



Return to Office Planning & Interns

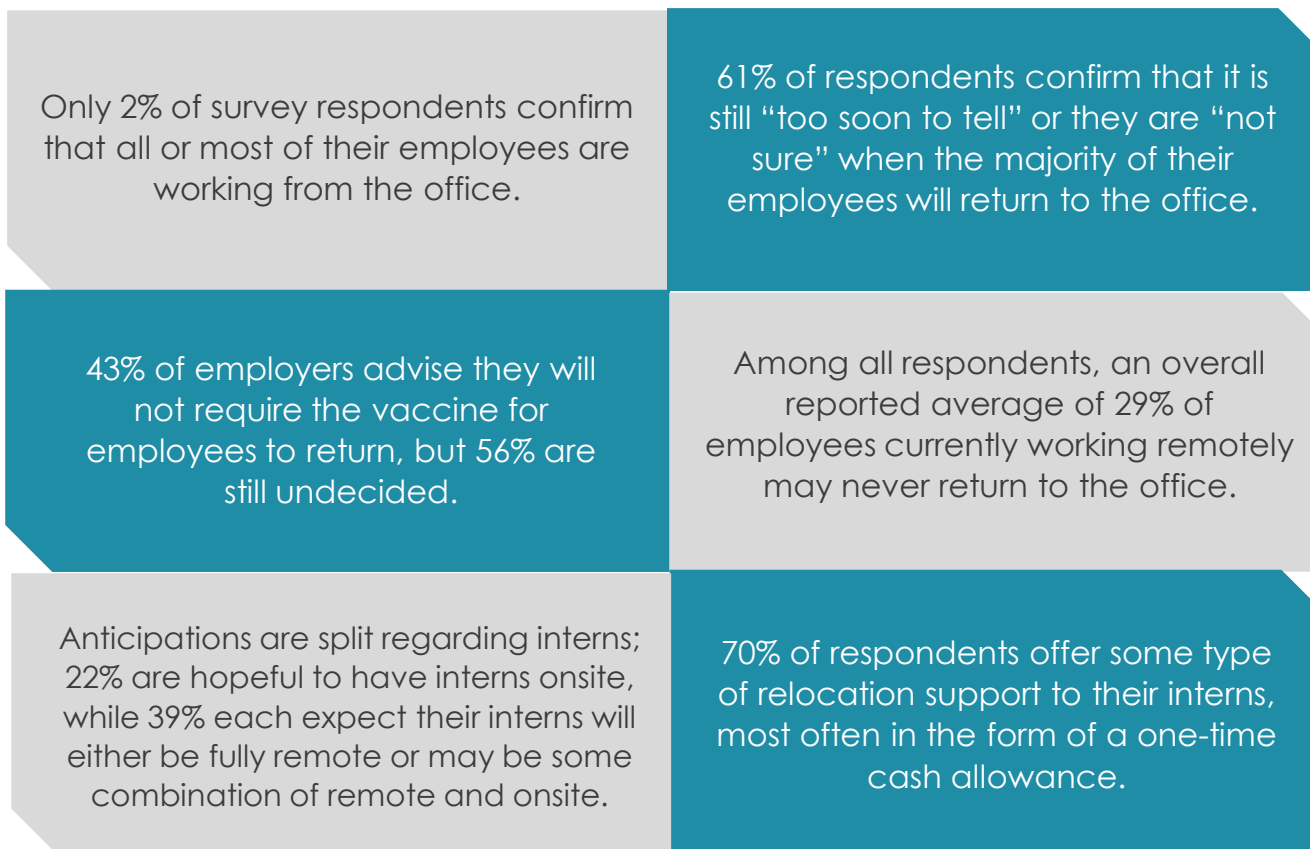
March 2021

pulse survey



Aires' 8th Pulse Survey in the COVID-19 series continues to explore the plans for returning workers to offices. Additionally, as we round the corner out of winter and move into spring, employers are beginning to prepare for upcoming internships. Last year's intern programs were greatly disrupted due to the pandemic. This year, employers are hoping to see more interns on-site and in-person; however, most employers still do not know when employees are returning to their offices.

Survey Highlights



Return to the Office

Since Aires released the 7th Pulse Survey in the COVID-19 series on November 30, novel coronavirus vaccinations have begun. The approval and distribution of a third manufacturer's vaccine in the U.S. is already increasing vaccination rates and expanding the group of recipients beyond the original 1a recipient category in some locations.

