

EMPLOYERS IN THE SPOTLIGHT: THE CALL FOR COMPANIES TO HELP END THE COVID-19 CRISIS



SEPTEMBER 2021



Overview

Since March 2020, in partnership with KRC Research and United Minds, Weber Shandwick and Powell Tate have been examining U.S. consumers and workers as the COVID-19 pandemic persists. While the majority of employees continue to say their employers have put safety above profits since early in the pandemic – with our latest polling reflecting 67% in agreement, down slightly from 72% in May – the demanding cry now is for employers to help end the COVID-19 pandemic.

To lead in a polarized and changing environment, while striving to meet business goals, manage back-to-office plans and sustain employee civility. This is no easy feat – particularly with diminishing optimism, deep divisions driven by socio-economic factors and a workforce that is burned out and ready for change.

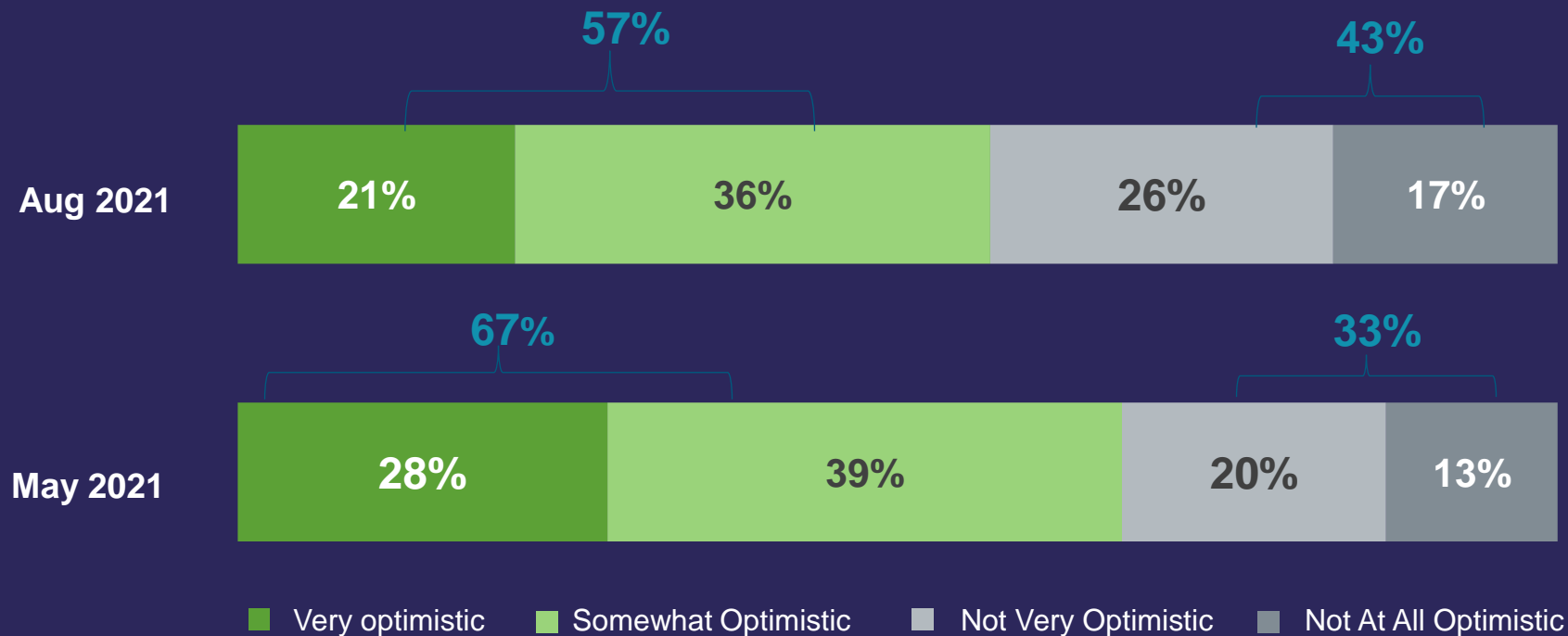
But as our latest research and mandates from the White House show, the private sector is being called on to do its part to end this crisis.

This survey was conducted by Weber Shandwick and KRC Research on August 23-25, 2021, with a sample of just over 1,500 adult consumers and workers, demographically weighted to align with the U.S. adult population based on U.S. Census data.



Optimism in the country's direction has eroded by 10 points since May.

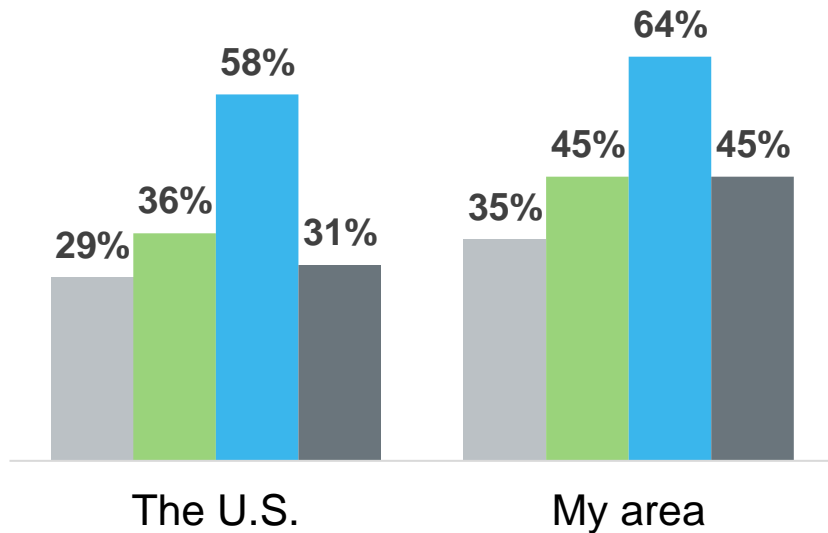
Overall, how are you feeling about the current direction of the United States?



