# 2021 DMEC ABSENCE MANAGEMENT PULSE SURVEY
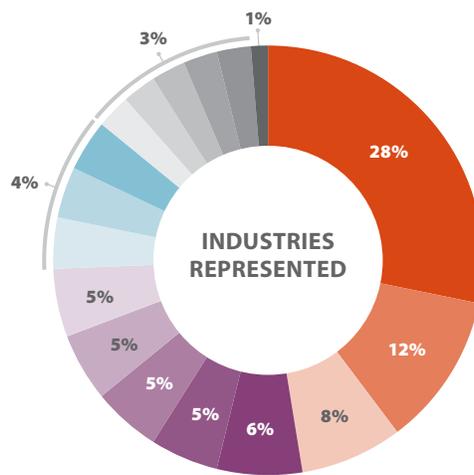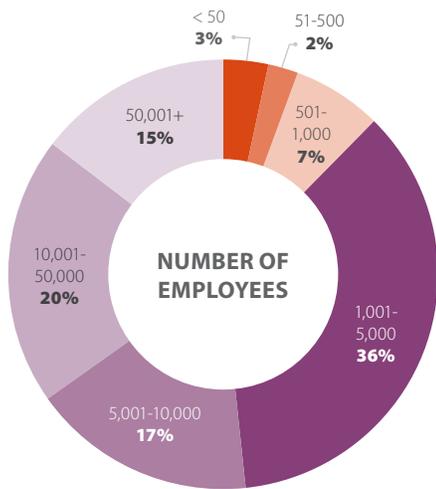
ABOUT THE SURVEY

Organizations have experienced extraordinary business shifts during the pandemic, with absence management practices being significantly impacted. As we evaluate the new terrain of leave management, it's pertinent to consider all stages of the industry's evolution over the past 16 months and how they will shape our future trajectory.

