



International
Labour
Organization

ACT/EMP



The Next Normal: The Changing Workplace in Ghana

Ghana Employers
Association (GEA)





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

FOREWORD

The effects of the Covid pandemic on the world of work have been dramatic. Despite these challenging circumstances, enterprises in Ghana have taken a wide range of steps to adapt to this dynamic environment. They have changed everything from characteristics of their working space to their human resource strategies, and throughout it all have demonstrated great resilience and adaptability.

The disruptions brought about by the pandemic considerably affected work, workers and workplaces in Ghana. While the pandemic stifled the business activities of many enterprises, it also propelled many employers to adopt strategies and modifications for business continuity and productive and stable employment relations.

This report details some of the emerging changes in the workplace in Ghana. The report has been carried out jointly by the Bureau for Employers Activities (ACT/EMP) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Ghana Employers' Association (GEA). The report is structured around the following questions:

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

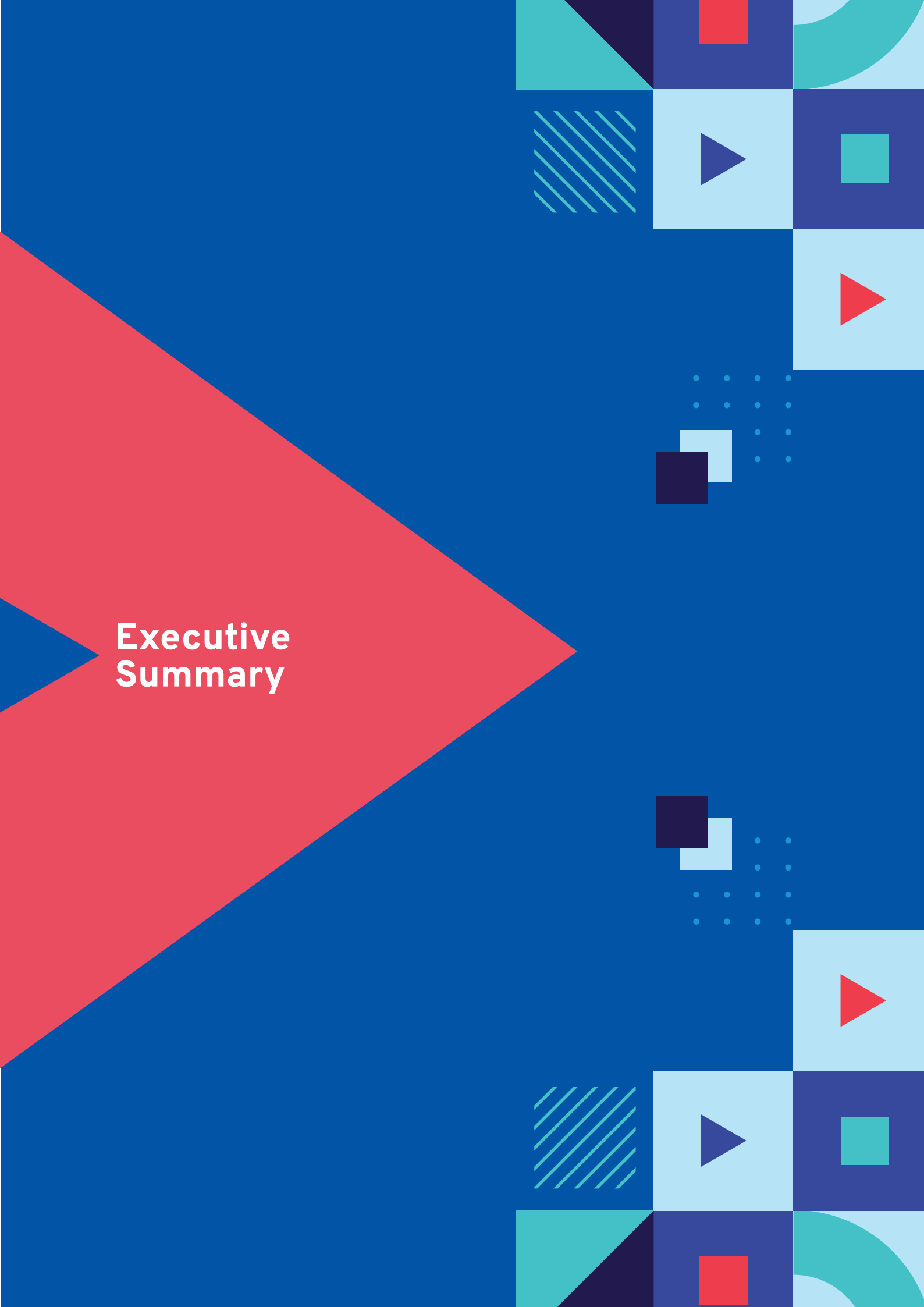
The report makes clear that the dramatic disruptions to labour markets over the past two years will have significant policy and legislative implications, and will support GEA in its future policy engagement with workers organizations and government.

The dramatic changes brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic have also forced employer and business membership organizations to rethink the services they offer to member enterprises. We feel that the findings from this report will greatly help GEA in adapting and recalibrating our service and training offering to our members.

We are indebted to the GEA membership for providing inputs into this report and in particular we thank Ms Julie Kazagui for the essential and dynamic role she played in bringing this exercise to a successful completion.

Dan Acheampong
President
Ghana Employers' Association





Executive Summary



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has had significant effects on workplaces in Ghana. The pandemic abruptly overturned normal work practices and accelerated other trends in working environments that were already under way, generating a wide array of unique challenges and opportunities for employers and their workforces. Emerging trends such as the migration to online and virtual work environments prompted many enterprises to institute new strategies in their working space in order to keep their enterprises competitive and resilient. This report highlights the experiences, interventions, and plans of Ghanaian enterprises towards the emerging new world of work. The report is structured into four thematic areas: (a) the working space; (b) workplace relations; (c) skills development, knowledge sharing and productivity; and (d) human resources management.

The study findings indicate that the major change occasioned by the pandemic on workplaces in Ghana is the paradigm shift from the physical work setting to remote work. The average enterprise noted that 34 per cent of employees worked remotely in Ghana during the pandemic and about 52 per cent of enterprises designed a work-from-home policy for implementation. However, performing regular work activities from home was impossible for some enterprises, especially those in the manufacturing, agriculture and hospitality industries. Therefore, a hybrid system, comprising both physical and remote work, was adopted in most cases. Despite integrating new digital tools such as Microsoft 360, Zoom and other video conferencing software for meetings, one of the major reasons why some employers did not implement remote work was the lack of systems for coordinating work remotely.

Other significant changes in most workplaces in Ghana include the installation of visible hand sanitizers at entry points, establishment of temperature checkpoints and other screening methods, rearranging of customer spaces including new barriers, as well as a more severe and frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces in common areas. At least two out of three Ghanaian enterprises confirmed that the various changes they adopted have led to improvements in production efficiency, customer experiences and workers' morale.

Aside from the workspace changes, workplace relations between senior management and other employees generally improved during the pandemic. Most enterprises had varying forms of dialogue and negotiation with their employees on different themes of interest. That notwithstanding, the highest priority of such dialogues were discussions on measures to enhance safety and health in the workplace. The survey revealed that average employee compensation, performance-based pay and reduced-hours contracts largely remained the same during the pandemic. Despite some difficulties regarding delays in negotiating new working terms for remote workers, bipartite and tripartite collective bargaining negotiations were marginally impacted by the crisis.

Given the increasing technological innovations and their newfound importance in the Covid era, the skills set requirements of employers have also changed rapidly. When asked about the top three most important skill sets for the future success of enterprises, the majority of enterprises cited digital skills, followed by communication skills and then creativity and innovation-related skills. Unsurprisingly, the skills requirements by employers shaped the way enterprises train, collaborate and share knowledge during the pandemic. The vast majority of the enterprises in Ghana indicated that they instituted new digital training courses for their employees to help them fit into the emerging world of work. At the same time, the majority of the enterprises had to rethink how they measure the productivity of their workforce following the outbreak of the pandemic. The most common way to measure performance of remote workers was through regular meetings with employee to keep track of their performance.

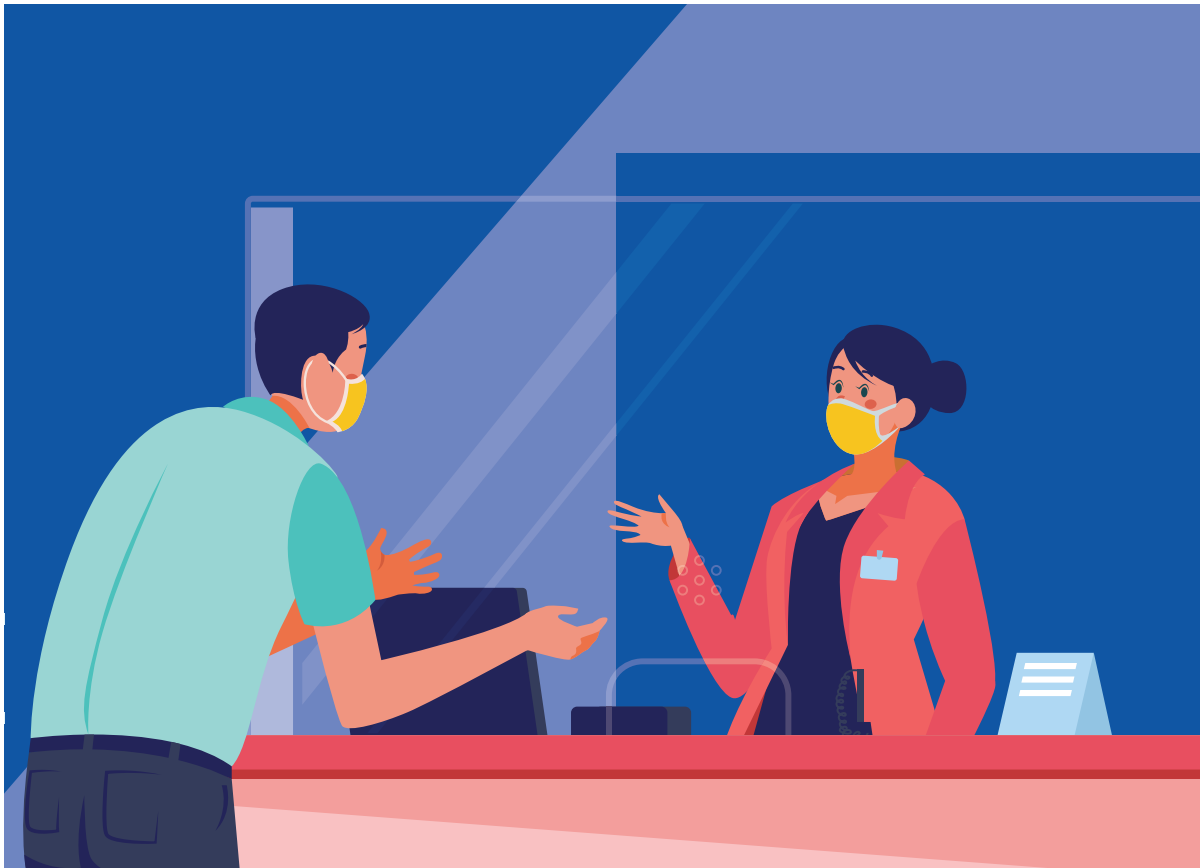
One major concern of enterprises, however, had to do with the lack of a standard mechanism to measure the performance of remote employees. Similar concerns were expressed in respect of the measurement of work hours and an appropriate remuneration or reward system for workers who engage in remote work. One respondent during our key informant interviews indicated that: "As people [and] businesses begin to permanently adopt work from home arrangement, we must begin to critically explore reliable means of measuring performance and how jobs are done, as well as determine the measurement of work hours and new compensation systems to reflect the current dynamic nature of work."



