

research results

SURVIVING A PANDEMIC: FACTORS THAT HELPED AND HINDERED NEW ZEALAND-BASED ORGANISATIONS

Overview

The Business Leaders' Health and Safety Forum commissioned research to understand, through a CEO lens, what factors helped and hindered organisational responses to a pandemic, and what lessons can be learned and translated into action to aid responses to future events.

The research carried out by Revolutionaries of Wellbeing (ROW), during July to October 2020, was three-fold: A survey was sent to both Business Leaders' Forum on Health and Safety members and also to members of the Institute of Directors. This was followed up by structured interviews with nine chief executives, and four structured focus groups, which explored the themes of the survey in more depth as well as providing more individual contributions. Interviews were also conducted with 11 general managers of health and safety to better understand pandemic planning.

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the research results.

survey

Methodology and participants

Survey instrument and reporting

The survey was conducted using SurveyMonkey, an online software. A suite of questions was employed to explore participant experiences leading into, during and after the first wave of COVID-19 in New Zealand. The survey is based on self-reported data. Note, Swedish rounding has been used so percentages may add up to slightly more or less than 100%. Participant comments have largely been left verbatim, although a small number have been edited for clarity. Outlier and ambiguous data responses have been removed.

Survey participants

The survey was sent to all members of the Business Leaders' Health and Safety Forum and Institute of Directors. In total, 298 CEOs, general managers, directors, and health and safety leads responded to the survey, with a 79% survey completion rate.

Participant responses

Age

Nearly two thirds of participants (64%) were aged 50 years or older. In detail:

Age	%
21-29 years	1
30-39 years	5
40-49 years	29
50-59 years	46
60 years or older	19

Gender

Participants were 68% male and 32% female.

Ethnicity

Just over 85% (86%) of participants identified as New Zealand European, 5% identified as Māori, 2% identified as Asian, 0.3% identified as Pacific Islander and 10% identified as Other (including "European" and "Pakeha"). Participants could tick as many ethnicities as applied to them.

Current role in organisation

Around two in five (37%) participants reported their current role was CEO, while 22% was a health and safety manager, 18% was a general manager, 11% was a director, and 12% was Other (e.g. “consultant” and “trustee”).

The researchers understand that in some cases, a general manager or director may be equivalent to a CEO role in some organisations. However, no modifications have been made to account for this possibility. Any comparisons by role are based entirely on participant responses to role in this question.

Length of time in role

Of all of the participants, 36% had been in their role for more than 6 years. In detail:

Time in role	%
Less than a year	12
1 – 5 years	52
6 – 10 years	19
more than 10 years	17

Number of worksites in organisation

Around two in five of all participants (37.8%) worked in organisations with 1 - 4 worksites. ‘Other’ responses included variable worksites (e.g., temporary sites or client workplaces) and work-from-home options.

Number of worksites	%
1 - 4	38
5 - 9	20
10+	35
Other	7

Trade regions of participant organisations

Around one in four of all participants (26%) worked in organisations that traded internationally. Just over 40% (42%) traded nationally and 32% traded locally only.

Number of employees across organisation

Nearly half of all participants (45.8%) worked in organisations with 100 - 999 employees:

Number of employees	%
1 - 9	5
10 - 99	25
100 - 999	45
1000+	23

Organisation sector

Just over 60% of all participants worked in energy and utilities, manufacturing or transport, warehousing and logistics, construction, or government (central and local). ‘Other’ responses included “cleaning” and “emergency”.

In detail:

Sector	%
Energy and utilities	14
Transport, warehousing and logistics	10
Government (central) - agency/department	10
Manufacturing	10
Construction	9
Government (local) - council/agency	7
Health care, medical and community services	6
Other	6
Agriculture, horticulture and forestry	6
Professional services	6
Retail	3
Science and technology	3
Financial and insurance services	2
Tourism and hospitality	2
Education and training	1
Real estate and property	1
Sports and recreation	0.7

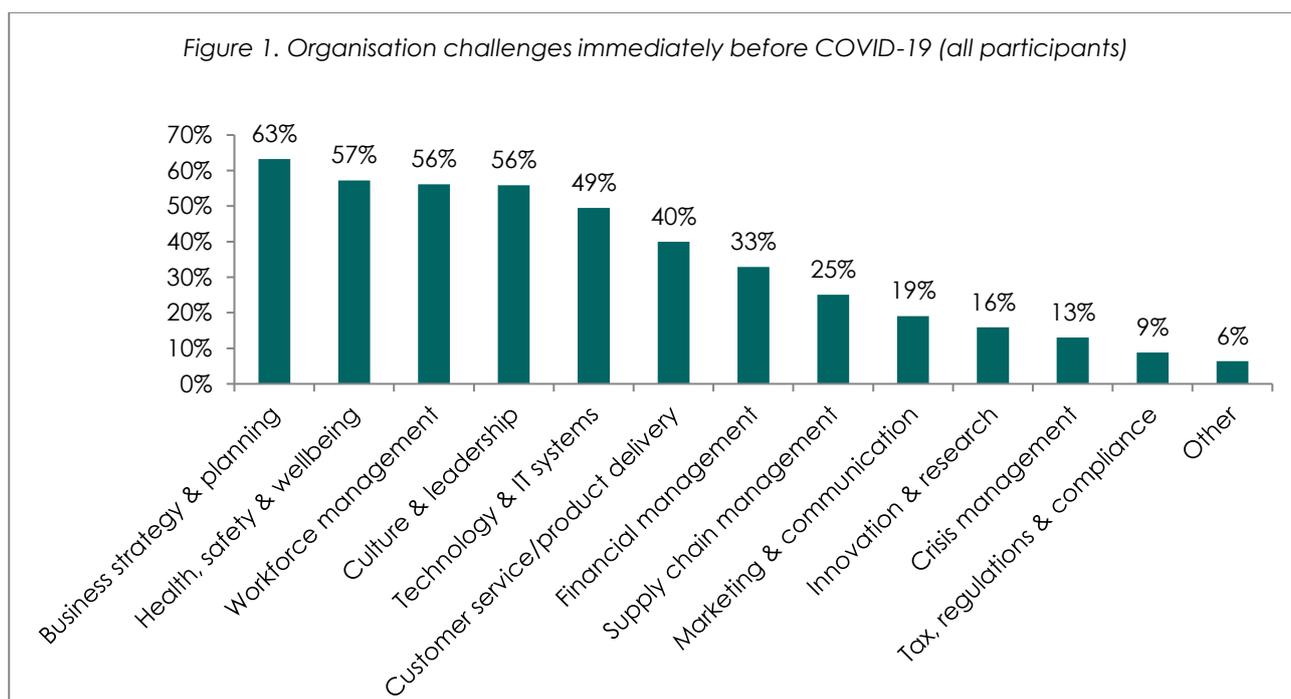
Prior to the first COVID-19 Alert Levels 3 and 4

Challenges before COVID-19

The most common challenges that organisations faced immediately before COVID-19 (in order of responses) related to business strategy and planning, health, safety and wellbeing, workforce management and organisation culture and leadership (see Figure 1). Participants could select as many as applied to them.

Other responses included:

- Market factors such as “log price drop” and “lack of work”.
- Operations factors such as “resource deployment” and “profitability”.
- Environment factors such as “sustainability” and “drought”.



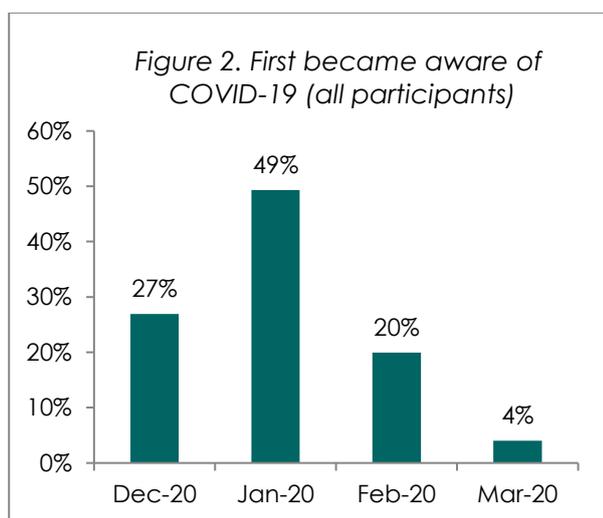
By role, the top three challenges in order were:

Role	Top three challenges	%
CEO	1. Business strategy and planning 2. Workforce management 3. Health, safety and wellbeing	67 60 58
General manager	1. Business strategy and planning 2. Health, safety and wellbeing 3. Culture and leadership	59 57 55
Health and safety manager	1. Culture and leadership 2. Health, safety and wellbeing 3. Business strategy and planning	73 68 63
Director	1. Business strategy and planning 2. Workforce management 3. Financial management	60 37 33

First awareness of COVID-19

Around one in four participants (27%) became aware of COVID-19 in December 2019 (see Figure 2).

By role, health and safety managers (87%) tended to be aware of COVID-19 earlier, by the end of January 2020, compared to general managers (76%), CEOs (75%), and directors (61%).



Belief that COVID-19 was a risk to organisations

Participants were asked to rate, out of 100, the extent that they believed COVID-19 was a substantial risk to their organisation. Based on the median of all who responded, participants believed the risk was 64/100. Answers ranged between 0 to 100, where 0 was no risk and 100 was a significant risk.

By role:

Role	Median risk level /100	Answer range
CEO	71	5 - 100
General manager	80	0 - 100
Health and safety manager	70	1 - 100
Director	52	5 - 98

First area(s) of focus on becoming aware of COVID-19

On becoming aware of COVID-19, the three most commonly reported areas of focus across all participants were health, safety and wellbeing, crisis management and customer service and product/service delivery (see Figure 3, next page). Participants could select more than one response.

