

The State of Changing Work Arrangements 2021



How the pandemic
has driven
massive changes
that may become
permanent



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Executive Summary

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a massive impact on how organizations get work done. It has shaken up perceptions about which kinds of work arrangements are effective and achievable. Even years after the pandemic subsides, its impact will likely be felt in how it has accelerated our progress into the future of work.

This study focuses on three types of changing work arrangements:

1. Contingent work arrangements
2. Flexible work arrangements
3. Job/role transformations

In all cases, we are interested in examining the following questions:

- What are organizations currently doing in terms of work arrangements?
- What has changed in the past couple of years?
- What do organizations expect will change in the next two years?
- Which practices seem to be most closely associated with success?

About this Survey

The survey, called “The State of Changing Work Arrangements,” ran in the fourth quarter of 2020. There were responses from 361 participants, with 290 responding to every question.

The participants come from a broad cross-section of industrial sectors. They represent all sizes of organizations, from those with just a few employees to those with more than 20,000 employees. Just over 40% of respondents represent organizations with 1,000 or more employees.

Below is a quick overview of some of the key findings

On Contingent Work

Major Finding **1** **In most organizations, both culture and work processes have changed considerably over the last year, but work processes have changed most dramatically.**

- Over the last year, corporate culture changed moderately in 33% of responding organizations and a lot in another 24%. That leaves only a minority saying that culture only changed a little or not at all.
- Over the last year, work practices have changed moderately in 24% of organizations and a lot in another 60%. That leaves only 16% where work practices only changed a little or not at all.

Major Finding 2

There have not been major increases in the adoption of contingent work arrangements over the last two years, but substantially more changes are expected in the near future.

- Today, 84% of HR professionals say their organizations use contingent work arrangements to some degree. Contingents make up 9% or less of employees in nearly two-thirds of organizations. Still, about a tenth of organizations say that contingent workers make up two-fifths or more of their workforces.
- Whereas more than a quarter of HR professionals say the proportion of contingent workers in their organization has increased a lot (4%) or a little (24%), nearly as many say their proportional use of contingents decreased a lot (11%) or a little (13%).
- Twenty-five percent predict that the proportion of contingent work arrangements in their organization will increase over the next two years, whereas just 14% expect the percentage to decrease. About half say the proportion will stay the same.

Major Finding 3

Most organizations are comfortable with their management of contingent work arrangements, though there is room for improvement.

- Most respondents believe their organizations are good (45%) or very good (13%) at acquiring and managing contingent workers, but this still leaves many that believe they could improve in this area.
- The most common means for acquiring contingent workers is via a staffing agency (cited by 43% of respondents).
- The most common use of contingent workers is for short-term projects (cited by 49%).

Major Finding 4

Organizations that are skilled at managing contingent workers are more likely than their less-skillful counterparts to:

- make better use of their employee referrals to source contingent talent
- leverage contingent workers to boost skills; in other words, there is a focus on improving effectiveness rather than just efficiently filling empty positions

On Flexible Work Arrangements

Major Finding 5

Flexible work arrangements are now firmly entrenched in most organizations, in large part due to the pandemic.

- Nearly all organizations (97%) offer at least one type of flexible work arrangement and 15% offer at least five.
- Three-quarters of respondents say that the pandemic is a primary reason for using flexible work arrangements.
- Four in five organizations now offer remote work options, the most commonly cited flexible work arrangement.
- Forty-five percent say their organizations are good at managing workers engaged in flexible work arrangements, but just 21% say they are very good at it. Meanwhile, about a third say that their organizations are only fair or worse in this area.

Major Finding 6

Flexible work arrangements have seen a massive uptick in usage over the last two years, and they are expected to increase even further in the next two years.

- Nearly half (48%) of respondents say that flexible work arrangements in their organizations have increased a lot in the past two years, and a further 33% say they have increased a little.
- What's more, about half (52%) say their organizations expect to increase the use of flexible work arrangements over the next two years.
- Leader receptivity to flexible work arrangements has also seen a massive increase, with 79% agreeing this has happened in their organizations.

Major Finding 7

Organizations that are skilled at managing flexible work arrangements are more likely than their less-skillful counterparts to:

- strongly agree that leaders are more receptive to flexible work arrangements than they were a year ago
- anticipate that their organizations will provide employees with more remote work resources/tools

On Job/role Transformations

Major Finding 8

Employees will increasingly offer flexible work schedules and flexible location options.

- More than two-thirds of the respondents (69%) expect flexible work schedules to become more common over the next two years.
- Further, more than half of respondents say they expect flexible location options or workers who nearly always work remotely to become more common in the next two years.

Major Finding 9

Most organizations expect to see jobs/roles substantially redefined over the next two years.

- Fully 96% of HR professionals report that jobs/roles will be substantially redefined in their organizations in the next two years.
- Among those that expect to see such changes, well over a third predict that 20% or more jobs/roles will be redefined in that period.



Work Culture and Processes



Finding: Company culture changed *a lot* in almost one-quarter of organizations

Changing corporate culture can be a difficult task, so it is striking to see almost one in four say their corporate culture has changed *a lot* over the last year. Even more striking is that most respondents (60%) say organizational work processes and arrangements have also changed *a lot*. If we are looking for evidence that the pandemic has had a massive impact on work, then we need to look no further than those two data points.

Each organization must determine which parts of the culture change have been positive and which parts negative. Many culture changes will have been a reaction to the circumstances surrounding the coronavirus pandemic, but going forward organizations may wish to be more intentional about how they shape culture.

Three Takeaways

There are several takeaways from these findings. The most immediate takeaway is that HR leaders at organizations that have seen changes in corporate culture and/or organizational work processes and arrangements will need to be alert to any unexpected side effects of those changes. They will also want to make sure that positive changes are reinforced and cemented into place rather than allowed to disappear once the pandemic is over.

The second takeaway is less immediate but still significant. Culture change is often depicted as slow and difficult to achieve. The reaction to the pandemic shows that organizations are more capable of rapid change than normally believed. Perhaps we should raise our expectations about what is possible and set more ambitious goals when it comes to organizational changes.

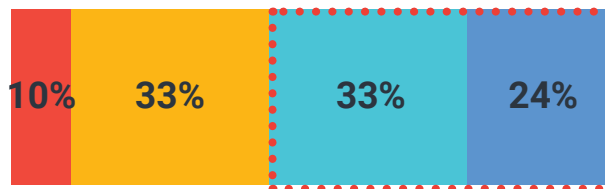
A third takeaway is that culture change may be lagging behind changes in work practices in many organizations. HR leaders should be prepared for ongoing changes in culture as the longer-term impact of changes in work practices are felt.



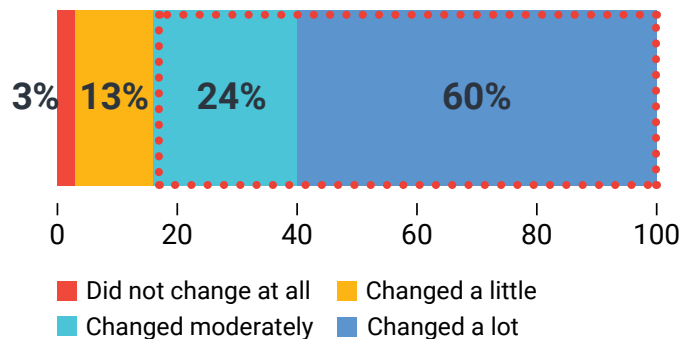
Organizational work processes and arrangements changed *a lot* in most companies (60%) and changed at least moderately in 84%

Survey Question: To what degree have the following changed in your organization over the last year?

Corporate culture



Organizational work processes and arrangements



Contingent Work Arrangements

For the purpose of this study and the accompanying survey, we defined the term contingent work arrangement as referring to any worker who is not viewed as a traditional full-time employee. Such workers may be freelancers, independent contractors, consultants, temporary employees, part-time employees, volunteers, or other outsourced and non-permanent workers.