Lastly, the Covid-19 pandemic has created a complex and challenging environment for managers and human resource management (HRM) practitioners, who needed to find creative solutions to ensure the continuity of their companies and to help their employees to cope with the extraordinary crisis. The hardest-hit enterprises had limited options other than to consider downsizing measures. On the other hand, some enterprises took on new employees for several reasons including an upsurge in demand and hence the need for production expansion and the establishment of IT departments to support digital operations at work. During one of the interviews, a respondent disclosed that: "During the lockdown days, the domestic demand for our products increased and this ultimately helped us to create jobs by employing more people to assist in production processes. "With regard to communication at the organizational level, most of the enterprises revealed that they communicate with employees about the business to help them understand the situation and reduce uncertainty. Nearly one out of every three enterprises surveyed reported that their hiring criteria now include new groups of workers such as fully remote employees not living near the enterprise.



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INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has had considerable effects on workplaces in Ghana. The pandemic abruptly overturned normal work practices and accelerated other trends in work environments that were already under way. The lockdown and social distancing policies implemented by the government to curb the spread of the virus generated a wide array of unique challenges for employees and employers. Emerging trends such as migration to online and virtual work environments prompted many enterprises to institute new strategies at the workplace to keep their enterprises competitive and resilient and at the same time avert the spread of the virus. Given the uncertainty about when the pandemic might end, the continual introduction of new strategies for work implies long-term structural changes to business operations. Through these changes may be inevitable, several concerns with regard to unforeseen complexities in how work will be executed, the skills requirement of the evolving work environment, as well as their impact on human resource management continue to engage the minds and attention of employers.

Employers and enterprises have described the pandemic as challenging, difficult, stifling, unparalleled and unexpected, which has made the world of work more dynamic and requires major policy interventions for redress. For some enterprises, it has brought about various innovations and modifications to their working space, making it relatively easy for team members who do not need to interface with frontline customers to work successfully from outside the office. For other enterprises, the changes to workplaces will reveal a multitude of challenges to both workers and employers. Representatives of workers are of the view that the pandemic has constantly subjected employees to the fear of job loss, redundancy, and reduction in compensation owing to the incessant pressure posed on enterprises to rethink their business models. The rest of this report analyzes the Covid-19 experiences of Ghanaian enterprises in the context of (a) working space; (b) workplace relations; (c) skills development, knowledge sharing and productivity; and (d) human resource management at the enterprise level.



APPROACH

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative methodologies) to ascertain how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected current workplace structures and practices, as well as the plans of enterprises in the foreseeable future. The quantitative aspect of the study entails a survey of 119 registered enterprises, with about 54 per cent of responses from the services sector, 32 per cent from industry and 14 per cent from the agriculture sector. More than half (57 per cent) of the enterprises surveyed were based in the capital city of Accra whereas nine per cent were centered in the industrial hub of Tema. The second-largest city of Kumasi accounted for eight per cent and five per cent were located in the twin city of Sekondi-Takoradi. The remaining 21 per cent operate at various locations in the Central, Northern and Volta regions of Ghana. Some of these locations include Tamale, Buipe, Ho, Twifo Praso, Sefwi Wiaso, and Bawku. Of the enterprises surveyed, 23 per cent were either partially or wholly owned by foreigners and about 30 per cent of them either import or export goods and services from/to other jurisdictions. Furthermore, one out of every five responding enterprises was female-managed.

The quantitative survey was supplemented with 21 in-depth qualitative interviews conducted with various enterprises, workers' unions, and Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs). These interviews were conducted as face-to-face discussions, with a few held via digital platforms such as Zoom or by telephone

call. In terms of sampling distribution, 14 enterprises were randomly sampled from the manufacturing, agricultural, banking and finance, catering and hotels, commercial and information communication and technology sectors. Respondents from the enterprises were at the levels of chief executive officer and HR directors. To obtain the perspectives of workers' representatives, two main labour centres in the country, namely the Trades Union Congress (Ghana) and Ghana Federation of Labour (GFL), as well as one large labour union, the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU), were interviewed. In addition, the views of senior officials from various MDAs such as the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations (MELR), the Ministry of Trade & Industry (MoTI), the Labour Department (LD), the National Labour Commission (NLC), and Ministry of Education (MoE) were also solicited. The responses that were collated orally were later processed and transcribed into one consolidated document for use in this report.

Although there seems to be several discussions concerning the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on workplaces around the world, the speculation of the impacts is often generalized for all economies. Meanwhile, the implications of the pandemic on workplaces may vary from one jurisdiction to the other. The evidence in this survey demonstrates a factual pattern of workplace transitions in Ghana and hence is crucial for economic policy formulation to resolve targeted challenges of enterprises.





THE WORKING SPACE

The Covid-19 pandemic has necessitated some modifications and changes to the working environments of most enterprises in Ghana. When we asked enterprises to give a one-word description of the most significant way the pandemic changed physical and/or remote working space, divergent responses were given. However, the most common descriptions were centered on subjects such as technology,

innovation, improvement, flexibility, virtual, digital, efficiency and convenience. Other generally negative responses that sought to highlight the unprecedented nature of the pandemic included drastic, slow, social distancing, stifling, challenging, and difficult. These varying responses imply that the impact of the pandemic on physical and remote working space was enormous yet diverse.

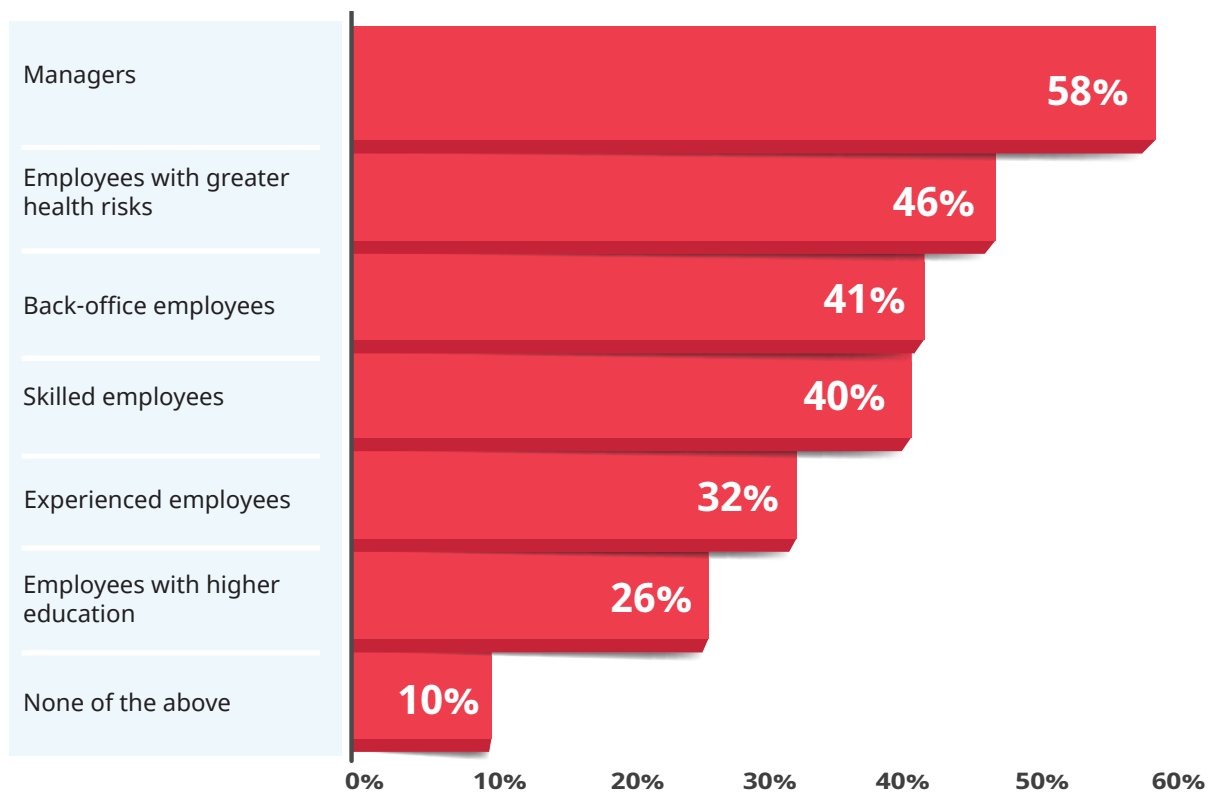
Figure 1. Most commonly cited words describing how the Covid-19 pandemic changed the physical and/or remote working space



One key observation is that, although the shift from a conventional workplace to remote work was already under way, the pandemic accelerated this transition (Diab-Bahman & Al-Enzi, 2020). In Ghana, the average enterprise said that 34 per cent of their employees were asked to work from home during the pandemic and about 52 per cent of enterprises had designed a workfrom-home (WFH) policy for implementation. When asked about the type of employees who are more likely to work remotely, more than half (58 per cent) of the enterprises stated managers, followed by skilled employees (46 per cent). Astonishingly, employees with

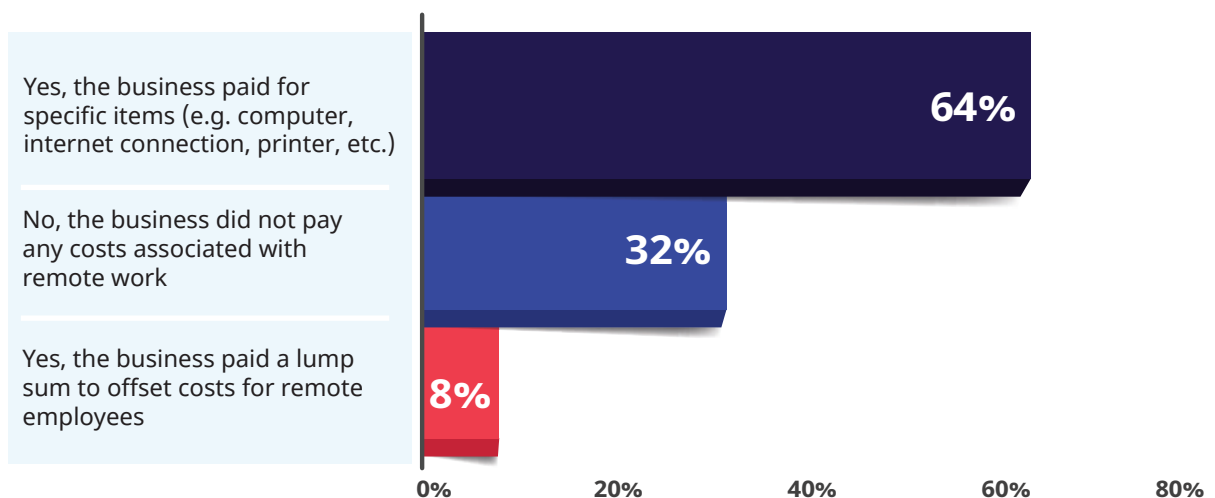
greater health risks were ranked third but this may be owed to the availability of Covid-19 vaccines and the related declining effect on the risk exposure of employees. It did not come as a surprise that a little over one-third of the enterprises classified “back-office employees” as being more likely to work from home as this category of employees usually do not interface with customers in the workplace, making their physical presence at the workplace unnecessary. Experienced employees and those with higher education were reported to be less likely to work from home compared with the average employee in Ghana.

