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# The Next Normal: The Changing Workplace in the Seychelles

The Seychelles Chamber of  
Commerce & Industry





First published 2022

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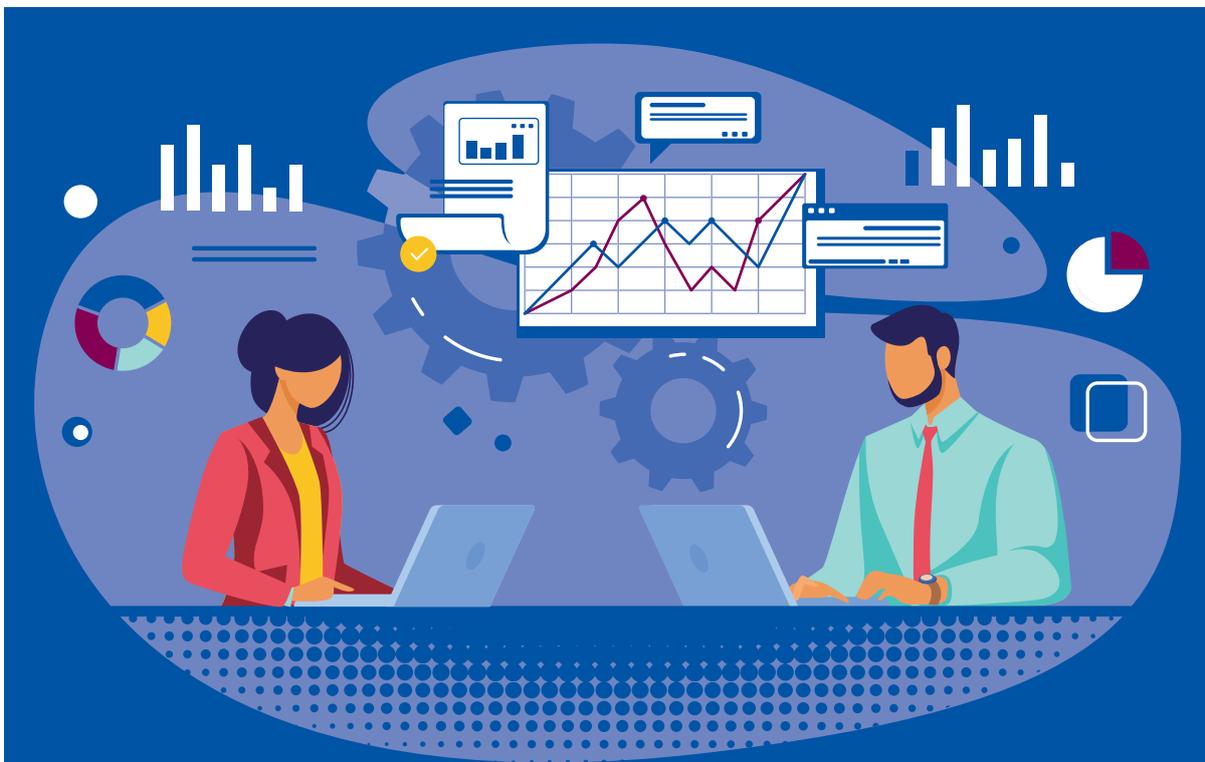
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## Table of Contents

▶ Preface	iii
▶ Executive Summary	v
▶ Introduction	1
▶ Approach	2
▶ The working space	3
▶ Workplace Relations	8
▶ Skills Development, Knowledge Sharing and Productivity	11
▶ Human Resources	15
▶ Conclusion	17



\*We have included throughout this report quotes from companies that either responded to the survey or in the interviews we conducted. In order to maintain confidentiality, we have not included the names of these companies.

## Preface

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The effects of the Covid pandemic on the world of work have been dramatic. While the consequences have been significant across the board, some groups - such as informal workers or businesses in the tourism sector - have been hit especially hard. The Covid pandemic has had a dramatic effect on enterprises broadly, with many struggling to remain afloat due to higher costs, government restrictions, and changing consumer behaviour. Many Seychellois enterprises faced new costs, often associated with health and safety measures to ensure customers and workers are not exposed to Covid-19. For some enterprises, these costs have grown more quickly than other expenditures, such as rent for buildings that are not being fully utilized, can be reduced. The additional costs are often accompanied by lower revenues. Despite these challenging circumstances, enterprises in the Seychelles have taken a wide range of steps to adapt to this dynamic environment. They have changed everything from the characteristics of their working space to their human resource strategies, and throughout it all have demonstrated great resilience and adaptability.

The dramatic changes brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic have also forced employer and business membership organizations to rethink the advocacy and services they offer to member enterprises. To help understand what changes are needed, the Seychelles Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCI) commissioned a study to better understand key trends being driven by the Covid-19 pandemic and what they mean for Seychellois enterprises. This study is informed by a nationwide business survey and key informant interviews undertaken by SCCI in 2021 and 2022. The research was centred around three key questions:

1. How has Covid changed workplaces in the Seychelles and how have enterprises responded to that? How do enterprises think post-Covid workplaces will look different in the next 5-7 years?
2. What do enterprises expect workplaces to look like in the medium term and how are enterprises preparing for this? What are the expectations on the role of SCCI in terms of membership and services and how will SCCI need to adapt to these changing realities as representatives of business?
3. What will be the policy approaches to create the enabling environment for this changing workplace and how can SCCI position itself as a leader in these debates?

We present the findings to you here in this report. They form an integral part of evidence base which will inform the future policy positions of SCCI.

**Oliver Bastienne**

President

The Seychelles Chamber of Commerce & Industry





# Executive Summary



## Executive Summary

The Covid-19 pandemic has had dramatic implications on the world of work in the Seychelles. For enterprises, the pandemic has been characterized by almost unparalleled disruption, forcing them to adapt to new circumstances almost overnight. Enterprises have had to alter their operations, production processes, human resource strategies, work modalities and many other aspects of their enterprises. This report explores the pandemic-era experiences of Seychellois enterprises in four key areas: (1) the working space; (2) workplace relations; (3) skills development, knowledge sharing and productivity; and (4) human resources.

The pandemic changed the working space dramatically, though perhaps no single change is as important as the shift of working space from the office to home. Amongst businesses we interviewed in the Seychelles, an average of 38 per cent of employees worked remotely during the pandemic. Employers rolled out the use of new digital tools such as video conferencing services to facilitate communications of all types for their newly-remote workers. The shift to remote work often entailed new costs, and the majority of businesses – some 63 per cent – paid for specific items that their remote workers needed. Many enterprises opted for a hybrid approach to work, with both remote and in-person work. For the businesses that did not fully implement remote work, the most common reasons cited were that it was not required for business continuity and that workstations or work processes could not work remotely. These reasons were cited by 31 and 24 per cent of enterprises, respectively.

Regardless of the work modality, many enterprises made changes to their physical premises because of the pandemic, with the establishment of health and safety features being the most common. Hand washing and sanitation stations were adopted by 76 per cent of enterprises surveyed, while temperature checkpoints were used at about 71 per cent of those same enterprises. Despite all of the changes and disruptions, nearly one third of enterprises noted that the modifications they made to their working space during the pandemic had a positive impact on production efficiency. In the coming years, many enterprises – about 41 per cent of those we surveyed – expect to continue a hybrid approach to work. Enterprises noted that hybrid workplaces can save costs on office space while still allowing human interaction. Others are eager to have the human touch back, given that

many enterprises require hands-on operations for everything from operating machinery to customer service to in-person sales meetings. About twenty-five per cent of enterprises said they would be mostly-in person but with changes while another twenty-five per cent said they would return to operating in-person, like before the pandemic. About one in ten enterprises in the Seychelles planned to become fully remote.

The pandemic has been a time of both opportunities and challenges for workplace relations. A notable share of surveyed enterprises – about one third – said that workplace relations had improved during the pandemic, much higher than the 17 per cent that said they had worsened. Some enterprises said that the pandemic helped build trust and understanding between workers and employers. Dialogue about workplace health and safety was common – held at 81 per cent enterprises. The majority of enterprises said that continuity planning, digital investments, workforce flexibility and workplace dialogue had all become more important during the pandemic. Some businesses – about 35 per cent – thought that employer and business membership organizations became more important during the pandemic, while 29 per cent thought the same about trade unions.

The skills needs and skills development tools of employers have also changed rapidly during the Covid era, sometimes reinforcing pre-pandemic trends. Communication skills were the most important single skill set cited by enterprises as being important for their future success, cited by 56 per cent of respondents as a top-three skill set. Employers generally also stated that soft skills such as teamwork and collaborative skills are amongst the most important to their future business success. Digital skills were also commonly cited as being important, as were multitasking abilities/flexibility. Few employers view networking, technical and language skills as vital in the years to come. The change in skills and knowledge sharing has been a major factor pushing enterprises to rethink productivity. The vast majority of enterprises said that the virus made them rethink how they should measure the productivity of their remote workforce, with 82 per cent saying they would focus on outputs as their key measure of productivity moving forward. More traditional measures such as the time spent in the office may be falling out of favour. Very few enterprises noted that they were closely monitoring the number of hours that employees spent working – just 7 per cent.