There has been a dramatic rise and fall in the belief that COVID-19 is mostly under control and efforts are working.

Percent Agree:

Coronavirus is mostly under control in...



Percent Agree:
Efforts to stop the spread of coronavirus and bring it under control are working.

| | May | Aug. | Change |
|------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| TOTAL | 74% | 50% | -24 |
| Northeast | 72% | 56% | -16 |
| Midwest | 77% | 50% | -27 |
| South | 72% | 47% | -25 |
| West | 75% | 51% | -24 |
| Republican | 72% | 51% | -21 |
| Democrat | 78% | 54% | -24 |
| Independent | 68% | 34% | -34 |
| Fully vaccinated | 83% | 54% | -29 |
| Not vaccinated | 65% | 39% | -26 |



80% of Americans agree companies should help end the pandemic.

*63% say very important
(up 16 pts since May)

| Important Issues for Business & Employers to Help Solve % | May | August |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| Drive economic growth and create jobs | 84 | 87 |
| Increase access to affordable health care | 75 | 82 |
| End the coronavirus pandemic | 75 | 80 |
| Reduce crime and uphold public safety | 72 | 80 |
| Reduce misinformation and disinformation | 74 | 80 |
| Protect national security | * | 80 |
| Improve America's reputation globally | 69 | 77 |
| Ensure the integrity of elections | 64 | 76 |
| Rebuild the country's infrastructure | * | 76 |
| Maintain U.S. leadership in the world | * | 75 |
| Reform the immigration system | 61 | 73 |
| Reduce gun violence | 64 | 72 |
| Make it easier for citizens to register and vote | 59 | 71 |
| Increase # vaccinated against COVID-19 | 67 | 70 |
| Reduce income disparities | 71 | 70 |
| Advance racial equality and address systemic racism | * | 69 |
| Tackle climate change | 64 | 68 |
| Reform law enforcement practices | 59 | 66 |

* Not asked in May 2021

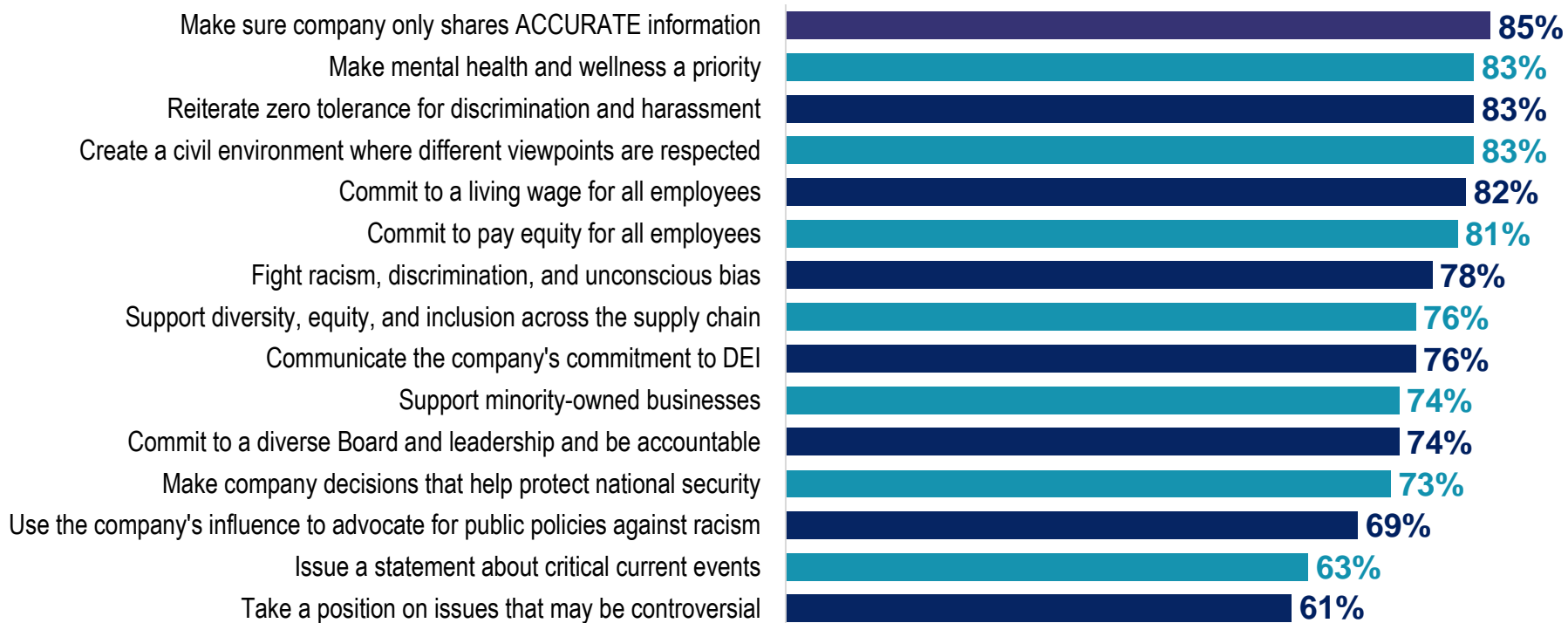


Most employees expect their employer to create safe and equitable workplaces — and to speak up on certain societal issues.

