JobStreet

COVID-19 JOB REPORT

MALAYSIA | August 2020 Edition

Contents

Introduction

With the COVID-19 crisis sweeping the world over a period of a few swift weeks, governments have been compelled to institute measures to contain the pandemic. Among these measures included physical distancing, urging citizens to stay at home, and limiting the operation of industries whose operations rendered individuals vulnerable to exposure to the virus.

The specific guidelines under these measures have varied across nations, and indeed continue to change as the magnitude of the crisis changes. Alongside the vast social changes have come the expected economic upheavals: The crisis has changed—and continues to change—the way we live and work. And for many of us, the changes have been profound and promise to be long-lasting.

As part of SEEK Asia, the region's no. 1 job search platform, JobStreet is committed to help both employers and candidates cope with this unprecedented crisis with the right tools that will make every talent search or job search easier and faster. From an intelligent search site to a new mobile app, every effort has been taken to empower and enable our users to rise to the challenges of the times.

One of our most important efforts has been to obtain relevant and useful information that will yield powerful insights on the markets in which we operate.

This document features highlights of our latest research, conducted among SEEK Asia's employers and jobseekers, covering key aspects of the job market in your country.

This information comes free of charge, and reflects how much we recognize the vital role we all play on the road that lies before us. #TogetherAhead, we rise above our challenges.

Approach

Data collection

Email invitations were sent to JobStreet jobseeker and employer panelists in Malaysia to complete online surveys.

The surveys were completed between the 13th and the 31st of May, 2020, with a final sample size of n=5,152 jobseekers and n=999 employers.

Eligibility

Jobseekers. Panelists were eligible to complete the survey if they had either been 1) working prior to COVID-19 or 2) looking for a job prior to COVID-19 (but not unemployed for more than six months). Those who were self-employed were excluded.

Employers. Panelists were eligible to complete the survey if they were personally involved to some extent in finding/hiring new staff and/or managing employee relations, payroll, benefits or training for their business/employer. Recruiters were ineligible.

Analysis. Significant differences between segments are displayed at the 95% confidence level. Only results with a sample size of n=50 or more are presented.

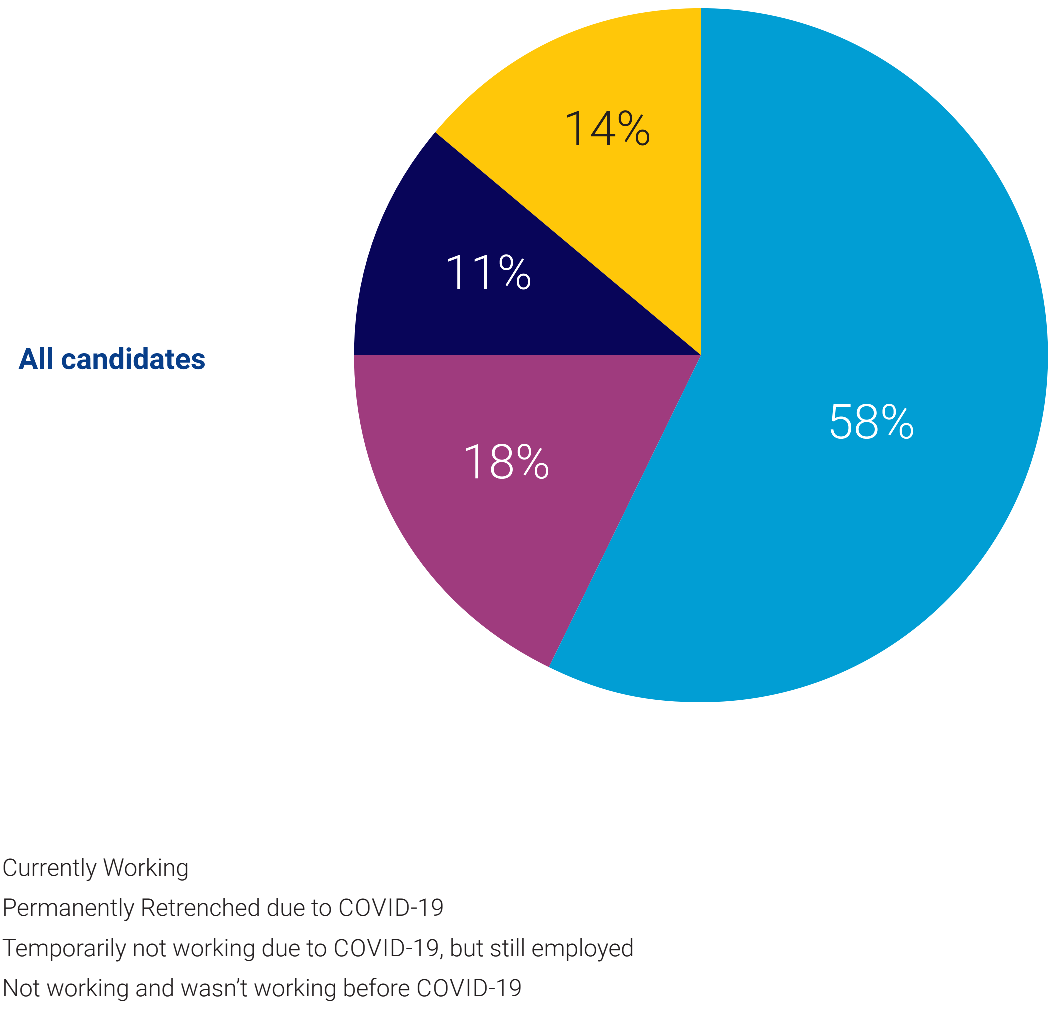
Work situation and quality of life

As may have been expected by many, the COVID-19 crisis has deeply scored the world's workforce, with entire industries forced to temporarily shut down, stalling or cutting off the jobs these industries supported.

Changes in work situation

In Malaysia, 29% of all job candidates were impacted by COVID-19. 18% were **permanently retrenched** and 11% found themselves **temporarily not working**.

1a. Changes in work situation



almost one out of three workers have had their livelihood interrupted

This means that almost one out of three workers have had their livelihood interrupted. The hardest hit among those permanently retrenched or temporarily not working have been short-time employees, those who were not working full time, and who had been working in organisations with less than 50 employees.

The hardest hit industries in terms of permanent or temporary unemployment have been the tourism/travel, hospitality/catering, food & beverage, mass transportation, education, and retail sectors.

1b. Changes in work situation – hardest and least hit among candidates

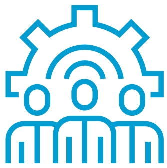
Candidates were **significantly happier** with their quality of life prior to COVID-19

The hardest hit in terms of permanent retrenchments/ temporary breaks in employment were those...	The least hit in terms of permanent retrenchments/ temporary breaks in employment were those...
% permanently retrenched/temporarily not working	% permanently retrenched/temporarily not working
• On **tenures of less than 12 months** (40%) • **Not working full-time** (50%) • Earning **less than 2,500 per month** (43%) • Working for **smaller organisations** with up to 50 employees (44%) • Working in the **tourism/travel agency** (63%), **hospitality/catering** (62%), **food & beverage** (50%), **mass transportation** (47%), **education** (46%), and **retail** (42%) sectors • Working in **hospitality/tourism** (66%), **food & beverage** (60%), and **education** (55%) roles • Aged **18 to 24 years** (42%) and **45+ years** (43%) • **Male** (35%)	• On **tenures of 12 months+** (29%) • **Full-time** workers (31%) • Earning **2,500+ per month** (30%) • Working for organisations with **51 to 500 employees** (31%) and **more than 500 employees** (21%) • Working in the **accounting/audit/tax services** (26%), **information technology (23%), manufacturing (22%), property development** (21%), **information technology** (23%), **banking/financial services** (19%), **medical/pharmaceutical** (17%), and **human resources management/consultancy** (13%) sectors • Working in **accounting** (24%), **banking/finance** (22%), **IT** (22%), **legal/compliance** (22%), **property/real estate** (20%), and **medical services** (16%) roles • Aged **25 to 44 years** (31%) • **Female** (32%)

On the hirer side, multinationals, mid-sized employers (51 to 500 employees) were more likely to be negatively affected by COVID-19 in terms of employee headcount. Local businesses and those in the architecture/building/construction sector were the most negatively affected in terms of remuneration.