Lastly, the Covid-19 pandemic has been a major challenge for human resources. Now more than ever, enterprises understand that the mental and emotional well-being of workers is closely intertwined with the successful operations of the business. More than half of enterprises reported engaging in regular communication to keep employees informed and connected. On the flip side, almost no enterprises established a right-to-disconnect policy which codifies the right of employees to go offline on nights and weekends or

had benefits packages that included external mental and emotional support services. The pandemic has also pushed some enterprises to consider who can be a member of their workforce. As enterprises increasingly shift to hybrid and remote work, their potential labour force is no longer constrained by geography. About 31 per cent enterprises noted that their hiring criteria now include new groups of workers who were not previously considered - such as fully remote employees not living near the business.



## Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought the most significant changes in generations to the world of work. At its core, the pandemic has fundamentally changed where and how people work. Enterprises around the world have made major structural changes, with many adopting digital tools and new technologies – often for the first time. The adoption of these new modes of working and new technologies have sent shock waves across the world of work, upending many long-standing norms and practices. Enterprises are questioning fundamental assumptions about their operations, such as whether they still need physical premises and how they measure what workers do. Workers are also rethinking key assumptions about work. This will drive long-term changes in the types of work being done, how work is performed, and what skills are required to do that work. The changes to the world of work will be complex, overlapping and significant.

Enterprises have described the Covid-19 pandemic as a roller coaster: a devastating time of extreme difficulties and challenges but also one of occasional hope and opportunity. For many, it has been a time of loss and uncertainty, which requires regular adaptation, unlearning old ways of doing things and adopting new ones. Companies have been forced to rethink many aspects of their business, from human resources to sales channels to their production portfolios. Enterprises have seen resizing, subcontracting, branch closures, halted projects and reduced investments. Workers have experienced forced retrenchment, compensation changes, and remote working. This report explores the pandemic-era experiences of Seychellois enterprises in four key areas: (1) the working space; (2) workplace relations; (3) skills development, knowledge sharing and productivity; and (4) human resources.



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## Approach

to better understand the effects of Covid-19 and the future plans of enterprises, the the Seychelles Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) commissioned a survey that was completed by 49 registered enterprises in the country. The survey took place between June 21st and November 5th 2021, and was completed using the online platform Qualtrics. The survey was open to enterprises from all sectors, however the vast majority of respondents (94 per cent) were in services. Only 4 per cent were in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and just 2 per cent were in manufacturing. This broadly reflects the dominance of the services sector in the country's overall economy, as it accounts for some 68% of GDP in 2020. Information was gathered from directors or senior managers. The vast majority of enterprises (46 of 49) were headquartered on Mahe Island, while the remaining businesses had headquarters elsewhere. Some 27 per cent of participants were either partially or wholly foreign owned, while 39 per cent of the participants were involved in either imports or exports. Notably, almost half (49 per cent) of respondents were from women-run enterprises.

Because this survey was implemented by SCCI, the vast majority of respondents were formal enterprises, and the number of large enterprises was somewhat overrepresented in comparison to the economy as a whole. This means that though

the survey results cover a number of businesses, the results included here should not be viewed as being representative of all businesses in the

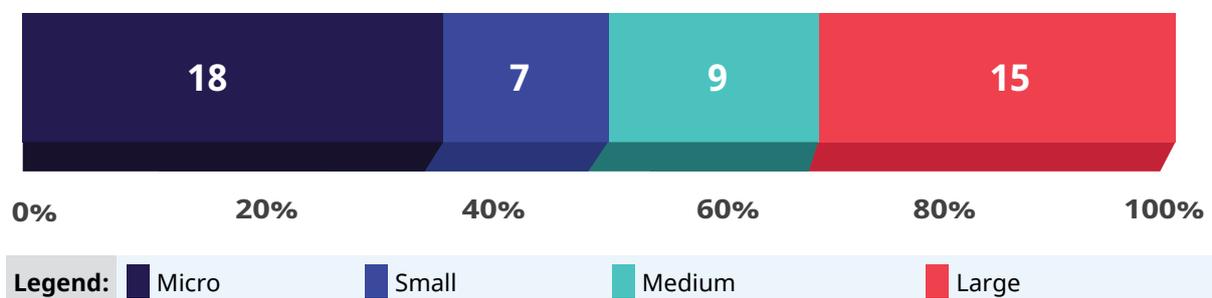


*The enterprises that participated in this survey collectively employed more than 3,500 workers in the Seychelles*



Seychelles, but only of the enterprises surveyed. A significant share of respondents (15 out of 49, or 31 per cent) were large enterprises. Just 18 per cent (9 out of 49) were medium enterprises while 14 per cent were small enterprises. Micro-businesses, with no more than five employees, were the largest share of respondents, accounting for 37 per cent of the total (18 of 49). For this report, we use the official Seychellois definitions of business sizes, which include measures of both are as follows: Micro enterprises – not exceeding 5 employees; Small enterprises – not exceeding 15 employees; Medium enterprises – not exceeding 50 employees; Large enterprises – more than 50 employees.<sup>1</sup>

Figure 1. Number and Share of Surveyed Enterprises, by Size



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.esa.gov.sc/about-us/>





## The Working Space

The Covid-19 pandemic has been the key driver of some of the most important changes in generations to the physical workspace. When asked how to briefly describe these changes, enterprises in the Seychelles came back with a wide diversity of responses. The most commonly cited word, by far, was “innovative,” showing that enterprises did not remain static during the pandemic but instead responded with new steps to address the pandemic’s disruptions. Another commonly-cited word, “adaptability”, echoes this theme. Another commonly-cited

word with many connections to innovation was “flexibility”. A number of enterprises mentioned words that reflect the digital shift in workplaces, cited terms including “online”, “technology”, and “digitalization”. Some enterprises chose words that reflected the magnitude or direction of change, using terms like “difficult” or “drastic”. If there is one take-away from the voices of enterprises, it is that the effects of the pandemic on the physical and/or remote working space have been diverse.

Figure 2. Most commonly cited words describing how the Covid-19 pandemic changed the physical and/or remote working space.



Nowhere is this change in physical working space more evident than it is for newly remote workers, who no longer physically work at the employer’s facility, but instead at the worker’s home. In the the Seychelles, an average of 38 per cent of employees worked remotely during the pandemic. While a significant share of the workforce, this figure does show that the majority of employees were not able to work remotely. While 38 per cent of all employees worked remotely, this was

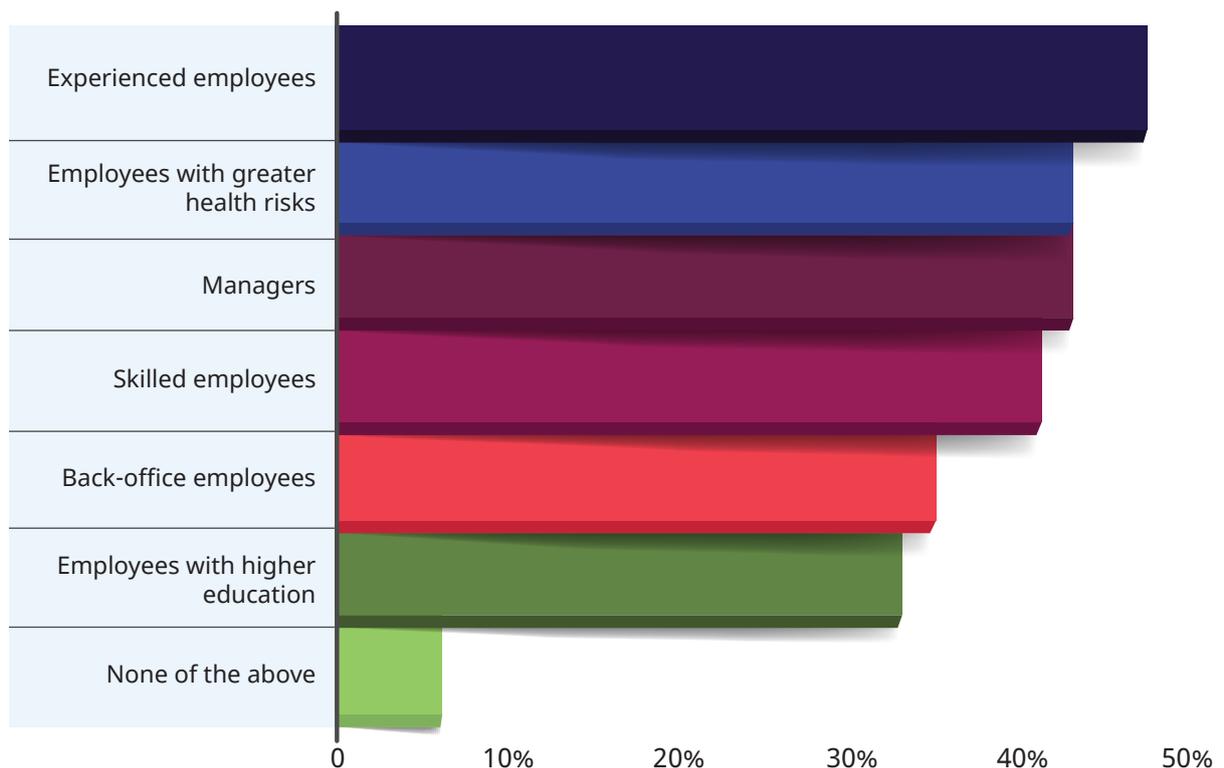
not evenly distributed amongst all groups of employees. Instead, some groups were more likely to be working remotely, while others were much less likely. Notably, a high number of enterprises (47 per cent) said that workers who were more experienced were more likely to work remotely. This was followed by enterprises that said that workers with greater health risks and managers were more likely to work remotely, both of which were noted by 43 per cent of enterprises.