EMPLOYED:

How important are each of the following for the company or organization you work for to do?

(Very or somewhat important)



65%

of employees and 61% of consumers agree that American businesses are increasingly a constructive force for positive change.

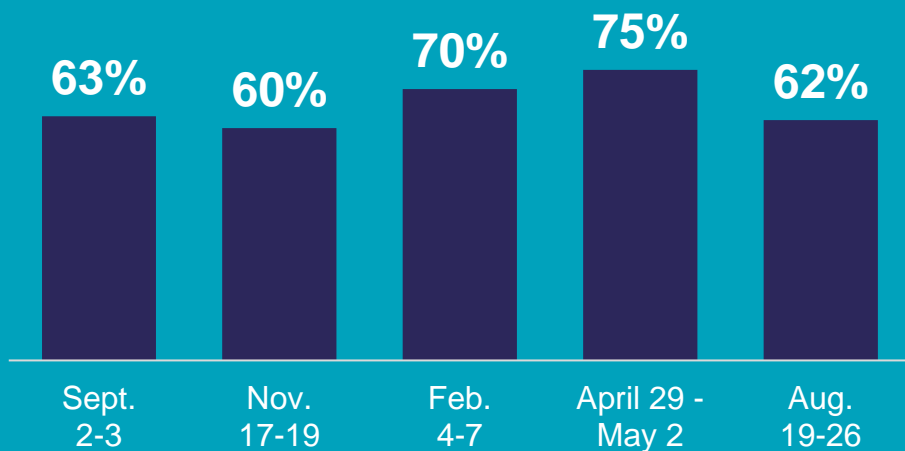


Trend: Confidence in businesses and employers.

ALL ADULTS

Businesses and employers are taking the right actions to stop the spread of coronavirus to bring it under control
(Percent very or somewhat confident)

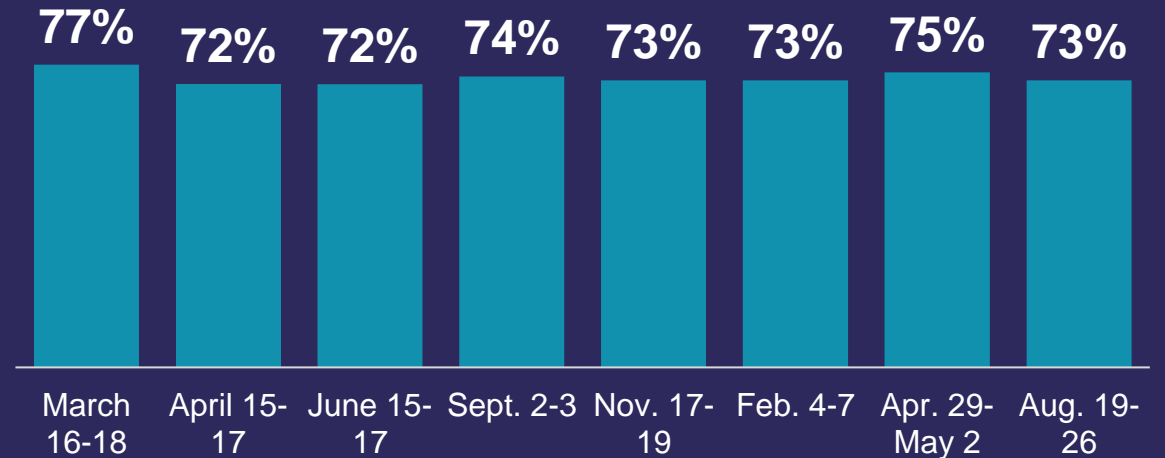
-13 points since May



THOSE EMPLOYED

My employer's response to the coronavirus is exactly what it should be
(Percent strongly or somewhat agree)

Employee confidence in employers has remained strong since the pandemic started



Companies that have communicated effectively through the pandemic have established strong reputations among employees.

74%

agreed that their employer is communicating effectively about the COVID-19 situation—
36% strongly agreed

Employees were asked if their employer is communicating effectively about the COVID-19 situation.

