

HAYS BAROMETER REPORT

THE MENTAL HEALTH
AND ED&I EDITION

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INTRODUCTION

Last month we passed six months since Australia & New Zealand's first lockdown took effect. The period between then and now has shown there is no clear or quick path out of this crisis and the short-term future remains very much unknown. As lockdowns resumed in metropolitan Melbourne in July and New Zealand in August, it was a stark reminder that this pandemic could continue to impact our world of work for some time to come.

It's no wonder then that along with attempting to navigate their way out of the crisis and through recovery, business leaders have become more concerned with their employees' mental health and wellbeing than perhaps any other time in recent history.

In our new Hays Barometer Report, we present to you a snapshot of how employers are acting to protect the mental health and wellbeing of their staff and how employees' mental health and wellbeing currently stands. One key finding is that less than half of professionals rate their current mental health and wellbeing as positive, down 21% since before the outbreak.

Other highlights include a mismatch between the level of support employers say they've offered and employees say they've received and a commitment from over 70% of employers to make mental health

& wellbeing more of a priority over the next three to six months.

Our findings also cover another highly pertinent issue at this point in time, namely equality, diversity & inclusion (ED&I). The Black Lives Matter movement has led to many organisations examining the support they offer to Indigenous employees. Yet as our survey shows, just 14% of employers say the importance of ED&I within their organisation has increased because of the Black Lives Matter movement. However, a further 30% intend to make ED&I more of a priority over the next three to six months.

But good intentions are not enough. The Black Lives Matter movement has created a newfound resolve within many organisations to make lasting positive change. For many – including here at Hays – the first step has been the introduction of a Reconciliation Action Plan. Other suggestions on how you can make improvements in your organisation can be found in the following pages.

As part of our survey, we also asked employers and professionals about their current priorities and whether they plan any long-term changes to either their workplace or the way they view their career as a result of COVID-19. You'll find their plans an interesting peek into what the immediate future could hold for us.

We hope you find the material contained in the following pages insightful. To discuss our findings,

or any other recruitment or world of work issue, please contact your local Hays consultant in [Australia](#) or [New Zealand](#).

“ One key finding is that less than half of professionals rate their current mental health and wellbeing as positive, down 21% since before the outbreak. ”

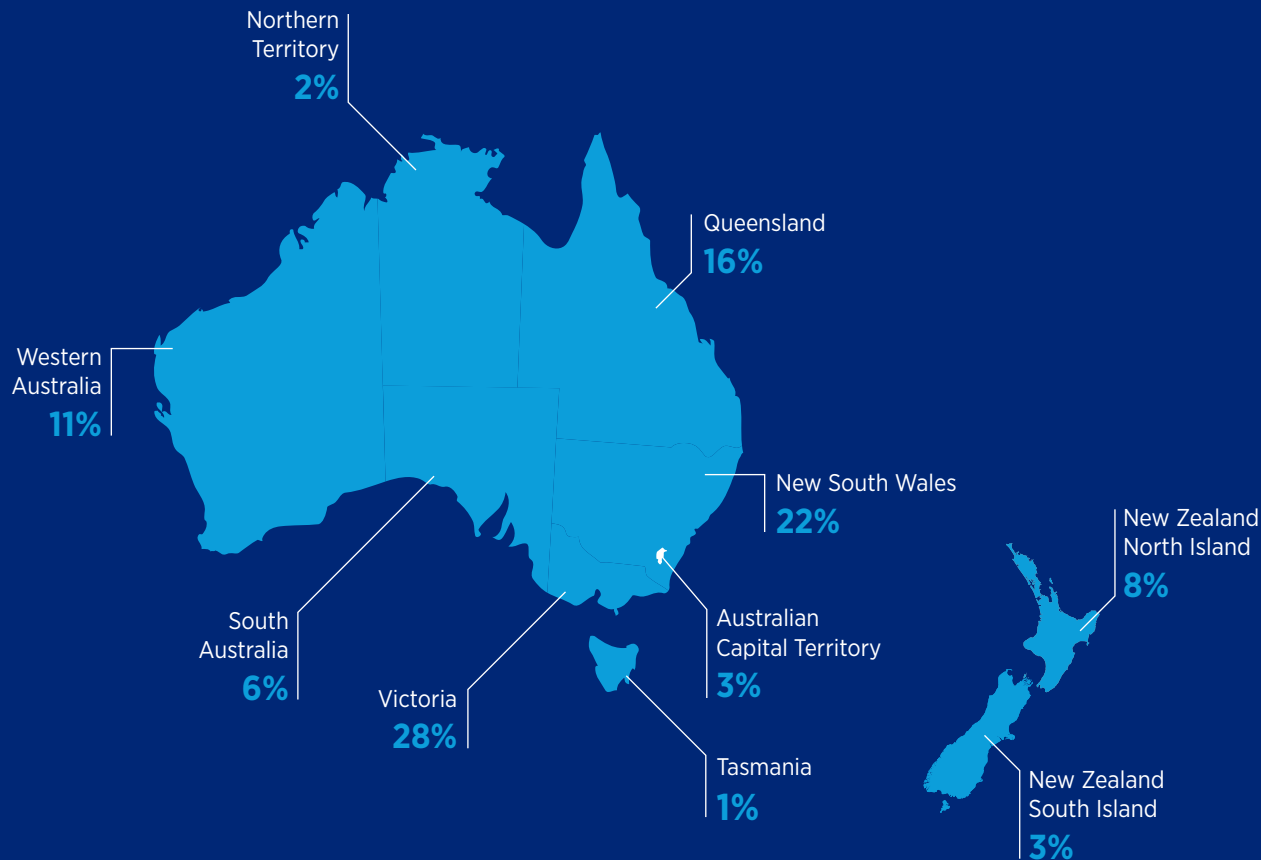


Nick Deligiannis
Managing Director, Hays ANZ

ABOUT THE SURVEY

Our survey was conducted in August 2020 and was completed by 4,105 people. Of these, 966 responded as employers and 3,139 were working professionals. In the following pages we compare and contrast the views of these employers and employees in various industries and locations.

Location of survey participants



Top six industries our survey participants work in



Survey participants by sector



Total by location



KEY FINDINGS

More than half of professionals say an organisation's **ED&I policies** will be either vital or important considerations when they next look for a job.



41%

of employers say their organisation has already **returned to growth** or rapid growth.



30%

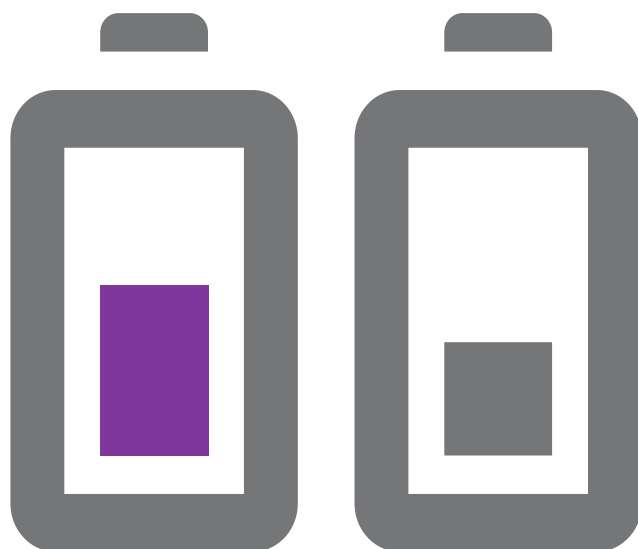
of employers say **ED&I** will become more of a priority for their organisation in the next three to six months.



71%

of professionals say **job security** has become more important to them since the outbreak of COVID-19.

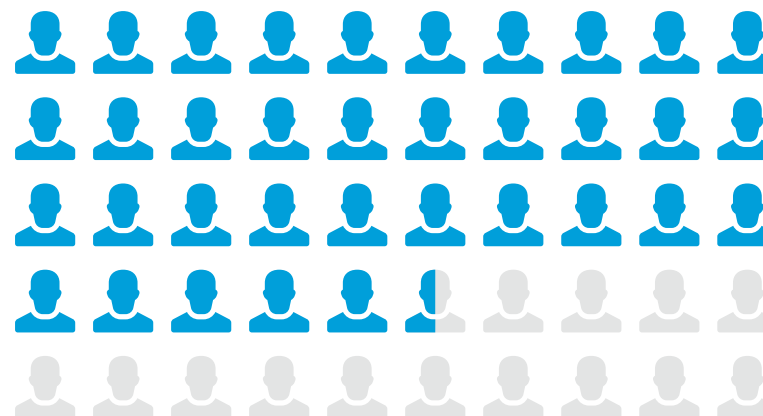
● Pre-outbreak ● Currently



42%

of professionals rate their current **mental health & wellbeing** as positive, down from 63%

Nearly three quarters of employers say their organisation's focus on **mental health & wellbeing** has increased either significantly or moderately during the pandemic.



COVID-19 CURRENT WORKPLACE SENTIMENT

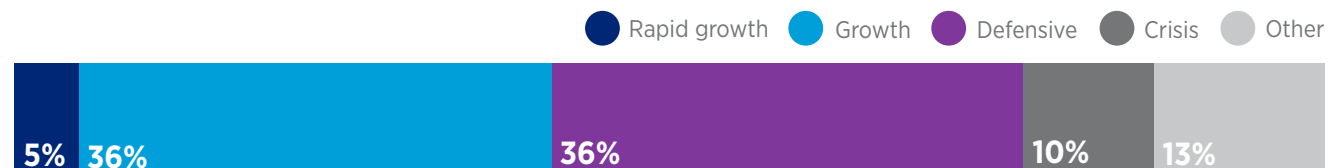


Organisational status: Returning to growth Employer snapshot

To gauge how organisations are faring in light of COVID-19, we asked our survey respondents to specify which phase they deemed their organisation to be in. Responses ranged from crisis through to rapid growth.

Our results suggest there is light at the end of the tunnel, with 36% of employers overall indicating their organisation has already returned to growth and a further 5% experiencing rapid growth. At the other end of the scale, 10% say they are still in the crisis phase while 36% describe their current state as defensive.

Which of the following best describes the current phase of your organisation?