DMEC partnered with Broadspire to explore how organizations' absence management programs looked before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, and what they will look like as we come into the post-pandemic landscape. These survey results provide the framework for understanding what areas of absence management are most significantly impacted by the pandemic, how employers have responded to the business upsets, and how organizations are strategically adjusting their programs for a stronger future.
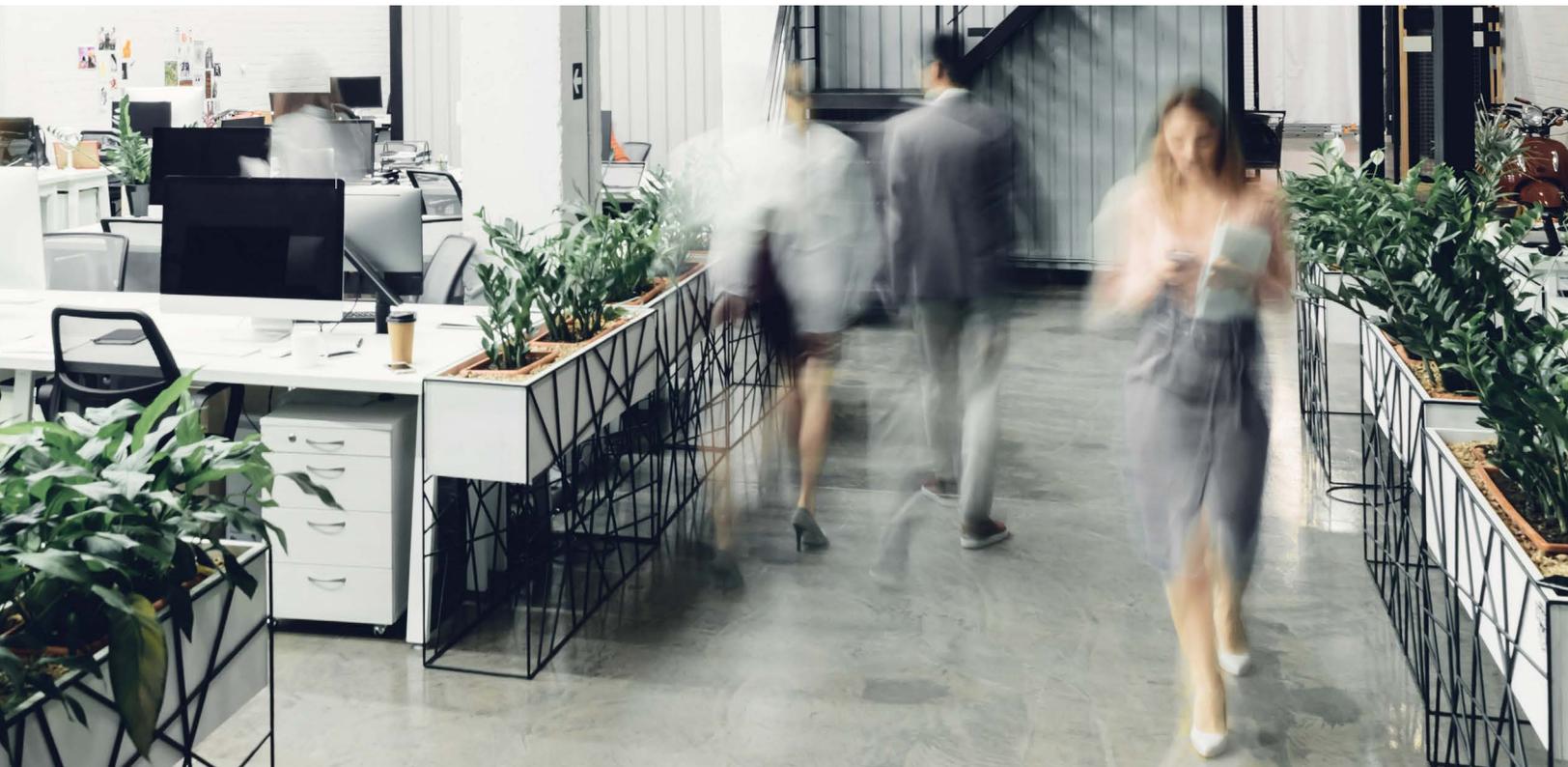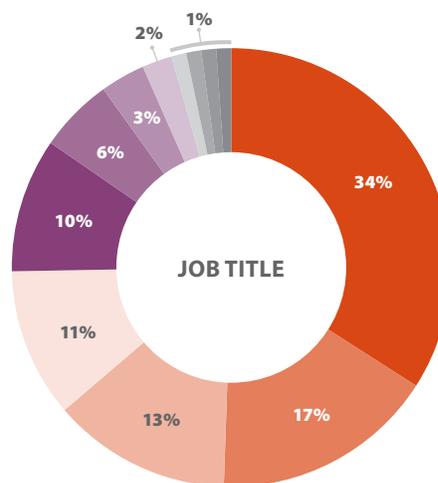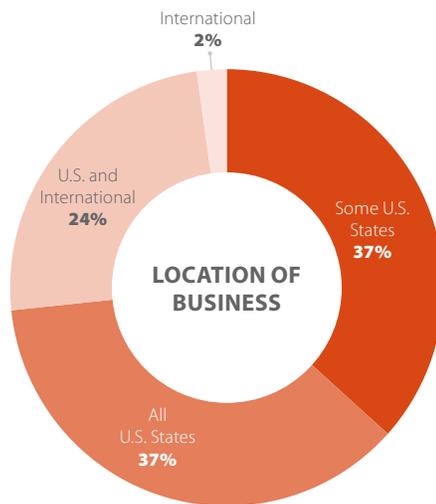
DEMOGRAPHICS

The pulse survey collected feedback from professionals serving companies of various sizes, within an assortment of industries.

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

- < 50 — 3%
- 51-500 — 2%
- 501-1,000 — 7%
- 1,001-5,000 — 36%
- 5,001-10,000 — 17%
- 10,001-50,000 — 20%
- 50,001+ — 15%

INDUSTRIES REPRESENTED

- Healthcare — 28%
- Manufacturing — 12%
- Education — 8%
- Government — 6%
- Utilities — 5%
- Insurance — 5%
- Other — 5%
- Technology — 4%
- Banking
- Brokers
- Transportation — 3%
- Not For Profit
- Food & Beverage
- Law
- Real Estate
- Retail
- Agriculture — 1%

LOCATION OF BUSINESS

- International — 2%
- U.S. and International — 24%
- Some U.S. States — 37%
- All U.S. States — 37%

