

May 2023

The GBA-GIP Post-COVID Workplace Policies and Practices Survey: Implications for Future Space Planning

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, workplaces rarely offered remote work as an option, with roughly 6% of the American workforce participating in this work arrangement.^{1,2} To reduce viral transmission during the pandemic, many U.S. employers, including health care organizations and U.S. medical schools, pivoted to remote-work environments.³ At three years into the pandemic, U.S. medical schools continue to explore how and where their employees work and collaborate.

In August 2022, the AAMC, in conjunction with the Group on Business Affairs (GBA) and the Group on Institutional Planning (GIP), released the Preparing for a Post-COVID Era: Workplace Policies and Practices Survey to all LCME-accredited U.S. medical schools (155 of them at that time). The survey collected data on remote and hybrid work policies and practices, including space-planning considerations. A final survey [report](#) was issued in fall 2022.⁴

This data snapshot summarizes the Space and Related Policies portion of the survey to help medical school leaders make decisions about future space allocation.

Highlights: Respondents and Space Reconfiguration

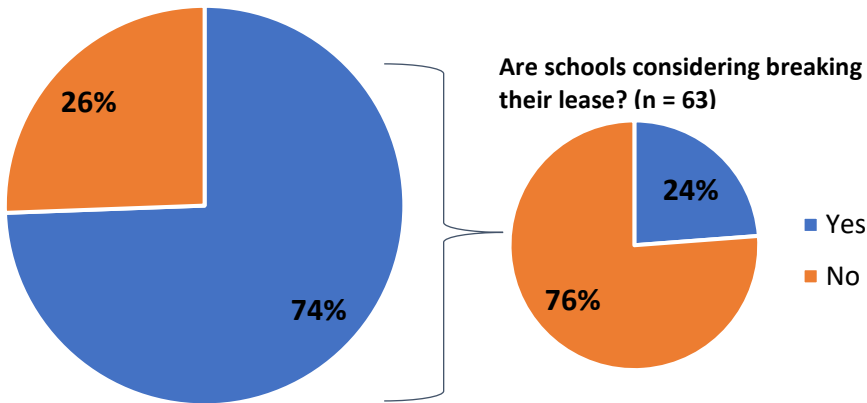
- Eighty-seven medical schools responded to the survey, and 56% of them (n = 49/87) confirmed there had been changes to space configurations because of the pandemic.
- Of the group whose space configurations had changed because of the pandemic, 41% and 45% either had already or planned to reduce staff office spaces, respectively, and 31% planned to increase both wet- and dry-lab research space (Table 1). Respondents were only able to check one action per location.

Table 1. Space Types and Approaches to Reconfiguration (n = 49)

Location of Change	Have Already Reduced Space	Plan to Reduce Space	Plan to Keep Same Space	Plan to Increase Space	Left Questions Blank
Education	2%	2%	74%	18%	4%
Wet-lab research space	0%	2%	63%	31%	4%
Conference rooms	12%	12%	57%	10%	9%
Dry-lab and computational research space	2%	4%	55%	31%	8%
Faculty offices	12%	16%	51%	14%	7%
Unassigned	6%	31%	22%	16%	25%
Staff offices	41%	45%	10%	0%	4%

Note: Values >30% are shaded.

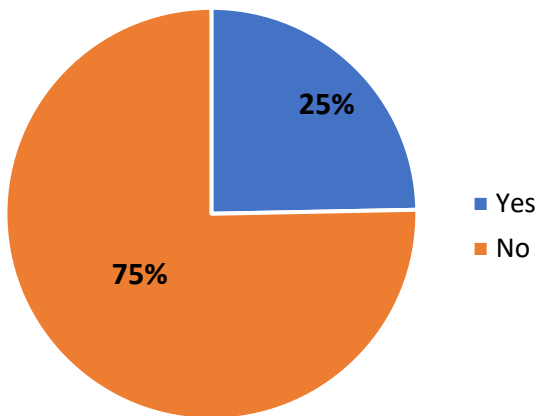
Were schools leasing space pre-pandemic? (n = 86)