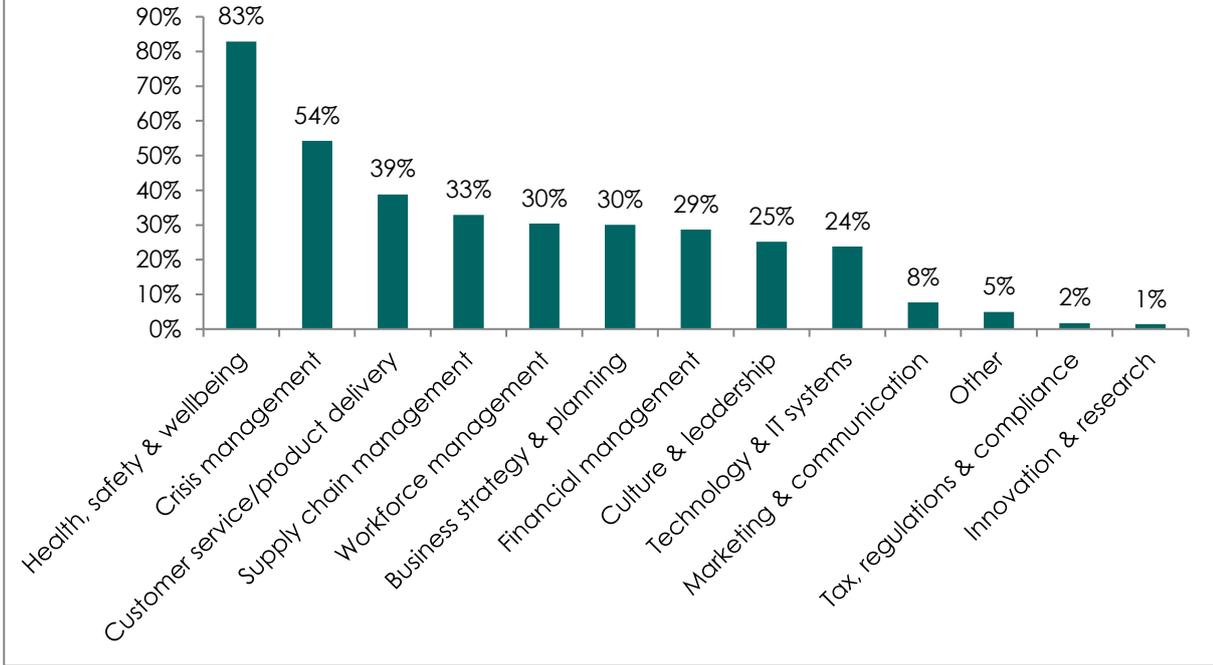
Other responses included:

- Business continuity factors such as “business continuity planning” and “pandemic planning”.
- People and safety factors such as “availability and currency of PPE” and “internal communications to staff”.

By role, the top three areas of focus on first becoming aware of COVID-19 were:

Role	Top three areas of focus	%
CEO	1. Health, safety and wellbeing 2. Crisis management 3. Financial management	80 50 42
General manager	1. Health, safety and wellbeing 2. Crisis management 3. Customer service and product/service delivery	82 65 43
Health and safety manager	1. Health, safety and wellbeing 2. Crisis management 3. Customer service and product/service delivery, and business strategy and planning	94 64 32
Director	1. Health, safety and wellbeing 2. Business strategy and planning 3. Customer service and product/service delivery	68 39 35

Figure 3. First areas of focus for organisations on becoming aware of COVID-19 (all participants)

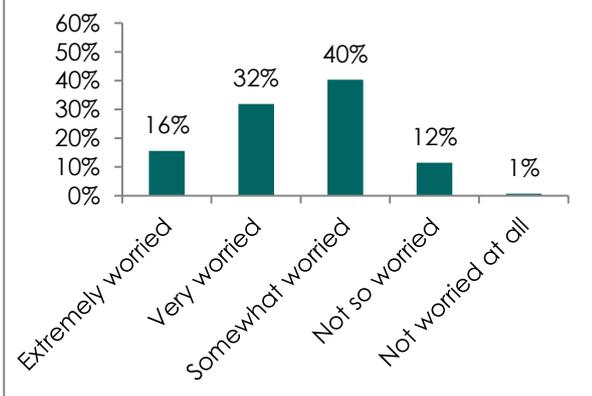


Concerns about the impact of COVID-19 Alert Level 4 on employees

Just under 50% (48%) of participants were very worried or extremely worried about the impact of COVID-19 on their employees before Alert Level 4 lockdown (see Figure 4).

By role, more CEOs (50%), general managers (51%) and health and safety managers (54%) were extremely or very concerned about the impact of Alert Level 4 on employees, than directors (32%).

Figure 4. Concerns about the impact of Alert Level 4 on employees (all participants)

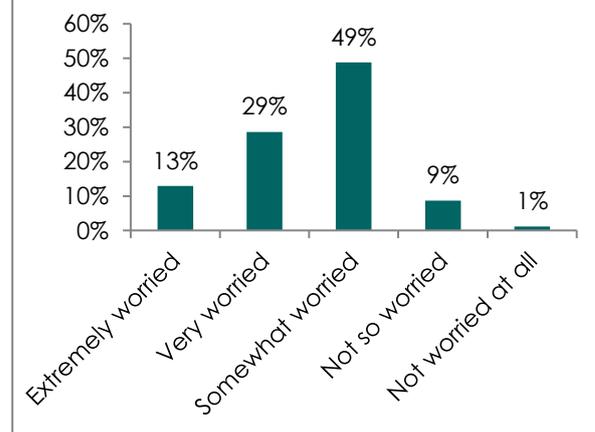


Concerns about the impact of COVID-19 Alert Level 4 on organisations

Just over 40% (42%) of participants were very worried or extremely worried about the impact of COVID-19 on their business before Alert Level 4 lockdown (see Figure 5).

By role, more CEOs (48%), general managers (44%) and health and safety managers (43%) were extremely or very concerned about the impact, compared to directors (23%).

Figure 5. Concerns about the impact of Alert Level 4 on organisations (all participants)



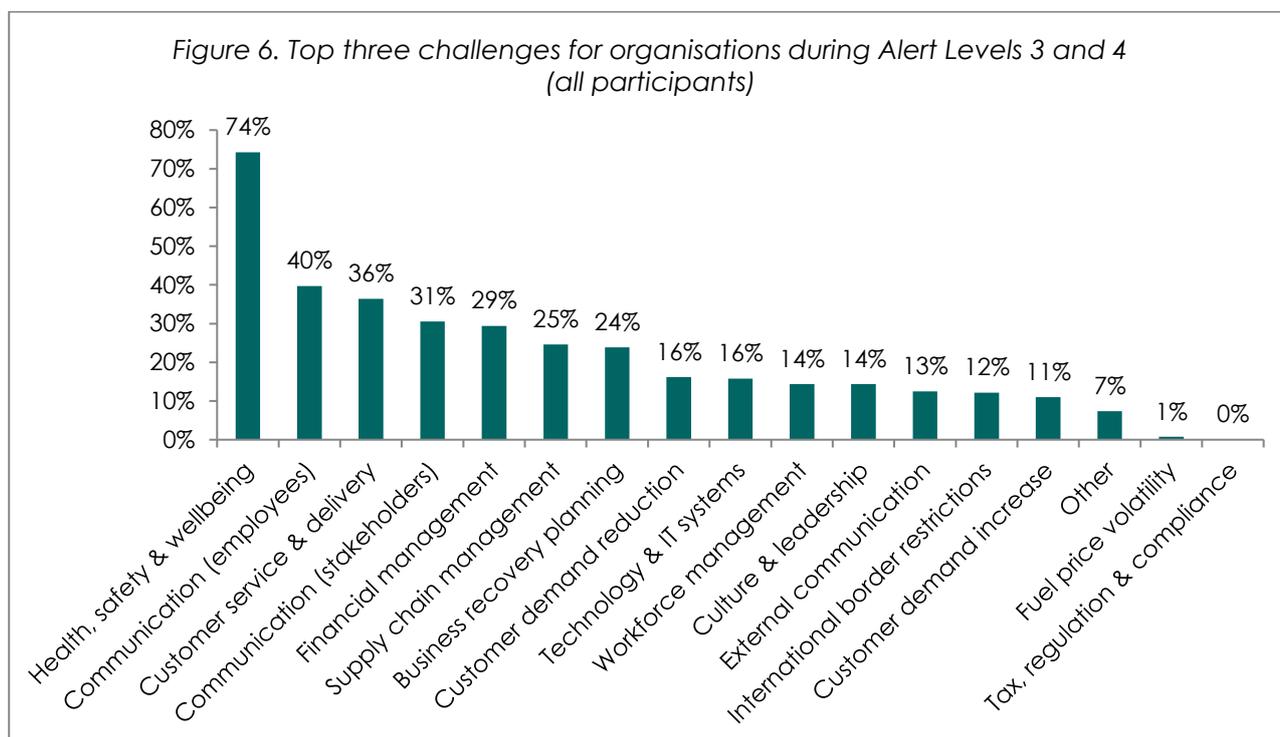
Responses through COVID-19 Alert Levels 3 and 4

Top three challenges during COVID-19 Alert Levels 3 and 4

The three most commonly reported challenges for organisations during Alert Levels 3 and 4 related to workforce health, safety and wellbeing, communication to employees, and customer service and product/service delivery (see Figure 6). Participants could select up to three challenges.

Other responses include:

- Business continuity factors such as “crisis management” and “immediate loss of a considerable part of our revenue stream”.
- Workforce factors such as “workforce management challenges” and “workforce planning”.
- External relationship factors such as “relationship with unions” and “getting advice to clients fast enough”.



