

# Return-to-Work Survey Findings

REPORT  
April 2021

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## SUMMARY

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This report summarizes a survey conducted in April 2021 of Contra Costa County residents and workers regarding a potential return to work following the availability of vaccines and an opening of businesses post-Covid. The survey was conducted online with a link sent in the 511 Contra Costa newsletter, was open for a period of ten days, and was promoted through the 511 Contra Costa website and social media channels. A total of 150 respondents completed the online survey and the tabulations summarized in this report include all responses.

The survey was conducted to understand how the Covid Work-from-Home experience and the post-Covid opening may impact traffic congestion and commute patterns. It was also intended to compare respondents' experiences shared in a previous Work-from-Home Survey conducted by 511 Contra Costa in June 2020 to experiences nearly a year later. Both surveys were offered to 511 Contra Costa customers through a monthly email newsletter. The demographics of survey takers as predominantly female, ages 35-54, corresponds with what we know of our overall customer demographic.

The Return-to-Work Survey was conducted under the following conditions:

- Contra Costa County was in the 'Orange' phase of Covid opening. Retail stores and restaurants were allowed indoor business at 50% capacity.
- Offices were allowed to open with restrictions, but the state encouraged that employers continue to allow Work from Home.
- Covid vaccines were available to anyone aged 16 and older in Contra Costa, but appointments were difficult to secure because of high demand.
- Traffic on most Contra Costa main arterials was reported at near pre-Covid levels.
- Some school districts had reopened with a staggered schedule for students while others announced that in-person learning would not return until the fall 2021 school year.
- The governor had announced that the state would lift all Covid restrictions, except for mask use, as of June 15, 2021, as long as the state's Covid-positive test rates continued to decline.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

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### *Satisfaction with Work-from-Home Has Diminished for Employees*

While respondents still want to continue working from home, their satisfaction with the experience has gone down. We originally asked people how they felt about their Work-from-Home experience in June of 2020, four months into the pandemic. At the time, 81% of respondents were 'Very Satisfied' or 'Satisfied' with their Work-from-Home Experience. That number dropped to 75% of respondents in this April 2021 survey.

When converting satisfaction to a rating and comparing it to current Work-from-Home status, the satisfaction drops as respondents' time in the office increases. Those who have always worked from home gave the highest rating to their Work-from-Home experience, a 4.5. Those who started working from home during Covid and are still full time at home rated their experience a 4.0. Those who have returned to work part time rated their Work-from-Home experience a 3.5. The lowest rating, a 3.0, was from respondents who have returned to an

office full time. It's not clear why the ratings change in relationship to a respondents' current Work-from-Home status. Those who were dissatisfied with their experience may have asked to return to work, being back in an office may change how someone views their time at home, or other factors could be at play.

### *Employees Want to Continue Working from Home*

While the number of days that employees want to continue working from home has dropped, it's clear that continuing some level of work from home is still preferred. Since first surveying in June 2020, the percentage of employees who want to work from home at least 3 days a week has dropped from 66% to 59%. However, 79% of employees taking the Return-to-Work Survey want to continue working from home at least one day a week.

### *Traffic will Worsen*

At the time the Return-to-Work Survey opened, most Contra Costa County roadways were reported to have traffic loads at pre-Covid levels. Forty-three percent (43%) of respondents stated that their employer had not yet shared a return-to-work plan with them. With just 10% stating they expect to continue working from home full time, there are a lot of employees still at home who are likely to return to an office at least part time - an indication that we have yet to see the brunt of returning commute traffic.

Answers regarding *when* respondents expect to return to a worksite may shed light on when we could reach the peak of post-Covid commute traffic. Just 15% of respondents cited that they had already returned or expect to return to a worksite before June 2021. The largest percentage, 44%, expected to return starting this summer and other 29% this fall.

Additionally, the survey results show a shift from bus and BART use to private car, possibly because of an ongoing concern for personal safety and social distancing. Until people feel safe returning to transit, drive-alone traffic is likely to contribute to more congestion.

It's also of interest to note that 91% of survey respondents cited an interest in using a '...smart phone app that offered a way to plan, book, and pay for a trip using any combination of walking, biking, bus, BART, Uber/Lyft, carshare, and bikeshare.' CCTA is developing such an app and the responses show an understanding of the challenges of peak-hour congestion in Contra Costa and an openness to using tools that give commuters active and shared-ride alternatives.

### *Covid and the Work-from-Home Experience Has Been Life Changing*

Covid has certainly had an impact on all our lives, with working from home just a small part of the experience. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of respondents cited that Covid or their Work-from-Home experience made them want to make one or more of the lifestyle changes we presented. The top three changes included achieving a better work/life balance (72%), getting more exercise, or living healthier (68%), and focusing more attention to self-care (66%).

When respondents who had already returned to work were asked if they would consider changing jobs in order to work from home more often or permanently, more than a third (36%) said 'Yes'. This may speak to what employers will need to offer in the way of flexible working arrangements to keep their employees.

## FINDINGS

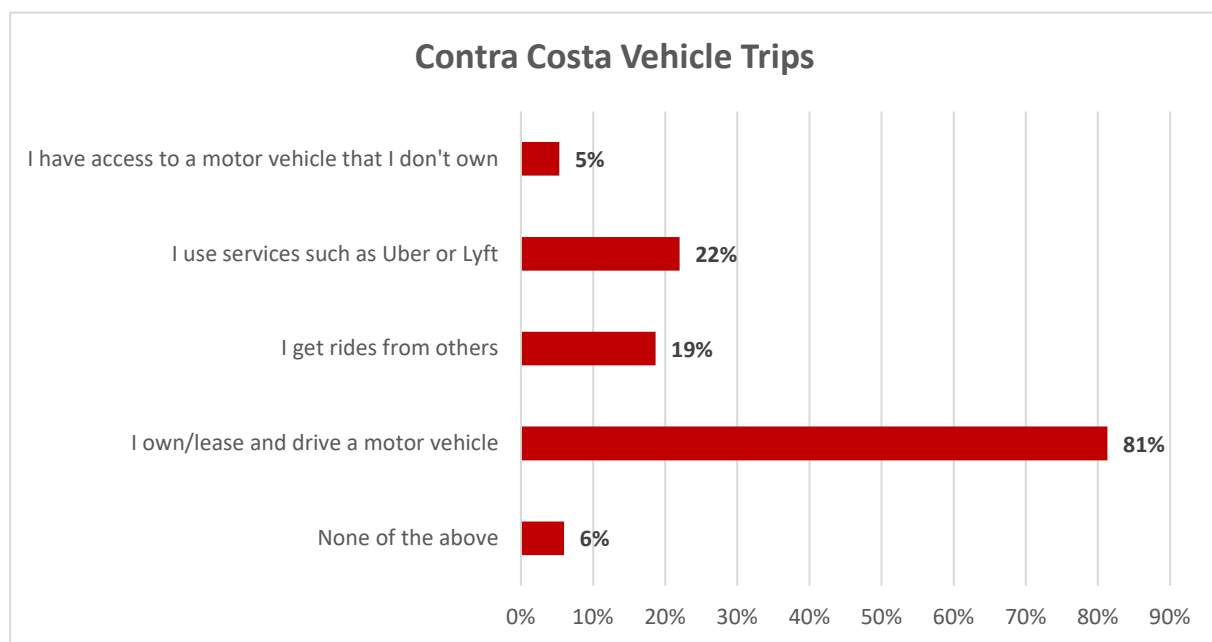
511 Contra Costa received a total of 150 online survey responses to the April 2021 Return-to-Work Survey.