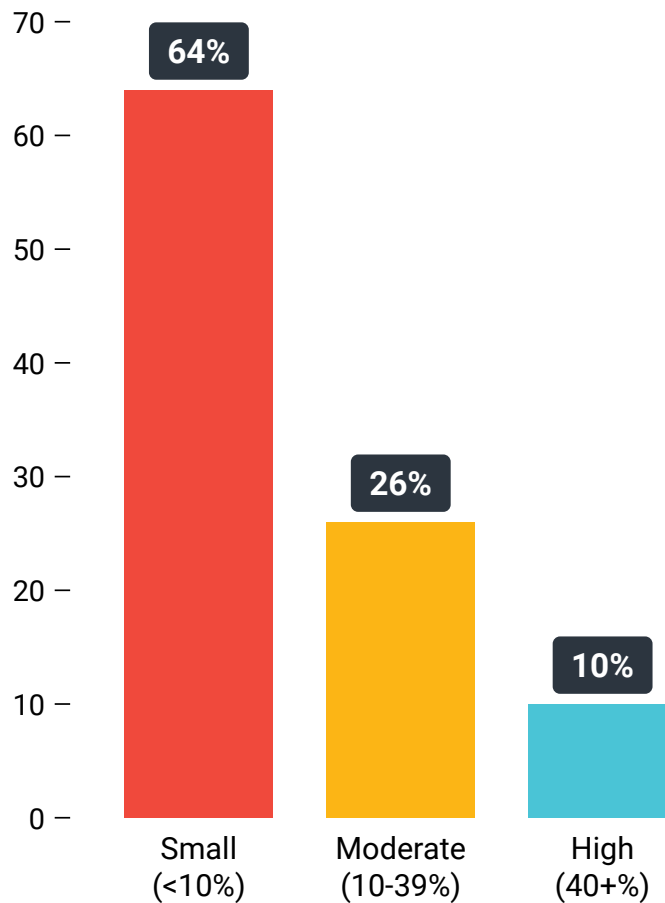
Finding: In most organizations less than 10% of the workforce is contingent but in about one-tenth it is over 40%

Almost all organizations use some contingent workers. However, the proportion of the workforce that is contingent varies widely. The most common approach (cited by 64%) is to use a relatively small percentage (less than 10%) of contingent workers, if any at all. (Note that 16% do not have any contingent workers at all.)

About a quarter of organizations have a sizeable number of contingent workers: 10-39% of their workforce. At that level, organizations must grow even more serious about managing contingent workers. The question for these organizations is whether the mindset of management—and HR—is still guided by a traditional view of work arrangements. Does the organization treat contingent workers as “talent” the same way it does traditional employees? If it doesn’t, then it may be under-utilizing a meaningful chunk of the workforce.

Relatively few organizations (10%) have a large proportion of contingent workers (40% or higher). In these organizations, it is crucial that both management and HR understand the importance of the contingent workforce. These organizations have decided that they do not need to rely on the traditional employment relationship to get work done. For all organizations, the question is whether they have the right mix of contingent to conventional workers. Is this something they have thought through, or have they simply stumbled into their current work arrangements?

Survey Question: About what percentage of your overall current workforce is made up of contingent workers? (please provide your best estimate)



In about a quarter of organizations, 10% to 39% of the workforce is contingent

* Note: this chart excludes respondents who do not have contingent workers



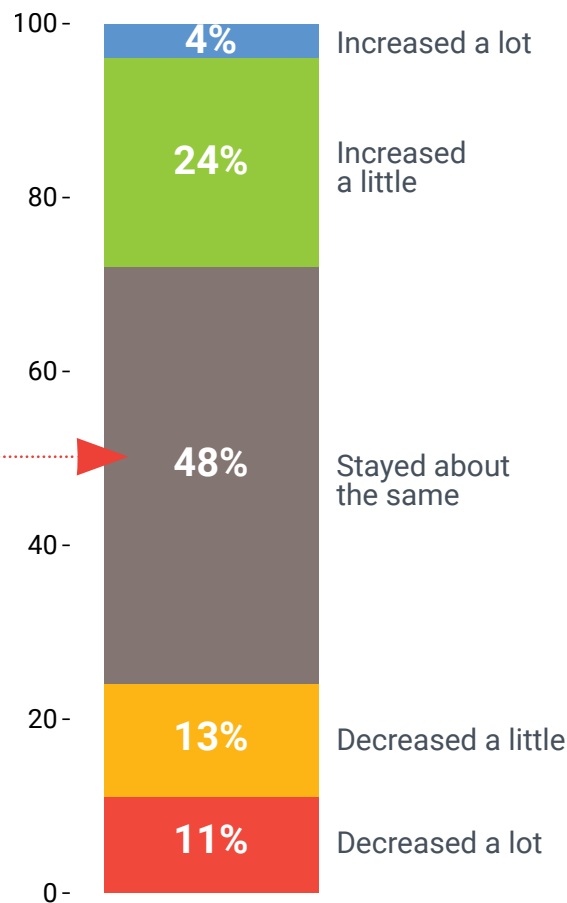
Finding: Few organizations have seen a large increase in their percentage of contingent workers over the last two years

The proportion of contingent workers over the last two years hasn't changed much. In 48% of responding organizations, the proportion has stayed about the same. More than a quarter of say the proportion has increased a little (24%) or a lot (4%), while slightly fewer say it has decreased a little (13%) or a lot (11%). The data suggest that most organizations did not react to the pandemic by using many more or many fewer contingent workers.



The percentage of contingent workers has stayed about the same in 48% of organizations

Survey Question: How has the percentage of contingent workers in your organization changed over the last two years?



Finding: It appears that the next two years will bring more significant changes in contingent worker usage

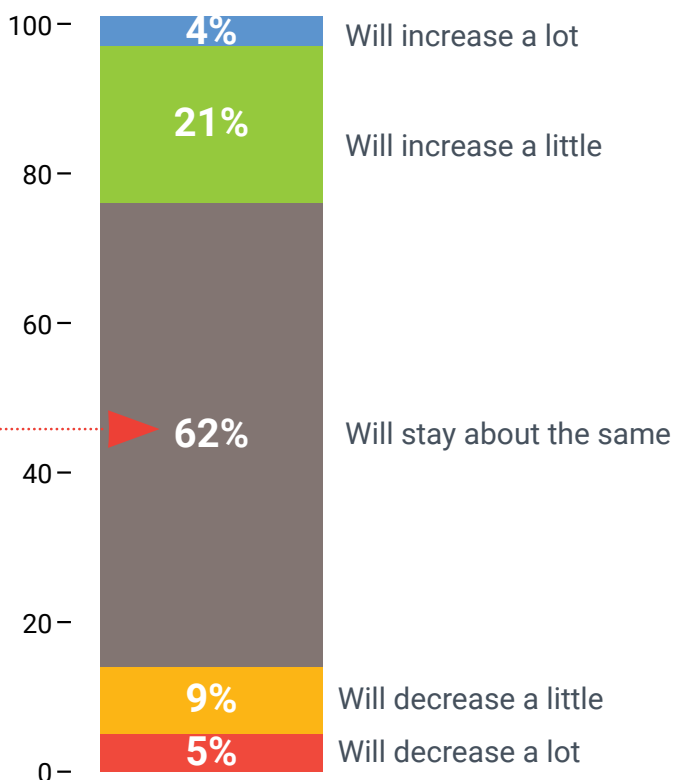
Most organizations (62%) do not expect a significant change in the percentage of contingent workers they use. However, more organizations expect some kind of increase in the percentage of contingent workers than a decrease (25% vs. 14%).

One thing that organizations need to consider is whether they are treating this growing contingent workforce in a way that aligns with their values. In some cases, people actively choose contingent work because it fits their lifestyle. However, others are forced into it due to a lack of alternatives. In these cases, organizations could wind up with fewer satisfied and engaged employees if they are not a culture fit.



The percentage of contingent workers is expected to stay about the same in 62% of organizations

Survey Question: How do you expect the percentage of contingent workers in your organization to change over the next two years?



