

April 2020

The impact of COVID-19 on UK business

COVID-19 is likely to impact all areas of our lives for months and years to come.

As the seriousness of this situation quickly came to light last month, we polled the opinions of our customers across a wide range of sectors and industries.

Business leaders from across the UK completed the survey and this report is a summary of our key findings.

Mark Rayner
Chief Executive
Richmond Events



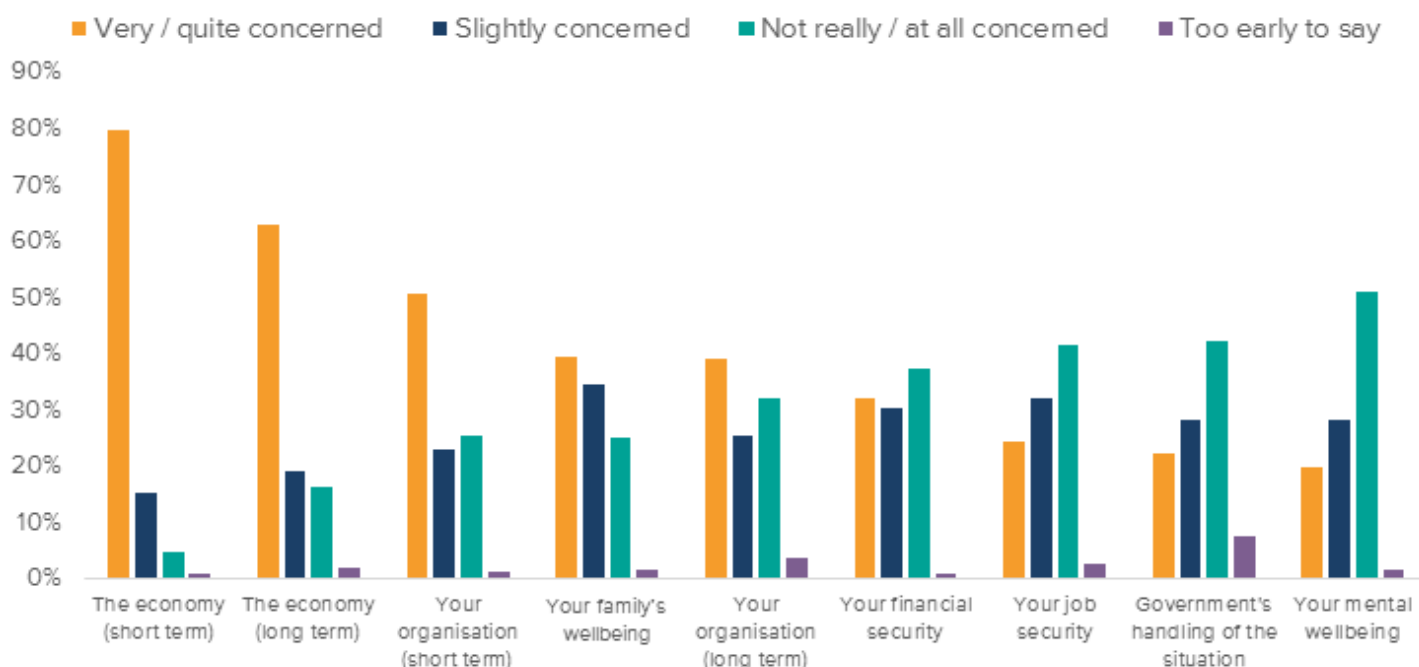
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What are you most worried about?

With so many unknowns and uncertainties facing us all, it seemed only right to start this questionnaire with asking people what was worrying them the most – and the least.

Economic concerns appear to outweigh concerns about one’s own organisation, although the two must be inextricably linked.

The health and happiness of the family appears to be of far greater concern than that of the individual with over 50% of respondents stating they weren’t particularly concerned about their own mental wellbeing.