41 per cent of enterprises also noted that skilled employees were more likely to work from home.

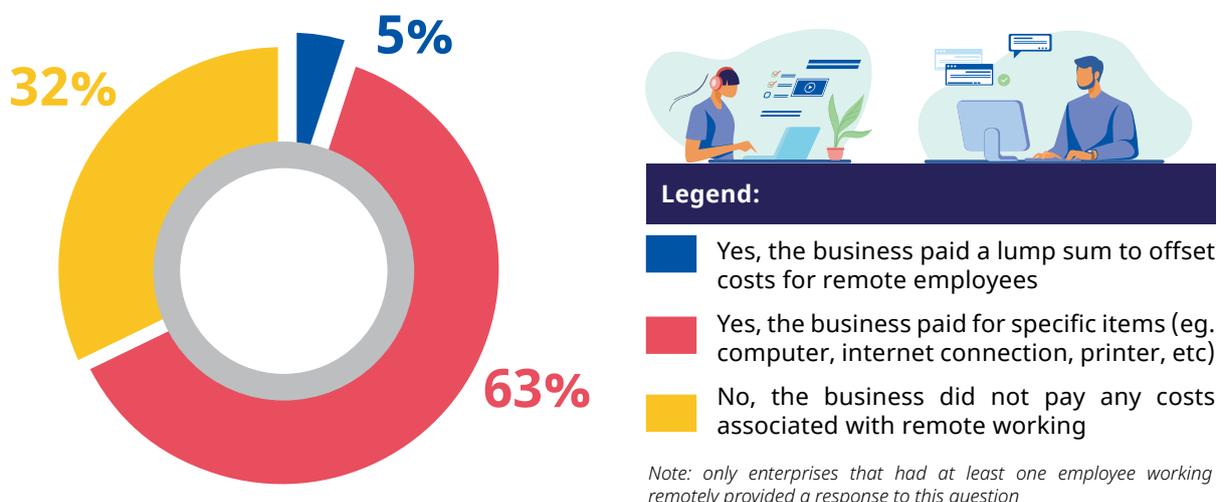
The shift to remote work created new work-related costs for both employers and employees, and as the survey found, many enterprises supported these costs for both. 63 per cent of enterprises said that they paid for specific items that employees needed to work remotely, such

as computers or internet connections. However, other enterprises left it to employees to cover these costs, with 32 per cent of enterprises reporting that they did not cover any of these costs. Only a small share of enterprises – 5 per cent - provided employees with a lump sum payment to be used towards the costs of remote work.

**Figure 3. Share of enterprises who said a group of employees was more likely to work remotely**



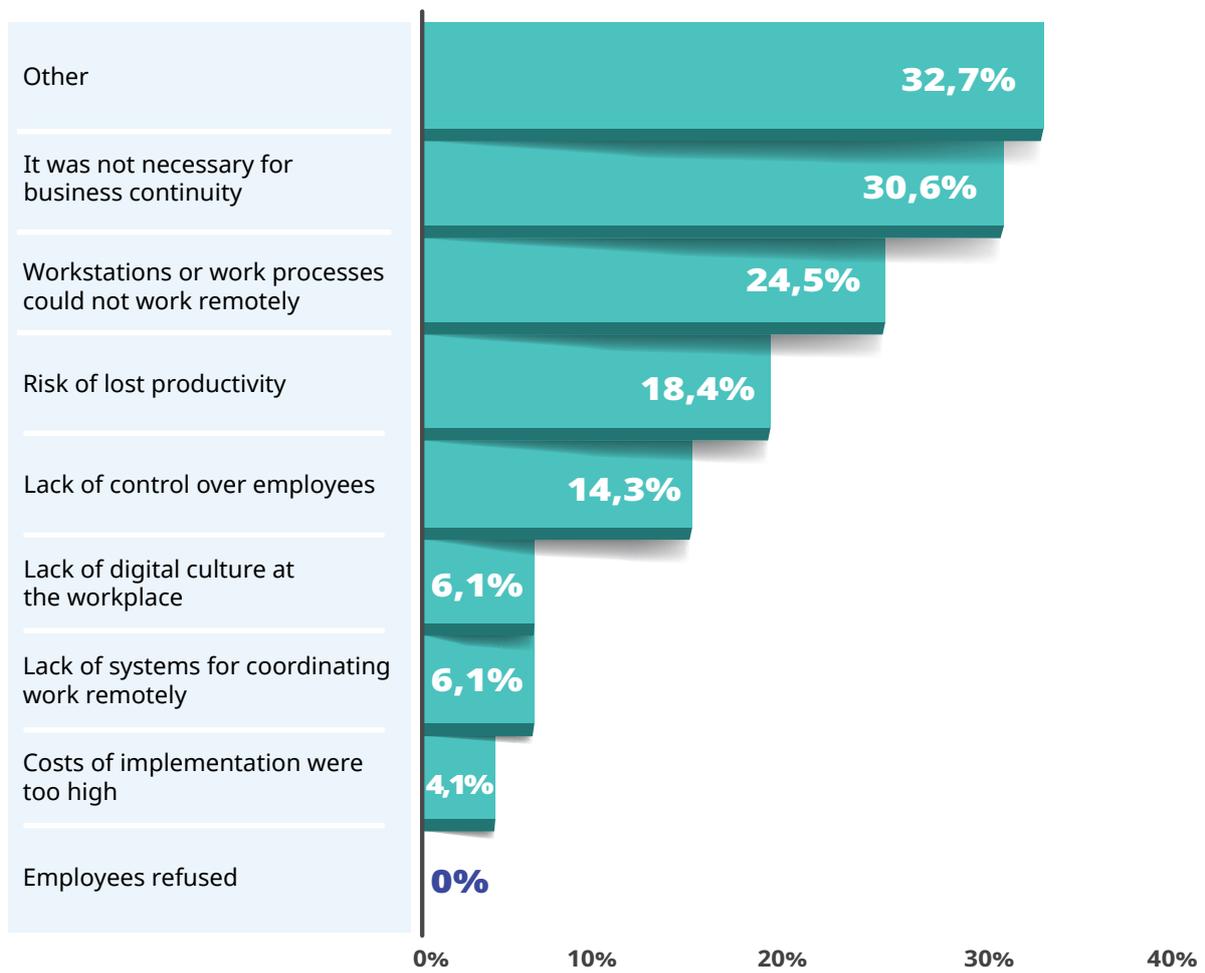
**Figure 4. Share of enterprises who said a group of employees was more likely to work remotely**



Though many enterprises in the Seychelles adopted remote work some of the time or for some employees, only 20 per cent of responding enterprises said they were fully remote. For the majority of enterprises, operations continued with a mix of in-person and remote work modalities. This choice, as well as the choice to remain fully in person, was often driven by necessity but also sometimes driven by other considerations. Of the enterprises that did not fully move to remote work, the most common reason for making this choice was that it “was not necessary for business continuity” cited by 31 per

cent of respondents. Another common response was that work stations or processes could not be adapted to run remotely, cited by 25 per cent of enterprises. On the other hand, no businesses noted that they did not implement remote work because employees refused, while only 4 per cent indicated that they did not implement remote work because the costs were too high. Just six per cent of enterprises said they did not implement remote work because of a “lack of systems for coordinating work remotely” or because of a “lack of digital culture at the workplace”.