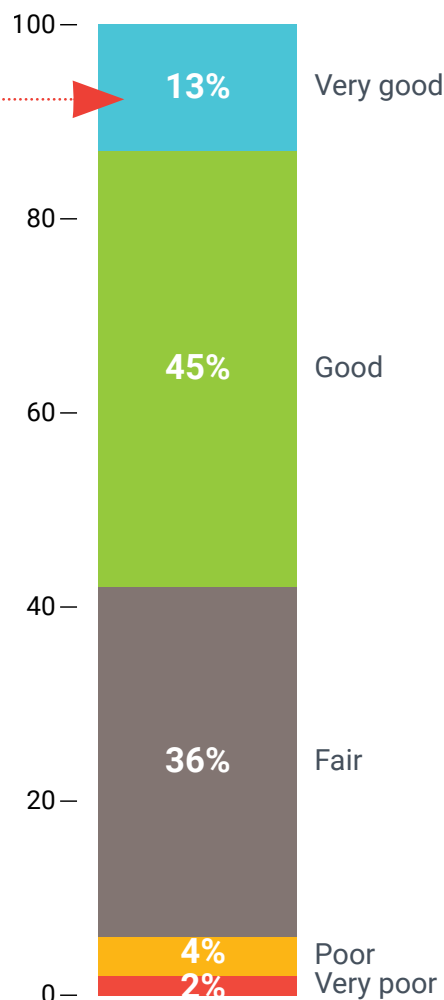
Finding: A majority of HR professionals say their organizations are good at acquiring and managing contingent workers, but there is room for improvement

Most organizations (58%) believe they are good or very good at acquiring and managing contingent workers. It is encouraging that relatively few (6%) say they are poor or very poor at it, but a sizeable proportion (36%) rates their organizations as only “fair.” This suggests that there is plenty of room for improvement for a large segment of employers.



Only 13% of organizations report they are very good at acquiring and managing contingent workers

Survey Question: How would you rate your organization in terms of its ability to acquire and manage contingent workers?



* Note: this chart excludes respondents who do not have contingent workers

Finding: The most commonly used type of contingent worker is a temporary employee the company hires directly

The term “contingent worker” covers a range of employment relationships. It includes everything from the classic “temp” to consultants to freelancers. Of these categories, the most common contingents are temporary employees hired or contracted directly by the organization, cited by 41% of respondents. The data suggest that many of these workers are independent contractors and consultants.

However, rather than hiring temps directly, organizations often hire them from a staffing firm or temp agency. These two types of firms are similar, but most temp agencies are focused specifically on readily available, short-term temp hires whereas staffing firms tend to offer a broader range of services.

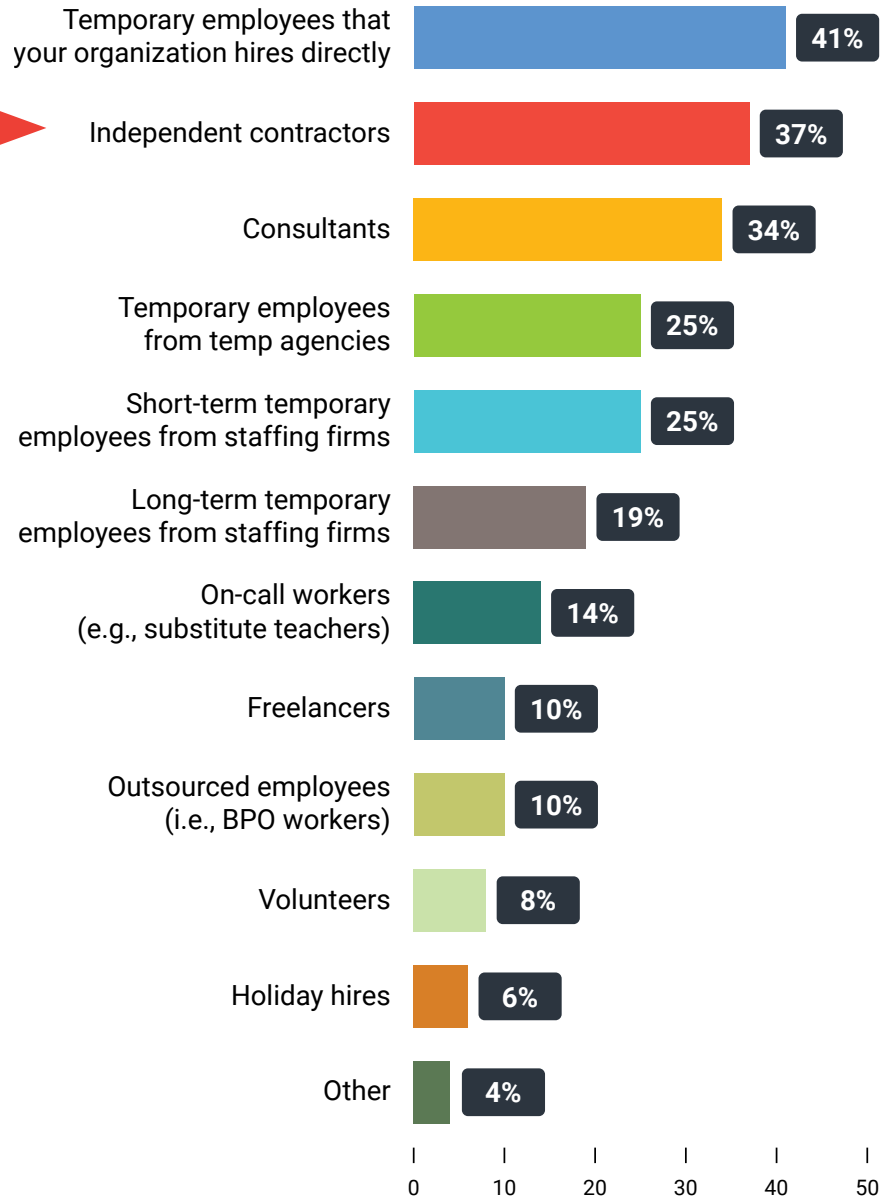
HR professionals should keep in mind that there is a range of options for getting work done. They should choose the type of contingent worker that is best for the role and the organization, not just the first type that comes to mind.





Over one-third of respondents cite independent contractors as one of their most commonly used types of contingent worker

Survey Question: Which types of contingent workers is your organization most likely to hire or contract?
(select all that apply)



* Note: this chart excludes respondents who do not have contingent workers

Finding: Four sources stand out as most common for acquiring contingent workers

As noted above, many organizations hire temporary employees directly, so it makes sense that the “internal recruitment function” (41%) is among the four most common sources of contingent workers. Two other commonly used sources are staffing (43%) and temp agencies (38%).

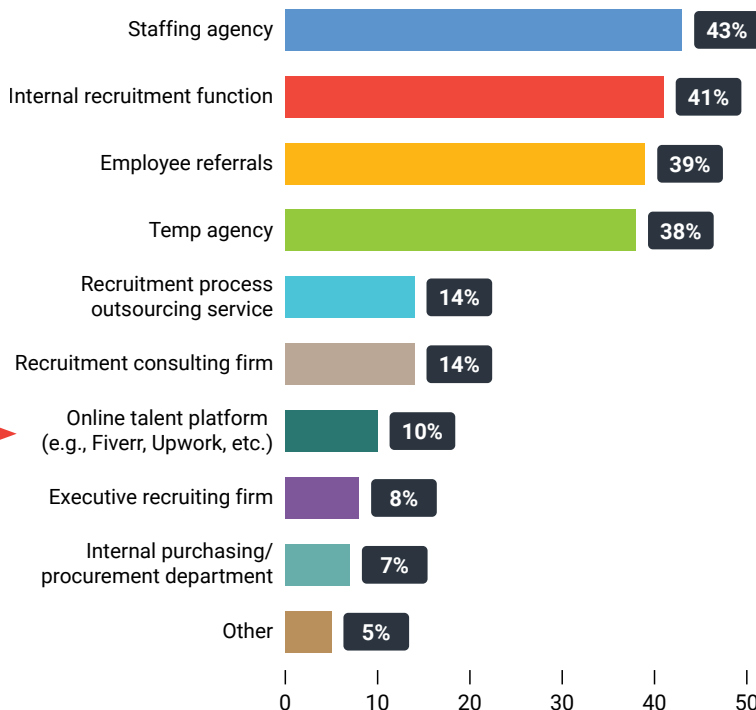
“Employee referrals” round out the list of the top four. Previous research conducted by the HR Research Institute shows that employee referrals are a highly regarded and widely used means of recruiting talent, and this study indicates this applies to contingent as well as permanent work arrangements. Presumably, referrals are a quick, reliable and cost-effective way of finding qualified contingent employees.

The internal purchasing/procurement department is only cited by 7% of respondents as a means of acquiring contingent workers.