JOB TITLE

- Manager, Supervisor, Team Lead — 34%
- Associate, Coordinator, Specialist, Representative, Generalist — 17%
- Associate Director, Director, Senior Director — 13%
- Other* — 11%
- Analyst — 10%
- Business Partner — 6%
- Consultant — 3%
- Administrative Assistant, Executive Assistant — 2%
- Account Executive/Manager
- CEO, COO, Chairman, President, Owner, Founder — 1%
- Counsel, General Counsel
- Healthcare Administrator

Other responses include: Benefits & Leave Administrator, HR Absence Manager, HR Liaison, Training Manager, and Workers Comp Care Manager

SURVEY RESULTS

Is the administration of your leave and/or disability benefits:

Insourced	**45%**
Cosourced	**32%**
Outsourced	**24%**
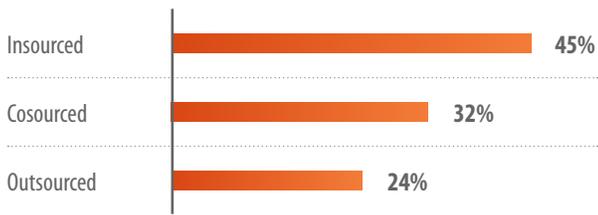
On average, about how much time per week is spent on administration of forms, claims, and leave tracking for your insourced program(s)?
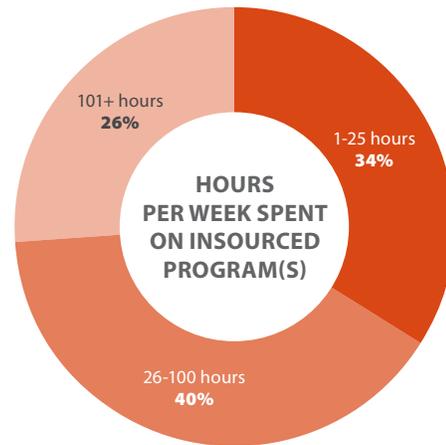
HOURS PER WEEK SPENT ON INSOURCED PROGRAM(S)

- 1-25 hours **34%**
- 26-100 hours **40%**
- 101+ hours **26%**

On average, about how much time per week is spent internally on administration of forms, claims, and leave tracking for your cosourced program(s)?
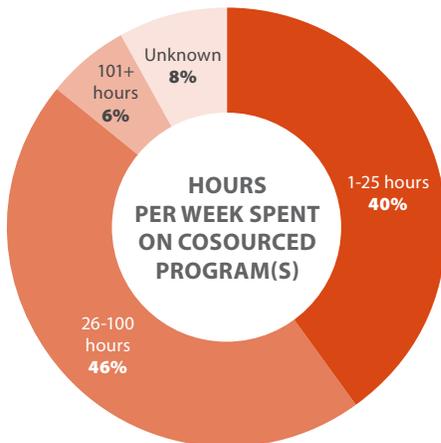
HOURS PER WEEK SPENT ON COSOURCED PROGRAM(S)

- 1-25 hours **40%**
- 26-100 hours **46%**
- 101+ hours **6%**
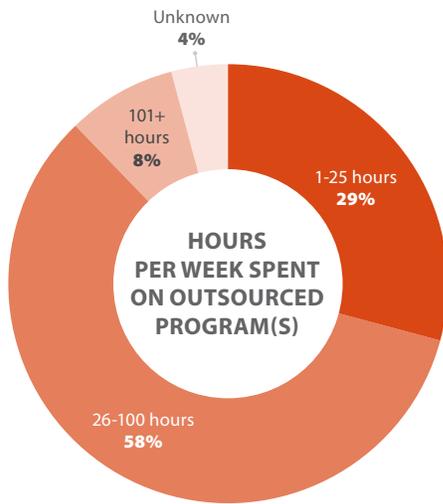- Unknown **8%**

On average, about how much time per week is spent internally on administration of forms, claims, and leave tracking for your outsourced program(s)?

Unknown
4%

101+ hours
8%

1-25 hours
29%

HOURS PER WEEK SPENT ON OUTSOURCED PROGRAM(S)

26-100 hours
58%

Based on your experience pre-COVID (before March 2020), please select your top challenges around absence management.