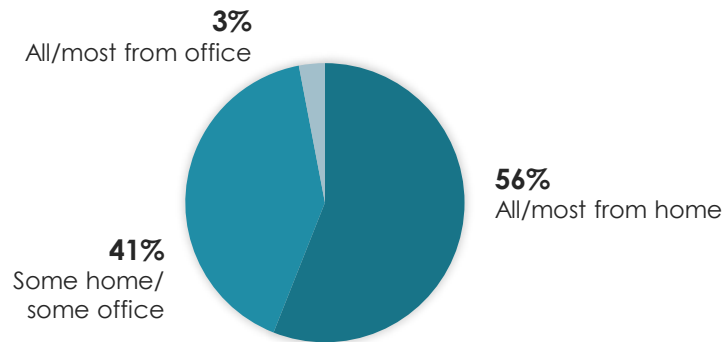
Various sources have publicly estimated that many Americans would likely have to wait until June to receive the vaccine. However, on March 3, the Biden Administration announced through all major news outlets that most adults should expect to be able to receive the vaccine by the end of May.

So, when will employees be able to return to their offices? The answer to that question is many employers still do not know. Below, we have outlined what our survey respondents do know and have shared in our most recent survey.

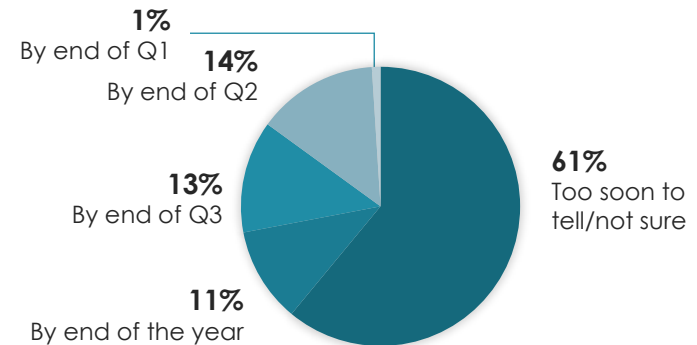
More than half of respondents confirm that all or most of their employees are still working from home, while another 41% say some employees are working from home and some are working in the office.

There has been no reported progress since November 30, 2020, in which 4% of respondents reporting having all or most of their employees back in the office. Then (and still) only a very small percent of respondents report having all or most of their employees working from the office.

Employee Work Situations



Anticipated Return to Office



Furthermore, some employees are expected to stay remote indefinitely or permanently. While this may still be hypothetical for many, respondents' estimates of the percentage of employees who many never return varies greatly, with a total average of 29% and median value of 25%.

The most common response to the question of how many employees may never return to the office was 50% (noted by 16% of respondents); however, only an additional 10% of the respondents noted more than 50% of their employees may remain remote. The second most common response was 25%, noted by 14% of respondents.

Some industries have higher reported averages of employees who many never return, while some have lower. Industries that imply a more present workforce (people required at a worksite, such as Agriculture, Energy, Food/Beverage, Retail/Restaurant, and Pharma) all reported lower than average percentages.

Wide ranges were noted specifically in Finance, Manufacturing, and Tech; these include companies that reported as few as 5% or no employees will remain remote, to several noting as many as 70%, 80%, 90%, and one even noting 100% of employees are expected to remain remote.

At the time of publication (March 2021), the available vaccines that are being administered appear to have little impact on return-to-office planning. This is likely because states have not yet been able to vaccinate the majority of the population in the CDC's identified Phase 1a (healthcare personnel and residents of long-term care facilities), 1b (frontline essential workers and individuals 75 and older), and 1c (other essential workers, persons 65-74 years of age, and individuals 16-64 years of age with underlying medical conditions).

64%

Of respondents expect that more than half of their current remote workforce will eventually return to the office

26%

of respondents expect that half or more of their current remote workforce will remain remote.

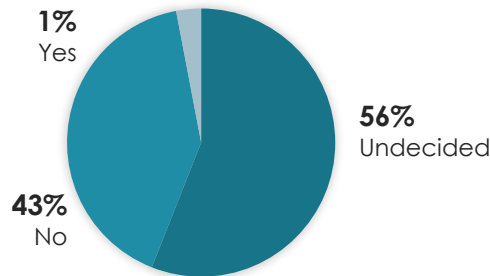
The total average percentage of employees that may never return to the office is 29%.

