Returning to the Workplace 2021

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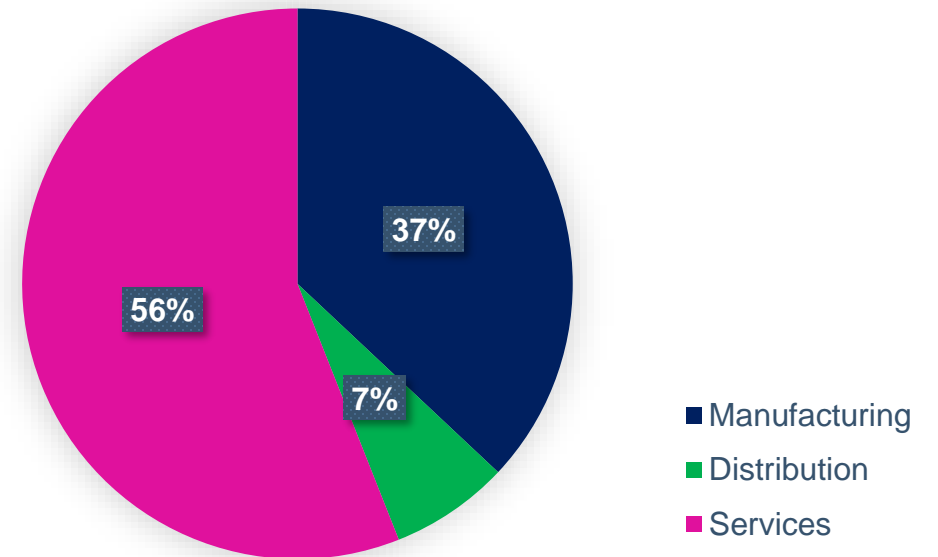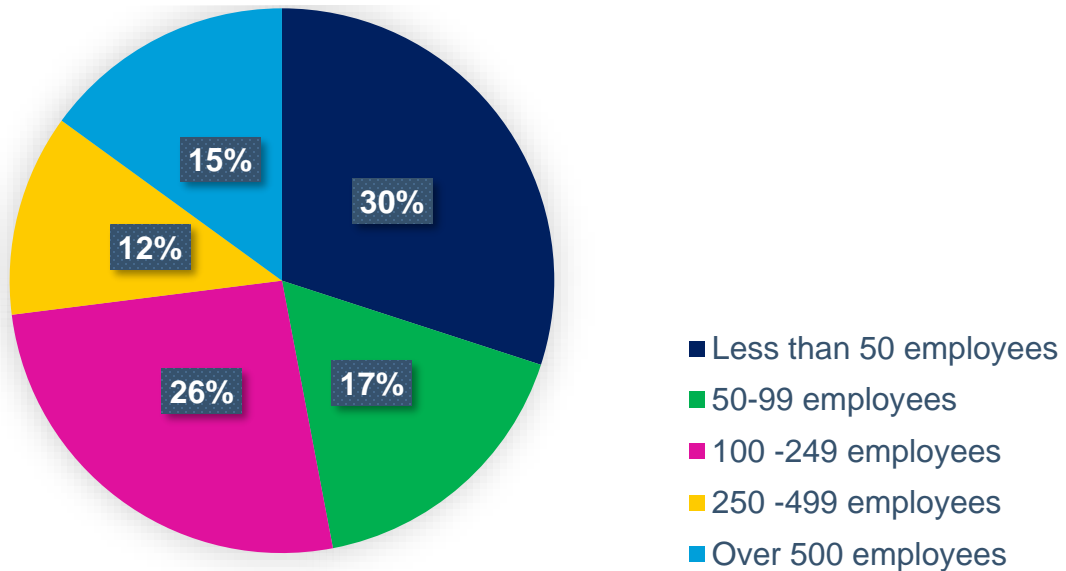
May 2021

Profile

370 responses

Conducted between 27/04/2021 – 05/05/2021

Sent to HR Most Senior Contact

Less than 50 employees — 30%
50-99 employees — 17%
100 -249 employees — 26%
250 -499 employees — 12%
Over 500 employees — 15%

Manufacturing — 37%
Distribution — 7%
Services — 56%

Key Findings – Timeline of return to workplace

- Over a quarter of respondents plan to return to working onsite in line with government advice and/or the finalisation of the vaccination rollout (28%). A similar proportion (29%) expect to return in September 2021 and one in five organisations expect to be fully back in the workplace in next three months (21%).

