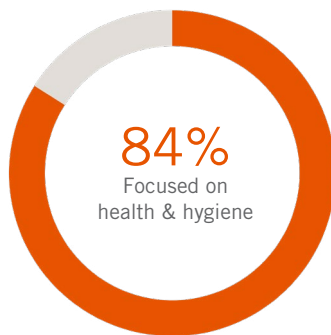


## ENSURING EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND HYGIENE IN THE WORKPLACE

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Going to the office used to be an understood norm. Companies quickly reacted to the COVID pandemic by pivoting from office to remote work. As employers consider their return-to-the-office options, employees say they want a workplace with improved hygiene that protects their health. At the same time, employees are quitting or changing jobs at record levels. An overwhelming majority of survey respondents (84%) said that health and hygiene practices are an important consideration in accepting a new job. Architects and designers have a larger role than they know in helping their clients attract and retain employees by reimagining workplaces with a greater focus on health and wellness.*



## ENSURING EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND HYGIENE IN THE WORKPLACE

Much has been written about the “Great Resignation.” Rather than leaving the workforce entirely, many are simply going somewhere else. That’s why some prefer to call it “the Great Migration.” Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella calls it “the Great Reshuffle.”

So why do employees leave? Research cited in a recent Inc. Magazine [article](#) says the explanation boils down to four words: feedback that goes unheard. Employees want their voices to be heard, and they want to work for organizations that share their values.

## THE NEED FOR HEALTHIER WORKPLACES

So, what do employees want? Just recently, a Harris Poll survey of employed people in the U.S. asked which top issues should be the focus for their employer. The number one issue? Employee health and wellness.

As more people became fully vaccinated in 2021, there was renewed interest in bringing back employees to the office -- either full-time or in a hybrid workplace environment. Then the Delta variant hit in the summer. And now Omicron. COVID-19 variants may become part of the new normal, as reported by USA Today recently. In the article, Lauren Ancel Meyers, a professor of statistical and data science and director of the COVID-19 Modeling Consortium at the University of Texas at Austin, states, “We haven’t had anything that looks like normal yet.” But to coax employees back to in-person workplaces, better office hygiene is a key part of assuring them that their employer is investing in ways to keep them safe and healthy.

LIXIL conducted its own research recently with the Harris Poll, in which 84% of respondents said that health and hygiene practices are an important consideration in accepting a new job.

### WHY EMPLOYERS NEED TO FOCUS ON SANITATION AND HYGIENE

- 1 COVID may have sped up the need for healthier workplaces, but it is a trend that has been growing for years.
- 2 COVID variants may become part of the new normal.
- 3 Employees have indicated they want improved hygienic common areas, notably restrooms.
- 4 Employees have said they want to keep themselves and their families healthy and safe.
- 5 More than 80 percent of workers said that health and hygiene practices are an important consideration in accepting a new job.

Further, LIXIL's research with Harris shows that respondents not only want to protect themselves but are mindful of being safe at the workplace to avoid bringing home the virus to their friends and family. As a result, employees expect that their organizations will implement new procedures and physical changes to the work environment to promote hygiene and safety.

As many as 80% of workers indicated they want their workplace to implement tangible changes. Half of respondents want social distancing between desks 3-6 feet (the top answer), followed by masking (44%), improvements to air purification and ventilation systems (40%), and touchless fixtures in bathrooms, kitchens and other common areas (36%).

Office environments typically have common areas including bathrooms, kitchens and break rooms, large conference rooms and elevators. A plurality of survey respondents (30%) indicated that bathrooms are the common area in their workplace they are most concerned about – and among those respondents, nearly half want touchless fixtures and expect their company to add hand sanitizing stations.

“Until 18 months ago, almost nobody cared about ‘healthy buildings,’” said Angelo Bianco, managing partner of CP Group, a building owner and management company, in an [article](#) in The New York Times. “That’s irrevocably changed.”

In a recent report from [JLL](#), a commercial real estate services company, 75% of employees claimed they expect to feel protected at work, clearly indicating that both mental and physical health will remain a key priority for employers to support their people.

## OPPORTUNITY FOR EMPLOYERS

While adhering to OSHA requirements for proper safety may be mandatory, employees state they want their employer to go beyond what is required to show commitment to their health and wellbeing. Physical changes also become a way employers can differentiate themselves in the marketplace by raising their employees' comfort level about returning to the office.