Figure 2. Types of employees in businesses who were more likely to work remotely



As part of the measures to ensure effective implementation of WFH policies, about 64 per cent of enterprises paid for specific items required by employees to work remotely, such as computers, internet connections, and printers, among others. About eight per cent of enterprises paid a lump sum to offset the cost incurred by remote employees.

Figure 3. Did the business pay for any of the costs incurred by employees who worked remotely?



For some enterprises, however, performing regular work activities from home was impossible, hence prompting them to adopt other new work arrangements such as shift systems and staggered work strategies. The nature of the enterprise and the type of employee in question were found to be the key determinants of whether or not a WFH policy could be implemented. Although remote work arrangements could easily be embraced in banking and finance, commercial and ICT sub-sectors, it was difficult for enterprises in the manufacturing, agriculture, and hospitality industry to implement because these sectors generally require employees to be physically present at the workplace to support business operations. For instance, one manufacturing company indicated that production teams kept working throughout the pandemic period, albeit with reduced hours compared to pre-pandemic days.



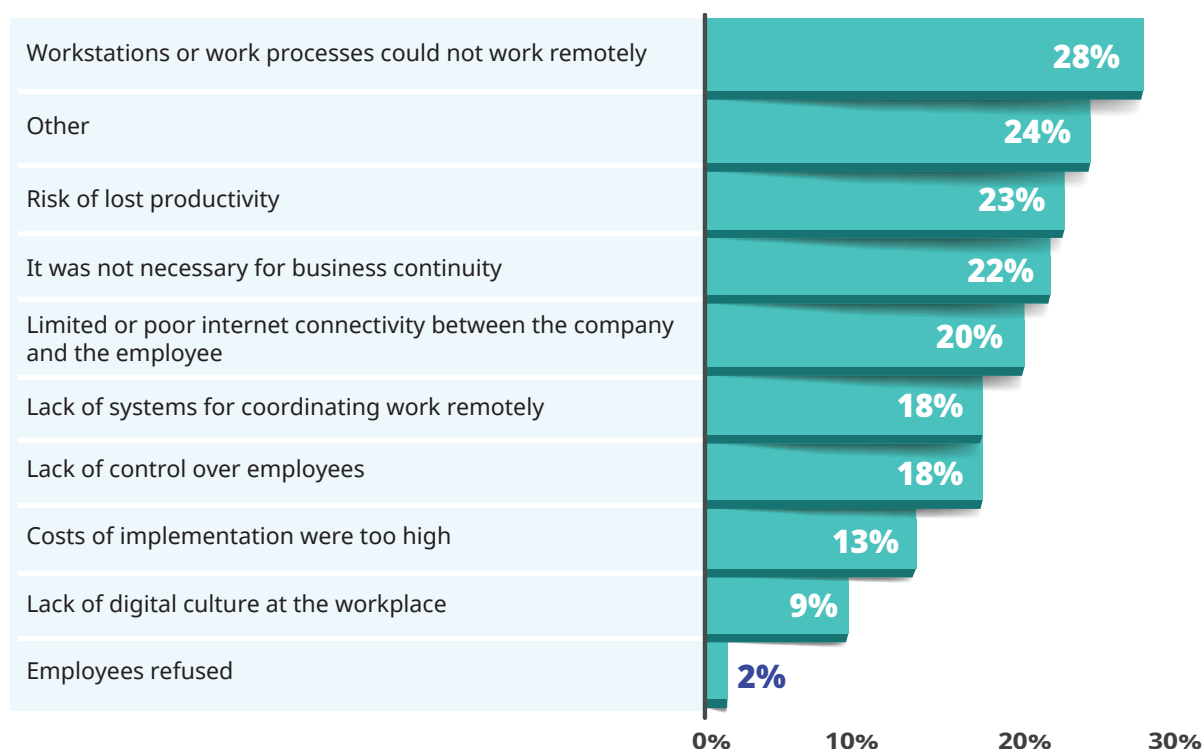
“Because of the nature of our work, we had to adopt a shift system instead of remote work arrangement in a bid to observe the Covid-19 safety protocols. Even though we developed a work from home policy, we did not really implement it”



It is worth noting that some enterprises designed a remote working policy but did not implement it for various reasons. Of the enterprises that did not implement remote work, 24 per cent indicated that their biggest challenge was the “lack of systems for coordinating work remotely” whereas 23 per cent cited the “risk of lost productivity” for not implementing remote work. In addition, 22 per cent indicated that it was difficult to get workstations or work processes to work remotely. It is common knowledge that the quality of remote work is underscored by reliable internet connectivity. According to the Global Digital Quality of Life Index in 2021, Ghana ranks 104th out of 110 countries because of unstable mobile internet connectivity and poor internet speed.

It was therefore not surprising that about one-fifth (20 per cent) of enterprises in Ghana indicated they could not implement a remote work policy owing to limited or poor internet connectivity. The country has room for improvement in all digital wellbeing areas, especially in infrastructure, internet quality, and affordability. Because the shift to the use of digital tools was rather abrupt, 13 per cent of the enterprises that could not implement remote work indicated that there was a lack of digital culture at the workplace whereas 18 per cent cited concerns about not being able to have control over employees. Amid these challenges, about 18 per cent of the enterprises said a remote work policy was not necessary for the business continuity plans of their enterprises.

Figure 4. Reasons why businesses did not implement remote work



“

“Naturally we would like to return to in-person meetings and training programmes. It is an undeniable fact that the attention span of people is better in-person than virtual meeting and hence meetings that require much focus of participants would be better executed when organized inperson”

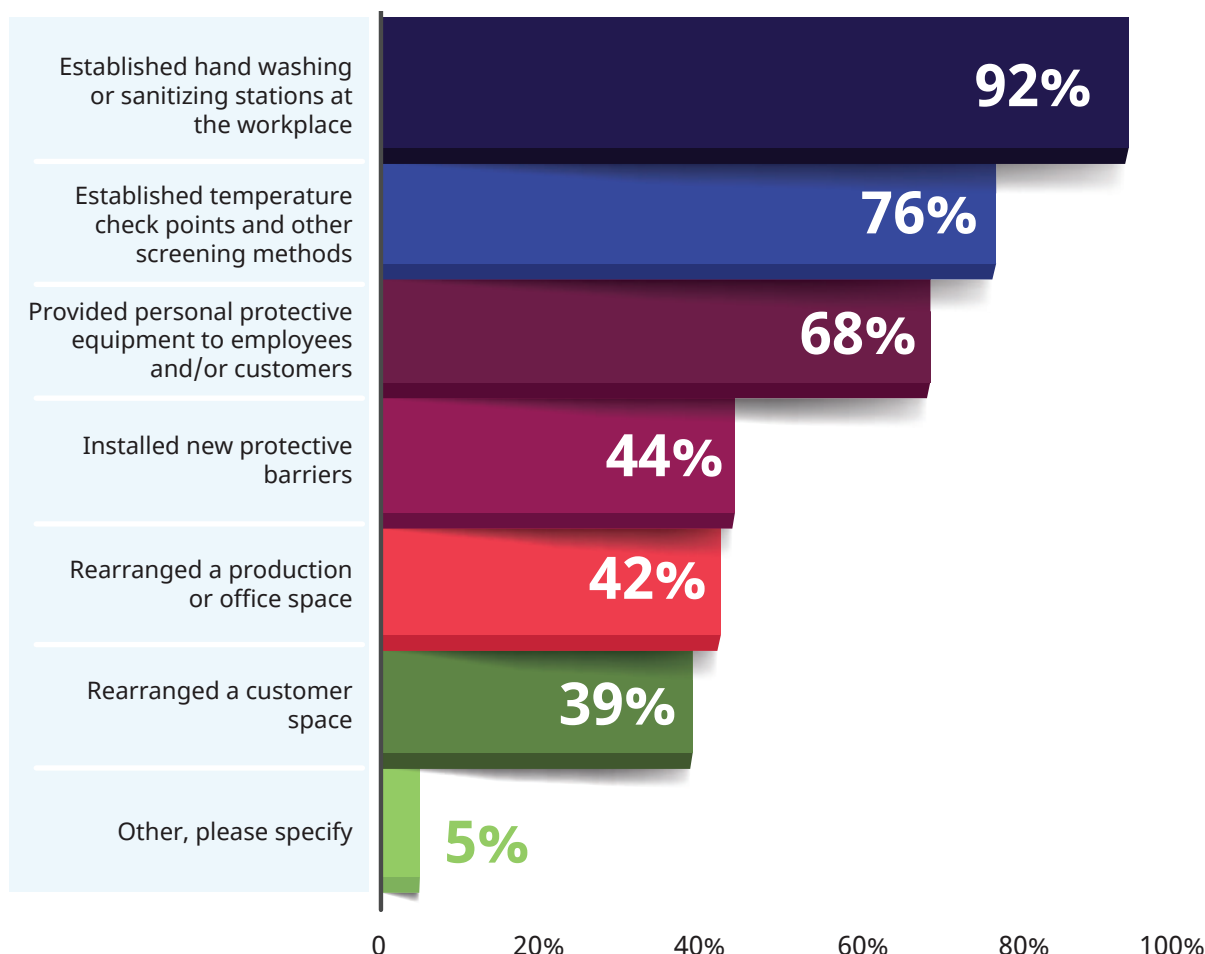
”

It is important to add that, given the fast change in events in the workplace, both employers and employees had limited options other than to shift their modus operandi completely. This is because only nine per cent of the enterprises related their

inability to implement remote work policy to the high cost of implementation and just one per cent indicated that employees refused the policy. This implies that most employers and employees were eager to adopt new measures that would help sustain to their enterprises but were limited by some challenges.

Our findings indicate that visible sanitizing efforts such as hand sanitizers at entry points, temperature checkpoints and other screening methods, rearranged customer workspace including installed barriers, more severe and frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces in common areas, implementation of remote work arrangements” and employee training on health and safety protocols are the most important changes enterprises adopted in their work premises because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The new normal is therefore anticipated to involve frequent disinfecting of commonly touched surfaces, hands-free doors, socially distanced spaces, and touchless transactions even in the post-Covid era (Kolakowski, et al, 2021).

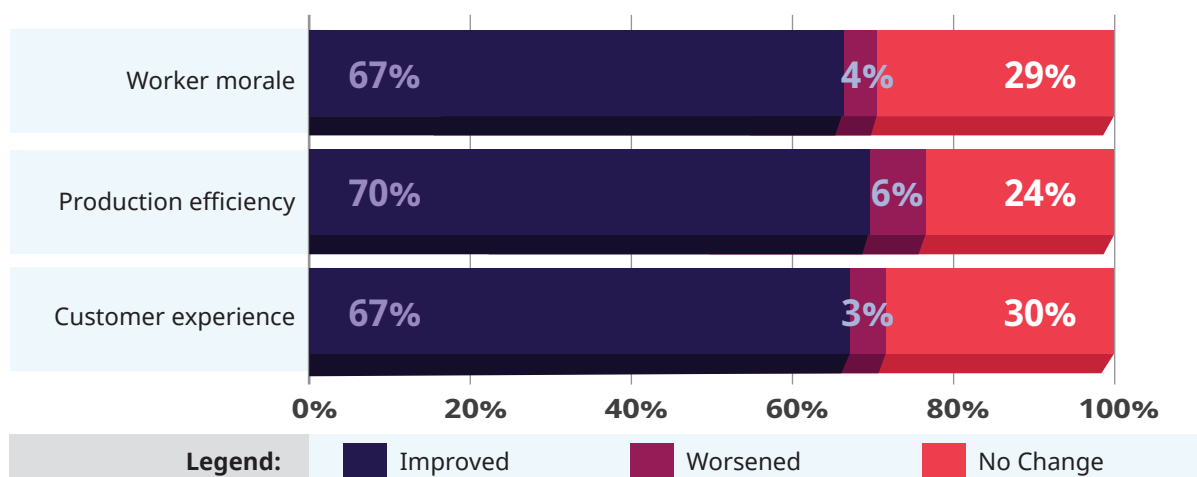
Figure 5. Changes made to business premises because of the pandemic?