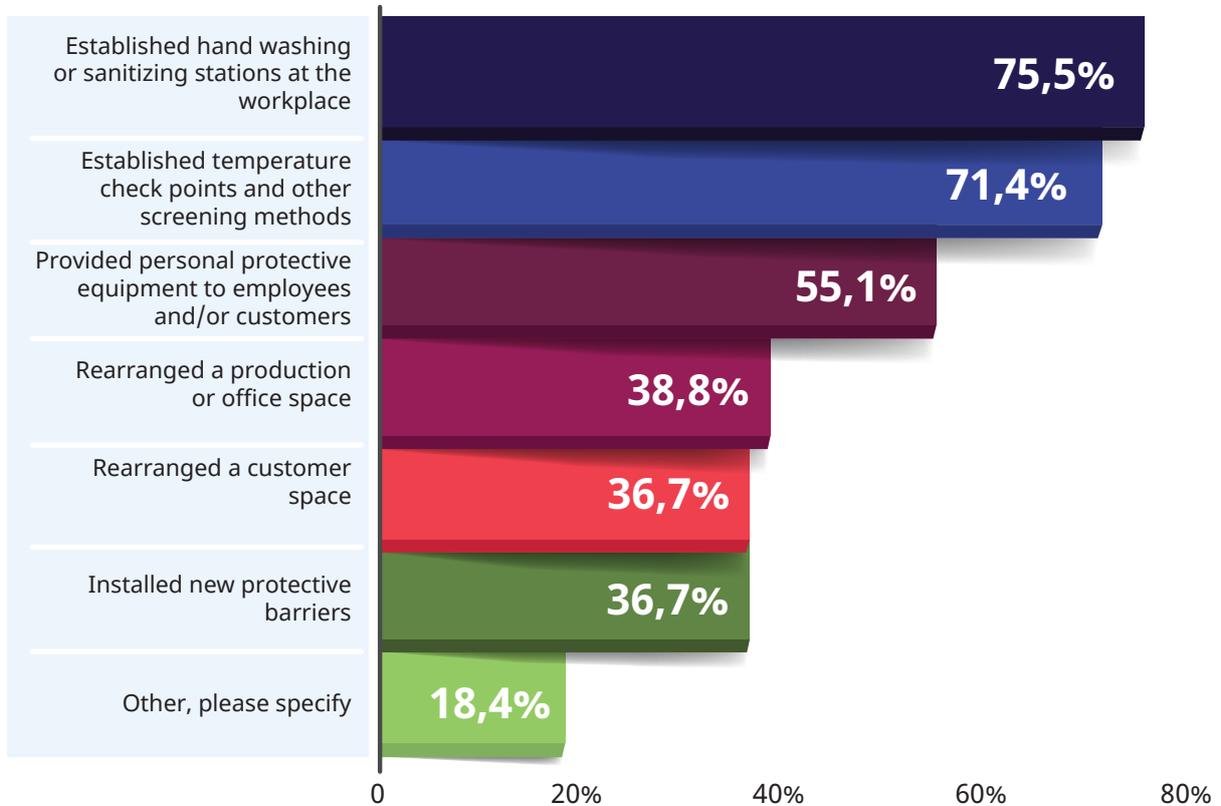
**Figure 5. Reasons why enterprises did not implement remote work**



In order to facilitate in-person and hybrid work in the pandemic era, many enterprises had to make changes to their physical premises. Some steps were very common. For example, 76 per cent of enterprises said they establishing hand washing/ sanitation stations while nearly 71 per cent of enterprises establishing temperature check

points and other screening mechanisms. 55 per cent of enterprises provided personal protective equipment to employees and/or customers. At the lower end, about 37 per cent of enterprises rearranged a customer space or installed new protective barriers because of the pandemic.

**Figure 6. Which of the following changes have you made to your business premises because of the pandemic?**



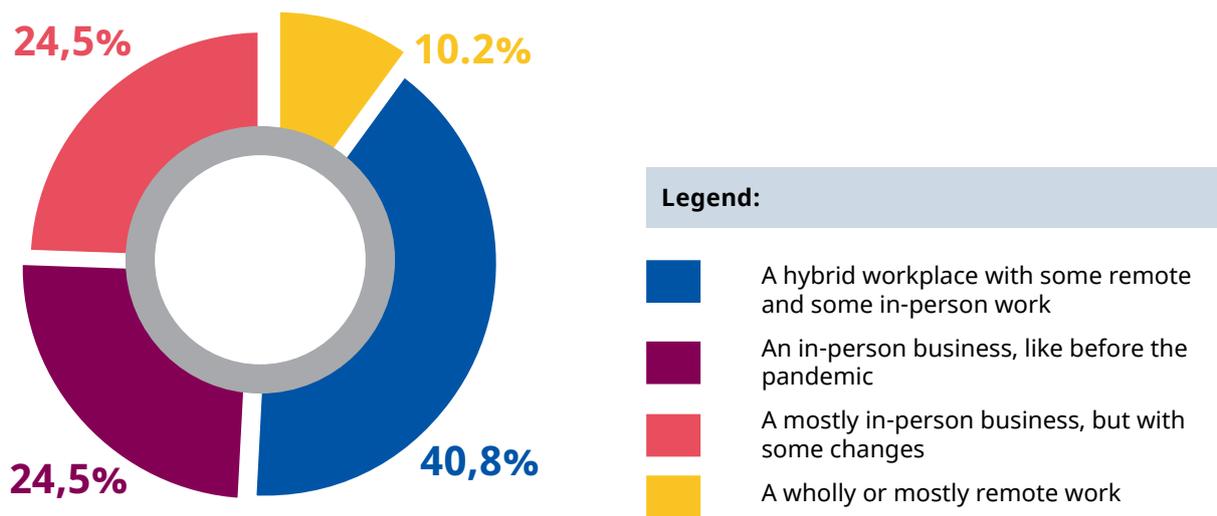
The many challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic have resulted in a wide range of changes to the way enterprises operate. Yet many enterprises were able to mitigate the consequences of these challenges and sometimes even turn them into opportunities to improve their business. Three in ten enterprises we surveyed said that changes to the premises helped improve worker morale, more than the 22 per cent that said it worsened it. Enterprises were more balanced when it came to customer experience – 29 per cent said that changes to the business premises improved the experience and the same share said it worsened it. Lastly, when discussing production efficiency, three in ten enterprises also said that pandemic-induced changes to the business premises had contributed to improvements, compared to two in ten that said these changes worsened production efficiency.

**Figure 7. How have the changes you made to the business premises affected each of the following?**



Despite all the upheaval and change in the last two years, Seychellois enterprises have already put thought into their business model moving forward, and a significant share look poised to be hybrid workplaces. In total, about four in ten enterprises anticipated that they would be a hybrid workplace, where workers split time between remote and in-person work. Just under a quarter believe that they will be mostly in-person business but with some changes or an in-person business, like before the pandemic. Notably, only 10 per cent of enterprises said that they would be a wholly or mostly remote workplace.

**Figure 8. Which of the following best describes your business model in the coming years?**



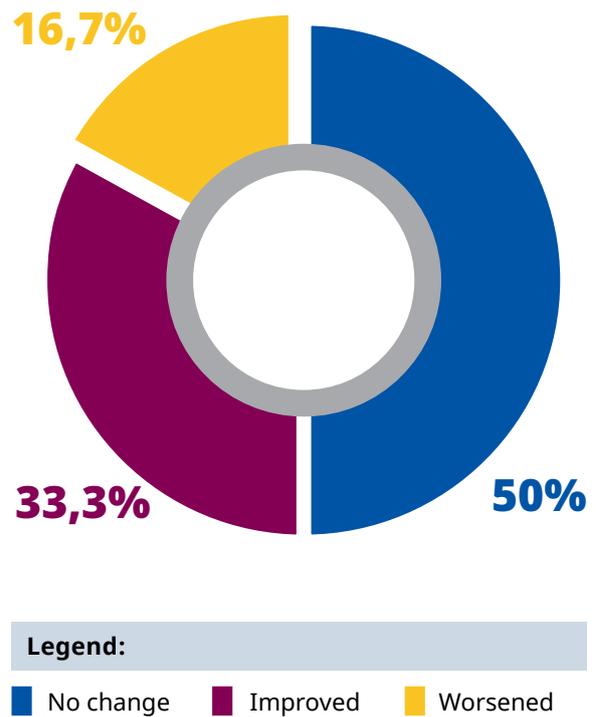


## Workplace Relations

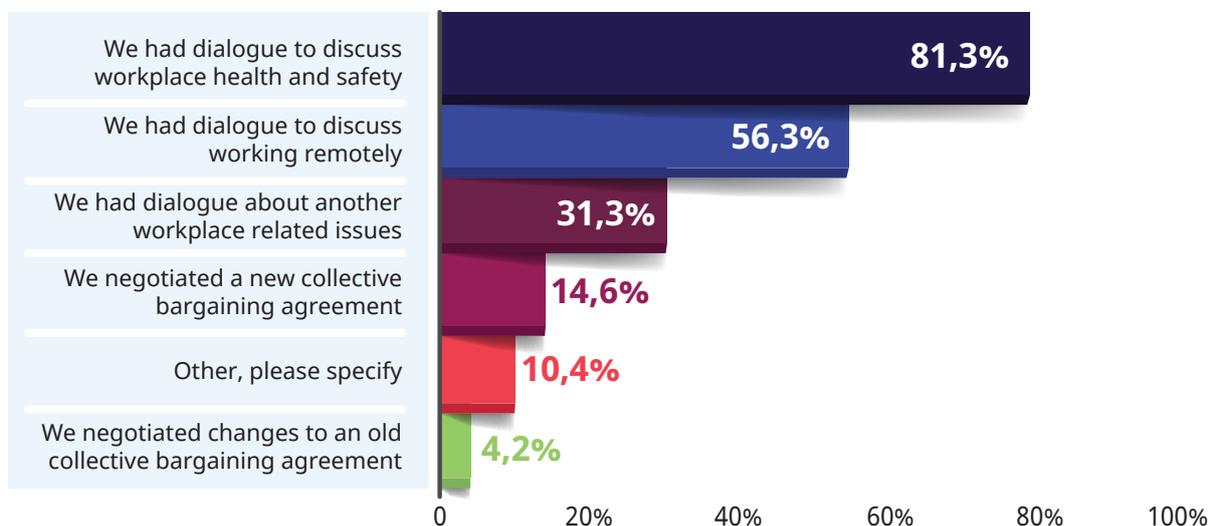
The Covid-19 pandemic has both been a challenge for workplace relations but also provided opportunities for it to grow, with potential long-term benefits. Despite the immense strains placed on employers and employees during the pandemic, our survey found that a third of enterprises said that relations between senior management and employees improved during the pandemic. This was twice the number of enterprises (16.7%) that noted that workplace relations had worsened during this same time period. Half of enterprises said that the pandemic did not change the quality of workplace relations.

