PULSE POLL:

THE FUTURE OF WORK

ABOUT THE ALLIANCE

The Diversity & Flexibility Alliance is a think tank dedicated to creating work environments centered on inclusion and innovative thought leadership. The Alliance provides practical solutions that increase organizational effectiveness and create high performance cultures that advance diversity and flexibility to attract and retain top talent. More information about the Alliance can be found at dfalliance.com.

METHODOLOGY

An invitation to participate in our pulse poll was sent to all Diversity & Flexibility Alliance (the "Alliance") members and other major organizations. Individuals at firms and organizations were also encouraged to participate in the pulse poll via social media posts. Between November 5, 2020 to December 4, 2020, **27 organizations** completed our pulse poll.

Results are summarized through tables, figures, and natural language. A question may not be represented if the data was not statistically reliable. Given that not all organizations responded to each question, figures representing the number of organizations (i.e., the sample size applicable in the particular calculation) appear either in a parenthetical next to the descriptive text or in the accompanying graphic.

Of the 27 participating organizations, the vast majority (25 of 27, or 92.6%) are law firms. The remaining two organizations are a hospital and an association. Of the 25 participating law firms,

- 84% (21 of 25) are in the Am Law 200 and 56% (14 of 25) are in the Am Law 100 (note that firms included in the Am Law 100 are also included in the Am Law 200);

- 44% (11 of 25) are U.S. based (only U.S. offices), and 56% (14 of 25) are global (at least one U.S. and one international office); and

- 56% (14 of 25) have more than 450 attorneys, 28% (7 of 28) have between 251-450 attorneys, 4% (1 of 25) have between 100-250 attorneys, and 12% (3 of 25) have less than 100 attorneys.

In this report, we will also be comparing results to our previous Pulse Poll: COVID-19 & Reentry released July 8, 2020 ("Previous Pulse Poll"). **34 organizations** completed our Previous Poll. Of the 34 participating organizations in our Previous Pulse, the vast majority (32 of 34, or 94.1%) were also law firms. The remaining two organizations were a technology company and a consulting company. Of the 32 participating law firms in our Previous Pulse Poll,

- 71.9% (23 of 32) were in the Am Law 200 and 25% (8 of 32) were in the Am Law 100 (note that firms included in the Am Law 100 were also included in the Am Law 200);

- 68.8% (22 of 32) were U.S. based (only U.S. offices), 28.1% (9 of 32) were global (at least one U.S. and one international office), and 3.1% (1 of 32) were international (only international office(s)); and

- 37.5% (12 of 32) had more than 450 attorneys, 18.7% (6 of 32) had between 250-450 attorneys, 34.4% (11 of 32) had between 100-251 attorneys, and 9.4% (3 of 32) had less than 100 attorneys.

Multiple characteristics of the data are presented when there are meaningful differences due to the range in size and characteristics of the participant organizations. For some items, summary statistics may include percentages. Due to rounding and other factors, frequencies of responses may not total 100%.
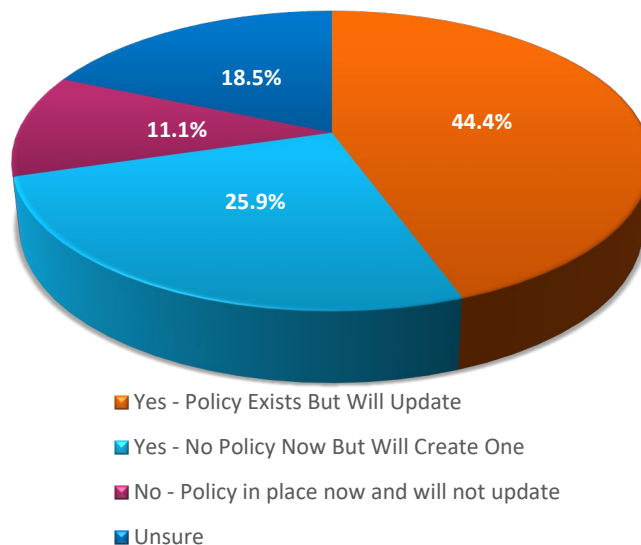
DETAILED RESULTS

Figure 1.   Is your organization planning on creating/updating its written remote work policy in the future? (n=27)

More than two-thirds (70.4%, or 19 of 27; includes 17 law firms, one association and one hospital) responded "Yes" (of which 63.2%, 12 of 19, have a written remote work policy in place and are planning on updating it in the future, and 36.8%, or 7 of 19, do not have a remote work policy in place but are planning on creating one in the future). No organization responded that they do not have a written remote work policy in place and that they are not planning on creating one. Only 11.1%, (3 law firms) responded that they have a written remote work policy in place and they are not planning on updating it.   Less than one-fifth (18.5%, or 5 law firms) responded they are unsure.