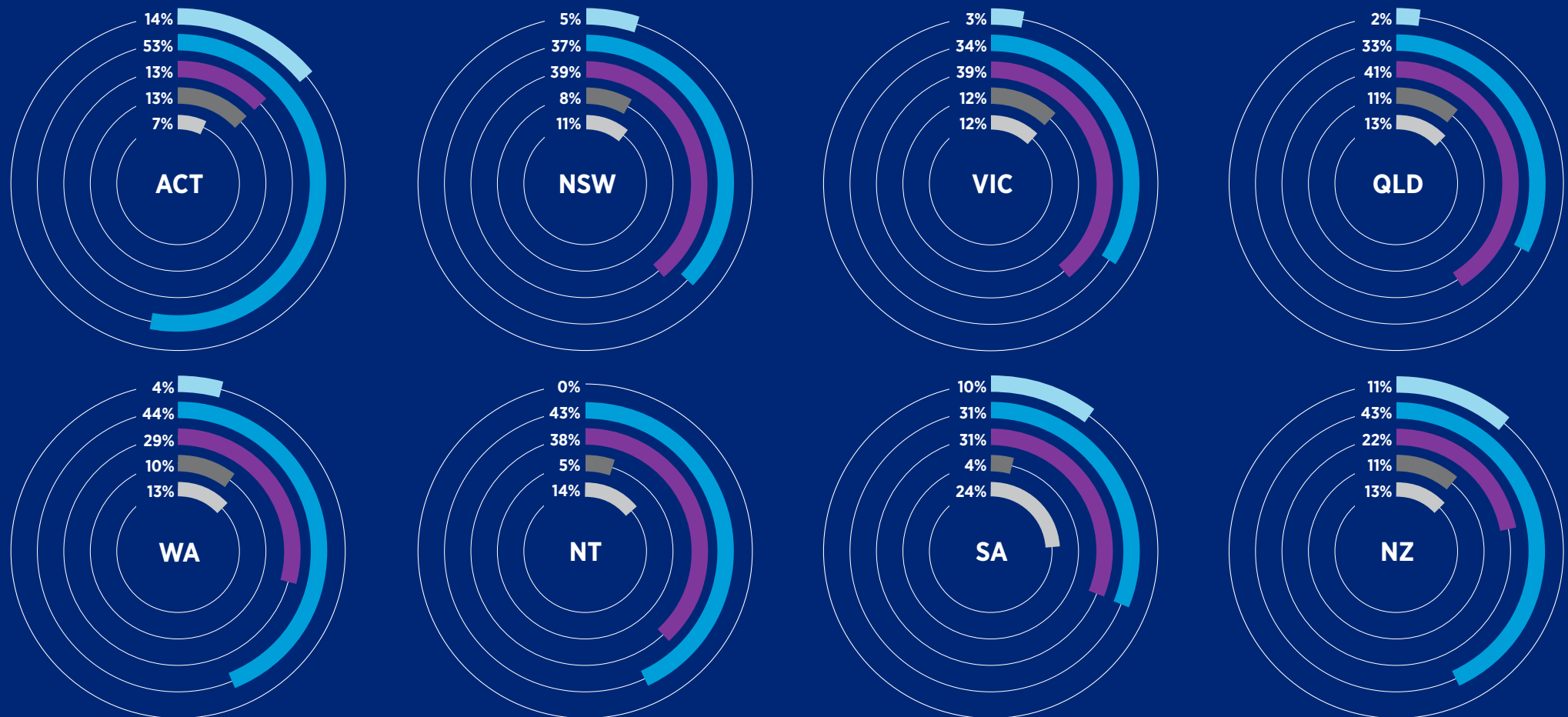


41%
of organisations are in either growth or rapid growth phase

Location snapshot

Organisation's current phase

● Rapid growth
 ● Growth
 ● Defensive
 ● Crisis
 ● Other



Perhaps unsurprisingly, ACT is leading the charge with 67% of employers experiencing 'growth' or 'rapid growth'. In Western Australia, 48% of employers are experiencing 'growth' or 'rapid growth', while between 41 and 43% of employers in

South Australia, New South Wales and the Northern Territory are also experiencing such growth. However, our results also suggest that the road out of recovery will be uneven. While ACT leads the way, Queensland and Victoria lag with 52 and 51% of

employers respectively still in the crisis or defensive phases. In Tasmania, 50% are in the defensive phase. In New Zealand, 54% of employers are experiencing 'growth' or 'rapid growth', which is ahead of every state and territory in Australia except ACT.

Top business priority: Job protection is key

Our survey shows that employers are focused on protecting the jobs of their staff. In fact, this is the most important priority now for over half of our respondents.

While there have been many pandemic job losses in organisations large and small, those that can protect jobs are able to shield their staff from unemployment and the resulting financial and mental health & wellbeing hardships. In fact, very early in this crisis employers prioritised the mental health & wellbeing of employees and our survey confirms this remains the second most important priority for them today.

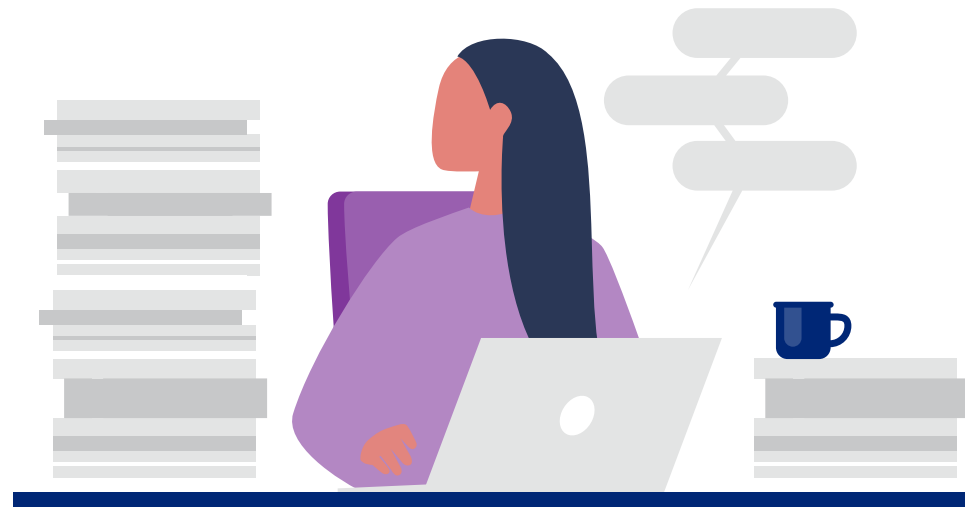
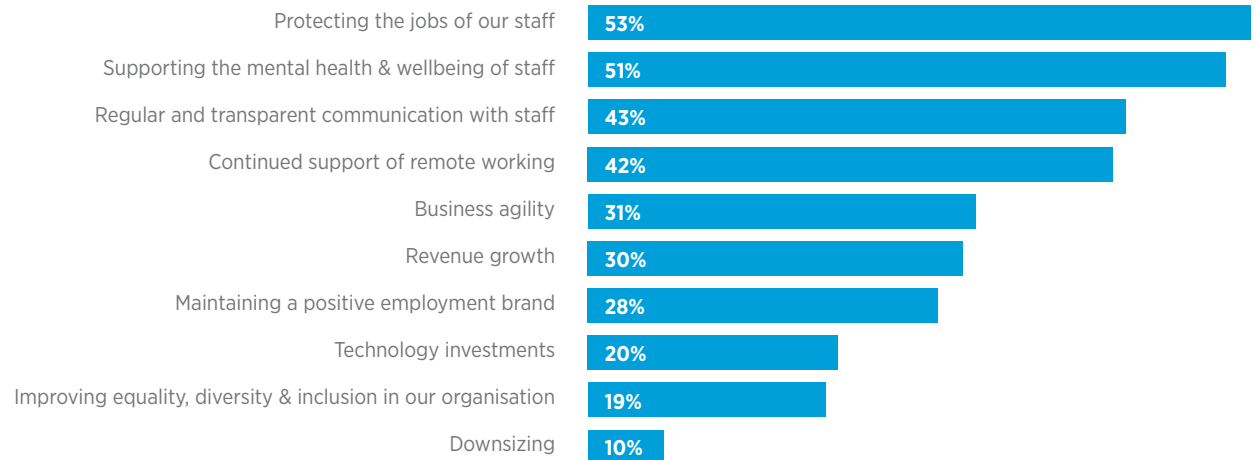
Also important are regular and transparent communication with staff and continued support of remote working, which are additional strategies employers have prioritised to lessen the mental health & wellbeing toll of COVID-19.

Private sector employers are more likely to prioritise revenue growth (40% versus 14%).

But public and third sector employers are more likely to prioritise the mental health & wellbeing of staff (61% versus 44%), continued support for remote working (49% versus 37%), regular and transparent communication with staff (47% versus 39%) and business agility (34% versus 30%).

Which of the following are you prioritising at this point in time?

(Multiple responses allowed)



Looking ahead: Flexible working crucial

While it will take time to settle upon a post-COVID-19 'normal', employers are beginning to think about the long-term changes they may make to their workplace. Topping this list is the offering of regular flexible working. This pandemic has dramatically changed the way people work in many industries and it's hard to see the ability to work remotely dissipating post-COVID-19.

While flexible working shouldn't be considered a cure-all for your engagement and retention challenges, the success of the shift to remote working in many organisations during the pandemic has removed most of the former objections to the practice. Consequently, failing to offer some form of flexible working post-pandemic could damage your employer brand and ability to attract and retain top talent.

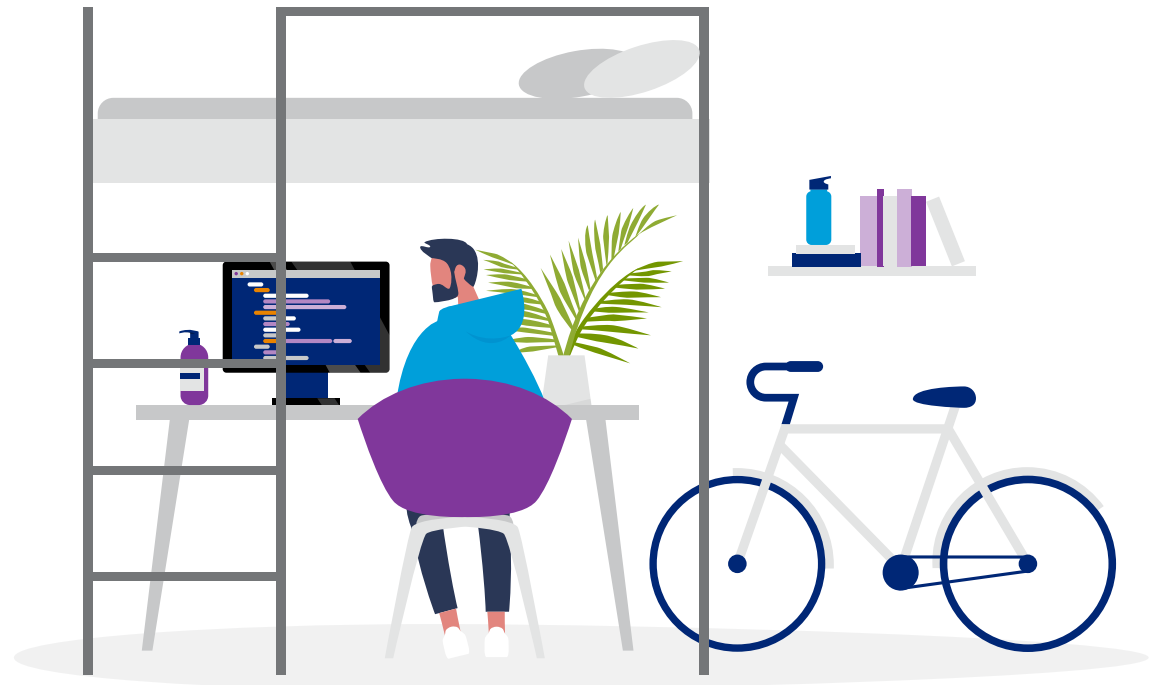
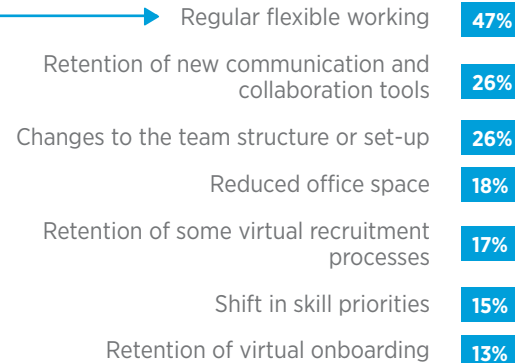
▲ 75%
Office Support

▲ 55%
Information
Technology
and Human
Resources

▼ 36%
Construction
& Property

At this stage, are you planning any long-term changes to your workplace as a result of COVID-19?