At least two out of three Ghanaian enterprises are of the view that the various changes they adopted have led to improvement in production efficiency, customer experience, and workers' morale whereas almost one-third of them think they have

no impact at all. On average, about five per cent of Ghanaian enterprises think that the various changes adopted worsened production efficiency, customer experience and workers' morale.

Figure 6. How have the changes you made to the business premises affected each of the following?



Based on the challenges Ghanaian enterprises have begun forecasting into the near future about suitable business models required for business continuity and sustainability. One out of every two (50 per cent) enterprises surveyed is poised to adopt hybrid workplaces with some remote and some in-person work in future. In addition, 28 per cent anticipate most work to be performed in-person but with some changes. However, 19 per cent envisage a return to in-person work just as they used to observe during the pre-pandemic era. Although the general views towards remote work seem positive, there is some degree of uncertainty about the readiness of enterprises to shift completely to remote work. Our findings indicate that just about three per cent of the enterprises anticipate that they would wholly shift to remote work in the future (See Fig. 7).



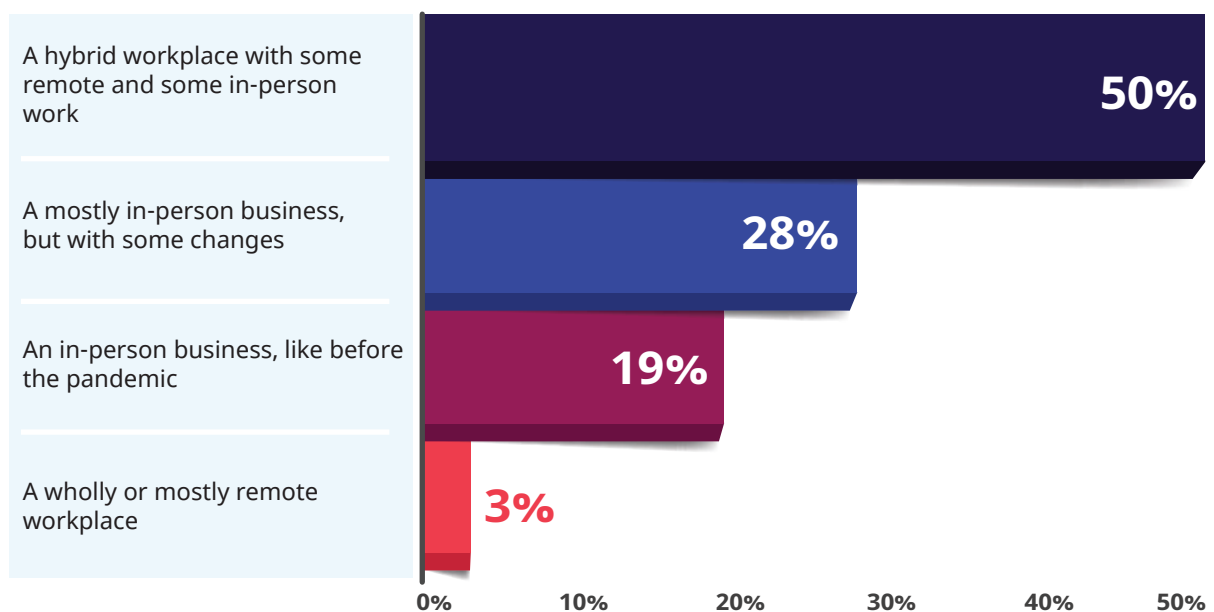
"We embraced Zoom and other video conferencing platforms. Instead of having 4-5 guests constituting a studio panel in the prepandemic era, panellists now join in virtually for studio discussions. We intend to continue using the video conferencing methods and even adopt emerging technologies to help us stay as the best performing company"





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Figure 7. Which of the following best describes your business model in the coming years?



Despite the challenges the pandemic has presented to workplaces at large, enterprises in Ghana have an opportunity to use their influence and power to build better alternative futures. Evidence from this study indicates that returning to the “old normal” way of doing business may create significant challenges and have negative economic implications. It is time for enterprises to reimagine how and where work is done. Policymakers also have to consider prioritizing equitable access to digital infrastructure as well as new ways of enabling occupational mobility in order to maximize the benefits of the new normal.

“Although the pandemic has brought its changes to our society, I believe most of the changes will be for the betterment of our society in the long term. When unexpected happenings occur, societies respond and such responses make us better. The changes we are currently witnessing will continue to stay with us”



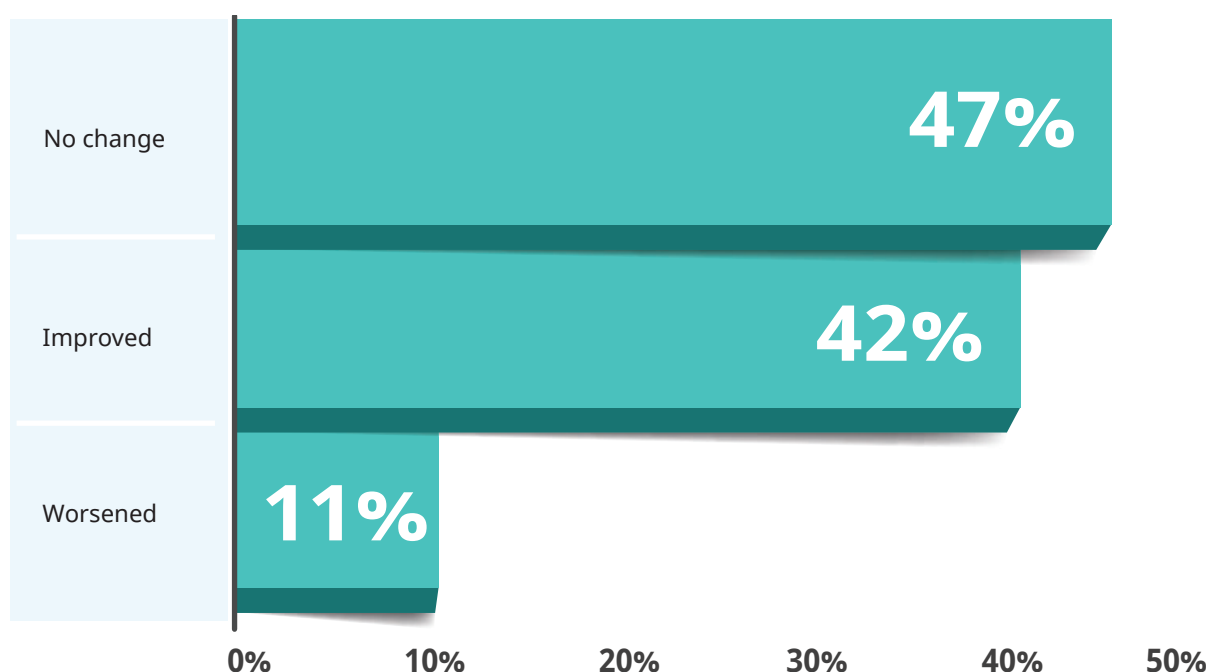


WORKPLACE RELATIONS AND LABOUR LAW

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly altered people's experiences of work around the world. In doing so, the crisis appears to have changed the public narrative about work and employment and, at the same time, highlighted the continued relevance and value of employment relations. In other words, issues of employment and work relations have become, for at least the time being, more important than ever. Terms such as "workers' safety", "the value of work" and "essential workers" have become the focus of social partners and some politicians.

It is therefore not surprising that despite the numerous challenges occasioned by the crisis, about 42 per cent of the companies surveyed indicated that relations between senior management and other employees improved during the pandemic. This was almost four times higher than the 11 per cent of enterprises that said that workplace relations had worsened during the pandemic. Meanwhile, nearly one out of every two (47 per cent) enterprises said that the pandemic did not change the quality of workplace relations.

Figure 8. How has the Covid-19 pandemic changed workplace relations?

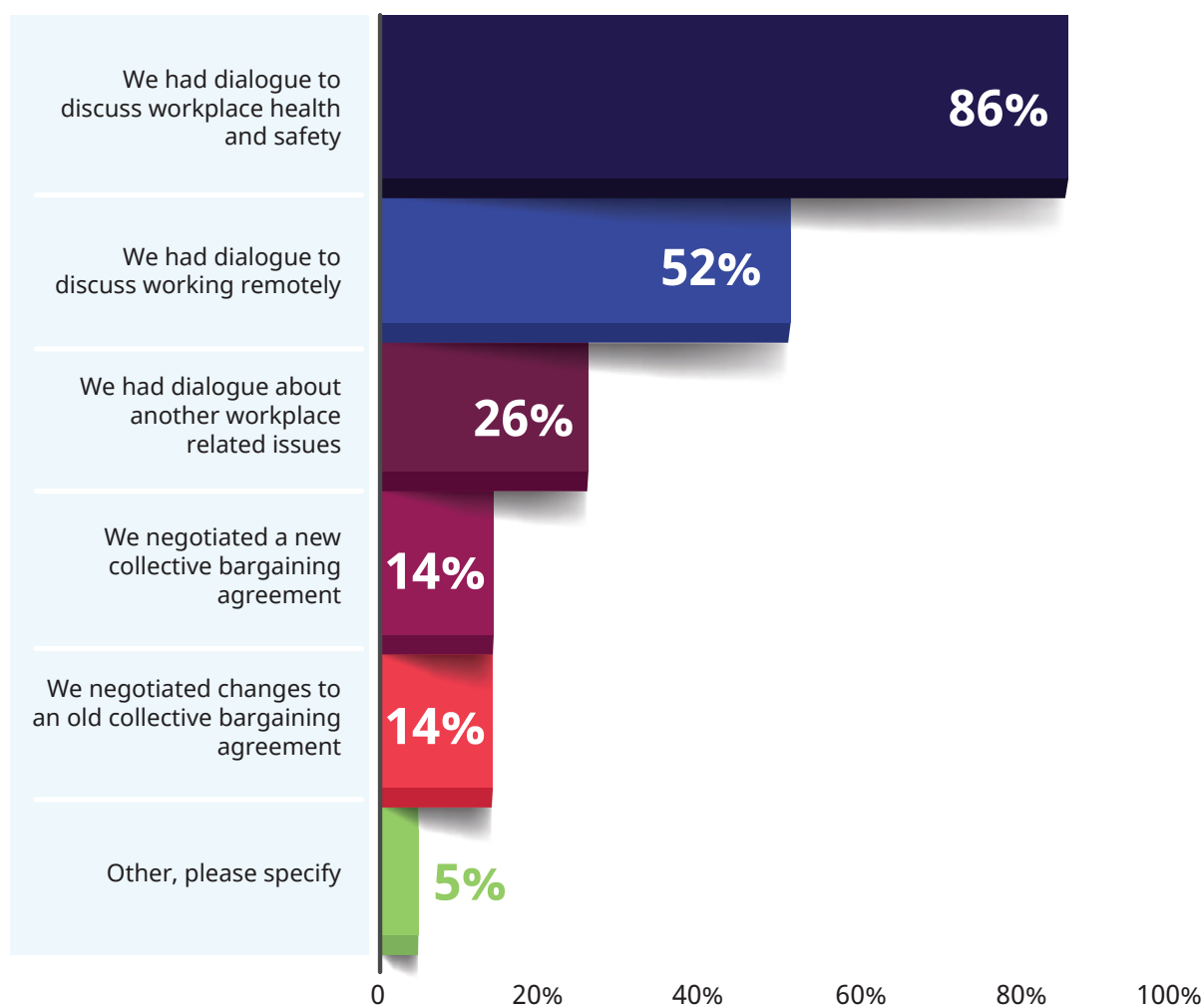


The survey results indicate that, from the onset of the pandemic, enterprises had varying forms of dialogue and negotiation on various topics of interest with their employees. We found that the highest priority of enterprises was centered on measures to enhance safety and health at the workplace. A little over four out of every five (86 per cent) enterprises indicated that they held dialogues to discuss workplace health and safety whereas about 52 per cent said they engaged their employees to discuss how work could be performed remotely. In addition, a little over one