Online talent platforms are used as a source of contingent workers in 10% of organizations

Survey Question: From which of the following sources does your organization acquire contingent workers? (select all that apply)



* Note: this chart excludes respondents who do not have contingent workers

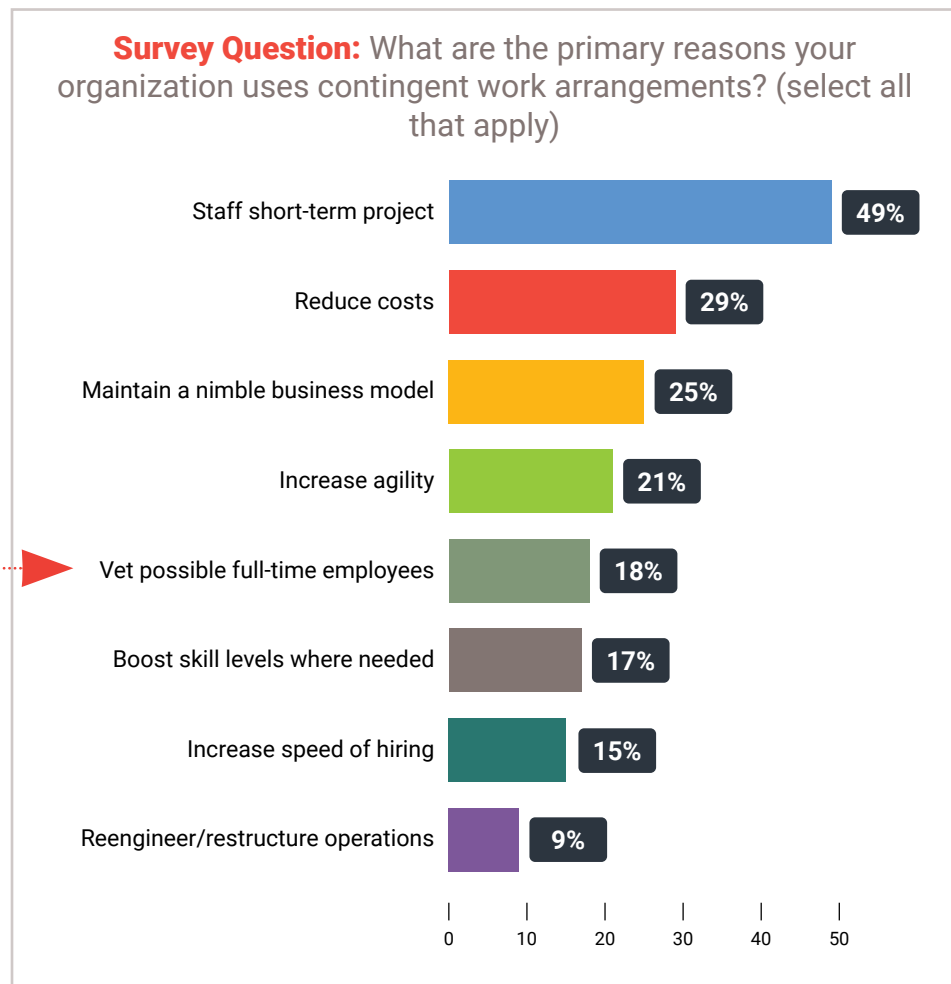
Finding: Almost half of the respondents use contingent workers primarily to staff short-term projects

There are many possible reasons a company might choose to use contingent workers over traditional employees. The most common one is to staff short-term projects (cited by 49% of respondents). Other common reasons include reducing costs, maintaining a nimble business model, and increasing agility.

HR can play a role in educating managers in the many different uses of contingent staff. Managers may be inclined to ask for a new full-time employee when in fact a contingent worker would be a better fit for the business need.



Almost one-fifth say vetting possible full-time employees is one of the primary reasons for using contingent workers



Note: this chart excludes respondents who do not have contingent workers

Contingent Management Leaders and Laggards

To better understand contingent work arrangements, we divided respondents into two cohorts:

- **Contingent management leaders:** Those who answered good or very good to the question: “How would you rate your organization in terms of its ability to acquire and manage contingent workers?”
- **Contingent management laggards:** Those who answered fair, poor, or very poor to the same question.

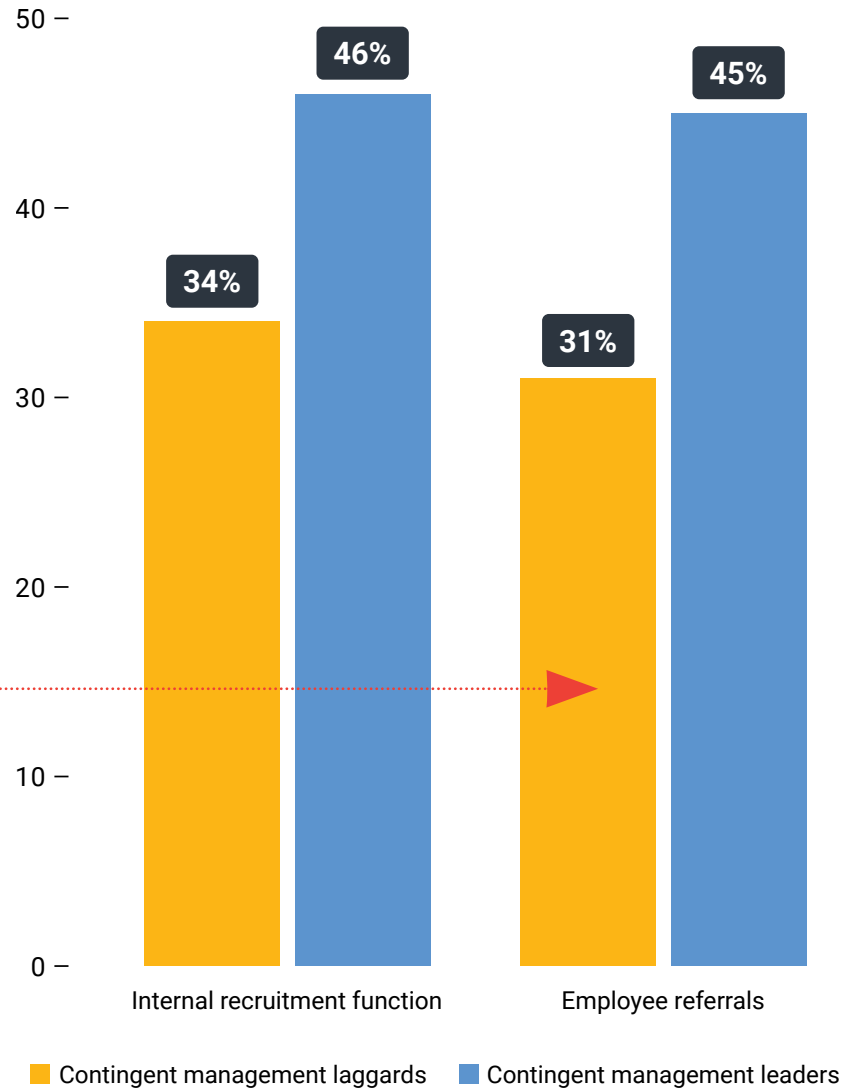
Note that organizations that do not have any contingent workers are excluded from this analysis.

Finding: Organizations skilled at managing contingent workers make better use of their internal recruitment function and employee referrals to source contingent talent

One difference between contingent management leaders and their less skilled counterparts is in how they source contingent workers. Leader organizations are more likely than laggards to rely on their internal recruitment function and employee referrals.

This is not to say that external sources are not useful for acquiring contingent workers, but having a robust and effective internal recruitment department and referral process seems to pay dividends in this area. It is possible that internal recruitment departments with good skills in hiring contingent workers may also be more successful when partnering with external services. That is, their internal skill sets may also make them better at leveraging the service of external agencies.