- Therefore, if government guidelines provide for it, it seems likely that 78% of respondent organisations could be returned to the workplace by September of this year.

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Key Findings – Employer actions

- Initially it is expected that both national (51%) and international (50%) travel will be limited within organisations for a period of time.

- Business event attendance is also expected to be limited for a period of time in 48% of respondent organisations.

- Many of the changes required to deal with covid-19, social distancing, wearing of face masks and so on, are expected to be retained, at least for a period on returning to the workplace.

- Of the organisations with remote working in place currently, just over four out of five (81%) expect some form of hybrid working in their organisation following covid-19.

- Across all respondent organisations three quarters (74%) expect the use hybrid working to increase over the next 2-3 years.

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Key Findings – next 2-3 years

- Seven out of ten respondents cited an increase in training for line managers in managing flexibility or new ways of working to facilitate flexibility over the next 2-3 years.

- Almost two thirds (61%) foresee permanent changes to support better public health taking place in their workplaces.

- Investment in technology to support remote collaboration and work is expected to increase in over half (52%) of respondent organisations.

- National (40%) and International travel (45%) are expected to decrease in respondent organisations in the next 2-3 years.

- The proportion of employees working fully onsite is expected to decrease in over half the organisations in the next 2-3 years.

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Hybrid working

How hybrid working will be implemented in organisations varies, but some of the key features are:

- One in five (20%) respondent organisations expect employees to work three days onsite with an additional 13% expecting to work 2 days onsite.

- Overall organisations see more collaborative and face to face work activities taking place onsite, with more administrative, routine or individually focussed tasks taking place in remote setting

- Employers are considering investment in IT, software and physical spaces to promote collaboration among employees on and off site

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Situation in respondent organisations for the past year

The majority of respondents, almost three quarters (74%) had some employees working remotely and some onsite

- Around one in five (20%) had all employees working remotely

- Fewer than one in twenty (4%) had all employees working onsite
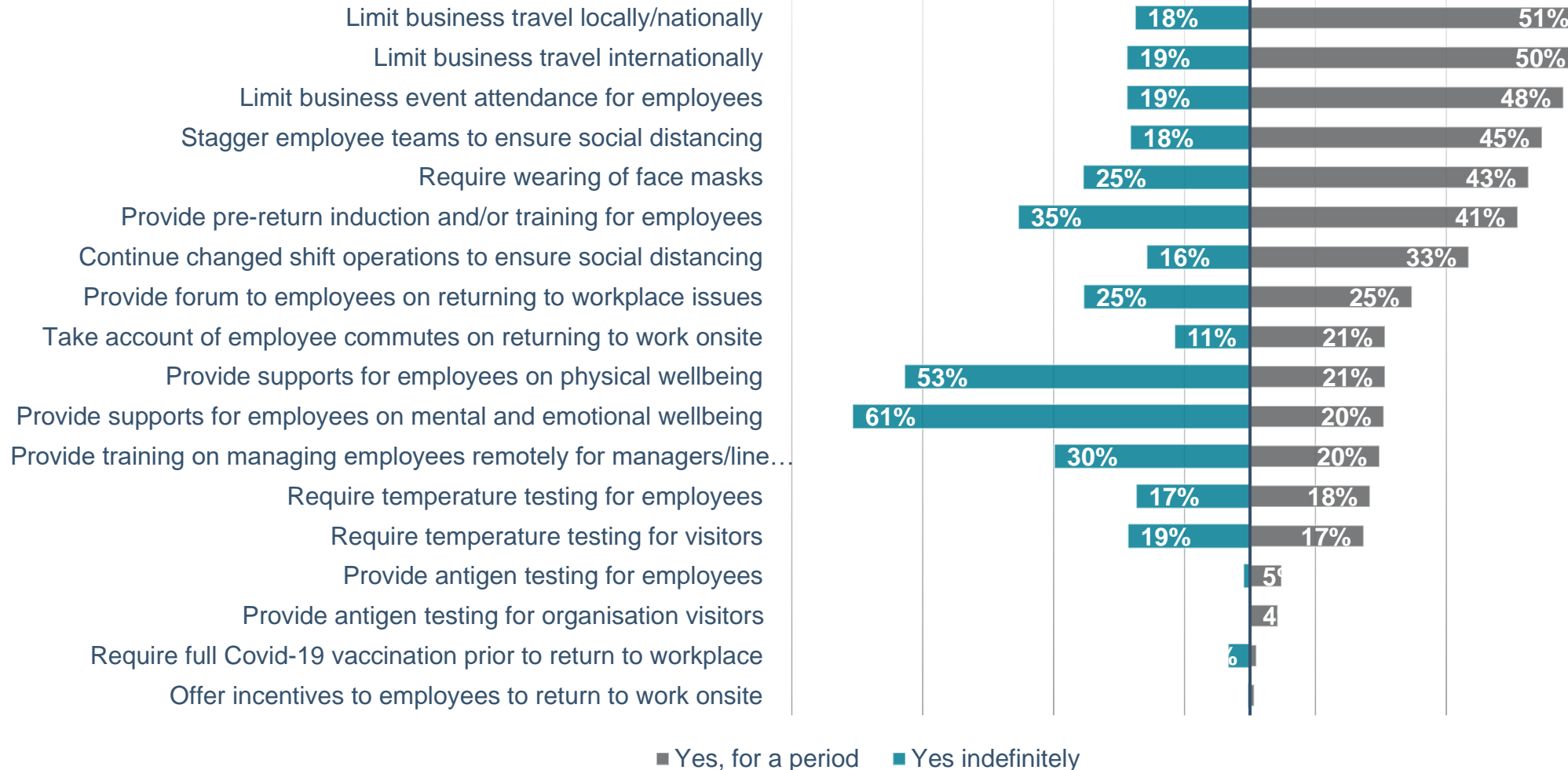
- Other arrangements applied in 2% of respondent organisations

