

# Big Tech wrestles with unpredictable back to work reality as pandemic surges

Article

**The news:** Coronavirus infections in the US are on the rise in [every state](#) because of the highly contagious **Delta variant**—just as companies are returning employees to in-person work. Big

Tech companies are being forced to reassess back-to-office timeframes as well as whether to impose vaccination and mask policies, [per](#) Mashable.

**How we got here:** As the nation's vaccination rates [plateau](#), the sudden and sustained spread of COVID-19 variants has resulted in [surging](#) infections in every state.

- The Delta variant can be transmitted within 5 minutes of contact with a contagious person, while the older variant was transmittable within 15 minutes of contact [according to](#) **Dr. Linsey Marr**, an expert in airborne transmission of viruses.
- Overall **new cases** in the US have [increased 141%](#) in the past two weeks.
- The CDC is once again [urging](#) all people to wear masks indoors, regardless of vaccination status.

**The bigger picture:** Businesses have looked to Big Tech companies as models for implementing remote and hybrid work during the pandemic, and have largely followed their lead on return-to-office policies. These policies have been a [source of tension](#) between employers' desire to return staff to the office, and employees' preference to remain remote. Meanwhile, many tech workers looking to change jobs are seeking more flexibility around remote work [per](#) Fast Company.

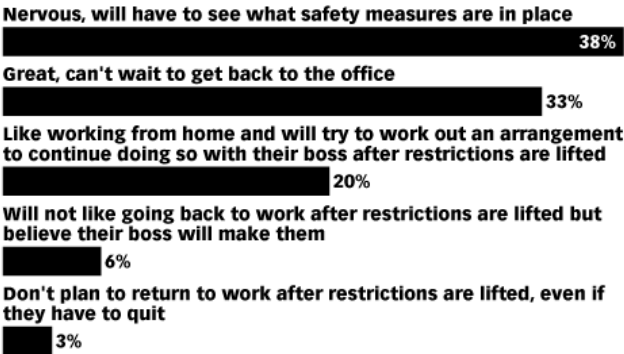
- **Twitter** [closed](#) its San Francisco and New York offices due to the current surge. The company announced Wednesday that they are pausing future office reopenings after considering CDC guidelines.
- Google on Wednesday also announced that it will delay its office returns to October, a month later than originally planned. **Apple** is similarly [pushing back](#) its return-to-office deadline to October and is [requiring masks](#) for employees and customers of its retail stores.
- **Google** and **Facebook** will [mandate](#) vaccines for all employees at their US offices and expect to require vaccinations in other locations. "Getting vaccinated is one of the most important ways to keep ourselves and our communities healthy in the months ahead," Google CEO **Sundar Pichai** [wrote](#) in a blog post.
- **Amazon** is not requiring employees to be vaccinated and only [enforces](#) mask-wearing for unvaccinated workers.

**The dilemma:** Big Tech companies who were looking at returning to work by September are scrambling plans made **before the sudden surge** of the highly [contagious](#) Delta variant. **The**

unpredictable nature of coronavirus variants and increased rates of infection will continue to confound businesses as they struggle to remain profitable while keeping employees and customers safe.

**How Do US Employees Feel About Going Back to Work After the Coronavirus Pandemic Restrictions Are Lifted?**

% of respondents, May 2020



Note: ages 18-65  
Source: Blue Fountain Media, "Blue Fountain Media Work From Home Survey," May 4, 2020  
255436 [www.eMarketer.com](http://www.eMarketer.com)