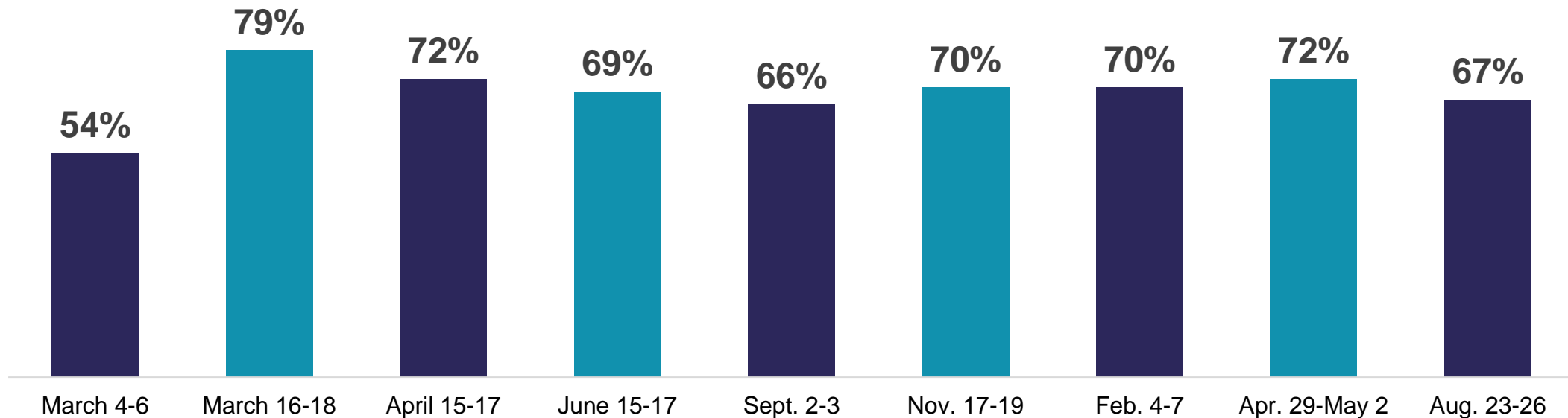
| August 2021 | Employer Communicated Effectively | Employer Did Not |
|---|--|-------------------------|
| Very satisfied with my job | 86% | 49% |
| Proud to work for my employer | 90% | 47% |
| My employer's response is exactly what it should be | 86% | 37% |
| Employer puts safety of workers above profits | 79% | 35% |



Employees say their employers have put safety above profits since early in the pandemic.

In early March, when just over half agreed that their employer put worker safety ahead of profits (a third disagreed and many were unsure), only 42% had received information about company policies and actions related to the coronavirus. Those who received information from their employer were far more likely to report their employer put worker safety above profits (75% vs. 44%). By mid-March, 81% reported receiving employer communications, and perceptions of safety rose to 79% in parallel.

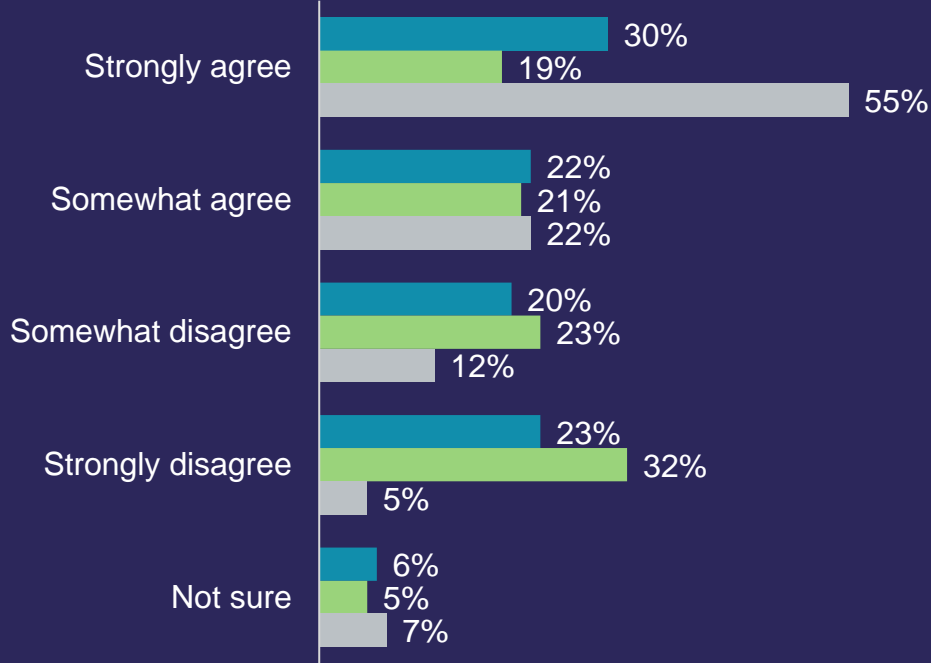
Percent Employed Agree: My employer puts the safety of workers above profits.



Mixed feelings about right of business to require proof of vaccination. Those not vaccinated feel it is a matter of privacy.

| Should businesses be allowed to... | Employees to provide proof | Customers to provide proof |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Yes | 48% | 43% |
| No | 28% | 28% |
| Depends on type of business | 20% | 21% |
| Not sure | 5% | 4% |

My vaccination status is a private matter and I should not have to share my status with anyone



■ Total ■ Fully vaccinated ■ Not vaccinated



There is bipartisan support for employer mandates for masks, vaccines and other measures that ensure the health of employees in the workplace.



Employers should have the right to require employees to...

