



SME Sentiment Survey

Research by PureProfile

Introduction

The small business sector has been greatly impacted by COVID-19, but Australian small business owners are resilient and resourceful.

They are adapting, planning and pivoting online to navigate the business impacts of COVID-19.

Fiverr, a platform that connects small businesses with skilled freelancers, commissioned a survey of the Australian SME sector from independent research provider PureProfile to draw a point-in time picture of the concerns, sentiment and attitudes of Australian small business owners.

This report documents those findings. We would like to thank the business owners who gave their time to participate in the survey. We are proud to be telling their story in a time of immense change.





Methodology

Fiverr commissioned [PureProfile](#) to conduct an online survey of Australian small business business owners.

Of the 500 respondents, 87 percent employ between one and 20 people and 13 percent employ between 20 and 50 people.

The survey, conducted between July 17 and July 22, contained questions gauging:

- the business impacts of COVID-19 on SMEs,
- attitudes towards state and federal government responses to COVID-19,
- sentiment for the future of their business and;
- their operational responses to COVID-19.

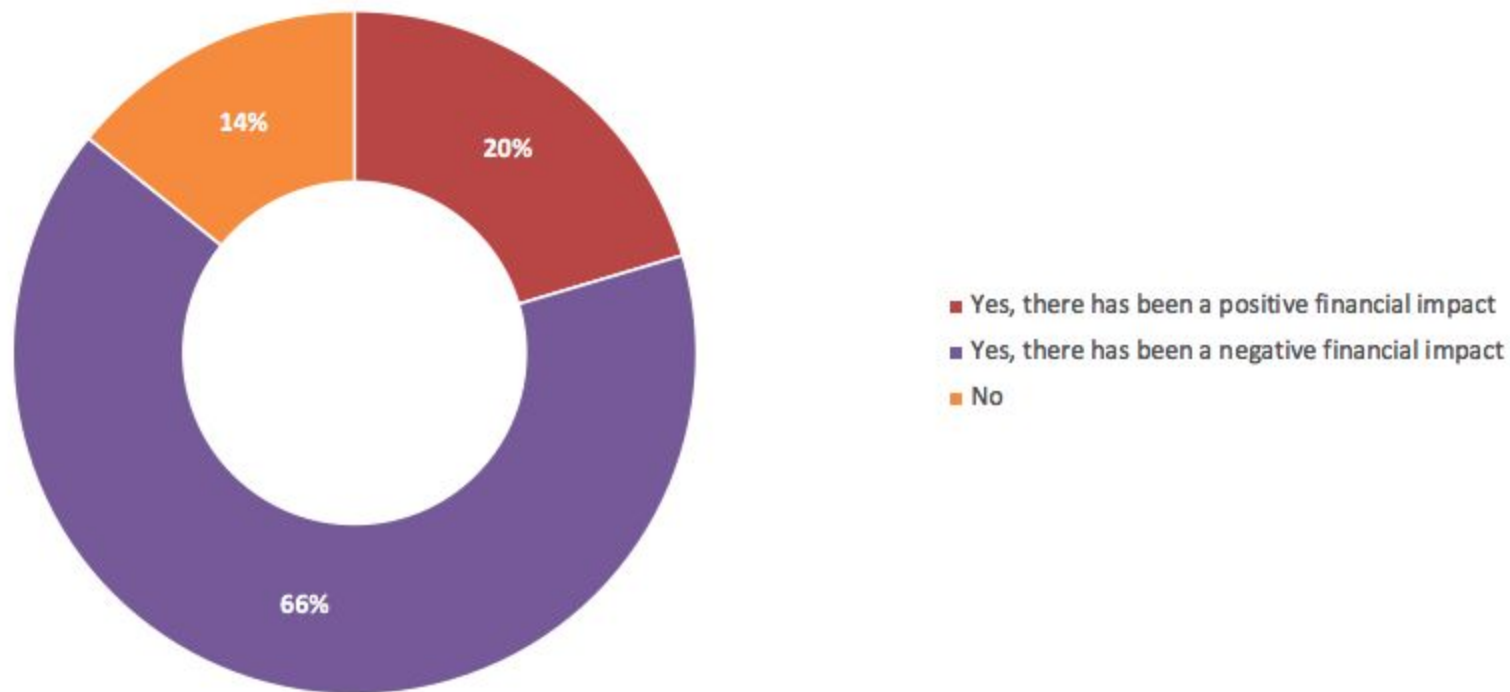
Impact of COVID-19

- **Two in three** small businesses have suffered financial loss because of COVID-19
- **For three in four** affected businesses, losses exceed \$10,000
- **For one in five** affected businesses, losses exceed \$100,000

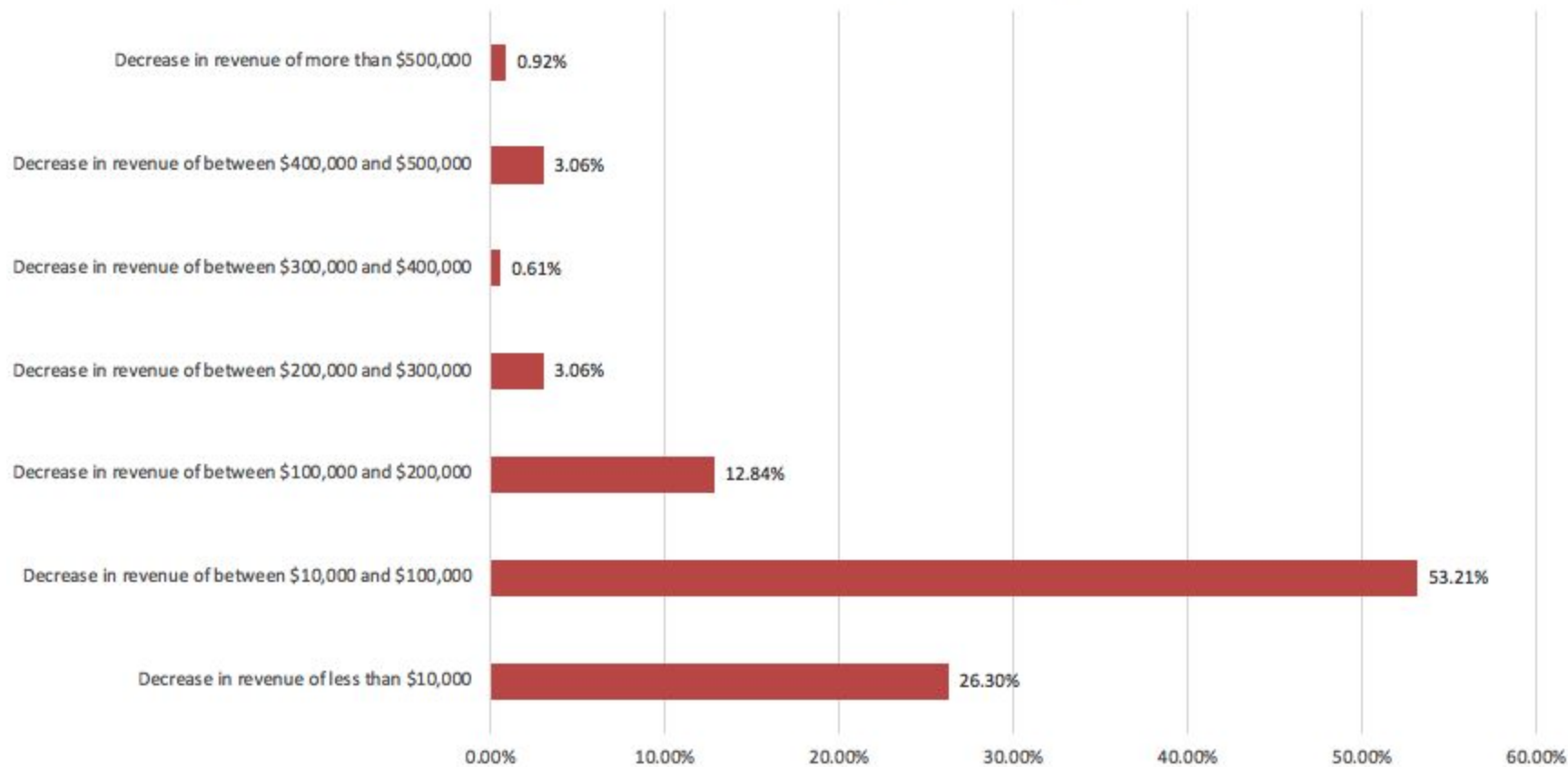
A red sign with white text hanging from a silver chain. The sign is tilted and has rounded corners. The text on the sign reads "CLOSED DUE TO COVID-19" in a bold, sans-serif font. The background of the sign is a solid red color, and the text is in a bright white color. The sign is suspended by a silver chain that is attached to a circular metal fastener at the top. The background of the entire image is dark and out of focus, suggesting an indoor setting with some lights visible in the distance.