1c. Changes in work situation – hardest and least hit among hirers

Mid-sized hirers (51 to 500 employees) were the **most likely to have experienced negative impacts** on head count and staff leave, whereas smaller (up to 50 employees), local hirers were the most likely to have experienced negative impacts on staff remuneration.

COVID-19 negatively impacted head count (47%), were more likely to be… % head count impacted	• Organisations with **51 to 500 employees** (70%)	
COVID-19 negatively impacted staff remuneration (46%), were more likely to be… % remuneration impacted	• **Local businesses/corporations** (62%) • Organisations with **up to 50 employees** (60%) • Organisations operating between **5 to 10 years** (75%)	
COVID-19 negatively impacted staff leave (35%), were more likely to be… % leave impacted	• Organisations with **51 to 500 employees** (31%)	

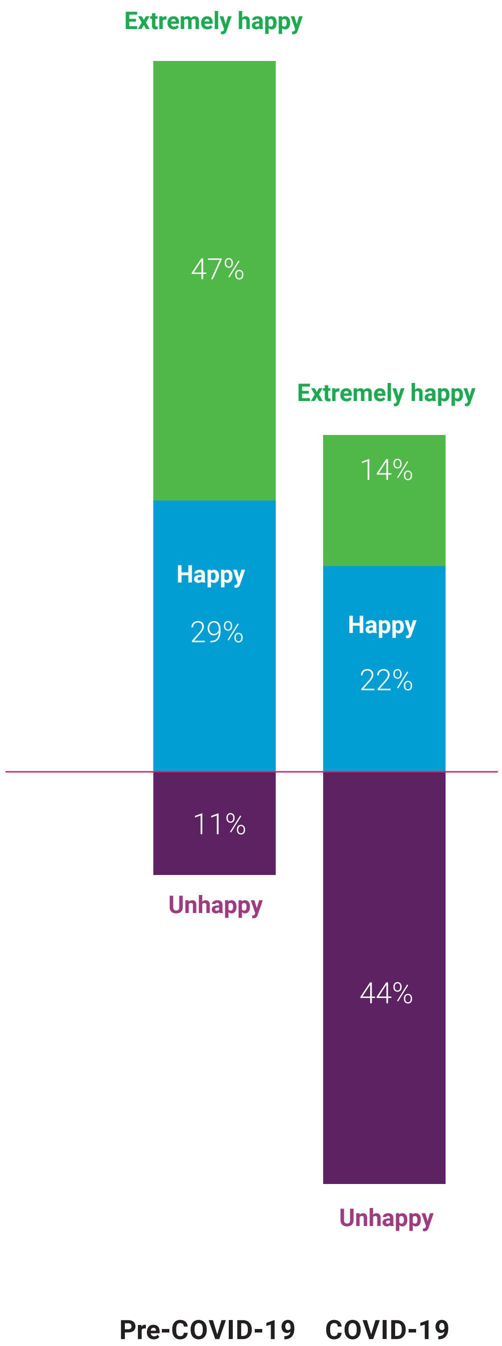
Quality of life

The changes brought about by the crisis saw a very sharp drop in **happiness with quality of life**, whether the respondents had been working or not been working before the pandemic.

2a. Happiness with quality of life

Happiness with quality of life

Candidates were **significantly happier** with their quality of life prior to COVID-19

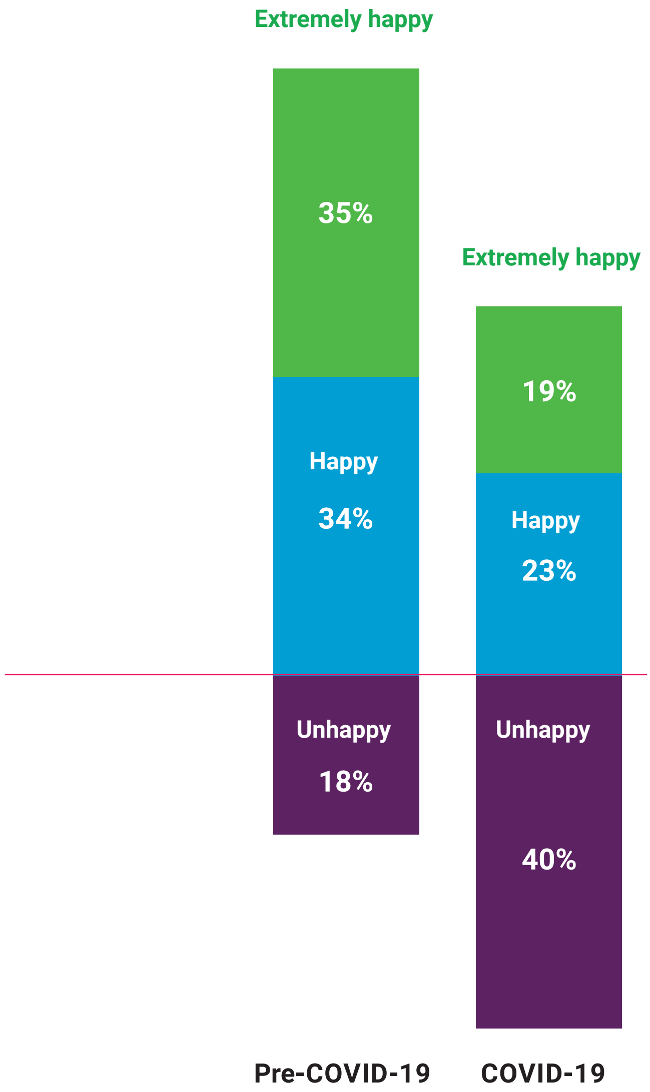


Furthermore, despite having kept their jobs under COVID-19, many of those currently working are **no longer happy** with their jobs.

2b. Job happiness

Happiness among those currently working

Amongst those currently working, more than two-thirds (68%) were **happy with their jobs** prior to COVID-19, whereas only 42% in are happy now.



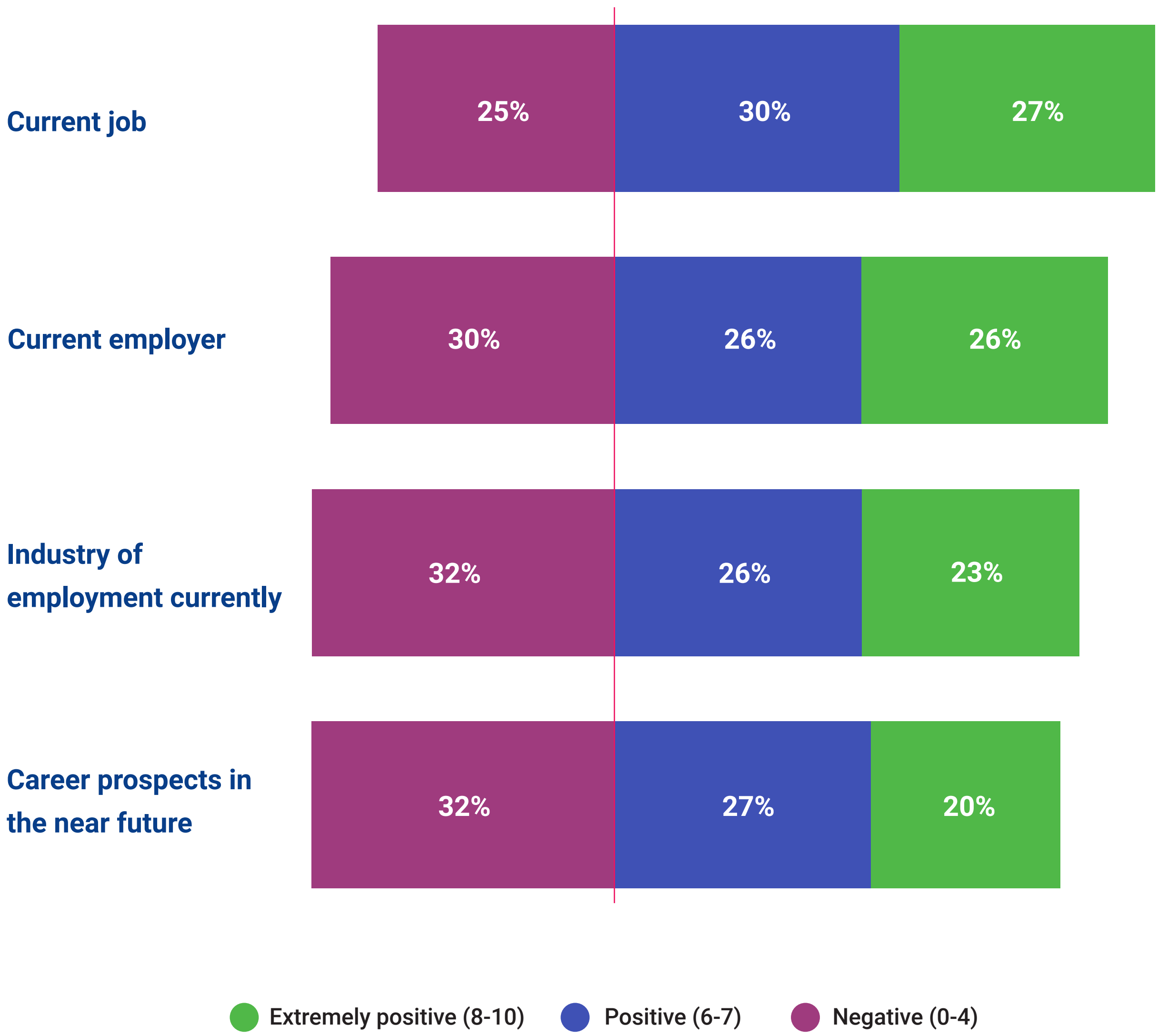
There is also a **sharp reduction in job happiness**, from 69% pre-COVID-19 to 42% during the pandemic.