Averages of Employees Who Are Expected to Remain Remote by Industry

Industries	Percentage	
Aerospace/Defense	30%	
Agriculture	20%	
Automotive	37%	
Chemicals	40%	
Consumer Products	24%	
Energy	20%	
Finance/Insurance/Investment	34%*	*Responses ranged from 5% to 70%
Food/Beverage	25%	
Manufacturing	24%*	*Responses ranged from 0% to 60%
Pharma/Health	14%	
Retail/Restaurants	20%	
Technology	30%*	*Responses ranged from 0% to 100%
Transportation/Distribution	30%	

While most employers find themselves with time to prepare for their employees to be eligible to receive the vaccine, many employers do not know whether it will be a requirement of their return-to-work strategies.

Will a COVID-19 Vaccine Be Required for Employees to Return to the Office?

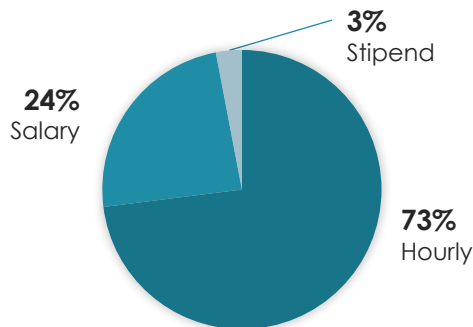


Interns

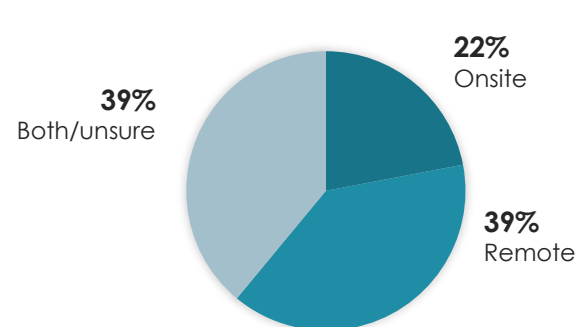
Ninety-six percent of survey participants confirm knowing that their organization has a formalized internship program. The internships are reported to most often be three months or fewer in duration and ranging in size from less than 25 per year to more than 1,000 per year, with approximately half reporting 50 or fewer and half reporting more than 50.

Respondents confirm most interns are paid hourly. Salaried interns are less common and were noted only in certain industries, including Automotive, Consumer Products, Finance, Food/Beverage, Retail/Restaurants, and Technology. Many still do not know if interns will be present in offices.