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Timeline for Return to Workplace N=287
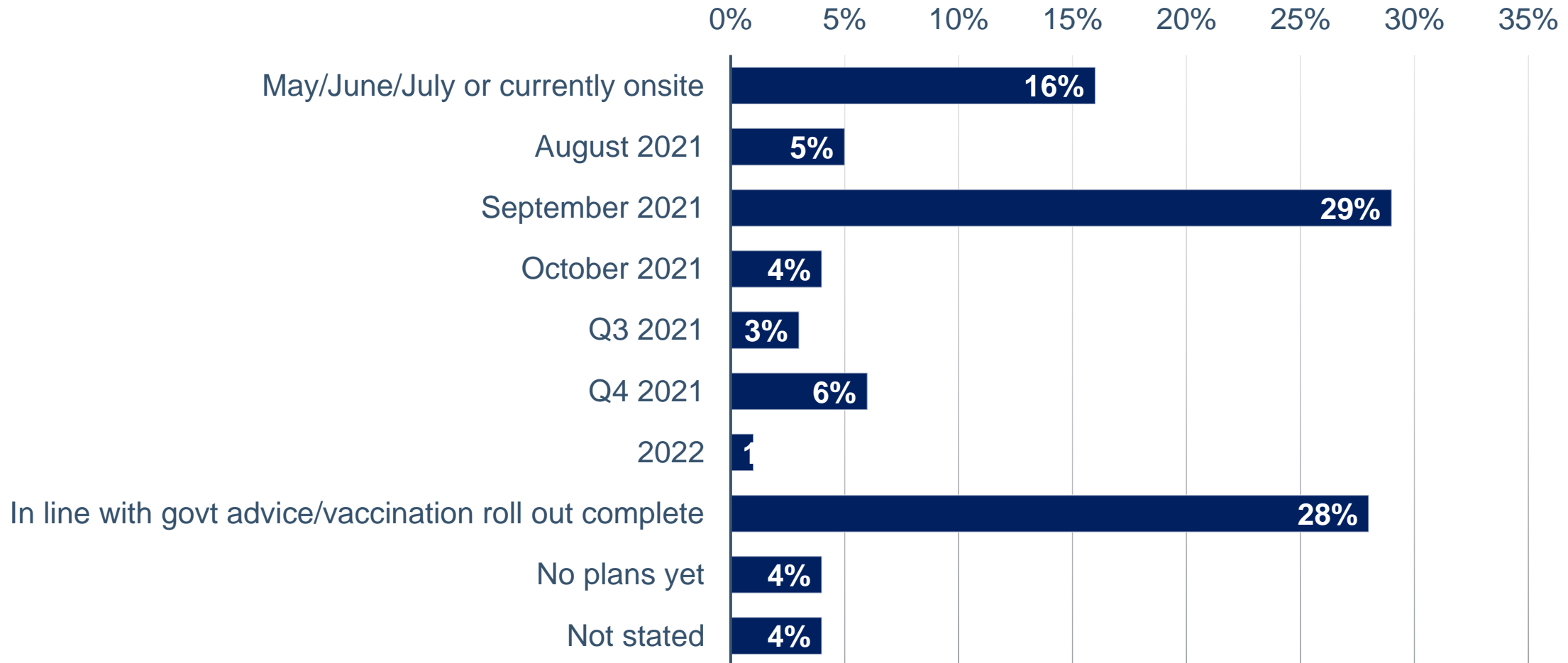
Actions - Does your organisation plan to do any of the following when returning employees to the workplace?