Similarly, to the Previous Pulse Poll, the vast majority, over two-thirds, indicated that they plan to create/update their written remote work policy, and no organization indicated that they do not have a remote work policy in place and are not planning on creating one. Compared to the Previous Pulse Poll, a smaller share are unsure about their plans regarding a remote work policy (18.5% in this pulse poll vs. 23.5% in the Previous Pulse Poll) and larger share of organizations that have a written work policy in place are not planning on updating it in the future (11.1% in this pulse poll vs. 5.9% in the Previous Pulse Poll).

**Will You Create/Update Your Remote Work Policy in the Future?**

- Yes - Policy Exists But Will Update
- Yes - No Policy Now But Will Create One
- No - Policy in place now and will not update
- Unsure

ALLIANCE GUIDANCE: The Alliance recommends that all organizations, whether or not they currently have a flexible work policy in place, should revisit their flexible work policies as the pandemic has changed workplace flexibility needs for both organizations and employees. Organizations should think through what worked and what didn't regarding flexible work in order to create or revamp flexible work policies post-pandemic. Additionally, we recommend assessing flexible work holistically – in particular, organizations should consider all types of flexible work options (i.e. reduced hours/part-time; telecommuting; flexible start-end times; compressed work week; job sharing; sabbatical offerings). Taking a holistic approach at flexible work is important, because flexible work needs vary from individual to individual, and some employees may not be able to utilize certain types of flexible work due to function but may be able to take advantage of other types of flexible work. When creating/updating flexible work policies in the future, remember to use your Alliance member-exclusive benefits: Resource Library, Strategy Calls, Policy Reviews, Advisory Hours and Signature Seminars. As a starting point, review the following Action Steps: *Paving the Way for Flexible Work After the Pandemic, Working Outside the Box: Tips for Establishing a Telecommuting Policy, Formalizing Your Full-Time Flex Program*, and Implementation Essentials for Flexibility Program.

Figure 2. If your organization has or plans to create/update its written remote work policy, who can/will be able to utilize remote work pursuant to this policy? (n=19)