By role, the top three challenges in order were:

Role	Top three challenges	%
CEO	1. Workforce health, safety and wellbeing 2. Communication to employees 3. Customer service and product/service delivery	71 40 38
General manager	1. Workforce health, safety and wellbeing 2. Communication to employees 3. Supply chain management and communication to stakeholders	72 46 28
Health and safety manager	1. Workforce health, safety and wellbeing 2. Supply chain management and customer service and product/service delivery 3. Communication to employees	78 40 37
Director	1. Workforce health, safety and wellbeing 2. Customer service and product/service delivery 3. Communication to stakeholders	77 45 38

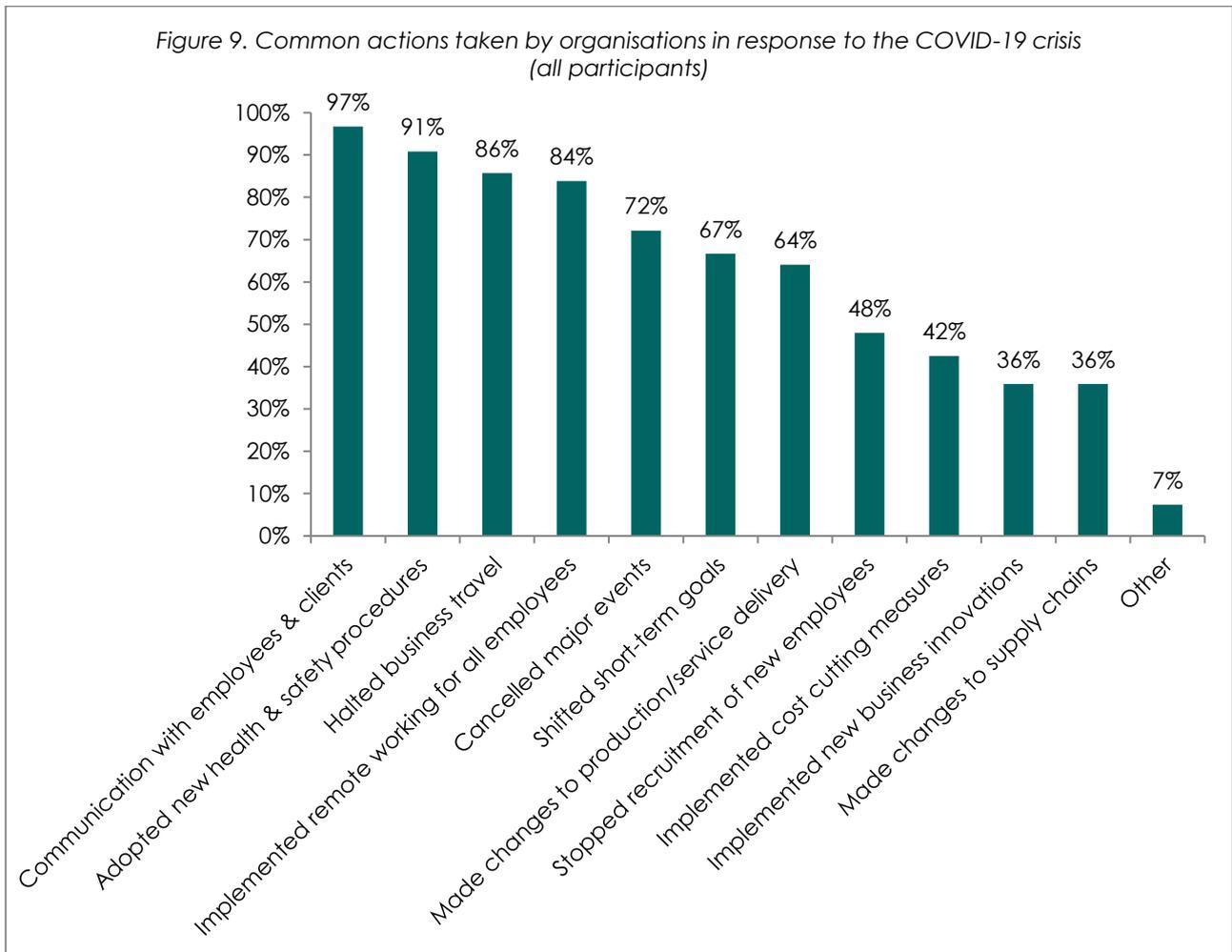
Common actions taken by organisations in response to the COVID-19 crisis

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, nearly all participants reported that their organisation communicated more regularly with employees and clients/customers. Organisations also adopted new health and safety procedures, halted business travel, implemented remote working for all employees, and cancelled major events (see Figure 9). Participants could select as many as applied to them.

The most common actions were consistent across all roles, in the order above.

Other responses included:

- Business continuity factors such as “put in place financial, risk management and work plans to cover most scenarios (the ones we could anticipate)” and “immediate loss of a considerable part of our revenue stream”.
- Workforce factors such as “remote working for those employees for whom it was practical to do so” and “re-deployed staff to support government activity - e.g. contact centres”.



Factors that helped organisations respond to the COVID-19 crisis

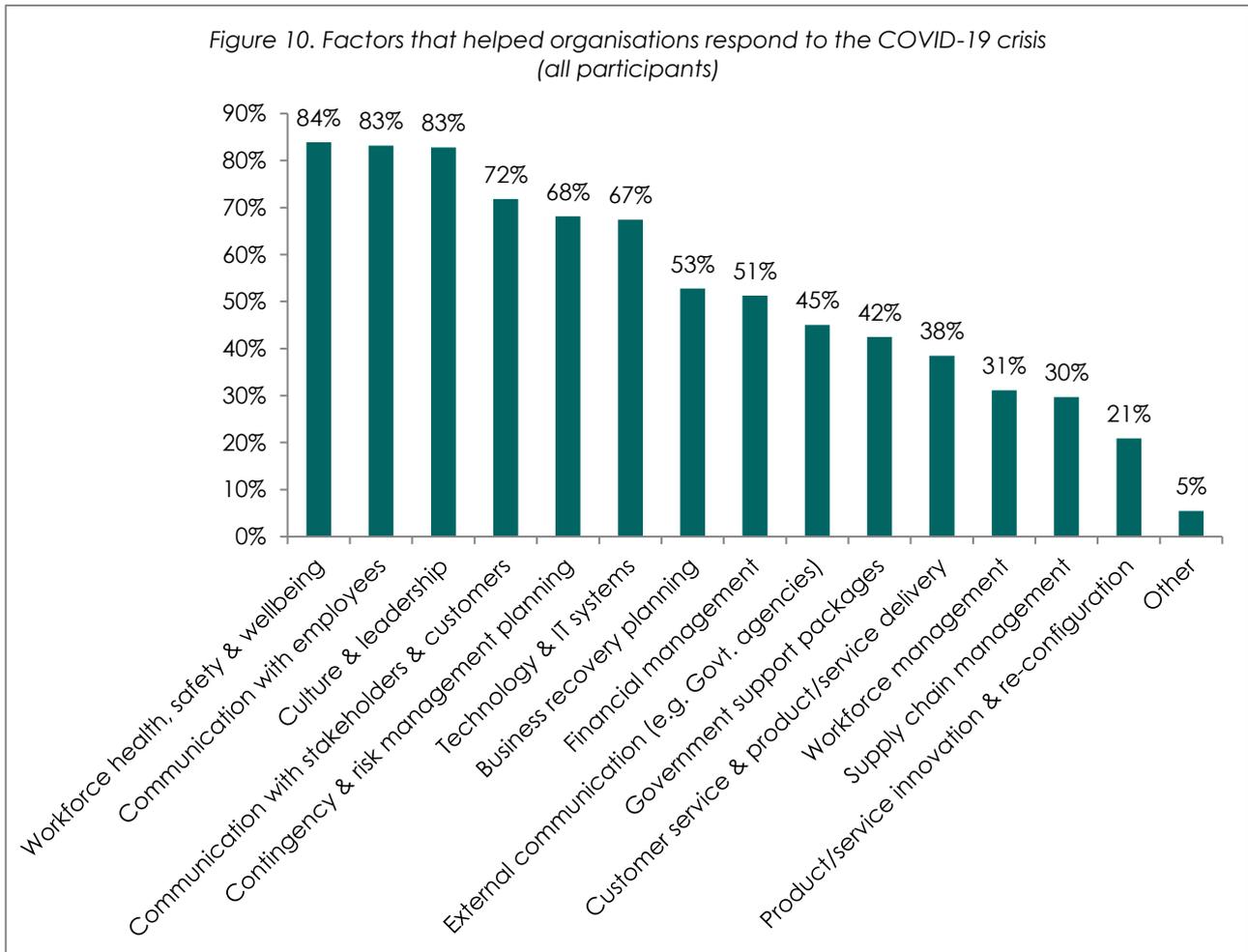
The top three reported factors that helped organisations to respond to the COVID-19 crisis were, in order, workforce health, safety and wellbeing, communication with employees, and organisation culture and leadership (see Figure 10). Participants could select as many as applied to them.

The most common actions, as reported above, were consistent across all roles.

Other responses included:

- Business continuity factors such as “restructure” and “we knew our service was going to remain essential so while demand was reduced we were not worried about financial instability”.
- Workforce factors such as “we recognised the excellent work that the entire staff did over the COVID level 3 & 4 period (in particular) by thanking all staff publicly” and “passion of people to get the job done”.
- External relationship factors such as “strong customer / client support” and “relationships with our suppliers and stakeholders”.

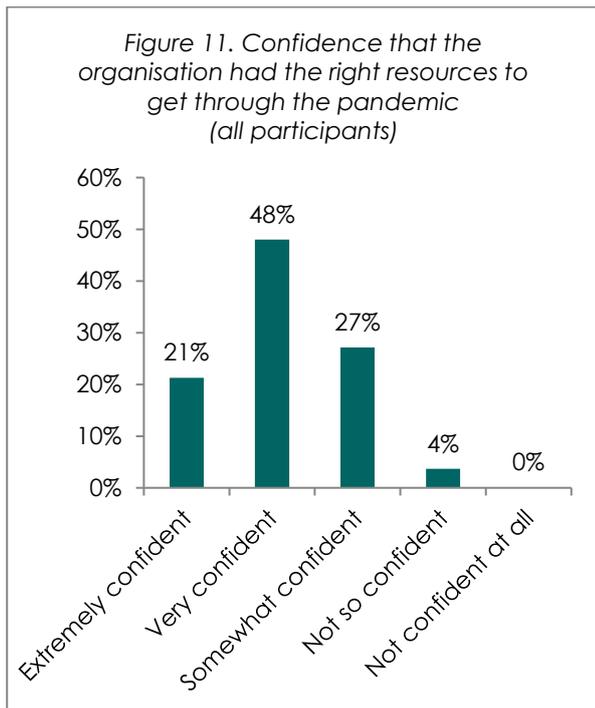
Figure 10. Factors that helped organisations respond to the COVID-19 crisis (all participants)



Confidence that the organisation had the right resources to get through the pandemic

69% of the participants were very confident or extremely confident that their organisation had the right resources to get through the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure 11).