### *All Respondents*

#### **Q1. Which of the following is true for vehicle trips you take in Contra Costa County? (Select all that apply)**

n=150 (multiple selections allowed per respondent)

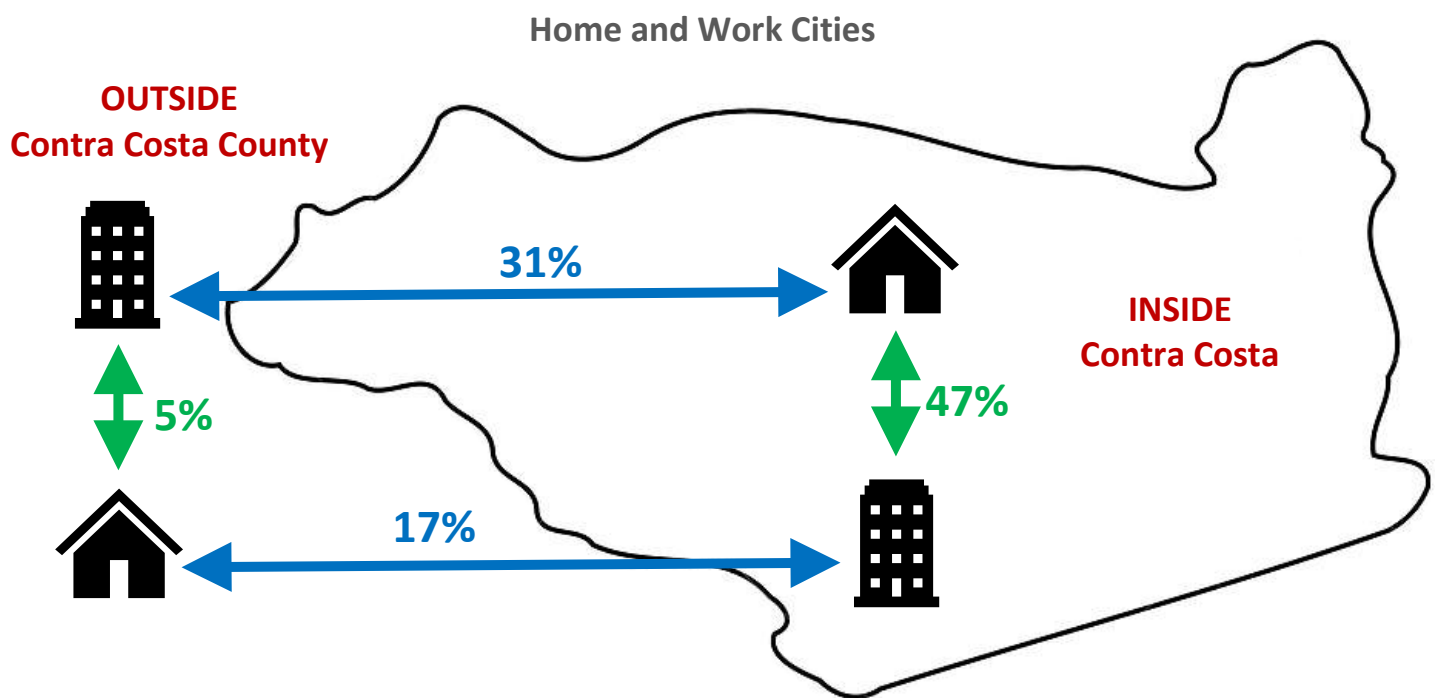
I have access to a motor vehicle that I don't own	5%
I use services such as Uber or Lyft	22%
I get rides from others	19%
I own/lease and drive a motor vehicle	81%
None of the above	6%



*All Respondents*  
**Q2/3. Home and Work City**  
 n=150

Travel from home to work within Contra Costa	47%
Travel from home in Contra Costa to work outside	31%
Travel from home outside Contra Costa to work inside	17%
Travel from home to work outside Contra Costa	5%

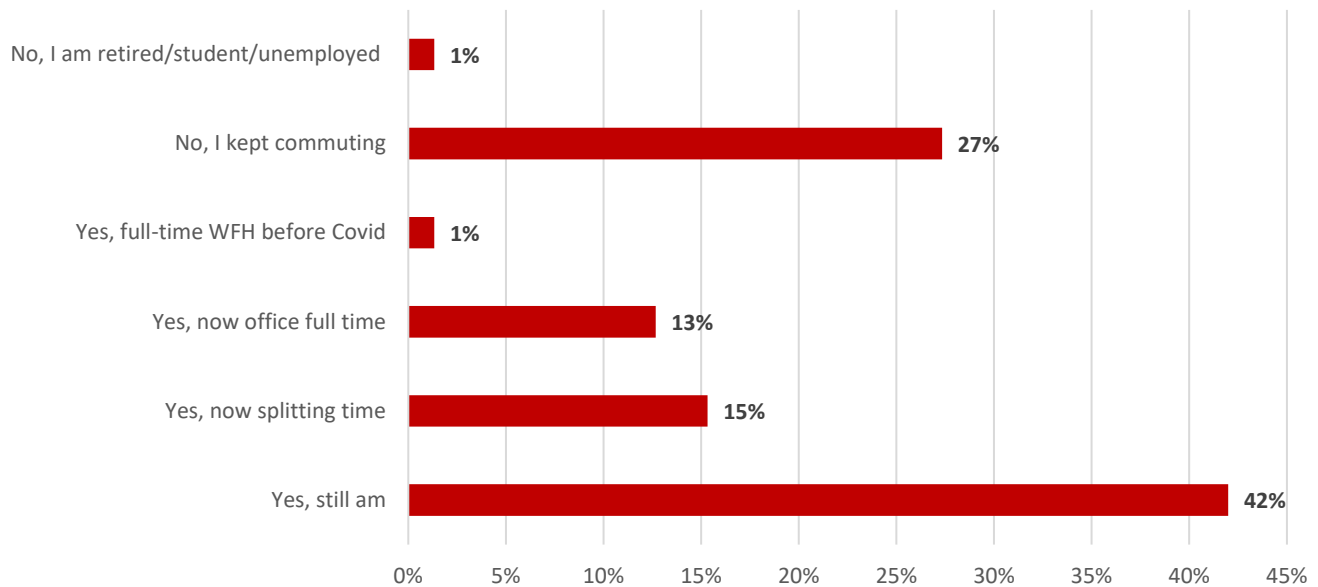
To understand commute flow, we asked respondents for their home and work cities. The graphic below represents the percentages of responses by their commute travel flow.



*All Respondents***Q4. Have you worked from home at any time during Covid?**

n=150

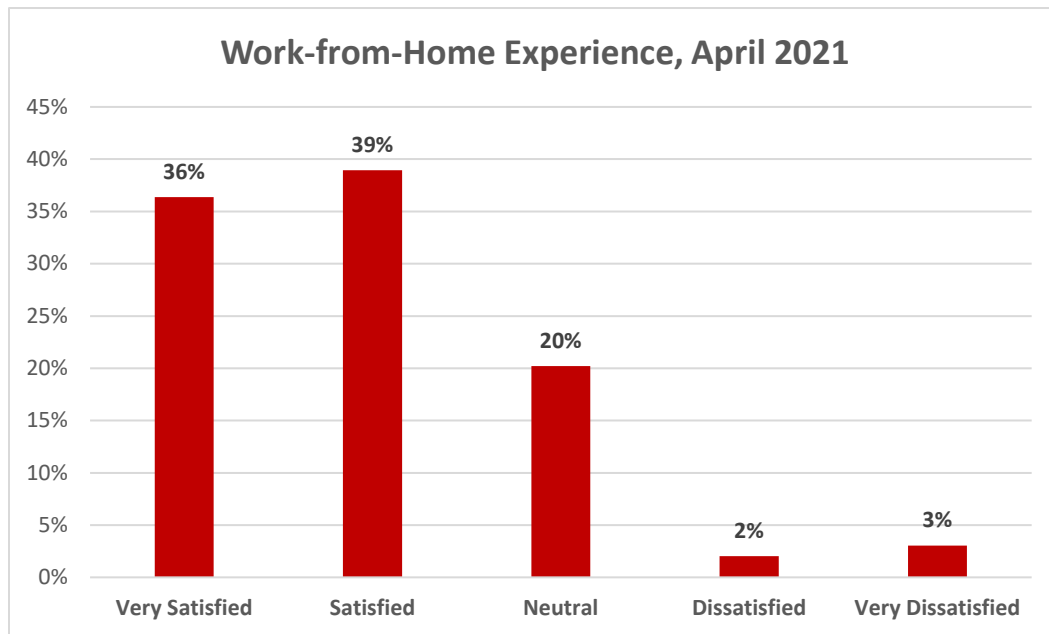
No, I am retired/student/unemployed	1%
No, I kept commuting to work	27%
Yes, full-time WFH before Covid	1%
Yes, but have since returned to an office full time	13%
Yes, but am now splitting time at home and office	15%
Yes, and I am still WFH full time	42%

**Worked at Home During Covid**

*Respondents who worked from home during Covid*  
**Q5/15. Please rate your overall Work-from-Home Experience**

