



VACCINE MANDATES

IN THE WORKPLACE



Vaccine Mandates: In Context

In September 2021, President Joe Biden directed the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to draft rules requiring private companies with 100 or more employees to ensure their staff are vaccinated against COVID-19 or test those who aren't at least once a week. On October 12, OSHA submitted its proposal to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

As the new rules will apply to approximately two-thirds of the private sector workforce, BioSpace surveyed our readers' thoughts on the matter. The results were eye-opening and pointed to a workforce still very much wrestling with how to manage in a world where COVID-19 is becoming endemic.



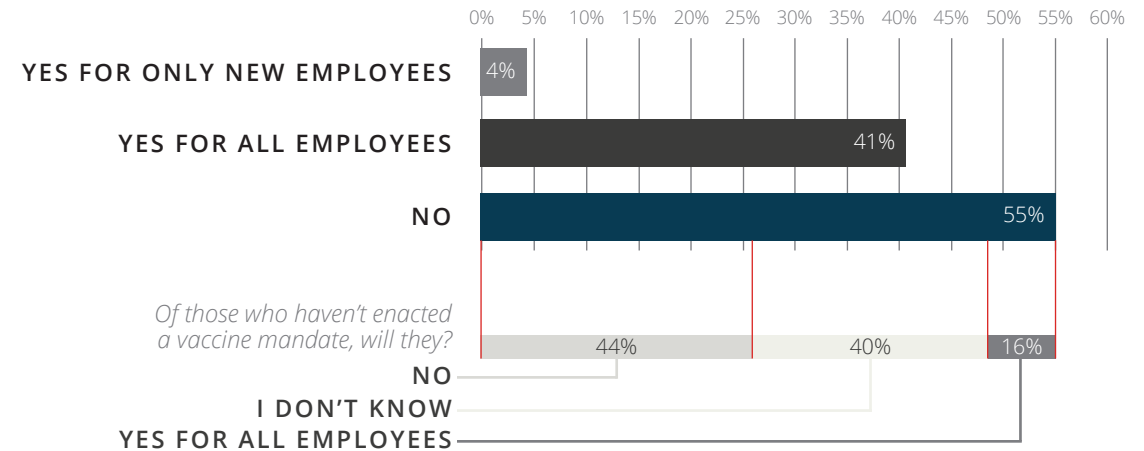
The Big Picture

MANDATES IN ACTION

41% of employers have already enacted a vaccine mandate

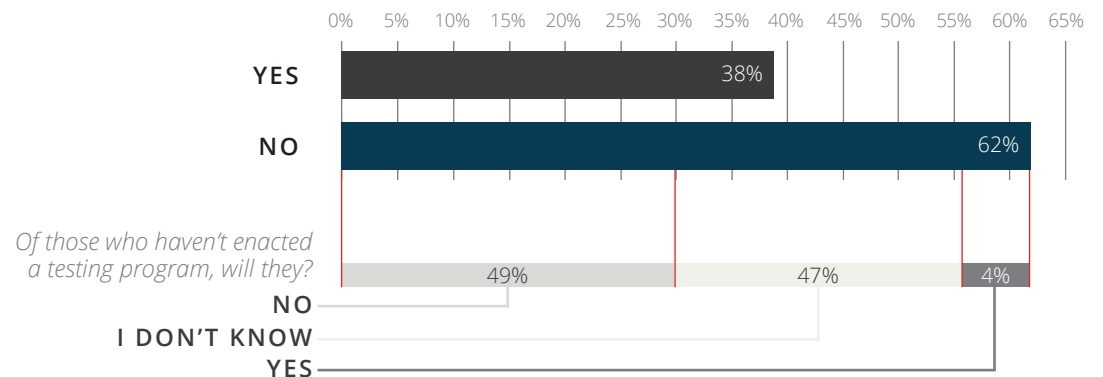
Amongst employers who haven't enacted a vaccine mandate, 40% are still unsure if they will do so.

Has your organization enacted a COVID-19 vaccine mandate?



38% of employers have enacted a testing program

Will your organization enact a COVID-19 testing program?