Survey Question: From which of the following sources does your organization acquire contingent workers?
(select all that apply)



Contingent management laggards are less likely to leverage employee referrals



Finding: Organizations successful at managing contingent workers are more likely to use contingent workers to boost skill levels

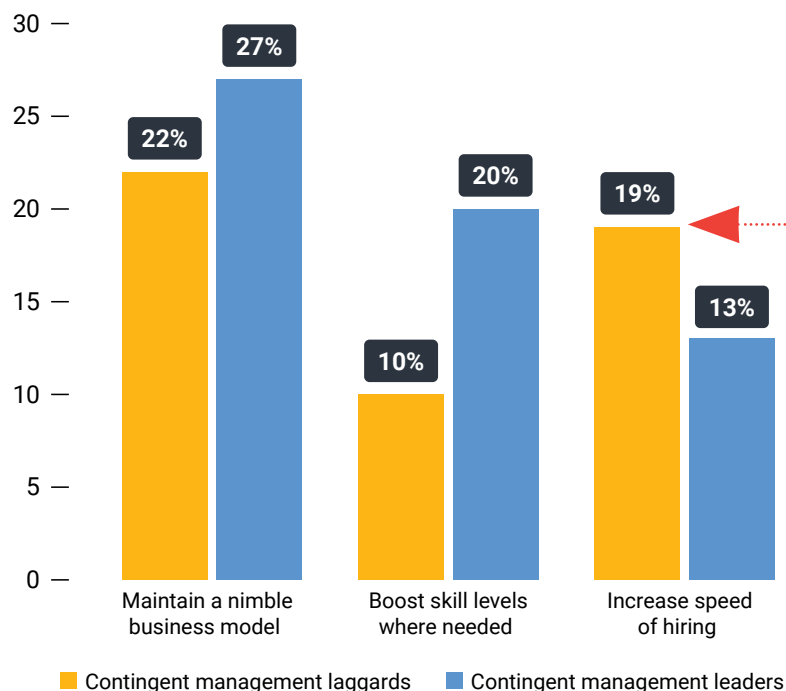
Why does your organization use contingent workers? Is it a quick method to fill a vacant role or is it to bring fresh skills into the organization? It can be *both*, of course, but organizations skilled at managing contingent workers are more likely to use contingent workers to inject needed skills into the organization and to maintain a nimble business model. Contingent management laggards are, however, more likely to use contingent workers to increase the speed of hiring.

One might say the contingent management leaders are more likely to view contingent workers as a way to make the organization more *effective*, while laggards are more likely to view contingent workers as a way to improve HR *efficiency*. The goals of greater nimbleness and better skills seem to be more closely associated with success in this area.



Organizations less skilled at managing contingent workers are more likely to use contingent workers to increase the speed of hiring

Survey Question: What are the primary reasons your organization uses contingent work arrangements? (select all that apply)



Flexible Work Arrangements

For the purpose of this study and the associated survey, we defined the term flexible work arrangement as referring to arrangements that allow employees to choose when, where, and/or how long they work. The idea is to give employees, and sometimes employers, greater work flexibility.

Finding: More than four in five organizations now offer remote work options

Nearly all organizations (97%) offer at least one type of flexible work arrangement and a further 15% offer at least five types.

This survey was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, which can explain why 82% of employers offer remote work as a flexible work arrangement. The next most common practice, flex time, is popular (52%) but nowhere near as prevalent as remote work.

The only other flexible work arrangement offered by more than 30% of respondents is part-time schedules. Compressed workweeks (21%) and job sharing (11%) are less commonly offered.

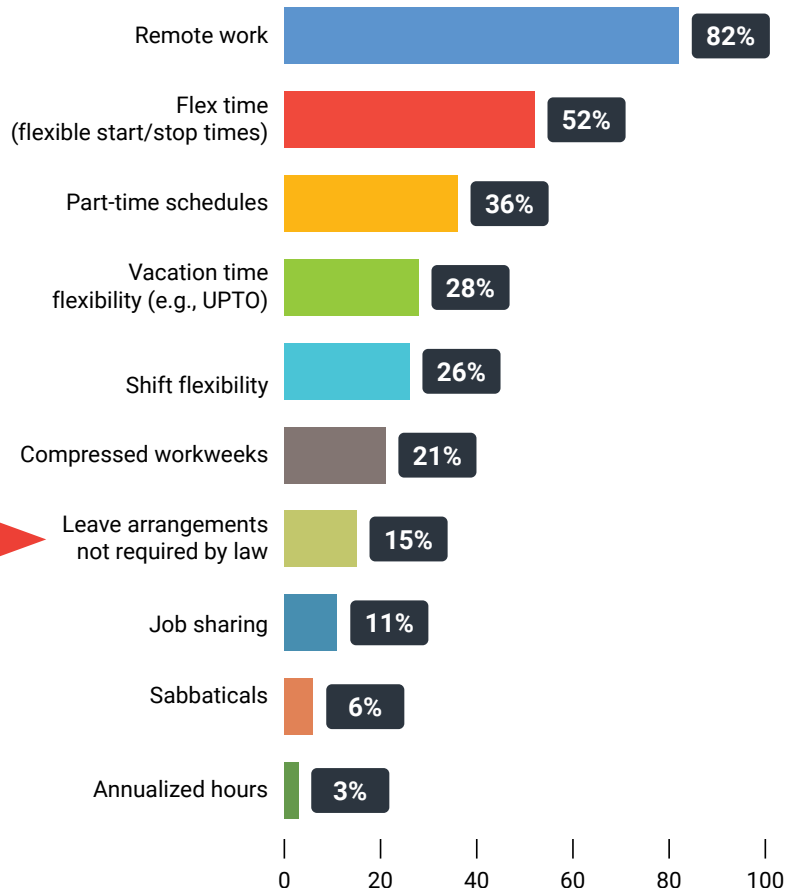
Giving the press coverage devoted to employers competing for talent, it is surprising that these flexible work arrangement aren't offered more frequently. In practice, if remote work continues to be a common option, the need for other types of formally sanctioned flex work could decrease because it can be easier for most employees to create the flexibility they need when working remotely.





Only 15% of organizations offer leave arrangements not required by law

Survey Question: Which types of flexible work arrangements is your organization most likely to utilize? (select all that apply)



Finding: Over the past two years, most organizations increased their use of flexible work arrangements, often by a lot

The use of flexible work arrangements increased at least a little in 81% of organizations in the last two years. Even more dramatic is that most of these organizations increased the use of flexible arrangements *a lot*—almost half of all responding organizations have done so.

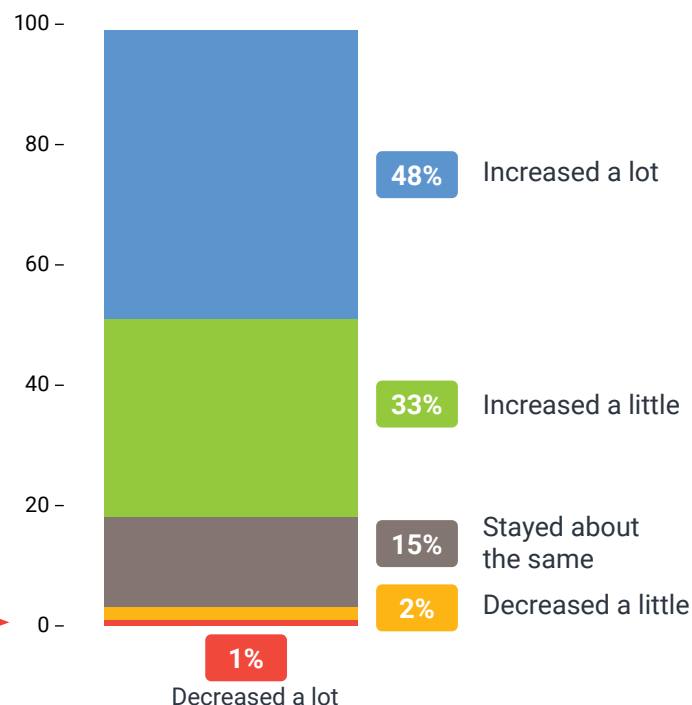
As we will see in the next finding, this surge is largely linked to the pandemic. Based on our discussion with various employers, some organizations have surprised themselves in how rapidly they pivoted. This might embolden leaders to tackle greater changes to work arrangements in the future.

Furthermore, some employees who have now experienced more flexible work arrangements may resist moving back to more traditional arrangements.



Only 3% of organizations decreased the use of flexible work arrangements in the past two years

Survey Question: How has the percentage of workers using flexible work arrangements changed over the last two years?