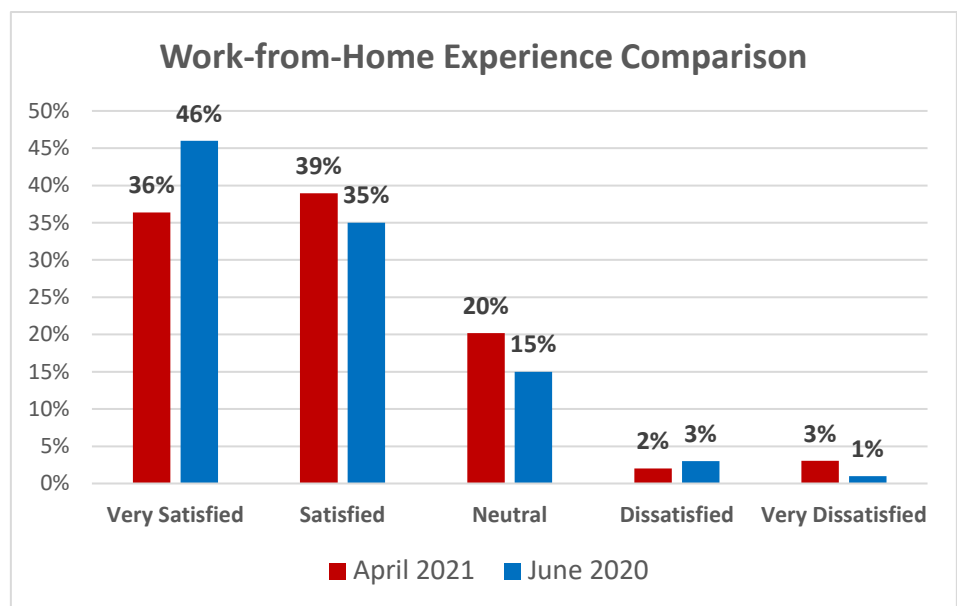
n=99

Very Satisfied	36%
Satisfied	39%
Neutral	20%
Dissatisfied	2%
Very Dissatisfied	3%



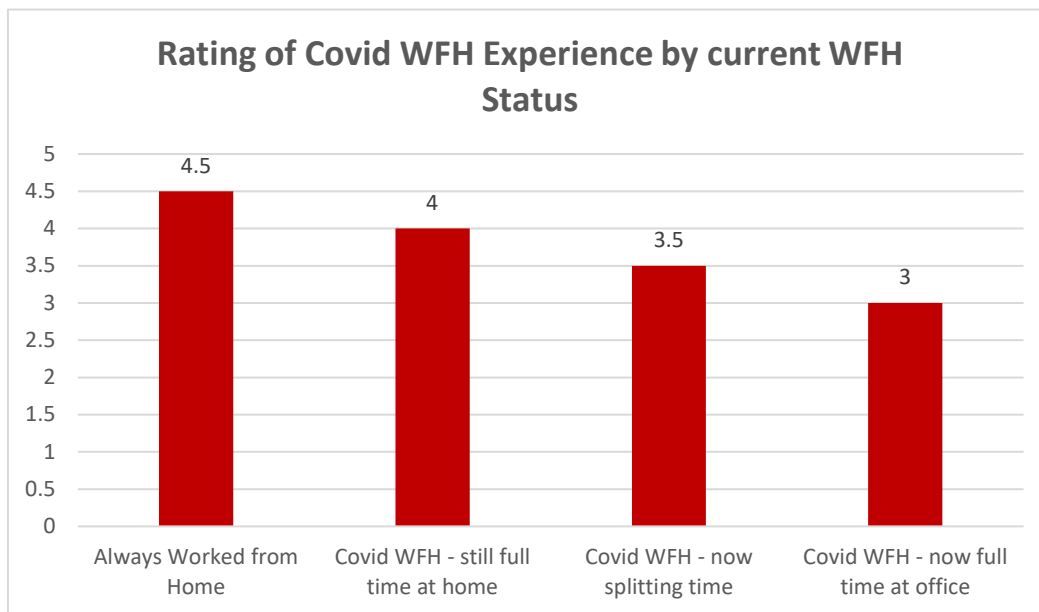
The same question was asked in the June 2020 Work-from-Home Experience Survey. In this Return-to-Work Survey 75% of respondents cited that they were 'Very Satisfied' or 'Satisfied' with their Work-from-Home experience compared to 81% in the earlier survey.

More respondents in the April 2021 survey found their experience 'Neutral', and the percentage of respondents who were 'Very Dissatisfied' or 'Dissatisfied' with their Work-from-Home experience was near identical between the two surveys.





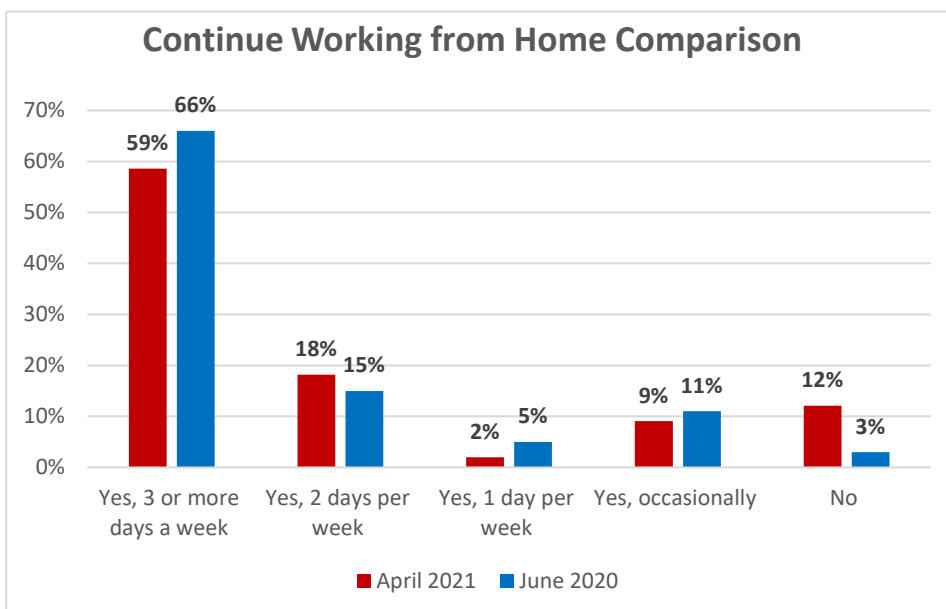
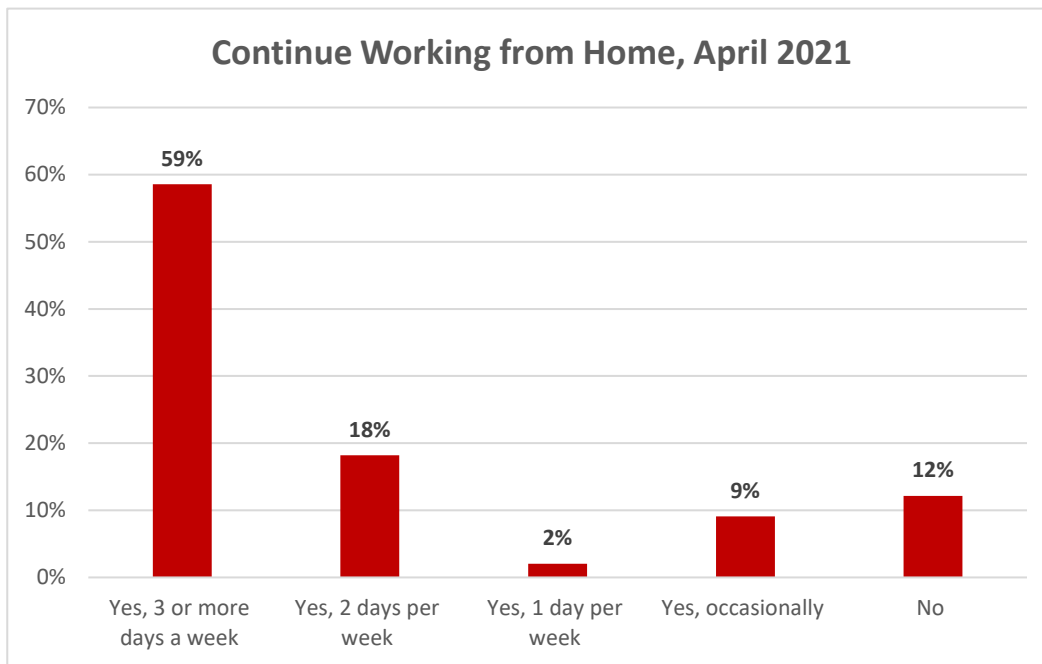
When converting the satisfaction ratings to a point system, with 'Very Satisfied' worth 5 points and 'Very Dissatisfied' worth 1 point, the average score of all respondents was 4.0. When comparing the satisfaction rating with current Work-from-Home status, the rating drops as respondents have returned to work. Those who have already returned to an office full time rated their Work-from-Home experience the lowest, with an average of 3.0.



