# AMSRO COVID Survey

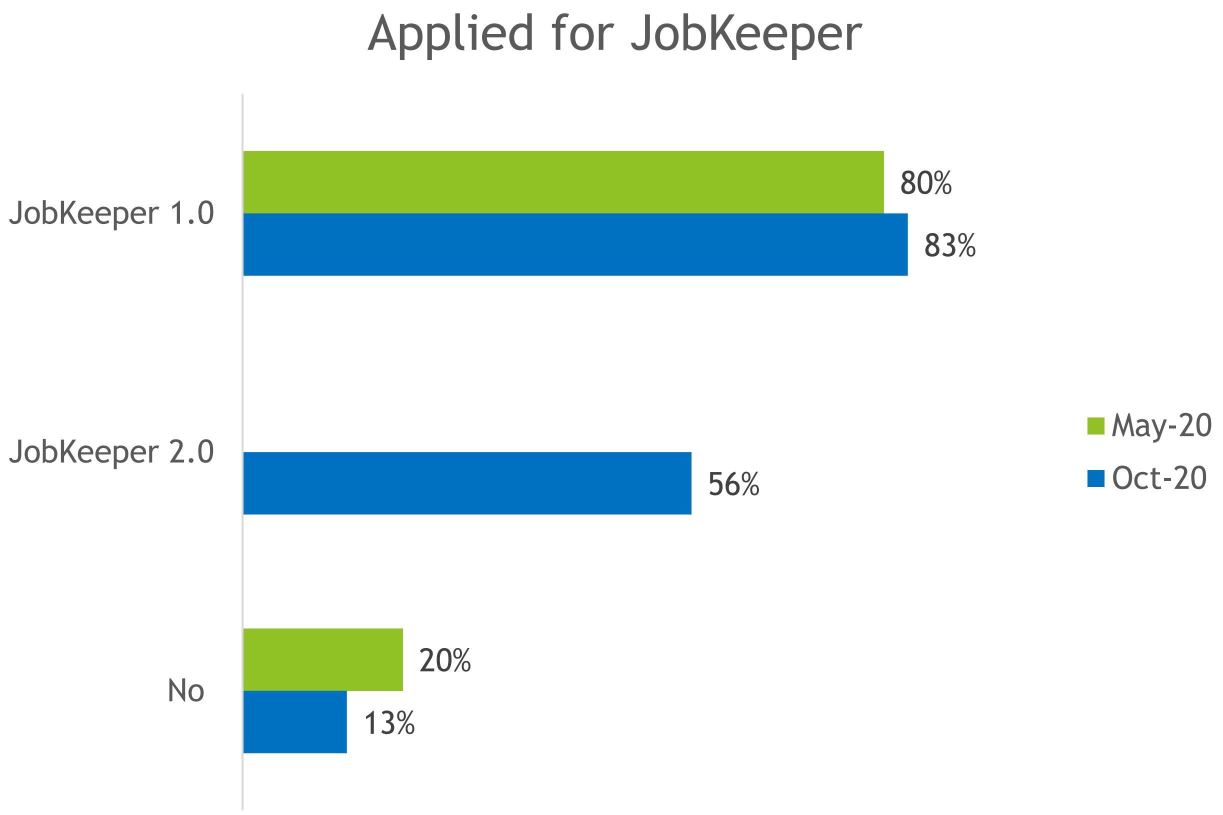
October 2020

AMSRO

Endorsed by the Association of Market & Social Research Organisations
PRIVACY
QUALITY
ETHICS

# JobKeeper

## Just over four in five research businesses (83%) applied for JobKeeper 1.0, while only 56% expect to be eligible for JobKeeper 2.0, and thus not reaching the 30% decline in revenue required. Businesses outside of Victoria and New South Wales were more likely to be applying for JK 2.0 (83%).

