

covid-19:  
employer pulse survey

on business sentiment & workforce management.

# about the survey.

Despite the perception that the labour market may have slowed down due to the COVID-19 global outbreak, an online survey conducted by Randstad Hong Kong found that 63% of employers are still hiring talent.

Randstad Hong Kong surveyed 372 employers and HR professionals to get a pulse on business sentiment and workforce management measures as employers seek to ensure business continuity amid the disruption of COVID-19.


The COVID-19 Employer Pulse Survey was conducted between 24 February 2020 and 2 March 2020 with 372 respondents (employers and HR professionals). 42% of respondents came from the Banking & Financial Services, Retail & Consumer and Information Technology & Telecommunications sectors.

# despite the COVID-19 outbreak, it has been “business as usual” in the first half of the year for the majority of employers in Hong Kong SAR.

\*respondents can select up to 3 answers.



- 63% are still hiring or planning to hire
- 25% said that they've either freezed or parked headcount growth
- 13% will maintain headcount but apply other measures to mitigate losses
- 11% never planned to increase headcount or hire in H1 2020
- 8% planned to decrease headcount in H1 2020
- 4% are hiring mainly contract workers to remain agile
- 4% are moving headcount to other markets

A man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a white dress shirt and a dark tie, is seated at a desk in a bright office. He is looking down at a document he is holding in his hands. The background is a blurred office space with large windows and some plants. The right side of the image has a yellow-to-white gradient overlay.

Many employers would have planned their hiring activities for the first quarter as they know that's when job seekers are open to new opportunities after bonus season. Given this trend, it's business-as-usual for many organisations that still have vacant roles to fill and targets to hit. Hiring activities are also more rampant in high-growth spaces like technology, life sciences and functions within banking. However, we've observed a dip in hiring activities within the retail, consumer, hospitality and tourism. Some of these companies may have also asked their customer-facing employees to take no-pay leave as a result of reduced foot traffic.

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# 91% of employers made business arrangements to protect their employees.

\*respondents can select up to 3 answers.

65%

implemented work-from-home or remote working arrangements

8%

did not change business practices or introduce new measures

22%

implemented split team arrangements to reduce the number of employees in the office

5%

introduced shorter work days with early departure, offered unpaid leave or encouraged leave of absence