*Respondents who worked from home during Covid*  
**Q6/16. Do you want to continue working from home permanently?**

n=99

Yes, 3 or more days a week	59%
Yes, 2 or more days a week	18%
Yes, 1 day per week	2%
Yes, occasionally	9%
No	12%



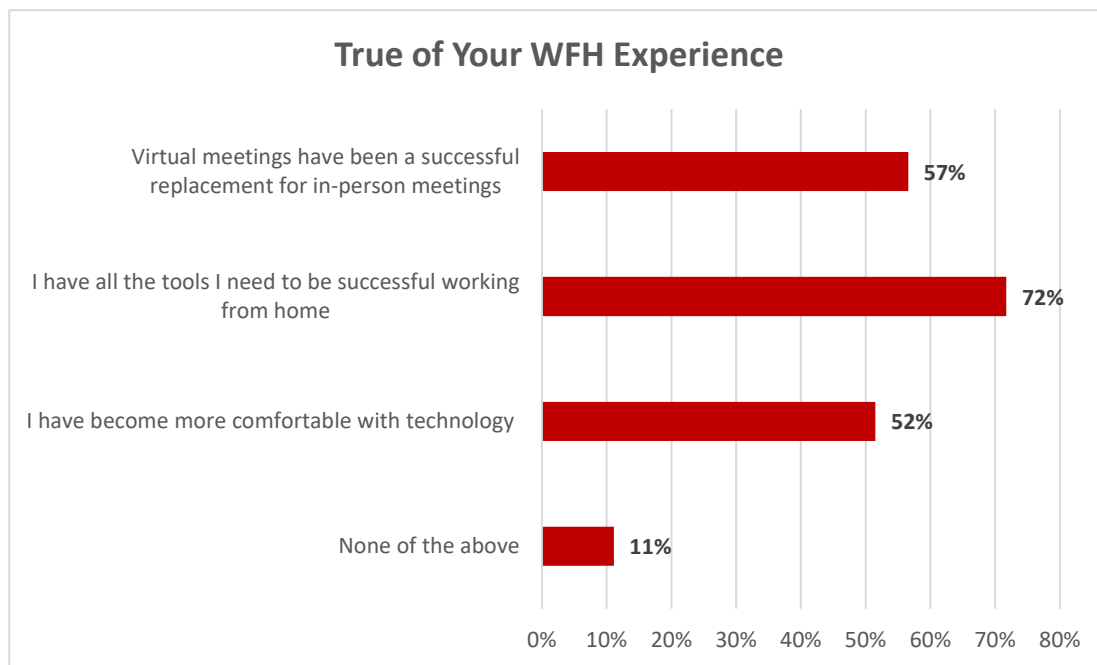
This was also a repeat survey question. In the Return-to-Work Survey, 59% of respondents wanted to continue working from home 3 days a week or more compared to 66% in the Work-from-Home Survey conducted at the start of the pandemic.

The percentage of respondents who do not want to continue working from home increased from 3% in June 2020 to 12% in April 2021.

*Respondents who worked from home during Covid***Q7/17. Which is true of your Work-from-Home experience? (Select all that apply)**

n=99 (multiple selections allowed per respondent)

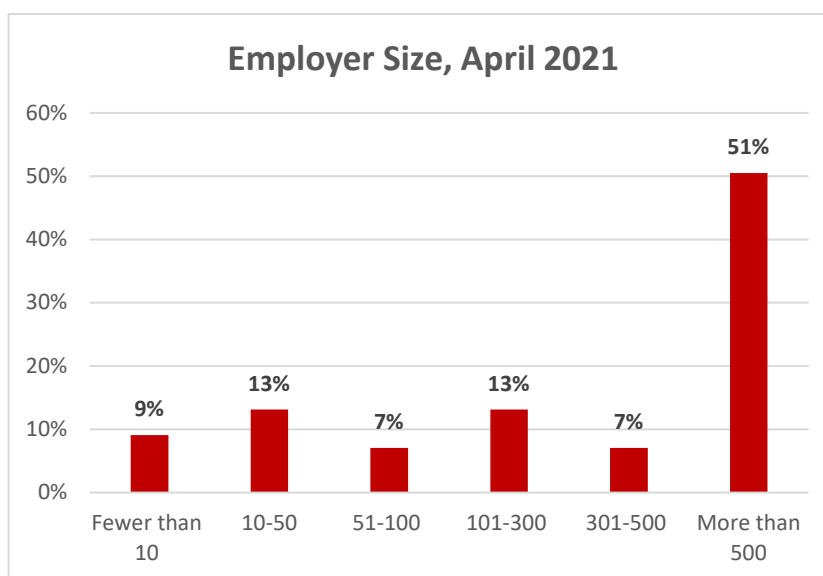
Virtual meetings have been a successful replacement for in-person meetings	57%
I have all the tools I need to be successful working from home	72%
I have become more comfortable with technology	52%
None of the above	11%



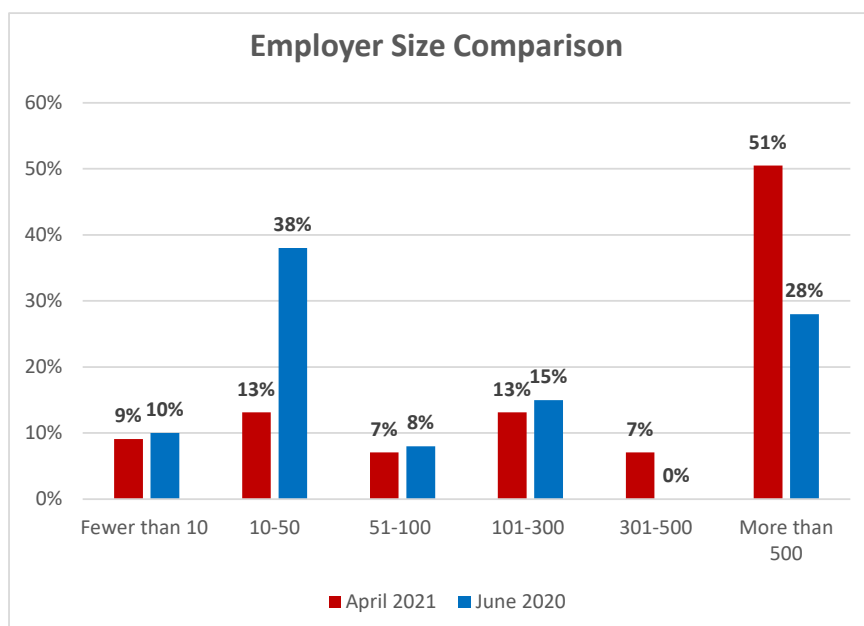
*Respondents who worked from home during Covid*  
**Q8/18. How many employees does your organization have?**