(Multiple responses allowed)



Career confidence hit hard

Employee snapshot

Almost half (49%) of Australia & New Zealand's skilled professionals say they feel less positive about their career in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

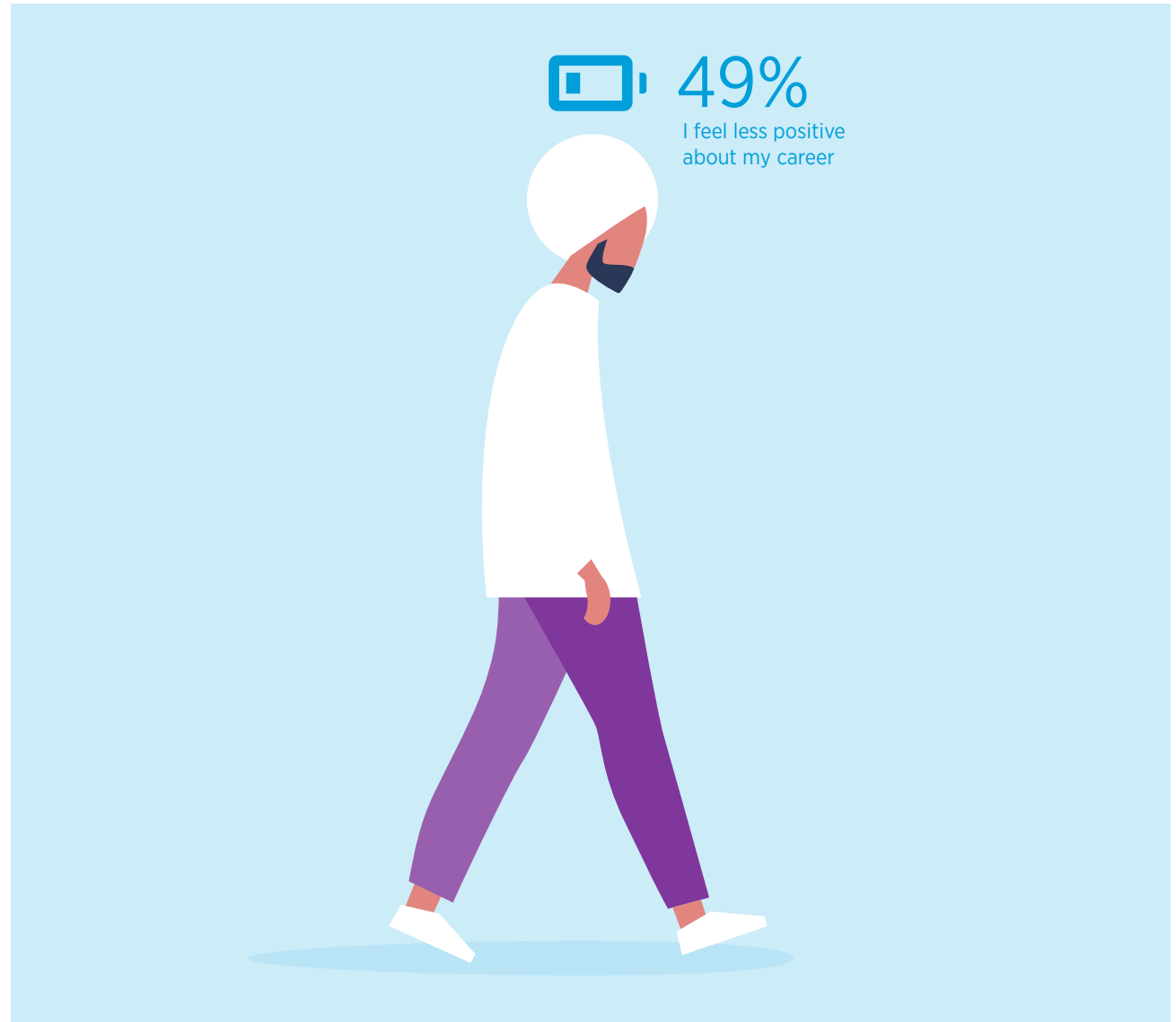
This crisis has upended the professional lives of many and the shock brought on by rapid change and uncertainty has been unsettling. However, confidence will eventually return. Indeed, as we saw on page 6, employers are already beginning to return to growth. In time, competition for the top talent will heat up once more and careers will progress with certainty.

Has the coronavirus pandemic changed how you feel about your career?

 **13%**
I feel more positive
about my career

 **38%**
No change

 **49%**
I feel less positive
about my career



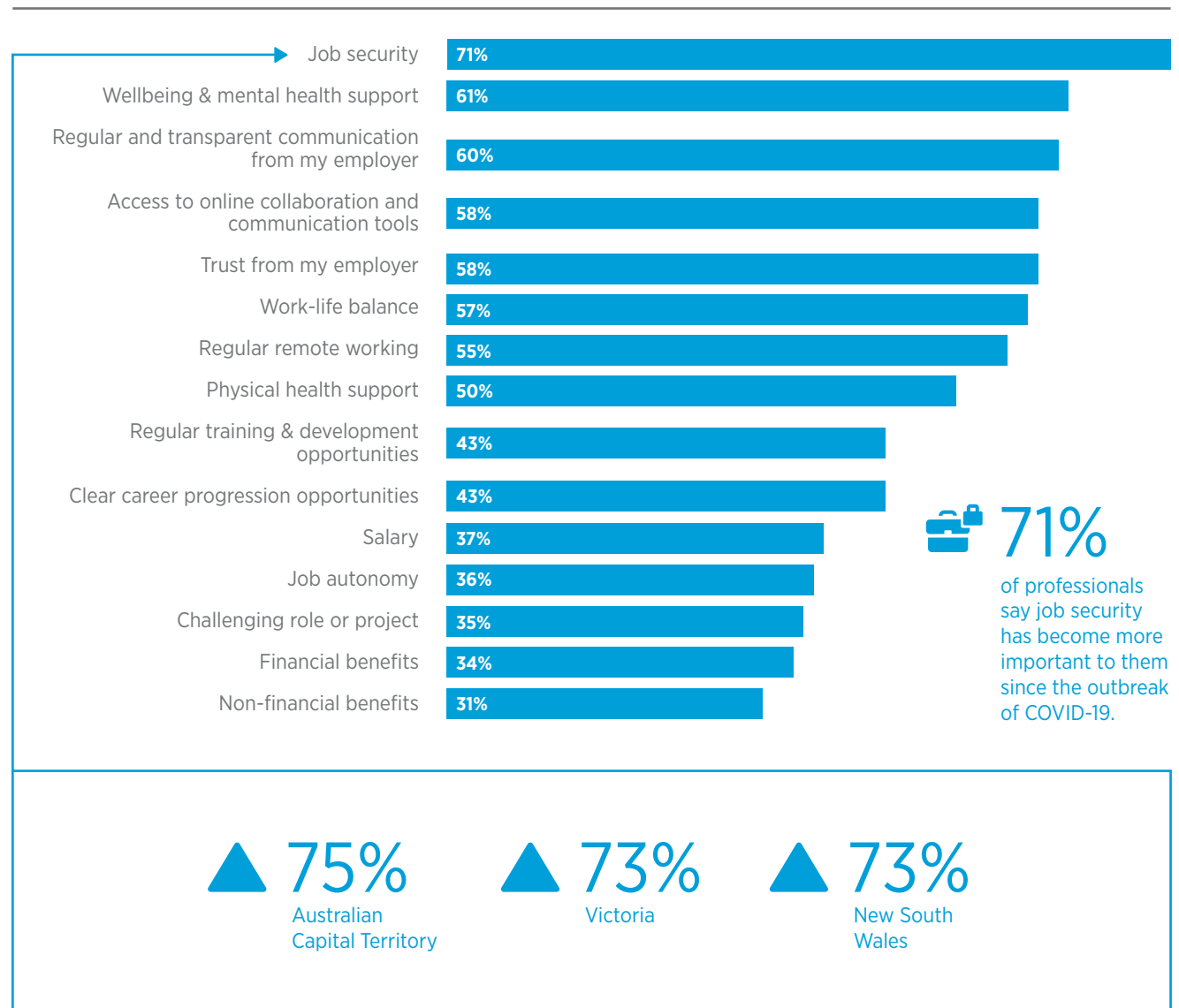
Top priorities: Job security is key

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the importance to professionals of working in a secure job. When they next consider a new job, 71% say job security will be a far more important aspect to them. This sentiment is strongest for those professionals working in ACT (75%), followed by Victoria and New South Wales (both 73%).

As a result of their experience during the COVID-19 outbreak, wellbeing & mental health support and regular and transparent communication from employers have also become more important. With a significant percentage of people now exposed to remote working, another big shift occurs in the growing importance placed on finding an employer who offers access to online collaboration and communication tools, trusts their staff, offers work-life balance and provides regular remote working.

For employers, these findings point to the main drivers of your post-COVID-19 attraction and retention strategy. After all, retaining top talent has always been of strategic importance, however it will need to become even more of a priority if organisations are to engage and retain their best people to return to growth as quickly as possible.

What aspects of a job are now more important to you since lockdown? (Multiple responses allowed)



Top three aspects of job importance

Industry snapshot

IT

Regular remote working	76%
Access to online collaboration and communication tools	73%
Job security	72%

Construction & property

Job security	68%
Trust from my employer	56%
Wellbeing & mental health support	56%

Resources & Mining

Job security	66%
Regular and transparent communication from my employer	55%
Work-life balance	55%

Marketing & Digital

Regular remote working	82%
Access to online collaboration and communication tools	77%
Work-life balance	75%

Office Support

Job security	71%
Wellbeing & mental health support	63%
Regular and transparent communication from my employer	61%

Human Resources

Regular remote working	80%
Job security	78%
Work-life balance and access to online collaboration and communication tools	67%

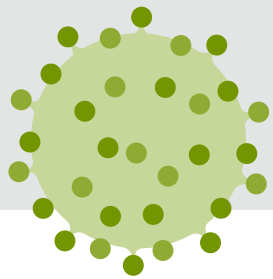
Accountancy & Finance

Job security	72%
Regular remote working	71%
Access to online collaboration and communication tools	67%



WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

COVID-19 TAKES ITS TOLL



Current status: In decline

A growing focus on mental health and wellbeing was bubbling away in the background of the pre-crisis world of work, but it accelerated in response to COVID-19 as employers looked to ensure not only the physical safety of their staff but also their mental health & wellbeing. However, despite their best efforts, only 42% of the professionals we spoke to rate their current mental health & wellbeing as positive. This is down from 63% before the first COVID-19 lockdown.

By industry, resources & mining is a stand-out, with 87% of professionals rating their current mental health & wellbeing as either positive or neutral, down just 7% since before the outbreak.

At the other end of the scale, only 55% of sales professionals rate their current mental health & wellbeing as positive or neutral, down from 90% pre-pandemic.

How would you rate your mental health & wellbeing?

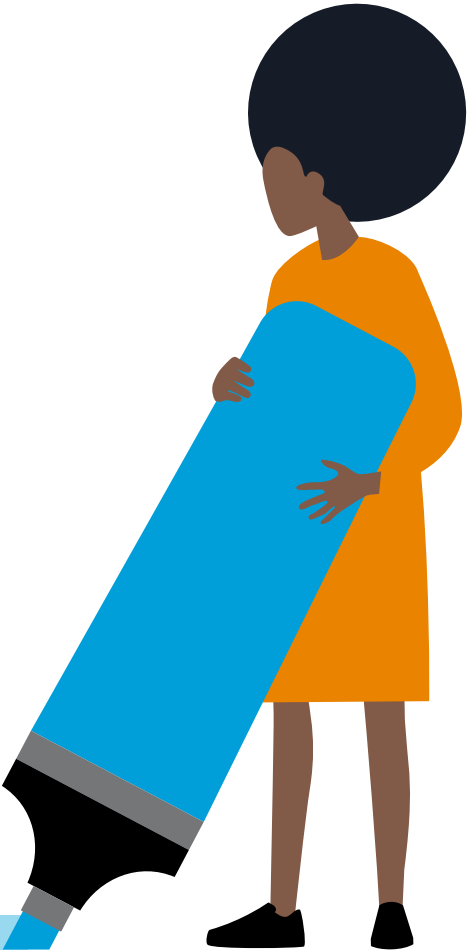
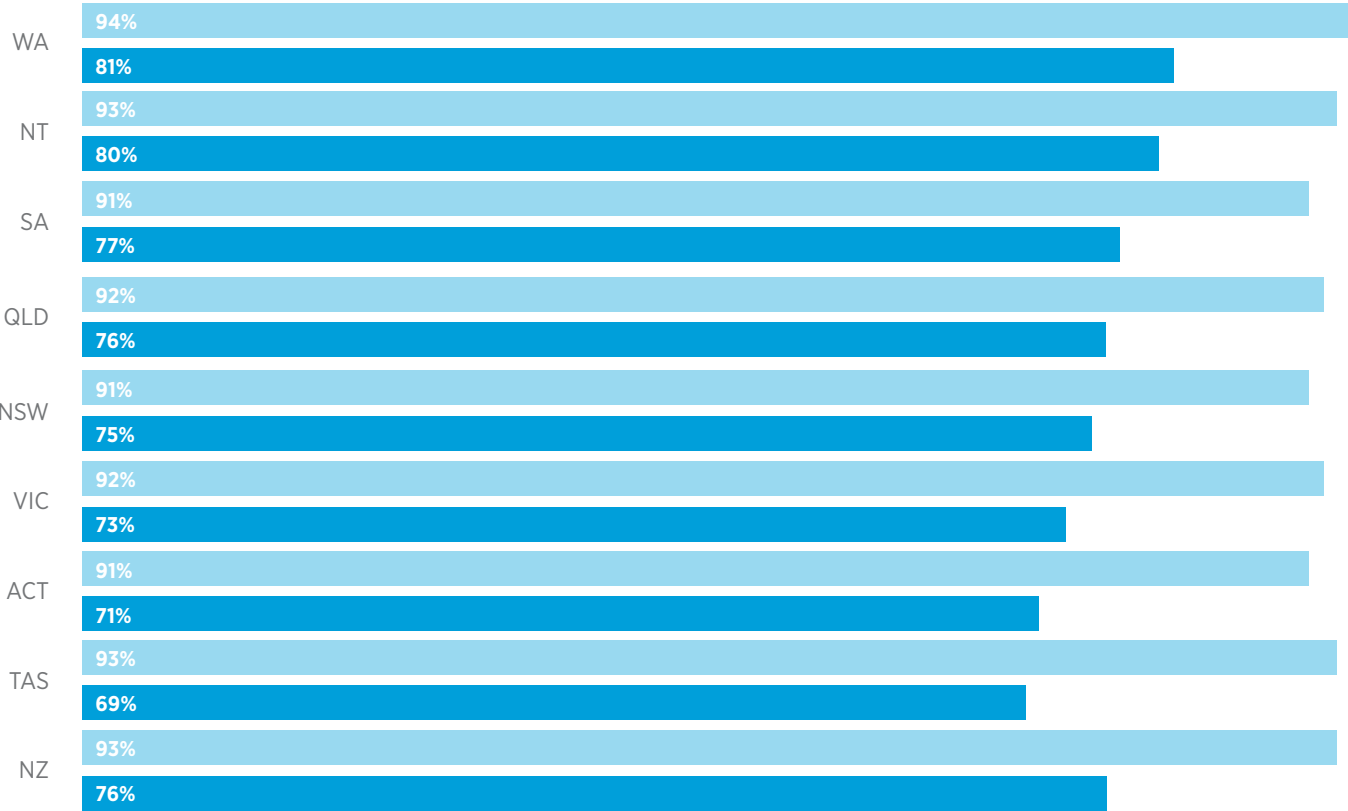
● Positive ● Neutral ● Negative