Of the 19 organizations that plan to create/update its written remote work policy, nearly two-thirds (63.2%, 12 of 19, including 11 law firms and one hospital) will include all employees, more than one-fifth (21.1%, 4 of 19, including three law firms and one association) will only include certain employees (of these four organizations, 2 of 4 will determine who can utilize remote work based on job function; 1 of 4 will determine who can utilize remote work based on tenure; 1 of 4 may not provide remote work to staff); and 15.8% (3 law firms) are unsure which employees will be included at this time.
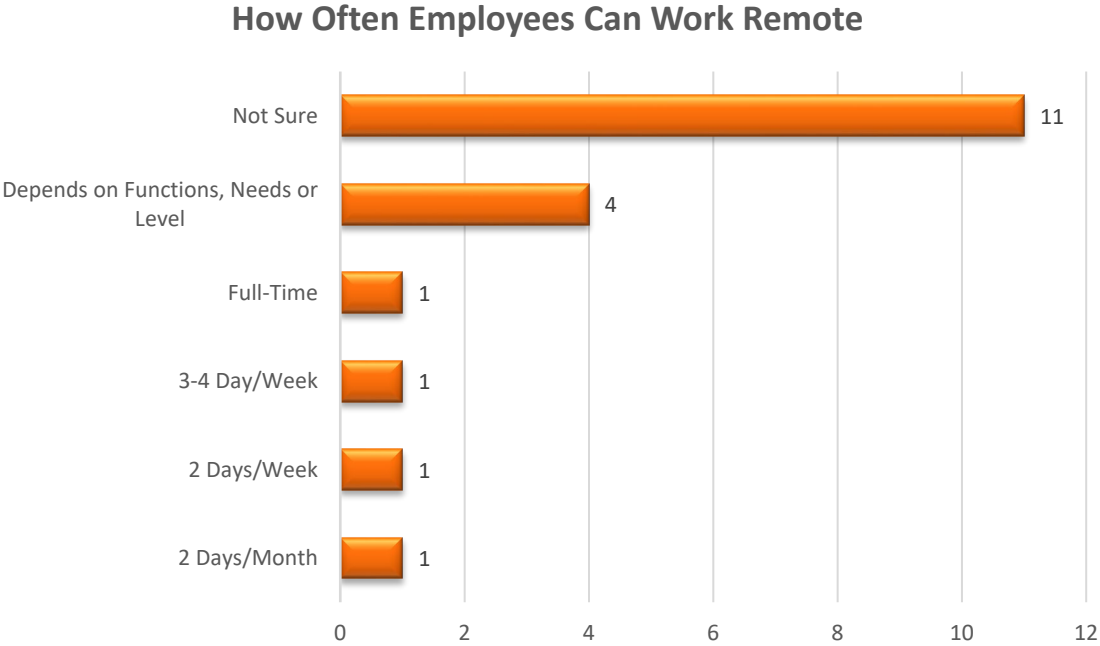
Who Can Utilize Remote Work?
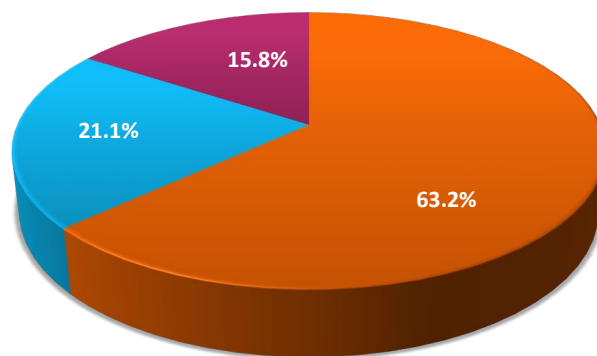
- ■ All Employees
- ■ Certain Employees Only
- ■ Unsure

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ALLIANCE GUIDANCE: The Alliance strongly recommends that all organizations include all of their employees in their flexible work policies. By adopting holistic flexible work policies (i.e. reduced hours/part-time; telecommuting; flexible start-end times; compressed work week; job sharing; sabbatical offerings), organizations can offer flexibility to all employees, even those who need to be in the office due to their function. For example, a receptionist may not be able to telecommute due to his/her function, but may be able to use job sharing, compressed work week or part-time options. Given that virtually all employees needed to work remotely during the pandemic, organizations that do not offer any flexible work to certain employees will lead to retention/satisfaction issues. Take a look at our action step, Truly Inclusive Flex & Leave Policies Must Include All Employees.

Figure 3. If your organization has or plans to create/update its written remote work policy, how many days will your employees be allowed to work remotely pursuant to this policy? (n=19)

Of the 19 organizations that plan to create/update their written remote work policy, the results were very mixed as to how often employees can work remotely. More than a majority (57.9%, 11 of 19, all law firms) are unsure at this time, and more than one fifth (21.1%, 4 of 19, all law firms) will base the frequency of how often employees can work remotely on employees' functions, needs and/or level. Of the remaining participants, one law firm (5.3%) mentioned it would allow employees to work remotely two days a week, one hospital (5.3%) mentioned it would allow employees to work remotely full-time, one law firm (5.3%) mentioned that it would allow employees to work remotely two days a month, and one association (5.3%) mentioned that it is not sure but probably will allow employees to work remotely 3-4 days a week.

How Often Employees Can Work Remote

Category	Value
Not Sure	11
Depends on Functions, Needs or Level	4
Full-Time	1
3-4 Day/Week	1
2 Days/Week	1
2 Days/Month	1

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ALLIANCE GUIDANCE: We recommend that organizations conduct surveys, focus groups and check-in meetings with their employees to understand flexible work needs. Conduct check-in/focus group meetings with leaders to better understand successes and challenges experienced with remote work during the pandemic, and also gather feedback from all employees to understand their experiences. Based upon this feedback, determine the optimal amount of remote work you should offer to your employees at the outset. Make sure to regularly monitor employees' experiences once you roll out your flexible work program to ensure you are offering the right mix of remote and in-office time. See our Action Step, *Monitor & Measure*, for useful ways to gather data.