Get vaccinated for COVID-19 or show proof of a negative COVID-19 test in order to come into the workplace with other employees (Among those employed)



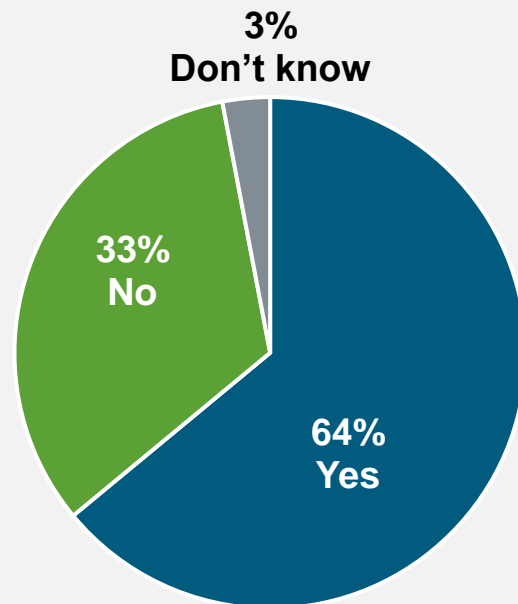
Wear masks on the job in the workplace (Among those employed)



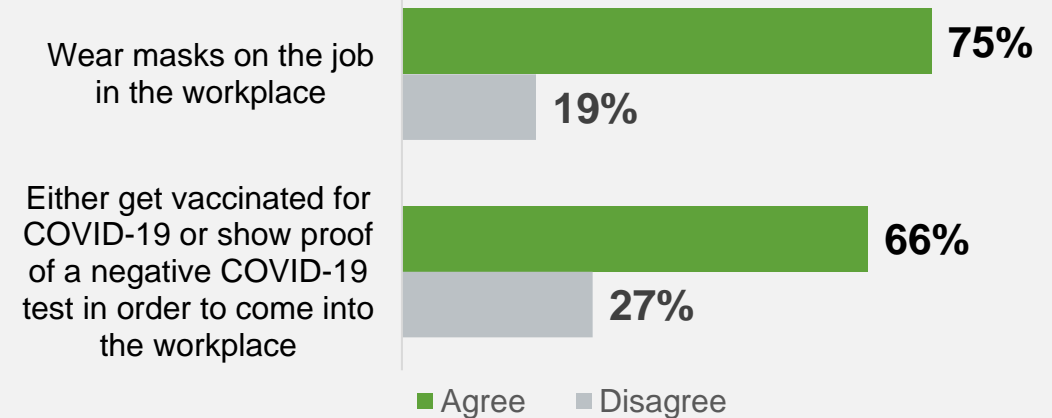
Two-thirds report their employer has encouraged employees to get vaccinated.

About the same number agree their employer should have the right to require either vaccination or proof of negative COVID-19 test. Three quarters believe employers should have the right to require masking.

Has your employer encouraged you to get vaccinated?
(Among those employed)

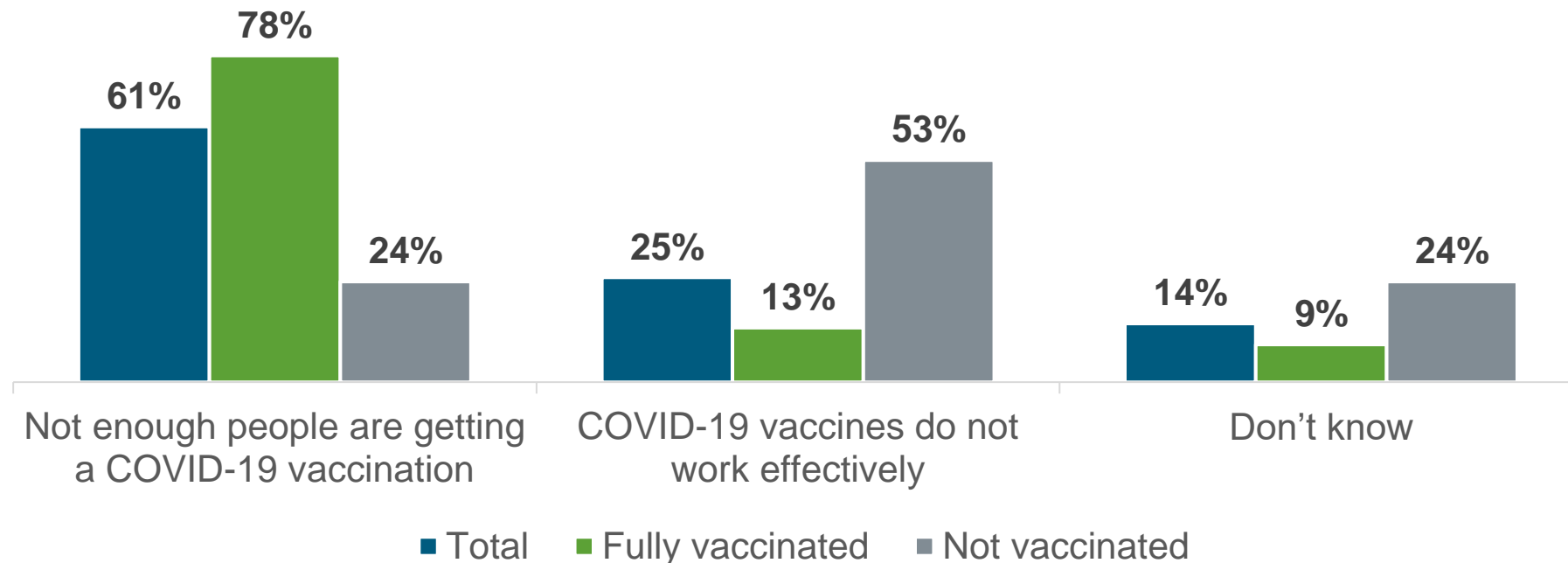


Employers should have the right to require employees to... (Among those employed)