Mental health & wellbeing ratings by state/territory & New Zealand

Percentage of people who rate their current mental health & wellbeing as either positive or neutral

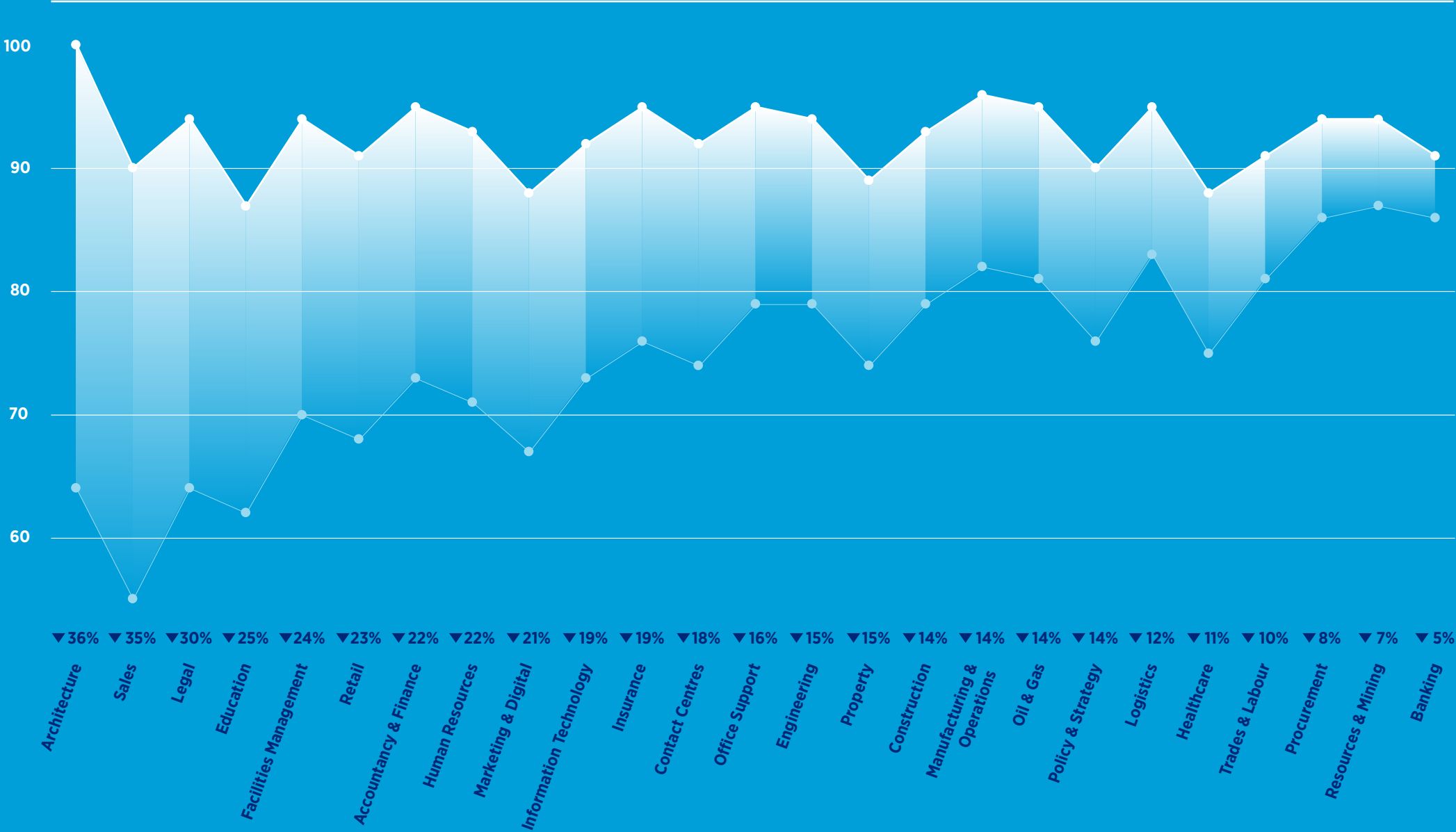
Pre-COVID-19 Current



Industry snapshot

Percentage of people who rate their current mental health & wellbeing as either positive or neutral

Pre-COVID-19 During COVID-19 Decrease



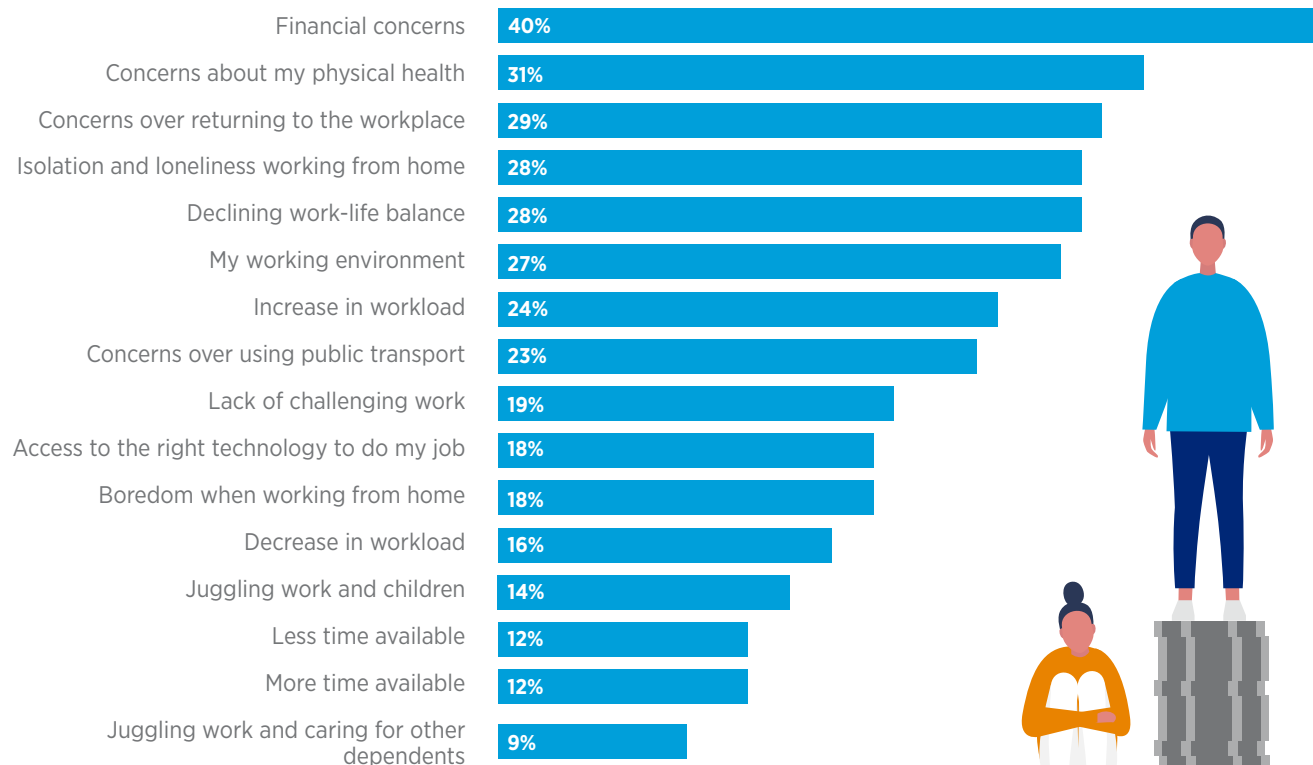
Challenges to mental health & wellbeing: Financial concerns greatest pain point

During the pandemic, employees have certainly been pushed to their emotional limits and faced many challenges to their mental health & wellbeing, including financial worries, concerns about their physical health, apprehension about returning to the workplace and isolation and loneliness for those working from home.

Professionals in Western Australia and Queensland both nominated their working environment (29% and 27% respectively) as their greatest challenge. However, in Tasmania, ACT and South Australia it is declining work-life balance (40%, 34% and 27% respectively). In the Northern Territory, an increase in workload (28%) is the greatest pain point, while in Victoria, New South Wales and New Zealand, it is isolation and loneliness when working from home (37%, 31% and 29% respectively).

Isolation and loneliness when working from home	28%
Marketing & Digital	50%
Human Resources	48%
Banking	39%
Information Technology	35%
Increase in workload	24%
Construction & Property	35%
Declining work-life balance	28%
Marketing & Digital	47%

What has been the greatest challenge to your mental health & wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic? (Multiple responses allowed)



Divided opinions over the level of support provided

Industry snapshot

At the same time as the mental health & wellbeing of professionals has deteriorated, employers have increased support for their staff.

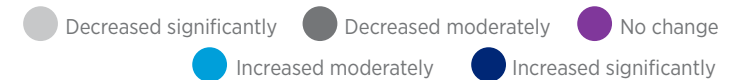
In fact, 72% of employers say their organisation's focus on mental health & wellbeing has increased either significantly or moderately throughout this pandemic.

This figure is, however, in stark contrast to the 26% of professionals who agree that the level of support has increased during this time.

Perhaps this gap will soon reduce, since 71% of employers say mental health & wellbeing will become even more of a priority in their organisation over the next three to six months.

Employers

Has your organisation's focus on mental health & wellbeing changed during the COVID-19 pandemic?



 **72%**

of employers feel that their organisation's focus on mental health & wellbeing increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Industry snapshot



The greatest increases by industry are in HR, with 84% of employers increasing 'significantly' or 'moderately' their focus on mental health & wellbeing.



However, resources & mining, construction & property, accountancy & finance and IT are below the average, with 62%, 65%, 67% and 71% of employers respectively saying their focus on mental health & wellbeing increased either significantly or moderately during the pandemic.

Employees

Has the level of support increased or decreased since before the COVID-19 pandemic?