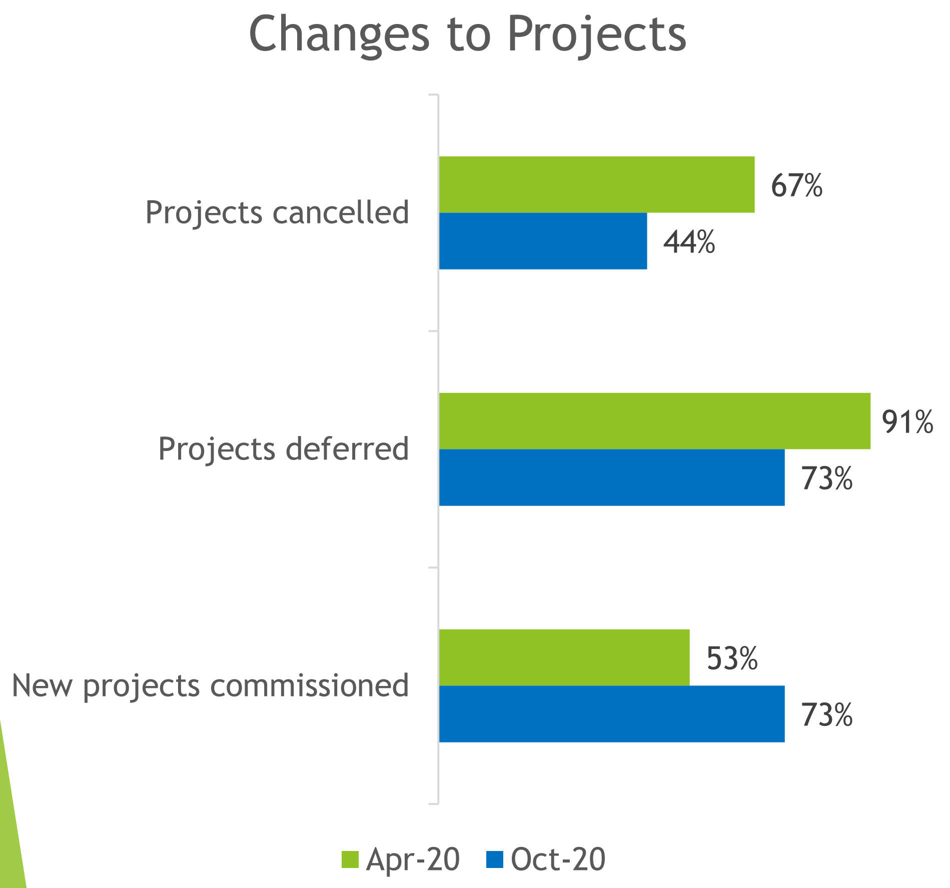


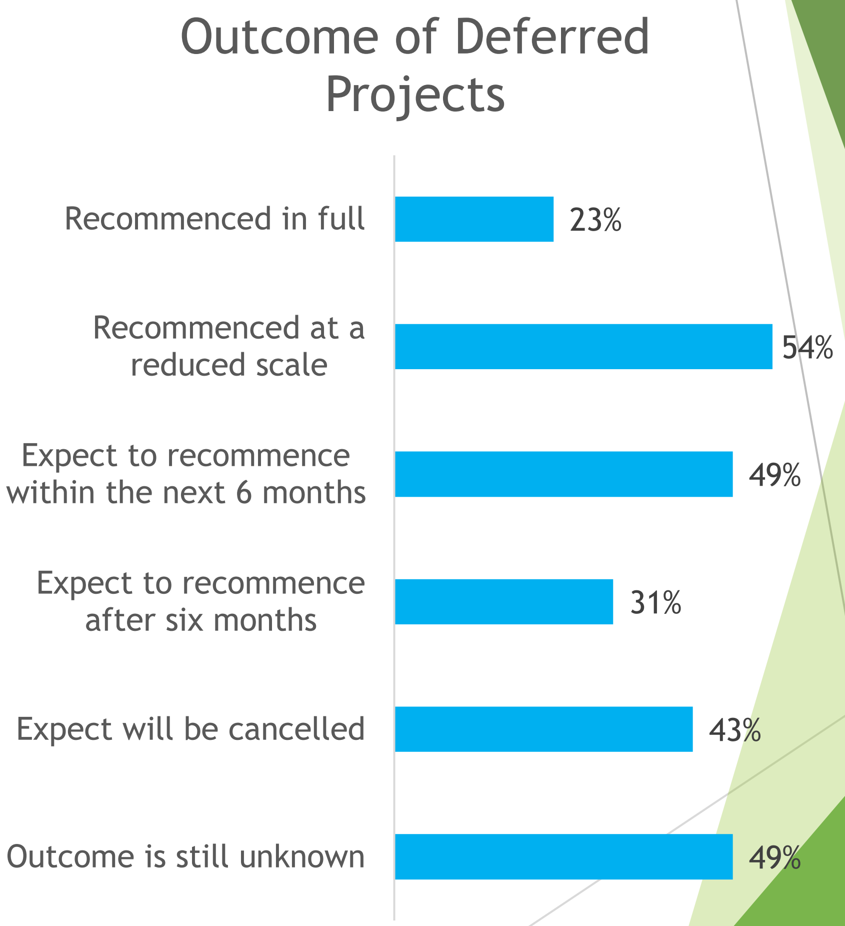

Recruitment agencies were much more likely to apply for JobKeeper 2.0 (91%) compared to 53% of full service agencies)