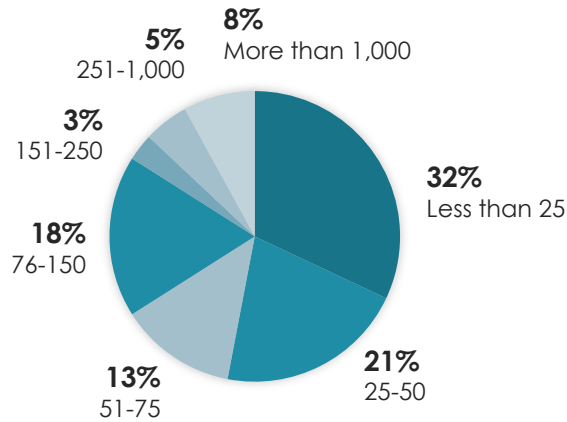
Intern Pay



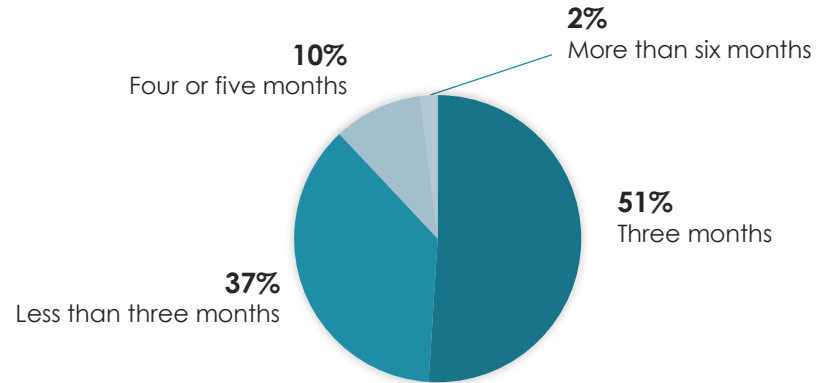
Anticipated Intern Work Locations



Number of Interns Per Year

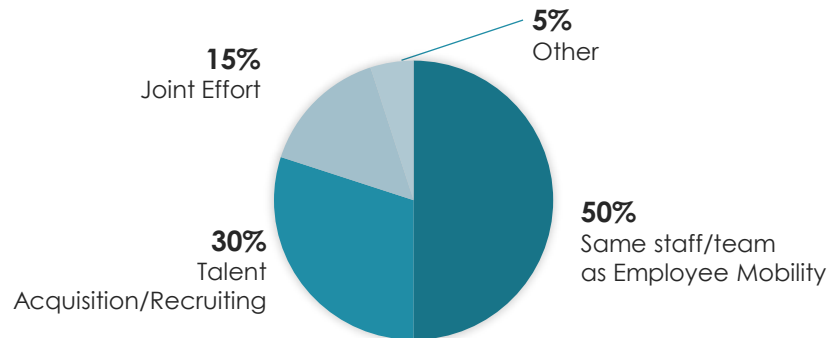


Average Length of Internship



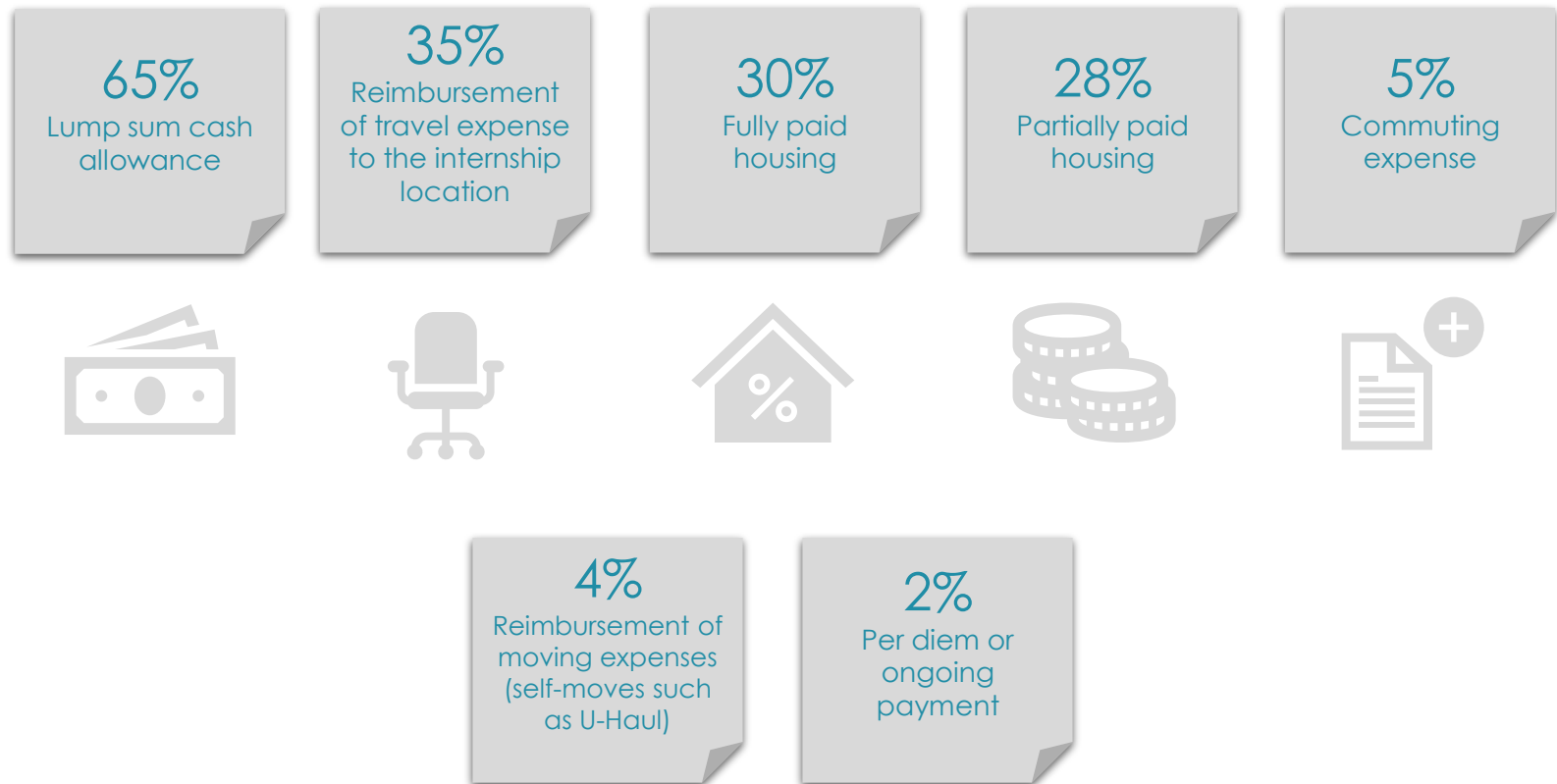
Half of respondents confirm relocating interns are managed by the same staff/team that manages employee mobility. Other staff/teams that hold responsibility for managing interns include Talent Acquisition and Recruiting. Several respondents also noted that it is a joint effort, most often between Talent Acquisition, Mobility, and/or Human Resources, while other specific responses noted University Relations, Intern Recruitment, and University Recruitment.