Decreased Remained the same Increased



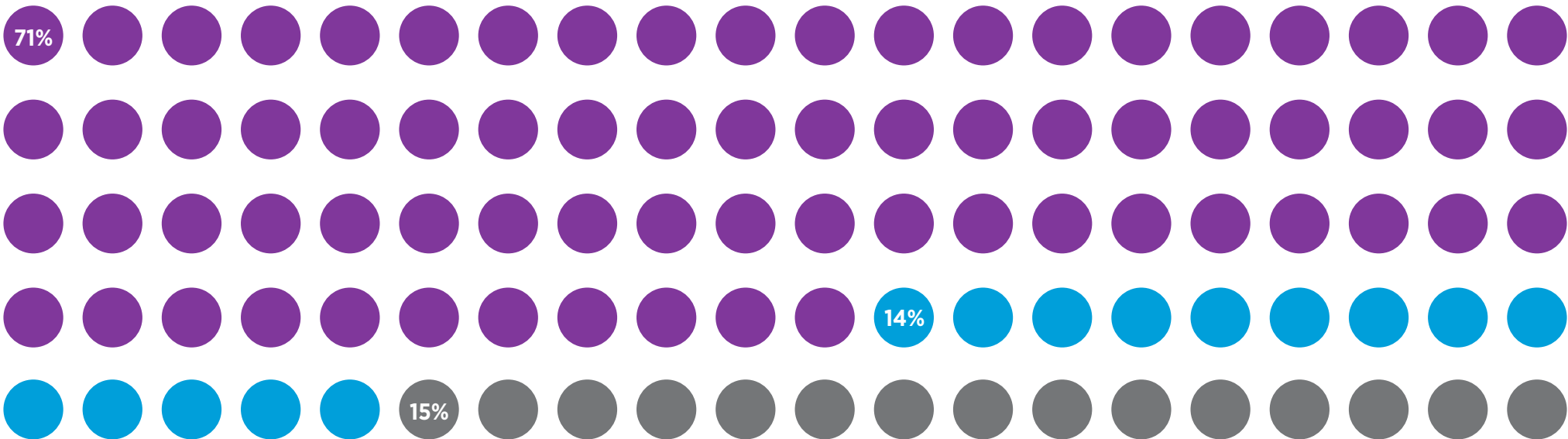
The greatest increases by industry are in IT and HR (both 32%)



In contrast, 26% of office support and 25% of construction & property professionals say their level of support has decreased.

Do you think mental health & wellbeing will become more of a priority for your organisation in the next 3-6 months?

Yes Unsure No



Remote working: Mental health & wellbeing support for scattered workforces

COVID-19 forced a significant upswing in the number of people who have been able to work remotely. According to our survey, 55% of professionals say they have worked from home during this crisis. The rapid adoption of remote working brought many challenges, with the mental health & wellbeing of remote staff a top concern for employers.

For those employers whose staff have or continue to work remotely, almost seven in ten believe they support their mental health & wellbeing either exceptionally well or satisfactorily. This sentiment is strongest for the leaders of HR, marketing & digital and office support teams, with 74% believing they support the mental health & wellbeing of their remote staff either exceptionally well or satisfactorily.

We also asked professionals who have or continue to work remotely to name what support they have received during this outbreak. Topping the list is the holding of regular team meetings, offering access to counselling, virtual social activities, the encouragement of regular breaks and the provision of tips on remaining physically active.

Employees

Have you worked from home at any point during the COVID-19 pandemic?

45%

No - the nature of my work doesn't allow for remote working

55%

Yes

Who worked from home more?

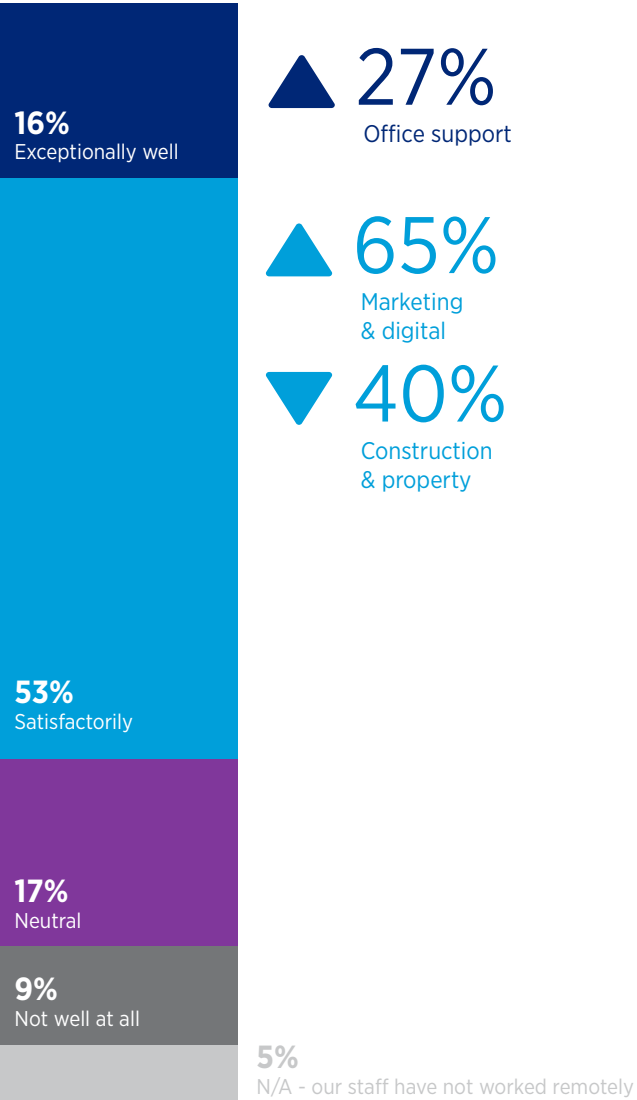
- ▲ By industry, the number of employees who have worked from home is highest in marketing & digital (94%), IT (86%), HR (83%) and accountancy & finance (70%).
- ▼ In office support, only 50% have worked from home during the pandemic. In construction & property, 37% worked from home.



Mental health support during COVID-19

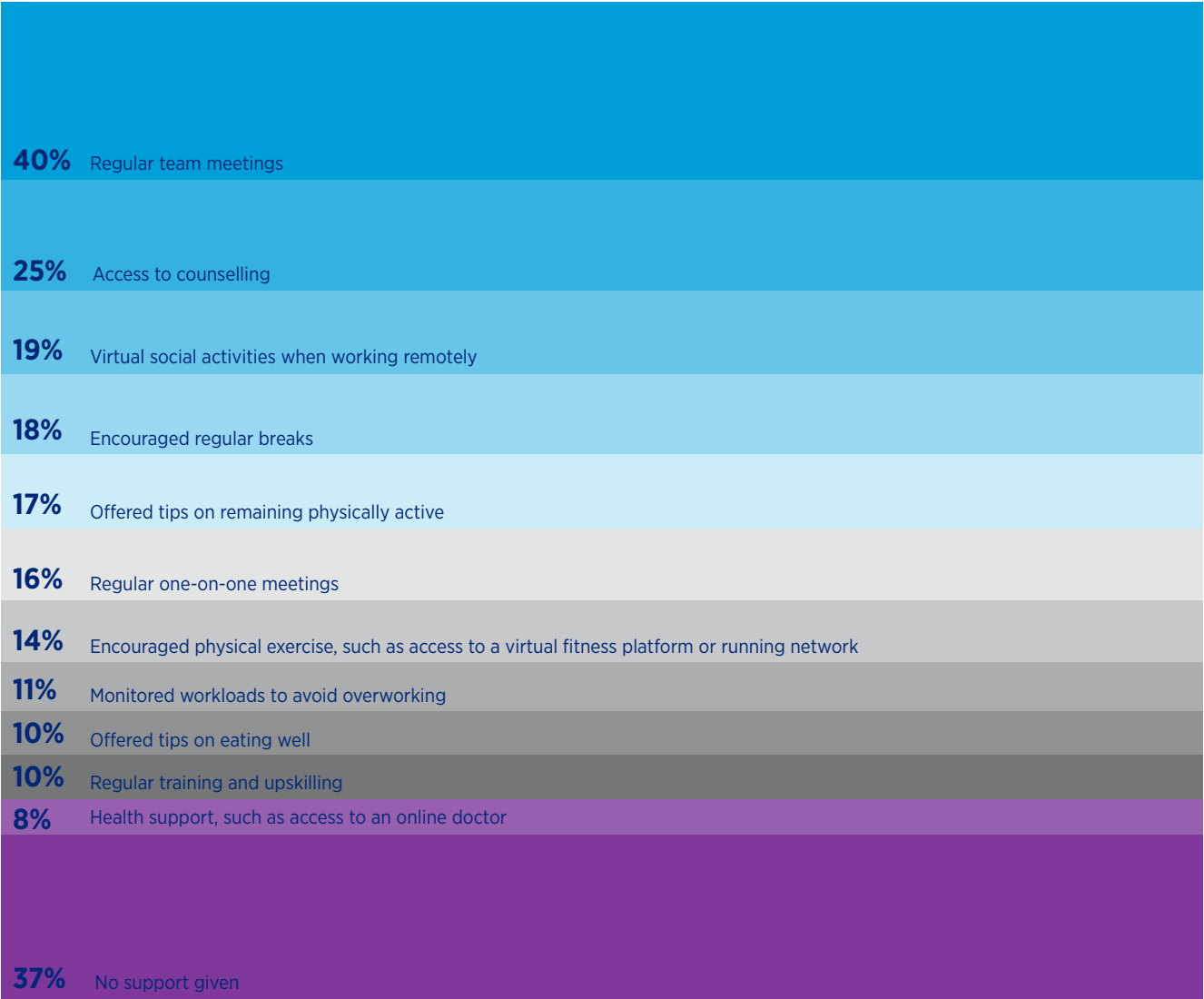
Employers

How well do you feel you've been able to support the mental health & wellbeing of remote staff?



Employees

How has your employer supported your mental health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic? (Multiple responses allowed)



Employers versus employees: Who is responsible for workplace mental health & wellbeing?

Today, many people have come to expect that their leaders will not only support their mental health & wellbeing but take responsibility for it too. An overwhelming 67% of the professionals we spoke to believe their employer has a responsibility to support their mental health & wellbeing at work.

Interestingly, almost all (94%) of employers agree and believe they should shoulder either significant or moderate responsibility for their employees' mental health & wellbeing.

It could be argued that there is a symbiotic relationship between employers and employees when it comes to maintaining positive mental health & wellbeing in the workplace. While employers should establish policies, procedures and initiatives, employees ultimately need to choose to get involved in the initiatives offered.



Employer

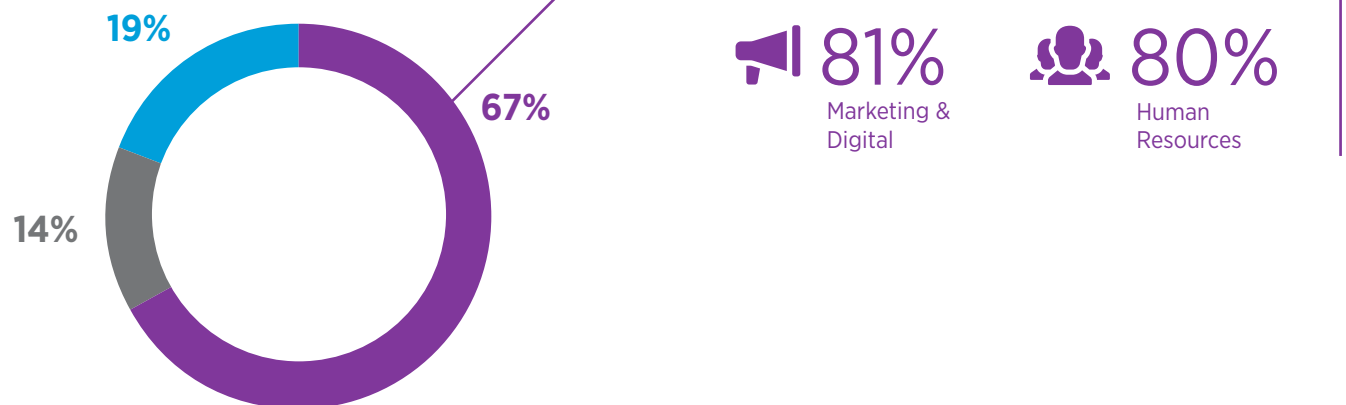
How much of a responsibility do you believe employers have to ensure the mental health & wellbeing of their staff?



Employee

Do you feel your employer has a responsibility to support your mental health & wellbeing?