**CLOSED DUE TO
COVID-19**

Has your business been financially impacted by the COVID pandemic?



What has been the financial impact on your business?

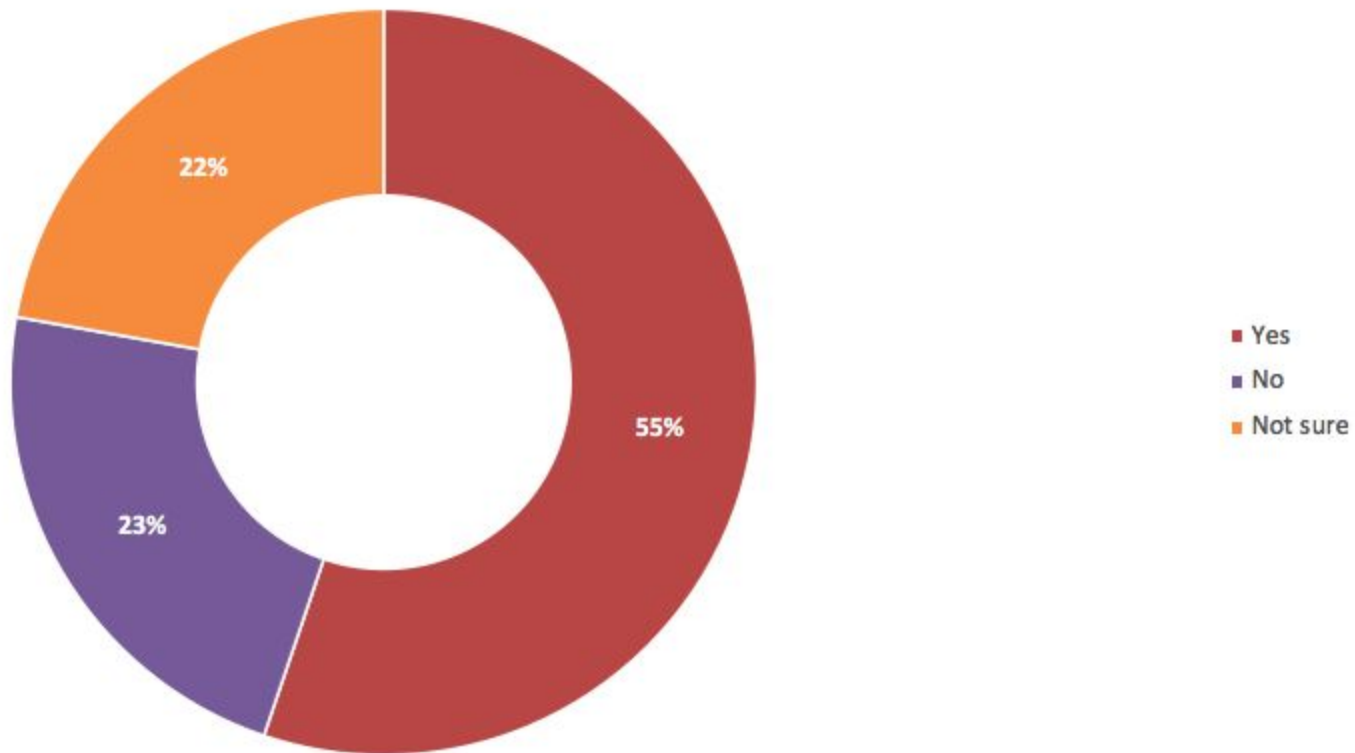




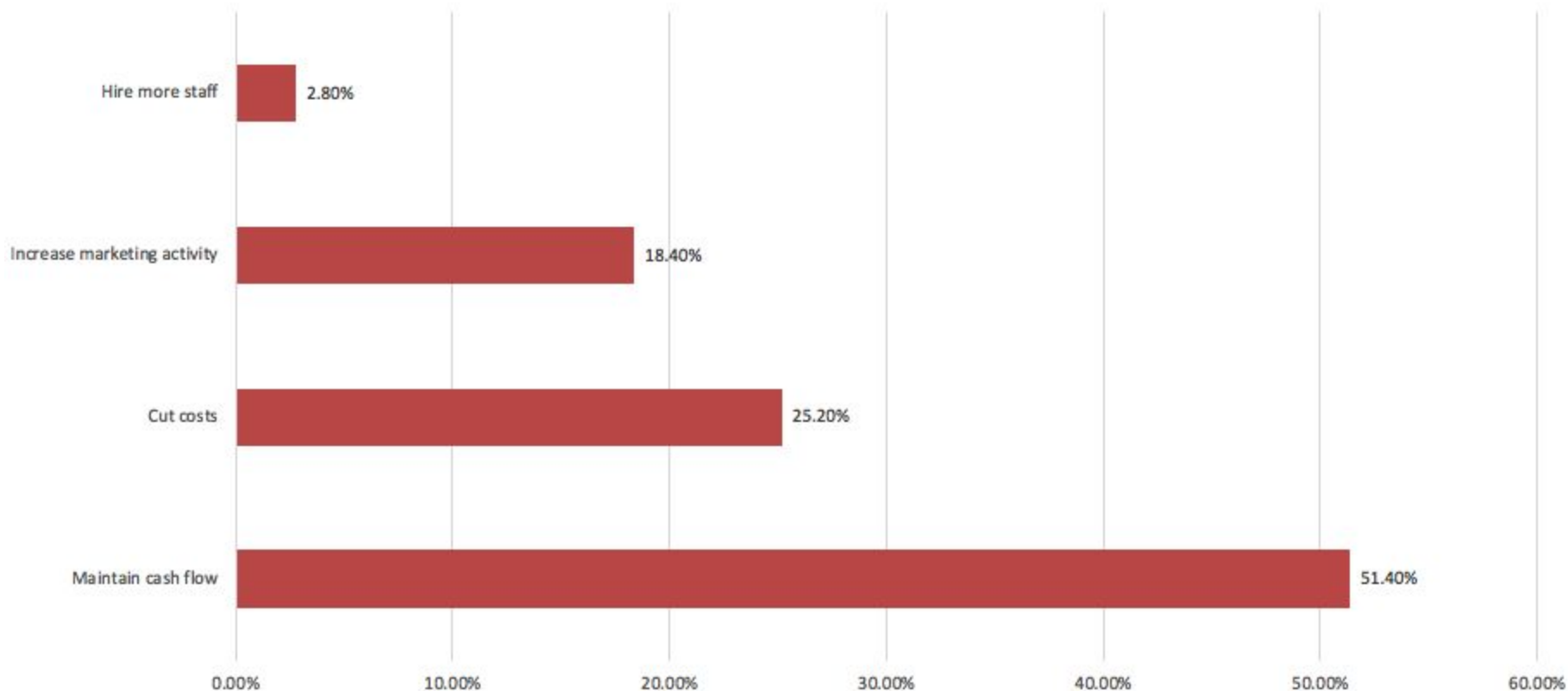
Planning and Sentiment

- Despite the challenging environment, 55 percent of small business owners are **optimistic about the future**
- The number one priority for more than half (52 percent) of business is to **maintain cash flow**
- SMEs are looking to **connect with customers online**, with one in three upping their spend on digital marketing
- Capacity to support additional staff is limited - **only three percent identify hiring as their top priority**