Finding: The majority of respondents say the pandemic is the primary reason for using flexible work arrangements

Three-quarters of respondents say the pandemic is among the primary reasons their organizations have adopted flexible work practices. Although this far eclipses other reasons, there are several other important drivers cited by at least 40% of participants, including:

- fostering work/life balance
- improving employee retention
- improving employee well-being

There are a couple of takeaways from this. One is that organizations can be flexible when they need to be. The second is that organizations will face big decisions about flexible work once the pandemic has abated. Do they remove or reduce flexible arrangements now that the primary reason for them has passed, or do they continue them since they have learned that these arrangements work?



Relatively few organizations say aiding recruitment (16%) is a primary reason for using flexible work arrangements

Survey Question: What are the primary reasons your organization uses flexible work arrangements? (select all that apply)



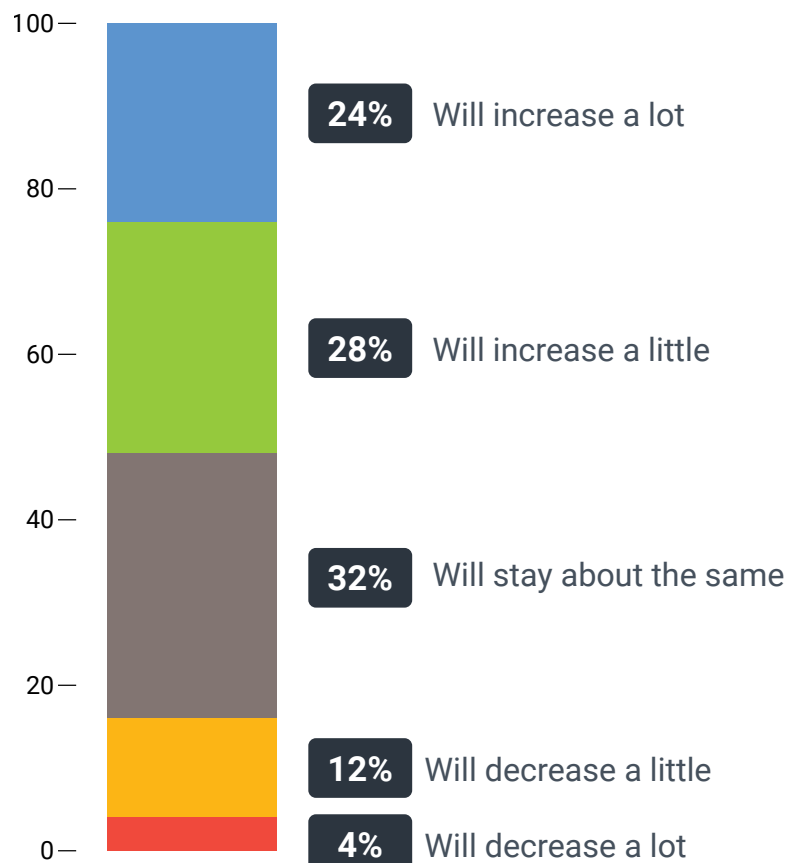
Finding: More than half of organizations expect more employees to use flexible work arrangements over the next two years

While some people may expect the pendulum to swing back toward less flexible work arrangements once the pandemic ends, respondents to this survey say the opposite. In fact, about half of respondents (52%) expect the use of flexible work arrangements will increase in the next two years, whereas only 16% expect it to decrease.



Only 16% of organizations expect the percentage of employees using flexible working arrangements to decrease

Survey Question: How do you expect the percentage of workers utilizing flexible work arrangements to change over the next two years?



Finding: Leaders are now more open to flexible work arrangements than they were a year ago

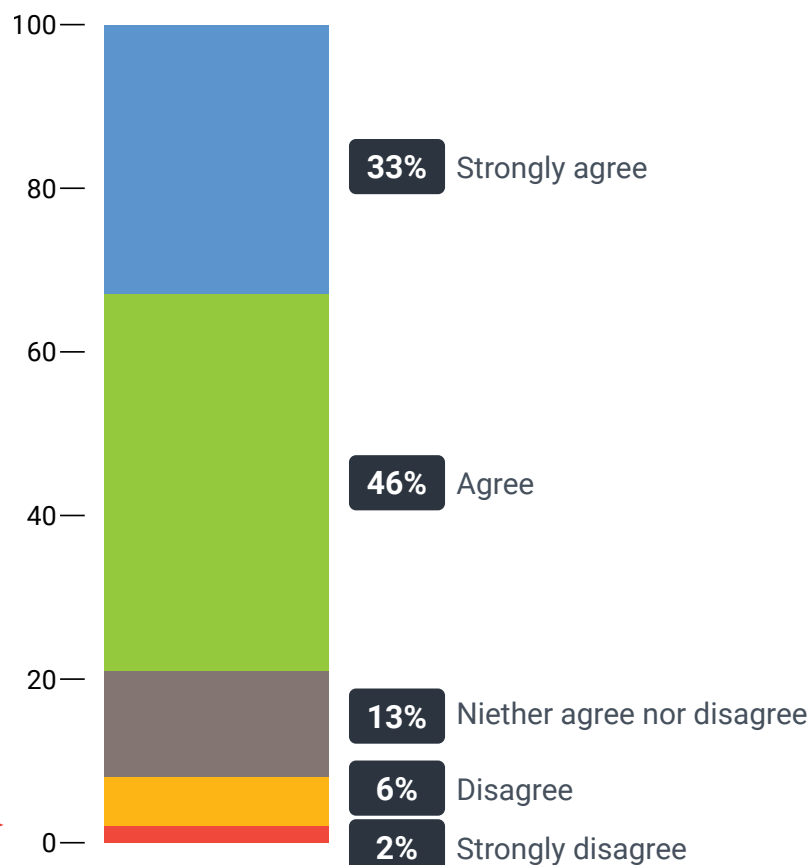
Fully 46% of respondents *agree* that leaders' support for flexible work arrangements has increased, and an additional 33% *strongly agree* that leaders' support has increased. It's fair to conclude that leaders, having seen flexible work arrangements in practice over the past year, are now much more supportive of these arrangements.

HR leaders should take note of this changed attitude and consider where flexible work arrangements would continue to most benefit the company and employees.



Only 8% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that leaders are more receptive to flexible work arrangements than they were a year ago

Survey Statement: Leaders in your organization are more receptive to flexible work arrangements than they were a year ago.



Finding: Two-thirds of respondents say they are good or very good at managing workers who are in flexible work arrangements

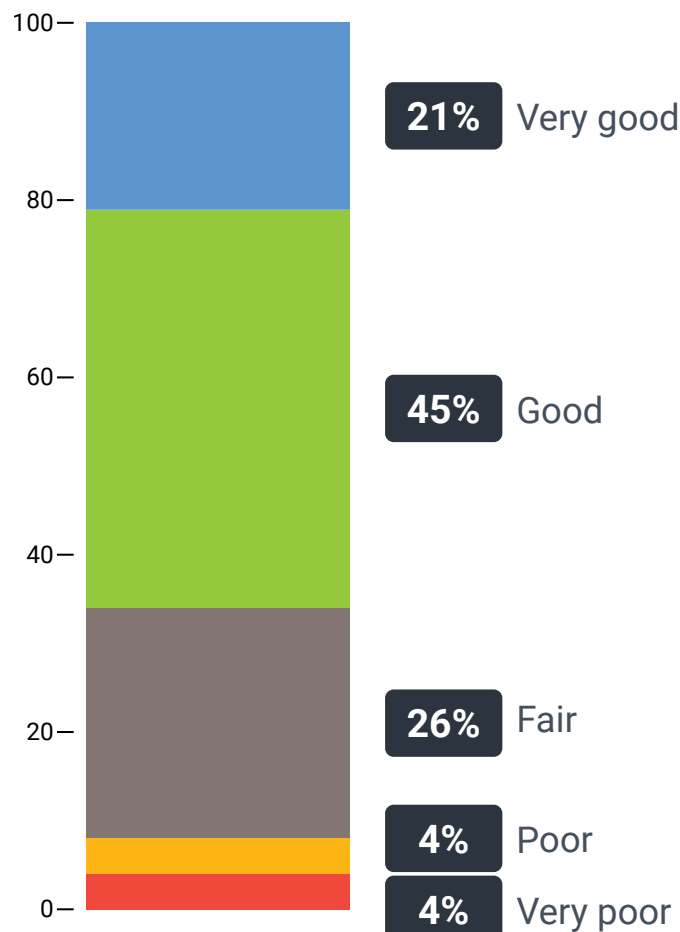
Some organizations may have been forced into adopting flexible work arrangements due to the pandemic (especially remote work). The good news, however, is that most have found they are effective at it. Fully two-thirds of respondents say their organizations are good or very good at managing workers who are in flexible work arrangements.