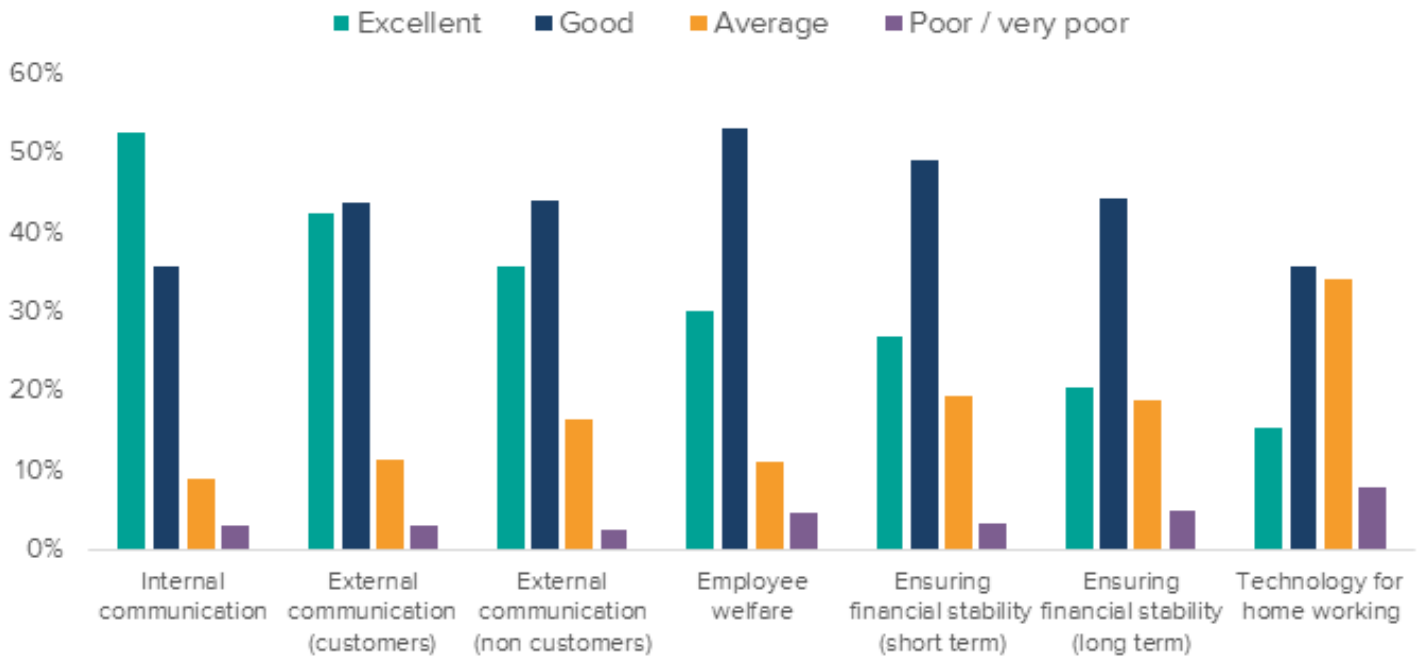


How do you rate your company's response?

On the whole, there was positive feedback on organisations' responses to the COVID crisis. People feel that they been kept informed & looked after and their companies are doing a fair job keeping in touch with customers and prospects.

A more lukewarm response to the implementation of technology for home working, possibly indicative of the speed in which large numbers of people transitioned to remote working.