Still and all, when it came to their **current job and employer**, their **current industry**, as well as their **future prospects**, a good number **still felt positive**—a sign of optimism.

2c. Attitudes toward work

Amongst those currently working, more than half (57%) were **feeling positive about their current job**, and only a quarter felt negatively. **Negative feelings** were greater towards their employers (30%), industry of employment (32%) and career prospects (32%).

Attitudes among those currently working



Those working in several key industries in Malaysia felt their **level of happiness toward their quality of life** affected. Among these industries are those that have been those hardest hit by the crisis worldwide—notably, the hospitality/catering, tourism/travel, media/publishing, and health & beauty care.

2c. Happiness with quality of life – Affected industries

Hospitality/catering -62%

Tourism/travel agency -58%

Media/publishing/print -53%

Health & beauty care -53%

- COVID-19 has had the **greatest impact on quality of life** amongst those who have been permanently retrenched (-63% drop in % happy) and those temporarily not working (-50%).

	% Happy (6-10 rating) Pre-COVID-19	% Happy (6-10 rating) Now	Difference	n
All candidates	**79%**	**36%**	**-43%**	**5285**
Work Situation				
Still working	78%	44%	-34%	2964
Temporarily not working due to COVID-19, but still employed	79%	29%	-50%	583
Permanently retrenched/laid off due to COVID-19	81%	18%	-63%	902
Wasn't working before COVID-19	67%	25%	-41%	703
Industry of Employment				
Hospitality/catering	88%	26%	-62%	164
Tourism/travel agency	83%	25%	-58%	112
Media/publishing/printing	75%	22%	-53%	51
Health & beauty care	78%	26%	-53%	116
Advertising/public relations/marketing services	79%	28%	-51%	105
Food and beverage	79%	27%	-51%	205
Freight forwarding/delivery/shipping	80%	30%	-51%	91
Contact center/business process outsourcing	81%	31%	-49%	93
Energy/power/water/oil & gas/waste management	84%	36%	-48%	111
Agriculture/forestry/fishing	83%	36%	-47%	53
Retail	74%	27%	-47%	209
Property development	76%	31%	-45%	97
Human resources management/consultancy	76%	31%	-44%	108

Impact on employees

Changes at work

As the COVID-19 crisis gave rise to the Work From Home culture, it also delivered harsh impacts on key aspects of work: **remuneration, role progression, and leaves**.

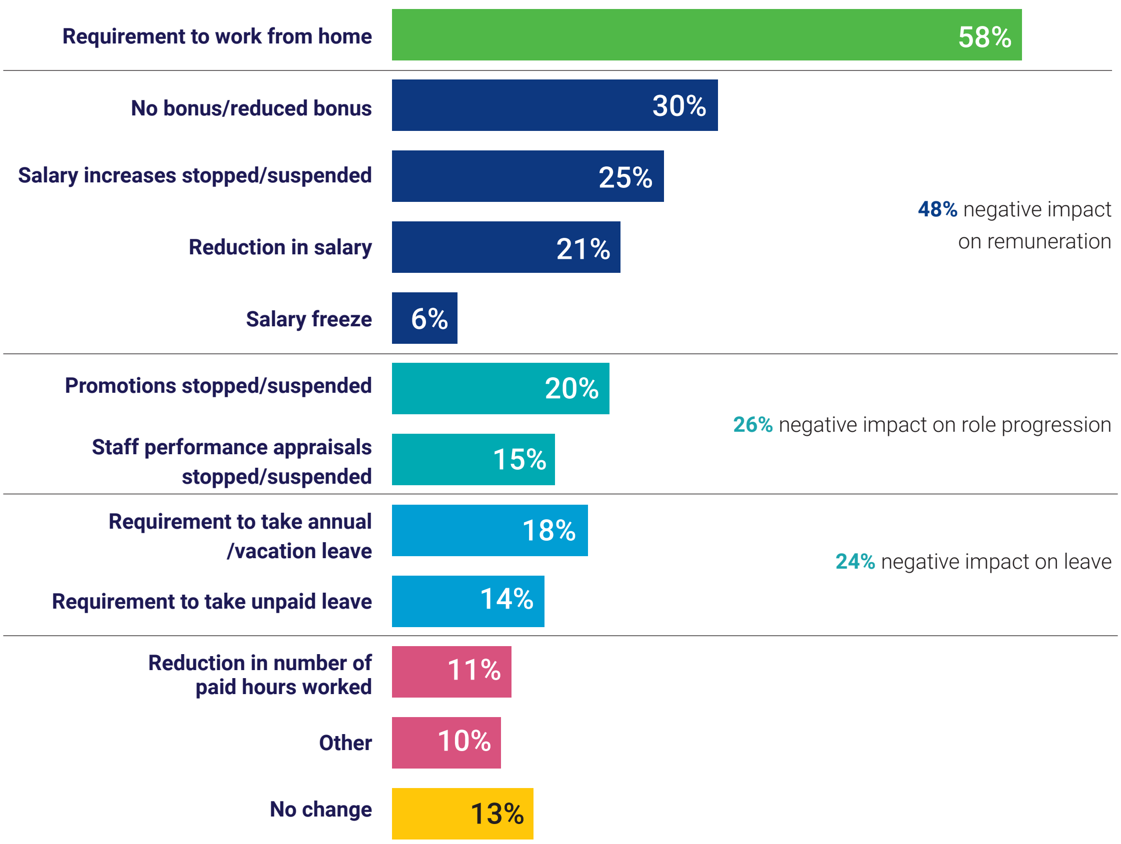
Majority of the employees (87%) experienced changes brought about by COVID-19. While the work-from-home environment was the most common change (with 58% affected among those who continue to work), almost half of the employees experienced **a negative impact on how much they earned**, through one or more of the following: a reduced or eliminated bonus, a suspended or cancelled salary increase, or a freeze or reduction in their salary.

A notable percentage of employees also experienced a **negative impact on the progression of their role within their organisation**, with promotions and/or staff performance appraisals halted or suspended. A large number of employees also found their leaves affected negatively.