May 2020: Have you registered for the JobKeeper allowance?
October 2020: Changes to JobKeeper are due to commence at the end of September in terms of eligibility and the amount being paid per employee. These changes are referred to as JobKeeper 2.0. Which of the following apply to your business?
AMSRO COVID survey October 2020 (n=48)

# Changes to Existing Projects

The proportion of businesses experiencing cancelled or deferred projects has also declined (from 67% to 44% and 91% to 73% respectively) as clients move away from the crisis response at the start of the pandemic. However, of the deferred projects, only 23% of respondents had projects that had recommenced in full, with the outcome of many still some way off. In addition, almost three in four businesses (73%) had new projects commissioned due to COVID, up from 53% in April.




April: Which of the following, if any, have you experienced in your business due to the COVID?
April: Have you had new projects commissioned specifically driven by COVID-19?
October: In the September quarter (July to September), did your business experience any of the following as a result of COVID?
What is the status of the projects that were deferred as a result of COVID
AMSRO COVID survey October 2020 (n=48)

# Changes to business due to COVID19

Closure of Victorian businesses since the last wave has resulted in more respondents expecting to have staff working from home over the next 3 – 6 months. Fewer businesses were expecting methodological changes to research, making operating cost cuts, reducing hours worked or requesting rent relief. Almost a third of businesses were expecting to increase hours worked, while half were expecting to recruit new staff. Has the tide turned?

Recruitment agencies were much more likely to be expecting to make cuts to operating costs (82% compared to 24% of full service agencies)

| Changes due to COVID19 | Already implemented | | | | Expected | | | | Still in place |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | April | May | October | | April | May | October | | October |
| Recruited new staff | Na | Na | 33% | | Na | Na | 50% | | 28% |
| Only some staff working from home | 11% | 23% | 15% | | 7% | 58% | 48% | | 9% |
| Requesting staff use up holiday and annual leave entitlements | 33% | 45% | 48% | | 58% | 53% | 46% | | 28% |
| All or most staff working from home | 84% | 68% | 83% | ↑ | 56% | 25% | 40% | ↑ | 72% |
| Making cuts to operating costs | 64% | 68% | 52% | ↓ | 58% | 60% | 38% | ↓ | 32% |
| Methodological changes to research conducted | 62% | 65% | 50% | ↓ | 44% | 53% | 33% | ↓ | 47% |
| Increasing hours worked | Na | Na | 27% | | Na | Na | 29% | | 15% |
| Increased IT expenditure | Na | Na | 42% | | Na | Na | 25% | | 23% |
| Changed business accommodation arrangements | Na | Na | 10% | | Na | na | 19% | | 6% |
| Redundancies | 9% | 15% | 25% | | 13% | 15% | 17% | | 6% |
| Reducing hours worked | 31% | 45% | 58% | ↑ | 51% | 35% | 15% | ↓ | 30% |
| Requesting rent relief | 44% | 58% | 44% | ↓ | 38% | 33% | 15% | ↓ | 30% |
| Reducing salaries/wages | 22% | 33% | 40% | | 38% | 20% | 10% | | 21% |
| Standing staff down (leave without pay) | 13% | 10% | 2% | | 13% | 8% | 4% | | 0% |

What changes, if any, have you implemented in your business as a result of the COVID-19 crisis?
What changes, if any, are still in place for your business as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic
What changes, if any, do you expect to have in place for your business over the next 3 - 6 months as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?
AMSRO COVID survey October 2020 (n=48)

Methodological changes were mostly online qual (46%), less/no FTF (33%) and more online (21%)

# Changes to business due to COVID19 – October

Methodological changes are very much still in place currently, along with all or most staff working from home and recruiting new staff. Redundancies are much less likely to be still occurring.

| Changes due to COVID19 | Already implemented | Expected | Still in place | Proportion still in place |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Methodological changes to research conducted | 50% | 33% | 47% | 94% |
| All or most staff working from home | 83% | 40% | 72% | 87% |
| Recruited new staff | 33% | 50% | 28% | 85% |
| Requesting rent relief | 44% | 15% | 30% | 68% |
| Making cuts to operating costs | 52% | 38% | 32% | 62% |
| Only some staff working from home | 15% | 48% | 9% | 60% |
| Changed business accommodation arrangements | 10% | 19% | 6% | 60% |
| Requesting staff use up holiday and annual leave entitlements | 48% | 46% | 28% | 58% |
| Increasing hours worked | 27% | 29% | 15% | 56% |
| Increased IT expenditure | 42% | 25% | 23% | 55% |
| Reducing salaries/wages | 40% | 10% | 21% | 53% |
| Reducing hours worked | 58% | 15% | 30% | 52% |
| Redundancies | 25% | 17% | 6% | 24% |
| Standing staff down (leave without pay) | 2% | 4% | 0% | 0% |