Assumptions on Vaccination Rates

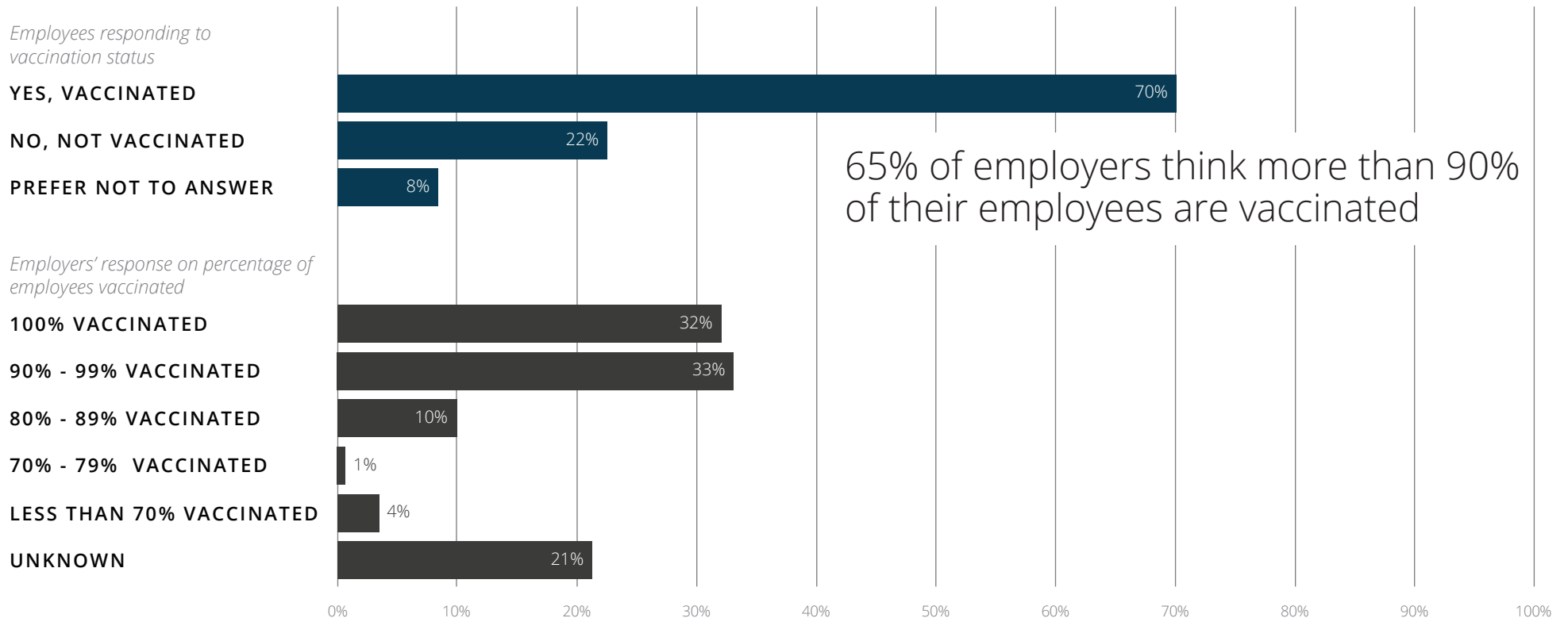
70% of survey respondents have received a Covid-19 vaccine. That's a slightly lower proportion than the recently reported 77% of Americans who have received at least one dose¹.

And it stands out sharply in contrast to what employers believe their vaccination rates are amongst their employees.

Three-quarters of employers think at least 80% of their employee base is vaccinated, and 65% of employers think more than 90% of their employee base is vaccinated.

Despite being in biopharma, industry **employers may want to be cautious about making assumptions.**

70% of survey respondents are vaccinated



¹) <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/vaccine-requirements-raised-covid-19-vaccination-rates-by-20-percentage-points-2021-10-13/>

The Unvaccinated

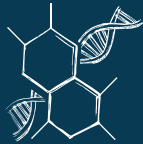
Significantly, of those that have not received the vaccine, a striking **80% indicated they would resign** if their employer required them to get it. More than 90% of those individuals do not want to work for a company that has a vaccine mandate.

Why have you chosen not to get the vaccine?