### THE COST OF NOT ADDRESSING EMPLOYEE HYGIENE AND SAFETY

Employees are in the driver's seat, and the stakes are higher to retain top talent. According to the Society of Human Resource Management's Human Capital Benchmarking Report, the average cost-per-hire was \$4,129 in 2016 (\$4,706 in 2021 when adjusted for inflation). The average time it takes to fill a position is 42 days. During COVID, new issues have emerged that affect employees considering a job change. An overwhelming majority of respondents said that a potential employer's health and hygiene practices are essential considerations in accepting a new job. It may take quite some time to return to "normal," if ever. Avoid these top pitfalls that may derail bringing back employees to the workplace:

- Not showing concern and empathy for employees by resisting investments in physical changes.
- Being unprepared for emotions or stress that employees face as they protect themselves and their families in the workplace.
- Not making changes may cause some employees to become embarrassed when they wipe down handles or common areas, for example, because the company has not invested in ways to reduce touchpoints in the office.

### HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES:

Be proactive and demonstrate care through actions and facilities upgrades. Use the time prior to inviting employees back to the office as an opportunity to reimagine the workplace and create safer spaces and healthier buildings beyond simply mandating vaccines or testing. Redesign and retrofit common areas, such as bathrooms, meeting rooms, kitchen spaces and entryways, to reduce physical touchpoints using innovations that already exist in the marketplace.

Improve employer branding by explicitly linking workplace changes to the company's mission and values. Demonstrate a commitment to creating a workplace that supports employees in all situations by investing in the changes that matter to them.

Regularly poll employees to understand any other concerns about returning to the office to ensure they are heard.

Follow established OSHA and CDC guidelines and correct misinformation around COVID, vaccines and protective measures.

Handwashing remains one of the best ways to protect against illness. Making that process easier and healthier is one of the top ways to lower barriers to people using common area faucets.

According to a paper from Hanley Wood University, "[Touchless] faucets are doubly significant because they greatly decrease instances of cross contamination resulting from multiple people handling infecting faucets. In fact, healthcare and school food service, or any foodservice employee for that matter, may even wash more frequently because of hands-free faucet activation."

## WHAT INDUSTRY LEADERS ARE HEARING

Architects, designers and facility managers have shown great interest in utilizing the office space that has largely been unused during the past two years. They are looking for ways to assure occupants that their facilities are safe.

And yet it's clear that many in the industry, even while meaning well, are not aware of what's on the mind of employees who must consider how to keep themselves safe. Requiring vaccinations, testing and masks are steps in the right direction, but fall short of elevating the long-term comfort of those who use common areas.

## HOW EMPLOYERS CAN ACT

First, ask employees what's on their minds regarding returning to the office. Take surveys or set up focus groups to research the topics that LIXIL's research has identified to determine priority concerns.

Second, partner with architecture and design firms and property management companies to discuss the innovations already in the marketplace that can help lower the number of touch points employees experience in their workplace. For example, there are several options available to retrofit bathrooms with touchless faucets, soap dispensers, restroom stall doors, toilet flushers and paper towel dispensers, among others.

"When we return to our physical workplaces, we need to rethink how we introduce interfaces that aren't just frictionless, but also touchless," said Lee Billington, former director of connected experiences at [Gensler](#), a global architecture, design, and planning firm. "We should start by looking strategically at the various technologies already available to us."

## CONCLUSION

Evaluating what's on the minds of end-user employees and developing an action plan to upgrade building infrastructure to lower the number of touchpoints are core components of ensuring the comfort of employees asked to return to the workplace. Architects and designers are uniquely qualified to proactively approach their commercial clients to discuss innovative ways to use existing technologies to reduce touchpoints in the work environment.

As the war for talent continues to escalate, employers and facility managers will want to use every option available to keep their employees from leaving and instead return to the office. Employees are focusing on health and hygiene, not just simply pay and benefits.

Returning to the office may look different -- and that's what employees are counting on.

1. Integral Employee Activation Index with the Harris Poll, Summer 2021, of 2,000 people employed in the U.S.  
<https://www.teamintegral.com/2021/integral-employee-activation-index/>
2. LIXIL survey with Harris Poll, December 2021, of 1,200 people employed in the U.S.  
[link to downloadable one-pager.]

## APPENDIX: POLL RESULTS

### Methodology

From Nov 30 – Dec 2, 2021, the Harris Poll conducted a survey of 1,141 US adults who were employed either full- or part-time, or were self-employed. The survey was commissioned by LIXIL in order to better understand employees' attitudes around health and hygiene in the workplace. Statistical testing was done at the 95% level of significance.