Figure 4. What kinds of technology support/resources is your organization offering and/or planning to offer? (n=27)

Of the 27 participants, virtually all (85.2%, 23 of 27) offer/plan to offer technology resources (i.e. loaning and/or providing technology resources) or technology stipend. More specifically, most (77.8%, 21 of 27) offer/plan to offer technology resources (i.e. loaning and/or providing technology resources). More than one third (37%, 10 law firms) offer/plan to offer technology stipends; in addition, one participant not offering a technology stipend reimburses for certain technology expenses. Notably, one third (9 law firms) offer/plan to offer both technology stipends and technology resources (i.e. loaning and/or providing technology resources) to their employees; please note that one of these law firms only offers technology stipend to certain groups. Additionally, most (74.1%, 20 of 27, including 18 law firms, one association and one hospital) provides/plans to provide technology training.

Since the Previous Poll, organizations have significantly expanded the technology resources/support they provide/plan to provide to their employees – 85.2% in this pulse poll will offer technology resources and/or technology stipend, compared to only 35.3% offering technology resources and/or technology stipend in the Previous Pulse Poll.

Technology Resources/Support

Category	Value
Technology Training	20
Technology Stipend	9
Technology Resources	21

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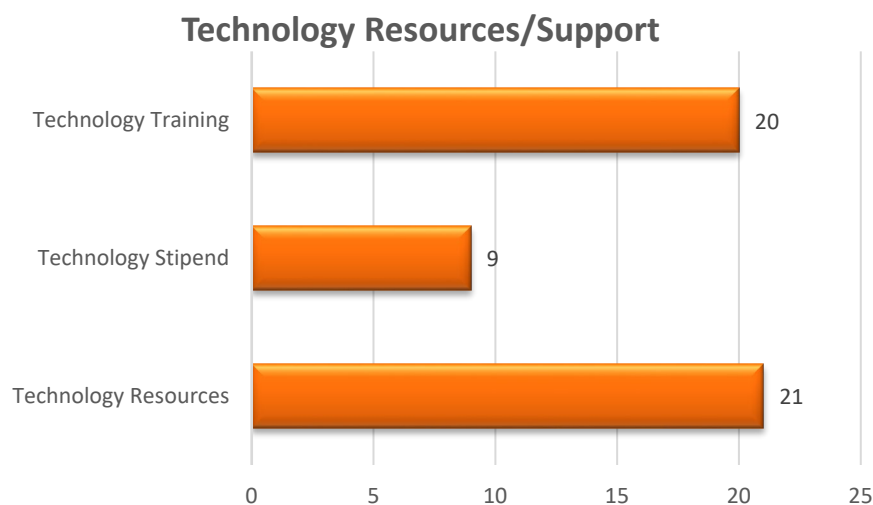
ALLIANCE GUIDANCE: We strongly recommend that organizations offer technology resources/support in order to make flexible work as successful as possible. In our conversations with organizations of all sizes, leaders often commented that technological infrastructure led to a successful transition to remote work during the pandemic. The right technology is key to making remote work effective.   Now is the time to survey employees, asking what technology resources were most helpful during the pandemic and what additional technology resources would be necessary. In addition to providing the right technology, organizations must make sure that all employees know how to use and leverage this technology.   Leverage your IT Department's expertise by having them lead various technology trainings on useful technology/applications.

Figure 5. Will your organization create/continue to have a flexible work affinity group? (n=27)

Of the 27 participants, only 14.8% (4 law firms) will create/continue to have a flexible work affinity group; in addition, two other organizations mentioned that they have a parents/caregivers affinity group despite not having a flexible work affinity group. This low figure is consistent with pre-pandemic trends, as only 6.1% of participants indicated having a flexible work affinity group in our 2019 Law Firm Flexibility Benchmarking Study.

