

Science and Digital Briefs

By Shopper Editor Dave Bunting

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Study found 1 in every 30 American employees quit last September

Hiring good employees has always been a challenge - but these days it's harder than ever. And it is unlikely to improve anytime soon.

The so-called quit rate – the share of workers who voluntarily leave their jobs – [hit a new record of 3%](#) in September 2021, according to the latest data available from the Bureau of Labor and Statistics. The rate was highest in the leisure and hospitality sector, where 6.4% of workers quit their jobs in September. In all, [20.2 million workers left their employers](#) from May through September.

Companies are feeling the effects. In August 2021, a survey found that 73% of 380 employers in North America were having [difficulty attracting employees](#) – three times the share that said so the previous year. And 70% expect this difficulty to persist into 2022.

Observers have [blamed a wide variety of factors for all the turnover](#), from employees learning they could survive without working on the small COVID supplemental paychecks. Employees also quit to avoid the workplace hostility about masking and vaccinating, for fear of contracting COVID-19 from co-workers or customers on the job. and because of paltry wages and tips.

[Info: shpr.fyi/workersquit](#)

Electric Vehicles require metals that we must either mine or import

The United States has enough reserves of lithium, copper and other metals to build millions of its own electric vehicles (EVs), but rising opposition to new mines may force the country to rely on imports and delay efforts to electrify the nation's automobiles.

The tension underscores the dilemma facing the United States going into 2022, a year in which U.S. policymakers hope to see groundbreakings on a raft of EV manufacturing facilities from [Ford Motor Co\(F.N\)](#), [General Motors Co\(GM.N\)](#) and others.

President Joe Biden [signaled](#) earlier this year he prefers to rely on allies for EV metals, part of a strategy designed to placate environmentalists. That means U.S. automakers will find themselves competing with international rivals for supply amid the global rush to electrification.

A Reuters analysis found that proposed U.S. mining projects could produce enough copper to build more than 6 million EVs, enough lithium to build more than 2 million EVs and enough nickel to build more than 60,000 EVs, far short of the need.



"If we don't start getting some more mining going this coming year, we will not have the raw materials domestically to support EV manufacturing," said James Calaway, executive chairman of Ioneer Ltd

[Info: shpr.fyi/needmines](#)

COVID guidance has changed

Vaccination no longer fully prevents COVID

Vaccination no longer fully protects us against COVID infection because:

1) The new Omicron variant is much more infectious than previous variants so it can overwhelm our vaccination immunity, and

2) Immunity produced by vaccination declines after six months or so.

Yes, vaccines don't prevent us from getting the virus. Or, at least, they don't guarantee it won't happen."

Nevertheless, vaccines including boosters are still strongly recommended because they:

1) Greatly reduce our chances of catching COVID, and

2) They greatly reduce the seriousness of COVID if we catch it.

Vaccines reduce the seriousness of the infection and help your body fight off the virus quicker, but they do not prevent all infections.

The latest data show that unvaccinated individuals are roughly 10 times more likely to get COVID-19 than vaccinated and boosted people, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Rochelle Walensky has said — and they're about 20 times more likely to die from it.

A [September CDC report found that vaccination reduced hospitalization among those 75 and older by 76 percent](#). That's not 100 percent, but it is considerable.

A lot of us have decried the "Covid Zero" mentality — that if governments just enacted enough strict vaccination mandates, lockdowns, mask requirements, stay-at-home-orders, quarantines, occupancy limits, travel restrictions and so on, then somehow the virus would disappear.

But COVID will not disappear. The virus is going to become endemic, be with us permanently. Like the common cold, it will always be around. Apparently, it is in the process of getting weaker and weaker, while more and more of the population acquires natural immunity from prior infection or well-prepared immune systems from vaccination. Hopefully the masking that prevents us from seeing each other's smiles will soon become history.

[Info: shpr.fyi/vacclessprotect](#)



"Cloth masks are little more than facial decorations"

Most of our masking protocols are [requiring people to take actions that won't do any good against this variant](#):

"There's no place for our masking with cloth masks in light of Omicron," said CNN Medical Analyst Dr. Leana Wen, on CNN Newsroom.

If we want to protect ourselves and our world with masks, "We need to be wearing at least a three-ply surgical mask," she said. These masks are also known as disposable masks and can be found at most drugstores and some grocery and retail stores. "You can wear a cloth mask on top of that, but do not just wear a cloth mask alone."

[Info: shpr.fyi/clothmaskspoor](#)

Do we still need masks in schools?

If everyone's going to get it eventually, and most infections will be asymptomatic or mild, do we still need mask mandates in schools?

Scientists generally agree that, according to the research literature, wearing masks can help protect people from the coronavirus, but the precise extent of that protection, particularly in schools, remains unknown—and it might be very small. What data do exist have been interpreted into guidance in many ways. The World Health Organization, for example, does [not recommend](#) masks for children under age 6. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control [recommends against](#) the use of masks for any children in primary school.

Masks do less toward preventing the wearer from catching COVID. Masks do more toward preventing the infected wearer from spreading the virus to others. And remember that we are [most contagious on the day before we show symptoms](#).

[Info: shpr.fyi/maskinschools](#)

Omicron has hit Seattle

Omicron appears to have 40 to 75% reduced risk of hospitalizations compared to Delta.

A U.K. study analyzed more than 528,000 Omicron cases and 573,000 Delta cases from Nov. 22 through Dec. 26 finding COVID vaccines reduce the risk of hospitalization from Omicron by 60% to 75% compared to Delta. A booster dose provides even better protection.

[Info: shpr.fyi/omicronless](#)

Dave Bunting, Jan. 3, 2021
References in links below items.
See these columns on my blog:

[daverant.com](#)