The following generation definition were used:

- Gen Z: 18-24 years
- Millennials: 25-40 years
- Gen X: 41-56 years
- Boomers: 57-75



### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

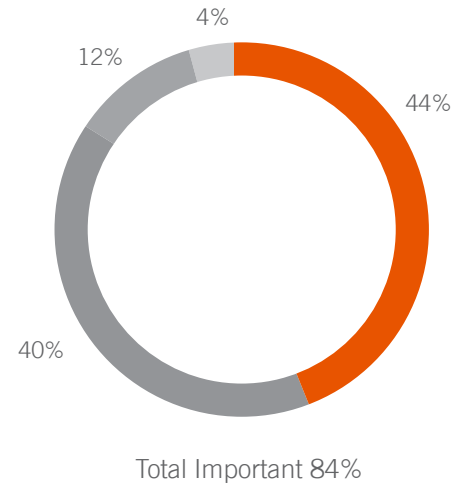
- 1 84% of the respondents said that health and hygiene practices of a potential employer is an important consideration in accepting job positions
- 2 Younger and more educated respondents showed greater concern about protecting themselves and workplace hygiene than their counterparts
- 3 Almost half (48%) want their workplace to implement social distancing (3 or 6ft.)
- 4 Bathrooms are the main common area that respondents are concerned about in their workplace in terms of health and hygiene (30%). Gen Z respondents are more concerned about elevators than other subgroups.
- 5 More than half the respondents are concerned about protecting everyone in public spaces (55%).

**QUESTIONS**

1. How much do you agree or disagree that your workplace has taken adequate steps to ensure the health and hygiene of employees?  
(Select one response)

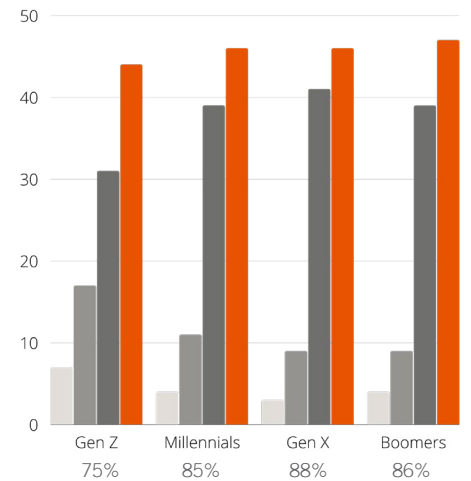
- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

84% of the respondents agreed that their workplace has taken adequate steps to ensure health and hygiene of employees



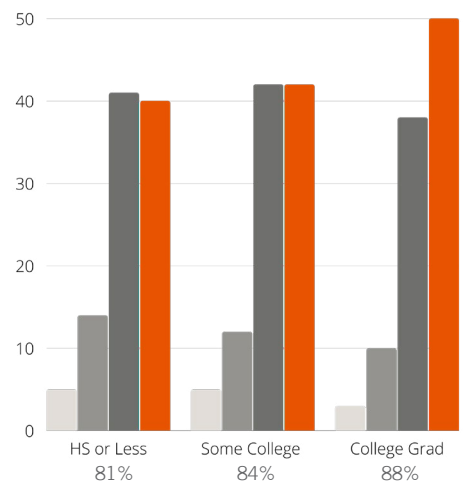
Gen X and Boomers are more likely to agree that the employers have taken measures to ensure workplace hygiene than their younger counterparts

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree



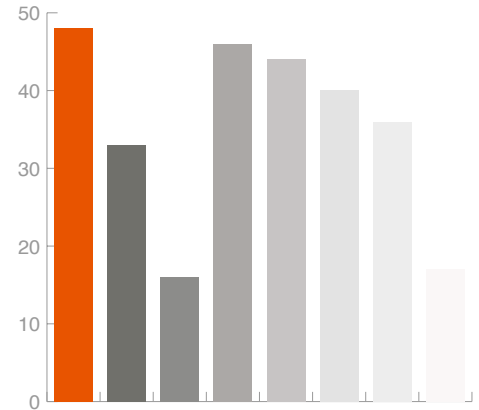
Respondents across all education groups agree that their employers have taken measures to ensure workplace hygiene. College Grads strongly agree, more than non-college educated

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree



2. Which of the following do you want your employer to implement in the workplace? Please select all that apply.

- 48% Total Social Distancing - 3 or 6 ft
- 33% Social Distancing Workspace proximity 6 ft+
- 16% Social Distancing- Workspace proximity 3 ft+
- 46% Adding Hand Sanitizing Stations
- 44% Masking
- 40% Air Purification and Ventilation
- 36% Touchless fixtures in Washroom, Kitchens, Other commons
- 17% None of these