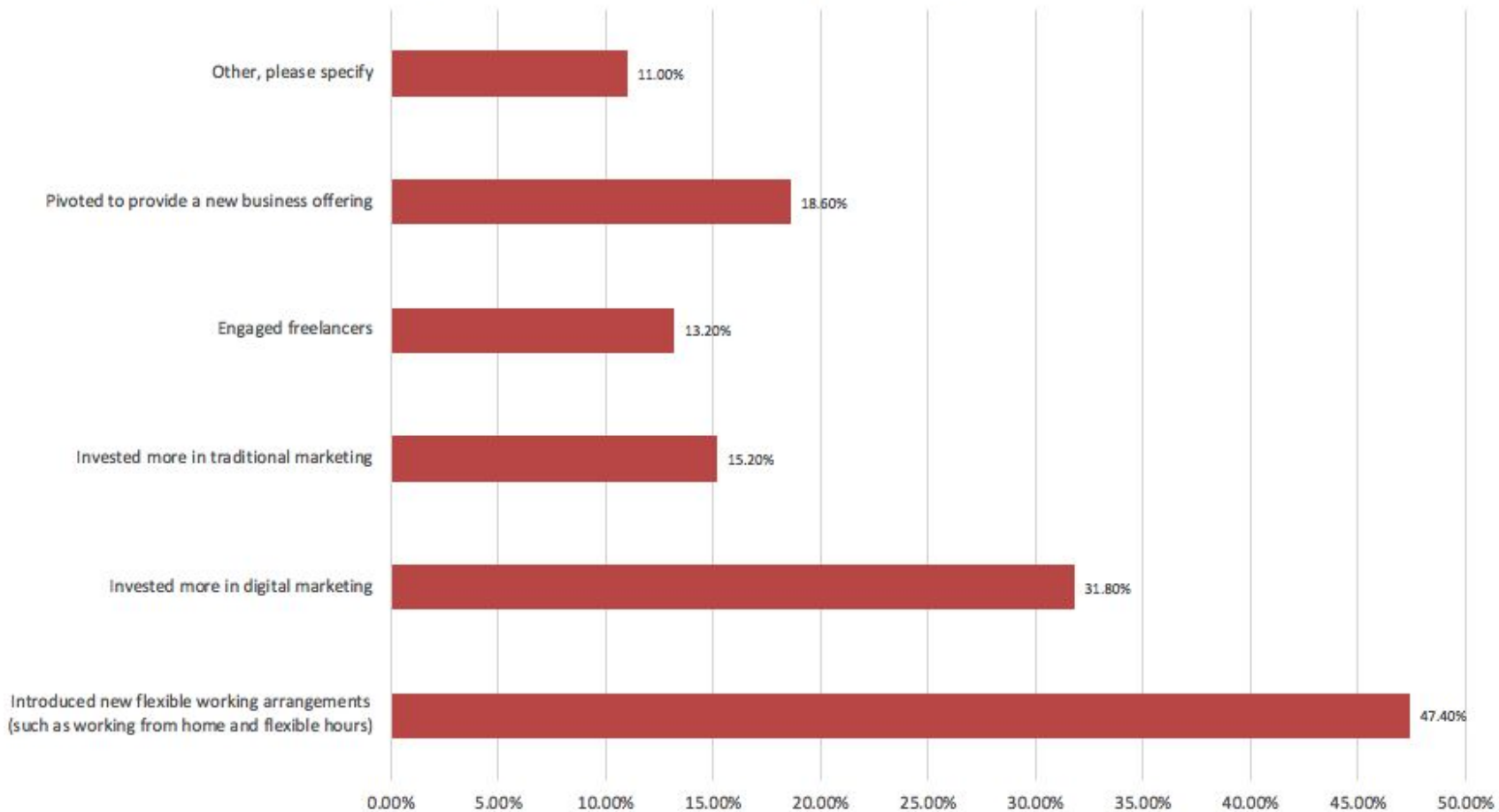
Are you optimistic about the future of your business?



Of the following, which is the highest priority for your business in the next 12 months?



What have you done differently in response to the crisis?

