Employers recognize that a virtual work environment or a hybrid approach of working from home and the office may be the new long-term norm, according to the survey.

As employers across the globe consider options for bringing workers back to the office, a new Korn Ferry survey shows that even though professionals are not afraid of returning, many will choose to stay at home. Nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of respondents say they are not afraid of returning to the office and 74 percent feel their colleagues will follow safety guidelines (wearing masks, social distancing), a Korn Ferry survey found. However, 53 percent say it is either only somewhat likely or not likely that they will return when the offices re-open. The majority of respondents (58 percent) say they are more productive when working virtually, even if there are distractions such as a spouse and children at home.

The new long-term norm. According to the survey, employers recognize that a virtual work environment or a hybrid approach of working from home and the office may be the new long-term norm. Only 14 percent say returning to the office every day will be mandatory. While a little more than half (57 percent) of the professionals surveyed say they are most looking forward to camaraderie with colleagues if they do go back to the office, 23 percent say they are not looking forward to any part of returning.

"A vast majority of professionals have spent the last several months working from home, and for many, the new routine has in fact made them more productive," said Sarah Jensen Clayton, Senior Client Partner and Lead, North America Culture & Change. "But it's still incumbent upon employers to create new, virtual ways to maintain organizational culture and employee engagement."

"Regardless if the decision is to allow employees to continue working virtually or bring them back to the office, now is the time for employers to re-evaluate the employee experience," said Clayton. "COVID has dramatically changed employees' expectations and the future of work is being defined now."