n=99

Fewer than 10	9%
10-50	13%
51-100	7%
101-300	13%
300-500	7%
More than 500	51%



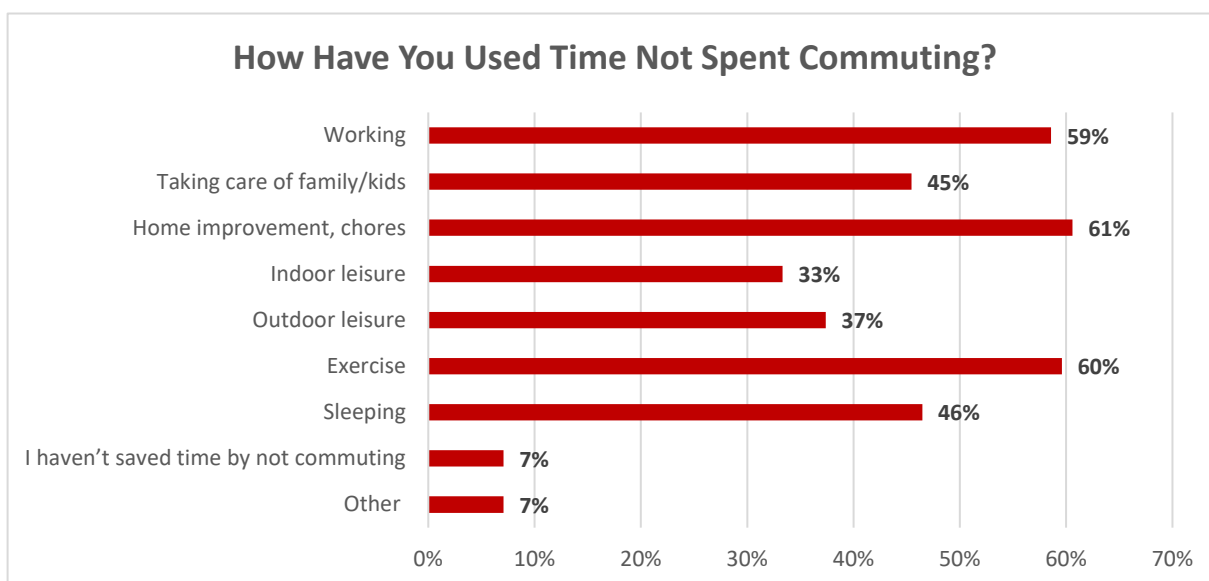
The Return-to-Work Survey included respondents from primarily larger employers. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of respondents worked at a company with 300 or more employees. In contrast, just 28% of respondents of the Work-from-Home Survey conducted nearly a year earlier were from 300+ employers. The reason for the difference is not clear.



*Respondents who worked from home during Covid***Q9/19. How did you use the time you saved by not commuting to work? (Select all that apply)**

n=99 (multiple selections allowed per respondent)

Working	59%
Taking care of family/kids	45%
Home improvement, chores	61%
Indoor leisure	33%
Outdoor leisure	37%
Exercise	60%
Sleeping	46%
I didn't save time by not commuting	7%
Other	7%

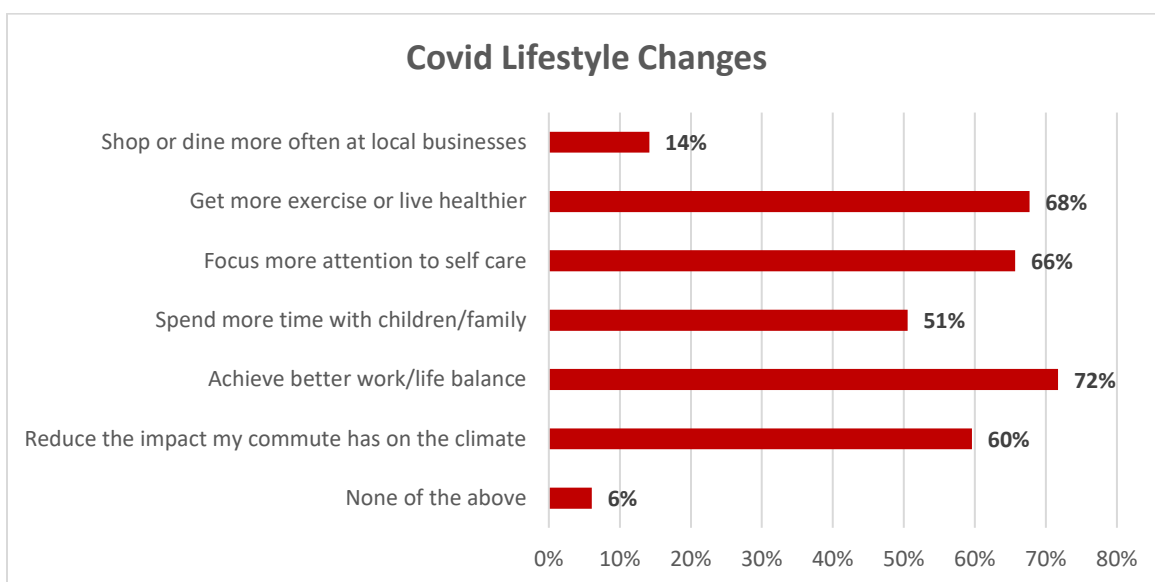


Other responses included going to school, eating healthier, spending more time with a spouse, and prayer.

*Respondents who worked from home during Covid***Q 10/20. Did Covid or your Work-from-Home experience lead you to make or consider lifestyle changes to accomplish any of the following?**

n=99 (multiple selections allowed per respondent)

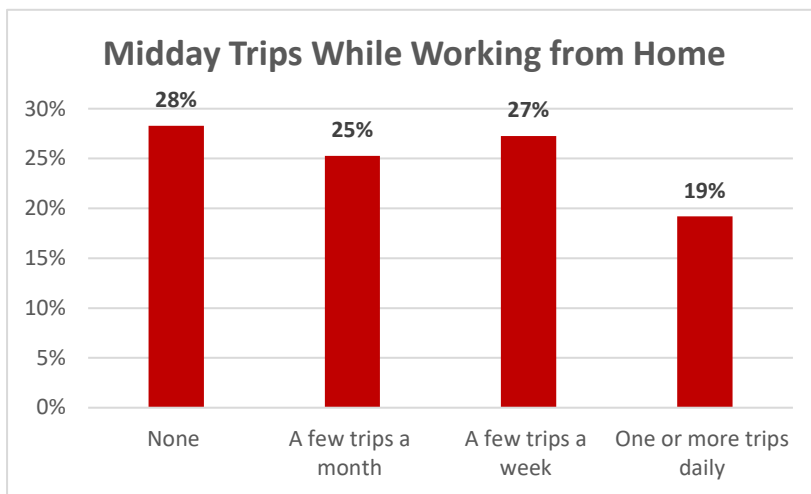
Shop or dine more often at local businesses	14%
Get more exercise or live healthier	68%
Focus more attention to self-care	66%
Spend more time with children/family	51%
Achieve better work/life balance	72%
Reduce the impact my commute has on the climate	60%
None of the above	6%



*Respondents who worked from home during Covid***Q 11/21. During your regular work week, how many midday trips did you typically make while working from home?**

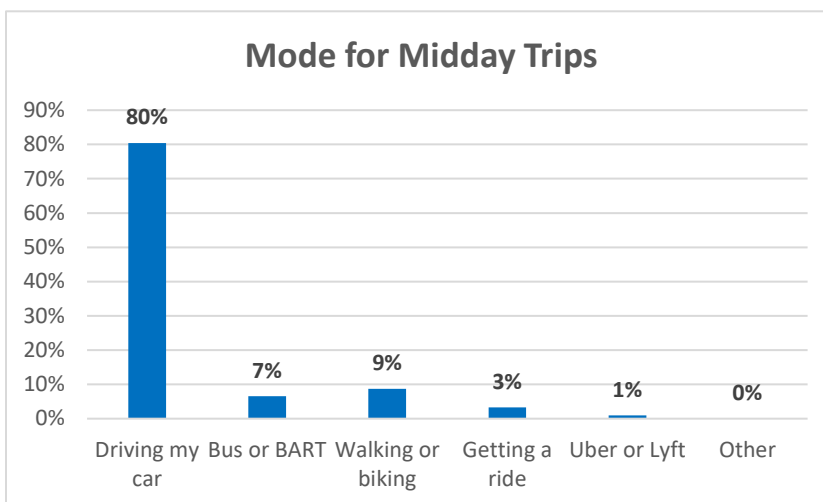
n=99

None	28%
A few trips a month	25%
A few trips a week	27%
One or more trips daily	19%

*Respondents who worked from home during Covid***Q 12/22. How did you make those midday trips?**

n=92

Driving my car	80%
Bus or BART	7%
Walking or biking	9%
Getting a ride	3%
Uber or Lyft	1%
Other	0%