out of four enterprises had dialogues on other related workplace issues. There were split findings in relation to negotiations concerning old and new collective bargaining because 14 per cent of the enterprises indicated they negotiated both a new and an old collective bargaining agreement.

At the bipartite and tripartite level, the relationship between social partners was revived both the national health emergency required frequent consultation among partners.

Figure 9. Dialogues or negotiations businesses had with employees since the start of the pandemic



The regular engagements at both the National Tripartite Committee and the Social Partnership Council led to the formulation and implementation of key social and economic policies including:

- The GHC750 million soft loans scheme for Micro, Small and Medium scale enterprises;
- The GHC1 billion Covid-19 stimulus package for industries; and
- The Ghana Covid-19 Alleviation and Revitalization of Enterprises Programme.

“The use of video conferencing tools enabled the National Tripartite Committee and the Social Partnership Council to organize more consultative meetings in a speedy and less costly ways which eventually gave birth to key policies at the national level”

Also, at the height of the pandemic, consensus was reached among partners for government to cover 100 per cent water and electricity bills for the poor segments of the population and give 50 per cent relief on these utility bills to enterprises to alleviate the burden on workers and firms. After deliberating on the impact of the pandemic on workers, social partners agreed to explore measures to establish a National Unemployment Insurance Scheme, for which government would

provide initial seed money of US\$50 million.

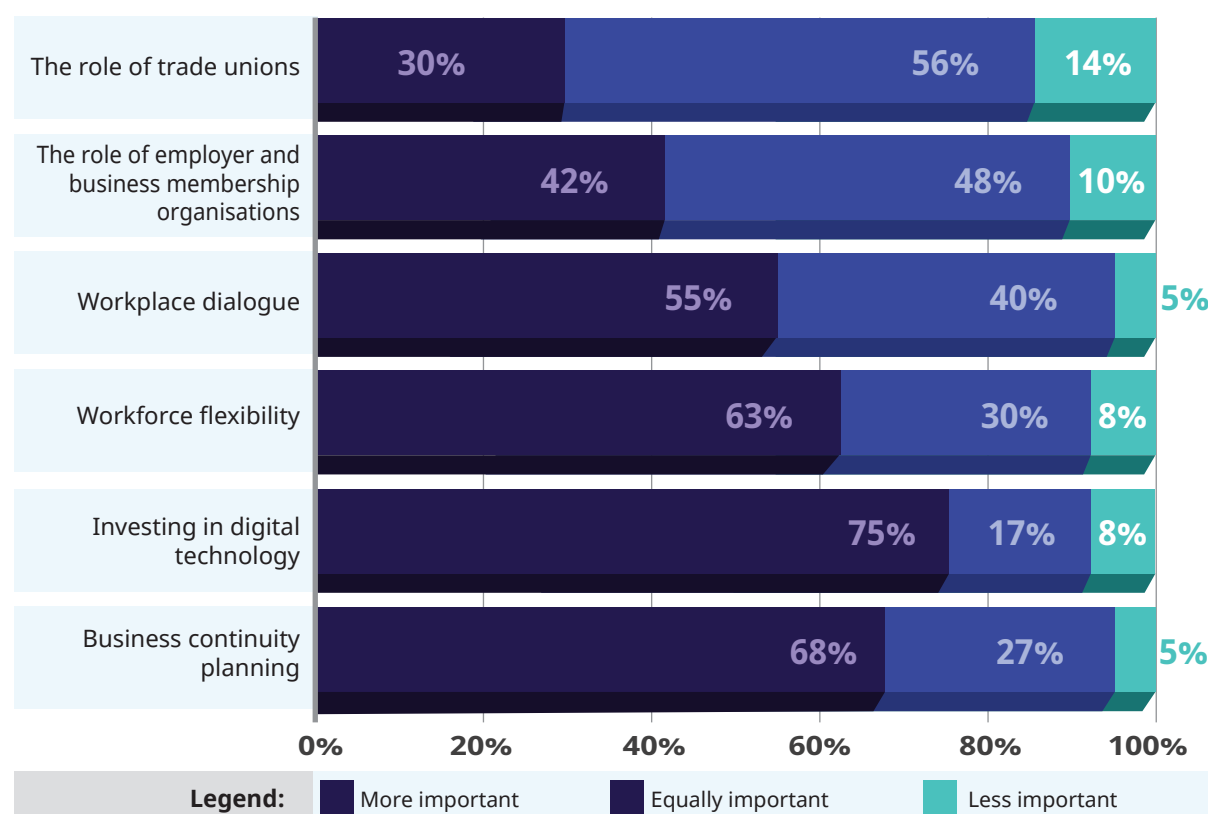
Other concerns for discussion included the degree of exposure of health workers to the virus. Therefore, the various tripartite engagements on the issue also informed government's decision to introduce a tax holiday to health workers over a six-month period, as well as a 50 per cent salary top-up to all health workers for a seven-month period.

However, because of to public health guidelines that enforced restrictions on conferences and meetings, social dialogue and collective bargaining often had to be rescheduled or switched to online meetings whenever the situation made it necessary. Interestingly, the transition appeared to have been smooth, with no major difficulties although it was a first-time experience for some members of the consultation and negotiation processes. One respondent during our interviews revealed that, *"in fact, for the first time in history we conducted negotiations online and the most interesting part of it all is that we were able to conclude the discussions within two hours."*

The experiences enterprises have had since the outbreak of the pandemic have fine-tuned their perception of the relevance of certain work-related activities. Our findings indicated that

Ghanaian enterprises generally view the role of employers' organizations and trade unions as similar in importance compared to the pre-pandemic era. However, when comparing the two, a greater share of enterprises perceived that the role of employers and business member organizations increased in importance more than that of trade unions. Perhaps, this notion is driven by the fact that, if the primary mandate of business associations (in relation to advocating for stability in the macroeconomic environment) is not well advanced, enterprises can easily fold up and consequently reduce the density of unions. Unsurprisingly, enterprises cited "investment in digital technology", followed by "business continuity planning", "workforce flexibility" and "workplace dialogue" (in that order) as the four work-related activities that had grown most in importance.

Figure 10. How has the pandemic changed the importance of the following work-related areas?



We also found that two-thirds of the enterprises said they did not increase their use of external contractors since the pandemic started whereas nearly one out of five (19 per cent) enterprises indicated they increased their use of external

contractors. For those enterprises that said they increased the use of an external contractor(s), the most important reason for such an action was the high demand for people with skills that are not part of their core business (35 per cent).

Figure 11. Has your business increased its use of external contractors since the pandemic started?

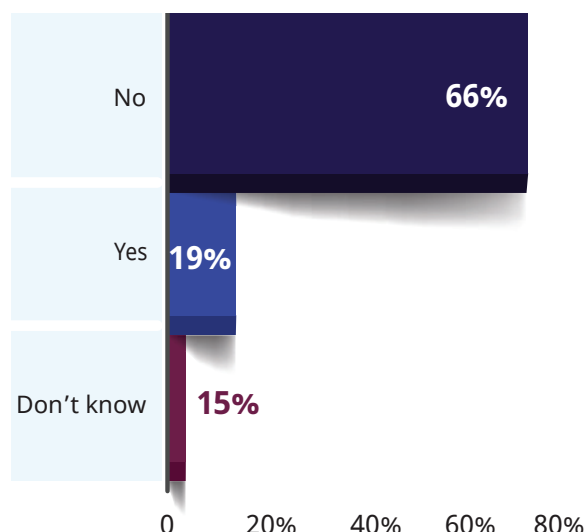
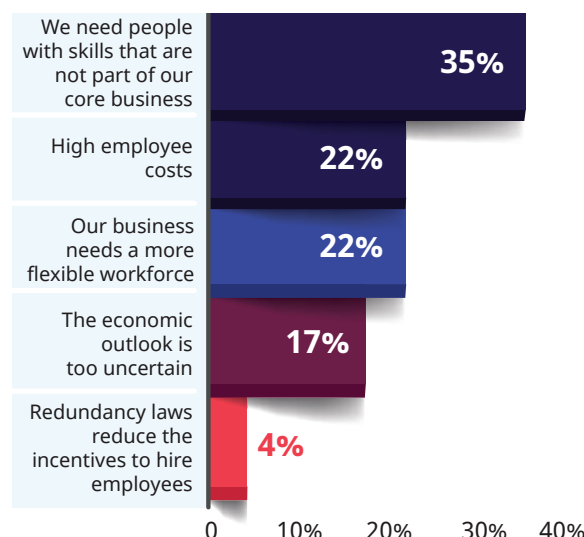


Figure 12. What is the most important reason that your business is expanding its use of nonemployee (external) workers?



This was followed by “high employee cost” and “needs for more flexible work” (both at 22 per cent). The least cited reasons were “economic outlook” and the fact that “redundancy laws reduced the incentives to hire employees”.