What changes, if any, have you implemented in your business as a result of the COVID-19 crisis?
What changes, if any, are still in place for your business as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic
What changes, if any, do you expect to have in place for your business over the next 3 - 6 months as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?
AMSRO COVID survey October 2020 (n=48)

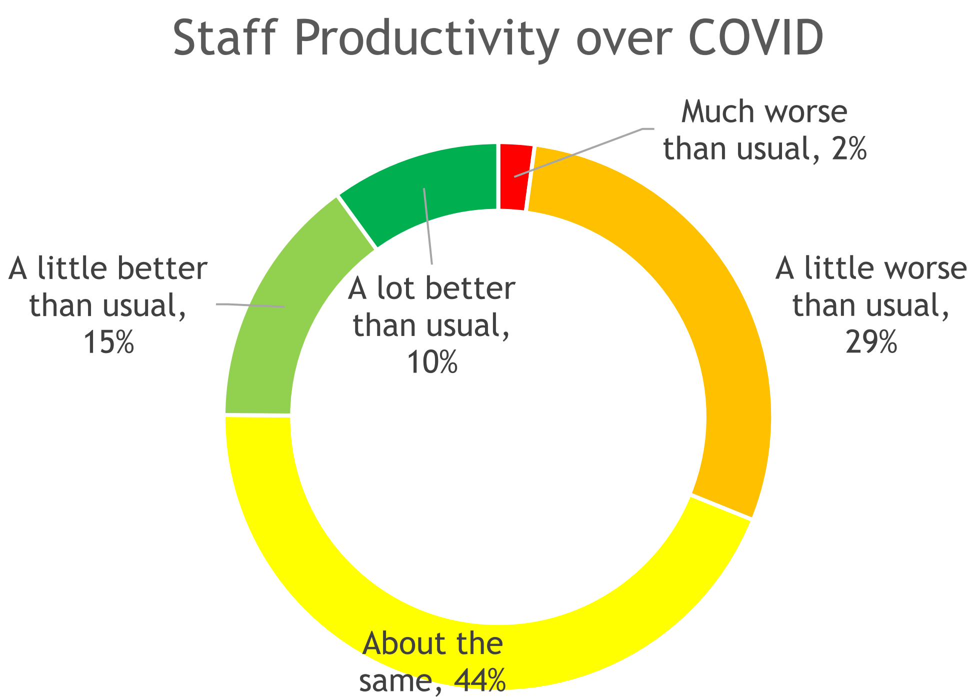
# Challenges around returning to the workplace (selected comments)

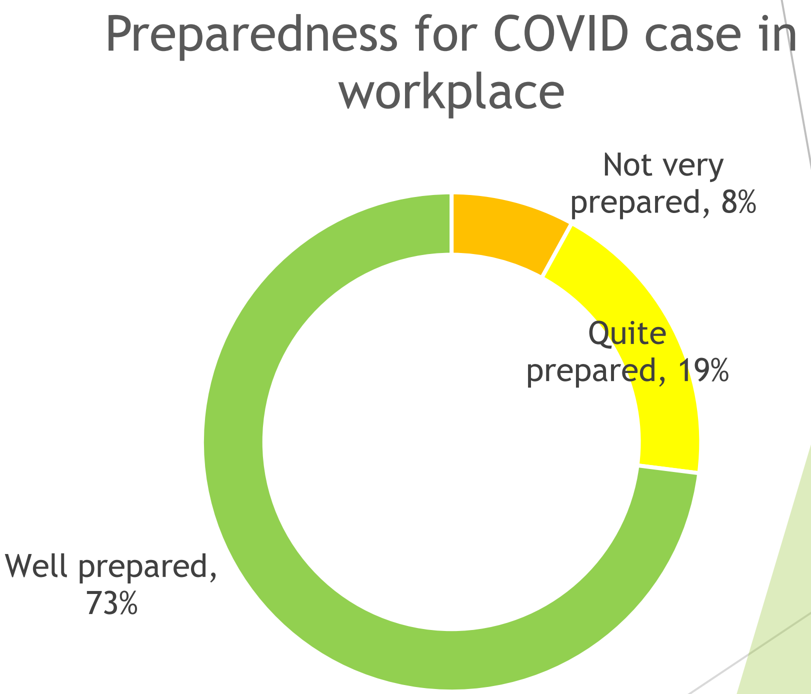
- Anxiety around using public transport especially with no mandatory mask wearing requirements
- Balance between work at office and home, team culture, leadership challenges
- Concern over social distancing. Some things work better remotely, e.g. use of Teams for meetings
- Cultural challenges of transition back to an office after long-term isolation and having a blended workforce - in person and remote on different days
- Emotional management pertaining to people being in the same space, people getting used to the requirements managing COVID safety, some increased inefficiencies
- Most are reluctant to take public transportation and are concerned about the safety of shared office spaces, like restrooms and kitchen areas. Staff don't all trust one another to maintain the rules. Union is getting increasingly demanding about providing equipment and furniture for WFH & EBA negotiation is coming up. Mental health support requirements will increase.
- Motivating staff to come back to the office. Reassuring staff that office is safe. Dealing with mental health issues which have been triggered by COVID-19 for staff and family members.
- Staff have enjoyed working at home and have realised there are many benefits associated with it. Hence, we have made a formal change to our working guidelines for 2020 which provides our team with the choice of flexibility in or away from the office.
- People worried about catching public transport to come to office, many staff now want to continue working from home most of the time - but that will affect learning and development especially for newer/younger staff. Less face to face work, less face to face presentations and sales meetings.
- Treading the line between being respectful of staff concerns and desire for flexibility with need to start to work more in the office and gain team and culture benefits