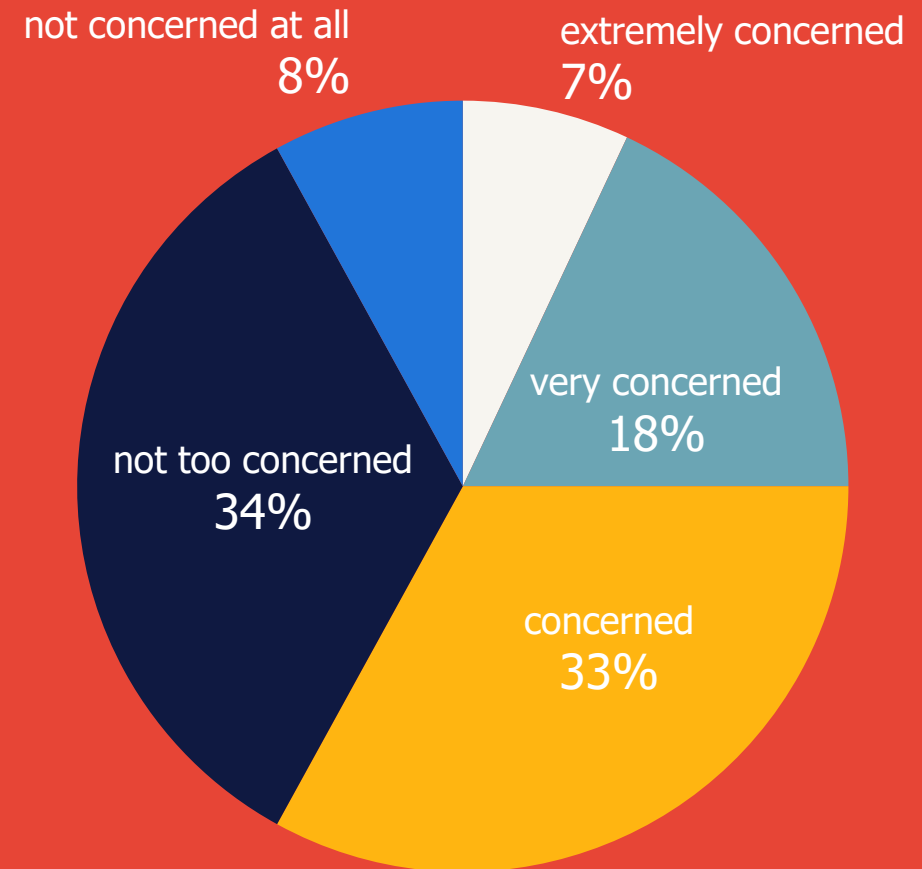


# employers share split sentiment on the impact of COVID-19 on possible business restructuring.

## 58%

of respondents expressed a level of concern that COVID-19 will result in business restructuring (e.g. layoffs, reorganisation, outsourcing).

Respondents from the retail and consumer industries are the most likely to feel the brunt of COVID-19 with 72% expressing a degree of concern.



The SARS outbreak in 2003 had taught us many valuable lessons. During this period, many people have consciously minimised physical interactions and avoided crowded areas to avoid the possibility of a community outbreak. Many companies have also prepared business continuity plans for circumstances like these, where they have to make temporary business arrangements for their staff to work from home.

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# businesses in hong kong will likely take time before making changes to their hiring and headcount plans.

When asked about hiring plans after COVID-19 subsidies, 45% of employers said they will maintain headcount but apply measures to mitigate risk and loss, awaiting for the economy and business to pick up.

Only 3% said they will continue hiring as planned and 24% will begin hiring perm roles again and/or contract workers to remain agile.

Meanwhile, 30% of respondents said they will continue to freeze hiring until the economy picks up, 12% never planned to increase headcount and a further 8% will likely decrease headcount for other reasons like lower global demand and supply.





nearly half of employers (44%) already offer remote working as an employee benefit to either all of their staff or select employees / functions.

\*respondents can select up to 3 answers.

However, 24% of respondents said that their remote work and work from home arrangement is only a temporary measure and they will not implement a policy as an employee benefit after COVID-19.

Needless to say, the ability for organisations and employees to maintain workplace productivity is still up for debate.

14% of respondents observed a sustained level of productivity, while equally 14% of employers noticed reduced productivity, which will result in a closer review of their corporate policy moving forward.



# top measures employers intend to take to improve remote work and agile ways of working.



51%

will review and upgrade their digital infrastructure and ecosystem of tools



9%

will not take further action



34%

will issue laptops to their employees to enable remote working



8%

feel their organisation is already well equipped with necessary equipment / systems to support remote work




20%

will upgrade their network security system to protect company's data



4%

will offer phone bill reimbursements to our staff who are working remotely



COVID-19 could have accelerated the plans that employers already had about remote working and upgrades to their technology infrastructure. When employees work from home, they face challenges that they would not if they were to work in the office. Some may have problems accessing files from the cloud network, while others may not be able to connect to the teleconferencing system as smoothly as they'd hope. This is why employers should collect feedback from their staff and improve their digital systems to make sure they are fully-equipped to provide a seamless working experience, whether at home or remotely. Moreover, it is critical for employers to note that providing flexible working arrangements as an employee benefit is increasingly being perceived as a hygiene factor by job seekers and employees alike.

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# are you hiring?

Whether you are hiring or making some adjustments to your workforce needs, we're here for you.

We know how the right talent can make a significant impact not only to your company's workforce productivity and business growth. Our specialist recruiters provide strong market knowledge and candidate insights, and have a proven track record in sourcing high-calibre professionals across various key industries.

Visit our website to find out more about our talent recruitment services and HR solutions at [randstad.com.hk/employers](https://randstad.com.hk/employers).

If you have any questions or feedback about this survey, please contact us:

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