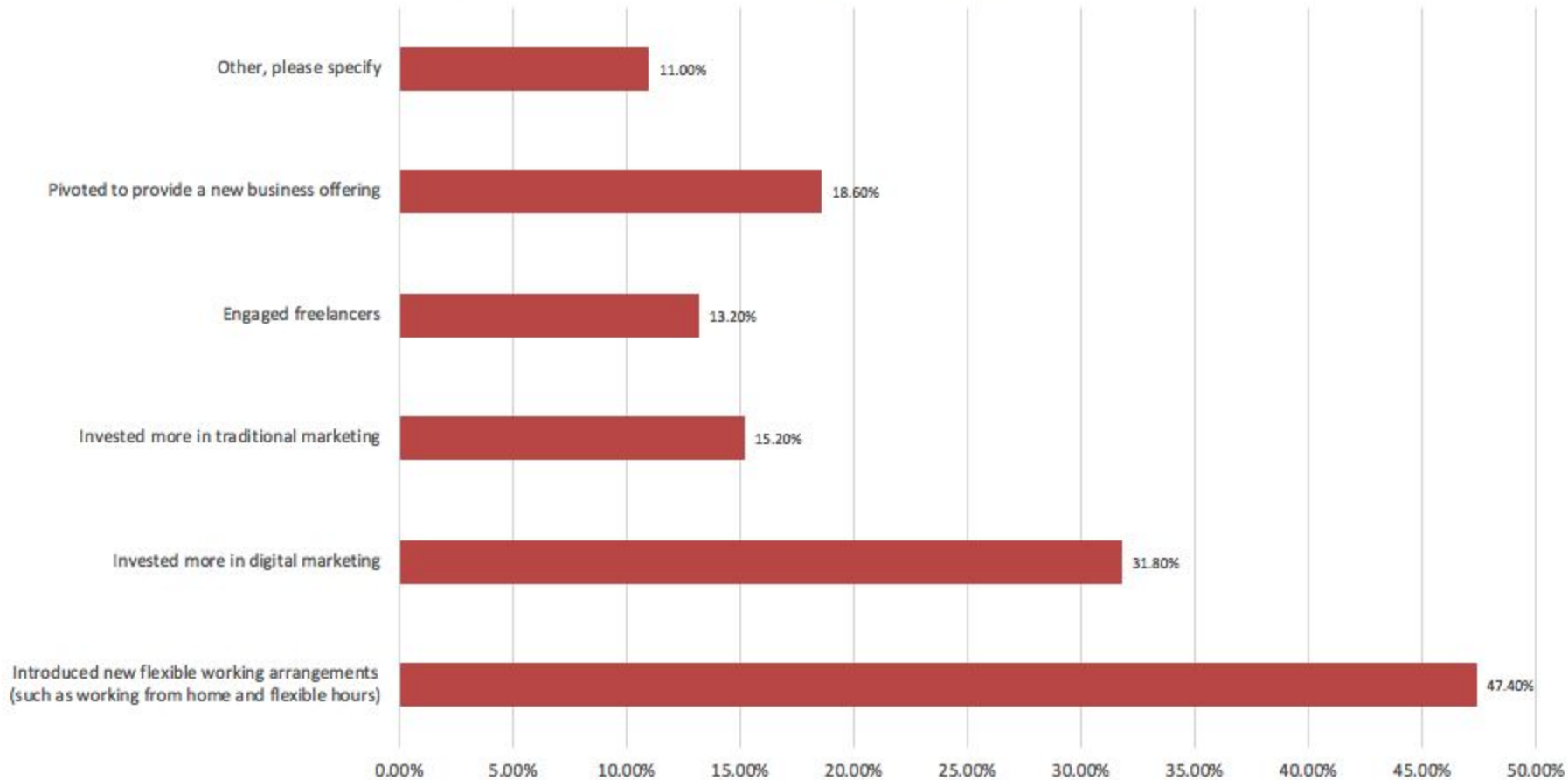


Remote Work

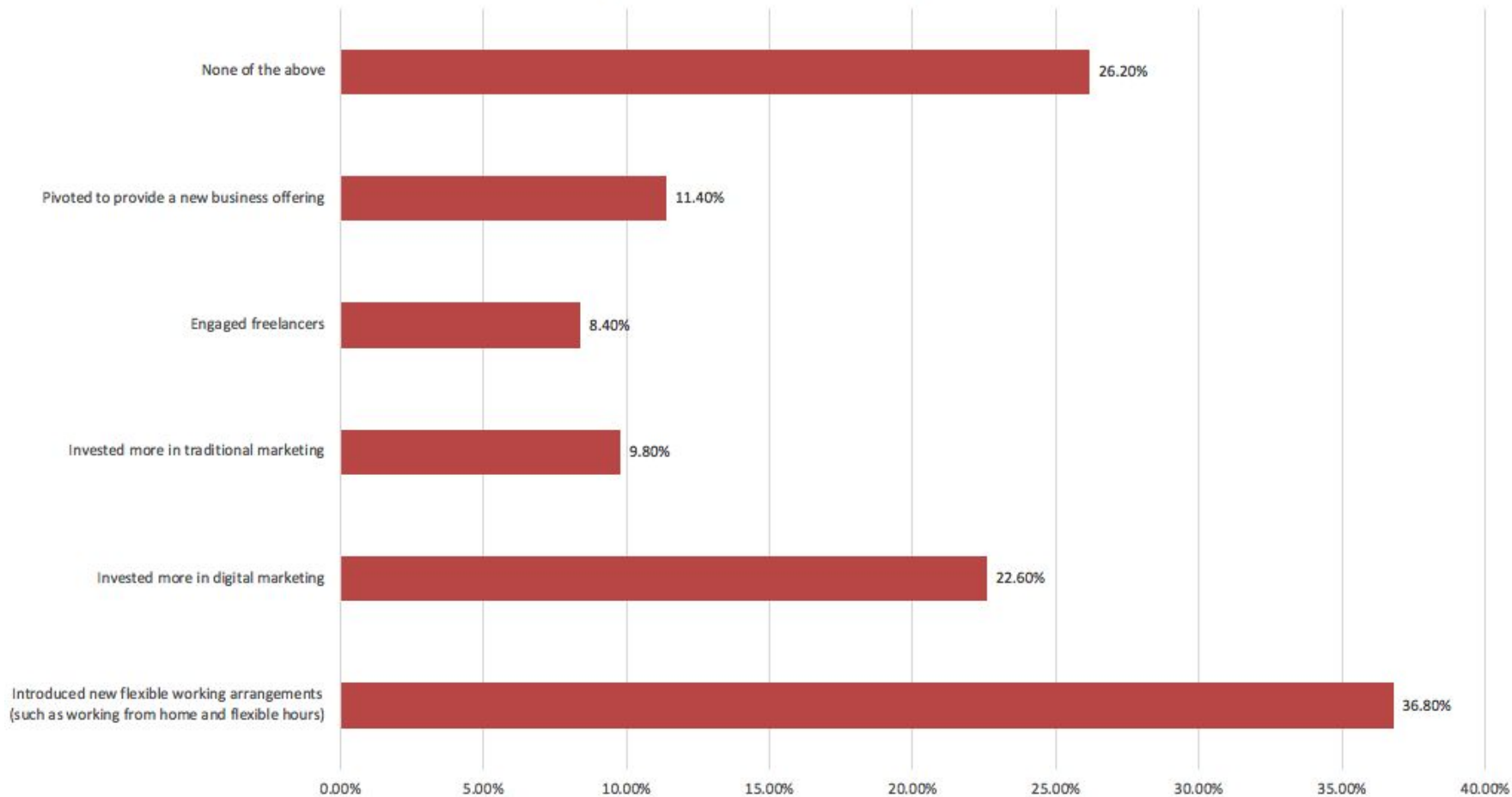
- Nearly half of small businesses have introduced some kind of flexible work - and **most of them plan to keep it**
- One in three say remote work has **boosted productivity**, and half say it has stayed the same
- **Challenges include staying focused**, managing distractions and a lack of social interaction with colleagues



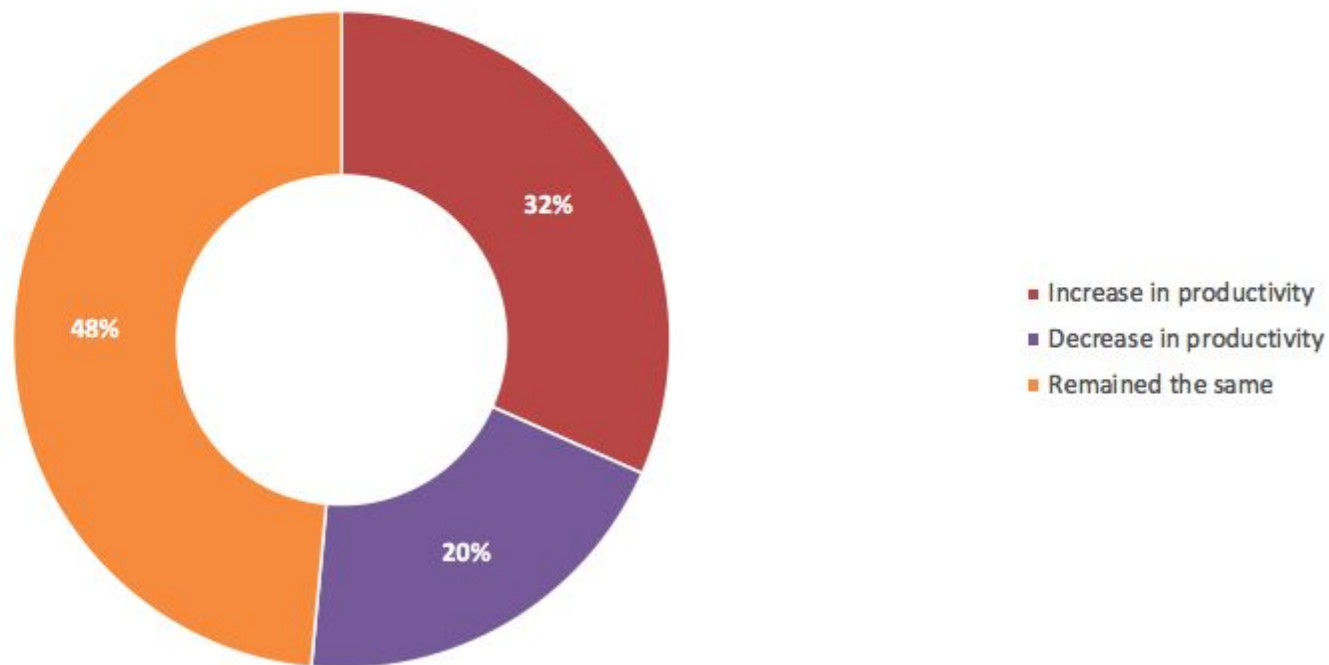
What have you done differently in response to the crisis?



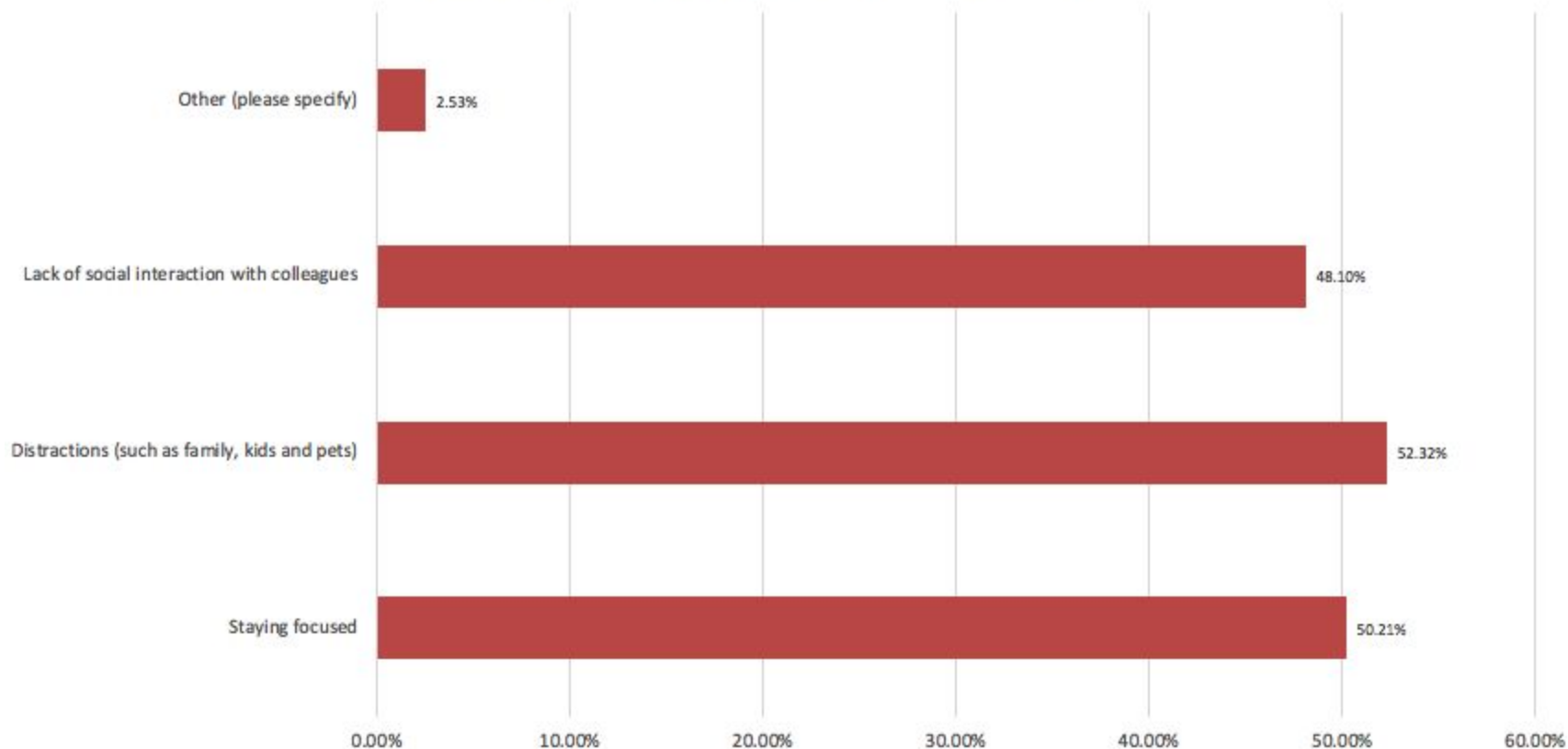
What will you continue to do post-crisis?