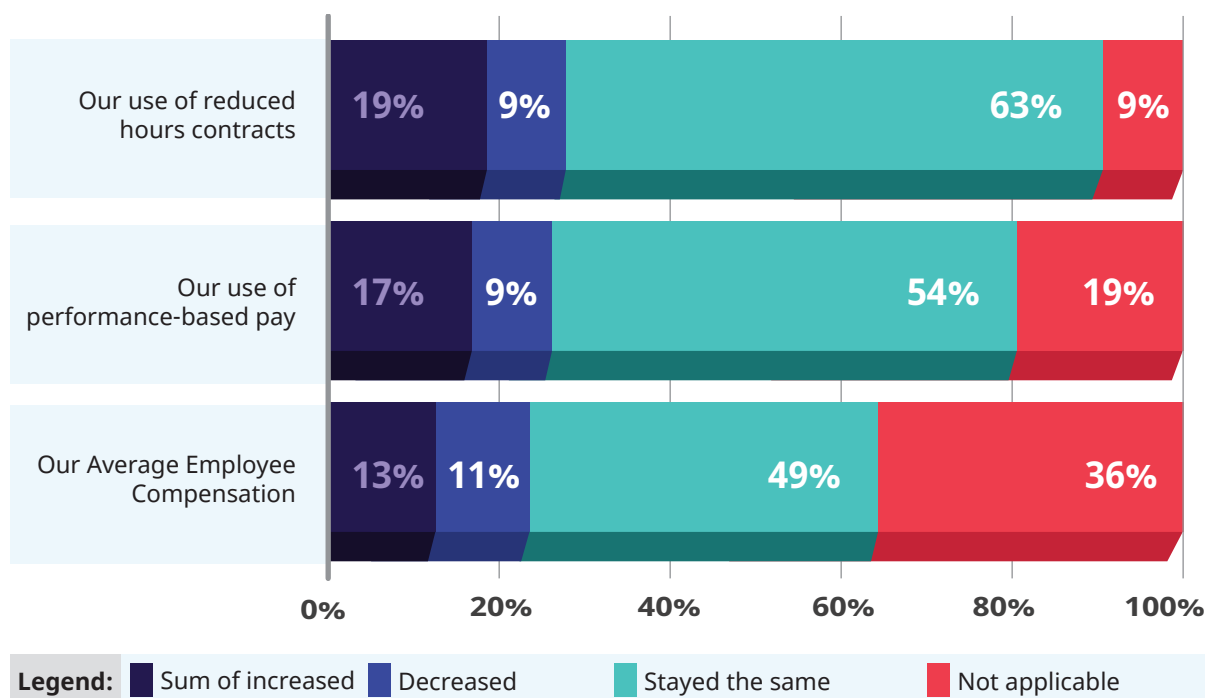
As the economic repercussions of the pandemic continue to play out around the globe, one thing is clear: its impact on enterprises varies greatly both within and across industries. Generally, one can say that the effect has been negative, with many companies unexpectedly realizing either flat or negative revenue growth over the past year. However, for some other enterprises, the change has had a moderate to neutral effect on their revenue. Our interviews indicate that some companies even benefited from an uptick caused by a pandemic-fuelled spike in demand for products or services.

Because revenue performance goals set out before the onset of the pandemic were not attainable, one would expect that enterprises would adopt a range of compensation strategies to ensure they remain viable. Some of the strategies include altering average employee

“During the lockdown days, the domestic demand for our products increased and this ultimately helped us to create jobs by employing more people to assist in production processes”

compensation, the use of performance-based pay, and the use of reduced hours contracts. However, our findings indicate that, in general, all the abovementioned parameters (average employee compensation, performance-based pay, and reduced hours contracts) largely remained the same during the pandemic. Only about 13 per cent of enterprises reported using reduced-hours contracts more during the pandemic. With regard to performance-based pay, 17 per cent of the enterprises said they had increased their usage and 19 per cent increased the average compensation for employees.

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



During the pandemic, policymakers, enterprises, and workers adapted to new ways of advancing work relations more quickly than previously thought possible, out of sheer necessity. In the longer term, similarly agile and collaborative responses among

employers and unions, and/or government at both the bipartite and tripartite levels could lead to higher productivity growth, peaceful industrial relationships, and at the same time ensure easy mobility for workers.



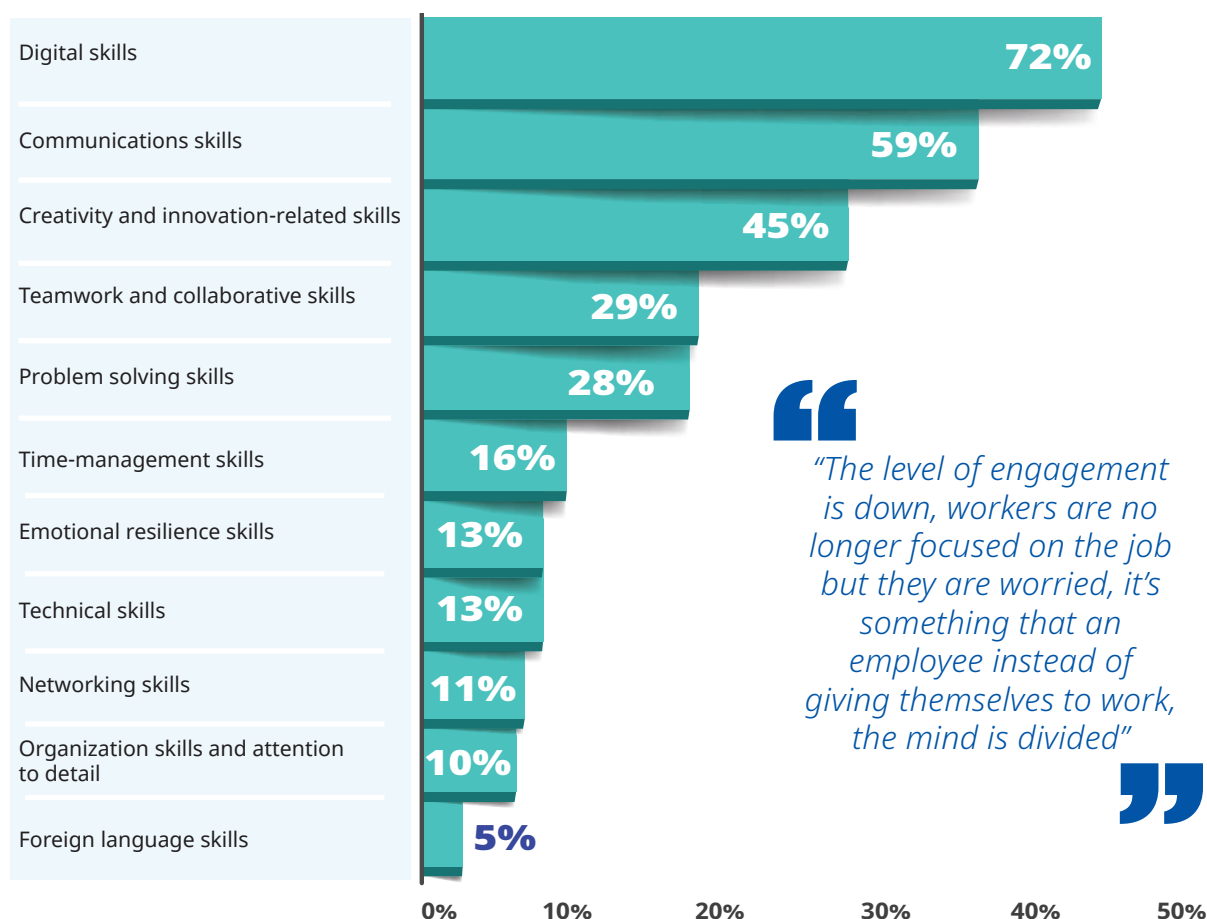


SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, KNOWLEDGE SHARING, AND PRODUCTIVITY

The increasing technological innovations in the world of work keeps altering business models and hence requires new sets of skills for workers to thrive in an increasingly competitive environment. At the same time, the changing nature of how knowledge is shared ultimately has implications for the productivity of enterprises and workers. The types of skills required by enterprises to flourish were laid bare during the pandemic.

Our survey indicates that the use of various technologies in service delivery and business operation has become very necessary and that, in future, contactless payment or contactless bank cards, digital menus that can be viewed on personal mobile devices via QR codes, digital payments, keyless entry, and touchless elevators will be essential for doing business in the post-pandemic era.

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



When asked about the top three most important skill sets for the future success of enterprises, 72 per cent of Ghanaian enterprises cited digital skills, followed by communication skills (59 per cent) and then creativity and innovation-related skills (45 per cent). The ranking of digital skills did not come as a surprise because the continuous dynamism in the world of work requires people

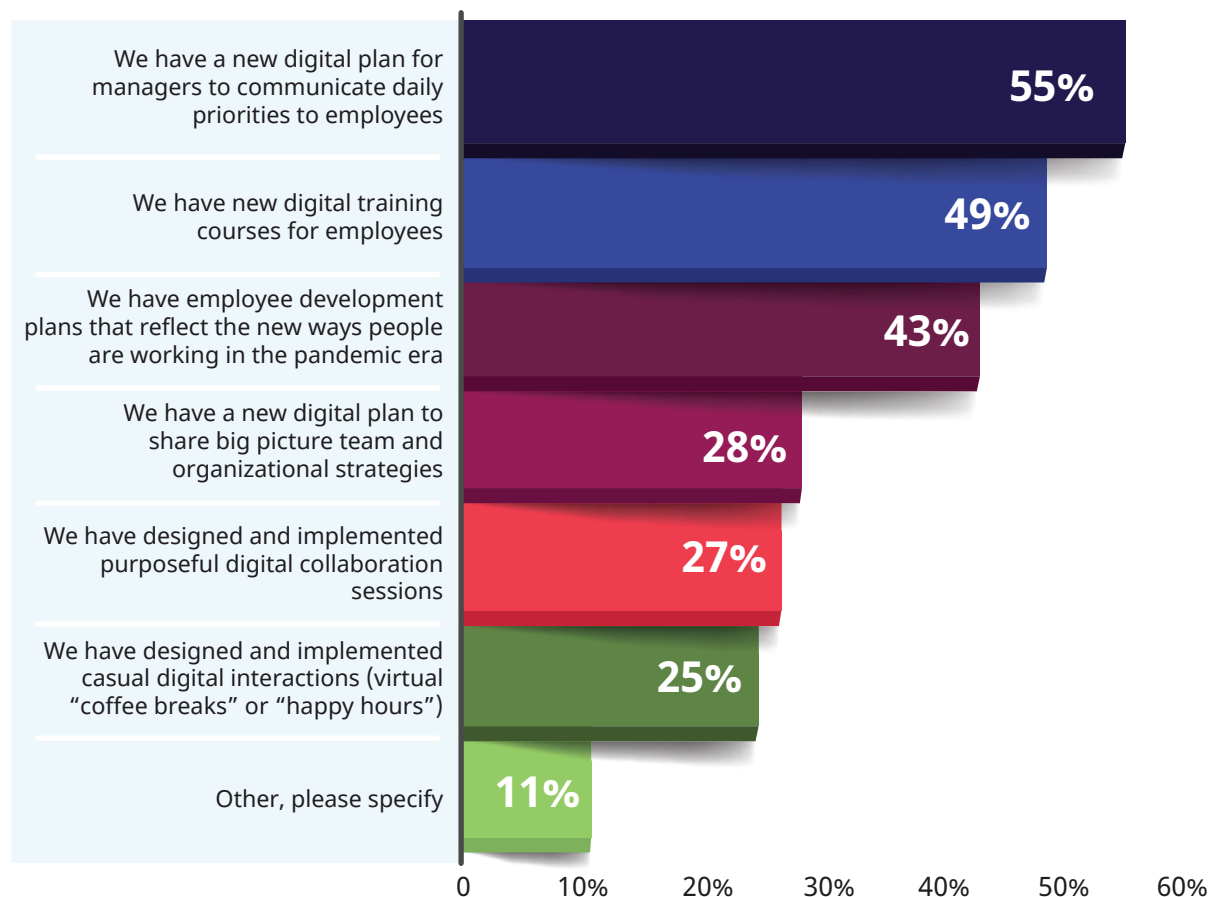
who can easily adapt new, digitally inclined business models to manage clients, build clients and conduct job tasks online. Also, given that the growth in the Ghanaian economy is largely driven by the services sector, enterprises require people who can effectively communicate their brands to a wider network in a creative style and through digital means.