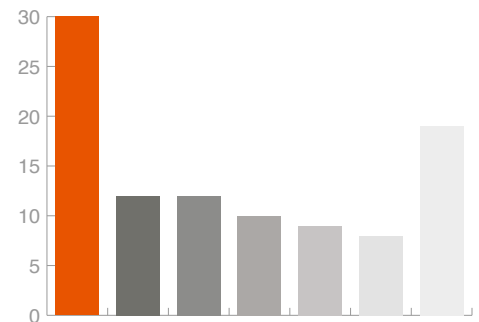
Eight in ten workers want their workplace to implement at least one of the following to enhance hygiene. Half (48%) want their workplace to implement social distancing (3 or 6ft.)

|   | Total      | Generation |                 |            |             | Education      |                  |                   |
|---|------------|------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|   |            | Gen Z (B)  | Millennials (C) | Gen X (D)  | Boomers (E) | HS or Less (F) | Some College (G) | College Grad+ (H) |
|   | N=1141     | N=123      | N=466           | N=334      | N=207       | N=293          | N=350            | N=345             |
| <b>Total Social Distancing - 3 or 6 ft.</b>                   | <b>48%</b> | <b>42%</b> | <b>55% E</b>    | <b>48%</b> | <b>43%</b>  | <b>41%</b>     | <b>41%</b>       | <b>59% FG</b>     |
| Social distancing - workspace proximity 6 ft+                 | 33%        | 28%        | 34%             | 34%        | 34%         | 26%            | 32%              | 38% F             |
| Social distancing - workspace proximity 3 ft+                 | 16%        | 14%        | 21% DE          | 13%        | 9%          | 16%            | 9%               | 22% G             |
| Adding hand sanitizing stations                               | 46%        | 47%        | 48%             | 51% E      | 38%         | 41%            | 45%              | 51%               |
| Masking   | 44%        | 45%        | 47%             | 43%        | 41%         | 42%            | 32%              | 46% F             |
| Air purification and ventilation                              | 40%        | 37%        | 37%             | 44%        | 46%         | 27%            | 42% F            | 47% F             |
| Touchless fixtures in washrooms, kitchens, other common areas | 36%        | 30%        | 37%             | 41%        | 30%         | 30%            | 34%              | 41% F             |
| None of these   | 17%        | 13%        | 11%             | 18% C      | 27% BC      | 18%            | 22% H            | 13%               |

More than half of Millennials and College Graduates want employers to implement social distancing. Half of College Graduates also want their employers to implement masking as well as air purification and ventilation.

3. Which of the following areas of your work environment concerns you the most from a health and hygiene perspective? Please select one.

- 30% Bathrooms
- 12% My Workstation
- 12% Lobbies/Commons areas
- 10% Meeting Rooms
- 9% Elevators
- 8% Kitchens
- 19% None of these



Bathrooms are the main common area that respondents are concerned about in their workplace in terms of health and hygiene (30%).

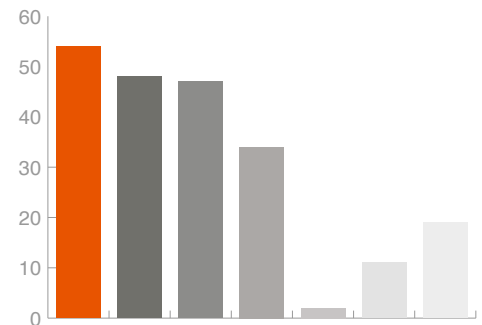


|                      | Total  | Generation |                 |           |             | Education      |                  |                   |
|----------------------|--------|------------|-----------------|-----------|-------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|                      |        | Gen Z (B)  | Millennials (C) | Gen X (D) | Boomers (E) | HS or Less (F) | Some College (G) | College Grad+ (H) |
|                      | N=1141 | N=123      | N=466           | N=334     | N=207       | N=293          | N=350            | N=345             |
| Bathrooms            | 31%    | 35%        | 32%             | 29%       | 27%         | 36%            | 28%              | 29%               |
| Lobbies/common areas | 12%    | 9%         | 13%             | 16% E     | 6%          | 9%             | 15%              | 11%               |
| My workstation       | 12%    | 10%        | 14%             | 11%       | 12%         | 9%             | 11%              | 15%               |
| Meeting rooms        | 10%    | 2%         | 13% B           | 8%        | 10%         | 9%             | 7%               | 12% G             |
| Elevators            | 9%     | 22% CDE    | 8%              | 9%        | 7%          | 9%             | 8%               | 11%               |
| Kitchens             | 8%     | 5%         | 11%             | 7%        | 6%          | 9%             | 6%               | 7%                |
| None of these        | 18%    | 17%        | 11%             | 20% C     | 31% BCD     | 19%            | 24% H            | 15%               |

Elevators are more concern to Gen Z than the others. Three in ten Boomers are not concerned about any of these.