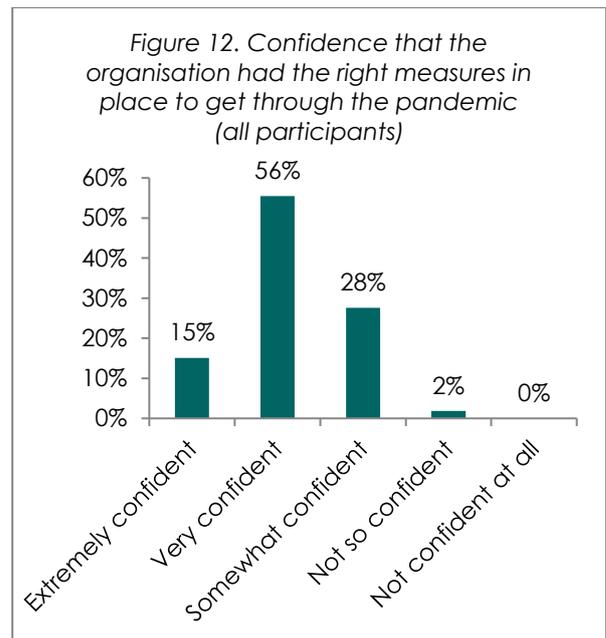
Across roles, CEOs (72%) and health and safety managers (75%) tended to be very or extremely confident that their organisation had the right resources, compared to general managers (64%), and directors (58%).



Confidence that the organisation had the right measures in place to get through the pandemic

Just over 70% of the participants were very confident or extremely confident that their organisation had the right measures in place to get through the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure 12).

Across roles, health and safety managers (77%) tended to be very or extremely confident that their organisation had the right measures in place, compared to CEOs (69%), general managers (68%), and directors (68%).



Factors that hindered organisation response to the COVID-19 crisis

The most reported factors that hindered organisation responses to the COVID-19 crisis included external communication (e.g. from Government agencies and departments), supply chain management, technology and IT systems (see Figure 13).

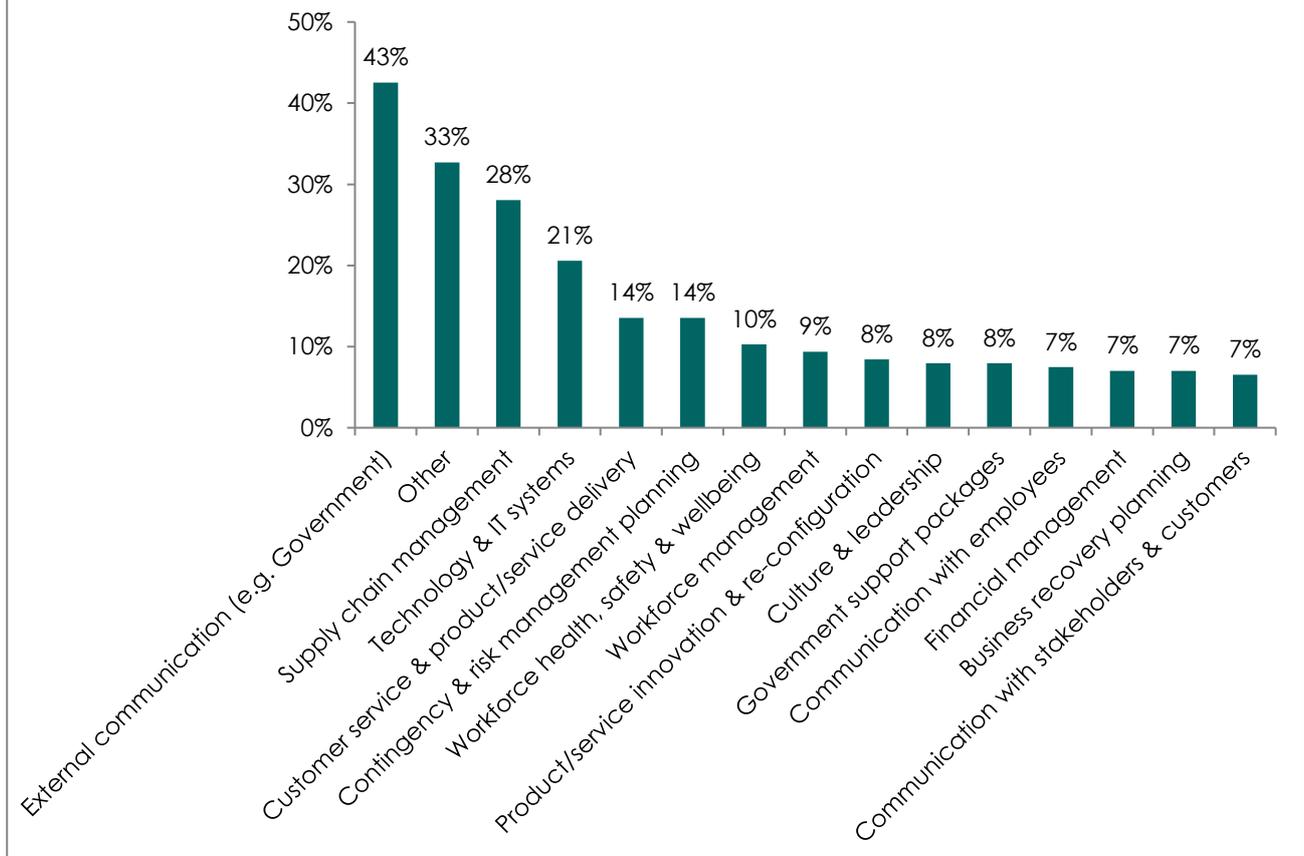
Participants could select as many as applied to them.

Across roles, external communication from Government was consistently reported as the greatest hinderance, followed by supply chain management.

Other responses included:

- Business continuity factors such as “marketing and awareness of our products. We get return business. Tough to get it once clients stop picking up phones”.
- Workforce factors such as “attitude of staff” and “BOD trying too hard to be supportive...and inadvertently adding to pressures on executive”.
- External relationship factors such as “disparity between what the government were saying, and what our industry advisory was saying”.
- Not hindered: ten participants reported not feeling hindered in their response and eight reported “none of the above” of suggested items (shown in Figure 13 below).

Figure 13. Factors that hindered organisation response to the COVID-19 crisis (all participants)



The greatest work-related challenges of the lockdown period

Participants were asked to describe the greatest work-related challenges of the lockdown period.

The most common work-related challenges of lockdown can be themed as follows. The top lessons, by volume of comments, have been marked with an asterisk.

These challenges included business operations challenges, conflicting advice from Government and other external sources, managing leadership, culture and wellbeing, and managing the supply chain and customer expectations.

There was no noticeable distinction across roles in the challenges experienced.

Summarised responses:

Business operations, including: *
Being identified as an essential service, and meeting Ministry of Health guidelines.
Reducing business-as-usual activities which will impact the business later (such as maintenance).
Forecasting /scheduling challenges.
Managing the uncertainty of work and the future of the business.
Moving to, or an inability to move to, a digital/remote business.
Anticipating risks and being ready to respond, moving with the speed of change.
Not having a relevant pandemic plan to support business continuity.
Workload (not enough, fluctuating and too much).

External relationships and Government advice, including: *
Inconsistent unclear messaging from Government (including inconsistencies between messages from Government departments and the Prime Minister's daily briefings) on what was expected of businesses and the nature of "essential services".
The short timeframes between Government announcements and responding to requirements.
Managing relationships with Government representatives.

Understanding what Government support was available (e.g. subsidies)
Inconsistent messaging from unions (e.g. on the application of laws), or union resistance to change.
Obtaining relevant in-sector information.
Managing public expectations with health and safety.
Sourcing information on the long term impact and consequences of COVID-19.

Culture, leadership and wellbeing, including: *
Communication and maintaining connection with teams (particularly with remote workers).
Managing culture and leadership (e.g. providing reassurance, ensuring trust, retain engagement, empowering staff to make decisions, managing pressure, listening to feedback, keeping positive).
Keeping customers and staff safe (including introducing PPE, hygiene, and social distancing at work, plus managing worker and public non-compliance).
Capability of workers to respond to the crisis and work at hand.
Moving workers to remote working (including access to ergonomic support and IT).
Supporting worker wellbeing (particularly mental health, stress and fatigue, including 'Zoom fatigue'). Also supporting parents with children who required home schooling.
Supporting workers who needed to be at work (e.g. contact centre).
PPE procurement and delivery to workers.
Adapting to new ways of working and working with agility (e.g. remote working and quick decision making).
Managing uncertainty including employment for workers.
Managing expectations of board of directors/senior leaders.

Customer/stakeholder management, including:

Inability to market products and services.
Restrictions on service and trade (including restrictions on travel and being able to serve customers face-to-face).
Supply chain management and logistics (e.g. ensuring supply, delivering stock, accessing equipment), particularly for international suppliers or customers.
Managing customer expectations and experiencing a substantial demand reduction/increase.
Managing other stakeholder expectations/actions (e.g. ensuring subcontractors were following PPE guidelines).
Having commercial contracts not designed for risks such as COVID-19.
Managing information flow to keep the business and other stakeholders informed.

Workforce management, including:

Re-organising teams (e.g. splitting teams to ensure continuity of work) or restructure.
Recruitment for key roles (e.g. seasonal workers).
Mobilisation of workers (domestic and international).