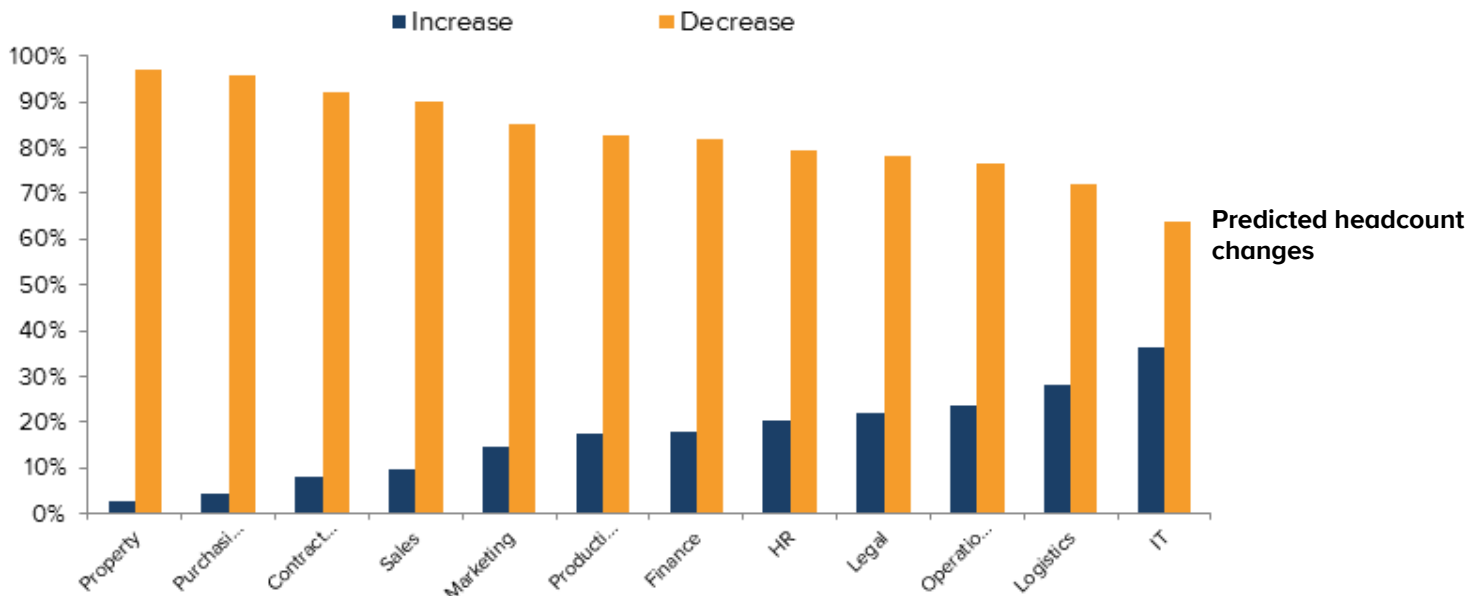
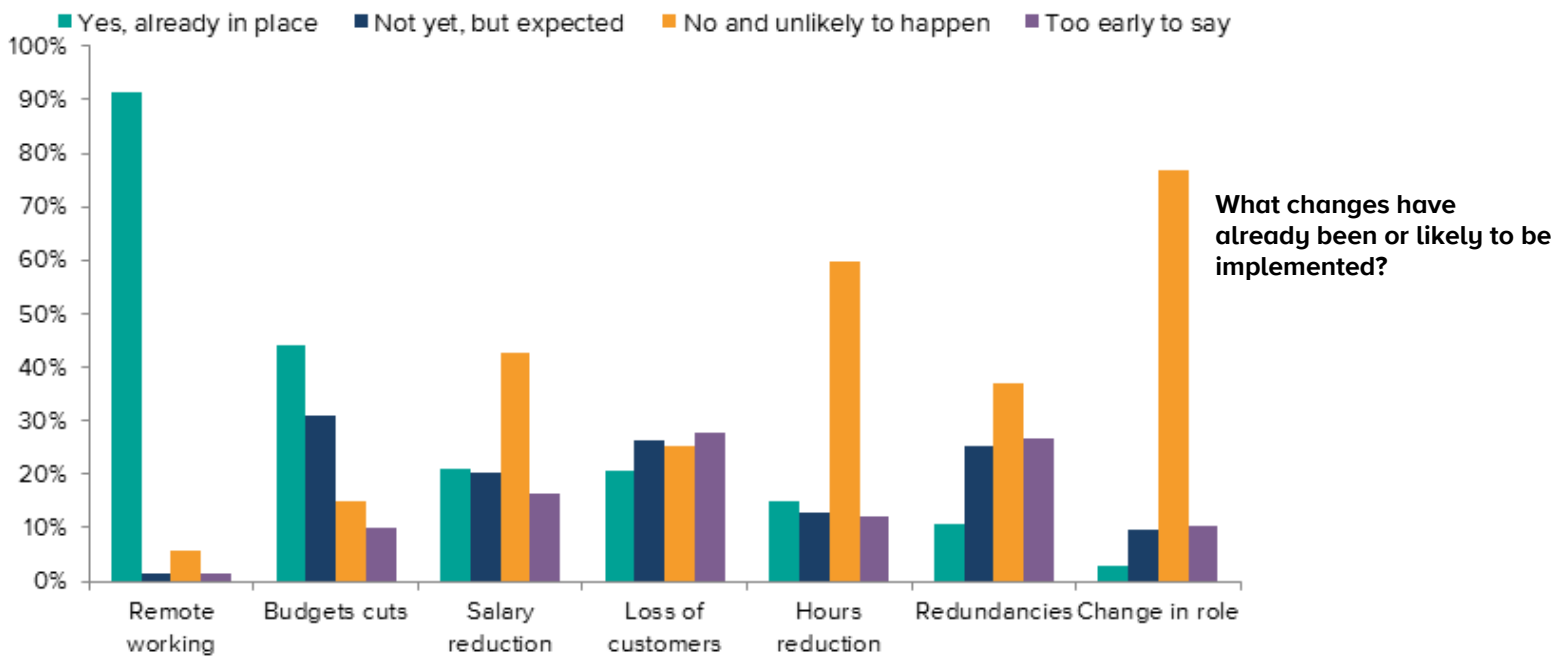
How do you rate your company's handling of the following areas?