On the other hand, the least-ranked skills included foreign language skills, with just five per cent of enterprises thinking it was very important. This

was followed by organizational skills and attention to detail as just one in every ten enterprises cited it as the most important skills for business success.

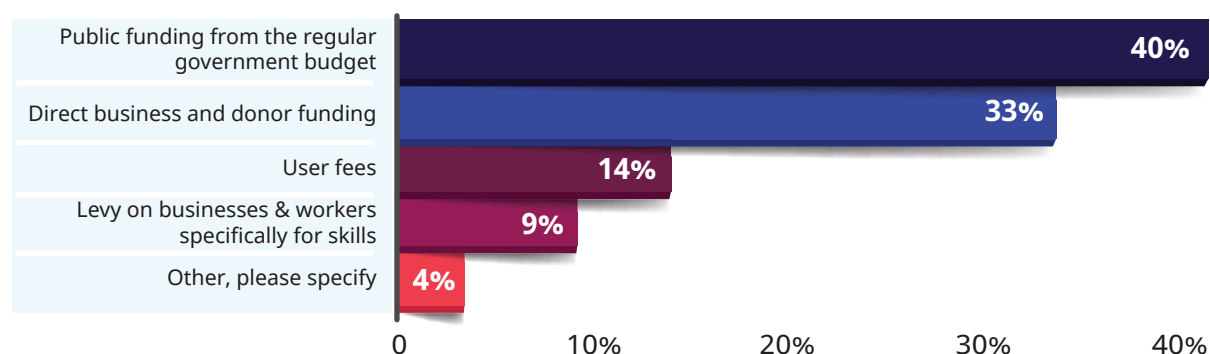
Figure 15. How have you changed the ways in which you train, collaborate and share knowledge during the pandemic?



The type of skills anticipation for business success played a critical role in shaping the ways enterprises train, collaborate and share knowledge during the pandemic. This was evident as a majority (55 per cent) of the enterprises in Ghana indicated that they have instituted new digital training courses for their employees. Also,

nearly one in every two (49 per cent) enterprises said it had developed a new digital plan for a manager to communicate daily priorities to employees. However, the least cited way of training or collaboration was the design and implementation of new casual digital interaction such as virtual coffee breaks or happy hours.

Figure 16. Which model for funding postpandemic skills development is most suitable?



One key observation during our interviews was that, even though opportunities may surface from the wave of innovations, displaced workers may encounter challenges in their transition to new jobs. The rate of digital transformation may outpace efforts to retool and upskill talent, potentially leading to a supply and demand mismatch. Concerns have been raised about the potential intensification of the vulnerability of many low-skilled workers and rural inhabitants who are in occupations with low potential for remote work. It is widely anticipated that informal sector workers, who depend on their daily wages to survive, with minimal social protection, risk plunging into extreme poverty and that gender gaps are starkly apparent given the predominance of female workers in the informal economy.

To curtail the situation, there is the need to fund post-pandemic skills development. Meanwhile, when it comes to issues of funding, there are often divergent views about the source of funds, particularly for skills development. In eliciting the most suitable model for funding post-pandemic skills development, about two out of every five enterprises cited public funding from the regular government budget as the most suitable model whereas one out of three enterprises preferred the direct business and donor funding model. The least preferred models per our survey include a levy on enterprises and workers, as well as user fees, with nine per cent and 14 per cent of enterprises citing these models respectively.

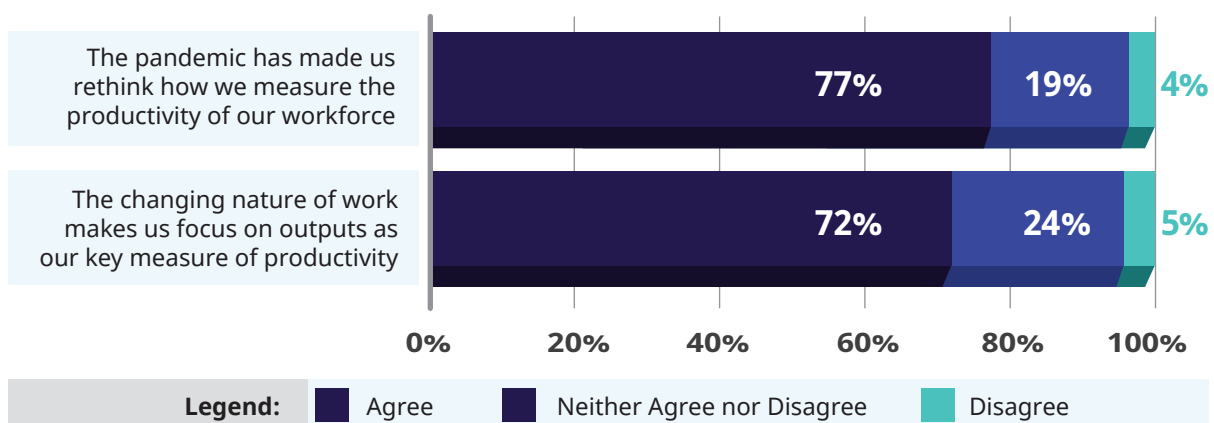


“As people [and] businesses begin to permanently adopt work from home arrangement, we must begin to critically explore reliable means of measuring performance and how jobs are done, as well as determine the measurement of work hours and new compensation systems to reflect the current dynamic nature of work”



The increasing change in skills required and the changing nature of work are compelling enterprises to rethink labour productivity. The survey shows that 77 per cent of enterprises in Ghana had to rethink how they measure the productivity of their workforce since the outbreak of the pandemic. At the same time, 72 per cent of these enterprises revealed that the changing nature of work was making them focus on outputs as their key measure of productivity. This trend will reinforce the adoption of remote work systems in the Ghanaian labour market.

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

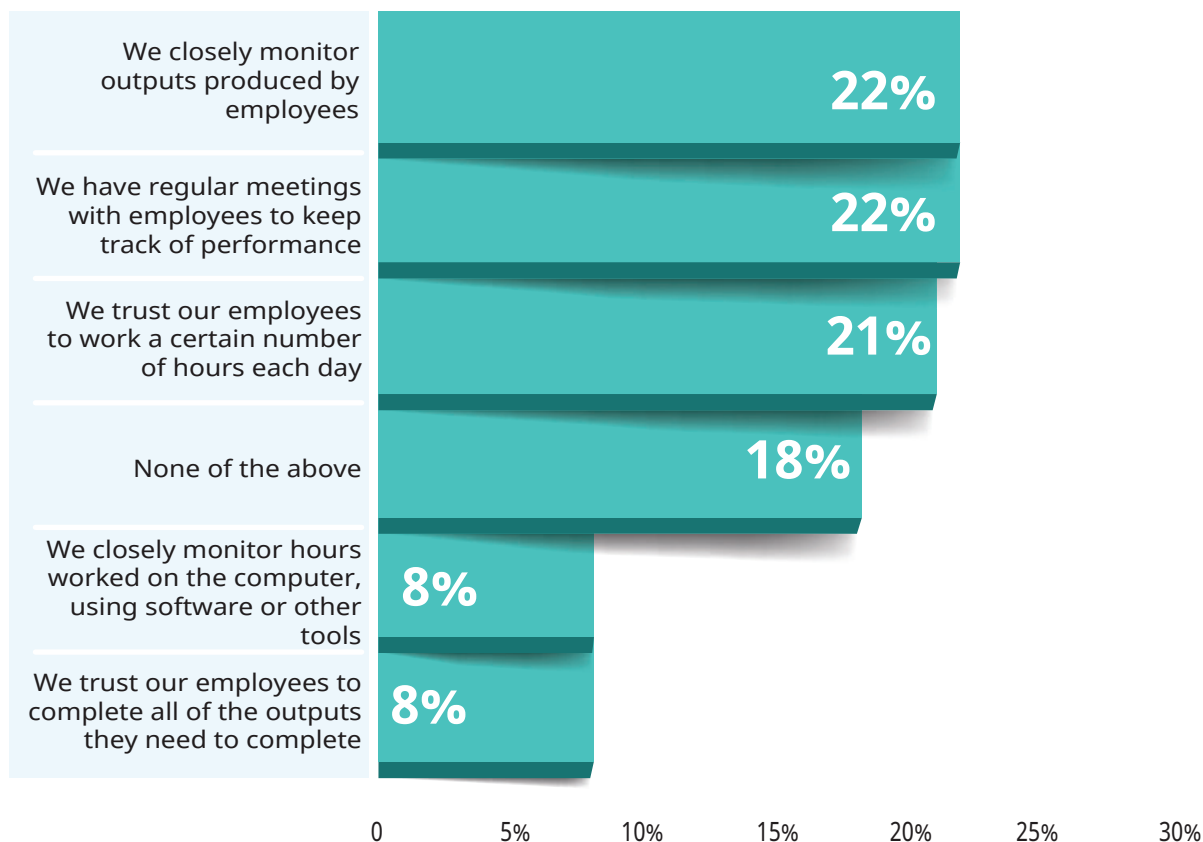


The only concern, however, will be the ease of determining a reliable and fair mechanism for measuring the performance and productivity of the various workforces. This is because the approach for measuring the performance of a

worker in the production unit may not necessarily be the same as for a worker in the sales department of the same company. Therefore, if the fairness in approach of measurement is not ensured, it may give rise to industrial disputes.



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



With regard to how enterprises monitored the performance of remote employees during the pandemic, a vast number of approaches were suggested. There was a split decision (22 per cent) between the enterprises that closely monitored the output produced by employees and those who had regular meetings with employees in order to keep track of their performance. The survey also revealed that 18 per cent of the enterprises trusted their employees to complete all of the outputs they needed to complete in a timely and professional manner. Meanwhile, just about 8 per cent of enterprises had systems such as software and other tools in place to monitor the hours worked by employees on the computer whereas 8 per cent relied on trust in their employees to work a certain number of hours each day.

“Google sheets have been adopted to complete daily reports. These sheets are usually being accessed and monitored remotely by Supervisors on regular basis to ensure that employee performance does not drop”

It is not surprising that approximately one in every five enterprises (21 per cent) did not use any of the above approaches, implying that they either do not have any method in place to monitor the performance of remote workers or their method of monitoring was not considered in the survey.