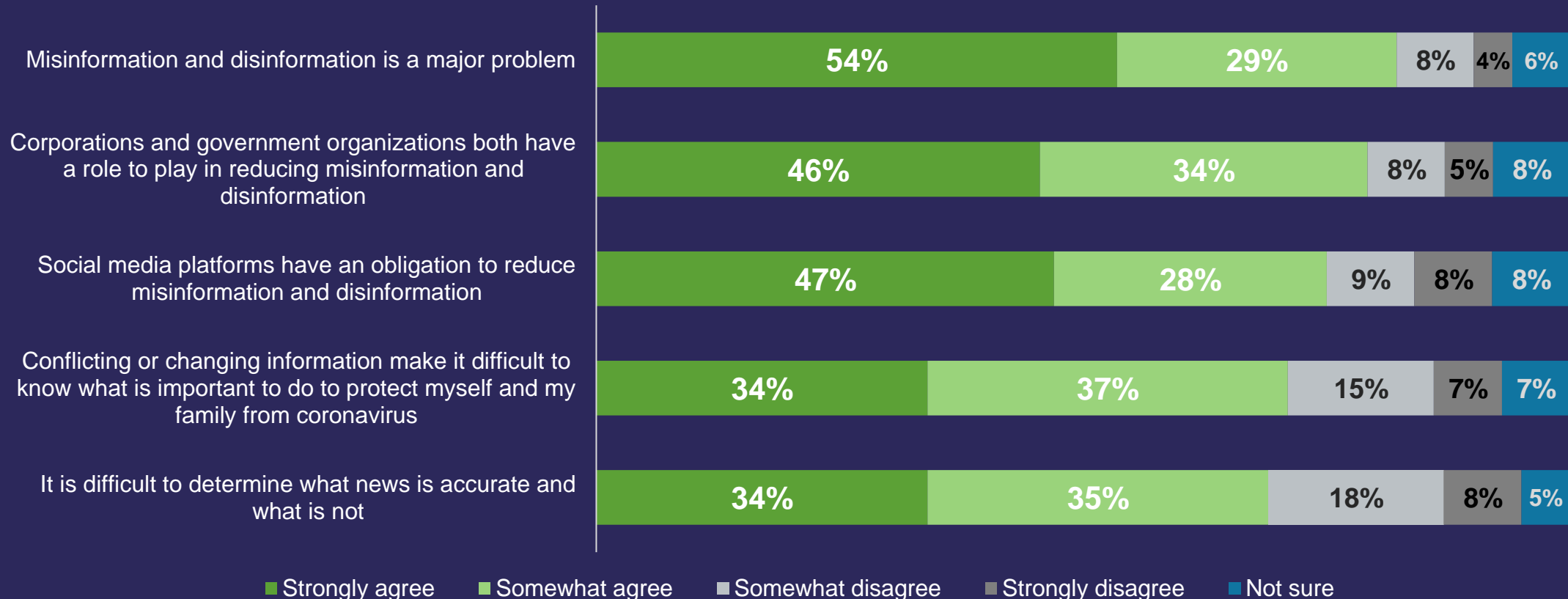


Nearly 80% of the vaccinated — and a quarter of the unvaccinated — say that the main reason COVID-19 is spreading now is because not enough people are getting vaccinated. Half of the unvaccinated say it is because vaccines do not work effectively.

What one of the following do you think is the main reason that COVID-19 is spreading now? (Forced choice)