Majority of the employees (87%) experienced changes brought about by COVID-19

3a. Changes at work – employees

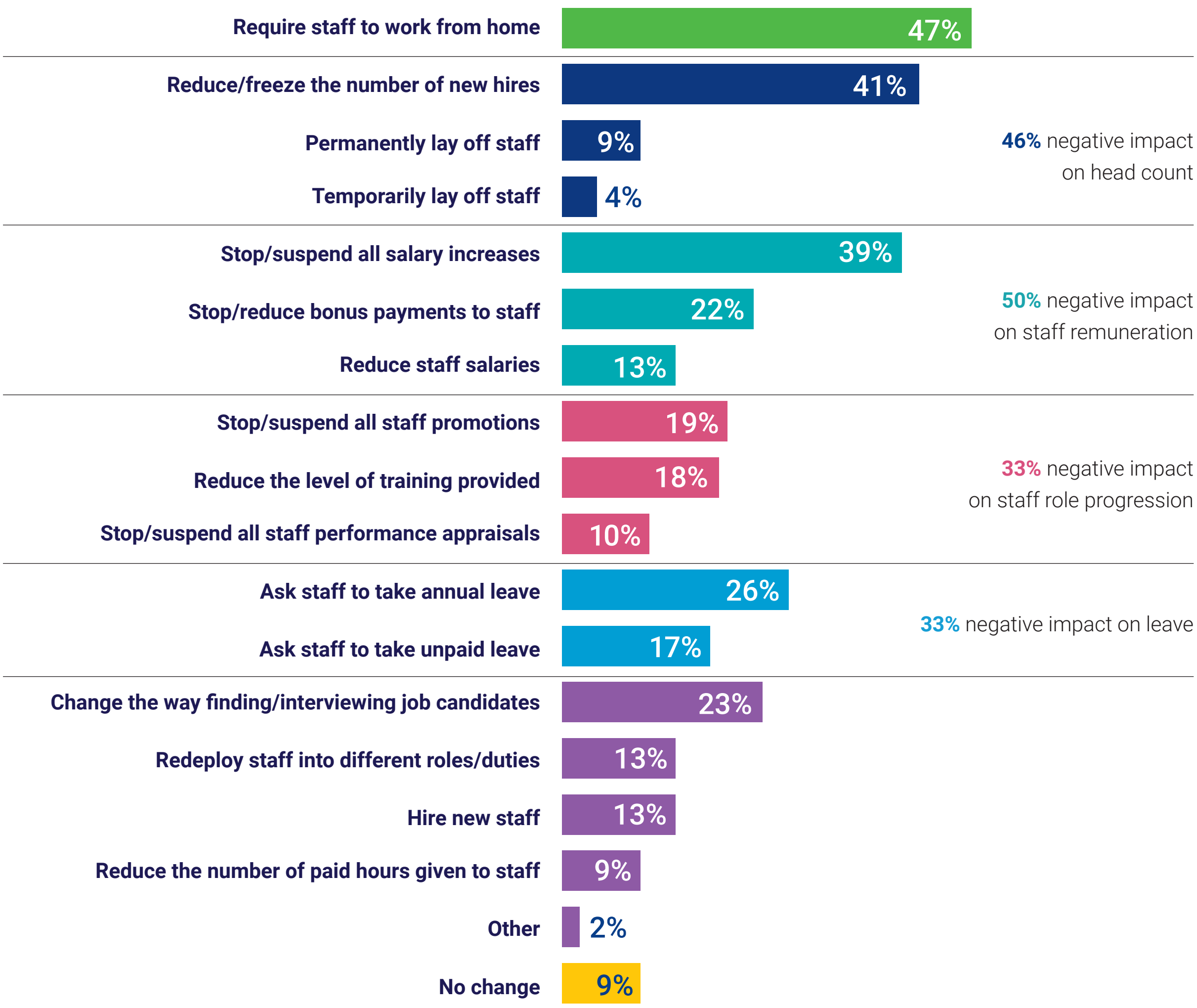
The majority of workers (87%) had experienced some changes since COVID-19. The most common was a **need to work from home** (58%). A further one in two (48%) had also been negatively impacted in terms of their **remuneration**.



These results are validated by the impact dealt by COVID-19 on the employer side, where their decisions had similarly harsh negative impacts on remuneration, role progression, and employee leaves.

3b. Changes at work – employers

Nearly all organisations (91%) had implemented HR changes in response to COVID-19. The most common was a **requirement for staff to work from home** (47%). A further 50% had **reduced staff remuneration** and 46% had experienced a **negative impact on head count**.

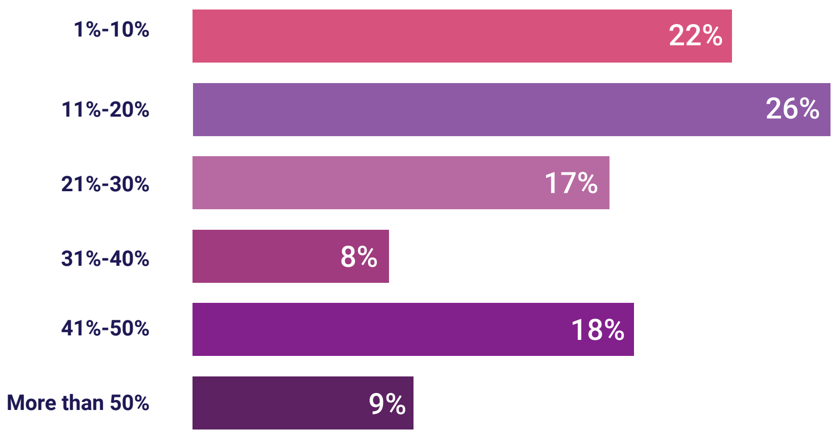


Salary reduction

For those who found their salaries reduced, **35%** experienced a reduction of more than 30%.

3c. Salary reduction

Of those workers who had experienced a drop in salary, around one in three (35%) had experienced a reduction of **more than 30%.**



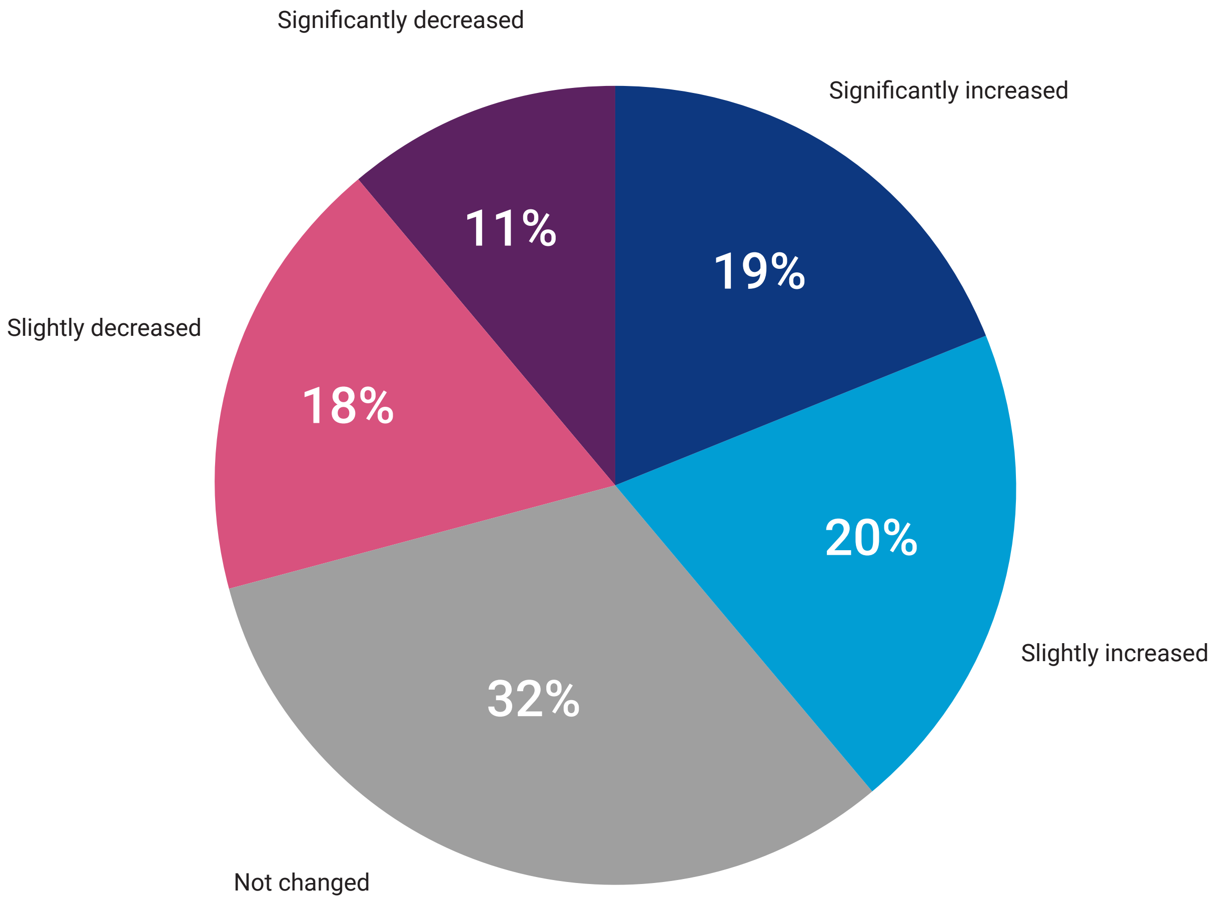
Changes to scope of work

As the nature of work in many fields and industries changed, so has the scope of work for majority of employees—indicating shifts not only in the **working environment**, **renumeration**, **or career progression**, but in the areas their **field of work covered** as well.