39%

RISK & QUALITY IS YET UNKNOWN, NOT ENOUGH DATA



36%

NATURAL IMMUNITY/ RECOVERED FROM COVID & HAVE ANTIBODIES



11%

SIDE EFFECTS



7%

MEDICAL REASONS

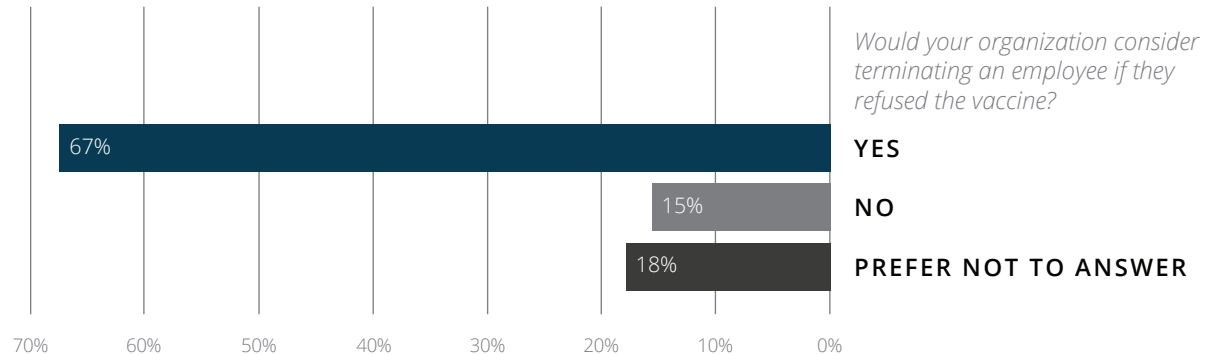


7%

POLITICAL / PERSONAL CHOICE

80% of unvaccinated respondents would resign if they were required to get a vaccine

Additionally, **67% of employers, who have or will enact a COVID-19 vaccine mandate indicated that they would consider terminating an employee if they refused to receive a vaccine.**



Both stances may fuel the challenges already circulating in a very tight labor market.

Why those who are unvaccinated have chosen to remain so is varied and nuanced.

36% indicated that they had recovered from Covid-19 and now had natural immunity. However, a larger proportion, 39% indicated that they had lingering concerns over vaccine risk due to unknown quality and not enough data.

People undoubtedly feel very strongly about retaining their sense of autonomy, just as employers feel very strongly about Covid-19 safety.

Biopharma employers should **treat vaccine mandates with sensitivity** and limit their assumptions on both their vaccination rates – as well as why people have chosen not to get their vaccine.

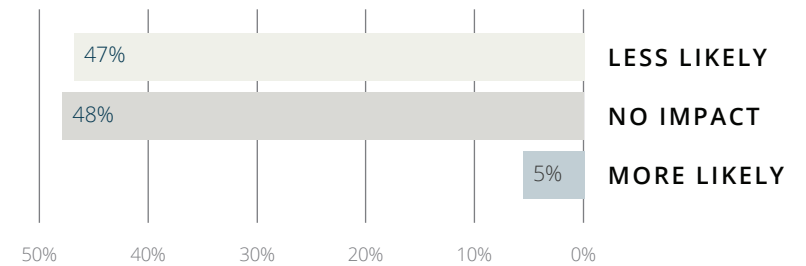
Impact on Productivity and Culture

Nearly half of all respondents said they were less likely to want to collaborate with a colleague in person if they knew that they were not vaccinated.

While 93% of unvaccinated respondents indicated they did not prefer to work at a company with vaccine mandates, they were still keen to limit their exposure to other unvaccinated colleagues.