In what aspects have you seen or are you expecting to see challenges around returning to the workplace?
AMSRO COVID survey October 2020 (n=48)

# Staff productivity and preparedness for COVID case

A quarter of businesses stated productivity over COVID had improved, while 31% stated it had declined. Interestingly, Victorian businesses were more likely to say productivity had improved (47% compared to 15% of all other States). Positively, almost three quarters of businesses felt they were well prepared for a potential COVID case in their workplace.



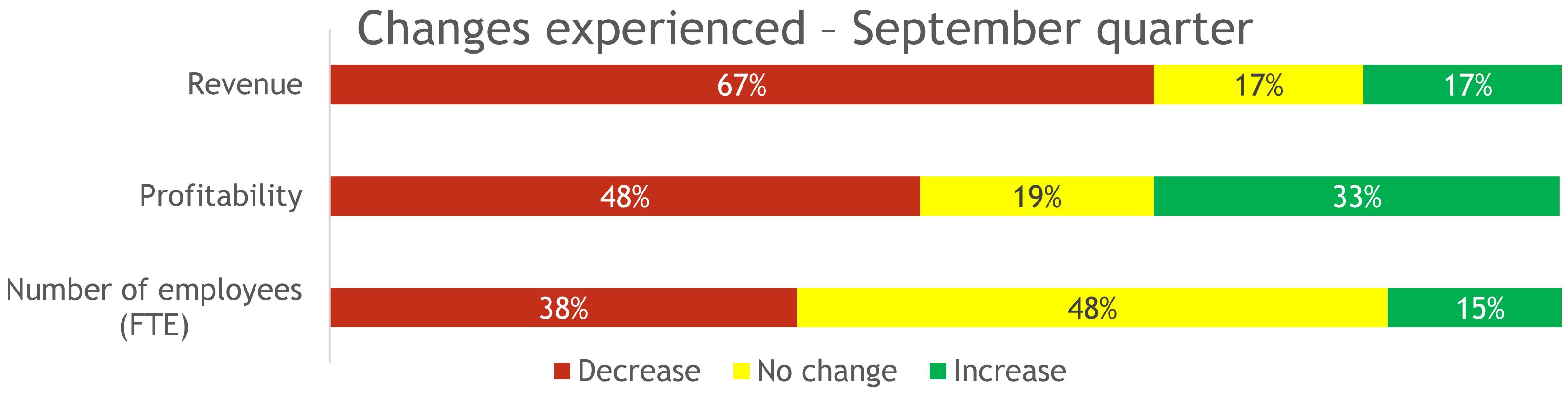




Over the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, how would you rate the productivity of your staff?
How prepared do you feel your business is for a potential COVID case in your workplace?
AMSRO COVID survey October 2020 (n=48)