Changes

The clearest (and expected) change here relates to working remotely. Also, unsurprisingly, over 70% of people have already suffered or shortly expect to enforce budget cuts. Conversely, there appears to be a certain degree of confidence around job changes, reduction of hours and, to a lesser degree, salary reductions and redundancies.

When asked about staffing level changes, only 52% of respondents expect to see any movement, with 48% not predicting any changes. As a positive, over 35% expect to see a headcount increase in IT and nearly 30% in supply chain. However it cannot be ignored that the decrease predictions across all departments are significant.

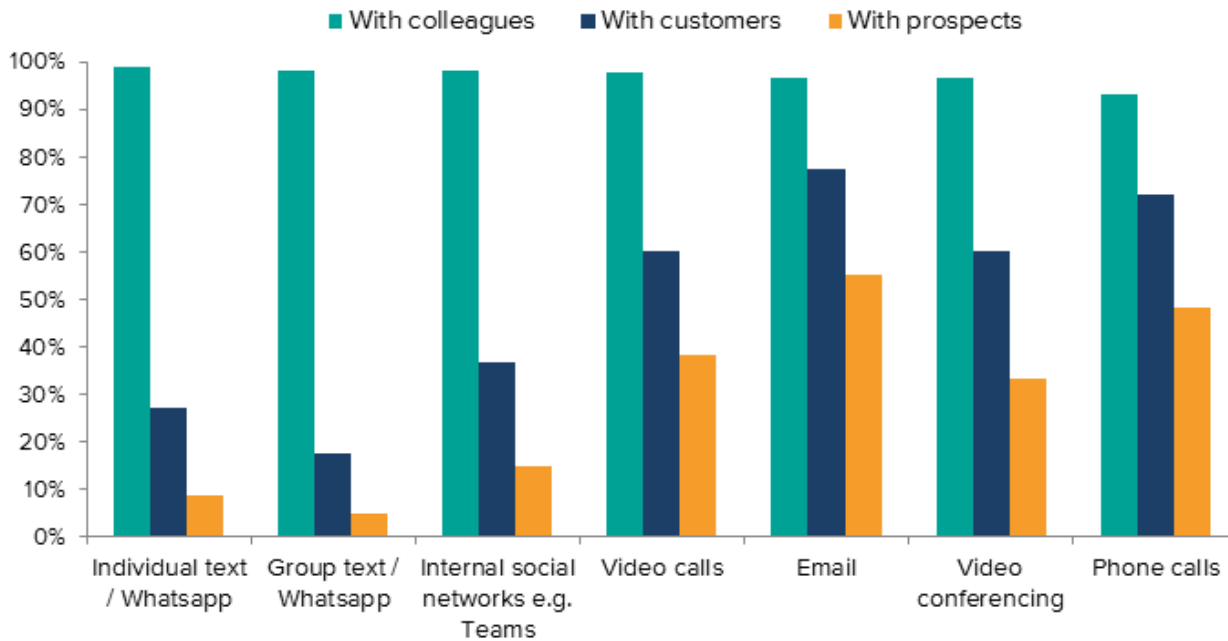


The New Communication Reality

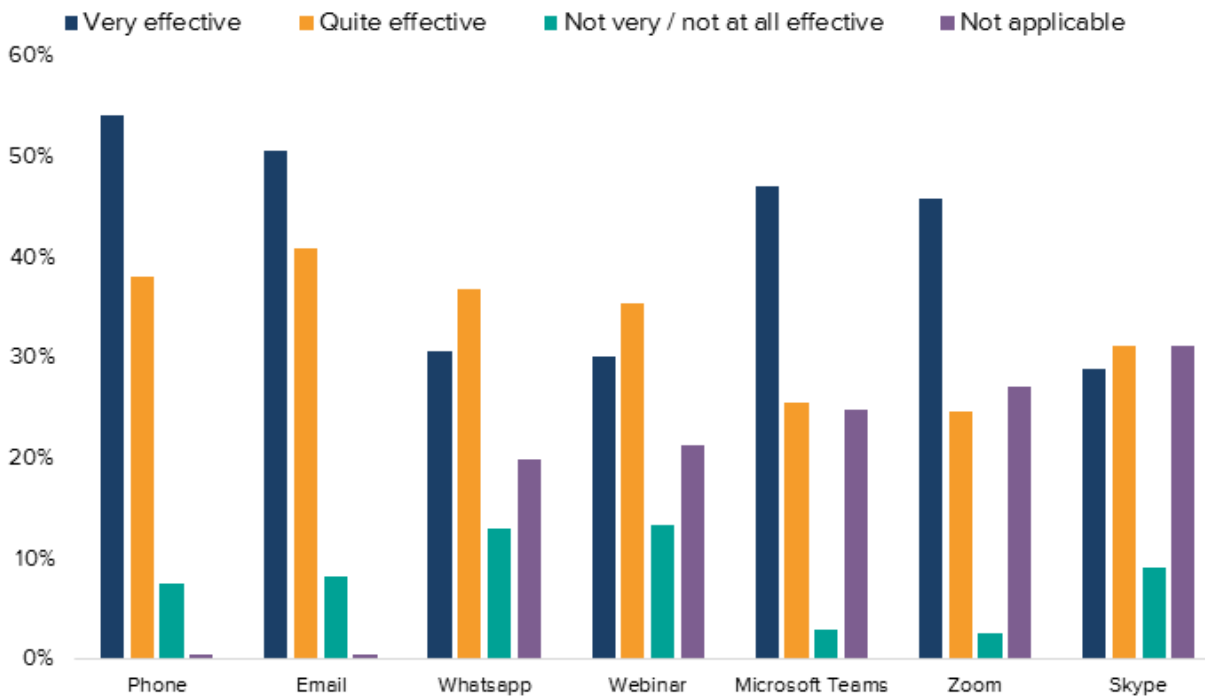
People appear to be using the whole range of communication channels to keep in contact with their colleagues. A little more focused when contacting customers and prospects, with email and phone calls still being the preferred methods of communication.

On the whole, people seem relatively comfortable with the channels at their disposal, most likely as they continue to use the channels that worked best for them previously.

How are you communicating?



How effective are the following channels for you?