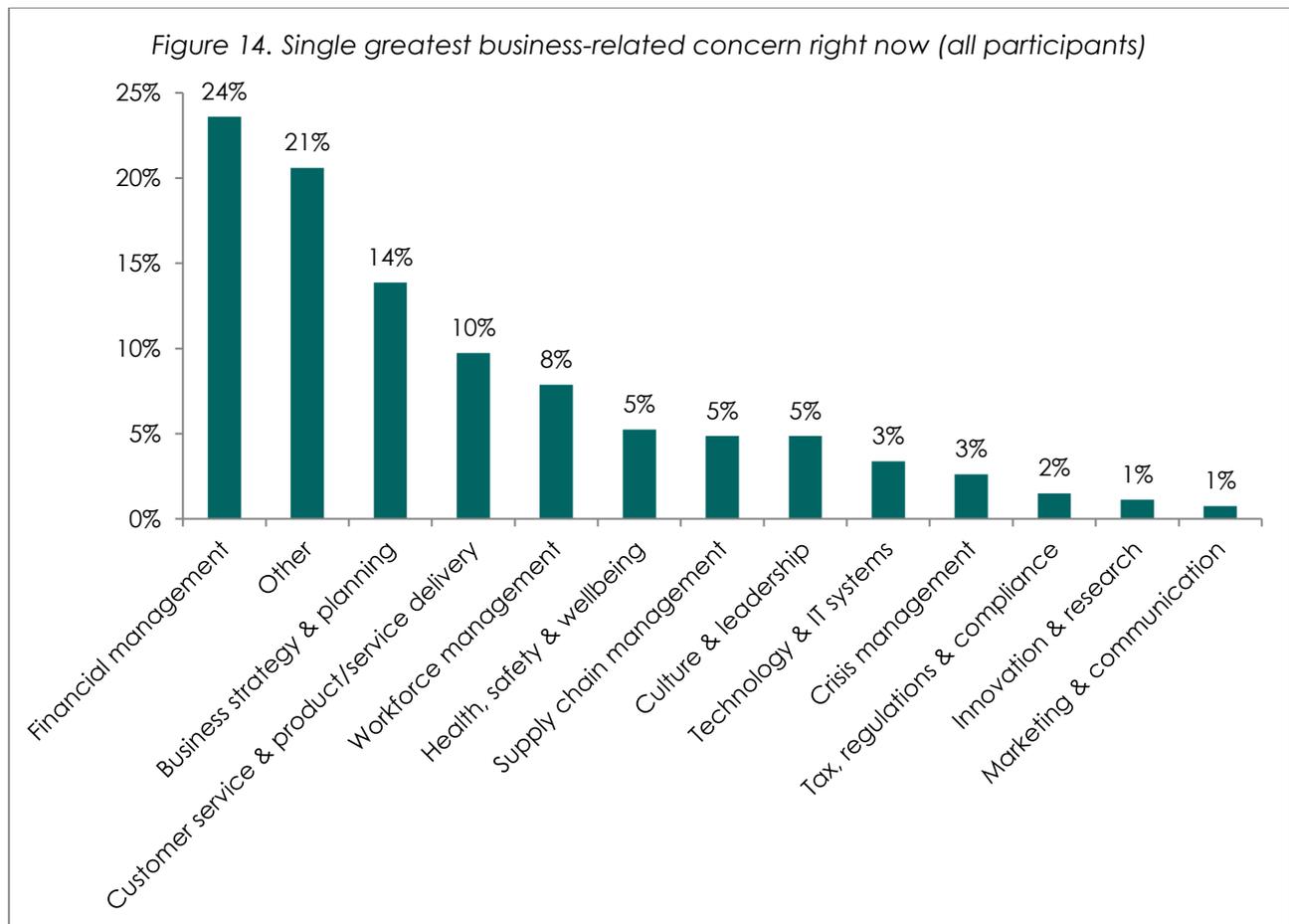
The single greatest business-related concern right now

Participants were asked to identify their single greatest business-related concern right now.

The most commonly reported concerns include financial management, business strategy and planning, and customer service and product/service delivery (see Figure 14).

Other responses included:

- Financial management issues such as “ability of customers to continue to pay” and “loss of revenue”.
- Wellbeing issues such as “recovery” and “loss of focus”.
- Market factors such as “market resilience” and “return of COVID-19”.



By role, the top single greatest business-related concern was:

Role	Top single business-related concern (listed)	%
CEO	Financial management	23
General manager	Financial management	23
Health and safety manager	Financial management	35
Director	Business strategy and planning	23

The top three lessons learned from the pandemic

Participants were asked to describe their top three lessons learned from the pandemic. The lessons have been summarised and themed as follows. The top lessons, by volume of comments, have been marked with an asterisk.

The most common responses related to business strategy and operations, communication, leadership and culture, crisis management, flexible working, and financial management. The health, safety and wellbeing of workers and customers was also important to participants.

The top three lessons were relatively consistent across roles, with no clear distinction to note.

Summarised responses:

Business strategy and operations, including: *
Have a clear purpose or clear end goal and share this with workers.
Have a clear strategy and stay focused on what is important (do not be distracted).
Focus on the issues of the day, take notice of the wider environment, and adapt as needed.
Adjust operations to a new normal and prioritise.
Ensure diversification of products and services.
Continue operational planning.
Manage global differences carefully.
Travel and transport are critical infrastructure and can be unreliable.
It is possible to work remotely/as a digital operation. Plan ahead and test.
Develop system flexibility and have the right people, systems, and equipment in place to enable the work.
Apply principles of emergency management to business-as-usual work.
Ensure stock is well managed.
Ensure the supply chain is dependable, risks are identified, and back-up options are available. Act early to secure the supply chain.

Communication, including: *
Good communication to workers, stakeholders and customers is essential. Ensure it is frequent, honest, transparent, and empathetic.
Ensure there are good existing communication channels in place, including rapid communication options (such as text messages and social media).
A one-size-fits all approach to communication does not work, tailor messages.
Ensure communications can be cascaded through the organisation.
Go for bite-size information rather than long messages and ensure it is timely.
Consider two types of meetings – those for solving business issues, and those for developing personal connection.
Include worker families in communication.

Leadership and culture, including: *
The importance of strong leadership and organisational capability.
Take time to make decisions that may have an impact later (avoid "knee-jerk" decisions).
Visible leadership is key.
Invest in a people-focused culture: Ensure it is fit for purpose and can sustain rapid change.
Efforts to improve culture pay off and are essential when moving to remote working.
Good relationships are critical with workers. Collaboration is key.
Prioritise action over consensus.
Put people at the forefront of decision-making. People are the most important asset.
Build trust to manage through uncertainty.
Empower workers and trust them to make good decisions.
People will experience crises differently and will require different support.
The importance of staying connected with people.
Draw on the experience of others, as a CEO you cannot do it all.
Better governance oversight: Ensure the senior leadership team and board work

well together. Provide information to new board members/those in governance roles on protocols for supporting a business during a crisis.
The value of command-and-control leadership in a crisis.
Ensure the organisation has cohesive senior leadership team.
Ensure leaders know how to behave in a crisis. The best crisis leaders may not be senior leaders. Natural leaders will emerge in a crisis. Be aware of non-positional leadership.
Invest in leadership capability across the business. Ensure leaders are adaptable and flexible.
Create toolkits for managers.
As CEO, create certainty and confidence. Be clear. Show empathy and support.
Trust is infectious: Trust your employees to do the right thing. Trust the team. Trust people.

Working from home/flexible working, including: *

The value of flexible work arrangements and having remote working already enabled.
Maintain flexible work arrangements so that you can move in and out of them.
The value of having a flexible workforce (in terms of work location).
Most workers adapted quickly to working from home and for some, productivity was at an all-time high.
Remote working requires a different leadership style.
Ensure workers are adequately resourced to work from home.

Crisis management, including: *

The importance of emergency (or business continuity) planning and procedures and routinely testing those plans/procedures.
Use a framework and decision tree rather than a plan so that you can be agile.
Be prepared for all eventualities – “expect the unexpected” and “expect the worst”.
Ensure emergency plans have flexibility and are adaptable.

Respond earlier, especially with health, safety and wellbeing provisions.
Ensure all staff keep up-to-date contact information.
Be prepared with stock and resources on hand.
Ensure new processes created during the crisis are mapped.
Create essential work templates to support safe work.
Expect the crisis to move faster than anticipated.
Ensure emergency plans align with customers.
Spread the workload for teams responsible for managing the crisis.
Look for opportunities created by the crisis.
Take time-out during the crisis to re-focus and re-group; re-set priorities.
Assume all operations may need to be shutdown.
Have checklists and clear policies.
Update emergency plans based on pandemic experience.
Have a dedicated crisis management team in place with clear roles and responsibilities.

Financial management, including: *

Liquidity is king; Have adequate financial reserves for a rainy day.
Be prepared to cut spending quickly and harder than you think you need to.
Ensure investments are diverse.
Focus on strong cash management.

Health, safety and wellbeing, including: *

People welfare is vital: people are impacted differently.
Ensure stocks of PPE are well maintained.
People are more resilient than they may seem.
People don't behave rationally in a crisis.
Have health and safety plans for a pandemic and be prepared.
Ensure better wellbeing support is available.
Have mental health support provisions in place. Prepare for mental health demands.

Consider the effects of working from home on people.
Health and wellbeing of families is important too.
Know how to manage fatigue.

Workforce management, including:
Workers can be proactive, cover other roles and help in other business areas.
People can adapt to change and use their knowledge to solve problems.
Have good employment advice in place and be clear with workers on provisions, such as pay and leave.
Ensure workers have back-up people available to take on a role.
An internal network works better than a top-down approach.
Consider how groups are comprised (e.g. don't have a specialised group all sitting together in one site).

Technology, including:
The importance of having good IT infrastructure and systems.
Ensure IT systems are robust and enable people to work remotely.
Build IT capability and digital literacy before you need it.
Stress test IT systems regularly and upgrade as needed.

Customers/stakeholders, including:
Invest in marketing.
Good relationships are critical with customers and suppliers.
Engage with unions regularly and sector bodies.

Build key networks and relationships, which will be critical in a crisis.
Share big decision-making with other organisations.
Digital meetings have a role but cannot replace face-to-face meetings, especially with customers.
Collaborate with clients/customers.
Understand customer impacts. Talk to your customers and look after them.
Spread your customer base over a number of industries.

Respond with agility, including:
Being flexible, adaptable, and agile is key.
Act decisively. Do not be afraid to make decisions without the full information. Revisit decisions if necessary.
Act early. Be positive. Stay calm.
Focus on innovation, think outside the square.
Do not panic. Manage what you have control over.
Do not wait for permission – act.
Reframe problems as opportunities.
Do not let pride get in the way.

Government relationships and industry bodies, including:
The value of strong Government relationships.
The importance of clear, trusted, accurate external information and advice.
Do not wait for Government advice, be proactive.
The importance and value of industry bodies and well-connected sectors.

What would be done differently

Participants were asked to reflect on the past six months and describe what they would do differently at work in response to the pandemic.

The most common responses included acting earlier and having more robust business strategies in place to respond to such an eventuality, increasing wellbeing support, and increasing the frequency of internal communication, among others.

Around 60 participants reported that they would not have done anything differently, would do very little differently, or were happy with how their organisation responded.

Responses have been summarised and themed as follows. The top reflections, by volume of comments, have been marked with an asterisk.

While reflections across the major themes were similar for all roles, CEOs commented more often on personal wellbeing matters and stress management, and health and safety managers commented more often on crisis management planning and health, safety and wellbeing matters, than participants in other roles.