# Impact on Key Business Indicators

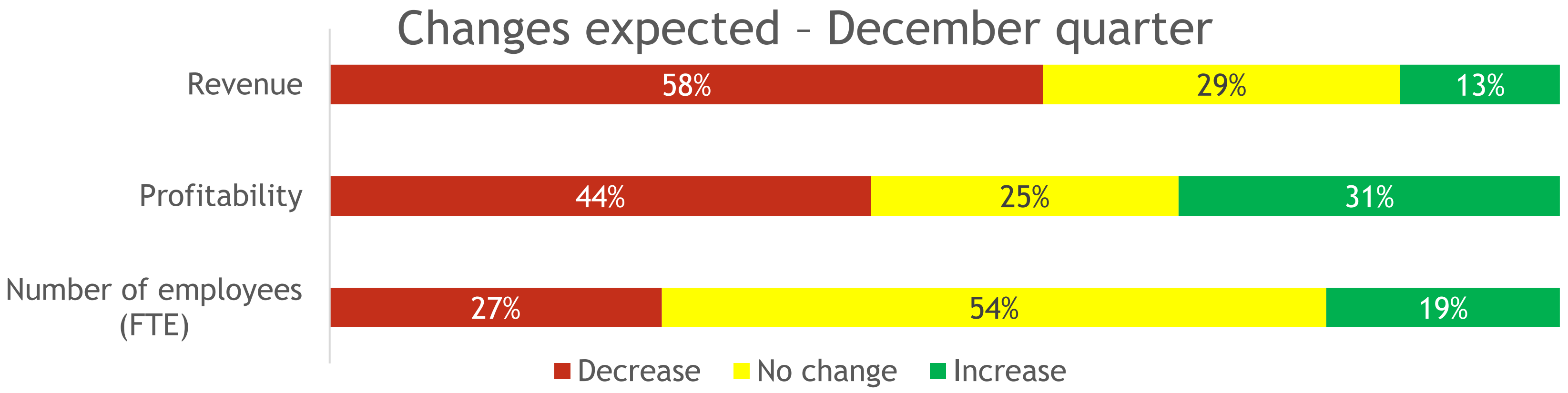
Overall, two-thirds of businesses reported a drop in revenue in the September quarter and 58% expected a drop in revenue for the December quarter. Profitability was also down (48% recorded a drop in the September quarter and 44% in the December quarter). FTE numbers had also declined to a lesser extent (38% and 27% respectively).

Recruitment agencies had a larger average decline in revenue for the September quarter (down 37%), while fieldwork companies were more likely to have seen and be expecting declines in the number of employees (-18% and -13% respectively)