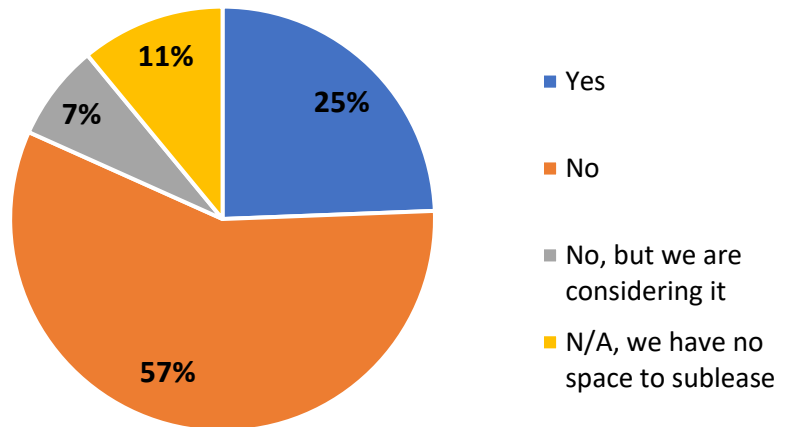
Highlights: Leasing

- Seventy-four percent (n = 64/86) of responding schools confirmed they were **leasing** space pre-pandemic.
- Of the group leasing space pre-pandemic, nearly a quarter (24%, n = 15/64) were considering breaking their lease agreements and three schools were exploring subleasing space.

Were schools subleasing space pre-pandemic? (n = 82)



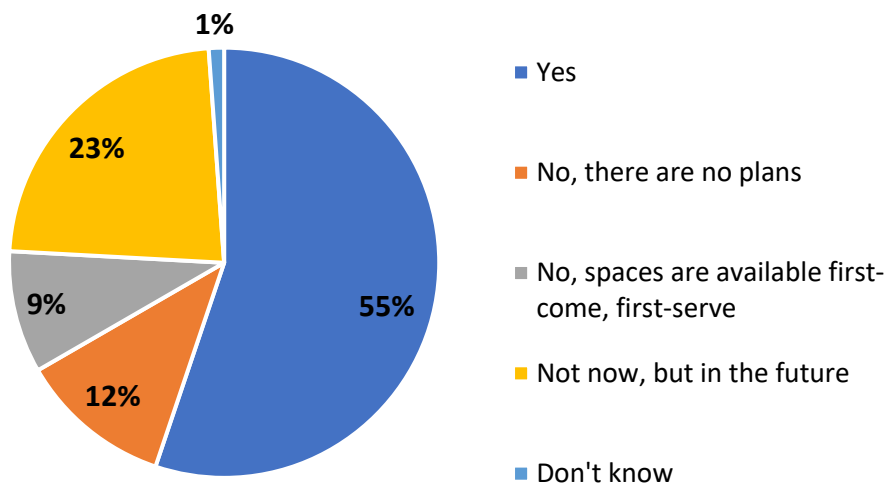
Are schools currently subleasing space? (n = 82)



Highlights: Subleasing

- A quarter of responding schools were subleasing space pre-pandemic, and this same group was still subleasing space in fall 2022.
- Of those who were not subleasing space pre-pandemic, 7% (n = 6) indicated that while they were not currently subleasing space, they were considering it for fall 2022.

Do schools currently offer hoteling space? (n = 87)



Highlights: Hoteling

- 55% of responding schools offered hoteling space in fall 2022 as a form of office space management, and 23% indicated they planned to in the future.
- The final question of the Space and Policies section asked for free-text responses to future considerations for reassigning space, and respondents indicated they were considering offering more hoteling, touchdown, collaborative, and shared office spaces.

Conclusion

The topic of managing space resources in a post-COVID era remains of particular interest considering employees' continued movement away from working in the traditional office setting and toward remote work and the costs of maintaining space. There appears to be a trend toward reducing traditional office spaces and providing shared, communal, and hoteling spaces for nonclinical and nonstudent-facing staff. Interestingly, nearly a quarter of responding schools that were leasing space indicated they were considering breaking their lease agreements, and a small group of those schools was considering subleasing space in the future. Respondents also indicated they were "analyzing, assessing, evaluating" and otherwise using the pandemic to reconsider how space is used and how to optimize existing spaces to prepare their offices, staff, and faculty for a post-COVID workplace.⁴ Additional data collections are needed to monitor these trends and support member institutions with future space considerations.

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References

1. Coate P. 2021. Remote Work Before, During, and After the Pandemic. NCCI. Jan. 25, 2021. https://www.ncci.com/SecureDocuments/QEB/QEB_Q4_2020_RemoteWork.html.
2. United States Census Bureau. The Number of People Primarily Working From Home Tripled Between 2019 and 2021 [Press release]. Sept. 15, 2022. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/people-working-from-home.html>.
3. Minkus L, Groepler N, Drobnič S. The significance of occupations, family responsibilities, and gender for working from home: lessons from COVID-19. *PLOS One*. 2022;17(6):e0266393. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0266393>.
4. AAMC. *Preparing for a Post-COVID Era: Workplace Policies and Practices Final Report*. Washington, DC: AAMC; 2022. <https://www.aamc.org/media/64286/download>.