Summarised responses:

Business strategy and operations, including: *
Act earlier on business-critical decisions.
Adapt the operating model earlier.
Avoid "knee-jerk" reactions to adjusting products/services.
Better separation between emergency management and business recovery/long term strategy. Create more headroom to be able to focus on business strategy.
Change approach to operations – including how decisions were made.
Have a threshold system within policy approaches that would led to pre-determined actions - would save a lot of time and resources.
Lean into global operations.
Utilize downtime to focus on work that does not get prioritised.
Stop international work sooner and bring workers home.

Keep some business-as-usual activities going, rather than focusing 100% on the response (e.g. maintenance).
Increase recruitment earlier and locally, rather than relying on international workers.
Avoid short term cost reduction measures (e.g. ceasing recruitment).
Understand financial impact quicker.

Health, safety and wellbeing, including: *
Stay better connected with people.
Better understand the pressures on workers.
Consider the wider impact on workers and associated industries. This would better protect relationships.
Ensure a greater level of understanding of what restrictions mean to workers. Ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities.
Act quicker to put health, safety and wellbeing measures into place.
Segregate workforce earlier.
Hold more stocks of PPE and order more PPE earlier.
Implement greater wellbeing support for workers.
Limit virtual meeting time.
Better support people to rest and recover to reduce fatigue.
Consider how workers who are parents and caregivers can be better supported.

Communication, including: *
Have a better strategic communications plan and protocols in place.
Ensure there is an emergency communications plan.
Better target messages and ensure messages are clear.
Educate workers earlier to address concerns and provide helpful information.
Communicate more frequently. Recognise there is no such thing as "over-communication".
Improve internal communications.
Improve communication with external stakeholders (e.g. subcontractors).

Nothing/no changes, including: *
Happy with/proud of how the organisation responded.
"Nothing."
"Very little."
"Well-executed, acted quickly."

Technology/working from home, including:
Have robust IT systems and a better understanding of how technology can help.
Upgrade IT to be able to better support working from home.
Test working from home arrangements.

Crisis management preparation, including: *
Act earlier and be alert for potential strife.
Have a plan that accounts for a long-term crisis.
Educate workers on emergency plans (beyond the leadership team and crisis management team).
Be better prepared (e.g. for a forced lockdown, with a critical risk analysis, to lessen the workload, having cash flow). Ensure there are robust plans in place.
Plan earlier and test different working arrangements and scenarios.
Clarify accountabilities and roles earlier.
Better incident control.
Create the crisis management team earlier.
Greater clarity of accountabilities, decision-making and governance.
Better testing of emergency plans/crisis responses.
More planning on how to manage immune-comprised people.

Personal reflections, including:
Prioritise sleep and family time.
Not focus on the 1pm news updates.
Come to the office daily.
Worry less about predictions of what's to come and seek diverse views.
Be healthier in order to manage the stress. Keep personal health routines up. Better take care to sustain the level of leadership required.
Be more financially ready.
Better manage fatigue.
Stay away from information overload.
Sleep more and do less work.
Take (more) breaks during the day.

Leadership, including:
Better connect leaders across the organisation to prevent silos.
Have management and governance work more closely together.
Mentor management to be more responsive and agile in the changing environment.
Share the great progress with the team, rather than focusing only on planning and actions.
Temper over-confidence in the leadership team that the crisis would not affect the business.
Better support leaders to lead when working remotely.

Government advice and packages, including:
Be more outspoken with the Government.
Be more responsive to government support packages. Also understand the limitation of Government assistance.
Devote less energy to trying to impact Government and more energy to supporting workers, customers and other stakeholders.
Keep to Government-recognised information sources, rather than other sources of information (e.g. social media).
Not rely on the effectiveness of Government control measures (e.g. at the border).
Start all-of-Government planning earlier.
Government to support manufacturing as an essential industry during Alert Level 4.

Supply chain, including:

Arrange alternative supply chain sources.

Better understand potential impacts on the global supply chain and disruptions for logistics.

Decentralise pandemic supplies.

Secure the supply chain earlier and talk to supplier and customers on a regular basis to assess stock levels.

Customers/stakeholders, including:

Find alternative channels to market when traditional channels are not available.

Communicate with peers, unions and industry partners differently (e.g. sooner, more collaboration).

Earlier and more proactive engagement with customers and develop products and services to help them.

Consider how the business could better support customers remotely.

Understand resilience of customers, and the level of risk.

Working from home, including:

Be better prepared for staff to work from home.

Take a different approach to reducing occupation in the office.

Looking ahead

Key challenges for the next six months

Participants were asked what they perceived to be the key challenges ahead for their organisation in the next six months. Responses have been summarised and themed as follows. The top reflections, by volume of comments, have been marked with an asterisk.

The most common challenges included delivering on strategic plans and operating effectively, managing organisation capacity and capability, managing finances, managing customer demand, and working through any resurgence of COVID-19, among others.

Challenges were consistent across roles.

Summarised responses:

Business operations and planning, including: *
Resetting the strategy and key deliverables in a post COVID-19 environment. Being able to deliver on the strategic plan and objectives.
Ensuring asset health.
Service delivery transformation/completing a major business transformation project.
Reviewing the structure of the business and identify skill gaps in the organisation, plus future demand.
Maintaining momentum.
Continuing improvement initiatives started pre-COVID-19.
Achieving major project deadlines.
Planning forward workload.
Getting research and development back on track.
Delays to infrastructure projects (Government funded).
Business development opportunities.
Being innovative.
Working out what the new normal is.
Managing issues unrelated to COVID-19 (e.g. ownership changes).
Keeping an eye on international impacts of the pandemic.
Continuing to invest in systems to support business operations (including remote working).
Having business continuity plans in place.

Organisational capacity and capability, including: *
Retaining key organisational capability and building resilience.
Gaining and retaining workers.
Capturing the lessons learned and benefits gained from the pandemic experience. Embedding learnings and skill growth.
Ensuring appropriate worker support, especially for remote working (e.g. IT systems).
Workload management.
Working at speed and with agility.
Getting workers back in the office after working remotely. Re-establishing the culture back in the office.
Adapting to work-from-home requests and more permanent flexible working.
Working through complexity and an ever-changing environment
Moving workers from crisis mode to long-term development mode.
Recruiting for and managing migrant workers in a changing environment.
Rewarding workers.

Financial management, including: *
Managing through increased financial pressure.
Securing revenue or funding sources.
Meeting financial targets and maintain cash reserves.
Making significant investments into systems and facilities.
Recovering financial losses incurred during Alert Level 4.
Retaining some of the efficiencies gained through Alert Level 4.
Implementing cost savings initiatives without impacting the business.
Managing fixed operating costs versus customer demand.
Access to debt.

Customers/stakeholders, including: *
Retaining customers who face financial pressure.
Responding to the community, if the community does not follow pandemic protocols (e.g. wearing a mask).
Managing expectations of customers and other stakeholders.
Developing alternative routes to consumers for products/services (e.g. including where travel restrictions impeded business development).
Expanding product/service range to diversify customer base.
Understanding and responding to the local economy (particularly if there is another resurgence) and to international markets.
Supplying customers with product.
Meeting customer needs safely.
Managing client confidence to invest in new projects. Securing new projects and enough customer work/demand.
Growing through existing contracts.
Responding to increased (or dramatically fluctuating, or falling) customer demands for products/services.
Understanding customer buying patterns in the "new normal".
Communicating with customers.
Managing increased competition for less customer demand/work opportunities.

COVID-19 resurgence, including: *
Operating the business through a resurgence of the virus (particularly another lockdown).
Managing business interruption, moving in and out of Alert Levels and outbreaks of the virus.
COVID-19 resurgence.
Preventing complacency.
Working through the volatility and uncertainty created by the pandemic.

Government relations, including:
Government responses to pay back debt (e.g. tax).
Uncertainty over election outcomes.
Managing through changes to Government regulations and restrictions (related to COVID-19).
Managing through changes to Government regulations and restrictions (not related to COVID-19).
The Government providing a clear vision for the next five years, providing certainty for business planning.
Government action/inaction.
Working with the Government on new opportunities.
Delivering on government policy for the COVID-19 response.

Health, safety and wellbeing, including:
Protecting the wellbeing of workers.
Keeping workers happy and engaged.
Managing mental wellbeing and providing support services.
Managing health and safety of on-site workers.
Supporting workers to work remotely.
Staying connected with workers when working remotely versus face-to-face.
Managing distractions, and distracted workers.
Managing worker fatigue and burnout.
Maintaining a positive culture and high performance through uncertainty.
Building worker resilience.
Support workers with changed family circumstances.

Supply chain, including:
Understanding and managing supply chain impacts.
Planning for forward work with current impacts to the supply chain.

The biggest single risk issue in the next six months

Participants were asked what they perceived to be the biggest single risk issue for their organisation in the next six months. Responses have been summarised and themed as follows. The top reflections, by volume of comments, have been marked with an asterisk.

The most commonly reported issues related to customers and other stakeholders, workforce management and financial management, among others.

Issues were consistent across roles.

Summarised responses:

Customers/stakeholders, including: *
Customers impacted by COVID-19, and how this changes demand.
Customers reducing spend, less work available/projects shelved as a result of COVID-19.
Managing increased demand for products/services.
Understanding and managing through impacts to the local economy and international markets.
Higher market competition.
Customer revenue flow. Customers failing/credit management/going bust.
Customer experience and retention.
Ensuring there is enough work in the pipeline.

Workforce management, including: *
Workforce planning.
Worker engagement and motivation.
Recruiting and retaining workers.
Workforce reduction and redundancies.
Sub-contractor management.

Financial management, including: *
Cashflow challenges. Lack of revenue and loss of revenue (ongoing).
Securing funding/revenue sources.
Managing through financial instability and financial management (general).

COVID-19 resurgence, including:
Managing through another outbreak of the virus.
Working through further lockdowns.

Health, safety and wellbeing, including:
Managing a workforce that is exhausted and fatigued.
Supporting worker mental health.
Health and safety (general).

Business operations and planning, including:
Delivering on a business strategy in an even more volatile world.
Forward workflow.
Workflow.
Changes to organisational risk profile.
Issues pertaining to particular businesses (e.g. ownership changes).

Government advice and regulations, including:
Government restrictions (e.g. border closure).
Government placing the country back in Alert Level 4.
Government policies and market access; Government work packages (e.g. shovel ready projects).
General election results.

Supply chain management, including:
International recovery from COVID-19 and impacts on the supply chain.
Demand uncertainty.
Supply issues, resilience, and security.

None, including:
"Nothing in particular."
"Tracking ok actually."