**Average**

| |
|---|
| -18% |
| -4% |
| -4% |

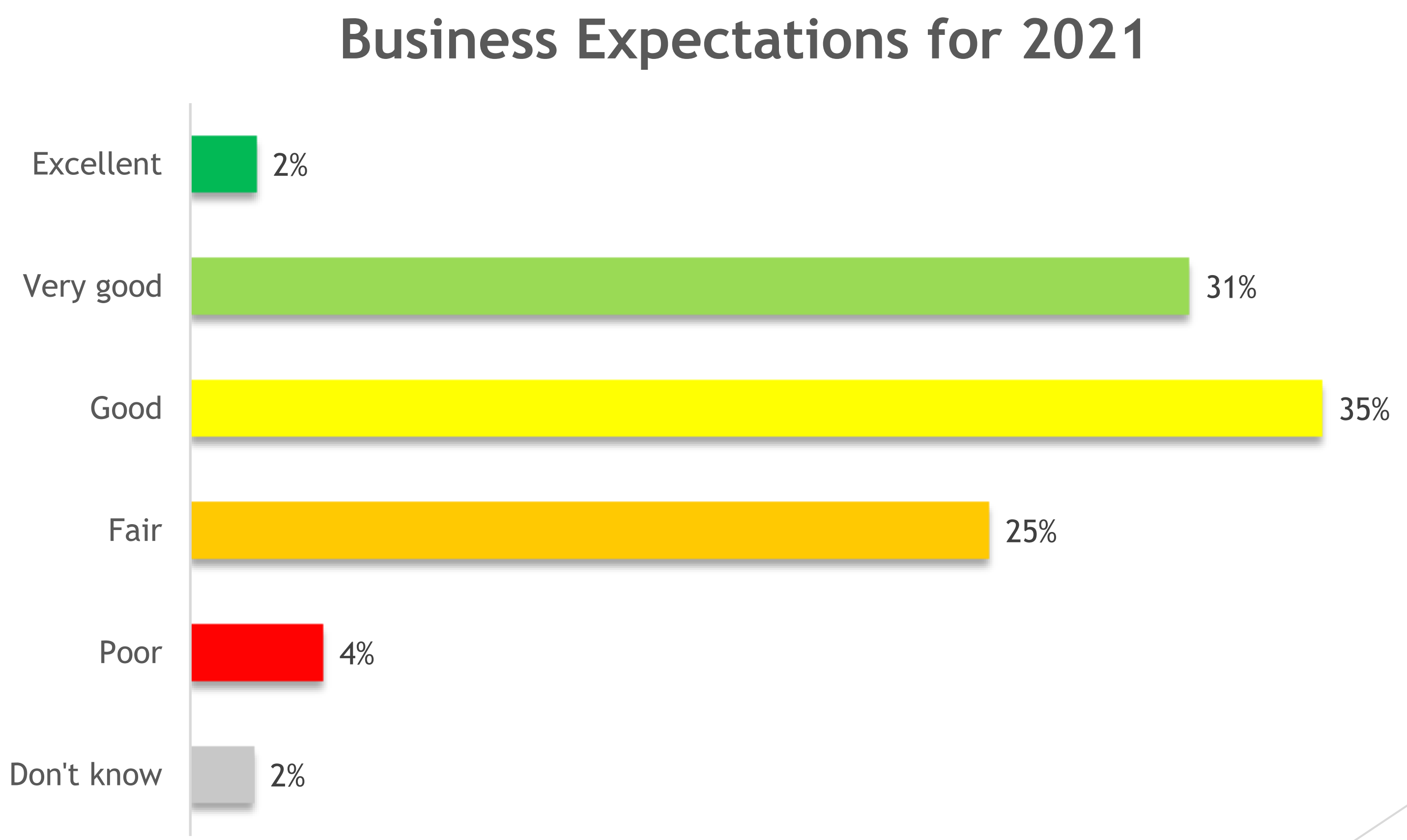



| |
|---|
| -10% |
| -1% |
| -2% |

Compared to the same time last year, what changes have you experienced in the September quarter in terms of the following?
Compared to the same time last year, what changes do you expect in the December quarter in terms of the following?
AMSRO COVID survey October 2020 (n=48)

# Business Expectations for 2021

Responses were divided equally between those expecting next year to be excellent/very good (33%), good (35%) or fair/poor (29%). While sample sizes are small, businesses located outside of NSW/VIC were more likely to rate 2021 expectations as fair or poor (67%).




How would you rate your expectations for your business in 2021?
AMSRO COVID survey October 2020 (n=48)

# Effect of COVID19 on mental health

Respondents were much more positive about the mental health of themselves and their team. However, Victorians were less positive, particularly in the areas of their family (47% good/very good), leadership team (69%) and themselves (60%). NSW based operational staff were also less positive (63% good/very good).


How would you rate the current state of mental health of the following as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic? on you, your leadership team and operational staff (if applicable) and your family?
AMSRO COVID survey October 2020 (n=48)

# Other key issues facing the business – the economy, winning projects, Victorian lockdown, JobKeeper 2.0 *(selected comments)*

- Being able to keep up with the new business opportunities as others falter and leave the industry
- Budgets reduced, clients reluctant to spend on research, need pressure on government to spend on research activities, rather than construction jobs
- Business and virus uncertainty
- Business owner spending more time working in the business, rather than on it which ultimately leads to more stress and working longer.
- Downturn in economy affecting our clients spend on market and marketing research. Competitors quoting very low prices that are unrealistic, and not sustainable without job keeper. More low cost internal online surveys administered by clients. Longer decision-making timeframes by clients. Cost now No. 1
- Economic conditions. Some clients are completely shut down with no understanding of when they will be able to operate again, let alone what the economic conditions will be when they are allowed to operate.
- General loss of business confidence, we are dependent on the reaction of the Large multi nationals/blue chips. If they severely cut marketing/insights budgets and postpone NPD and new initiatives, it will be a long climb back.
- Mental health especially of Melbourne staff. People being stretched to the limit.
- Negative impact of business restrictions in Victoria - inability of staff to work from the office - loss of productivity and erosion of culture
- The additional time and cost required to work through the complexities of Job Keeper 2 - due to the updated tests. How much responsibility the organisation has with WorkSafe - having 50-100 call centre staff working from home not clearly understanding the risk to the company. Staff holding on to leave as there is nowhere to go.
- The lockdown in Victoria is having a negative impact on our staff and I am concerned about the long-term impact on business and people.
- Uncertainty as many of our client contacts are losing/changing jobs. maintaining/managing relationships with suppliers, staff and clients is getting harder without the social and face to face interactions

Are there any other key issues facing your business right now as a result of the COVID-19 crisis?
AMSRO COVID survey October 2020 (n=48)