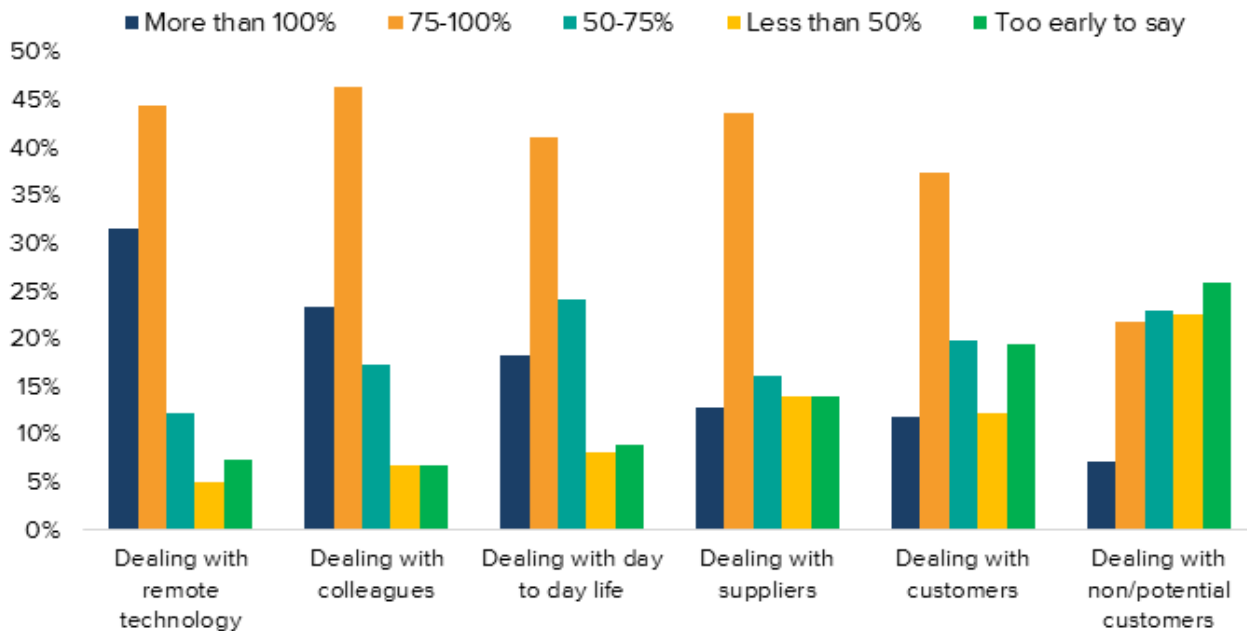
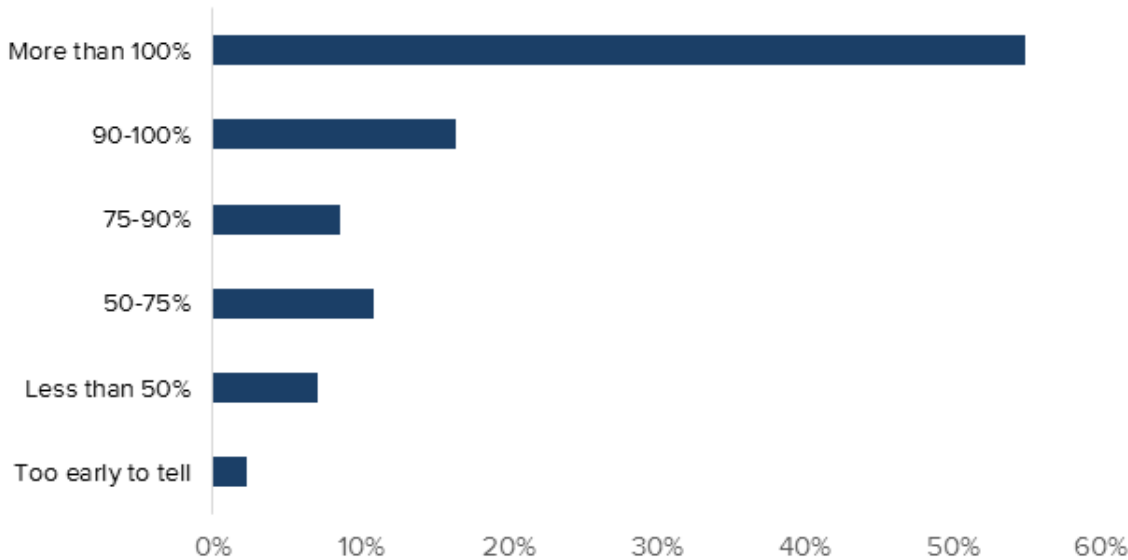


Productivity

So, it appears as if most people are working harder now than they have been previously. Given the timings of this survey, this could partly be represented by the initial scramble to set up for remote working or preparing teams to be furloughed.

For the most part, the general opinion is that productivity levels haven't significantly dipped, with many saying that they are seeing an improvement in using technology, communicating with their teams and coping with life in general.

That being said, it seems that when it comes to communicating outside of organisations or customer bases, this is more of a challenge.