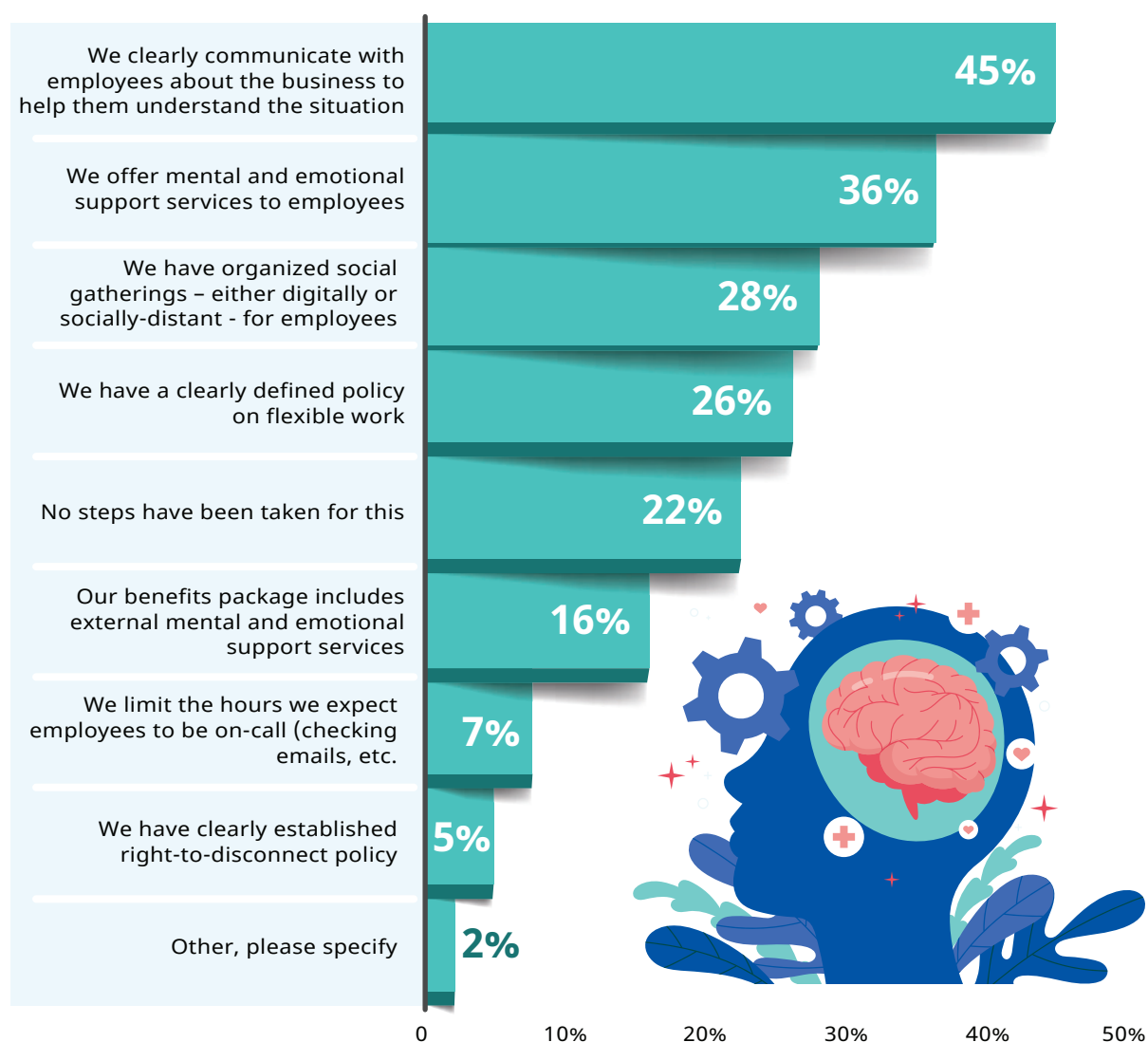


HUMAN RESOURCES

The Covid-19 pandemic has created a complex and challenging environment for managers and human resource management (HRM) practitioners, who needed to find creative solutions to ensure the continuity of their companies and to help their employees cope with the extraordinary crisis. The pandemic has led to several changes in

the processes of safety at work, training, work organization, recruitment and selection, reception and integration, as well as communication in the work environment. Amid growing telework, some enterprises have implemented some activities and practices to support their employees while they were far from each other and the workplace.

Figure 19. What steps have you taken to support the mental and emotional wellbeing of your employees, including those working both inperson and remotely?



When asked about the steps taken to support the mental and emotional wellbeing of their employees including those working both in-person and remotely, 45 per cent of the enterprises revealed that they communicate with employees about the business to help them to understand the situation and reduce uncertainty. A little over one-third (36 per cent) of the enterprises indicated that they offer mental and emotional support services to employees and 28 per cent of them said they organize either socially distanced or digital social gatherings for their employees. Given the growth in the adoption of remote work, one out of every four of the enterprises surveyed indicated that they have a clearly defined policy on flexible work. On the other hand, 22 per cent

of the enterprises surveyed said they had taken no action at all about the mental and emotional wellbeing of their employees. The least cited step by the enterprises was an established right-to disconnect policy, with just about five per cent of the respondents declaring they had taken such a measure.

Apart from being applied in a context of unexpected changes, these practices are new for employees and managers, who have not been previously trained or psychologically prepared for such changes. This may lead to an increase in their perceptions of person-environment misfit and dissatisfaction if they prefer the face-to-face interactions they used to have before the pandemic.



“The overall challenge for trade unions during the pandemic had to do with retrenchment and lay-offs, job insecurity arising from revenue losses of companies, pay cuts and a declining standard of living”

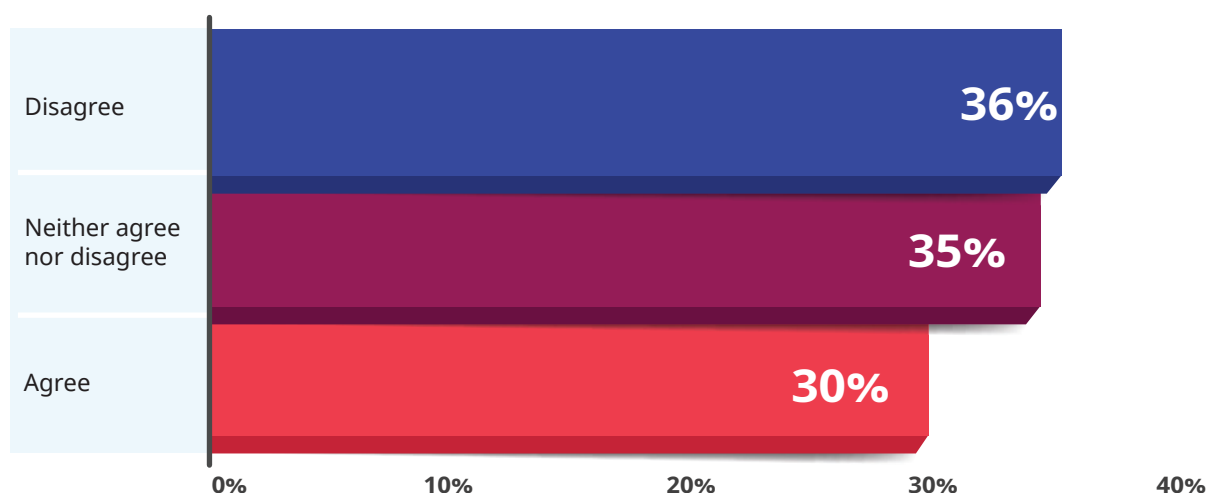


As indicated earlier, the pandemic has compelled some enterprises to make difficult human resources decisions in a bid to adapt to the changing nature of work. The hardest-hit enterprises had limited options other than to consider cutting the number

of employees, particularly casual, temporary, and low-skilled employees. Nonetheless, some enterprises also took on new employees for several reasons including an upsurge in demand and hence the need for production expansion, the establishment of IT departments to support digital operations at work, and in some cases a split in roles because the new remote work arrangement.

Concerning the scope of recruitment, 36 per cent of the enterprises did not change their hiring criteria to include new groups of workers they had not considered previously. However, three out of 10 enterprises surveyed reported that their hiring criteria now include new groups of workers such as fully remote employees not living near the enterprise. This is not surprising because the increasing adoption of remote work is gradually fading out the monomodal notion about physical work settings in favour of hybrid workspaces.

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

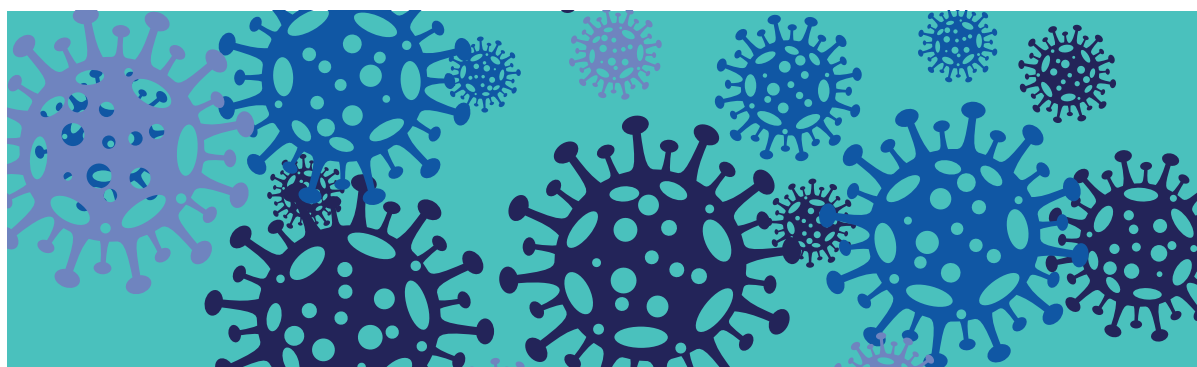


Finally, the pandemic has brought significant changes to the world of work. Even though some of the changes fade may away after the crisis, some of them are here to stay and hence may have an unforeseen impact on the future of work. When asked about the most significant ways their workforce will change in the next three to five years compared to the pre-pandemic era, Ghanaian enterprises gave varying responses. However, the most common descriptions were centered on themes including digital, technology, agile, improve, remote, innovative, efficient, virtual, positive, resilient, and creative.

It is beyond doubt that the current changes at work will affect leadership styles in managing people. One key question is “how can enterprises create superior leader communication to allow feedback and mentoring to happen effectively as people opt for remote work?” Although there is no one-size-fits-all answer to this question, human resource managers and leaders at work need to balance optimism and realism in their communications with employees while demonstrating skills such as charisma. Enterprises need to continue to invest in the development of employees to build new skills to function effectively in new work settings.

Figure 21. ONE word that describes describe the most significant way your workforce will change in the next three to five years, compared to how it looked before Covid.

**INCREASE EFFICIENT
REMOTE BETTER
DIGITAL
TECHNOLOGY
IMPROVE NONE
POSITIVE INNOVATE
VIRTUAL
FLUID GOOD FORWARD TREMENDOUS OFFICEWORK SKILLED**





CONCLUSION

The impact of Covid-19 on work, the workforce, and the workplace will persist even after the health crisis has subsided. This survey report highlights the major changes occasioned by the pandemic on workplaces in Ghana, as well as the current interventions and plans of enterprises towards the emerging new world of work. Given that “extreme events” often provide windows into identifying and understanding dynamics that are important but not necessarily visible during normal conditions, the actual long-term impacts of the pandemic can only be inferred. The evidence in this survey suggests that workplace transitions may be larger in scale than we estimated before the pandemic. This raises many concerns regarding the exact nature, opportunities and challenges of future workplaces.

How will growing remote work affect job satisfaction and productivity? What efficient employee appraisal systems should be implemented to evaluate the performance of virtual employees? Must legislation on worker compensation cover an injured employee outside

the workspace? What are the implications of online recruitment on the moral hazards of employees? Do domestic tax obligations apply to a remote worker in jurisdictions other than Ghana? How will hours of work for telework be measured? Must employers continue to pay for fuel allowances even as employees work remotely?

The pandemic will eventually fade, but the agility and creativity of policymakers and enterprises evident during the crisis will need to continue, to find effective responses to the looming workforce challenges. As we turn around the clock to charting a new path towards the future, there is a need to revise legislation that guides employment relations to make them conform to the pace of change in the world of work. Enterprises have a new opportunity to reimagine how and where work is done, rethink recruitment and retrain employees but Ghana Employers’ Association has a bigger role to help enterprises make the right decisions while advocating for the implementation of policies capable of creating the needed business environment for employers to thrive.



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