Responsible for Intern Mobility



In all, 70% of survey participants with internship programs offer some type of relocation assistance. The most common relocation benefit offered to interns is a one-time lump sum cash allowance.

70% Of survey participants with internship programs confirm offering some form of relocation support.



Lump Sums

The amount of the lump sums reported by respondents ranges from \$400 up to \$6,500. Three out of every five respondents offer a lump sum gross-up to payment.

65% pay a lump sum cash allowance

Average Lump Sum = \$3,409

Median Lump Sum = \$3,000

65%

report paying a static amount (e.g., \$2,000, \$2,500, \$3,000, etc.)

35%

report paying a variable amount (e.g., \$2,500-5,000, \$2,000 or \$4,000, \$400-700)

60% offer a gross-up to the lump sum payment

26% offer additional benefits/expenses in addition to the lump sum

15%

Offering a lump sum also reimburse travel to the internship location

10%

Offering a lump sum also cover housing in full

8%

Offering a lump sum also cover housing partially

Travel

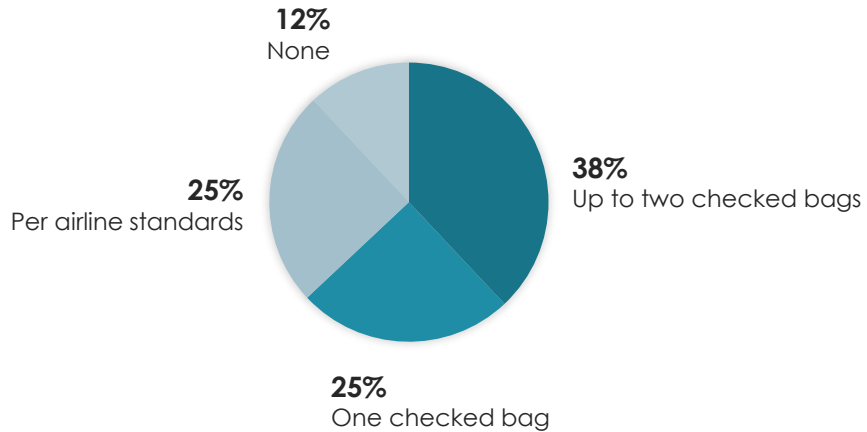
Of the intern programs that reimburse travel expenses, half have a distance requirement to qualify for reimbursement. Some provide mileage (if the distance is greater than 50 miles), while others provide airfare (if the distance is great than 350, 400, or 500 miles).

For interns traveling by air, more than a third are permitted to check up to 2 bags at company expense, while 12% are not reimbursed for baggage expenses.

No survey respondents confirmed providing return trip expenses during or after the internship.

35% reimburse travel expenses to the internship location

Baggage Reimbursement



Housing & Daily Living

Interns who are not local to their intern location must find housing for their stay. Over half of respondents confirm providing for housing to some degree, and the housing is usually furnished. The majority of interns receiving housing assistance do not also receive a lump sum.

Housing budgets are not common, but roommates are. It is not yet determined what impact COVID-19 will have on intern housing and if many interns will remain remote or be recruited locally, relieving the need to place them in company-paid housing.