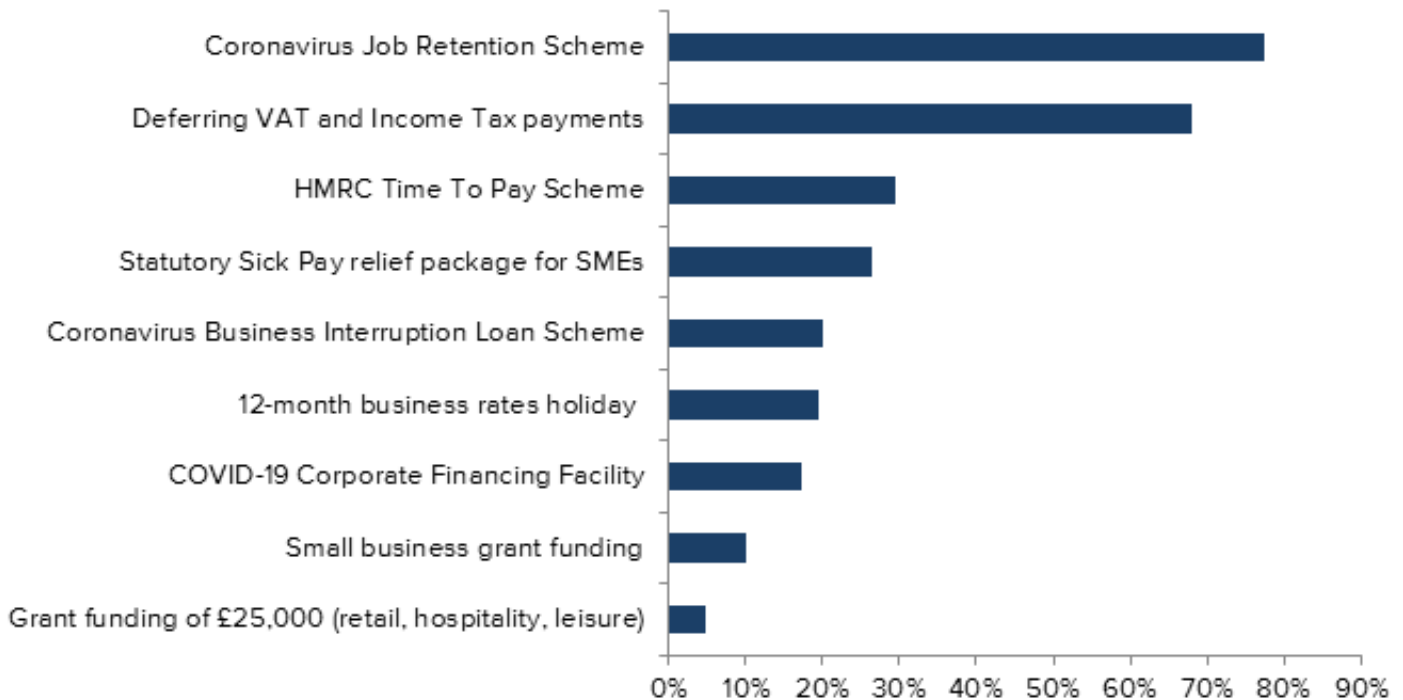
Government assistance

The government have put into place a range of assistance measures.

At the time of asking, the job retention scheme was due to start (1st April) and almost 80% of people are expecting their organisation to furlough a % of their workforce. Deferring VAT / income tax payments will also be utilised by nearly 70% of companies.

Almost 40% stated that they wouldn't be using any of these schemes or didn't know.

Which of the government's help measures will your company make use of?

