

The Future of Work Arrives Early: How HR leaders are leveraging the lessons of disruption

India

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Oxford Economics and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) partnered with SAP SuccessFactors to understand the realities of a post-pandemic workplace for both employers and employees in 10 countries.¹ Our research offers a glimpse of the various workforce strategies adopted by organizations in response to COVID-19, including insight into hiring and layoffs, expectations for future employment changes, readiness for remote work, and investment plans around digital technologies.

This brief report highlights research results for **India** and suggests next steps for HR leaders as they plan for the years ahead. The findings show that Indian employers expect to make major operational and strategic changes in the coming year—but may need to prioritize reskilling for work with new technologies.

INDIA'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Experiences with COVID-19 vary from country to country, based in some part on the scale of the virus spread, national responses to controlling the pandemic, and local economic realities. India has been hit hard by the pandemic and is struggling to contain the virus, especially as lockdowns continue to lift across the country in an attempt to spur economic activity.

Indian executives in our survey expect major changes around the workplace due to the pandemic—specifically greater flexibility around remote work. And while they anticipate a number of issues to become more important to talent attraction, such as benefits and compensation, their investments in these areas may be lagging. Indian leaders will have to prioritize efforts around talent strategies, as well as equipping their workers with the technologies they need to accommodate remote working.

Understanding regional and local differences will be critical for HR leaders in India and across the world as they make plans for their global workforces.

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¹ Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, India, Mexico, Spain, United Kingdom, United States. To learn more about the research, including a detailed overview of each country, visit: <http://www.sap.com/human-experience-shrm-oe>

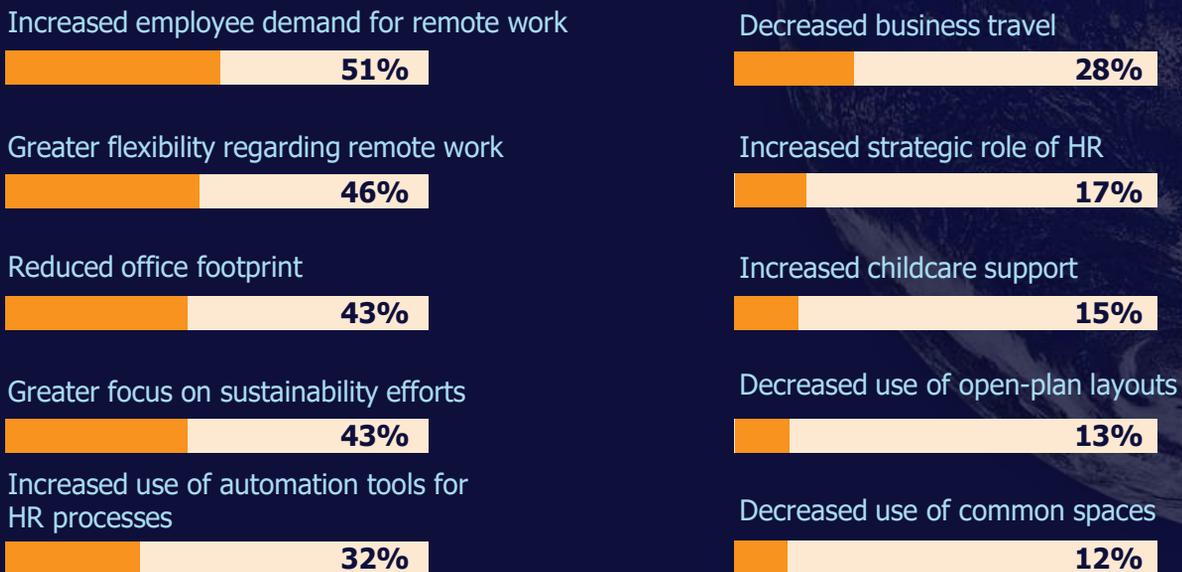
REDEFINING THE WAY WE WORK

Like their peers around the world, Indian organizations in our survey felt confident in their response to the pandemic: 88% said their organization has effectively handled new ways of working, and 86% said their organization is well prepared to address the changing work environment. But a new work paradigm leads to new challenges as well.

- Unsurprisingly, many expect an increase in employee demand for remote work (51%) and greater flexibility regarding remote work (46%) to be the top long-term changes in the workplace.
- Many expect that maintaining productivity given new ways of working (54%) and establishing a culture that supports more remote employees (46%) will be top challenges for businesses after COVID-19.
- Changes to the physical workplace are already underway: Indian leaders are increasing sanitation and cleaning (73%), training on new workplace safety protocols (65%), checking employee temperatures (62%), and implementing social distancing guidelines and precautions (59%) to keep employees safe and engaged at work. However, far fewer are staggering the number of employees in the workplace at once (34%) or conducting regular pulse surveys to gather employee feedback (41%).

FIG. 1: Indian leaders expect greater flexibility for remote work

Q: Which of the following long-term changes (12+ months) do you expect COVID-19 to have on the workplace? *Top-three ranked*



THE POST-PANDEMIC TALENT CRISIS

Securing and retaining top talent remains a concern for leaders across sectors—29% expect competing for top talent to be a main challenge post pandemic—and many acknowledge the need to strategize for the new work paradigm.

- Most Indian respondents expect healthcare, work/life balance, and environmental sustainability to become more important for talent attraction and retention, with other issues such as the financial stability of an organization (71%), flexible work policies (71%), and compensation (61%) also top of mind. Yet when asked about their investment plans, just 27% said they plan to invest in benefits, while 17% plan to do so for payroll.
- Reskilling must be viewed as a long-term talent investment—and nearly half (46%) expect to invest in learning programs for reskilling and upskilling over the next year.

FIG. 2: Flexible work will not be the only talent differentiator

Q: To what extent do you expect the following to become less or more important in an organization's ability to attract or retain talent, given the effect of COVID-19?

"Somewhat more important" and "Much more important" responses



MIXED MESSAGES ON TECHNOLOGY

Most Indian organizations are satisfied with the technology they have for new ways of working—but are they accommodating all workers?

- Most Indian respondents (86%) say their company has the technology it needs to navigate the changing work environment, but acknowledge that reskilling the workforce to work with new technologies will be a top challenge (60% say this will be a top-three challenge for businesses after COVID-19).
- Yet just 35% say most of their workers can work remotely *and* have the necessary technology and environment to do so effectively, and most believe agree their office workers and facilities/field workers (85%) and hourly and salaried workers (82%) have very different experiences during lockdown.

Q: Which technologies do you plan to invest in the most over the next 12 months? Top three technologies

46%

Learning programs for reskilling and upskilling, as well as new procedures

40%

Remote collaboration tools

39%

Performance management