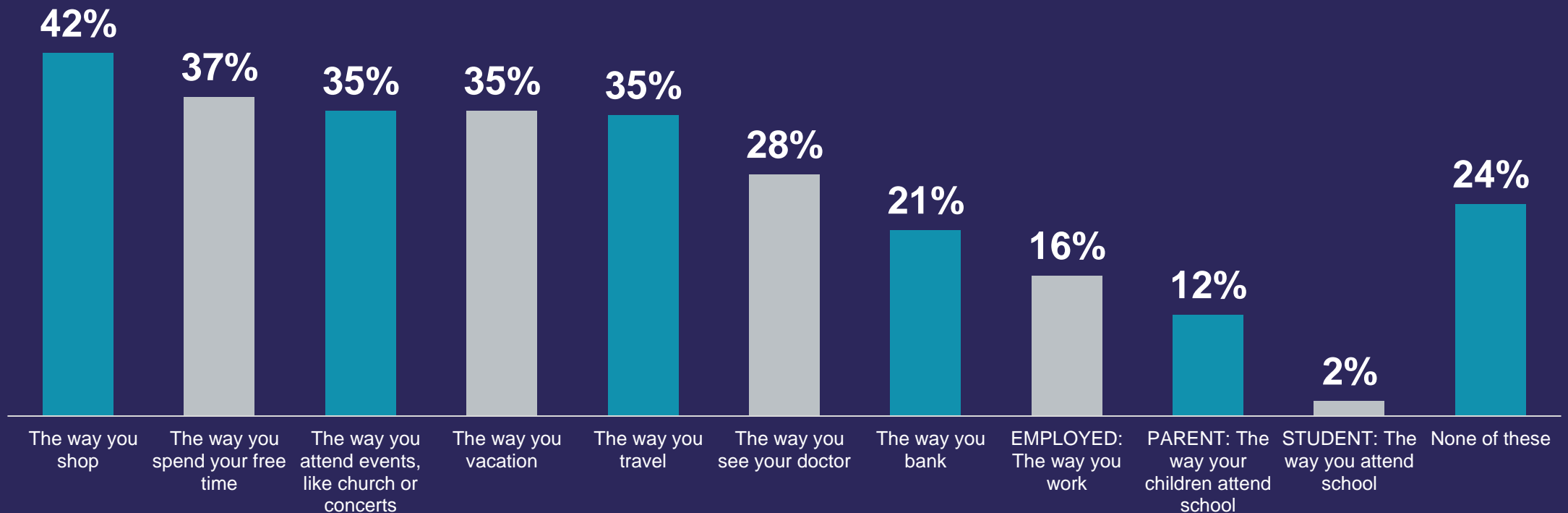


Mis- and disinformation are recognized as major problems — and 3 in 4 admit they have a difficult time knowing what news is accurate. Corporations and government have a role in solving the challenge.



The pandemic has fundamentally shifted the way we live. Three-quarters of Americans (76%) have made changes to the way they live their lives since the start of the pandemic.

Have you made any changes in the way you do each of the following since the start of the pandemic?



Employees split into three groups when it comes to how they want to work in the future — a third want to go into the workplace full-time, about a third want to split their time between home and workplace, and the remainder want to work from home full-time.

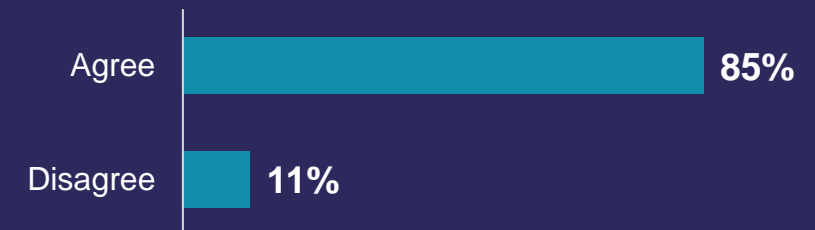
What is your personal preference for the way you work for an employer?

(Among those whose jobs can be performed from home)



I have proven that I can work productively from home and so my employer should not require me to go back to the workplace.

(Among those working from home)



I do not think it is fair that I have to go into work while others can work from home.

(Among those working from the workplace)

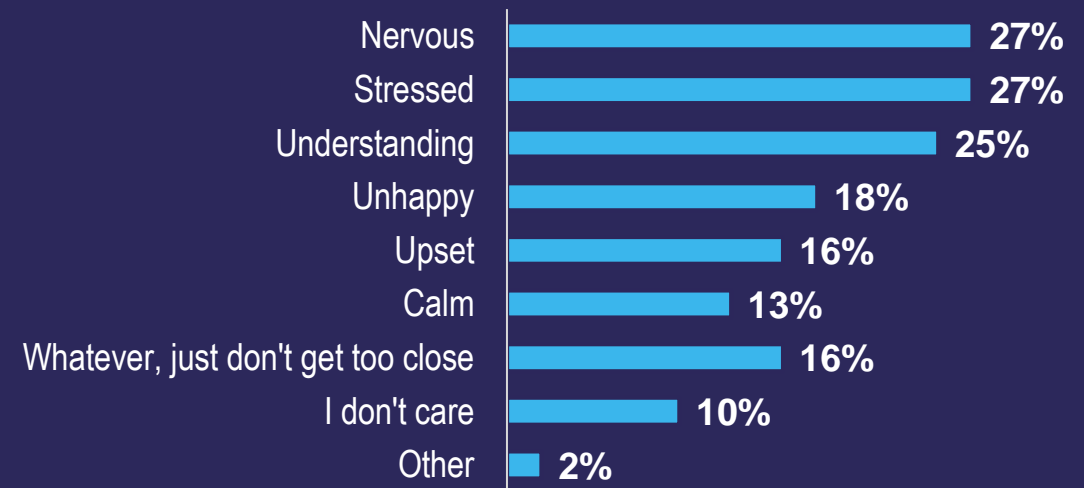


Workers that have been working remotely will be more nervous and stressed than those who are currently going into the workplace if their employer does not require vaccination or proof of negative COVID-19 test results.

How will you feel if your employer requires you to go into work when other employees are not vaccinated or providing proof of a negative COVID-19 test result?
(Among those working from home)



How do you feel that your employer requires you to go into work when other employees are not vaccinated?
(Among those going into workplace)