Yes Unsure No



Re-entry anxiety: Many employees aren't comfortable returning to the workplace

A new dilemma for employers is that of staff who are afraid to return to their co-located workplace. With the virus still in circulation, employers who call their staff back to work may find that their employees are not comfortable returning. Indeed, as our survey shows, 51% of professionals who have been working remotely do not (yet) feel safe and happy to return.

The potential for new waves of infections is certainly very real, so even if you have started transitioning staff back to the workplace, social distancing and therefore flexible working arrangements will likely need to remain in place until a COVID-19 vaccine becomes available.

By location, Western Australians appear the most confident, with 73% of those who have worked remotely either already back in their co-located workplace or planning to return in the next three months. At the other end of the spectrum, those in Victoria are the least confident, with just 32% feeling safe and happy to return to their workplace.



Employees

If you have worked remotely during the pandemic, do you feel safe and happy to return to a co-located workplace?



31%

Yes – I already have



18%

Yes – I plan to do so in the next 3 months



38%

Not at this stage



7%

No - I had returned but then went back to remote working

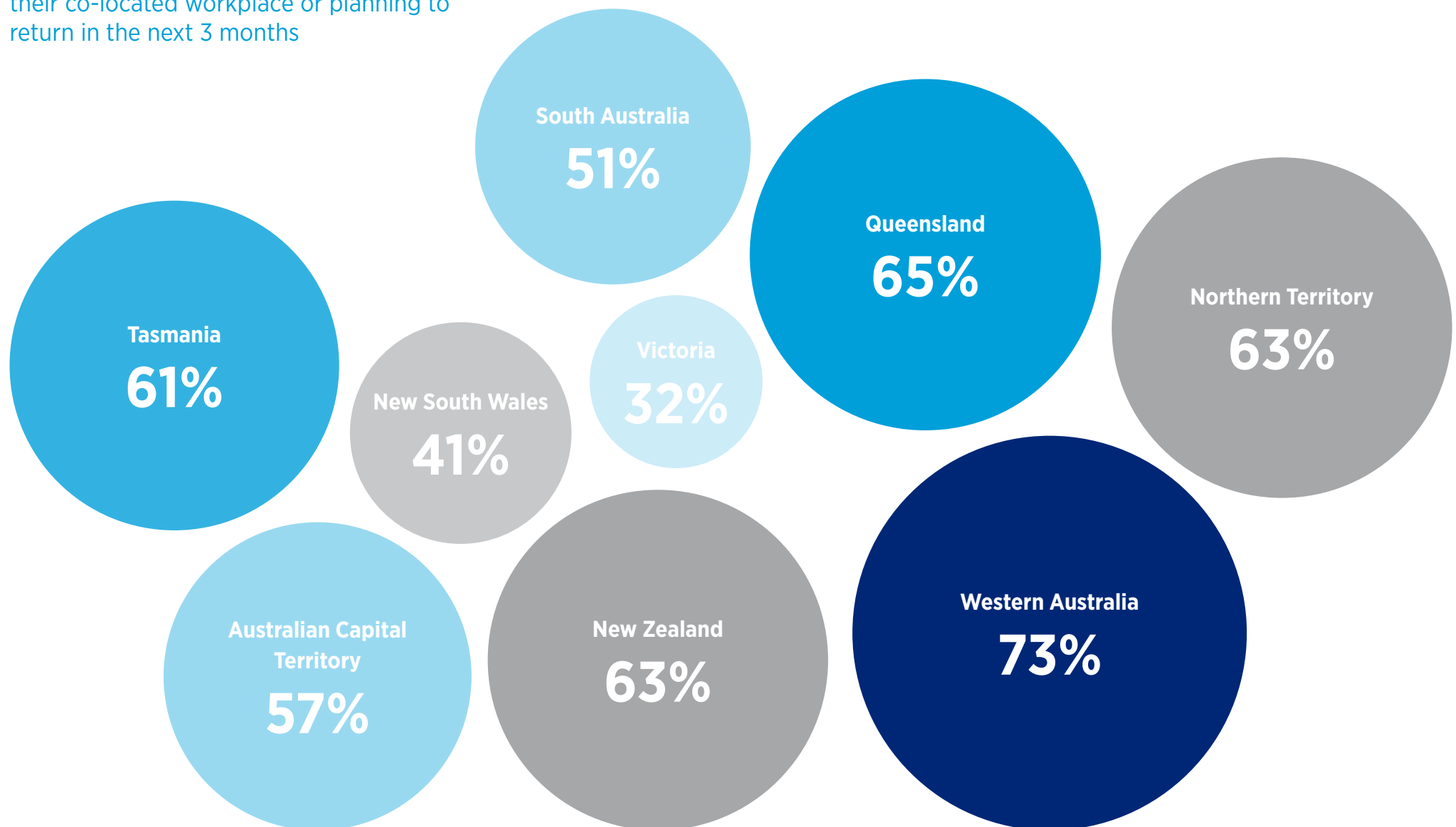


6%

No – I had returned, but my co-located workplace went back into lockdown

Location snapshot

Percentage of employees who have worked remotely and are either already back in their co-located workplace or planning to return in the next 3 months



How to improve mental health & wellbeing in your workplace: 8 practical suggestions

Employers have a critical role to play in fostering and maintaining a mentally healthy workplace. With tight budgets, new investments are understandably heavily scrutinised. However, investing in employee mental health & wellbeing will pay off long-term. It will help you build a resilient workforce who can perform at their best regardless of what's thrown at them.

According to the professionals we spoke to, the top way to improve mental health & wellbeing is to provide transparent and regular communication. This is followed by ensuring you listen to the voices of all employees and increase your offering of training and upskilling.

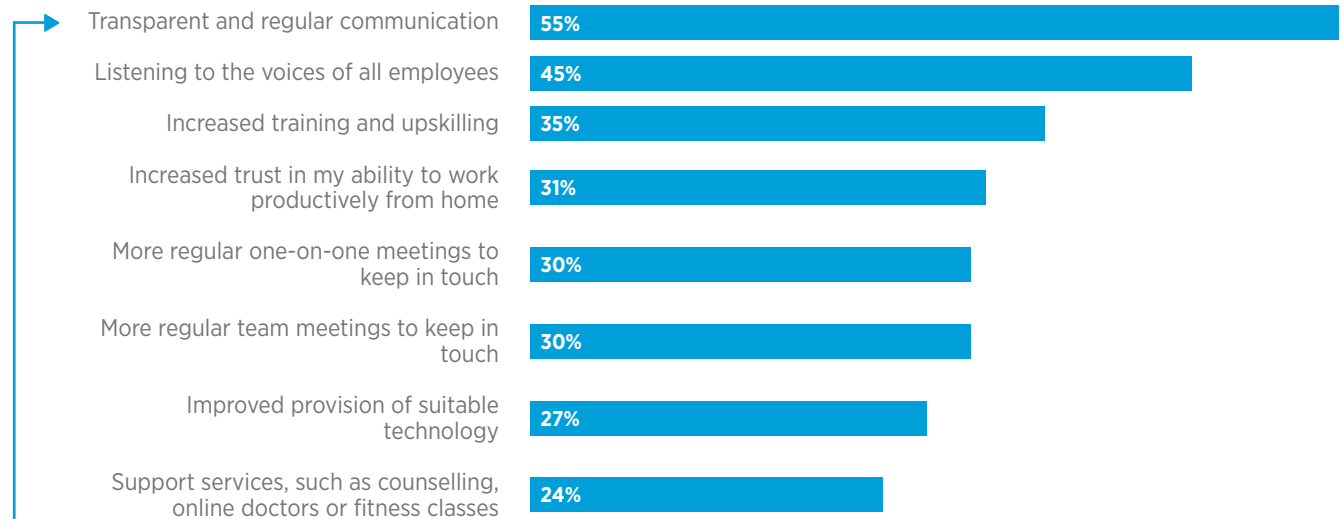
Post-pandemic, mental health & wellbeing support will remain an important benefit consideration that will resonate with employees in the new era of work. As we saw on page 11, attracting and retaining top talent will involve more than a traditional benefits package. Throughout this pandemic, professionals have reassessed what's really important in their lives and mental health & wellbeing has come to the fore.

No wonder then that 65% of employers believe their organisation's mental health & wellbeing policies are a vital or important element in their ability to attract and retain new talent.

Employees

How could your manager provide greater support for your mental health & wellbeing?

(Multiple responses allowed)