Administrative burden & tasks	**66%**
Compliance for leave laws & rules	**59%**
Tracking leaves	**52%**
Communicating with employees	**51%**
Return-to-work planning and scheduling	**49%**
Reporting & analytics	**48%**
Handling an increase of accommodation requests	**44%**
Understanding and meeting employees' evolving absence and disability needs	**35%**
Following up with medical providers	**27%**
Providing mental health support for employees	**24%**
Supporting employee caregivers	**5%**

Has your employee leave program been impacted by COVID (e.g., change in leave request volume, change in accommodation request volume, modification or adoption of new policies, etc.)?

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Significantly impacted	48%
Moderately impacted	35%
Slightly impacted	13%
No noticeable impact	4%
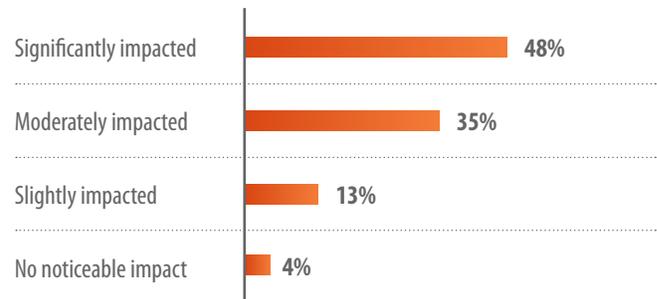
Based on your experience currently (March 2020 onward), select your top challenges around absence management.

Compliance for leave laws & rules	73%
Administrative burden & tasks	66%
Handling an increase of accommodation requests	60%
Tracking leaves	49%
Communicating with employees	43%
Understanding and meeting employees' evolving absence and disability needs	42%
Return-to-work planning and scheduling	41%
Reporting & analytics	36%
Providing mental health support for employees	32%
Following up with medical providers	25%
Supporting employee caregivers	8%

Since the pandemic began in March 2020, has your organization seen an increase in employee usage of telemedicine?

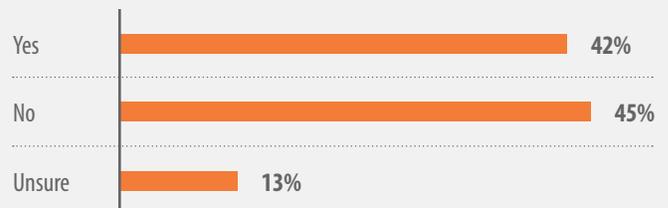|	
Yes	84%
No	2%
Unsure	14%
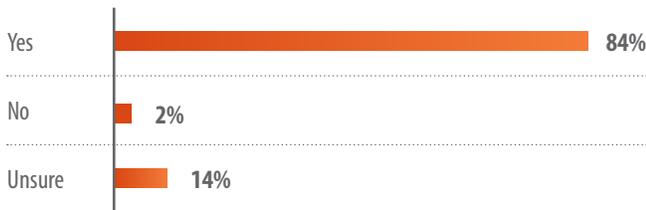
Since the pandemic began in March 2020, has your organization seen an increase in EAP utilization?
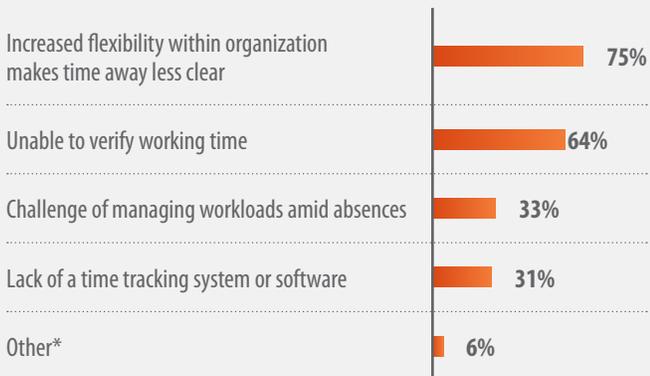
Yes	59%
No	9%
Unsure	33%
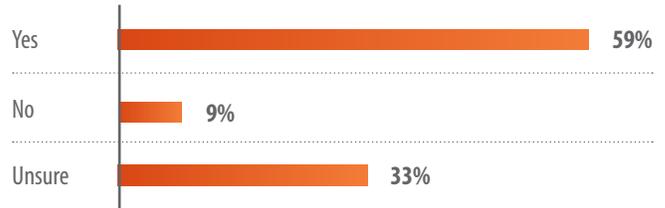
Since the pandemic began in March 2020, has your organization transitioned employees who previously worked on site to work from home?