**Will You Have a
Flexible Work Affinity Group?**

14.8%

85.2%

■ Yes ■ No
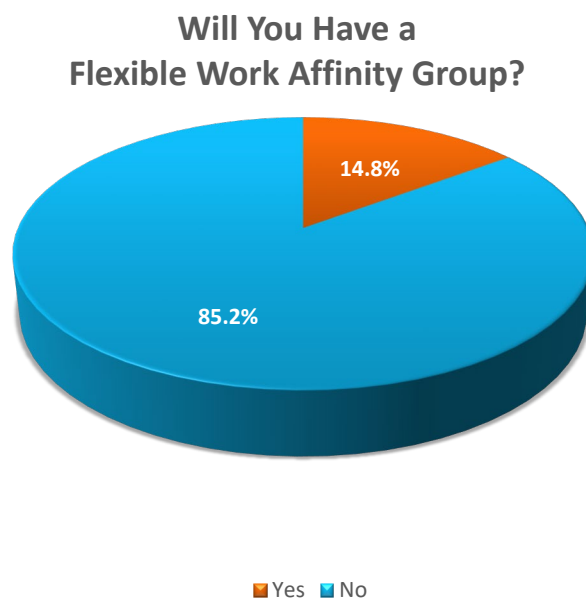
ALLIANCE GUIDANCE: Having an affinity group for flexible work employees is more crucial than ever. As many organizations are planning on creating/updating their remote work policy post-pandemic, flexible work infrastructure is crucial to provide community/support for an effective flexible work initiative. Take a look at our Action Steps, *It Takes a Community* and *Structuring Affinity Groups* when creating/revamping your flexible work affinity group.

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Figure 6. Will your organization institute an ombudsperson? (n=27)

Of the 27 participants, only 14.8% (4 law firms) will institute an ombudsperson.

Will You Institute an Ombudsperson?

■ Yes ■ No
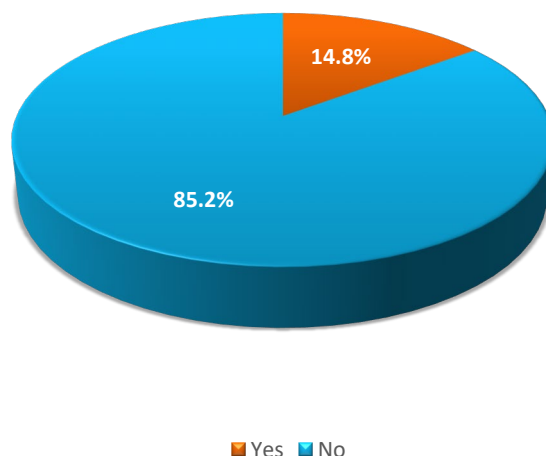
ALLIANCE GUIDANCE: Instituting an ombudsperson is vital as organizations expand their flexible work offerings. Bias, both actual and unconscious, affects flexible work employees in terms of work allocation, evaluations and advancement. An ombudsperson can help resolve issues faced by employees, including bias flexible work employees will encounter.

Figure 7. What trainings will your organization offer? (n=27)

Of the 27 participants, most will offer trainings in the areas of individual strategies for remote work success (81.4%, 22 of 27, including 20 law firms, one association and one hospital), managing remote teams (63%, 17 of 27, including 16 law firms and one association), and addressing bias/unconscious bias (70.4%, 19 of 27, 17 law firms, one association and one hospital).

Notably, there is a significant increase in the share of organizations that will provide these trainings compared to our Previous Pulse Poll (81.4% in this pulse poll vs. 38.2% in the Previous Pulse Poll will provide training on individual strategies for remote work success; 63% in this pulse poll vs. 32.4% will provide training on managing remote teams; and 70.4% in this pulse poll vs. 23.5% will provide training on addressing bias/unconscious bias).

ALLIANCE GUIDANCE: The Alliance strongly recommends providing employees with training to support them and help them succeed when expanding flexible work offerings. Organizations need to provide employees/leaders with training around successfully working remotely, effectively leading remote teams, and addressing unconscious bias. This way, organizations raise awareness of common pitfalls, set consistent expectations, and provide best practices on ways to succeed. Members can access

our Action Steps, *Telecommuters Guide to Working Remotely, Making Business Development A Priority For Flex or Reduced Hours Attorneys,* and *Individual Strategies For Remote Team Success* to develop trainings on individual strategies for remote work success. And our Action Steps, *Delivering Feedback Effectively, Five Mistakes Supervisors Make When Evaluating Flexible Schedule Associates, Reducing Bias in Evaluations,* and *Seven Strategies for Managing Remote Teams,* can be used as a starting point to develop trainings for managing remote teams.

Please contact Sejal Shah, Manager, Leadership Initiatives, at sejal@dfalliance.com if you have questions.