▲ 67%
Marketing & Digital

▲ 63%
Accountancy & Finance

▲ 59%
Human Resources

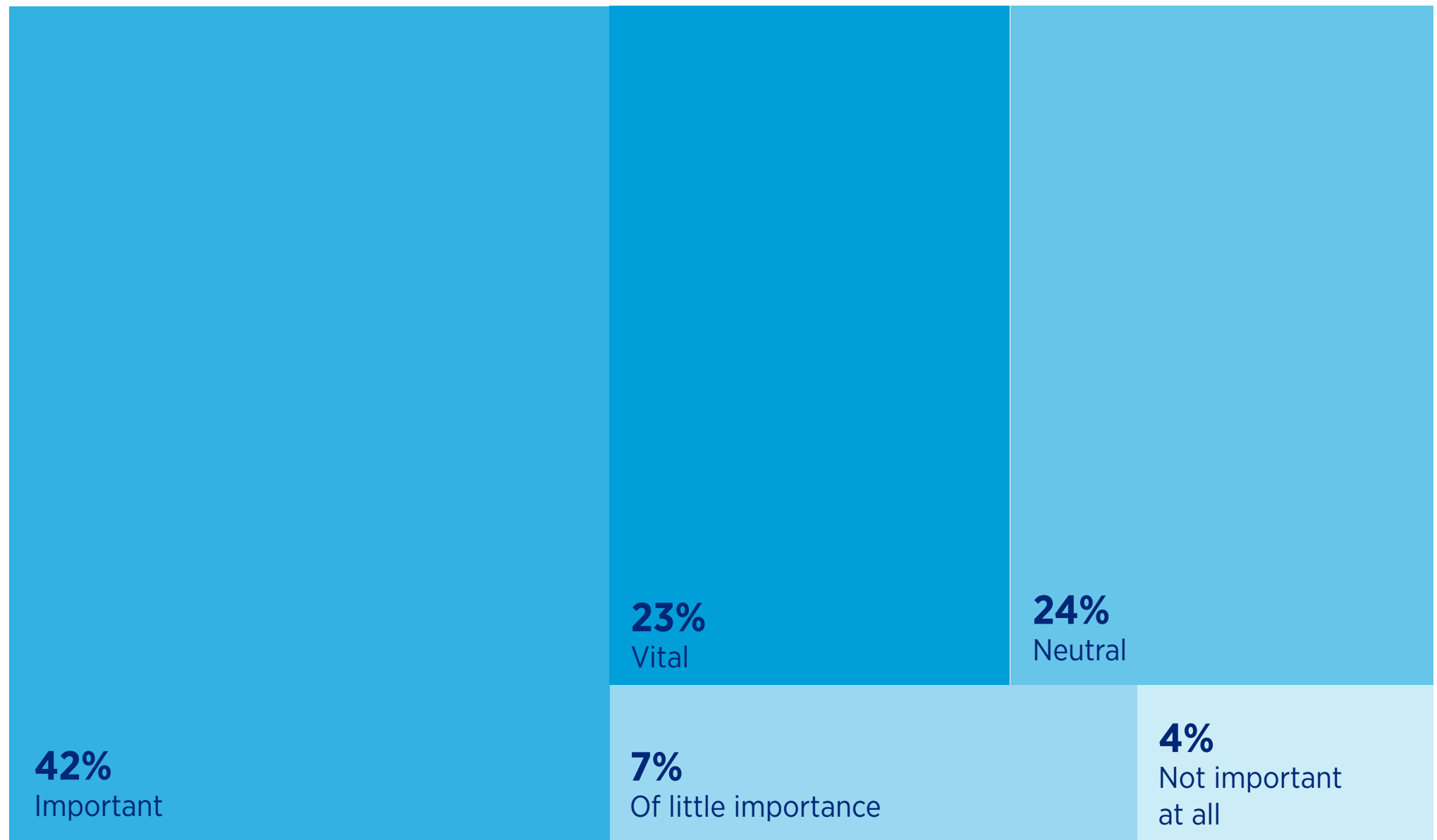
▲ 57%
Information Technology

▼ 54%
Construction & Property

▼ 51%
Office Support

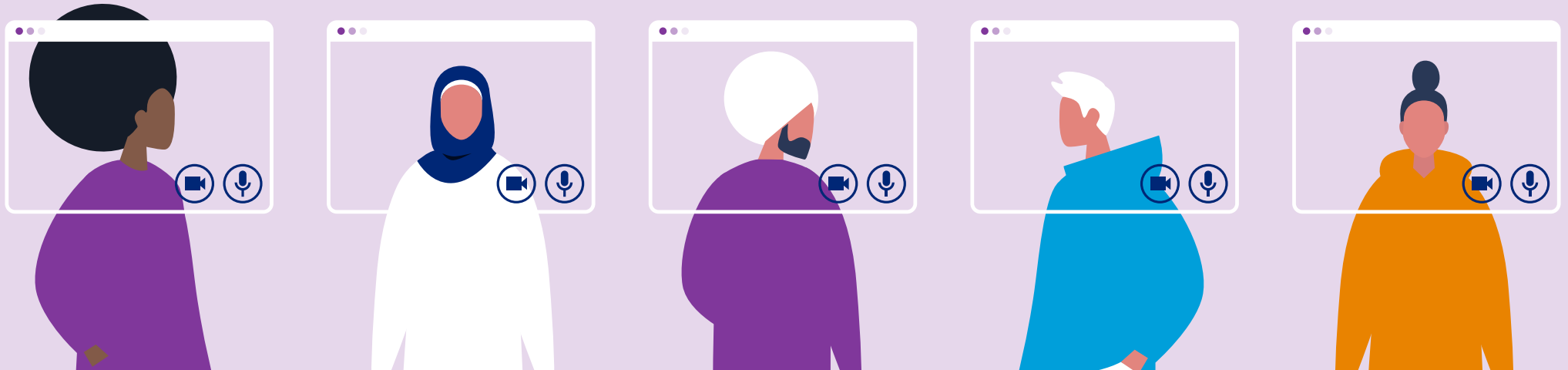
Employers

How important do you believe your organisation's mental health & wellbeing policies are in attracting new talent?



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

IT'S TIME FOR GENUINE WORKPLACE ACTION



Current status: Inconsistency regarding the attention ED&I receives

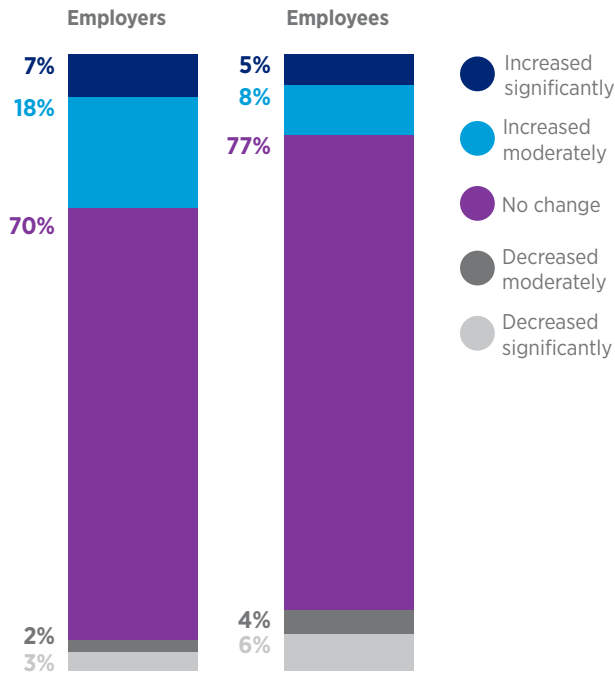
Equality, diversity & inclusion (ED&I) remains high on the agenda of organisations as we transition to the next era of work. Despite COVID-19 headwinds, the Black Lives Matter movement and resulting demonstrations around the world brought the issue of ED&I firmly to the fore. In the process, the world's spotlight was shone on the difficult lived experiences faced by many in our world of work today.

In our survey, we asked how attitudes towards ED&I have changed in recent months and the results point to a mismatch of opinions between employers and their employees regarding the attention ED&I has received. During this pandemic, 25% of employers say their organisation's focus on ED&I has increased. In contrast, just 13% of their employees agree.

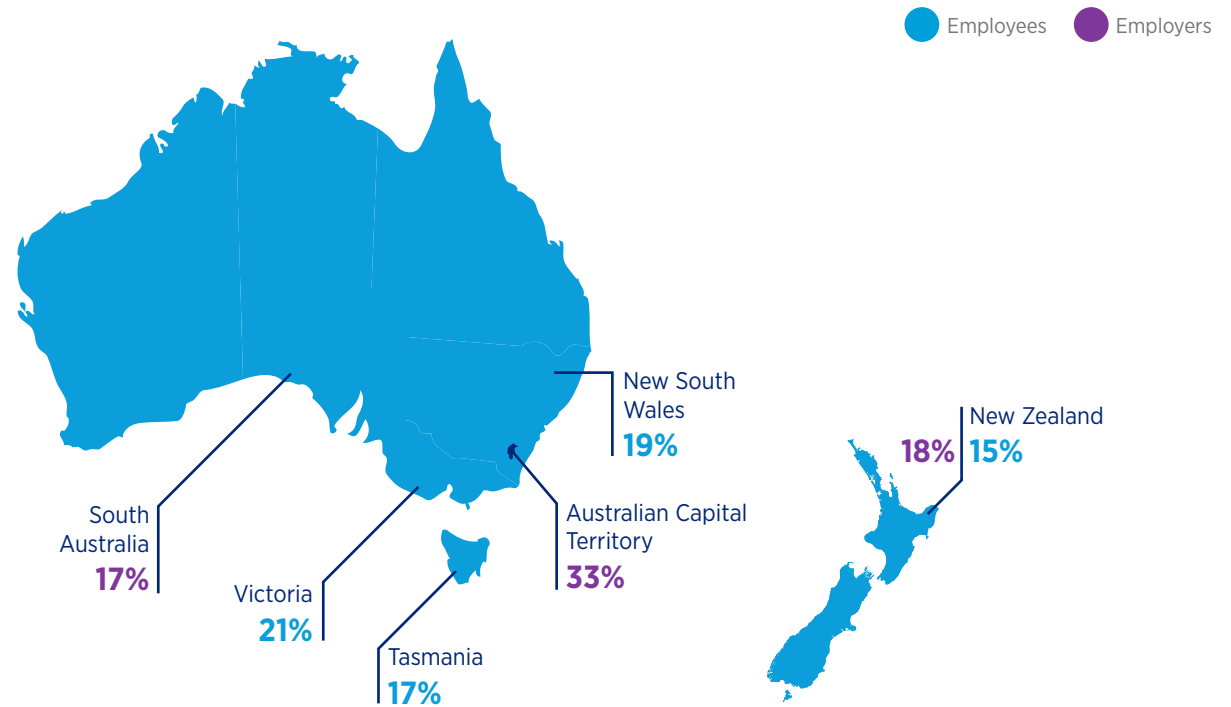
However, there is alignment when it comes to whether the importance of ED&I has increased as a result of the Black Lives Matter movement. As our results show, 14% of both employers and employees agree it has become more important. It should be noted though that the majority of both employees and employers say there has been no change in focus as a result of this or other similar movements.

“ 25% of employers say their organisation's focus on ED&I has increased. Just 13% of their employees agree. ”

Has your organisation's focus on ED&I changed during the COVID-19 pandemic?

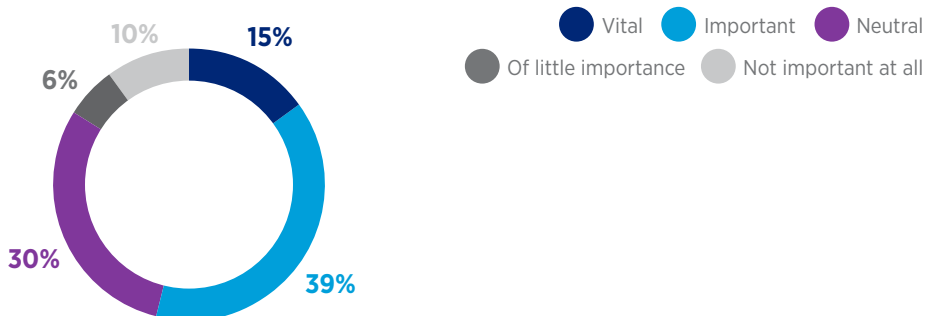


The importance of ED&I has increased most notably in the following locations as a result of movements such as Black Lives Matter:



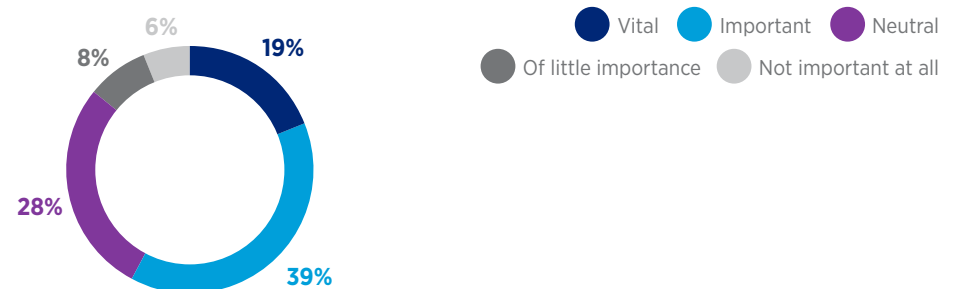
Employees

When you next look for a new job, how important will an organisation's ED&I policies be to you?



Employers

How important do you believe your organisation's ED&I policies are in attracting new talent?



Moving beyond talk: Real ED&I progress is required

Despite the enormity of the challenges that COVID-19 has brought us, the Black Lives Matter movement has prompted many business leaders to act rather than simply acknowledge that change is required.

This is important since failing to commit to real and lasting ED&I action will weaken your employment brand and damage your candidate attraction and staff retention rates. In fact, when they next look for a new job, 54% of professionals say an organisation’s ED&I policies will be either vital or important considerations when they decide who to work for.

Fortunately, over half (58%) of employers recognise that their organisation’s ED&I policies are vital or important in attracting new talent. Clearly then, now is the time to make real ED&I progress – something that 30% of organisations already acknowledge will become more of a priority for them in the next three to six months.

Industry snapshot

The priority placed on ED&I varies by industry:

▲ Human Resources	48%	▼ Resources & mining	18%
▲ Marketing & digital	48%	▼ Information Technology	23%
▲ Office support	46%	▼ Accountancy & finance	25%
▲ Construction & property	34%		

64% of public or third sector employers say their organisation’s ED&I policies are ‘vital’ or ‘important’ to attract new talent, compared to 53% of private sector employers.

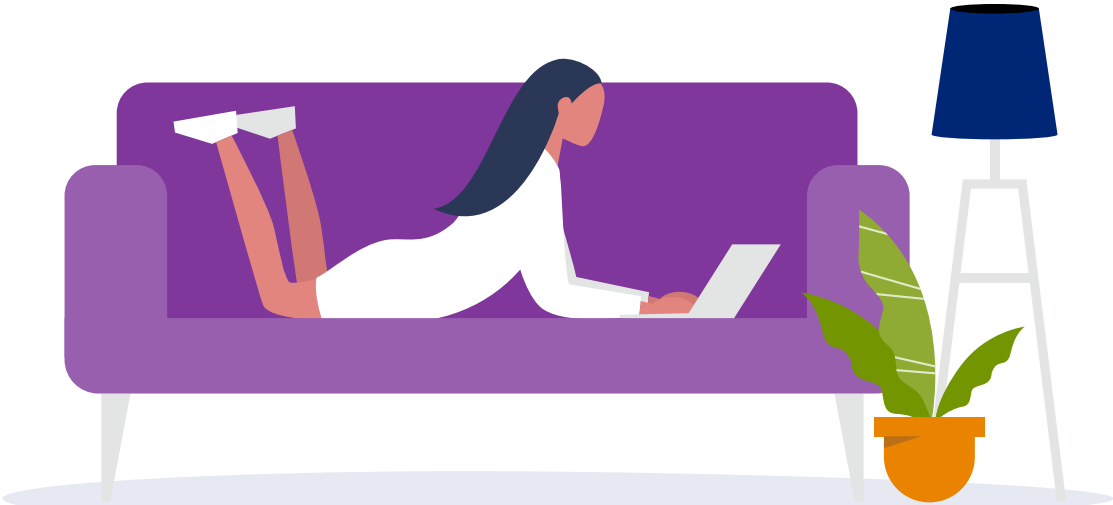
Employers

Do you think ED&I will become more of a priority for your organisation in the next 3-6 months?