The takeaway is that most organizations are finding that flexible work arrangements can be managed successfully.



Only 8% of respondents say their organizations are poor or very poor at managing workers who are in flexible work arrangements

Survey Question: How would you rate your organization in terms of its ability to manage workers engaged in flexible work arrangements?



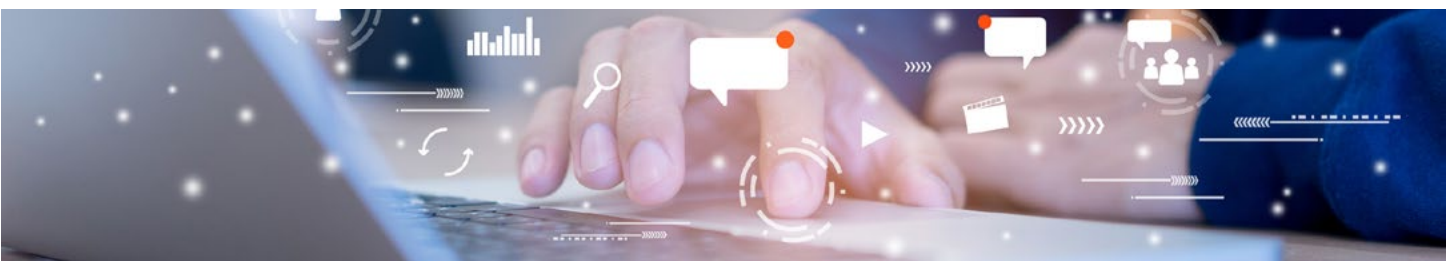
Finding: Nearly 70% of respondents expect organizations will provide employees with more remote work resources/tools over the next two years

One recurring question for organizations is whether work arrangements will go back to the way they were once the pandemic ends. The data suggests that organizations will continue to enable remote work; 68% of respondents expect organizations will provide employees with more remote work resources/tools over the next two years. In other words, remote work is here to stay.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents (61%) also expect that alternatives to conventional work arrangements will become more common in the next two years. This suggests that many organizations have been convinced that there is value in alternative work arrangements and will continue to explore them.

Also notable is that a little over half of respondents (53%) expect to increase training managers on how to handle different types of work arrangements. This is an important step since we managers cannot be expected to automatically know how to manage these arrangements.

The other practices covered in this question can all be connected to the increase of remote work. For example, increasing employee recognition can be seen as a response to the loss of connection remote work can create. Similarly, using goals and objectives to create greater clarity can compensate for the reduction in informal communication once people are no longer in the office. While the other practices are cited by a minority of respondents, the numbers are large enough to suggest that many people are considering how best to adapt to a world of new work arrangements.





Over half of the respondents say they expect alternatives to conventional work arrangements will become more common in the next two years

Survey Question: Which of the following practices related to changing workforce arrangements will become more common over the next two years? (select all that apply)



Flexible-Work Leaders and Laggards

To better understand flexible work arrangements, we divided the survey participants into two cohorts:

- **Flexible-work leaders:** Those who answered good or very good to the question: “How would you rate your organization in terms of its ability to manage workers engaged in flexible work arrangements?”
- **Flexible-work laggards:** Those who answered fair, poor, or very poor to the same question.

Finding: Flexible-work leaders are more than twice as likely as laggards to strongly agree that leaders are now more receptive to flexible work arrangements

The data reinforces that leaders are a key to the success of flexible work arrangements. More than two-fifths of respondents from flexible-work leader organizations strongly agree that leaders are more receptive to flexible work arrangements than they were a year ago. This is more than double than respondents from laggard organizations where just 17% strongly agree with that statement.

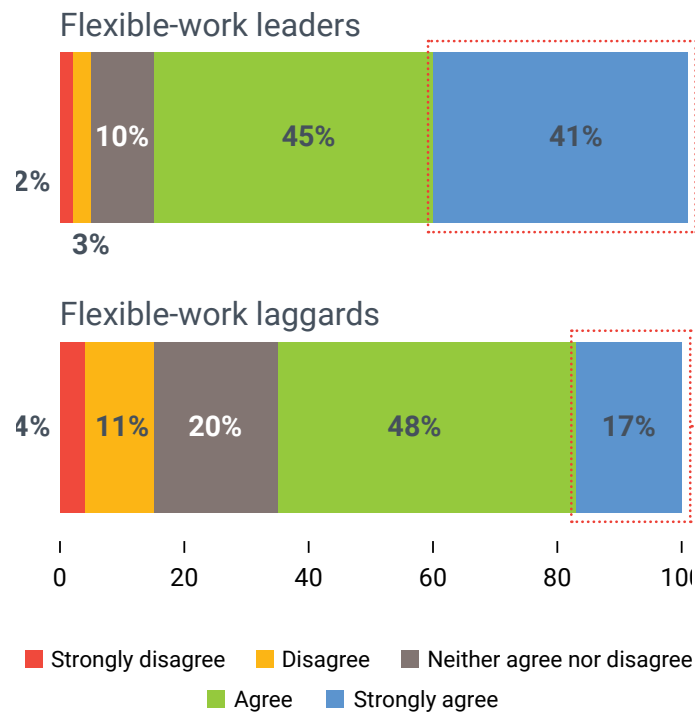
Similarly, only 5% of respondents at leader organizations disagree or strongly disagree that leaders have become more receptive. Three times as many of their laggard counterparts (15%) disagree or strongly disagree that leaders have become more receptive.

The takeaway is that the receptivity of leaders may help determine the success organizations have with managing flexible work arrangements.



Flexible-work leaders are much more likely to strongly agree that leaders are more receptive to flexible work arrangements than they were a year ago

Survey Statement: Leaders in your organization are more receptive to flexible work arrangements than they were a year ago.



Finding: Flexible-work leaders are notably more likely to provide employees with more remote work resources/tools over the next two years

More than half of flexible-work leaders and laggards agree that “providing employees with more remote work resources/tools” and “offering more alternatives to conventional work arrangements” will become more common over the next two years.

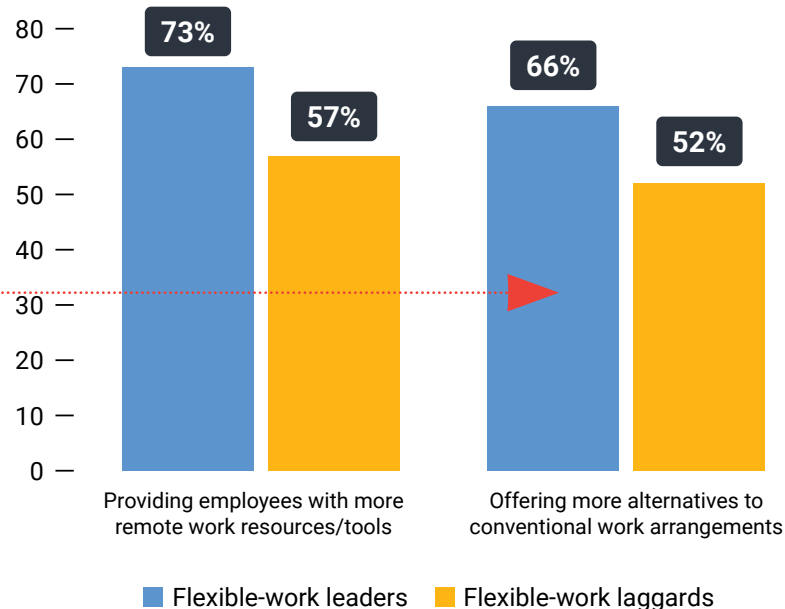
The biggest differences between the two groups is in the degree of enthusiasm for these practices. For example, notably more flexible-work leaders expect to provide employees with more remote work resources/tools (73% vs. 57%).