Action	Yes indefinitely	Yes, for a period
Limit business travel locally/nationally	18%	51%
Limit business travel internationally	19%	50%
Limit business event attendance for employees	19%	48%
Stagger employee teams to ensure social distancing	18%	45%
Require wearing of face masks	25%	43%
Provide pre-return induction and/or training for employees	35%	41%
Continue changed shift operations to ensure social distancing	16%	33%
Provide forum to employees on returning to workplace issues	25%	25%
Take account of employee commutes on returning to work onsite	11%	21%
Provide supports for employees on physical wellbeing	53%	21%
Provide supports for employees on mental and emotional wellbeing	61%	20%
Provide training on managing employees remotely for managers/line…	30%	20%
Require temperature testing for employees	17%	18%
Require temperature testing for visitors	19%	17%
Provide antigen testing for employees		5%
Provide antigen testing for organisation visitors		4%
Require full Covid-19 vaccination prior to return to workplace	6%	
Offer incentives to employees to return to work onsite		

■ Yes, for a period ■ Yes indefinitely

Are you planning to return all employees that are currently working remotely to work onsite following Covid-19? (N=309)
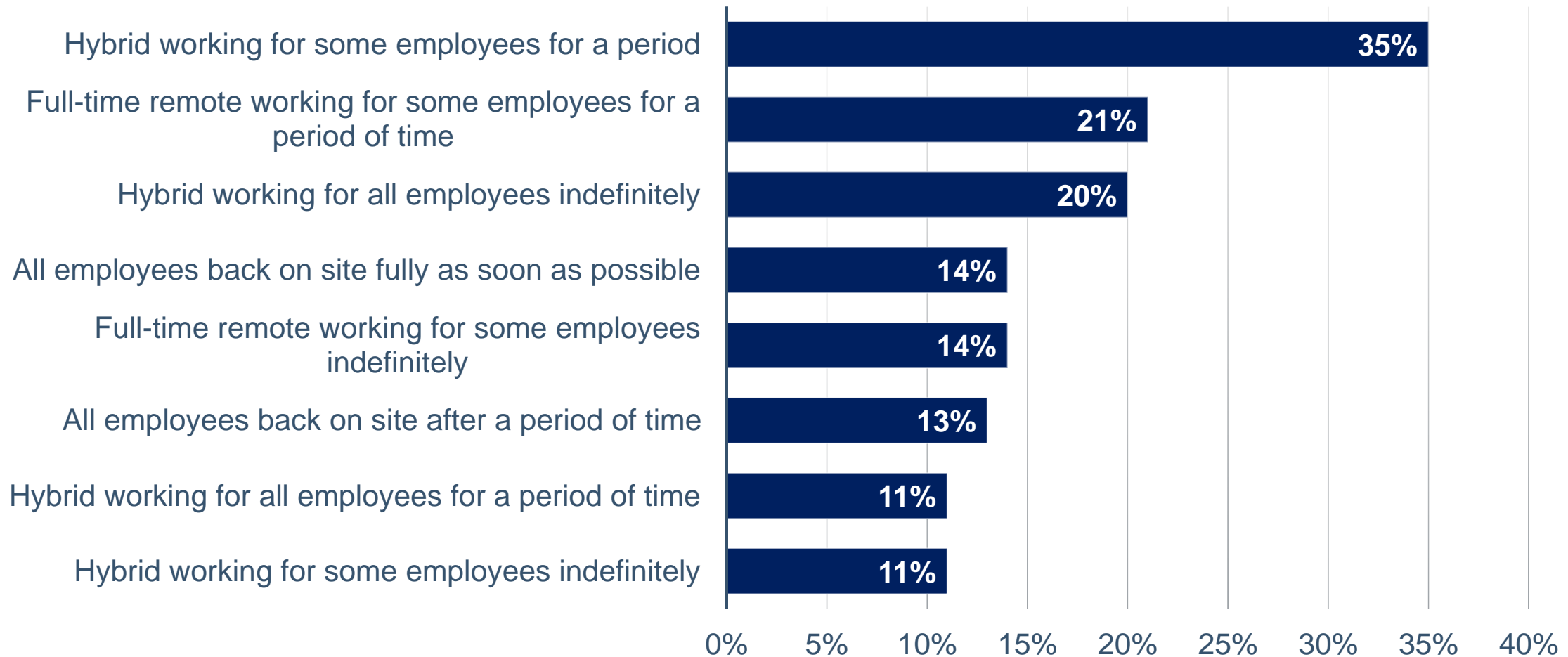
Are you planning to return all employees that are currently working remotely to work onsite following Covid-19? (N=303)
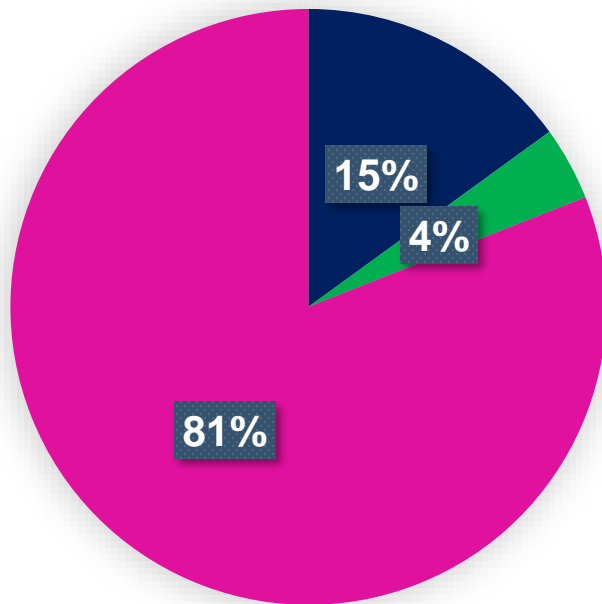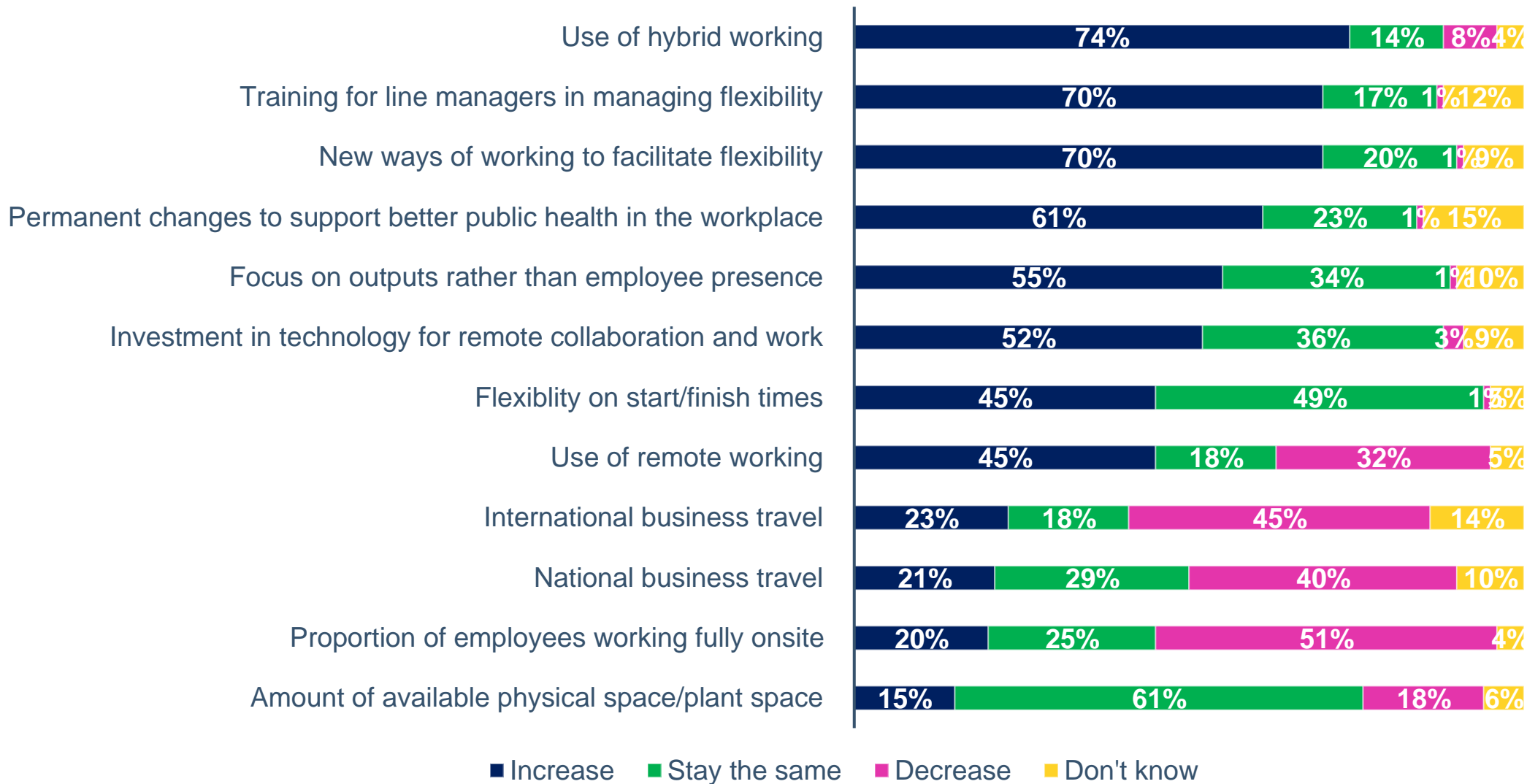