This included areas they found themselves newly engaged in—such as **markets**, **teams**, **products**, **and departments**.

3d. Changes to scope of work

Around three quarters of workers (68%) had experienced a change their scope of work since COVID-19, 39% an **increase** and 29% a **decrease**.



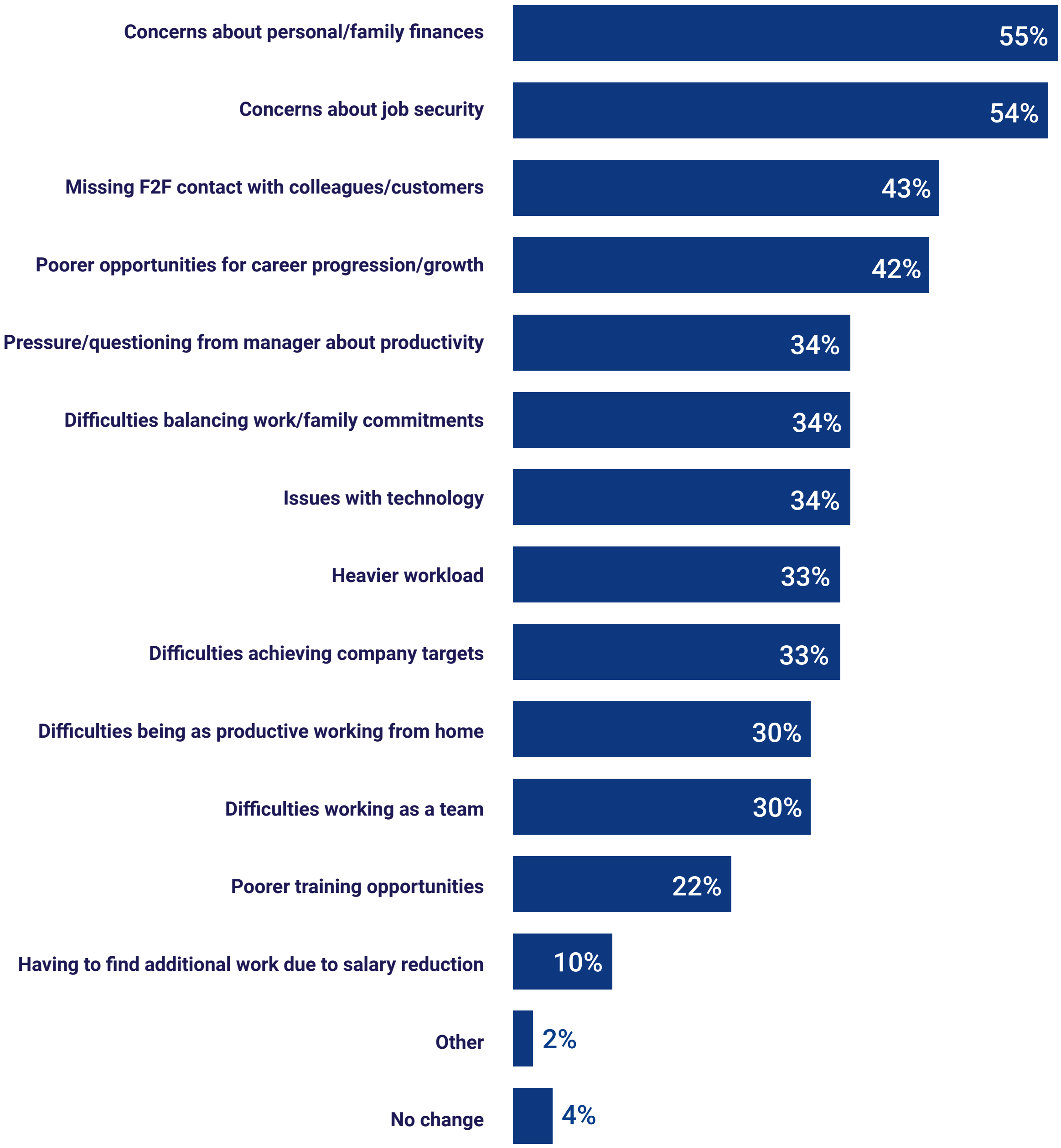
Employee concerns and difficulties

Employees felt most worried about their **personal or family finances** and **job security**, two very closely linked concerns. These were followed by difficulties regarding the sudden **lack of face-to-face contact** that is an effect of working from home, and **poorer opportunities for career progression**.

Concerns about their **managers' expectations about productivity**, **work-life balance**, and **issues with technology** also came up in the survey.

3e. Employee concerns and difficulties

The **biggest concerns** amongst workers related to their finances (55%) and job security (54%). A high proportion were also missing face-to-face contact (43%) and felt there were fewer career progression opportunities (42%).



Work from home

The full effect of the shift to the work-from-home environment caused by the COVID-19 crisis still cannot be fully calculated. With many continuing to work from their homes in an environment dependent on internet connectivity and remote interfacing, deep economic and social changes are still very much in motion as the crisis continues.

As of the end of May 2020, **67% of all employees** experienced being required to work from home. The chart below shows how they are distributed, according to **tenure, salary, the size of their organisation, their gender, and their age.**

deep economic and social changes are still very much in motion as the crisis continues

4a. Who is likely to be working from home? — by tenure, salary, business size, gender, and age

Tenure

62%	> 5 years
57%	up to 5 years

Salary

40%	<2,500
60%	2,500 to <4,000
63%	4,000 to <6,999
71%	7,000 to <12,000
67%	12,000+

Business Size (no. employees)

53%	Up to 50
58%	51 to 500
67%	501+

Gender

61%	Females
55%	Males

Age

54%	20-29 years
63%	30-39 years

We have also highlighted the **job functions and industries** in Malaysia which have exhibited the sharpest shift between working from home and onsite, as well as the location in which the shift was most felt.

4b. Who is likely to be working from home? — by job function, industry, and location

Job Function

74%	Design
74%	Education
73%	IT
64%	Accounting

Location

63%	KL
63%	Selangor

Industry

81%	Insurance/pension funding
77%	IT
70%	Education
70%	Property development
69%	Banking/financial services

Impacts of working from home

Working from home sharply impacted work hours for employees, with more than half of them **changing the times they worked**, and half of them **working longer hours**.

4c. Impacts of working from home

Of those employees who were required to work from home, over half (56%) had **changed their times of work** (e.g. worked weekends/evenings) and half were **working longer hours**.

Of further interest is the fact that a notable number of those who worked longer hours still took on more **household responsibilities**.

4d. Impacts of working from home

Although 17% of those employees working longer hours had asked other household members to take on more responsibilities, ultimately 42% had taken on more themselves.