30%
fully
pay housing

28%
partially
pay housing



83%

do not set a housing budget (intern housing is typically arranged through local temporary housing providers working with the available inventory in the specific marketplace)

37%

always require interns to share an apartment; another 11% require interns to share a bedroom

25%

encourage but do not require interns to share apartments

27%

let interns decide if they want to share accommodations

Only 2% of respondents noted paying an ongoing allowance to cover daily expenses, including a wellness reimbursement (which is part of their standard compensation package for regular employees) and another providing a variable amount determined by location and budget.


Commuting

Only 5% of respondents confirm providing some type of support with daily commuting expenses. Those that do offer support either provide van or carpools or reimburse local public transit pass.

5% offer commuting support 

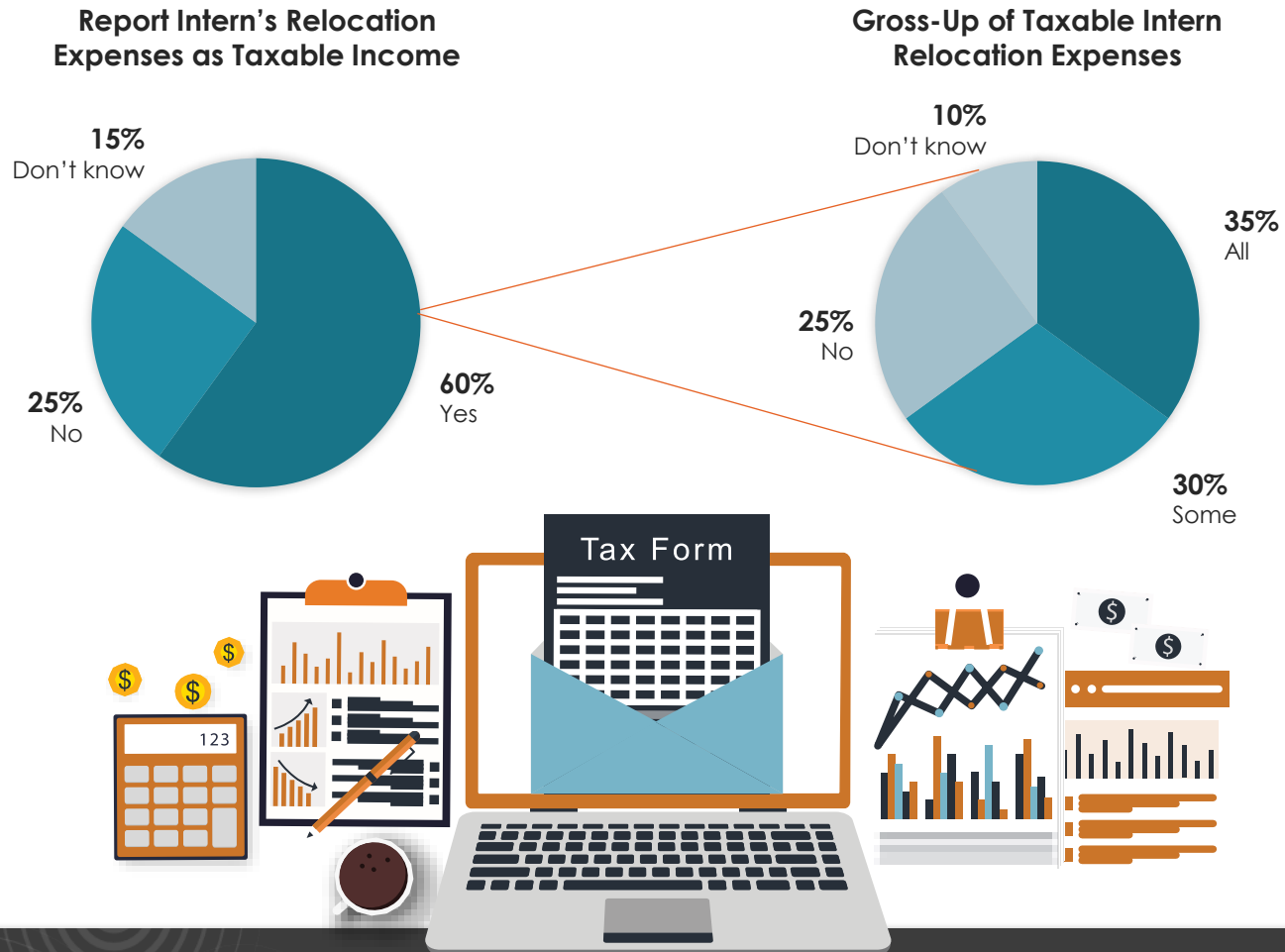
Shipment of Household Goods

It is not common to pay for the shipment of any household goods for interns. Only 4% do, and those practices are limited to the reimbursement of self-move expenses. Self-moves are typically identified as rental truck expenses, such as U-Haul or alternative services like PODs.