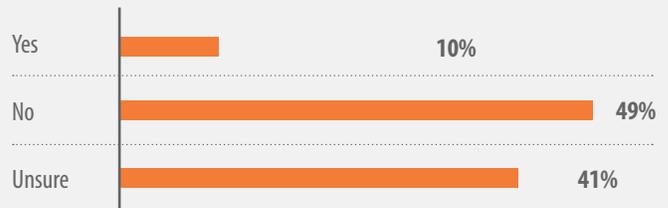|	
Yes	95%
No	4%
Unsure	1%

Since the transition to working from home, has it been more challenging to track intermittent leave utilization among employees?

Yes	42%
No	45%
Unsure	13%

What has made it more challenging to track intermittent leaves? Select all that apply.

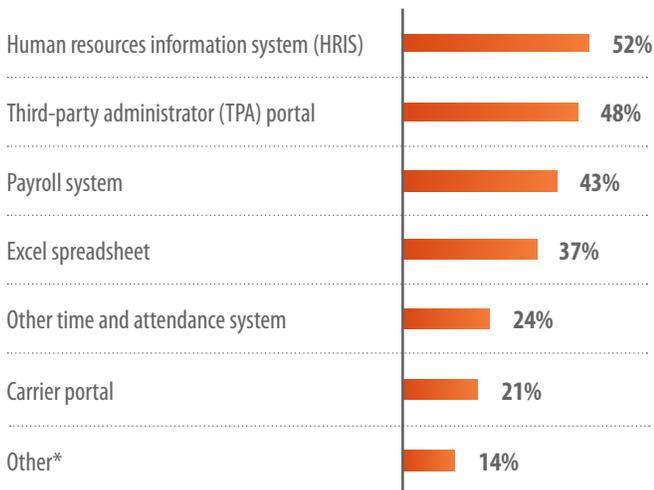|	
Increased flexibility within organization makes time away less clear	75%
Unable to verify working time	64%
Challenge of managing workloads amid absences	33%
Lack of a time tracking system or software	31%
Other*	6%

*Other response include: Employee communication

Since the transition to working from home, has there been an increase in musculoskeletal claims among employees?

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Yes	10%
No	49%
Unsure	41%

What technological resource(s) do you currently utilize to track and monitor your organization's leave and disability claims?

Resource	%
Human resources information system (HRIS)	52%
Third-party administrator (TPA) portal	48%
Payroll system	43%
Excel spreadsheet	37%
Other time and attendance system	24%
Carrier portal	21%
Other*	14%

Other responses include: Smartsheets; Salesforce; a combination of SAP payroll system and Excel spreadsheets; Kronos; Riskonnect; and custom integrated tracking system/database.

Do you feel your organization has adequate reporting & analytic resources on absence management?

	%
Yes	34%
No	54%
Unsure	12%
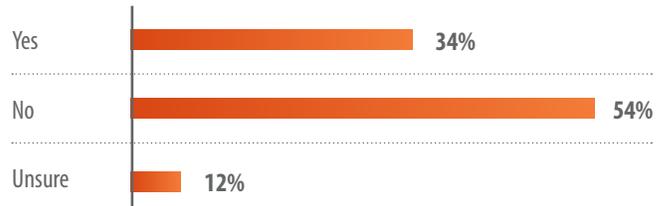
What would make the resources adequate?

- Additional manpower
- Customizable reports
- Dynamic dashboards
- Accurate, integrated data
- Robust HRIS and other systems
- Real-time updates

What data and analytics does your organization not currently have, but need?

- Tracking systems
- Integrated systems/data
- Specific leave and accommodation data

What type of reporting and analytics do you foresee being the most critical for your organization's absence program in the future?

- Leave tracking
- Trend data
- Absence and disability costs