Changes in COVID-related restrictions and concerns on work and research between January and August 2021

Facility restrictions

Overall, restrictions to facility access declined for both academic (students and faculty) and non-academic geoscientists since early 2021, with more than half of academic respondents reporting no facility restrictions in August 2021, and 38% of non-academic geoscientists reporting the same. Although restrictions on non-academic facilities began to decline two months before academic settings, by August 2021, there were far fewer restrictions at academic institutions than at non-academic facilities.

Health and safety restrictions

Since the start of 2021, both academic respondents and non-academic geoscientists have reported fewer health and safety restrictions. However, in August 2021, there was an uptick across both cohorts in the percentage of respondents reporting requirements related to COVID-19 testing (academic: 45%, non-academic: 31%), use of face masks (academic: 77%, non-academic: 63%), and increased health and safety protocols (academic: 45%, non-academic: 46%). In addition, social distancing measures were reported by 43% of academic respondents and 46% of non-academic geoscientists in August 2021.

Since March 2021, both cohorts reported an increase in COVID-19 vaccination as a health and safety requirement. Comments by respondents frequently indicated that while
COVID-19 vaccination was not required in most cases, vaccinated individuals had fewer or no health and safety restrictions, while unvaccinated individuals were required to take periodic COVID-19 tests and wear face masks.

Credit: AGI, data from AGI’s Geoscience COVID-19 Impacts Study

Meeting and travel restrictions

Both academic and non-academic geoscientists reported a decline in pandemic-related meeting and travel restrictions since the start of 2021. In-person meetings with restrictions have increased while virtual-only meetings have eased. Furthermore, as travel prohibitions have eased, there has been an increase in the percentage of respondents reporting that travel is permitted, but with approval, additional paperwork, and other restrictions.

Credit: AGI, data from AGI’s Geoscience COVID-19 Impacts Study

Concerns

Workplace safety continued to be a major concern for both academic and non-academic geoscientists, with two-thirds of geoscience students, and 58% of academic faculty and non-geoscience academics indicating this as a concern in August 2021. For non-academic geoscientists by August 2021, the percentage of respondents reporting concerns that were moderately to extremely driven by the pandemic had declined to near 10% for all categories other than workplace safety (58%) and employment opportunities (16%).

Credit: AGI, data from AGI’s Geoscience COVID-19 Impacts Study

For academic faculty, the percentage of respondents reporting concerns moderately to extremely driven by the pandemic declined for much of the year for academic rigor of programs, educational opportunities, job security, and workplace safety. Yet, with August 2021, there were upticks in the percentage of faculty reporting concerns across each of these categories. In addition, there has been a slow increase in the
percentage of academic faculty reporting concerns related to being able to meet financial obligations as well as those reporting concerns related to the availability of employment opportunities.

The percentage of geoscience students reporting concerns moderately to extremely driven by the pandemic related to the academic rigor of programs remained between 33% and 46% of students since January 2021. Concerns over availability of educational opportunities has fluctuated widely over the year with the highest percentage of students indicating this concern in April and May and again in August 2021. Concerns over availability of employment opportunities continues to be the top concern of students in 2021.

We will continue to provide current snapshots on the impacts of COVID-19 on the geoscience enterprise throughout the year. For more information, and to participate in the study, please visit: https://www.americangeosciences.org/workforce/covid19

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