During the pandemic, employers and employees engaged in workplace dialogue on a wide range of issues. Unsurprisingly, workplace health and safety was the most common, with dialogue taking place at 81 per cent of enterprises in the Seychelles. Remote work was also a common topic of discussion, covered at 56 per cent of enterprises. Changes to collective agreements, or new collective agreements, were less common but still discussed at numerous enterprises. Fifteen percent of enterprises noted that they negotiated a new agreement, while four per cent negotiated changes to an old agreement. Responses around collective bargaining may be relatively uncommon due to the fact that not all enterprises have collective bargaining agreements. Beyond workplace level dialogue, national-level dialogue was also an important ingredient in addressing the dynamic and devastating effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Figure 9. How has the Covid-19 pandemic changed workplace relations?**



**Figure 10. Dialogues or negotiations enterprises had with employees since the start of the pandemic**

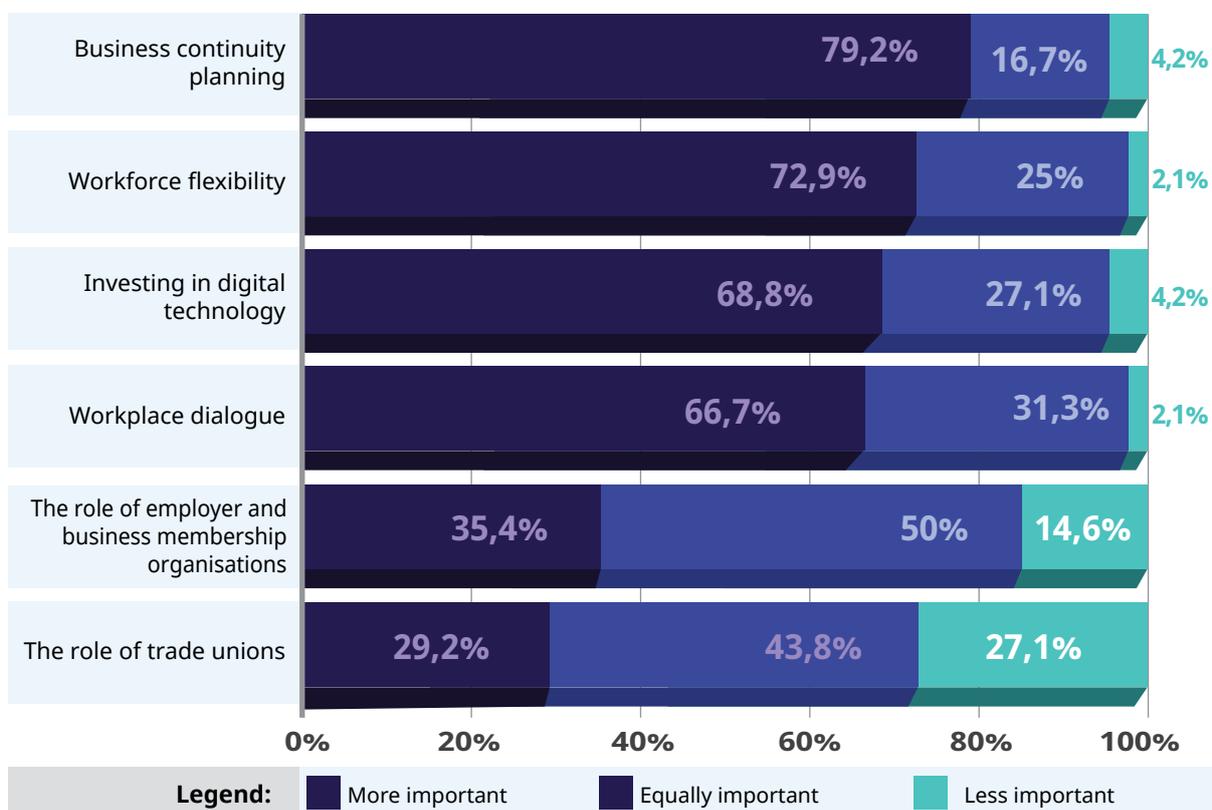


The pandemic has also changed the views of enterprises about a range of workplace-related activities. This was especially the case around planning and workplace flexibility. Nearly four in five businesses said that business continuity planning had become more important because of the Covid-19 pandemic. 73 per cent of enterprises said that workforce flexibility had become more common because of the pandemic. 69 per cent of businesses said that investing in digital technology had become more important because of the pandemic. For all of these workplace actions, very few businesses said that they had decreased in importance.

When asked about the importance of workplace relations and key industrial relations actors,

enterprises also generally noted their increased importance. Enterprise views about workplace dialogue are the most notable, with two thirds noting that this had become more important because of the pandemic. Views were more mixed about key actors – employer and business membership organizations (EBMOs) and trade unions. 35 per cent of enterprises said that EBMOs were more important because of the pandemic, though 15 per cent said they were less important. For trade unions, 29 per cent said they were more important but a rather large 27 per cent said that were less important. This suggests a neutral sentiment about the change in importance of trade unions because of the pandemic.

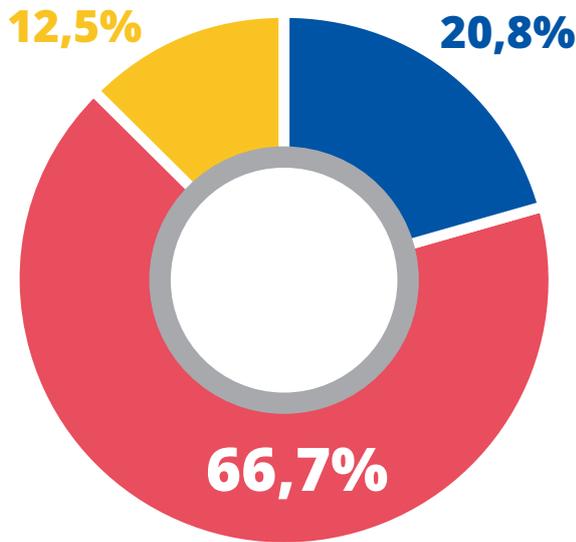
**Figure 11. How has the pandemic changed the importance of the following work-related areas?**



Though many enterprises noted the need to have an increasingly flexible workforce, the vast majority – some 67 per cent - said that they had not increased their use of external contractors since the start of the pandemic. About 21 per cent of enterprises noted that they had increased their use of external contractors, while a few enterprises responded that they did not know. Only a small number of enterprises increased their use of

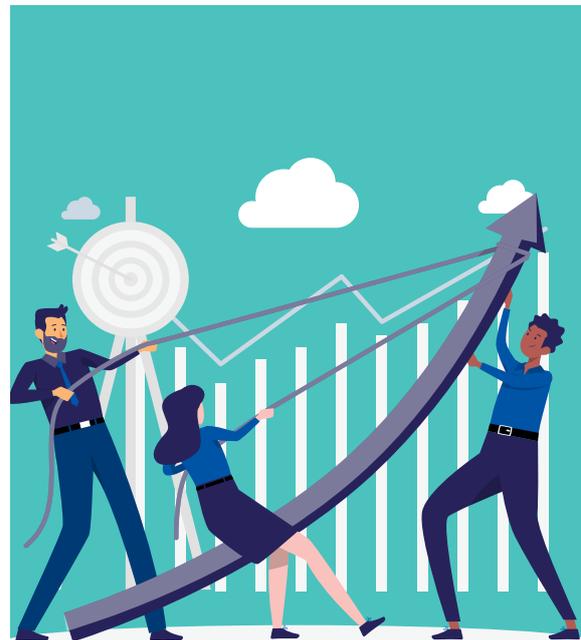
external contractors (10 out of 48 respondents), making it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions about the key drivers of this trend. Multiple businesses selected both “our business needs a more flexible workforce” and “we need people with skills that are not part of our core business”. A single business cited both high employee costs and the uncertain economic outlook.