- Yes, all employees to return to work fully onsite — 15%
- Some employees will continue to work fully remotely — 4%
- Hybrid working - some days onsite, some remote working — 81%

Compared to currently, do you see any of the following increasing, staying the same or decreasing in your organisation over the next 2-3 years, post Covid-19?

Category	Increase	Stay the same	Decrease	Don't know
Use of hybrid working	74%	14%	8%	4%
Training for line managers in managing flexibility	70%	17%	1%	12%
New ways of working to facilitate flexibility	70%	20%	1%	9%
Permanent changes to support better public health in the workplace	61%	23%	1%	15%
Focus on outputs rather than employee presence	55%	34%	1%	10%
Investment in technology for remote collaboration and work	52%	36%	3%	9%
Flexiblity on start/finish times	45%	49%	1%	5%
Use of remote working	45%	18%	32%	5%
International business travel	23%	18%	45%	14%
National business travel	21%	29%	40%	10%
Proportion of employees working fully onsite	20%	25%	51%	4%
Amount of available physical space/plant space	15%	61%	18%	6%

■ Increase ■ Stay the same ■ Decrease ■ Don't know

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Number of days to be completed onsite vs remotely in hybrid mode

Amount of time/Number of days spent onsite (N=265)

Category	Percentage
1 day onsite	1%
1-2 days onsite	9%
2 days onsite	13%
2-3 days onsite	9%
3 days onsite	20%
3- 4 days onsite	1%
4 days onsite	2%
50%	5%
As required/depends on role	13%
Roster to be agreed	5%
Plans not finalised	17%
Not stated/Not Applicable	2%
Other	3%