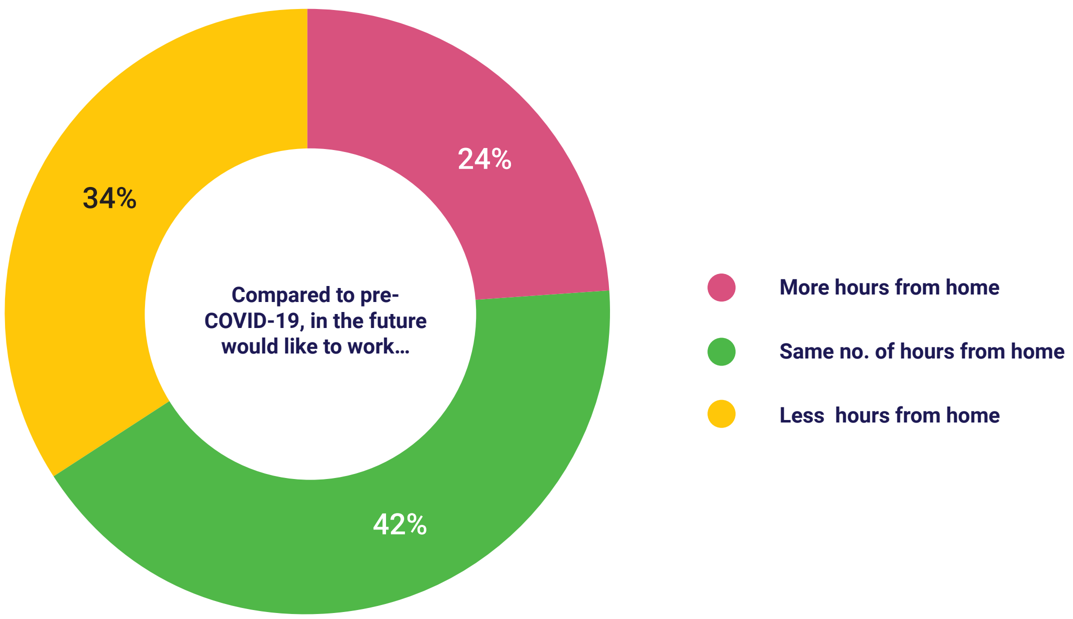
	Worked longer hours (n=867)	Worked shorter hours (n=571)
Taken on more house responsibilities yourself	**42%**	**46%**
Asked other household members to take on more responsibilities	**17%**	**12%**

Attitudes toward working from home

Compared to before the pandemic, most employees still desired to work **the same number of hours from home**, with about a third (34%) preferring to work fewer hours from home.

4e. Attitudes toward working from home

Based on their experience working from home during COVID-19, one quarter of employees would like to work **more hours** from home in the future (24%), whereas a third (34%) would like to work **fewer hours**.



43% of those who did not have full-time jobs were more likely to work fewer hours. Expectedly, many of these held manufacturing roles. On the other hand, many full time workers or those with longer tenure were found to prefer working more hours from home. Many of these worked in the banking/financial services sector, and/or in businesses with more than 500 employees.

4f. Attitudes toward working from home

Moving forward, longer-term, full-time workers in higher-paid roles, are more likely to be interested in **working more hours from home**. Most notably those working for larger organisations, and in the banking/financial services sectors.

Employees who would like to work fewer hours from home in the future (34%), were more likely to be… % would like to work less hours from home	**Employees who would like to work more hours from home in the future (24%), were more likely to be…** % would like to work less hours from home
• **Not working full-time** (43%) • Earning **<2,500 MYR per month** (41%) • Working in **manufacturing** (48%) roles	• On **tenures of 5+ years** (30%) • **Full-time** workers (25%) • Earning **12,000+ MYR per month** (38%) • Working for businesses with **more than 500 employees** (28%) • Working in the **banking/financial services** (32%) sector • Working in **legal/compliance** (44%) roles • **Males** (28%)

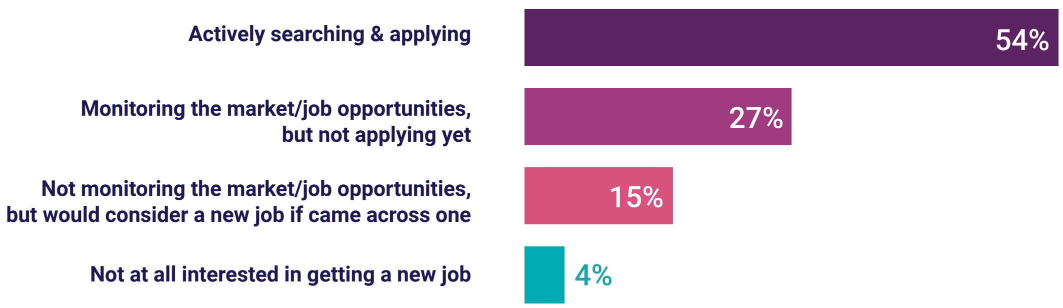
Job search amid COVID-19

The extremely **high volume of active job searches and applications—more than half** of those surveyed—amid the pandemic echoes the significant number of permanent or temporary job losses incurred by the workforce during the crisis, as well as **shifts in attitudes and concerns of employees** toward their current jobs. This is also reflected by the number of those who are **actively monitoring the market without applying**, as well as the considerable number of those who would **consider a new job if they came across one**.

Overall, these figures reveal a job market in flux, a symptom of the massive and unprecedented upheavals shaking industries and economies locally and globally. These dramatic changes continue to dislodge a significant number of employees from their livelihood, and affect **perspectives on career progression and job security** among those who continue to work.

5a. Job search amid COVID-19

Just over half of those surveyed (54%) were **actively searching and applying for jobs**.

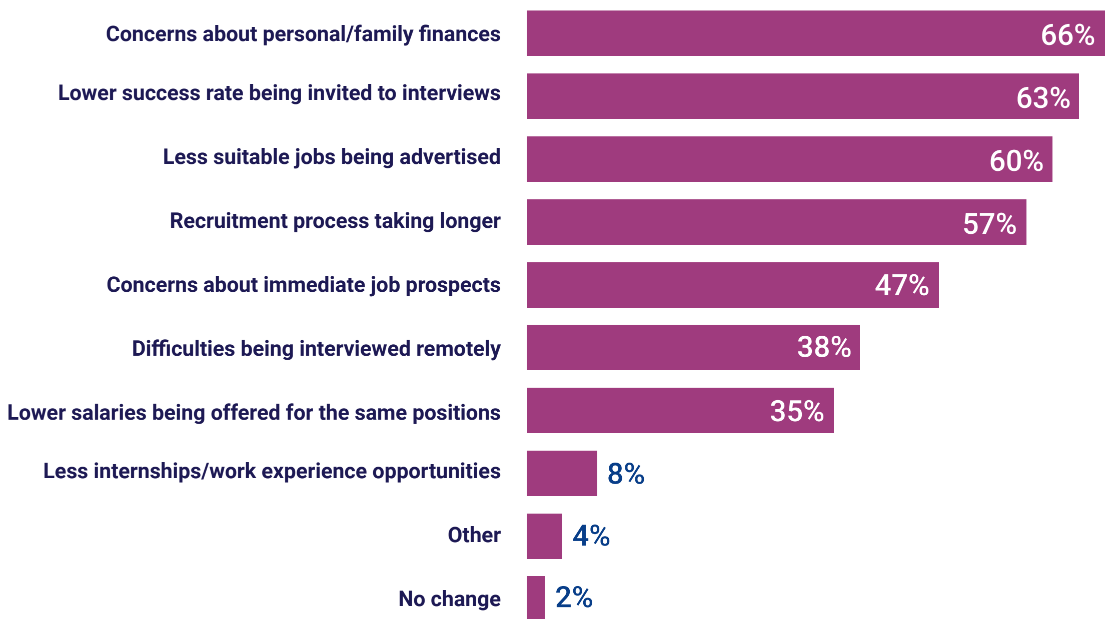


Changes in job market experiences

Concerns about personal/family issues took top spot among the concerns of those who were currently unemployed amid the COVID-19 crisis. Majority also found themselves **less successful at being invited to interviews**. Many of those currently not employed who searched for jobs **found the jobs being advertised less suitable** to them.

5b. Changes in job market experiences

Two thirds (66%) of those currently not employed were experiencing **concerns about their personal/family finances** (+11% more than those currently working). To add to these concerns, 63% had experienced a **lower success rate getting interviews** and 60% felt there were **less suitable jobs being advertised**.