**Figure 12. Has your business increased its use of external contractors since the pandemic started?**



**Legend:**

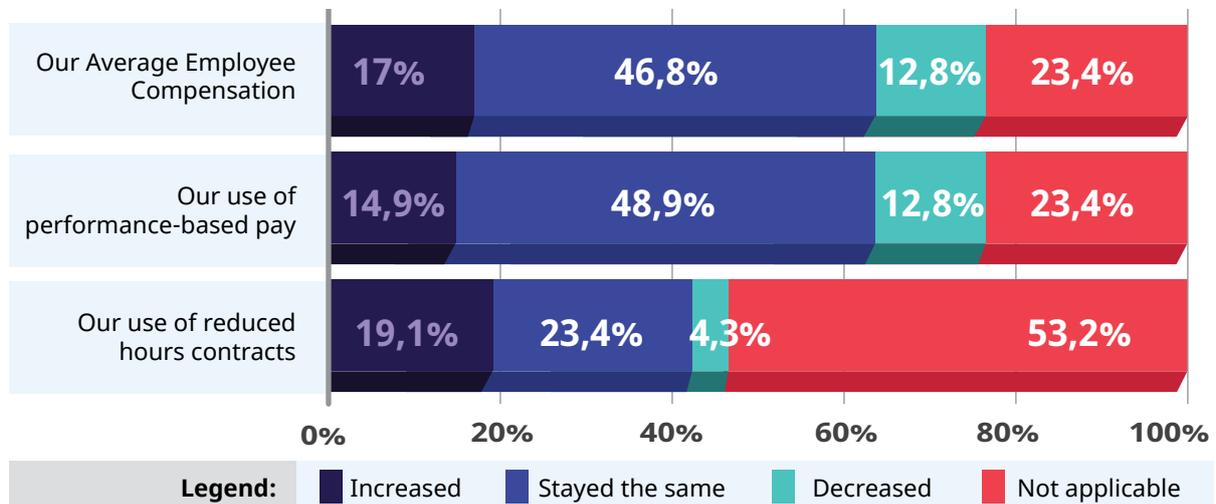
- Yes
- No
- Don't know



Some enterprises also made changes to compensation during the pandemic to manage costs, ensure business continuity and alleviate challenges with workplace relations. For many enterprises, average employee compensation remained fairly consistent. 47 per cent of businesses said that compensation stayed the same. 19 per cent noted that compensation increased while 13 per cent noted that it had decreased. Similarly, the use of performance-based pay also saw little change. 15 per cent of enterprises noted that it had increased while 13 per cent noted that it decreased.

One compensation-related change that did increase in use was reduced hours contracts. These types of contracts allow workers to work a lower number of hours, generally for a temporary period of time, to avoid the layoff of some personnel. 19 per cent of enterprises said that their use of reduced hours contracts had increased during the pandemic, while only 4 per cent noted that they had decreased. Notably, a majority of enterprises responded with “not applicable” suggesting that they do not use reduced hours contracts.

**Figure 13. How have the following aspects of your compensation practices changed since the Covid-19 pandemic?**



**Legend:**

- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased
- Not applicable



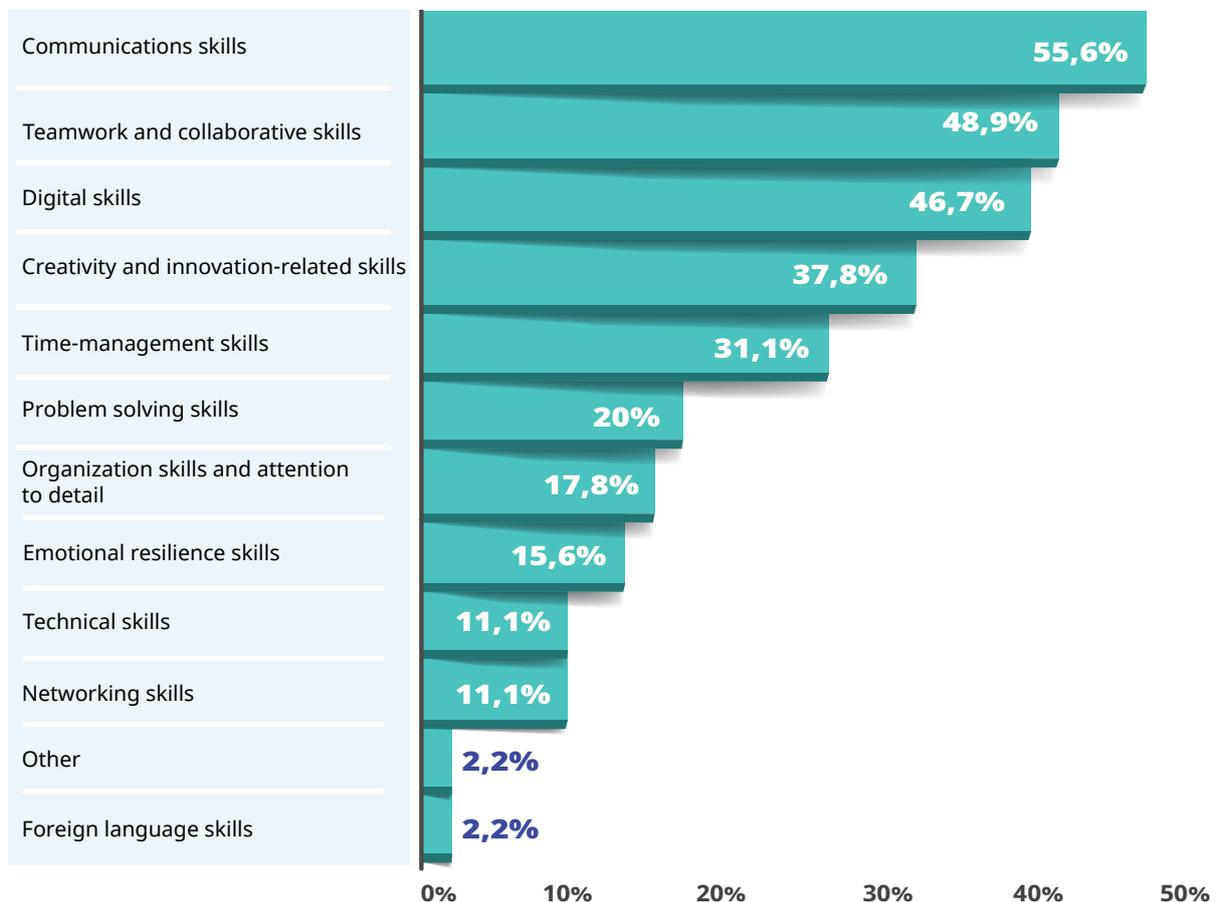


## Skills Development, Knowledge Sharing and Productivity

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant effect on skills that enterprises need to be successful, as well as on the way that those skills are developed and knowledge is shared within a business. The changing nature of skills and knowledge sharing has also had a significant effect on the productivity of enterprises. The skill sets that enterprises need to survive and thrive are reshaped by the pandemic, and recent trends in skills needs are

being reinforced. Across surveyed companies, there was a clear need to approach business skills differently during and after the pandemic. New skills would be needed, for example the ability to manage clients and develop business online, as this has become more important in comparison to the more traditional, in-person forms of client management. In general, surveyed companies needed greater adaptability from employees.

**Figure 14. Which of the following skill sets will be most important for the future success of your business?**



The survey found that the most important skills that enterprises needed moving forward were what are often referred to as “soft skills”. The most commonly cited skill set was communication skills, cited by 56 per cent of enterprises as one of the top three skills they needed in the future. This was followed closely by teamwork and collaborative skills (49 per cent). Digital skills were cited by 47