4% reimburse moving expenses 

Taxability of Relocation Expenses

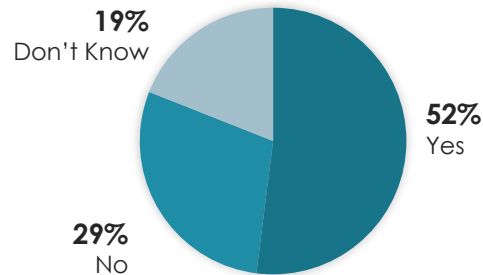
Over half of the survey respondents confirm knowing that their interns' relocation expenses are reported as taxable income. For those that report intern relocation expenses as taxable income, about one-third gross-up all taxable expenses, and just under one-third gross-up some taxable expenses. The other approximate one-third either don't gross-up or do not know.



Repayment Agreements

Just over half of respondents offering relocation benefits require a repayment agreement from interns. Repayments appear to be much less likely among interns than all other types of employees.

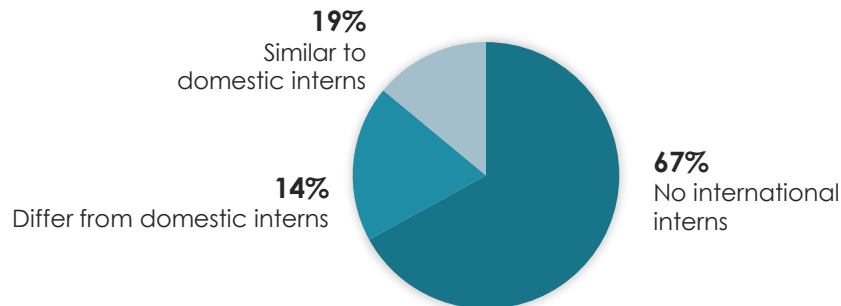
Intern Repayment Agreements



International Interns

Most of the respondents to this survey do not report having international interns; however, those that do offer similar support, with the addition of immigration support and tax support. Almost all respondents who noted their international intern programs were different cited immigration as the main difference. Less commonly reported differences included tax assistance, the lack of company-provided housing, and higher travel costs.

International Intern Benefits





“Visa processing is covered by the company.”

“Offered benefits are the same, but the flight allowance amount is higher for international.”

Intern Engagement

Pre-pandemic, many employers were looking to increase the employee mobility experience and employee engagement. During the pandemic, there has been a greater focus on employee mental health, mindfulness, belonging, community, and overall general employee support. Employers are also looking for ways to engage interns and enhance their experience.

Some survey respondents don't have much visibility to the types of ongoing support that may be offered to interns, but others were able to identify some key events and activities that exist within their intern programs.

COVID-19 has certainly had an impact on this, as it has with in-person work. Many companies are making adjustments to hold virtual events and gatherings.

Types of Intern Engagement	Percentage
Get acquainted events	82%
Mentor/buddy	75%
Team building events/activities	72%
Speakers/learning series	59%

Survey Participant Profile

A total of 77 companies participated in this survey spanning a variety of industries.

Industries	Percentage
Aerospace/Defense	2%
Agriculture	1%
Automotive	4%
Chemicals	3%
Consumer Products	7%
Energy	4%
Finance/Insurance/Investment	18%
Food/Beverage	3%
Hospitality/Leisure	1%
Legal/Professional/Consulting	2%
Manufacturing	13%
Pharma/Medical	8%
Retail/Restaurants	7%
Technology	25%
Telecommunications	1%
Transportation/Distribution	1%

Size of Organizations

Total Employees	Percentage
100,001 or more	17%
50,001 – 100,000	13%
20,001 – 50,000	17%
5,001 – 20,000	18%
1,001 – 5,000	28%
Under 1000	7%

Total Annual Domestic Volume	Domestic
Over 1,000	13%
500-999	7%
250-499	8%
150-249	13%
75-149	13%
50-74	10%
25-49	10%
Under 25	26%

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