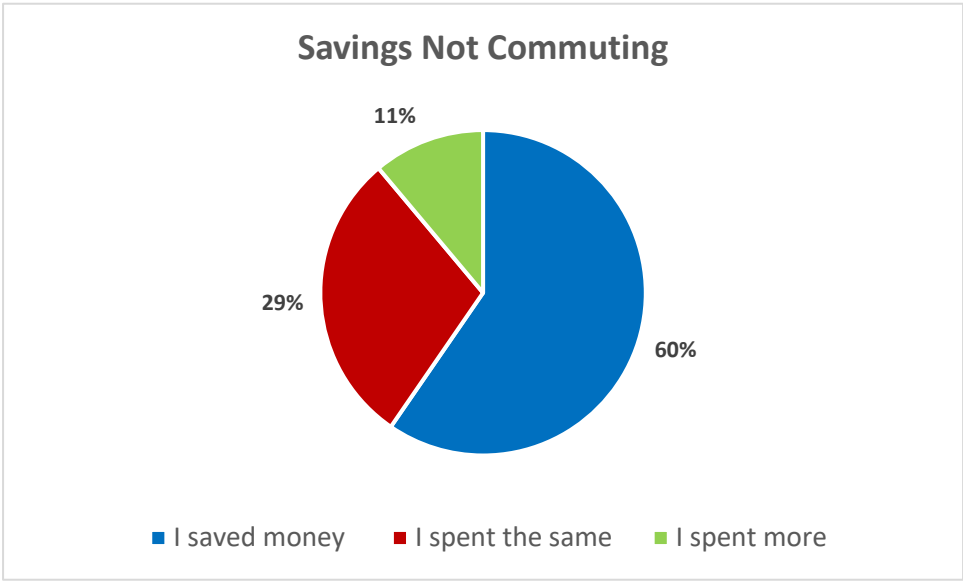


Respondents who worked from home during Covid

Q 13/23. Which is true of your work-from-home experience?

n=99

I saved money not commuting	60%
I spent about the same	29%
I spent more money not commuting	11%





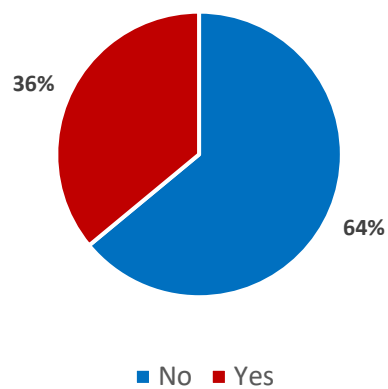
*Respondents who worked from home during Covid and have since returned to work.*

**Q 14/28. Did your Covid Work-from-Home experience lead you to consider changing jobs to one that would allow you to work from home more often or permanently?**

n=50

Yes	36%
No	64%

### Consider Changing Jobs to Allow Work from Home

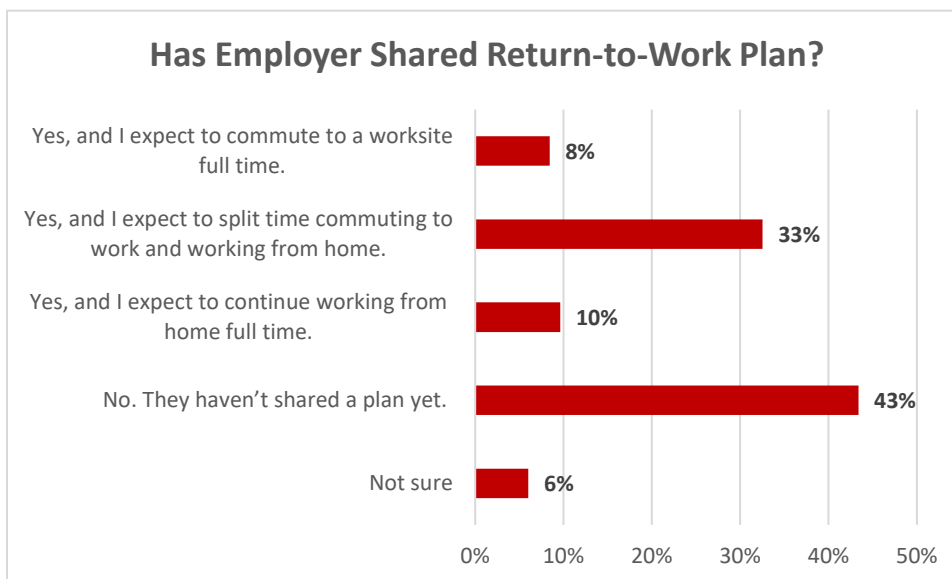


*Respondents who worked from home during Covid and have not returned to work.*

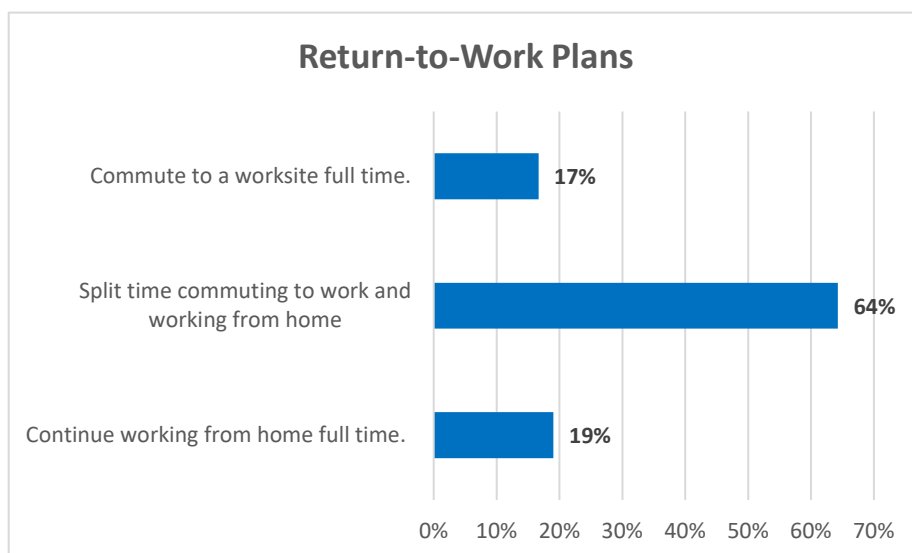
### Q 24. Has your employer provided a post-Covid return-to-work policy or plan?

n=83

Yes, and I expect to commute to a worksite full time	8%
Yes, and I expect to split time commuting to work and working from home	33%
Yes, and I expect to continue working from home full time	10%
No. They haven't shared a plan yet	43%
I'm not sure	6%



When looking at just the respondents returning to work in some capacity, the majority (64%) expect to split their time between a home and on-site office.

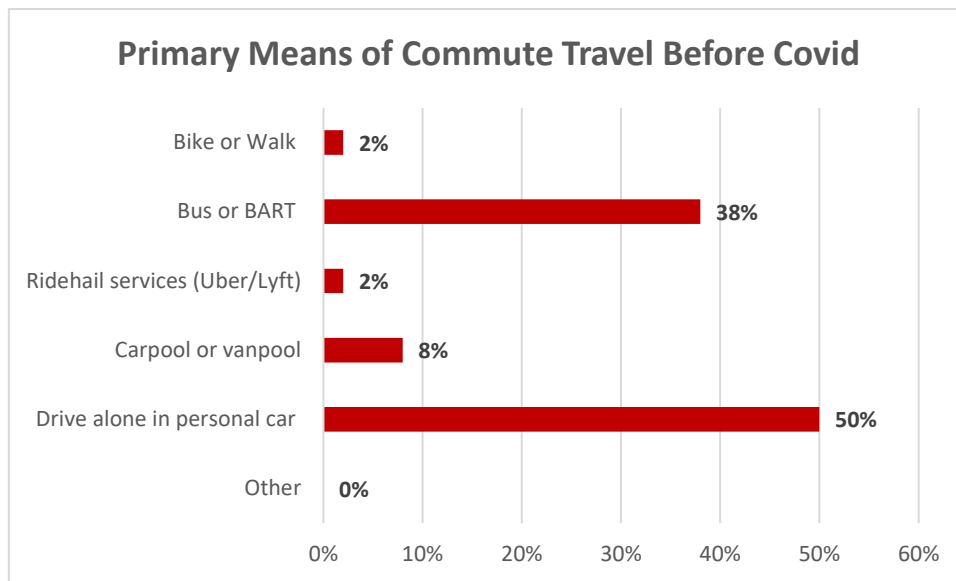


*Respondents who worked from home during Covid and have since returned to work.*

**Q 25/30. What was your primary means of travel to work before Covid?**

n=50

Bike or walk	2%
Bus or BART	38%
Ridehail services (Uber/Lyft)	2%
Carpool or vanpool	8%
Drive alone in a personal car	50%
Other	0%