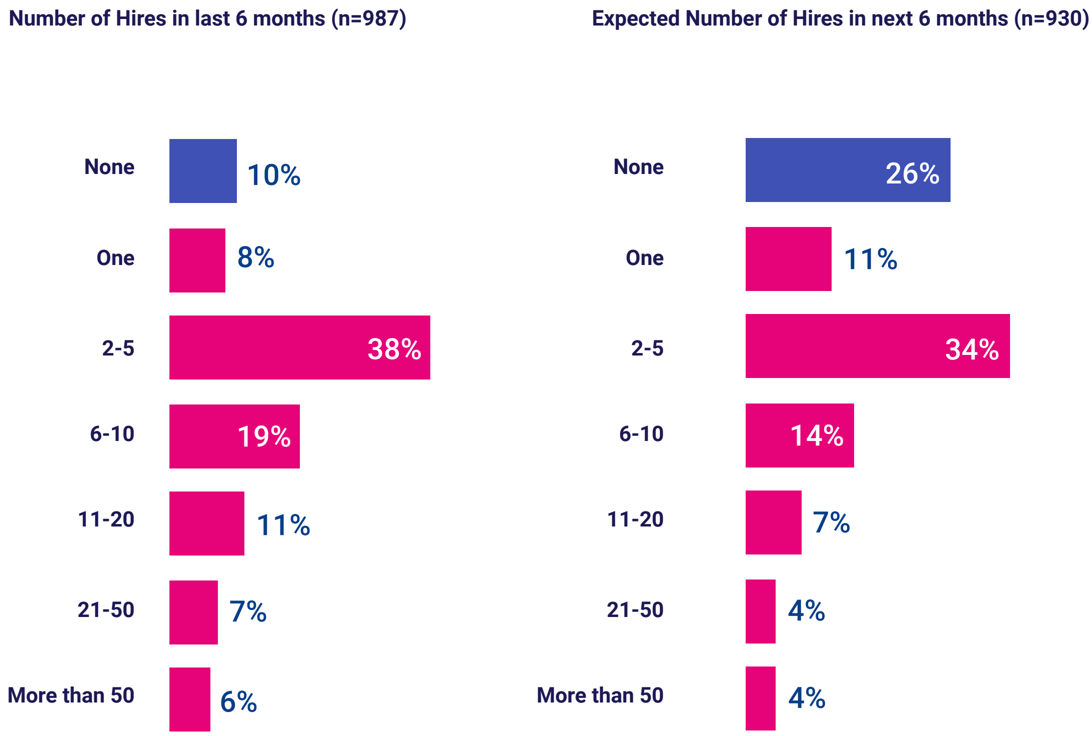


Recruitment activity

On the employer side, there was a **very sharp drop** from the number of hires over the last six months with only 10% not hiring, to 26% of hirers expecting not to hire over the next six months. This points to **tighter competition among job seekers**.

5c. Recruitment activity — last six months vs. next six months

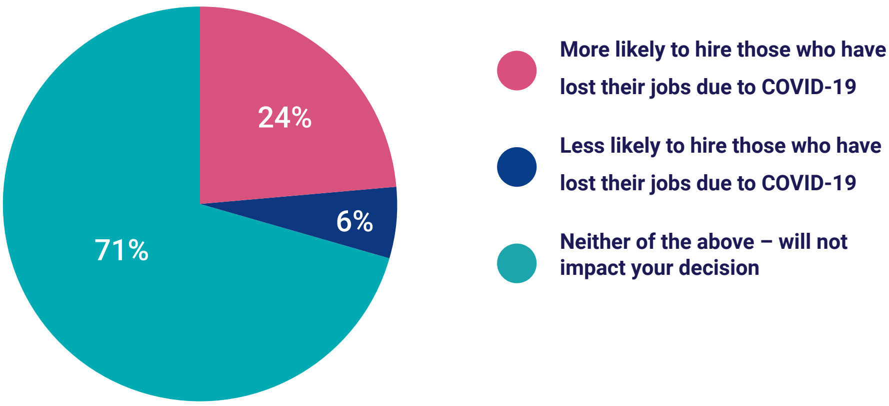
Nearly all organisations (90%) had **hired in the last 6 months**, with three out of four (74%) **expecting to hire in the next 6 months** (a drop of -16%).



Still, the hiring decisions of employers are largely not affected by whether new candidates have lost their employment as an effect of COVID-19. Furthermore, and on a positive note, there are more employers who are likely to hire those left unemployed by the crisis than employers who are not likely to hire them.

5d. Recruitment activity — COVID-19 and hirer decisions

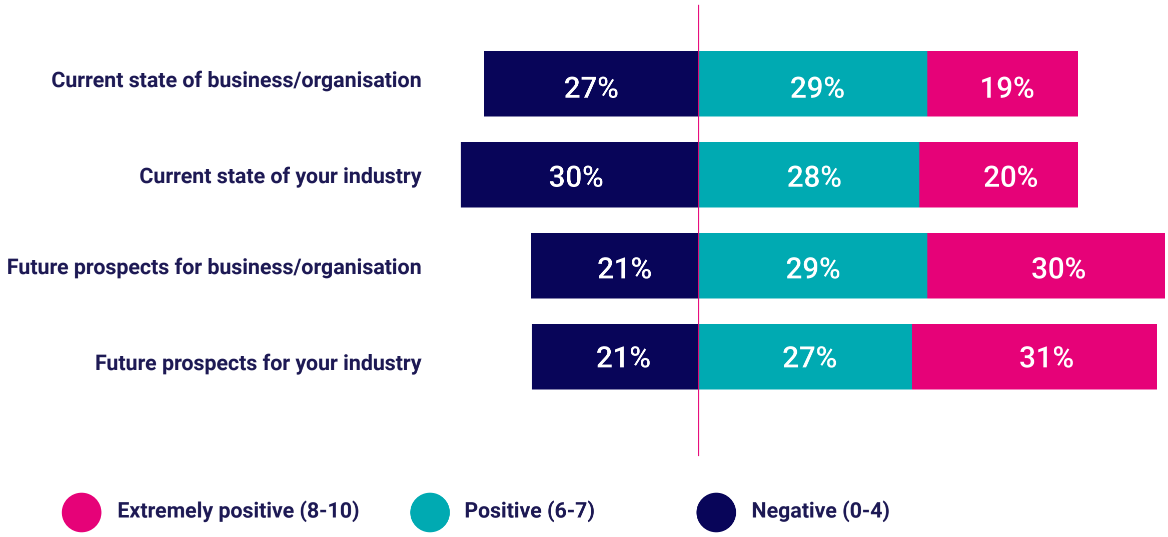
Positively, for **candidates who have lost their jobs due to COVID-19**, 71% of hirers will not factor this into their assessment of candidates in the future, and a quarter (24%) will actually be more likely to consider these candidates.



On an interesting note, delving deeper into hirer attitudes, hirers themselves felt largely positive about their own organisations, especially regarding their future prospects—indicating a healthy optimism about the outcome of the pandemic.

5e. Hirer attitudes toward their own organisations

Almost half of the hirers were **currently feeling positive** about their organisations (48%) and industries (47%). This improved by +11% each when **considering future prospects** (to 59% when thinking about their organisations and 58% their industries).