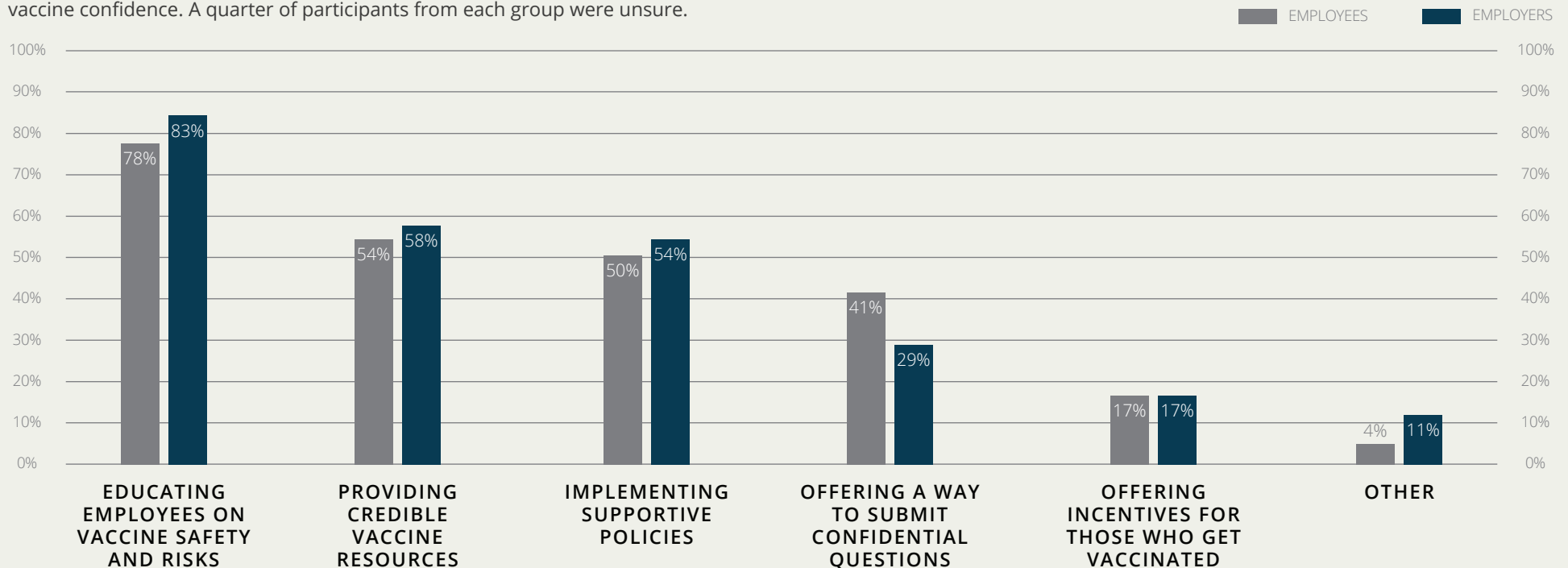
Employers who have returned to this office should address these concerns and set precedents to make all employees feel comfortable in their work environment.

If you were to learn that a work colleague was not vaccinated, would it make you more likely or less likely to want to collaborate with them in person?



Employer Communication and Transparency is Key

Less than half of employee respondents (41%) indicated their employer is doing anything to build vaccine confidence. A quarter of participants from each group were unsure.



Of those who are enacting initiatives to build vaccine confidence, the majority say that employers are educating employees on vaccine safety and risks. The next highest number claimed to provide creditable vaccine resources, while nearly as many (54%) were implementing supportive policies. However, **only 41% of employees think their employers are offering a way to submit confidential questions, and even fewer employers (29%) indicated they are actually offering a way.**

Addressing Questions and Demonstrating Consistency

A significant number of respondents had many questions for their employers.

And almost a third (28%) of all employee respondents think their **employer has not adequately answered their questions** on vaccine mandates and testing programs.

Addressing questions and concerns may be vital in improving vaccination rates and building employee feelings of security and trust in their employers as well as colleagues.

A key learning from this survey is that employee concerns seem to largely be based around policy inconsistencies.

Common themes came up that employers may want to address:



Adverse reaction policies. If adverse reactions happen from a mandated vaccine, will employees be compensated immediately and/or long term?



Testing. Why is testing available to visitors but not employees? Why aren't vaccinated employees tested if they can still spread Covid-19? Who pays for testing? When and how often do I need to be tested? Why are vaccines mandated when testing is not, and vice versa?



Boosters. Will boosters be required?



Exemptions. What counts as an exemption? How can I apply for an exemption?



Natural immunity. Why isn't natural immunity accepted, and can employers check for antibodies?



Inconsistent policies. Why is the Covid-19 vaccine mandated when other vaccines are not?