4. Which of the following are you concerned about when it comes to your workplace or to other public spaces? (Please select all that apply):

- 54% Protecting Everyone
- 48% Protecting my own health
- 12% Protecting health of my family and friends
- 10% Protecting health of my co-workers
- 9% Other
- 11% None of these



More than half the respondents are concerned about protecting everyone in public spaces

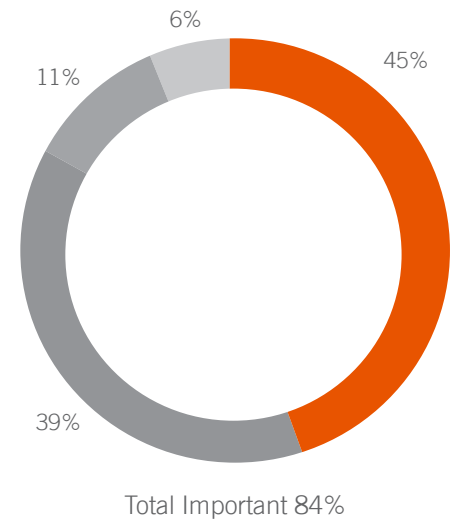
|  | Total  | Generation |                 |           |             | Education      |                  |                   |
|--|--------|------------|-----------------|-----------|-------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|  |        | Gen Z (B)  | Millennials (C) | Gen X (D) | Boomers (E) | HS or Less (F) | Some College (G) | College Grad+ (H) |
|  | N=1141 | N=123      | N=466           | N=334     | N=207       | N=293          | N=350            | N=345             |
| Protecting everyone                        | 55%    | 50%        | 54%             | 56%       | 53%         | 51%            | 49%              | 61% FG            |
| Protecting my own health                   | 49%    | 50%        | 54% DE          | 44%       | 40%         | 42%            | 43%              | 56% FG            |
| Protecting health of my family and friends | 45%    | 46%        | 54% DE          | 44%       | 37%         | 40%            | 45%              | 54% F             |
| Protecting health of my co-workers         | 35%    | 38%        | 40% D           | 28%       | 30%         | 30%            | 32%              | 39%               |
| Other                                      | 2%     | 4%         | 1%              | 3%        | 2%          | 2%             | 2%               | 2%                |
| None of these                              | 11%    | 8%         | 7%              | 12%       | 20% BC      | 14% H          | 14% H            | 7%                |

Millennials are more concerned about protecting themselves and their family and friends than the older generations. College Grads are more concerned about protecting everyone and themselves.

5. How important would a potential employer's health and hygiene practices be in your decision to accept a position to work with them? (Select one response)

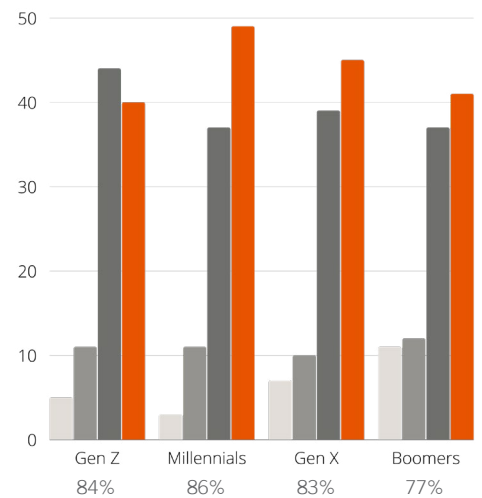
- Very Important
- Somewhat important
- Not too Important
- Not at all Important

Majority of respondents (84%) said that health and hygiene practices of a potential employer is an important consideration in accepting job positions



A potential employer's health and hygiene practices are more important considerations for accepting a position for Millennials than for Boomers

- Very Important
- Somewhat important
- Not too Important
- Not at all Important



More than 8 in 10 of all educational sub-groups feel that potential employer's health practices are an important consideration to accepting a position

- Very Important
- Somewhat important
- Not too Important
- Not at all Important