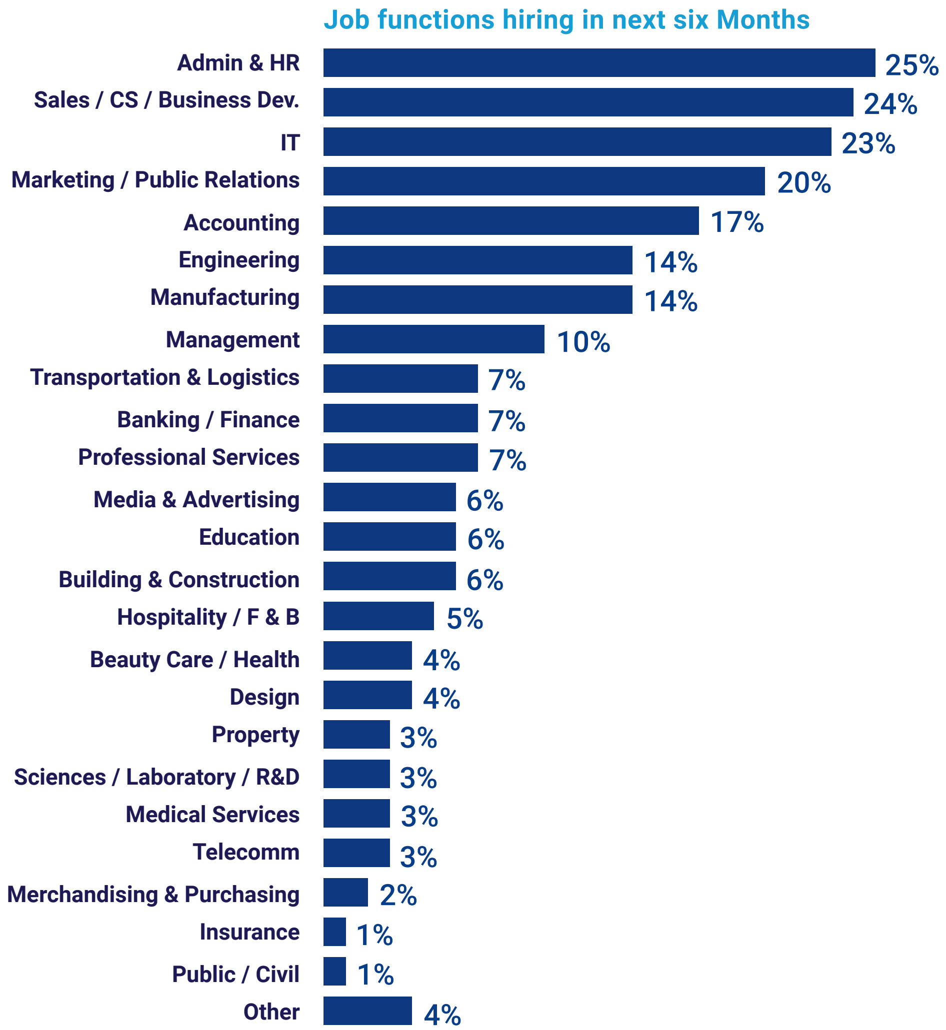


Roles in demand

Of useful note are the professional roles seen to be **most sought-out** by employers over the next few months. The research reveals a **healthy and heterogenous mix of jobs** ranging from customer-facing roles to back-office and organisational work, across a variety of associated industries.

5f. Roles in demand

Roles most likely to be in demand in the next 6 months are in administration/human resources (25%), sales/customer service/business development (24%) and IT (23%), and are more likely to be at a junior/entry level (67%).

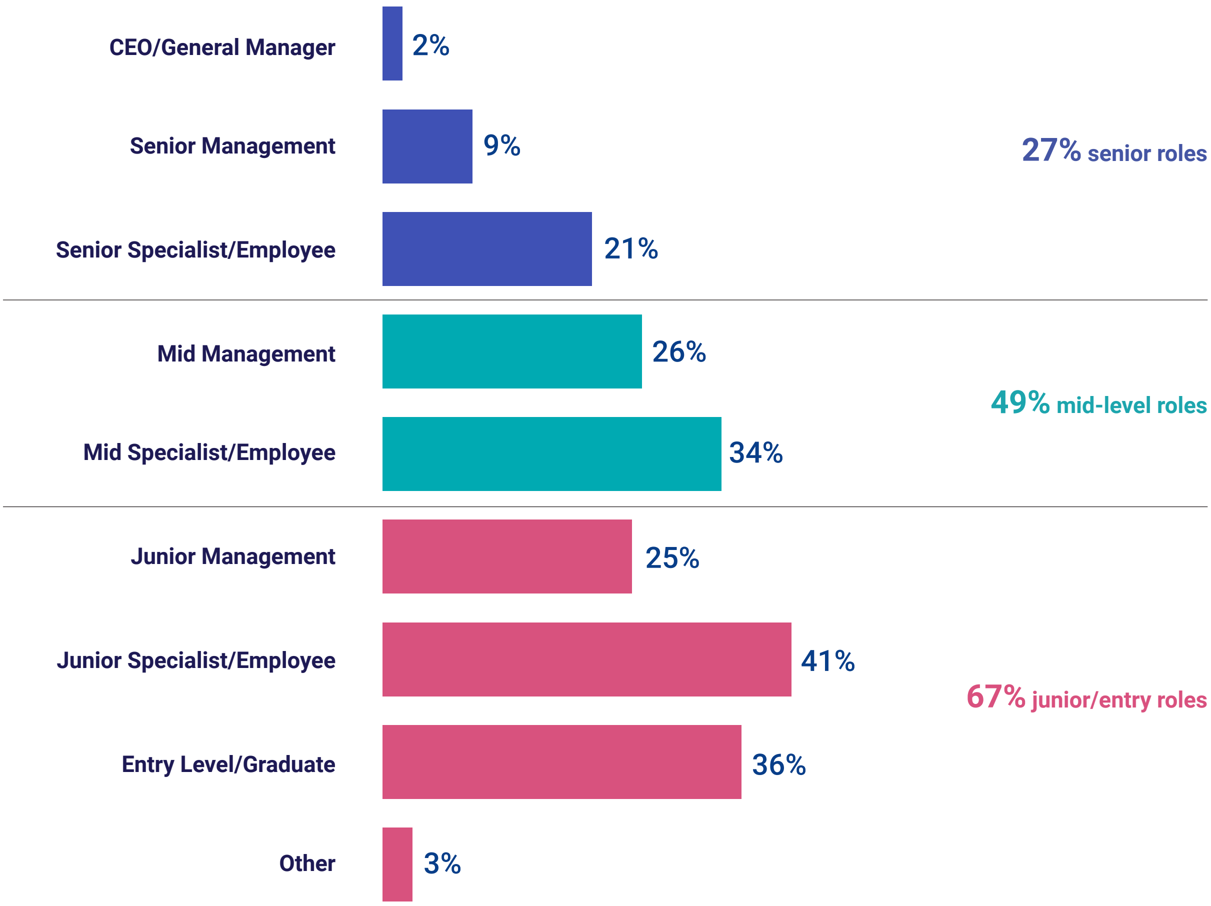


With **junior or entry-level jobs** taking majority of hirers' sought-after positions to fill, a more positive outlook remains for the **younger workforce**.

5g. Roles in demand

Job levels are most likely to be at a junior/entry level (67%).

Jobs level hiring in next six months



The propensity of majority of the organisations surveyed to require staff to work from home (**3a and 3b**), coinciding with data showing employers looking to hire junior or entry-level employees (**5g**), contributes some positive outlook amid the uncertainty brought about by COVID-19. However, tighter competition among jobseekers is foreseen in the light of the shrinkage of organisations that see themselves hiring over the next months (**5c**).

An evolving picture

A crisis within a crisis?

With the pandemic still in mid-course in many populations and in full swell in others, and with no clear end in sight from the global perspective, the economies of the world remain held in uncertainty. Amid the push to evolve slowly into a “new normal,” governments and private sectors across the world are dealing with their own domestic issues and concerns, while caught in a larger tug-of-war between protecting the health of citizens and bringing back their economies to a viable state.

In the shadow of COVID-19, many businesses face severe shortfalls and setbacks, if not outright demise, and must make decisive changes in order to survive. The task at hand for many enterprises to resolve these operational and organisational crises continues to evolve as the overall picture changes. Also, one must not overlook the optimism that still remains strong among both employers and employees, as well as hirers and candidates, as evidenced by their attitudes toward their jobs, both in the present and the future.

Responsiveness, resilience, and rising above the challenges

These job market studies, covering markets across the region, are part of a moving picture. With the global crisis unresolved—and seemingly seeing no easy resolution in the near term—we at JobStreet see this continuing research as part of our commitment to our employers and the jobseekers, as well as the industries we serve.

employers and employees, as well as hirers and candidates, can make more informed decisions about their organisations and their careers

Along with the innovations and tools we continuously develop to make the talent search and the job search easier and simpler, we see this effort as part of our role of being responsive to the times.

By providing relevant, actionable, and current information, we hope to shine some light on the path ahead. In knowing the changing industry and employment landscape better, employers and employees, as well as hirers and candidates, can make more informed decisions about their organisations and their careers.

In these ways, we aim to help give industries, businesses, and individuals the resilience they need to face this crisis, and to thrive in the long run.

#TogetherAhead, we rise above our challenges.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us at **marketing-kl@jobstreet.com**

JobStreet