30%
Yes

35%
No

35%
Unsure



How to improve ED&I in your workplace

Considering the Black Lives Matter global movement and the flow on effect in Australia and New Zealand, employees are looking at what their organisation is doing to create genuine change in the workplace. So, if you haven't already, it's time to start an open and sincere conversation about what could be done to achieve greater diversity in your organisation.

But real and lasting change involves more than talk. One obstacle in moving from conversation to action is the failure to embed ED&I in the culture of an organisation. This holds an organisation back because ED&I becomes more of a regulatory exercise. Rather than shifting mindsets around ED&I

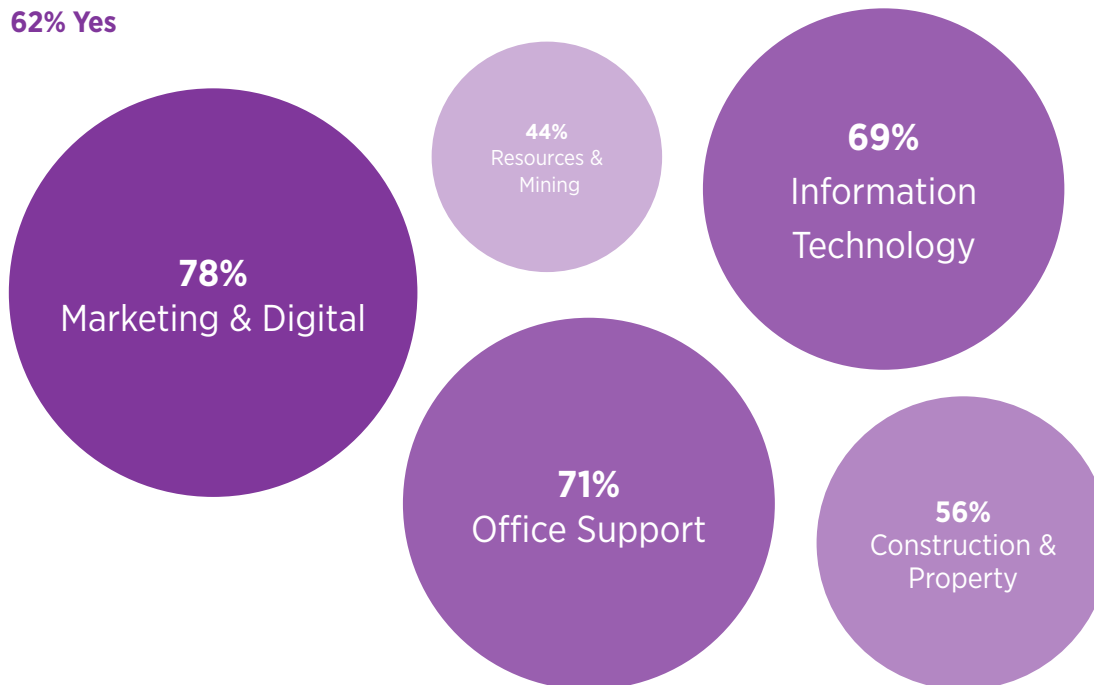
and embracing and celebrating underrepresented demographic groups and diversity of thought, the best that can be hoped for is a level of tolerance towards difference. Of our survey respondents, 38% say ED&I is not embedded in their culture, either because it is not a priority, or it is viewed as

a 'nice to have' only when time and budgets allow. Along with a culture that supports ED&I, our survey results show that providing a sense of belonging for every employee, encouraging employees to have a voice, and encouraging diversity of thought could also help improve ED&I within organisations.

Employers

Would you say that ED&I is embedded in the culture of your organisation?

62% Yes



23% No – it's seen as a nice to have when time and budget allows



16% No – it's not a priority at all



Being purposefully inclusive in times of crisis

Regardless of whether your employees are working remotely, in a co-located workplace, or a hybrid of the two, creating an inclusive work environment during the COVID-19 pandemic allows you to create a sense of belonging for all employees. This in turn helps you support their mental health & wellbeing while also improving morale, productivity, teamwork and innovation – all important factors that will help an organisation quickly return to growth.

To do this, employers must purposefully build a culture of inclusion, trust and assurance. Also vital at present is ensuring that communication to employees is purposefully inclusive, regular and transparent. Part of this involves running remote meetings in an inclusive way, which 75% of employers say they do.

Topping the list of ways to run remote team meetings in an inclusive way is the gathering of feedback to determine how team meetings could best work for everyone, followed by allowing enough time for all voices to be heard and creating an environment in which ideas are respected.

Employers

As a manager, do you take steps to ensure you run remote team meetings in an inclusive way?

 **75%**

Yes

 **9%**

No

 **16%**

N/A - we do not work remotely

Employees

Top 10 actions that could help improve ED&I within your organisation

(Multiple responses allowed - Top 10 indicated below)

1. Providing a sense of belonging for every employee (46%)
2. Encouraging all employees to have a voice (45%)
3. An inclusive culture (44%)
4. Encouraging diversity of thought (38%)
5. Ensuring all employees have access to career development (37%)
6. Salary transparency (29%)
7. Diversity & inclusion training for all staff (28%)
8. Unconscious bias training for all staff (28%)
9. Transparent promotional requirements (25%)
10. Hiring for diverse backgrounds (25%)



Meanwhile, the professionals we surveyed had advice for leaders who want to manage hybrid teams in an inclusive way. For them, team meetings that ensure every team member has a voice, understanding that co-located employees and remote employees have different work experiences and creating opportunities for informal conversations and interactions between remote and co-located employees are important considerations.

Employees

What actions do you rate as most important for leaders to manage hybrid teams in an inclusive way?

(Multiple responses allowed)



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

There is no doubt about it, the world of work will never return to the way it was pre-pandemic. Every day there are reports of new coronavirus cases, either locally, interstate or overseas, and so uncertainty remains. However, we are seeing initial signs that employers are looking ahead and taking steps to set themselves up for the future. This is evidenced by the percentage of organisations that have already moved out of the crisis phase, as well as a commitment to protecting the jobs of staff.

As we have seen in this report, throughout the pandemic mental health & wellbeing at work and ED&I have gained increased significance. With employees looking to their employers to lead the way, the following recommendations may help when you consider the additional support you can offer staff as we continue to navigate the COVID-19 world of work.

1. Equip managers and staff for hybrid working success

With just over one half of those who have worked remotely not yet feeling safe or happy to return to their co-located workplace, a hybrid working model will remain in place for some time to come, if not permanently. Employers therefore should focus on ensuring managers are equipped with the skills they need to lead a hybrid team. Make sure employees feel they can work effectively in such a setup. Communicate regularly, be transparent, offer flexibility and provide ongoing feedback to make hybrid team working a success.

2. Factor regular remote working into your attraction strategy

With over two in five employers already returned to growth or rapid growth and hiring starting again, employers must think about the steps they need to take to secure the most in-demand professionals. One area to consider is the provision of regular remote working opportunities. The pandemic saw a great number of employees work from home for an extended period. Now is therefore the time for employers and their employees to evaluate what hasn't worked, such as the methods of communication and technology used, and make modifications. Then decide how to best bring the positive aspects into the new era of work and communicate your approach in your employer brand and throughout the hiring process.

3. Verify a job's stability

Another important aspect of candidate attraction in the new era of work is communicating the stability and security of the job, which as we have seen has become a top priority for jobseekers. While it can be difficult for employers to promise stability at this point in time, when looking to attract new talent you can mention the skills they will gain in the role and, if relevant, the strength of your project pipeline or client retention rates. Discuss the value this role will bring to the organisation and what the successful candidate will receive in return.

4. Make genuine and sustainable ED&I progress

As we have seen, ED&I will be increasingly important to professionals, too. Those organisations working to a clear ED&I agenda will be far better placed to attract, employ and retain the best talent in this new era of work. If progress on this agenda has stalled in light of the pandemic, it's time to get it back on track. One important aspect of this is the creation of a culture that supports ED&I. Organisations can also consider making a public commitment to ED&I, such as by writing and publishing a promise to set out what you believe in as an organisation. You can read ours on the last page of this report. Next, translate your promise into clear actionable objectives. As we saw on page 30, other strategies include providing a sense of belonging for every employee, encouraging employees to have a voice and fostering diversity of thought.

5. Promote ED&I in the hiring process

You will then be in a stronger position to communicate your efforts throughout the hiring process, such as in job advertisements, your digital platforms and in conversations with your recruiter. We expect the topic of ED&I to be discussed more regularly during interviews, so ensure hiring managers understand your organisation's support and consider how this can be portrayed to interviewees in an effective way. Provide examples of how your organisation has championed ED&I and evidence the positive impact on individual employees as well as the wider organisation. Don't forget to also share with your workforce a consistent, regular and authentic message around your ED&I agenda and progress to aid your retention efforts. Make genuine progress too – you can't solely deliver aspirational messages as your employees won't promote your efforts or remain long-term if progress isn't authentic.

6. Support mental health & wellbeing

The mental health & wellbeing of employees must remain a top priority. Whatever steps you take in the months ahead, maintaining mental health & wellbeing, along with the physical health and safety of staff, must be front and centre of every decision, both short and long-term. As we saw on page 24, one way to support the mental health & wellbeing of staff is to provide transparent and regular communication. Other important strategies include listening to the voices of all employees, increasing your offering of training and upskilling to your staff, and trusting your employees to work productively from home. This is not the time for micromanagement, which would only damage your employees' mental health & wellbeing further.

7. Encourage employees to get involved

Our survey shows that both employers and their employees believe that organisations are responsible for the mental health & wellbeing of staff at work – whether that workplace is in the office or at home. As noted on page 21, while employers need to establish policies, procedures and initiatives to support the mental health & wellbeing of their staff, employees themselves also have a role to play by electing to get involved in the initiatives offered. In issue 16 of our Hays Journal (which you can read in [Australia](#) or [New Zealand](#)), we noted that some organisations are attempting to make wellbeing programs compulsory in response to low uptake. However, mandating activities can backfire. Instead, it is advisable to explore other strategies to attempt to increase participation in mental health & wellbeing programs, such as incentivisation, making it a use-it-or-lose-it benefit, or adding a mental health & wellbeing check-in to the annual review.



Equality, diversity & inclusion at Hays

Our promise

Here at Hays, we believe that a culture built on trust, respect, equality and inclusivity will enable us to live our values, achieve our ambitions and deliver our purpose.

We believe that diversity must be evident at all levels of our business and reflect the markets and communities we serve. Of course, we know that actions speak louder than words. Significant and enduring change will need our constant commitment.

With this in mind, we are actively committed to supporting equality, diversity and inclusion in all its forms. We will place no limits on where we look

for talent to join Hays and will ensure our hiring decisions will be made on talent and potential alone.

We will encourage our people to speak up and speak out so that all voices are heard and listened to – and, crucially, we will be open to learning and understand we can always do better.

We will also support our clients, suppliers and partners to deliver on their own Equality, Diversity and Inclusion ambitions.

Ultimately, we will strive to live our purpose of creating opportunities and improving lives in all that we do.

Many organisations that are committed to improving ED&I have introduced a Reconciliation Action Plan. You can learn more about our Reconciliation journey [here](#).

Want to know more? Read our insights on:

Remote work after COVID-19 – six considerations for managers in [Australia](#) or [New Zealand](#)

Adapt to the new era of work – our guide for employers in [Australia](#) or [New Zealand](#)

What is a hybrid team and how do I lead one – advice for employers in [Australia](#) or [New Zealand](#)

How to prioritise the wellbeing of your people in a hybrid workplace in [Australia](#) or [New Zealand](#)

How to prioritise employee upskilling during COVID-19 and beyond in [Australia](#) or [New Zealand](#)

