

## BSRIA April E-News

### **30% of workers claim they may refuse to go back to work unless employers provide assurance on air quality**

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Many employees have reservations about returning to the workplace by Herpreet Kaur Grewal

More than one in four (26 per cent) Britons are worried about airborne transmission, according to research by services group, Rentokil Initial.

This figure is a 19 per cent increase from when Rentokil Initial conducted the same survey back in November 2020.

Contact with other people, for example, when social distancing is breached, remains the most concerning route for transmission, cited by half the population.

The poll of 2,000 adults also found that the majority (52 per cent) of Brits remain worried that life will never go back to normal, the same percentage as recorded previously.

Last year the World Health Organisation updated its guidance to say that coronavirus could be transmitted via aerosols in the air, and this 'air to person' transmission route has been widely covered in the news and is clearly affecting public attitudes.

Two-thirds (68 per cent) of those surveyed said they believe businesses and employers should do more to ensure that they provide clean air in the premises (up from 65 per cent in November 2020), while 62 per cent of respondents went so far as to say that air purification systems should be mandatory in public buildings and education facilities (up from 59 per cent). Nearly one-third (30 per cent) of workers said they won't go back to work unless their employer assures them of the building's indoor air quality.

Heading towards 12th April and the first proposed step in the relaxation of lockdown measures for the retail and hospitality sectors in England, concerns about socialising indoors

appear to be heightened. The three activities that concern the public the most post-lockdown are: using public transport (36 per cent), socialising indoors (31 per cent) and drinking indoors at bars or pubs (29 per cent).

Jamie Woodhall, UK technical and innovation manager, Rentokil Initial, said: "These survey results show that tackling air quality and preventing the airborne spread of coronavirus clearly remains an important challenge, alongside the vaccine rollout.

"The scientific evidence continues to build and it is very clear how important good ventilation and air purification is within indoor spaces. When it comes to easing of lockdown measures, the expectation from the public is that businesses and employers need to do their bit in helping to ensure that they are providing clean air, so that the risk of catching an airborne virus indoors is reduced."

Separately, technology firm Infogrid published its report *Creating a Healthy Workplace*, which surveyed 2,000 UK employees to understand how they feel about returning to the workplace as the next phase of lockdown easing begins.

It found that 50 per cent of employees are concerned about returning to the physical workplace. Yet, 48 per cent of those that expect to return to the office believe they will be back before July 2021. A further 16 per cent have already returned to the workplace in some capacity.

Of those who aren't concerned, 60 per cent said it was because their employer had made their workplace safe. This factor was more important to employees than the vaccine rollout (54 per cent). Employees said regular cleaning has the biggest impact on how safe they feel to return to the office (73 per cent). Other popular measures included limiting the number of people in spaces (69 per cent), and improved air quality to reduce the spread of Covid-19 (61 per cent).

William Cowell de Gruchy, CEO of Infogrid, said: "This research shows that businesses have to accept that their employees have reservations about returning to the workplace. Organisations need to take action now to prepare the workplace. Not only to make their employees feel safe but to safeguard their ongoing welfare. Employees are now more conscious than ever of how their workplace impacts their wellbeing."