Areas of focus in the next six months for business recovery

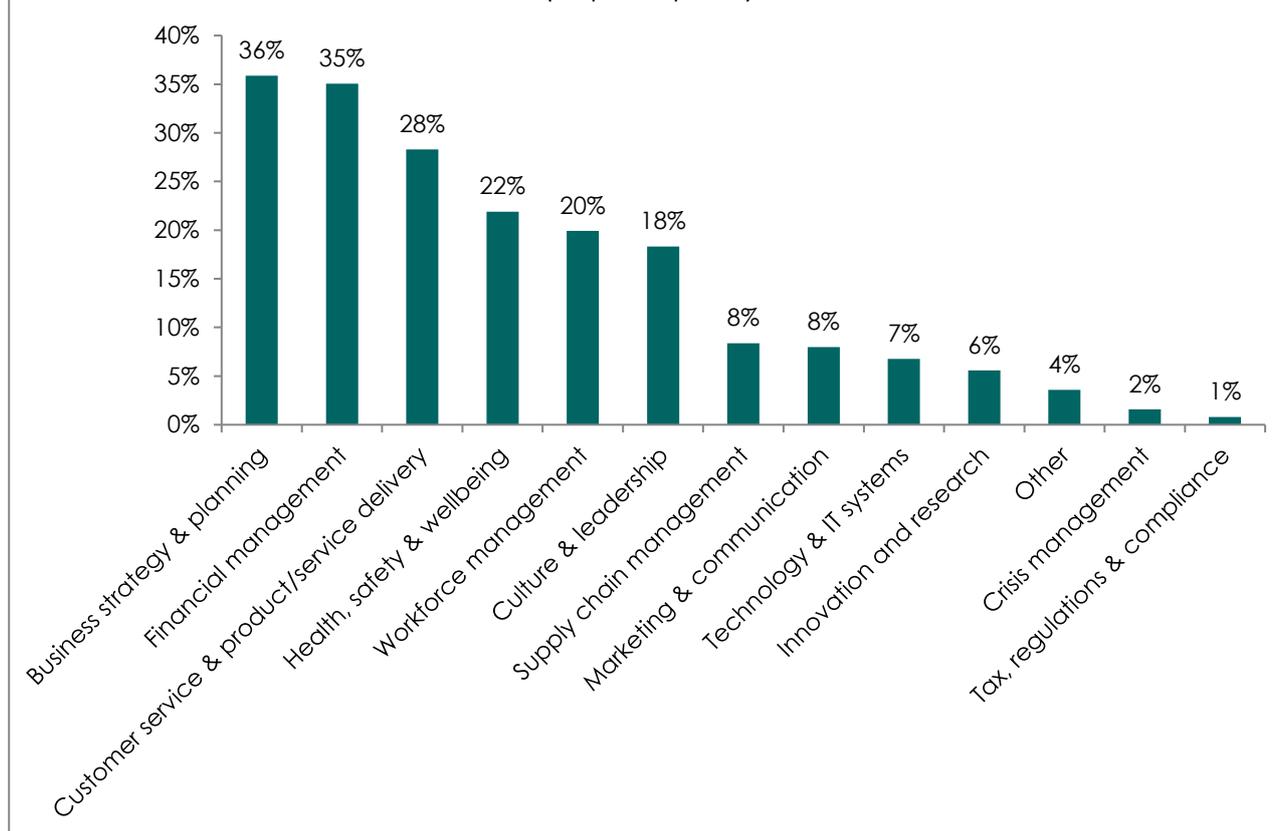
Around one in three participants planned to focus on business strategy and planning and financial management in the next six months for business recovery (see Figure 15).

Participants could select up to two priority areas.

Other responses included:

- "Funding and investment management capability."
- "Establishing future workload."
- "Market access and Government policy."

Figure 15. Areas of focus in the next six months for business recovery (all participants)



By role, the top areas of focus in the next six months for business recovery, in order were:

Role	Top three areas of focus	%
CEO	1. Financial management, and customer service and product/service delivery 2. Business strategy and planning 3. Workforce management	35 32 20
General manager	1. Business strategy and planning 2. Financial management 3. Customer service and product/service delivery	38 34 30
Health and safety manager	1. Financial management 2. Business strategy and planning 3. Health, safety and wellbeing	46 34 27
Director	1. Customer service and product/service delivery 2. Business strategy and planning 3. Workforce management	46 43 21

The one thing learned from this crisis worth holding on to

Participants were asked to describe the one thing learned from the crisis that was worth holding on to. Responses have been summarised and themed as follows. The top reflections, by volume of comments, have been marked with an asterisk.

The most common responses included reflections on operating effectively in a changing environment, the importance of leadership, teamwork, culture, communication, and the importance of managing the health, safety and wellbeing of the team, among others.

The top three lessons were relatively consistent across roles, with no clear distinction to note.

Summarised responses:

Operating in a changing environment, including: *
Do not underestimate the impact of a pandemic/health crisis on a business.
Be flexible and adapt quickly.
Act with agility and be decisive.
Keep calm.
Look for weak risk signals and act early.
Uncertainty is certain.
Be clear on the purpose of business and where it is going.
Focus on what you can control.
Slow down and look for ways to work more efficiently and effectively.
There are opportunities to grow a business in a crisis.
Get information on a crisis from a diverse range of sources.
Be aware of potential risks and ensure robust plans are in place.
Be prepared and learn from prior experience.
Many customers are loyal and want to support businesses.
The Government cannot be relied on to help.
Cash is king.

Leadership, teamwork and culture, including: *
Investment in leadership, culture and values – it shows during a time of crisis.
Be a careful, compassionate leader.
Strong leadership is key: workers look to a leader during a time of crisis.
Lead from the front and share clear messages. Be visible.
Teamwork at a time of crisis – everyone works together; people rose to the challenge.
Values such as kindness, empathy, generosity, and honesty are important during a crisis.
The value of internal consultation before a crisis.
Caring for the workforce and applying a practical response.
It is important to adapt leadership styles to different people at different times.
People's strengths and ability to adapt when needed.
Having a fully engaged and committed workforce.
Loyalty of workers.
Deal with performance issues before a crisis as they will be magnified during an event.
Trust and have confidence in the team and empower them.
The person connections made with workers as a result of contact during lockdown (which would not have happened otherwise).

Communication, including: *
Communicate, communicate, communicate: communication is paramount.
Staying connected with workers, customers and other stakeholders is vital.
Communicate with honesty, openness, and transparency. Be authentic, do not avoid sharing bad news.
Regular communications channels across different platforms are invaluable during a time of crisis (e.g. townhall meetings, daily briefings, team meetings).

Health, safety and wellbeing, including: *
People are more resilient than may be perceived.
Protecting worker health, safety and wellbeing is critical.
Manage worker fears about work and the pandemic early.
The importance of relationships and health and caring for others.
The importance of remaining positive.
The importance of making people feel safe.

Flexible working, including:
Working flexibility and embracing new ways of working.
It is possible for the team to work remotely and achieve work to a high standard.

Technology, including:
The importance of IT.
Embrace technology.

interviews and focus groups

The following information is a summary of key findings from the interviews with nine senior leaders and four focus groups, comprising CEOs, general managers of health and safety or people, and directors. It also includes some examples provided by participants.

Summary of key themes

Key themes	Notes
Awareness of COVID-19 and early pandemic planning/preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEOs were generally aware of COVID-19 either early (had family overseas, organisation traded overseas) or after the return from the traditional Kiwi summer break. A CEO in the agriculture, horticulture and forestry sector had been overseas as COVID-19 was spreading, but the initial thought was it would not impact New Zealand much. • There was some initial uncertainty about the threat, and some initial denial – from senior leaders or board members. • There was a concern about business resilience and cash positions to weather the storm amongst CEOs. • Prior planning paid dividends for organisations that had considered such a threat. Some organisation had a pandemic in their risk registers and had planned for worst case scenarios. One organisation had considered two options – a fast moving response and a slow and steady response in its scenario planning. • Organisations ranged in their approach to crisis management planning for this pandemic – some began planning once they became aware of the pandemic. Others started full crisis planning mid-March as Alert Levels increased. • COVID-19 was worse than expected – many organisations had to refresh their pandemic plan once they understood the scale of the crisis. Plans did not address working from home, or cover all sites, for example. • Workers from overseas were anxious to get back to family and friends as the threat increased. • CEOs shared that it would have been good to have more time to prepare the management team for the impending lockdown. It took some time for management to adjust and operationalise plans. CEOs described the importance of setting up a good pandemic management team structure. • A CEO in the government sector followed COVID-19 from the beginning and planned to review the organisation's pandemic plan but it all happened quicker than anticipated. • The response time to the pandemic was very quick for most organisations. Prior planning, built on the experience from previous crisis responses (such as the Kaikoura earthquake), was critical. • CEOs described three main drivers in their response – mental wellbeing, the quality of decision-making and financial management. • A CEO in the retail sector said that, moving through the crisis, they now needed to move away from being in the crisis to looking to the future. • A CEO in the construction sector described the challenge of managing advice from parent organisations overseas – given the circumstances of each country's response was unique. • CEOs emphasised the need to be agile and adaptive and focus on what needs improvement.

Key themes	Notes
Strategic planning / Operations impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some organisations lost three to four months of planning time and being reactive which was not good for the business. Being reactive rather than proactive had an impact on strategic planning and objectives and a CEO in the energy and utilities sector predicted this would have a long-term negative impact on the business. As a result of COVID-19, one organisation changed the way it operated and ended up more productive. Most organisations continued to operate through lockdown, delivering normal services. Previous experience with adverse events enabled this to occur more successfully. A CEO in the professional services sector described how a good strategy was not only about “how to get from A to B”, but it also includes “foresight – looking at explorative possibilities and probabilities”. This includes other high-risk low-probability events include war – the CEO was not sure businesses were ready for such an eventuality.
Workforce response and impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaders interviewed from Christchurch and Wellington-based organisations tended to work in organisations with a culture of learning from past experiences/mistakes – particularly earthquake-related - and this helped their response. The culture was about empowering people, being agile and trusting them. Many CEOs recognise there is still work to do to improve organisational culture and performance, but are very proud of their team. One retail organisation's mission statement was simple and kept everyone focused. The culture was built around its mission and people were passionate about bringing it to life (this strengthened the culture). Many CEOs reported that the uncertainty made it difficult to allocate resources appropriately, and they needed to re-group to ensure survival. CEOs were pleased with how quickly staff responded and “got things done” – rapidly responding unfolding crisis.
Government relations and external information sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One energy and utilities organisation was very proactive with the Government to ensure the immigration of essential workers. They had a positive experience. Some organisations had a pre-existing relationship with the Government, and this helped them to respond to the crisis quickly, and others did not, which meant they were relying on the 1pm briefings to respond to the crisis. A CEO in the science sector liked the rigidity of the Alert Level system, but more notice would have been helpful for planning, as without prior insight the team had to try and predict scenarios. Some CEOs reflected that one source of information would have been helpful, while others would have liked information to have been available from multiple governmental sources. A CEO in the professional services sector reflected that business was pushing for a lockdown and the Government was slow to respond. Transparency from Government was not optimal. External communication and decision-making by Government did not appear to be 100% informed by industry needs and this challenged organisations' ability to adapt and conform to what was expected.