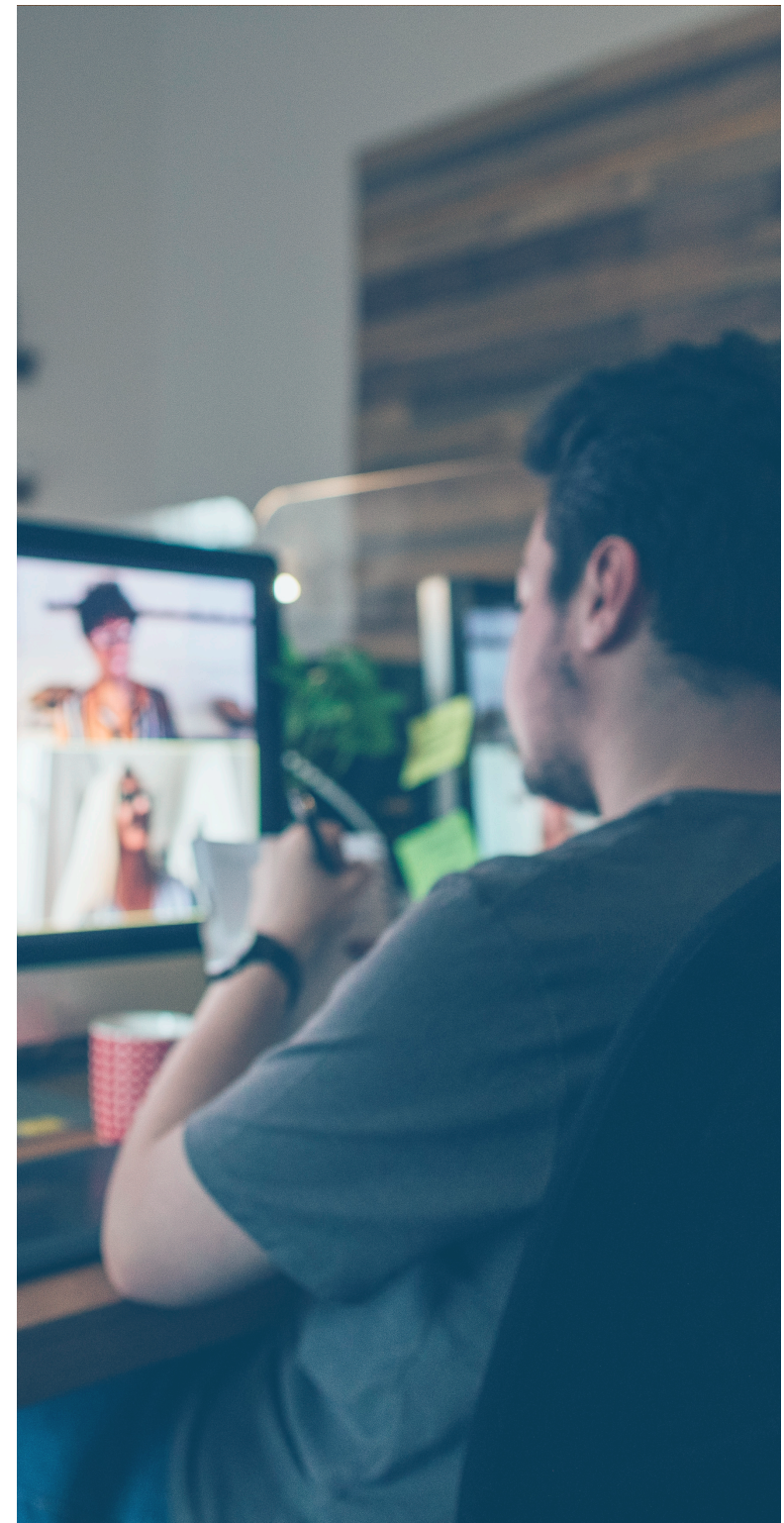
Colleagues. How many colleagues are not vaccinated? Will we be told who is not vaccinated? Will my employer guarantee my colleagues are vaccinated too? Will unvaccinated colleagues be allowed in the office?



Remote workers. Will remote workers be required to get vaccinated? Can I be come a remote worker to avoid getting the vaccine?



Termination. If I don't get vaccinated, will I be fired?




Employers Have Questions Too


Employees are not the only ones with questions. Employers are grappling with a huge variety of challenges with a wide range of considerations as they are required to roll out new policies.


They largely reflect the same concerns their employees are voicing. The greatest challenge is navigating mandates in nuanced situations.


Questions that have been raised include:

 How enacted mandates have affected turnover?


 How to create policies on exemptions?

 Booster requirements?


 How mandate application varies state to state?

 State versus federal labor laws?

 How to report and track testing and vaccinations?

 How to apply mandates to contingent, field or remote workers?

 How to determine liability?

 How to cover testing costs?

The devil really is in details.

Employers will need to continue addressing these details while managing and responding to employee concerns.

As vaccine mandates become more widely enforced, both employers and employees may need to be prepared to make changes and sacrifices in what is already a stressed labor market.

Methodology

BioSpace reached out to life science professionals to gather insight on controversial COVID-19 mandates and testing programs. Conducted in October 2021, BioSpace surveyed both professionals and employers in the industry collecting over 800 responses.