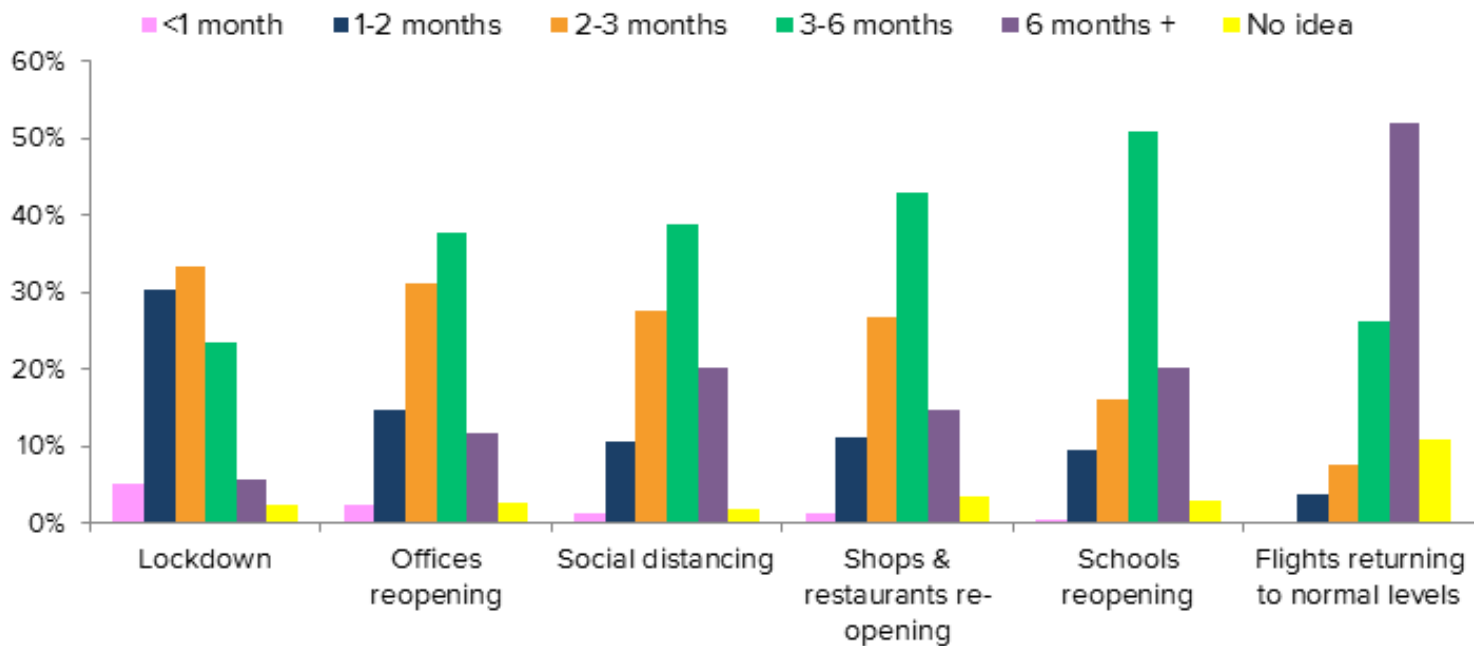


Getting back to 'normal'

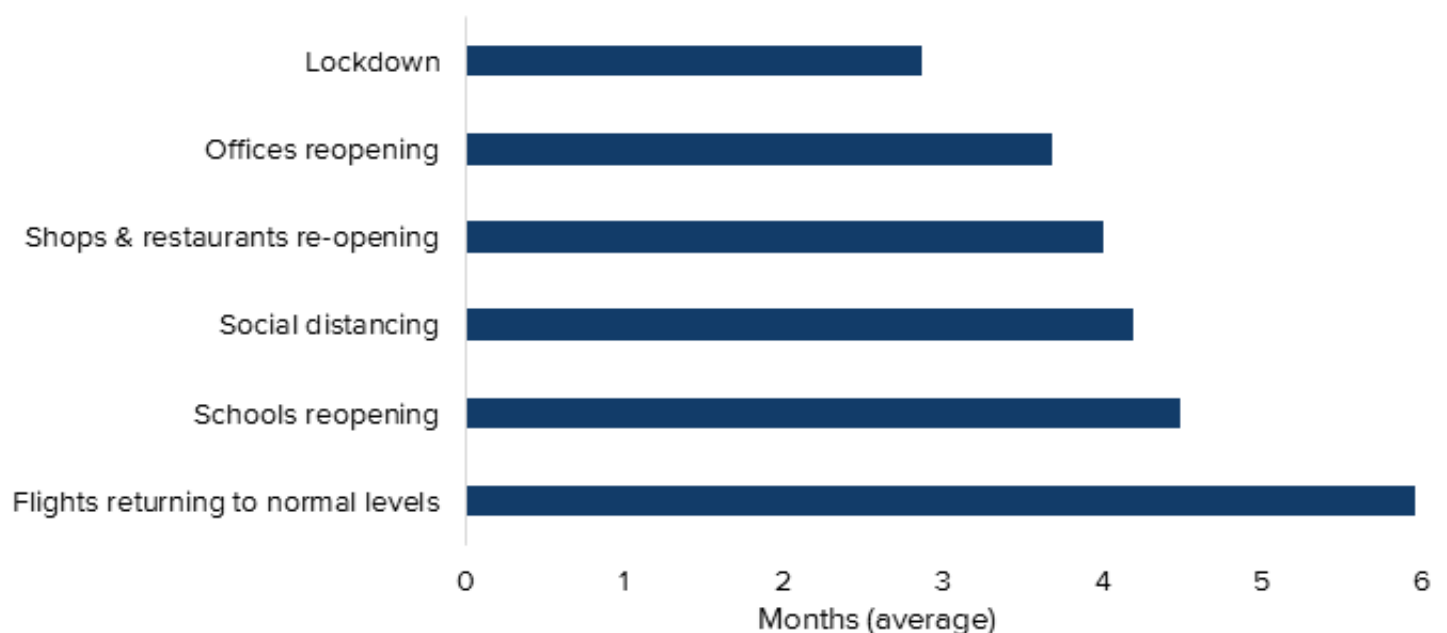
All anyone can offer is a best guess for when the activities we once took for granted will return to some degree of normality.

The group's predictions were that lockdown would be the first area to be eased, followed by offices reopening. The general consensus is that social distancing measures would remain in place for around 4 months and international travel will be most impacted.

How long do you think it will be before the following areas return to pre-COVID-19 levels?



Average number of months per area:



About our Respondents

317 people kindly completed this questionnaire. They are all directors, head of departments and senior managers within large organisations across a range of job functions and sectors.

Sector analysis