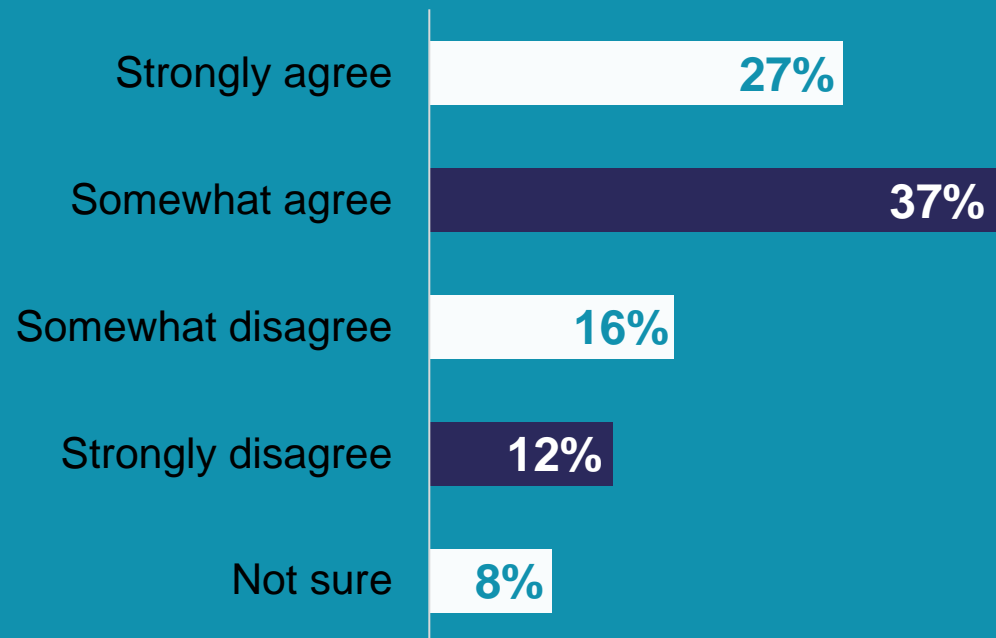
Mental health is a worry as many employees are experiencing burnout. Employers appear to be providing at least some resources to help.

58% of employees worry about their mental health and wellness

49% are experiencing work burnout

23% disagree that current working conditions are exactly what they need to do their best

Employer provides resources to help me manage my mental health and wellness

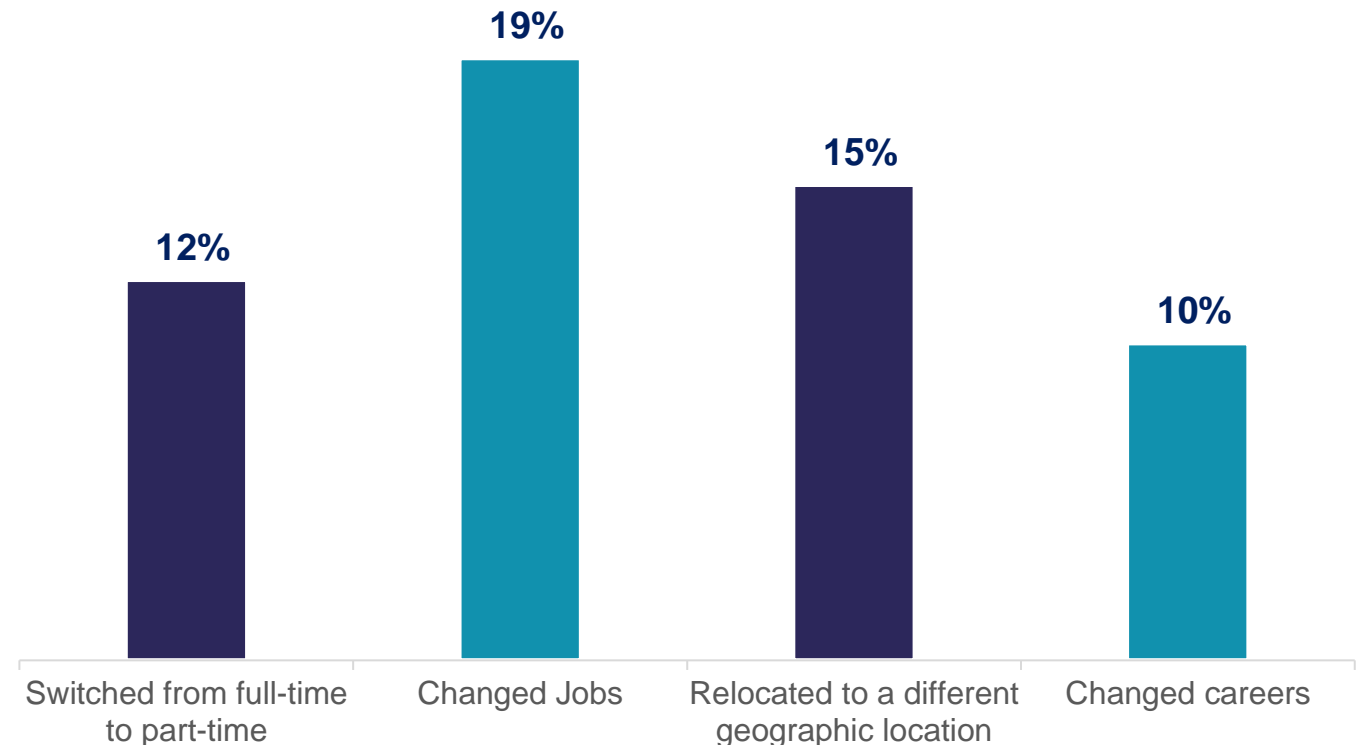


For employees, the pandemic has prompted reevaluation and life changes — and a third think they will change jobs in the year.

44% have made life changes since the pandemic started; only 56% have not:

56% say employee turnover is a problem where they work

30% think they will change jobs in the next year



Contact Us

For more information, please contact:

Micho Spring

Chair, Global Corporate Practice and
President, Weber Shandwick New England
mspring@webershandwick.com

Pam Jenkins

Chair, Powell Tate and
President, Global Public Affairs
and Weber Shandwick South
pjenkins@webershandwick.com

Kate Bullinger

CEO
United Minds
kate.bullinger@unitedminds.com

