

## Companies must balance Covid-19 concerns with new needs to create workplace of the future: IPS study

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SINGAPORE - With hybrid work arrangements here to stay and Covid-19 entering its endemic phase, workplaces have to change the way they look and operate.

A report by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) released on Monday (April 25) noted that going back to the workplace also means balancing Covid-19 concerns and safe distancing measures.

In general, people responded positively to stricter, restrictive measures at the workplace for unvaccinated staff, the study showed.

The number of respondents who felt this way increased when Singapore saw more Covid-19 cases from the end of December last year to early this year.

Many respondents also felt that it was not inconvenient to take regular Covid-19 tests as part of safe management measures at the workplace.

More respondents also agreed to [unmasking at workplaces](#) this March and April.

Regarding doctor's notes, around 64 per cent of respondents agreed with the measure that [did not require memos to be produced by employees and students](#) in order to return to work or school after recovering from Covid-19, when the query was posed to them in February and April this year.

But among those who have to return to their workplace on most days, about half of the respondents polled for this study were still afraid of being infected with Covid-19 when returning to work more regularly.

However, these concerns have been tapering off in April this year, the report noted.

Returning to the workplace also necessitates revamping the physical space to suit new needs, the report showed.

This means redesigning spaces to encourage collaboration.

IPS social lab associate director Mike Hou said: "Some of the main reasons people cite for going back to the workplace are collaboration, access to IT systems, and networking and coordination with colleagues."

"So we do not think that the workplace should fully revert to pre-pandemic arrangements where people mostly view the workplace as just a place where you go to perform work. It should be seen as a place where coordination and collaboration thrive and for greater networking and teambuilding activities."

The report added: "The value proposition of the workplace ought not to be undermined, but instead, redefined."

"Workplaces should no longer be viewed as sites for workers to produce the necessary output required of them given that many workers can do this successfully at home. Rather workplaces should provide the space for greater collaboration, fostering of organisational identity and belonging, as well as a sense of shared purpose."