As a result of introducing new flexible working arrangements, did you notice a change in the level of productivity?



What have been some of the difficulties for you or your team when working from home?



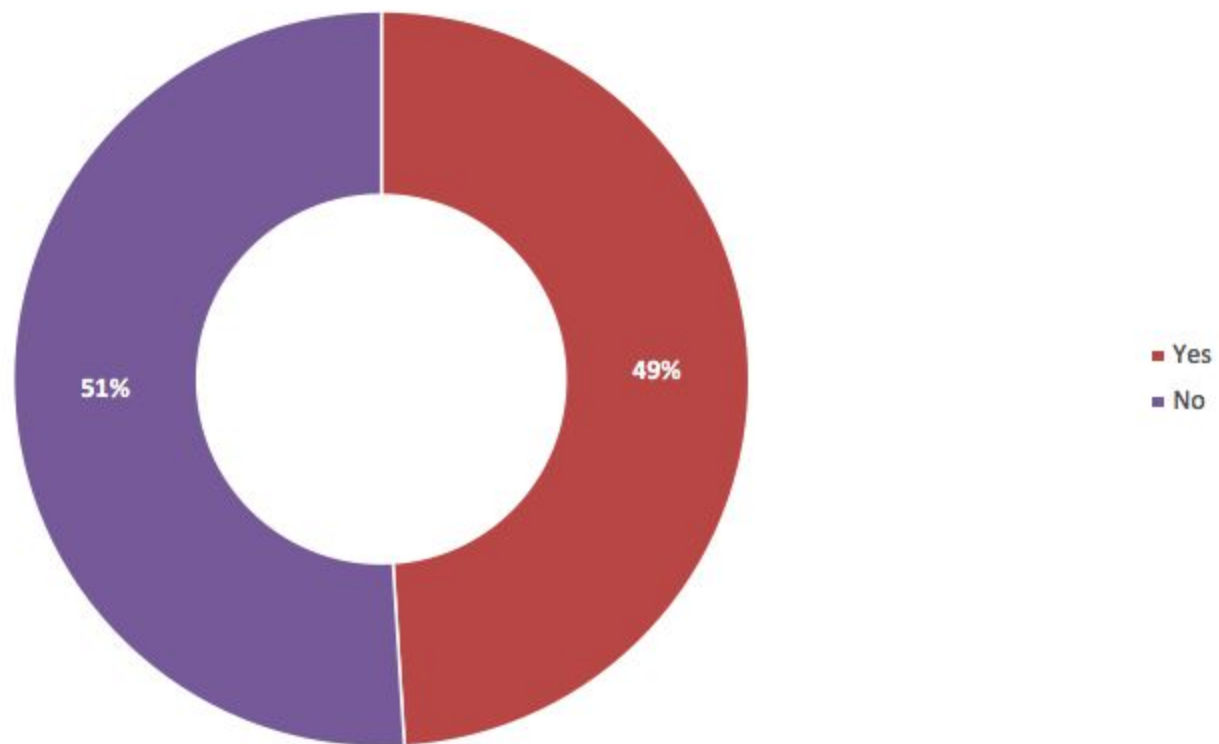
JobKeeper

- 49 percent of SME owners applied for Jobkeeper, 51 percent did not
- Of those who applied, 56 percent were paid promptly, 37 percent faced delays and 7 percent are still waiting
- Of those who did not apply, three in four did not qualify, and one in four gave up due to complications in the application process

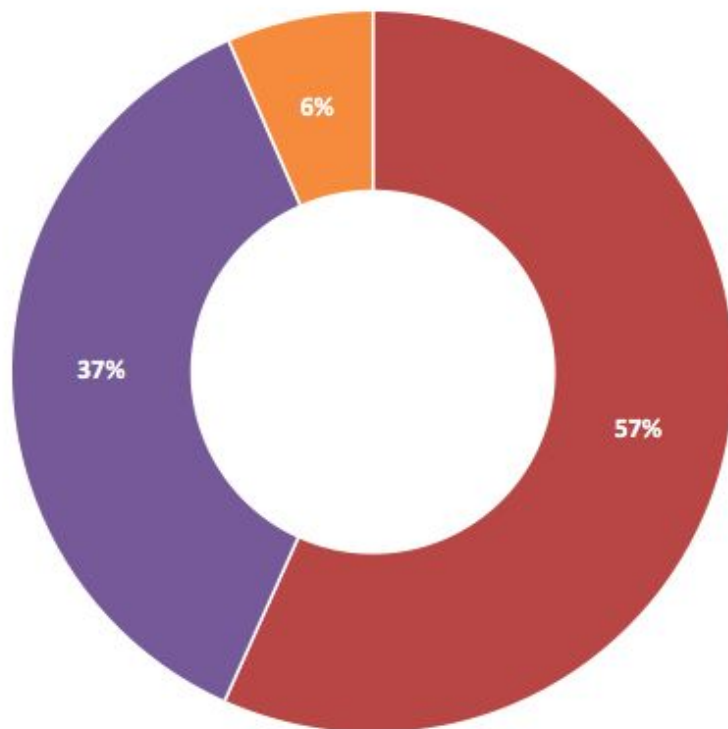
- Two in three small business owners **want Jobkeeper extended** past September, and only 15 percent want it stopped
- Of those who did not support the extension of the scheme, nearly half (47 percent) said **a second national lockdown would change their view**



Did you apply for the JobKeeper scheme?