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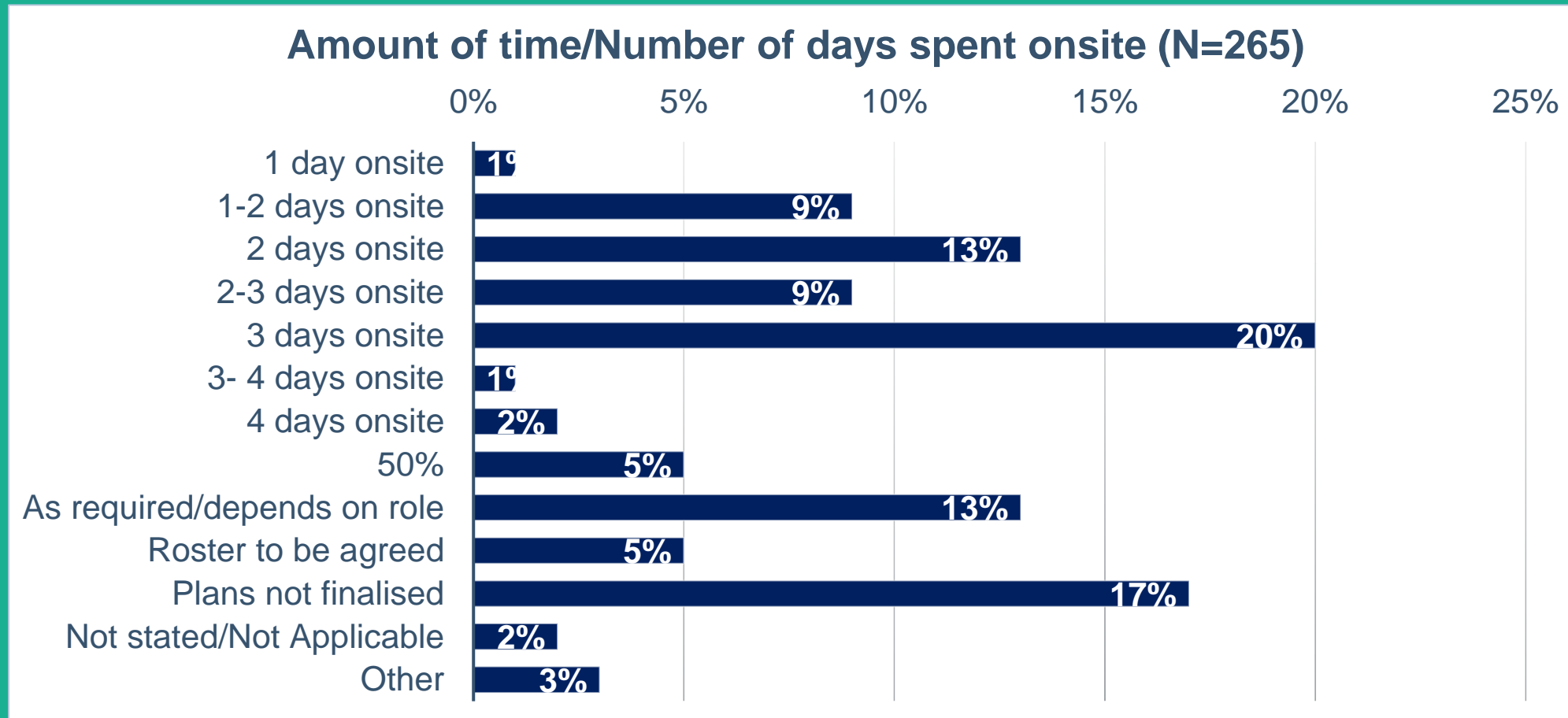
Examples of types of work to be completed onsite vs remotely in hybrid mode

Onsite
- Collaborative work
- Client or other meetings
- Administrative work
- Manufacturing and production activities
- Technical work
- Lab work
- Facilities, IT
- Reception
- Printing, post
- Warehousing

- **Remotely**
- Routine administrative work, email follow up, transactional work
- Data analysis/research
- Desk based activities
- Work that requires focus
- Finance and accounts
- Less sensitive work
- Some customer service
- Procurement
- Project management / Project work
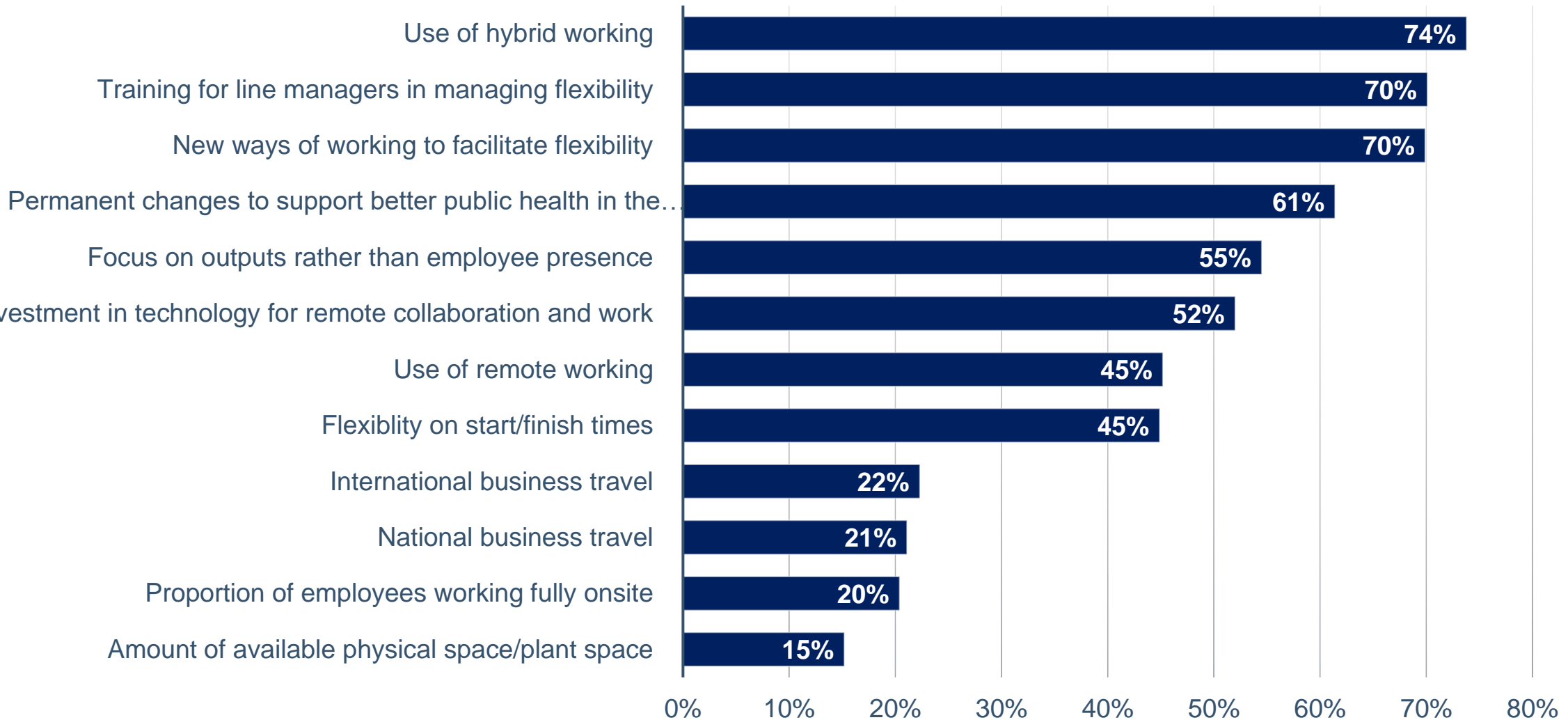- Some HR and Legal