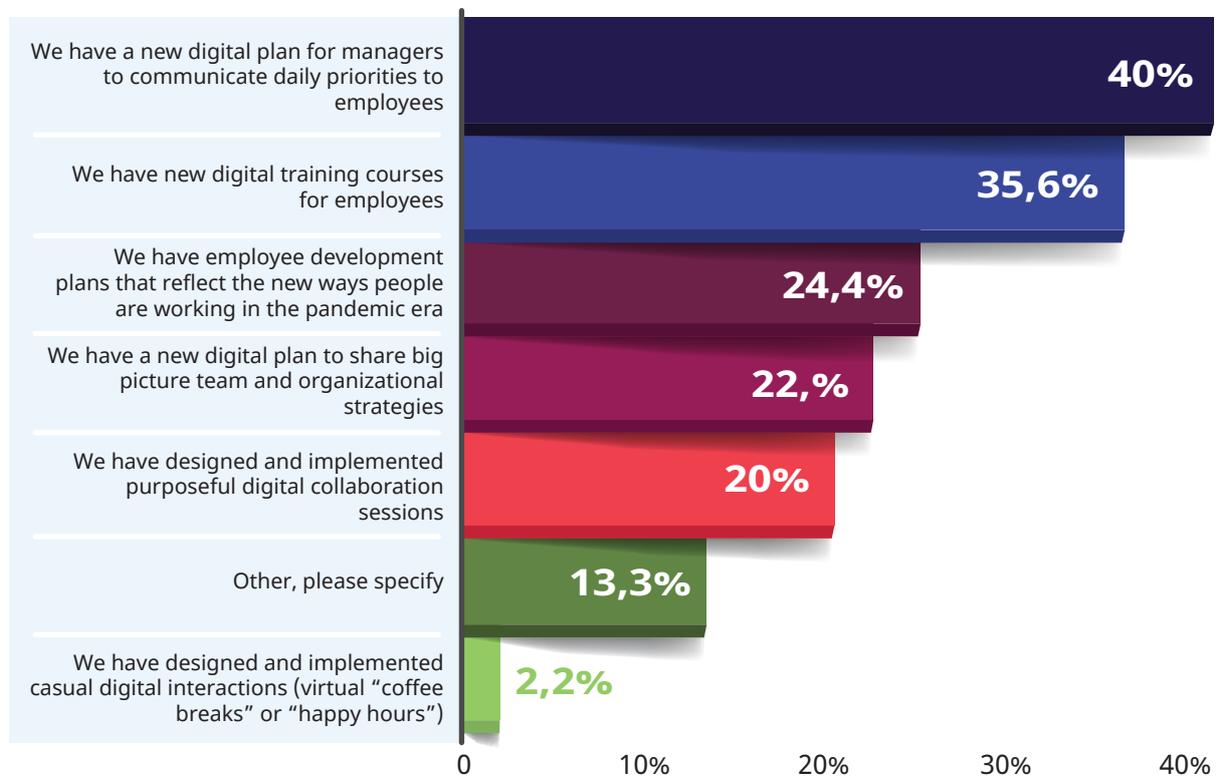
per cent of enterprises as a top skill set, while 38 per cent cited creativity and innovation-related skills. On the other hand, very few enterprises (just 2 per cent) noted that foreign language skills would be one of the three most important skill sets moving forward. Networking and technical skills were also amongst the most rarely cited skill sets that enterprises needed moving forward.

Across the survey, however, there was a clear indication that looking ahead, technological and digital skills will be in high demand. Communication skills as well as resilience, adaptability and the ability to multitask, so important during the pandemic, will also prove a sought-after skills in future. Of course, the change in skills needs is not the same across all sectors. The pandemic had a different impact, skills wise, depending on the sector.

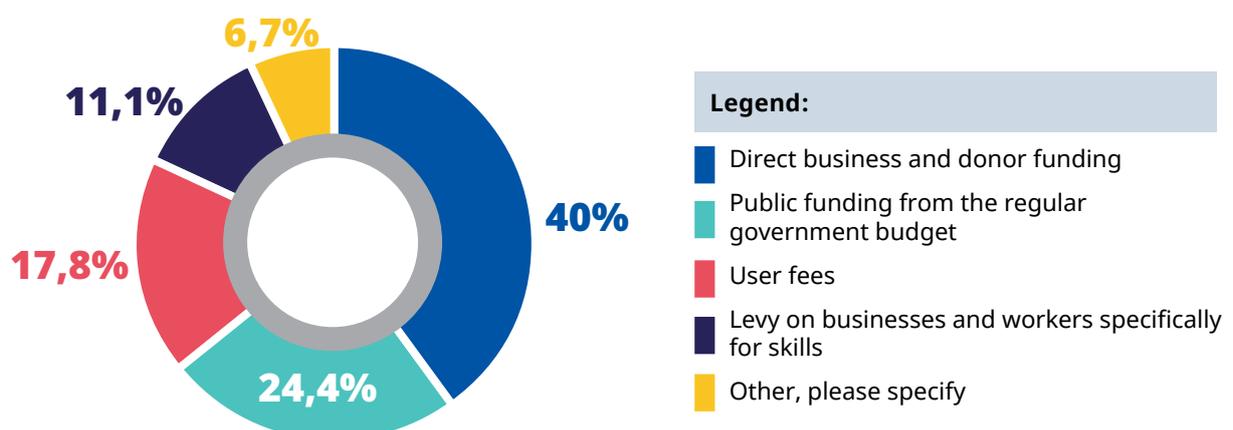
Enterprises have responded to the fast-moving context and the new skills demands by changing the way that they train employees, collaborate

and share knowledge. One of the most common changes, cited by 40 per cent of enterprises, has been to change employee development plans to reflect the new ways that people are working in the pandemic era. Some enterprises – about 36 per cent – reported that they have put in place new digital training courses for employees. 24 per cent of surveyed enterprises now have designed and implemented digital collaboration sessions for their employees. However, comparatively few enterprises (just 2 per cent) have implemented casual digital interactions, which can be good forums for informal information exchange and collaboration.

**Figure 15. How have you changed the ways in which you train, collaborate and share knowledge during the pandemic?**



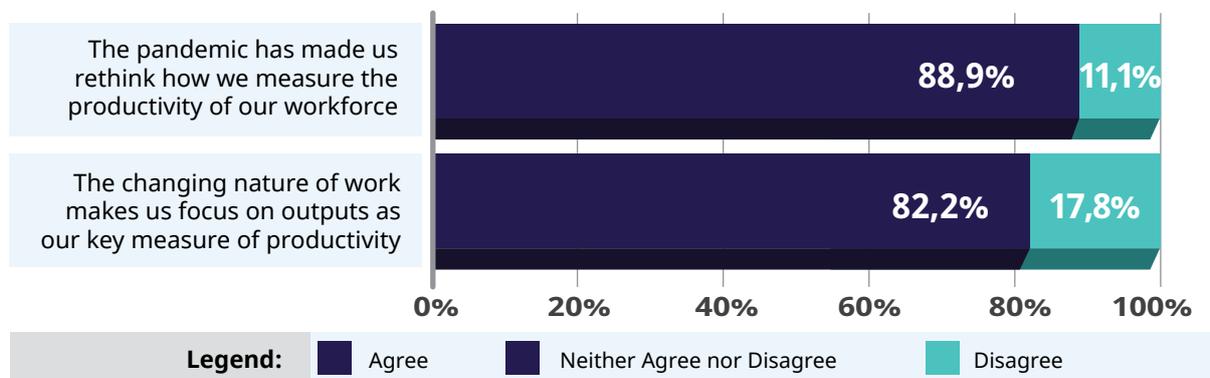
**Figure 16. Which model for funding post-pandemic skills development is most suitable?**



With the skills needs of enterprises changing, many countries will struggle to ensure that their workers are properly trained with the right skills for the post-pandemic workplace. Funding this training and skills development can be a major challenge. While skills development can benefit workers, employers and governments, there is often disagreement about exactly how it will be paid for, a tricky question given the many beneficiaries. Forty per cent of enterprises support a direct business and donor funding model as the primary model to fund skills development. Just under 25 per cent said that they supported public funding from the regular government budget. User fees were supported by about 18 per cent of enterprises while 11 per cent said that funding should come from a levy on businesses and workers.

The change in skills and knowledge sharing has been a major factor pushing enterprises to rethink productivity. The mix of skills and knowledge needed to be productive has changed for many enterprises and workers. The survey shows that the pandemic has caused the vast majority of enterprises to rethink productivity. Nearly 90 per cent of enterprises revealed that the virus made them rethink how they measure the productivity of their workforce. This suggests that more traditional measures such as the time spent in the office may be falling out of favour. 82 per cent of enterprises said that they would focus on outputs as their key measure of productivity. This has major implications for the time-based employment relationship that has been the mainstay of many formal workplace for decades, if not longer.

**Figure 17. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**



When asked how they monitor productivity of remote employees, the responses of enterprises showed a focus on output-based measurement. 27 per cent of enterprises said that they trust their employees to complete all outputs in a timely and workman-like manner, while 24 per cent said they “closely monitor outputs produced by employees” as the primary way to assess employee performance. Another common approach – used at 16 per cent of enterprises – was to conduct regular employee meetings to keep track of performance.

Most notable, however, was the small number of enterprises that relied on time-based measures. Just two per cent said they trusted employees to work a certain number of hours while just 7 per cent monitored hours worked using software of other tools. Though many enterprises moved to hybrid or remote work, some still noted that they required the physical presence of their essential staff, a phenomenon which was particularly the case for enterprises in manufacturing.

**Figure 18. Which of the following statements best describes how you monitor the performance of remote employees during the pandemic?**



Some organizations have found that there are technological or practical challenges to performance and performance monitoring, such as unreliable internet or the lack of managers with experience overseeing remote workers. Data costs are another key challenge and moving forward, affordable and reliable connectivity will be very important. To address this, some enterprises have adopted a mixed approach

and sourced information on performance from multiple sources. Enterprises have also digitalized systems that had a connection to skills and productivity. Online transactions such as mobile money and online banking were embraced while meetings were shifted to Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Such changes to digital modalities in cases had transformative effects across a whole sector.