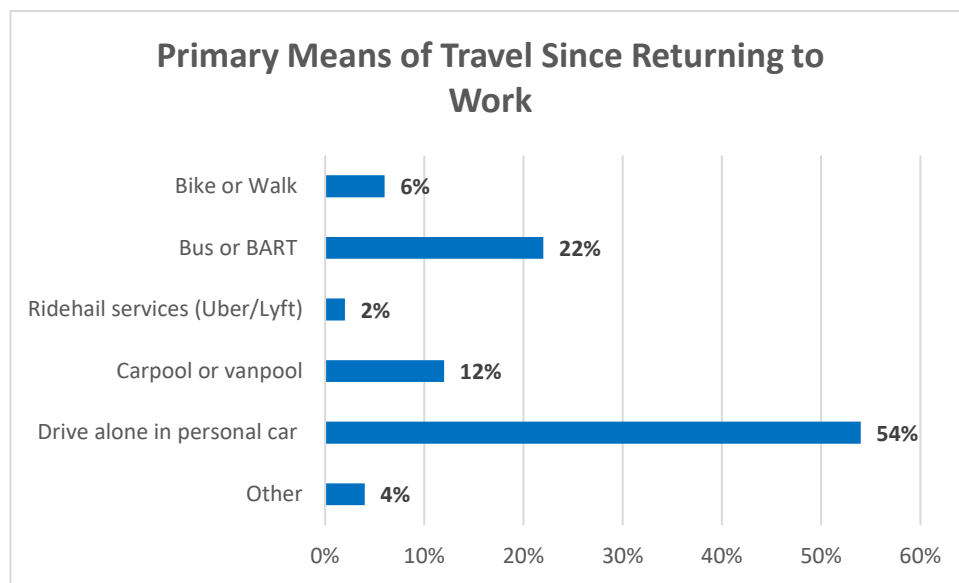


*Respondents who worked from home during Covid and have since returned to work.*

**Q 26/31. What is your primary means of travel since returning to your worksite?**

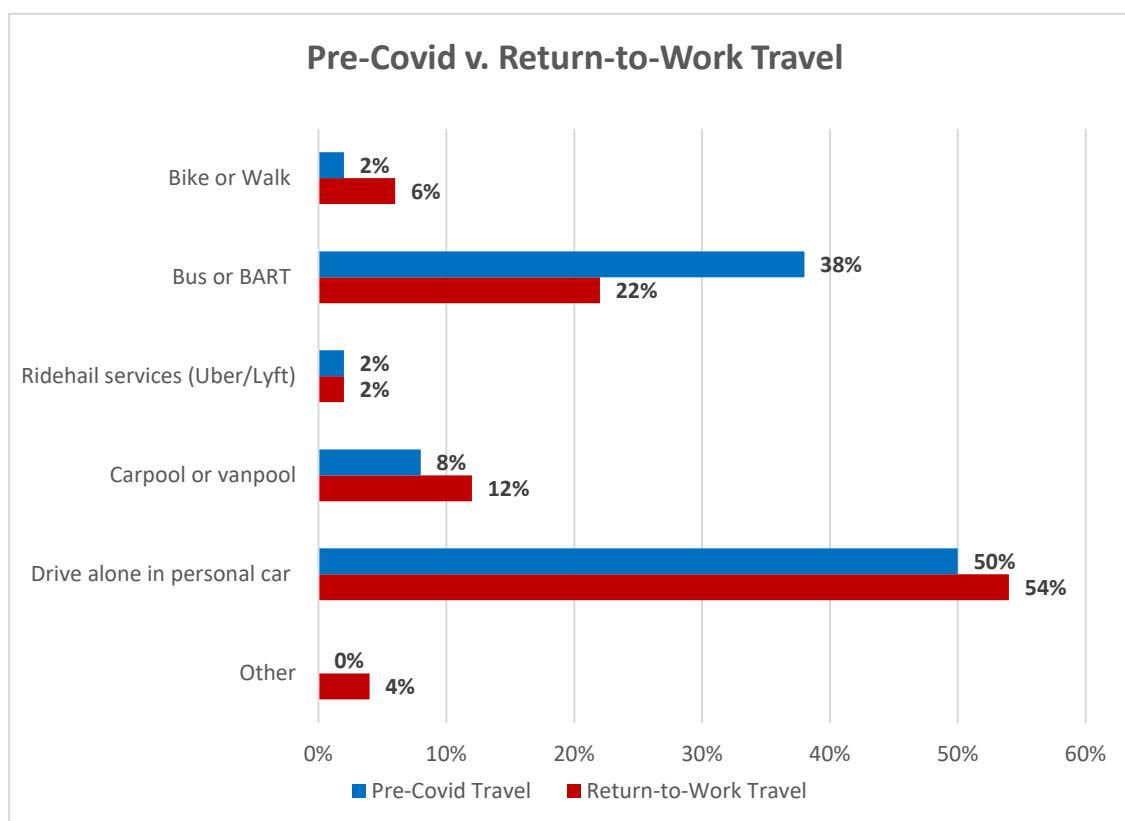
n=50

Bike or walk	6%
Bus or BART	22%
Ridehail services (Uber/Lyft)	2%
Carpool or vanpool	12%
Drive alone in a personal car	54%
Other	4%



Other responses included ferry and train.

When comparing pre-Covid travel with return-to-work travel, there is a clear shift away from public transit to forms that allow for social distancing, such as a personal auto and biking or walking. While still a form of shared transportation, carpooling or vanpooling with a small group, likely coworkers, that is the same every day could offer a feeling of security.

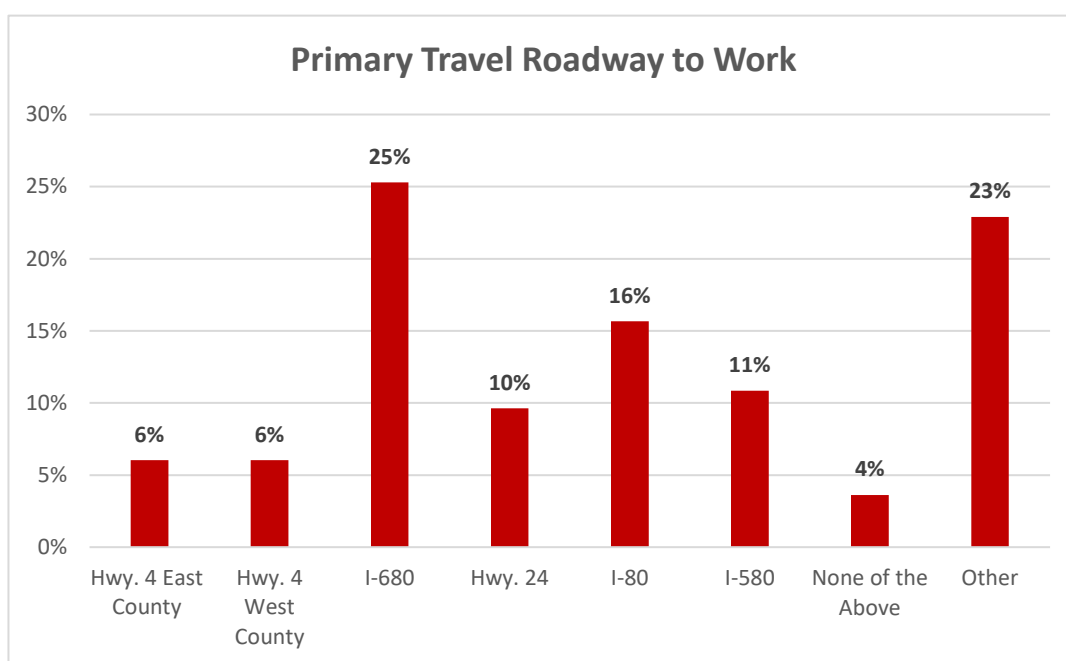


*Respondents who worked from home during Covid and have since returned to work.*

**Q 27/32. Please select the primary roadways you are travelling to get to work.**

n=50

Hwy. 4 East County	6%
Hwy. 4 West County	6%
I-680	25%
Hwy. 24	10%
I-80	16%
I-580	11%
None of the Above	4%
Other (Primarily local routes-listed below)	23%