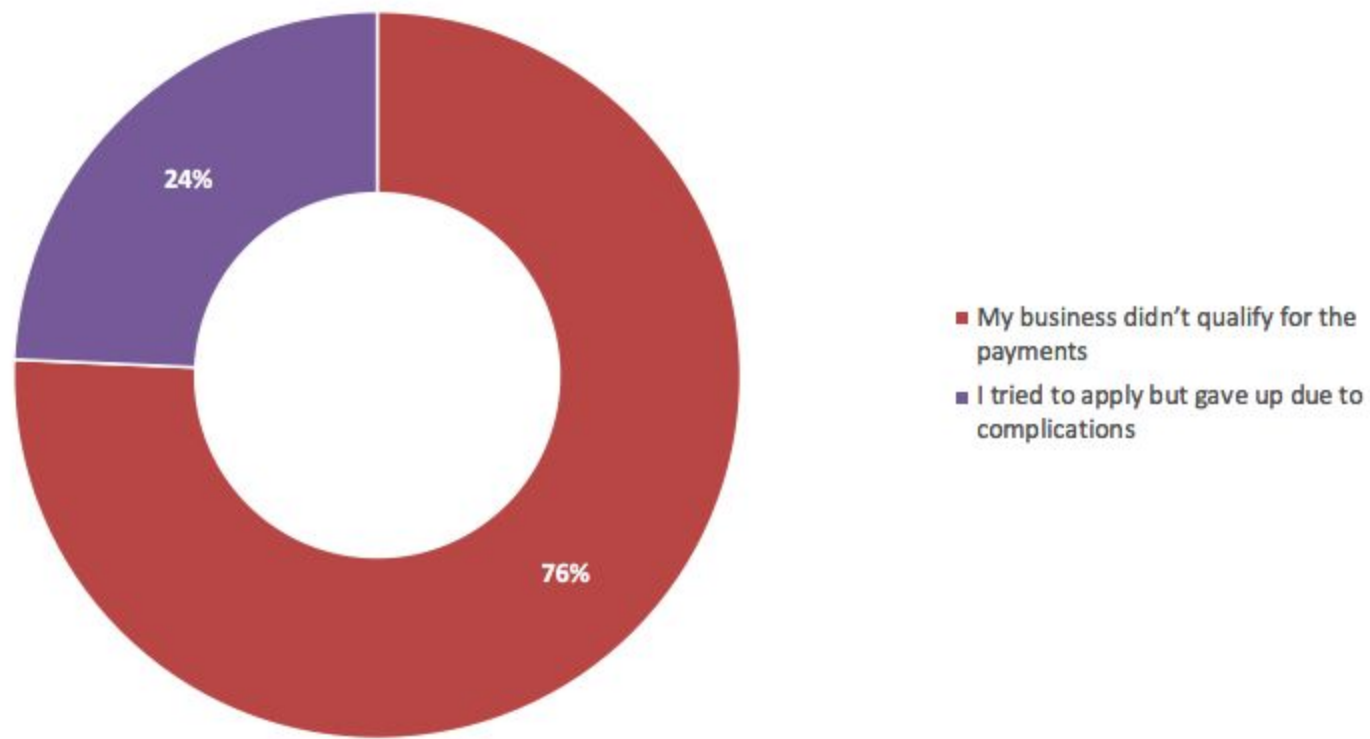


Which of the following best describes your experience applying for the JobKeeper scheme?

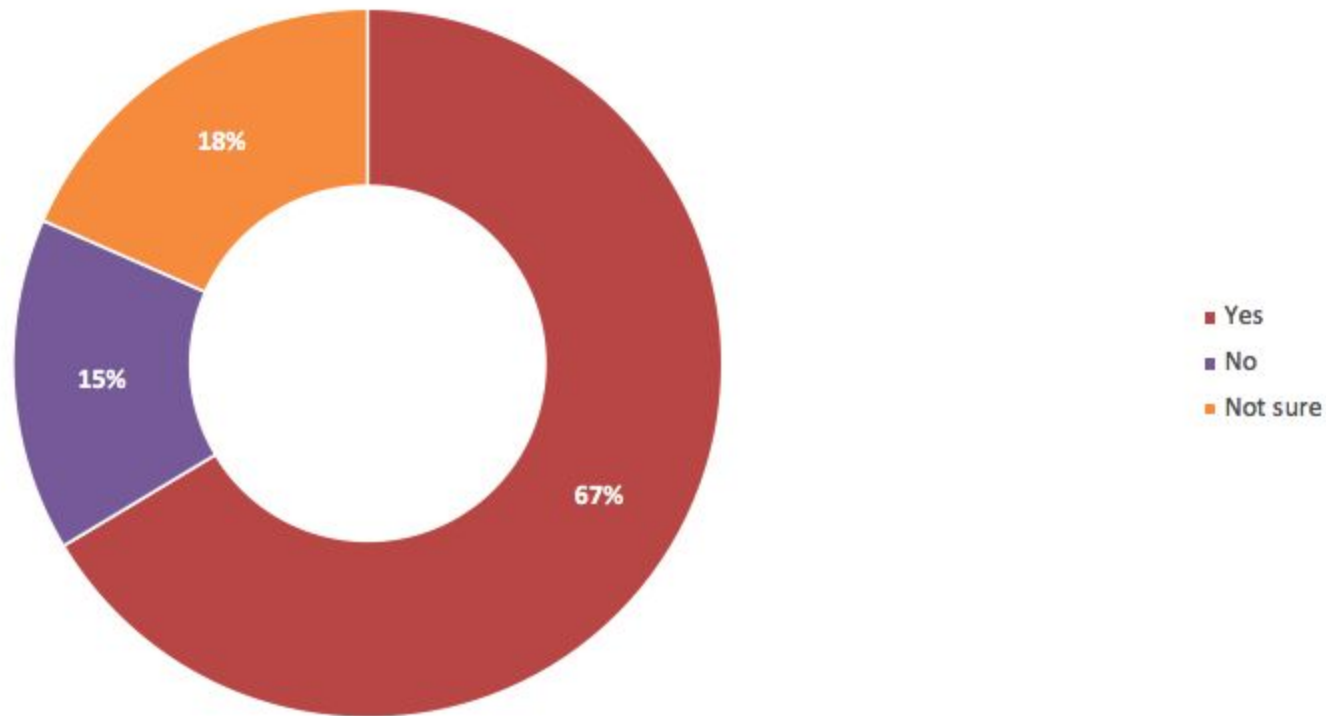


- I applied for JobKeeper and the payments came through seamlessly
- I applied for JobKeeper but there was a delay on receiving the payments
- I applied for JobKeeper but I am yet to receive the payments

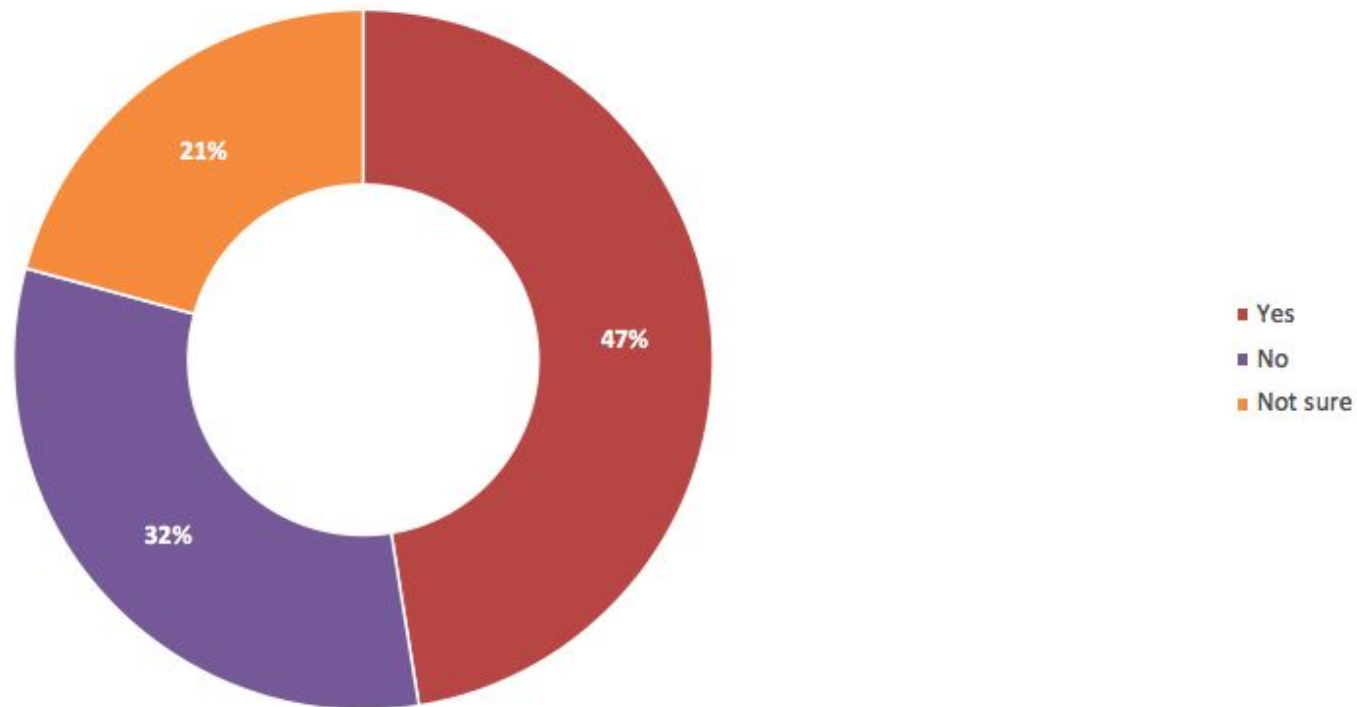
Why didn't you apply for the JobKeeper scheme?