Key themes	Notes
Supply chain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing the supply chain was an important first step for some CEOs. • The biggest risk to a retail organisation was supply chain management. One organisation reported its supply chain was “close to out of control”. • A few organisations developed scenarios around a COVID-19 outbreak in a factory-type setting – it meant they were prepared for the “worst-case scenario”. • A CEO in the construction sector described how a vehicle lease company offered to put contracts on hold if money was an issue – showing the depth of support for other organisations through the crisis, and the value of relationships. • CEOs reflected that supply chain resilience was important.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication was critical to organisations' success – with employees, customers and other stakeholders. This was a central theme repeated in interviews and focus groups. • Communication with stakeholders was very important and CEOs learned that making them personal was more effective. • Communication needed to be tailored to different audiences. It also needed to be timely and appropriate. • It was important to have diverse, agile communications channels.
Remote working/flexible working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving to remote working was a very seamless and rapid response for three organisations, built on the experience from previous crisis responses (Kaikoura earthquake). For one organisation that included readiness with technology, investment in digital literacy, plus training in resilience and mental health. • The challenges for several organisation included obtaining extra laptops, long working hours, and sharing the workload. • Staff were not prepared to work from home (in terms of equipment and technology), and several organisations did not have the necessary processes in place so that took some time. • Some senior leaders had difficulty with working remotely and there were IT implications (more challenging than being in the office). • Zoom burnout was a consistent theme. • Working from home was not in most pandemic plans – so this was an unplanned impact. However, for those with previous experiences of earthquakes, most had working from home practices in place. • Some organisations (across sectors) had run working from home trials, and this had been a good learning experience.
Financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A CEO in the retail sector described how cash flow drives decisions. • Three focus groups discussed the importance of financial management and having financial headroom as this gave CEOs and other senior leaders time to make decisions. • A CEO in the construction sector described lying in bed at night worrying about how staff would get paid.

Key themes	Notes
Customers/market/ the economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One organisation in the retail sector had trouble managing customer panic. • Several CEOs were concerned about the future of the economy, with the biggest challenge being the economic impact on their business. • A CEO in the transport, warehousing and logistics sector reported that COVID-19 has created opportunities and they needed to consider business transformation and cultural change.
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many CEOs developed a COVID response team with a “full licence to operate” (not hindered by normal decision-making processes). Several CEOs described encouraging staff to not “wait to ask for permission”, but rather “go for it” – empowering staff and delegating decision making. This gave staff the confidence that the organisation “had their back”. • During a crisis, a CEO in the construction sector reflected that people needed to know who was in charge. It provides reassurance. • A CEO in the energy and utilities sector believes in collegial leadership, empowerment and peer-to-peer working. The CEO believed diversity in the leadership team made a difference, and having an open transparent environment where everyone can their say. • Many of the CEOs interviewed talked about the importance of their senior leadership team and having good and effective relationships. CEOs encouraged people to play to their strengths. Several CEOs felt there was a high level of trust in their leadership team, and that they had good relationships with their colleagues. • In one transport sector organisation, the leadership team devised a new structure using A and B teams to avoid contamination and protect people. • Having a clear organisational mission statement or goal kept everyone focused. The clearer the mission, the easier it was to keep it front and centre of the response. • CEOs described the importance of having a community spirit or being aware of staff families and the impact of COVID-19 on not just the business, but stakeholders and the wider community as well. • A CEO in the construction sector reflection: “tone of engagement is magnified” during a crisis. • CEOs often found admin support difficult when working from home. • Some CEOs found board executives slow to orientate to the threat. Some initial board resistance had to be managed. • CEOs described the major challenge of leading through uncertainty, and not knowing when lockdown would end. CEOs reflected that they needed to be comfortable with ambiguity.

Key themes	Notes
Health, safety and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly all CEOs described the importance of having a strong team culture that was supportive, collaborative and agile. • It was critical to put health and wellbeing first and others issues second, focusing on people and keeping them connected. • Several CEOs observed that people were more affected by lockdown than expected. • Staff safety was important throughout – there was an immediate concern for virus transmission amongst staff required to be at work, across sectors. Some staff had the perception that being at work was more risky in terms of potential exposure to COVID-19. A CEO in the energy and utilities sector reflected that they were in fact more safe because of the health and safety at work. • A focus group discussed how a small number of staff were affected by Auckland going into Alert Level 3. It impacted these people more than the CEOs were expecting. • A CEO in the retail sector said when people were supported to be successful then they will take action to ensure the best interest of customers. • Fatigue was a key issue – mentioned across interviews and focus groups. Mental wellbeing of staff was also a key challenge. • Many CEOs said it was important to take time to look after themselves, and one had purposefully booked leave. The CEO said it was important to encourage other senior leaders to take leave as working under that amount of pressure is unsustainable. • Several CEOs believed that people went above and beyond because the organisation cared for them and valued them. There was also a strong community spirit. • One CEO did not like working at home. EA support was critical, and they preferred being in the office. • Most CEOs had good personal (family) support. • One CEO in the retail sector noticed the personal impact on their mental health, becoming more “tetchy”. • A focus group of CEOs discussed how they really noticed the Zoom fatigue themselves. • Several CEOs thought it was valuable to have CEO-to-CEO support to talk about things and work through problems. • Two CEOs, across sectors, said that crisis situations create emotional responses and you need to pause to consider how to best respond. A CEO in the government sector talked about the need to manage cumulative stress. • A CEO described seeing poor mental and physical wellbeing as a result of COVID-19. The CEO was concerned about the impact on the wider community – particularly young people. • A CEO in the retail sector talked about the “romanticization” of lockdown when, for many people, it was a difficult time as they were not earning any income. • Most CEOs talked about the high workload of responsibility for decisions as a CEO and the need to look after their wellbeing. They talked about the high level of stress – on a scale that was unprecedented. • Wellbeing initiatives across organisations included mental health and resilience training, online classes, and digital resources. • CEOs commented that people missed the face-to-face interaction and online technology was no replacement for having everyone in the room for strategic work. • A CEO in the construction sector commented on the different experiences between themselves and their CFO – the CEO enjoyed lockdown whereas the CFO had found it isolating and lonely.

The following information is a summary of key findings presented in the Health and Safety (H&S) section of the full report.

Timeframe	Notes
Prior to COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around one quarter of organisations interviewed had “pandemic” identified as a critical risk. • Almost a half of organisations had a specific pandemic policy or plan, however these were not generally considered fit-for-purpose for the current pandemic. Of greater utility was the existence of an effective Crisis Management Plan or Business Continuity Plan, which allowed a high level of agility in responding to a very fluid situation. • All organisations had a pre-existing, documented system, for the management of major incidents. Many used the Coordinated Incident Management System (CIMS), either ‘formally’ or had developed their own system based on CIMS. Previous operational exposure to the incident management system (either via training drills or actual events) was considered crucial for an effective response to an actual event such as the current pandemic.
Entering lockdown – Alert Level 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As New Zealand headed into “lockdown”, most organisations did not have a fit-for-purpose pandemic plan. • Some organisations chose to create high level plans/documentation specific to the pandemic, while most chose to pursue a more generic and agile approach. • Most organisations invested a great deal of time and energy developing operational documentation and communicating with staff. • There were differences between expectations based on previous national planning and what actually eventuated e.g. National Pandemic Plan alert levels were different to those eventually used; in some cases government “lead agencies” were different to those expected. • Most organisations had undergone formal training drills in the previous 12 months. These mainly consisted of responding to local (not national) scenarios. What eventually transpired in the form of a pandemic caught most organisations off-guard, however those with agile incident management systems who had undergone regular training, or experienced actual events, reported a high level of confidence in responding effectively to the events of early 2020.
During lockdown – Alert Levels 4 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various leadership structures were invoked during the lockdown, ranging from business-as-usual to activating the formal CIMS structure (or similar). • Participants emphasized how well the decision-making process worked when it was collaborative, involved input from technical experts, and took place in a high-trust environment. • Senior H&S practitioners performed a key role in both strategic and operational decision-making at the highest level. • Those involved in multiagency and/or multinational responses reported growing difficulties over time regarding communication and decision-making e.g. “who has the decision-making authority here?”

Timeframe	Notes
Post lockdown – Alert Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key focus areas for organisations in the post-lockdown environment included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - developing and implementing flexible working arrangements that best suit the needs of both the business and workers. - embedding new ways of working due to the large-scale uptake of new technologies. - increased consideration of workforce wellbeing, including management of psychosocial risks. - continuing to reap the benefits of building a positive H&S culture. • Developing and maintaining key relationships was seen as crucial, particularly with government departments and other relevant agencies. • How to build on the positive impact of fostering a high-trust environment, high-performing teams, utilising technical expertise and making decisions based on best evidence at the time. • The importance of putting the wellbeing of people first. • Organisations learned how agile they can be when necessary. • The importance of a strategic approach to ensuring concise, consistent communications to the workforce. • The power of maintaining a positive mindset – there will be a way to figure this out!
Additional learnings – regional lockdown (following the “Auckland cluster”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with unique workforce/compliance challenges for businesses located near a “border”, with some workers living and working under different alert levels. • Continued focus on worker wellbeing. Benefits of regular “check-ins” with staff and acknowledgement of the variety of responses from staff facing similar situations. • Several comments reflected that we may only be at the beginning of the pandemic, how easy it is to become complacent, and the need to remain alert, agile, and ready to respond to whatever comes next.