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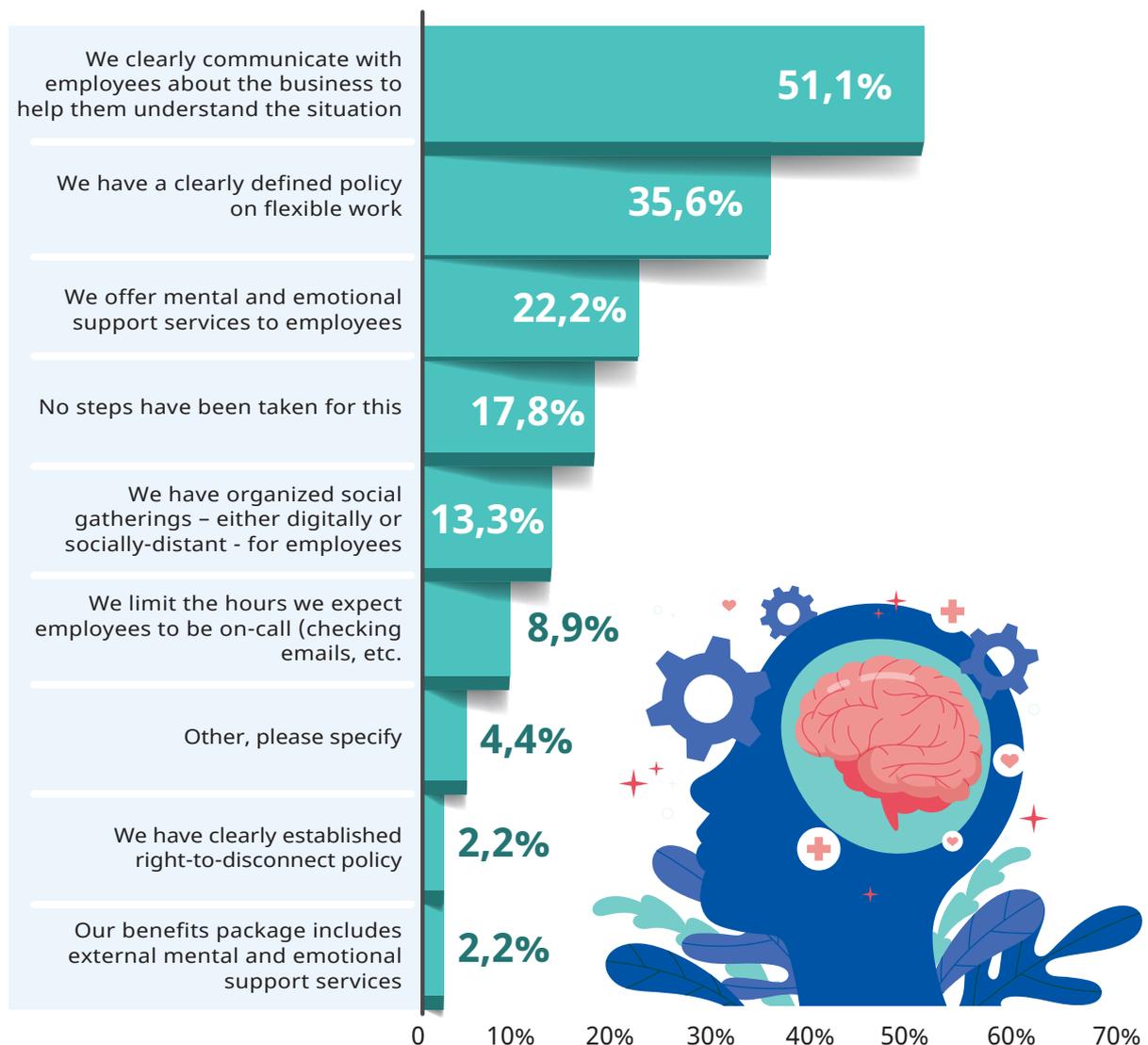


## Human Resources

The Covid-19 pandemic has created a range of new opportunities and challenges for the human resources side of an enterprise. The individuals and departments managing human resources are faced with a dynamic environment, with changing external factors such as Covid-related restrictions compounded by changing internal factors such as the duty of care to employees and the operational needs of the enterprise. Employees are similarly feeling the strain of the pandemic, having to

deal with constantly changing conditions while balancing professional and personal obligations. Workers are also concerned because of the pandemic-related uncertainty surrounding both their personal and work lives. Some enterprises have reported distress amongst employees as they feared the uncertain. For enterprises, then, the mental and emotional well-being of workers has become even more closely intertwined with the successful operations of the business.

**Figure 19. What steps have you taken to support the mental and emotional well-being of your employees, including those working both in-person and remotely?**



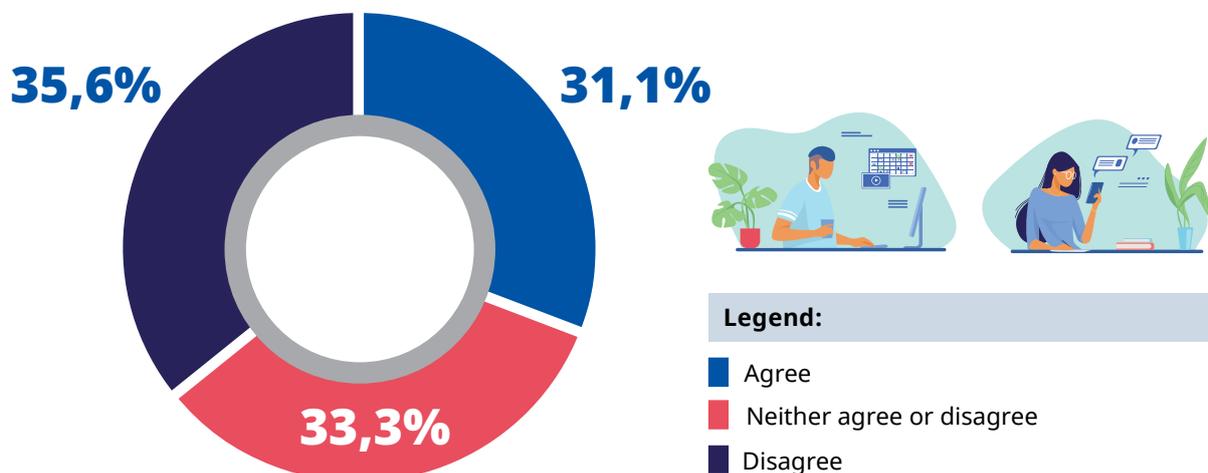
**Figure 20. ONE word the describes describe the most significant way your workforce will change in the next 3 to 5 years, compared to how it looked before Covid-19**

When asked to describe that change in one word, the responses were similar to those about how workplaces will change. The most common response was that the workforce would change to have greater “flexibility”. Another common response was “digital” or a closely associated term such as “virtual” or “remote”. Enterprises also regularly cited words including “resilient” and “innovative” as well as a number of different words around the concept of productivity, including “efficient” and “productivity”.



The shift to a more digital or remote workplace that some enterprises are undertaking may also have broader effects on the labour market, by allowing enterprises to hire groups of workers that they had not previously considered, such as remote workers not living near an enterprise. In the Seychelles about 31 per cent of enterprises noted that they had changed their hiring criteria to include new workers such as remote employees. However, 36 per cent noted that they had not made that change with another 33 per cent saying that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. This shows that the view of some enterprises about the office is evolving, from a location for full-time work to a part-time space for collaboration. This could have dramatic implications for policy, the economy, and lifestyles, affecting everything from real estate to where people chose to live. However, these changes will be muted by the fact that many businesses have not made this change and plan to continue operating with a significant in-person component to their business.

**Figure 20. “Since the start of the pandemic, our business has changed its hiring criteria to include new groups of workers we had not previously considered – such as fully remote employees not living near your workplace”**





## Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused major disruptions and changes for workplaces in the Seychelles, as the evidence from this report shows. Though much has already changed for enterprises, many questions remain about how enterprises will continue to change because of the pandemic. Many key questions about the future of work and workplaces are not yet fully clear. Will remote workers find it easier or harder to bargain with their employer for pay rises and improvements in conditions? Will employers find it easier to fire remote workers than if they had to do it face-to-face – some initial evidence suggests they do. How will firms monitor contractual working time in a world where remote workers no longer physically clock in? Can firms monitor remote workers to assess their productivity? Should a business pay

for a worker’s internet connection? Who is liable if employees injure themselves at home? Can remote workers live in another country and what would the tax implications of such an arrangement be here in the Seychelles?

These questions and more have wide-ranging implications for public policy. They serve as evidence of the need for changes to the vast body of employment law that governs work. This body of law will need to be modernised to keep pace with changes happening in the world of work. SCCI has a key role to play in helping to influence the policy dialogue and shape the answers to these questions in a way that advances the interests of employers in the Seychelles while also fully respecting the rights of employees in the country.



## References

- 1 <http://www.esa.gov.sc/about-us/>



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