Do you think that JobKeeper payments should be extended past September?



Would a second national lockdown change your view of whether the JobKeeper payments should be extended past September?

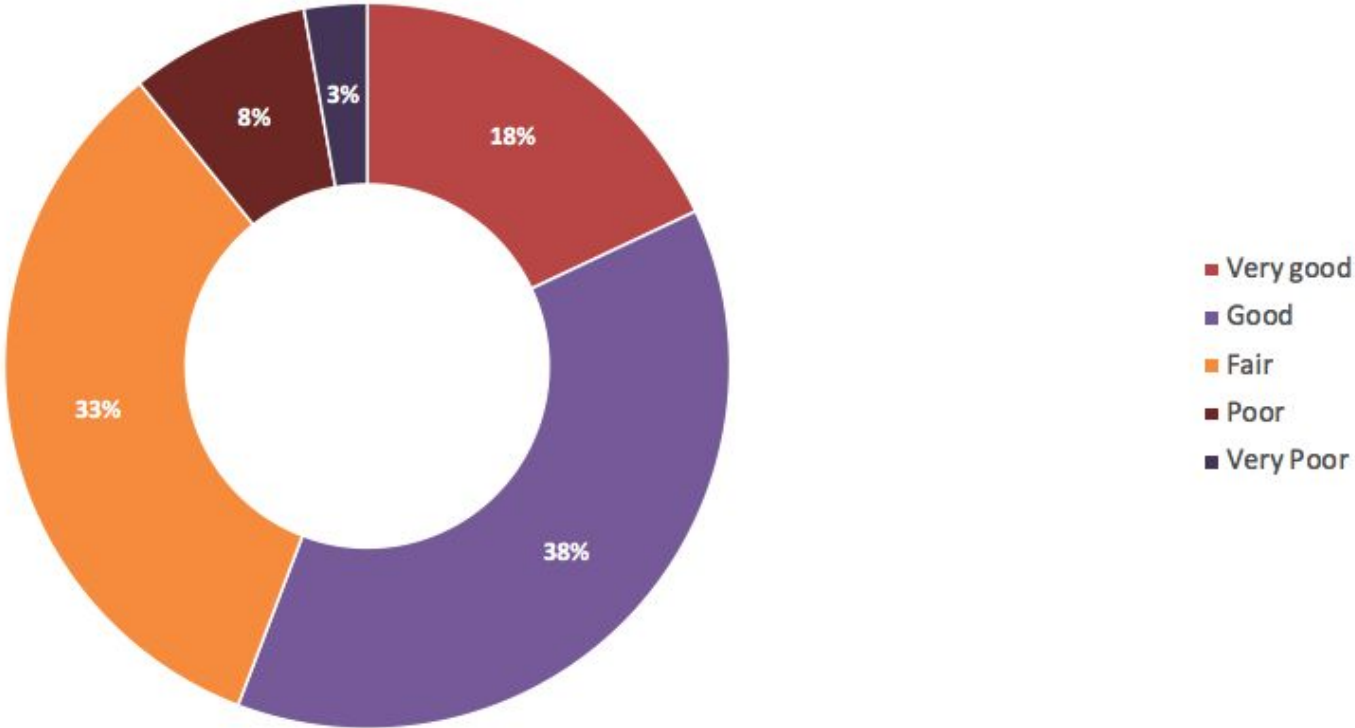


Government Response

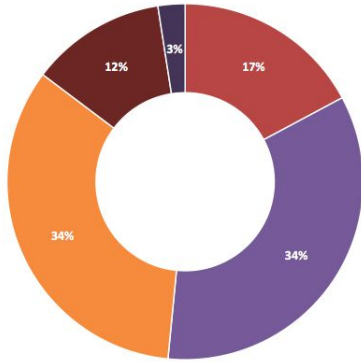
- More than half (56 percent) of small business owners **approve of the response** at a Federal level, and only 11 percent disapprove
- **Nearly one in three** Victorian business owners (30 percent) disapprove of their State Government's performance, compared with only 13 percent in Queensland and New South Wales
- **New South Wales has the highest approval** of State Government support at 51, but more Queenslanders rate their response "very good" rather than simply "good" - 23 percent vs 17 percent



How do you think the Australian federal government has handled the pandemic to date?

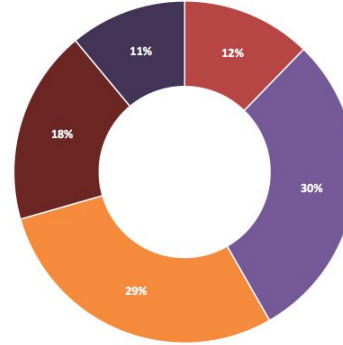


New South Wales



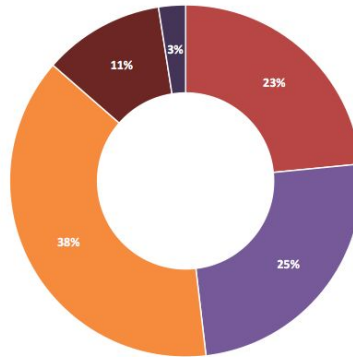
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Very Poor

Victoria



- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Very Poor

Queensland



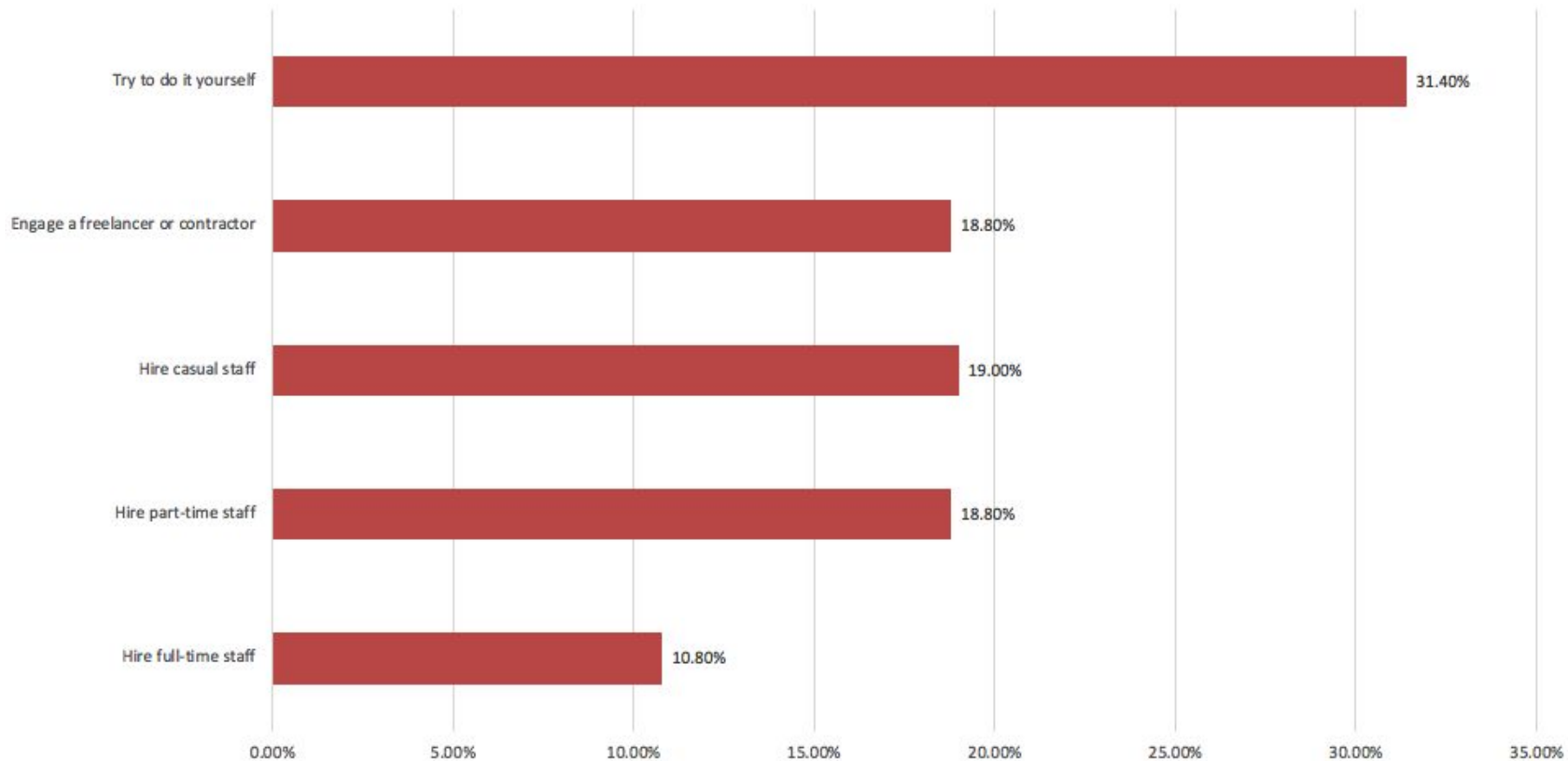
- Very Good
- Good
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- Very Poor