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Supports for employee social activities in hybrid mode

- Continue to offer virtual events, exercise classes, cookery, book club, quizzes etc.
- Designate a day for all employees to be onsite in line with Government guidelines
- Employee wellbeing team set up
- Resume physical social activities where currently virtual
- Depending on Government guidelines, possible reinstatement of outdoor or other work social events
- Wellbeing committee
- EAP
- Encourage employees to engage in social activities and team building exercises

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Supports for teamwork and collaboration in hybrid mode

- Additional software and appropriate spaces to be developed
- Better meeting rooms, AV technology
- Developing communication guidelines around collaboration
- Increased use of Zoom/Teams calls for field staff
- Virtual coffees/lunches etc
- Management catch up calls and virtual meetings with staff
- New meeting protocols to support online and physical presence
- Policy for flexible working
- Training for managers in team building

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Compared to currently, do you see any of the following increasing, staying the same or decreasing in your organisation over the next 2-3 years, post Covid-19?

Category	Percentage
Use of hybrid working	74%
Training for line managers in managing flexibility	70%
New ways of working to facilitate flexibility	70%
Permanent changes to support better public health in the…	61%
Focus on outputs rather than employee presence	55%
Investment in technology for remote collaboration and work	52%
Use of remote working	45%
Flexiblity on start/finish times	45%
International business travel	22%
National business travel	21%
Proportion of employees working fully onsite	20%
Amount of available physical space/plant space	15%

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Agreement with Statements

Our organisation has been able to adapt well to changed work practices as a result of Covid-19 — Agree 96%, Disagree 3%

We expect increased requests from employees for hybrid working — Agree 87%, Disagree 8%

We expect increased requests from employees for remote working — Agree 81%, Disagree 11%

We intend to adapt our business strategy to incorporate more flexibility — Agree 81%, Disagree 9%

We would support an EU-wide certificate system to support international travel — Agree 75%, Disagree 3%

We expect to deal with long term impacts on employee wellbeing following Covid-19 — Agree 74%, Disagree 11%

We intend to provide training to managers on managing effectively in a remote working context — Agree 73%, Disagree 11%

We will conduct more of our business online in the future — Agree 72%, Disagree 18%

We intend to adapt ways of working to have less work completed onsite — Agree 58%, Disagree 27%

There will be no major long-term changes to how we have been used to working, once Covid-19 is resolved — Agree 34%, Disagree 62%

A large proportion of my workforce face a long commute on returning to the workplace — Agree 30%, Disagree 57%

Our organisation will struggle to get up and running post Covid-19 — Agree 5%, Disagree 85%

■ Disagree ■ Agree

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