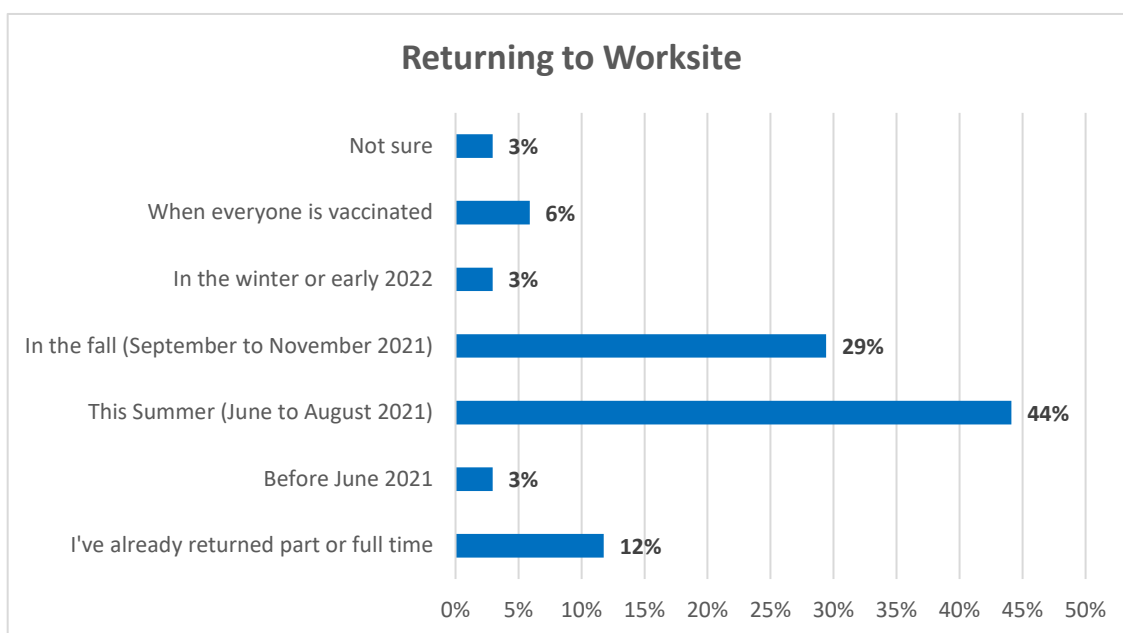
Other responses included single mentions of Clayton Road, Port of Chicago Highway, Moraga Road, San Pablo Dam Road, San Pablo Avenue, and the Canal Trail. Four respondents cited neighborhood or city streets.

*Respondents who are expecting to return to work.*

**Q 29. When do you expect to begin returning to your worksite.**

n=34

Not sure	3%
When everyone is vaccinated	6%
In the winter or early 2022	3%
In the fall (September to November 2021)	29%
This Summer (June to August 2021)	44%
Before June 2021	3%
I've already returned part or full time	12%

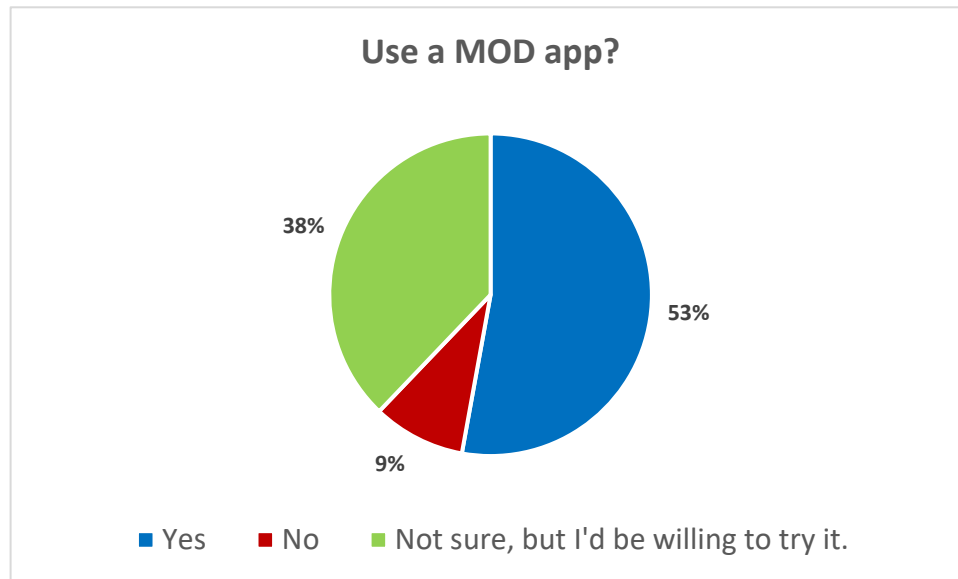


*All Respondents*

**Q 33. Would you use a smartphone app that offered a way to plan, book, and pay for a trip using any combination of walking, biking, bus, BART, Uber/Lyft, carshare, and bikeshare?**

n=140

Yes	53%
No	9%
Not sure, but I'd be willing to try it	38%



For those who responded 'No' we asked why they would not use an app. The responses included that public transit isn't safe or isn't available to them, worry about an app making them late, choosing carpooling over other travel planning, unwillingness to rely on an app, concerns for the personal information shared by an app, and because that kind of app is unnecessary.

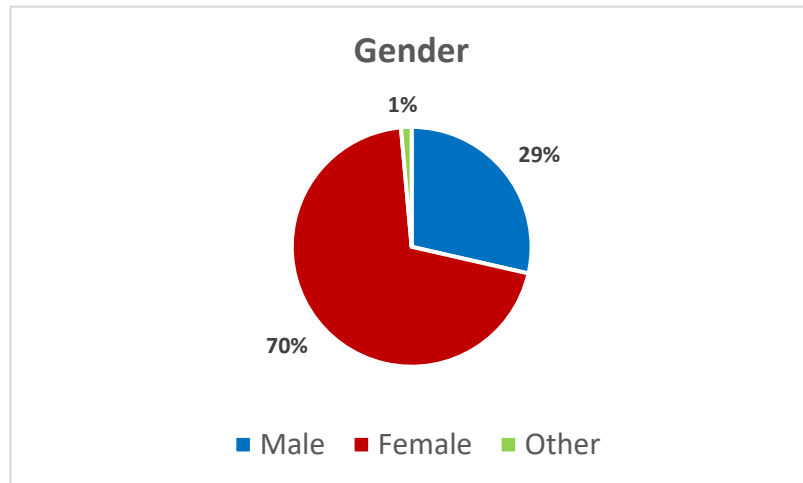


*All Respondents*

**Q 34. Gender**

n=140

Male	29%
Female	70%
Other	1%

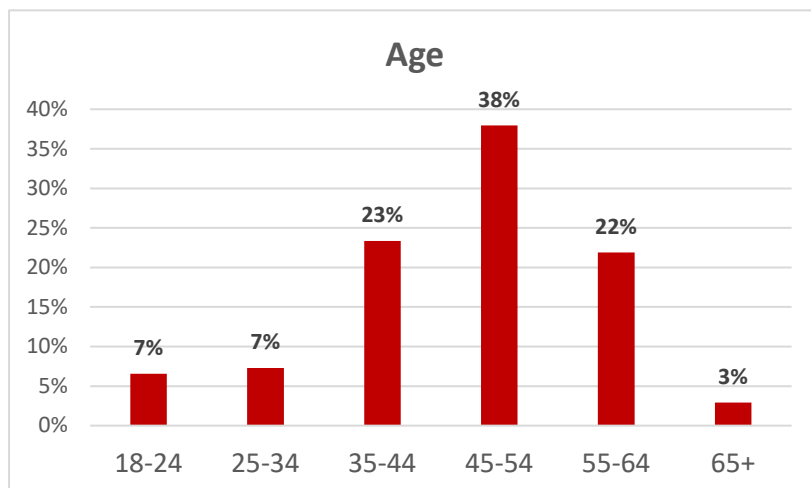


*All Respondents*

**Q 35. Age**

n=140

18-24	7%
25-34	7%
35-44	23%
45-54	38%
55-64	22%
65+	3%

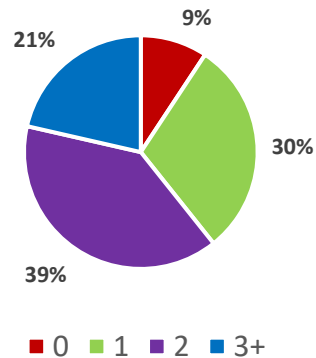


### Q 36. Number of vehicles at home

n=140

0	9%
1	30%
2	39%
3+	21%

#### Number of Vehicles at Home



*All Respondents*

### Q 37. Children at home under age 18

n=139

Yes	37%
No	63%

#### Children Under 18 at Home