The New Workforce

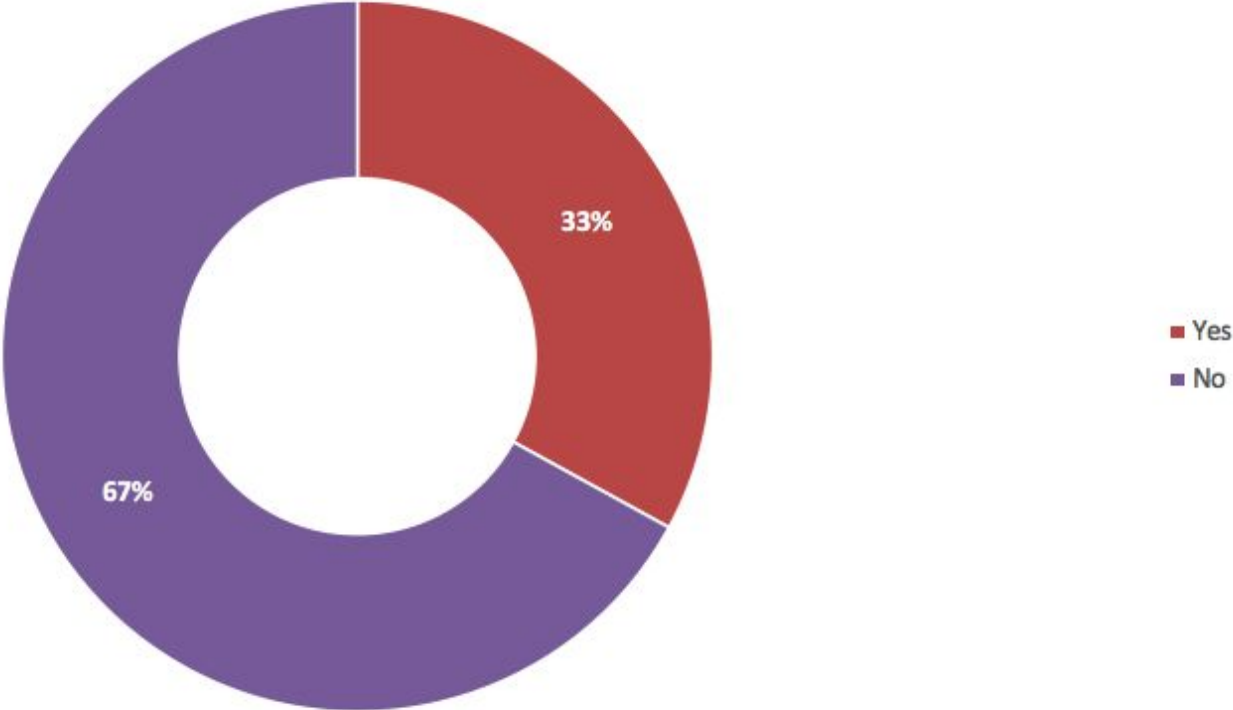
- When looking to fill skill gaps, most small business owners will **prefer to engage freelancers** or hire casual/part-time staff
- One in three small business owners have **increased their engagement with freelancers** since February
- Four in five would **prefer to pay more for an Australian-based freelancer** than cut costs by sending work overseas



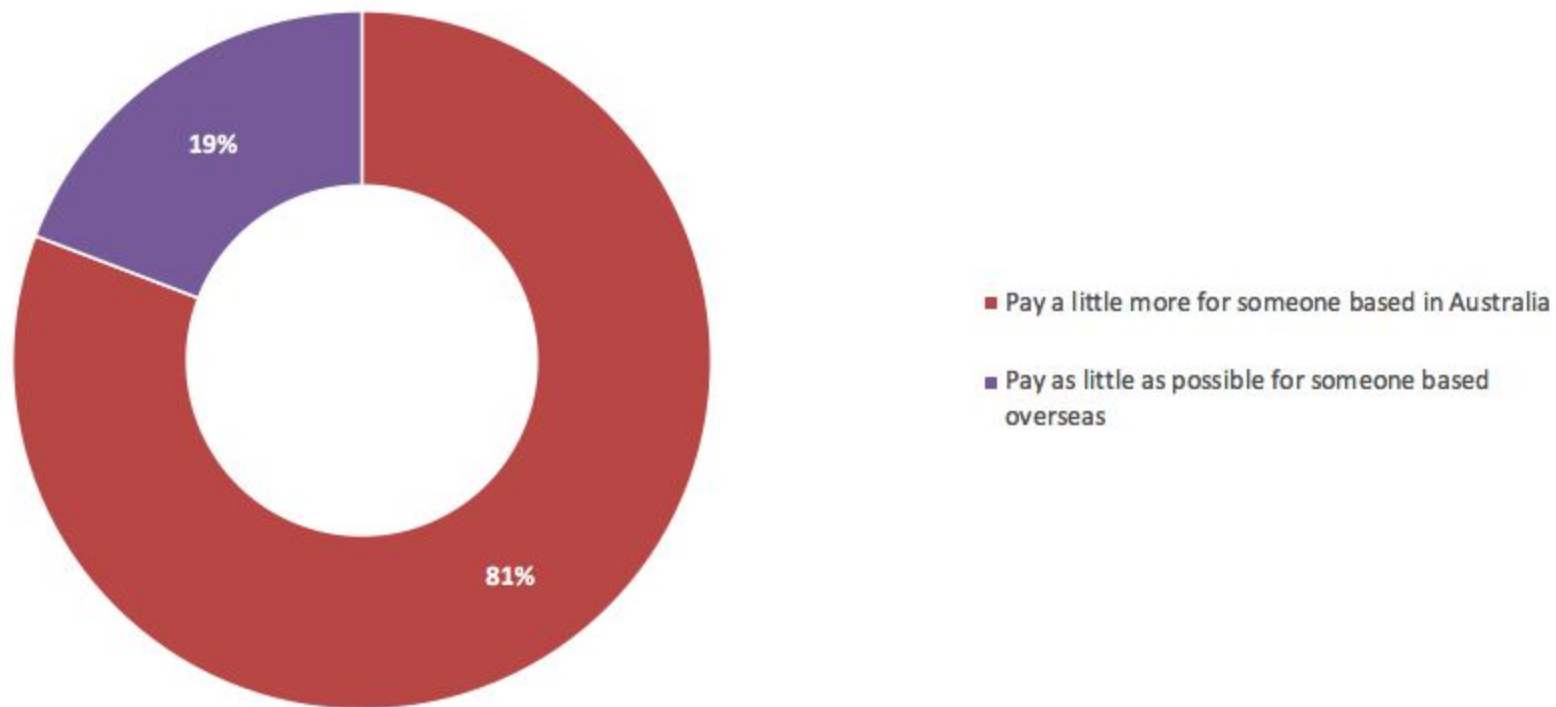
If you had an unmet need in your business that you don't have in-house skills for, would you be most likely to



Have you engaged more freelance service providers since February 2020?



If you were engaging a freelancer or contractor would you prefer to..



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