In short, it appears organizations that are more skilled at managing flexible work are also more committed to getting better at it than those that are less skilled.



Flexible-work leaders are more likely to offer such arrangements over the next two years

Survey Question: Which of the following practices related to changing workforce arrangements will become more common over the next two years? (select all that apply)



Future Work Arrangements

Finding: Flexible work schedules and locations will become more popular over the next two years

When asked which kinds of work arrangements are likely to become more common over the next two years, more than half cited three types:

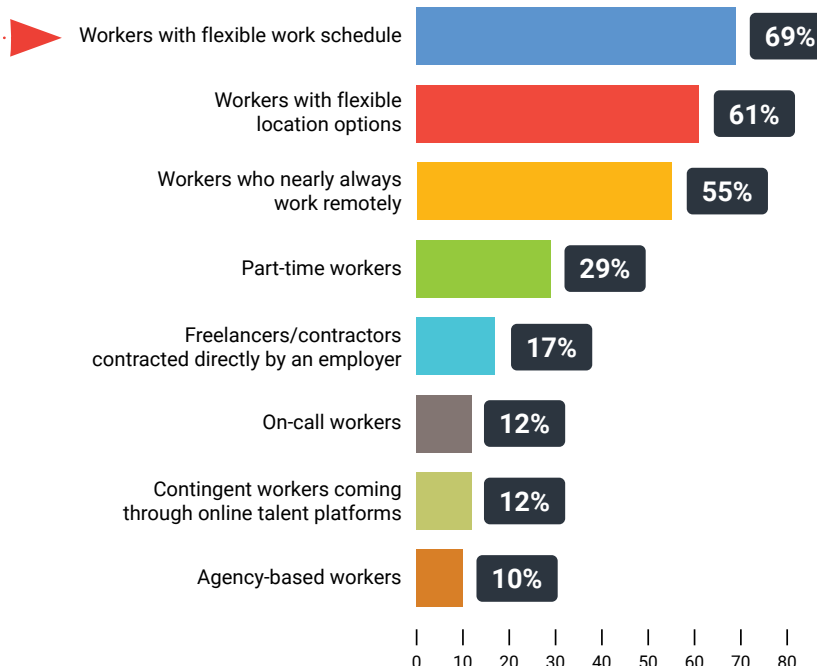
- workers with flexible work schedules
- workers with flexible location options
- workers who nearly always work remotely

Of course, once workers are remote, they naturally tend to become more independent. The job is not as much about spending hours in the office as it is getting the job done. So perhaps it is natural that once employees are trusted with flexible locations, they will also be trusted with flexible schedules.



More than two-thirds of respondents expect it is likely that flexible work schedules will become more common

Survey Question: Which of the following do you consider examples of changing work arrangements that are likely to become more common over the next two years? (select all that apply)



Finding: There is a consensus that some jobs will be substantially redefined in the next two years

Ninety-six percent of respondents say that at least some of the jobs/roles in their organizations will be “substantially redefined” over the next two years. Most respondents (59%) predict that no more than 19% of jobs will be substantially redefined in this period, but this leaves 37% saying that a fifth or more jobs will be substantially redefined.

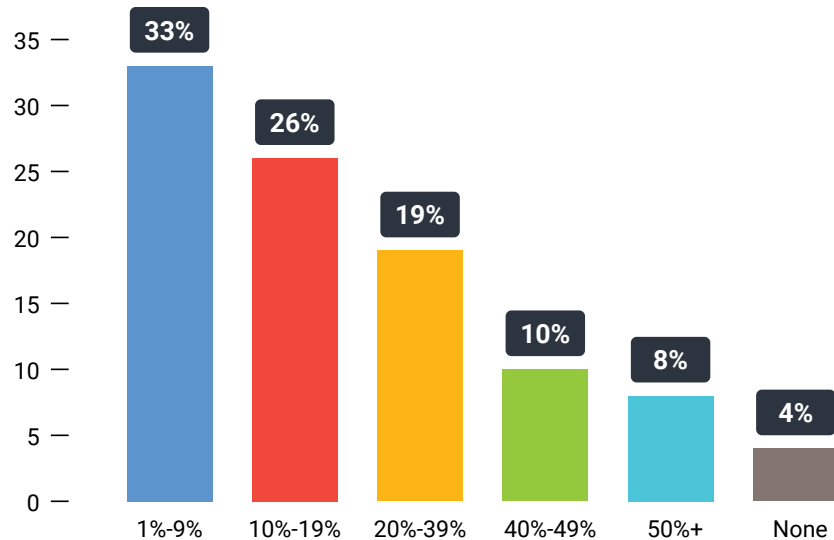
Even at the lower end of that scale, of course, such redefinitions may represent a large challenge not just for HR but also for management in general. It means modifying the ways jobs are structured, positions are filled, employees are managed, people are trained, performance is measured, etc.

The takeaway is that HR needs to be ready to support job redesign, and it must be able to help managers and planners cope with these changes as well.



Thirty-seven percent say that a fifth or more jobs will be substantially redefined

Survey Question: In your organization, what percentage of jobs/roles will be substantially redefined in the next two years? (please provide your best estimate)





Takeaways

Key Takeaway 1

Be ready for and adept at culture change. This study indicates that corporate culture can change more rapidly than many previously believed. Culture changed a *lot* in just one year in roughly one-quarter of the companies surveyed. This shows that culture can change in times when the need is visible to all and leaders are fully committed. Keep in mind that work *processes* have changed more than work *culture* over the last year, so organizational cultures may be playing “catch up” for a while as they adjust to new processes.

Key Takeaway 2

Stay up to date on possible new practices and processes. Dramatic changes in work practices were the norm rather than the exception in 2020. Employees and organizations are more adaptable than we normally give them credit for. But a practice that is adopted “on the fly” may not be the most effective and efficient one. Therefore, stay abreast of best practices both within and outside your organization. Review and revise current practices as needed to make them more effective.

Key Takeaway 3

Manage contingent workers well. Contingent workers are a well-established and important part of the workforce. What’s more, such arrangements are likely to grow in the future. Many companies have reached the point where they feel they are good managing these workers, but there is generally room for improvement and the target is moving. If your organization is only “fair” or worse at managing such workers, then it is time to improve practices and pinpoint the areas that need updating.

Key Takeaway 4

Ensure your recruitment team has the needed skills. Organizations skilled at managing contingent workers also tend to make good use of their internal recruitment function and employee referrals to source contingent workers. We think it’s likely they are also better partners with contractors of external services such as staffing firms.

Key Takeaway 5

Know how to partner well. When it comes to hiring contingent workers, many organizations partner with external providers. Partnering well is an art, and organizations should attempt to master it. This includes developing trust, enhancing communication, and fostering understanding. Even if an organization does not partner with a provider of staffing services, it will likely need to partner with contractors and other contingents.

Key Takeaway 6

Reflect on the best use of contingent workers. Organizations skilled at managing contingent workers are more likely than their less skilled counterparts to use contingent workers to boost skills rather than merely to increase the speed of hiring. In other words, there is a focus on effectiveness rather than just efficiency. Organizations should reflect on the value they could potentially get from contingent workers. It's not always just a quick way to fill an empty seat.

Key Takeaway 7

Prepare for a more flexible future. This research indicates that HR professionals are expecting there to be more flexibility in work arrangements in the future. It is likely that organizations will increasingly compete for talented candidates who expect a considerable amount of flexibility. This may not only include remote work but also work scheduling.

Key Takeaway 8

Consider doubling down on remote work. Many organizations have not only discovered that a great deal of work can be done remotely, but they have also learned how to ensure remote work is done well. This research indicates that HR professionals do not believe these arrangements will disappear with the pandemic. Therefore, organizations should consider building on this success by teaching employees how to better manage and work remotely and by providing them with advanced remote working tools and technologies.

Key Takeaway 9

Gain leader support for flexible work arrangements. The data supports the idea that flexible work arrangements will be more successful if leaders support them.

Key Takeaway 10

Build your capability to deal with substantially redefined jobs. In most organizations, some jobs will be substantially redefined in the near future. While it depends on the organization, the general takeaway is that HR should have an understanding of how jobs/roles will be redesigned and how HR can accommodate these changes. Handling the ramifications of changing work roles could be one of the most important HR skills of the future.



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