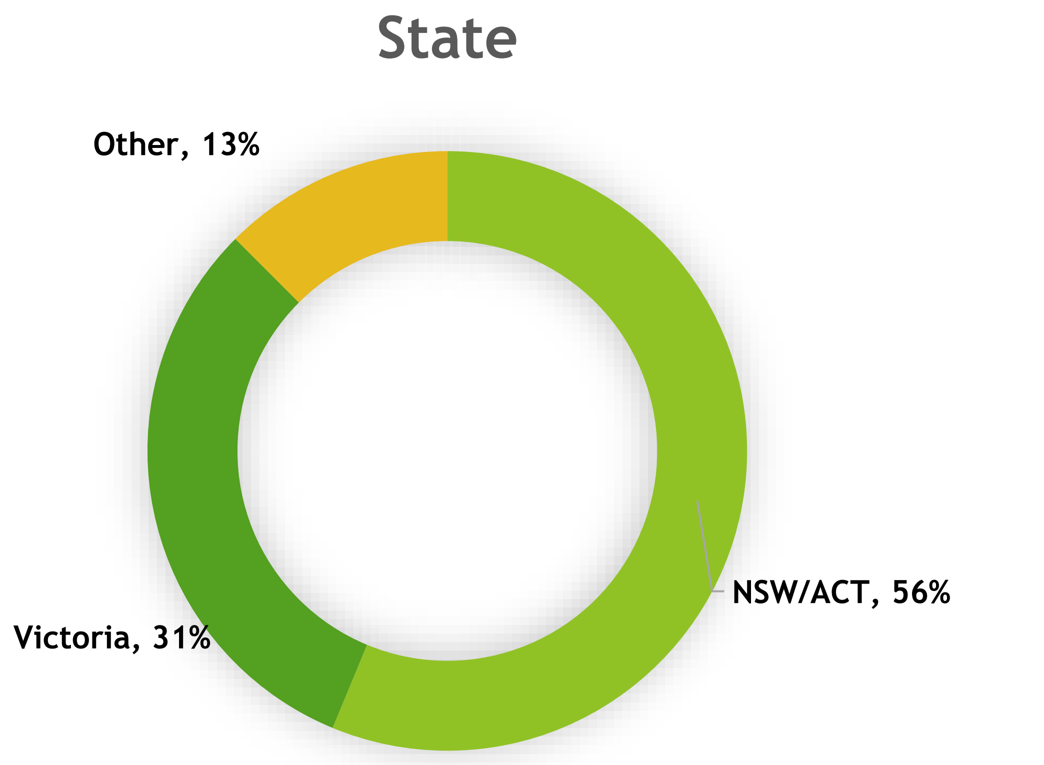
# Ways AMSRO can support members – return to office, webinars, spam blockers, lobbying and case studies *(selected comments)*

- Any guidance on strategies for staff resource allocation and management to cover uncertain, varying needs to deliver projects through the year would be appreciated. Advocacy and promotion nationally to encourage R&D investment in the private sector, especially as a strategy to understand markets in the new COVID landscape, would be valuable.
- Continue to lobby for the industry on Spam Blockers, employment regulations, and provide general support.
- Get ahead and keep us informed of the changes to reg over next few years that will impact business - visas, privacy, info security, ISO requirements.
- Innovation needs to be a key focus as we navigate an uncertain business environment and the need for pivot quickly with research methodologies according to the virus.
- Keep us informed of any changes, impacts that are hitting the industry. Networking. Webinars - Andrew is great! (he didn't pay me :))
- Ongoing legal advice is key to how we manage staff. Understanding how other business have adapted is useful. Offering leadership advice on managing teams
- Promoting AMSRO membership and ISO accreditation to AMSRO members and clients
- Return to office 'handbook' and continue with the employee agreement / legal updates
- Share ideas of how market research agencies have adapted
- Sharing IPND experience; continuing work on Call blocking; helping us prepare for EBA negotiation as new things will be on the table.
- Worksafe requirements during the enforced working from home period - a check list of what must be done from a legal perspective. Mental Health assistance for leaders and avenues for small to medium firms who cannot afford a dedicated service.

In what ways could AMSRO best support you and your business going forward to the new COVID-normal business environment?
AMSRO COVID survey October 2020 (n=48)

# Type of business

| Type of business | |
|---|---|
| Full service agency | 71% |
| Recruitment agency | 23% |
| Panel provider | 23% |
| Fieldwork provider (CATI & Face to face) | 13% |
| Group rooms | 2% |
| Data analytics | 13% |
| Other | 4% |




How would you describe your business?
In what State are you personally based?
AMSRO COVID survey October 2020 (n=48)