Reflektive

Benchmark Report

Employee Sentiment During COVID-19

Table of Contents

01 Introduction

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In the past few months, countries around the world have witnessed an unprecedented health crisis, impacting their health systems, economies, and businesses. People have been told to shelter-in-place, and work from home if they can. Very quickly, many companies have become 100% remote.

In light of this, Reflektive developed an employee engagement survey - the Coronavirus Sentiment Survey - to help companies assess how they're supporting employees during this unprecedented time. In a couple of weeks, dozens of Reflektive customers completed this survey -- including 32,000 responses and 4,000 comments from employees around the world.

With this data, we have crafted an in-depth report on employee sentiment during this time. In addition to the current state of employee engagement, we've also included successful programs and best practices from our customers around the world. Keep reading for insights on employee challenges, bright spots, and what's coming next in 2020.
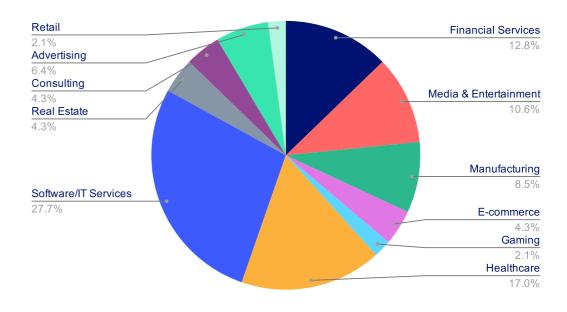
MORE RESOURCES

Evaluate company efforts around COVID-19 with our new Coronavirus Sentiment Survey
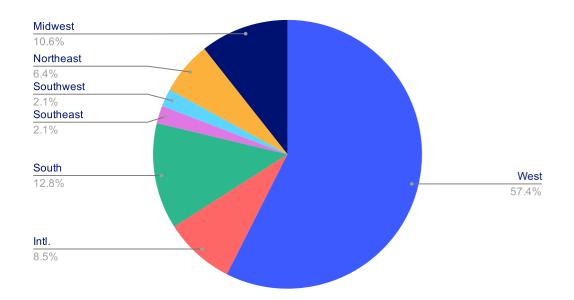
Read now →

Customer Breakdown

As part of our Coronavirus Sentiment Survey, we surveyed dozens of Reflektive customers and received thousands of responses from employees around the world. Here's a breakdown of the companies that participated in the survey.

Industry Breakdown

Retail
2.1%
Advertising
6.4%
Consulting
4.3%
Real Estate
4.3%
Software/IT Services
27.7%

Financial Services
12.8%
Media & Entertainment
10.6%
Manufacturing
8.5%
E-commerce
4.3%
Gaming
2.1%
Healthcare
17.0%
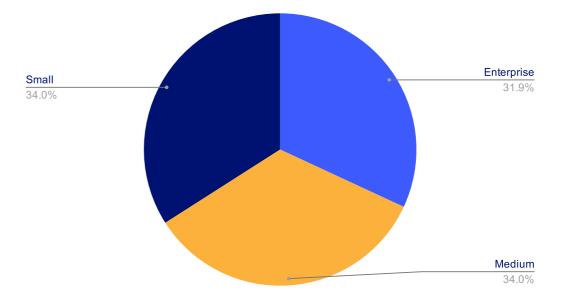
Company Location Breakdown

Midwest
10.6%
Northeast
6.4%
Southwest
2.1%
Southeast
2.1%
South
12.8%
Intl.
8.5%

West
57.4%

Company Size Breakdown

Small
34.0%

Enterprise
31.9%

Medium
34.0%

02 Summary: Favorable Employee Sentiment While Working Remotely

The Coronavirus Sentiment Survey results were positive overall. Of the five questions included in the survey, **76-92% of employees responded favorably.** We believe that there are two major factors contributing to this positive sentiment:

1. Reflektive customers invest in performance management tools, such as recognition and 1:1s, which in turn boost engagement and productivity

2. Employees are exhibiting significant resilience during this crisis, most likely thanks to support from managers and leadership

The positive employee sentiment overall indicated that companies are taking the right steps to support their workforce. "I'm thrilled that so many of our customers are putting employee safety and well-being first," says Greg Brown, CEO of Reflektive. "They implemented the right programs - fast - to help their workforce during this transition. Reflektive will continue supporting our customers with tools to drive alignment, engagement, and productivity during this time."

Key Takeaways

Employees at **large organizations** are more likely to feel engaged, productive, and supported

The **biggest challenges** for employees now are a lack of alignment, isolation, and technical difficulties

Remote productivity is not linked to remote work experience, as gaming and advertising employees have lower productivity
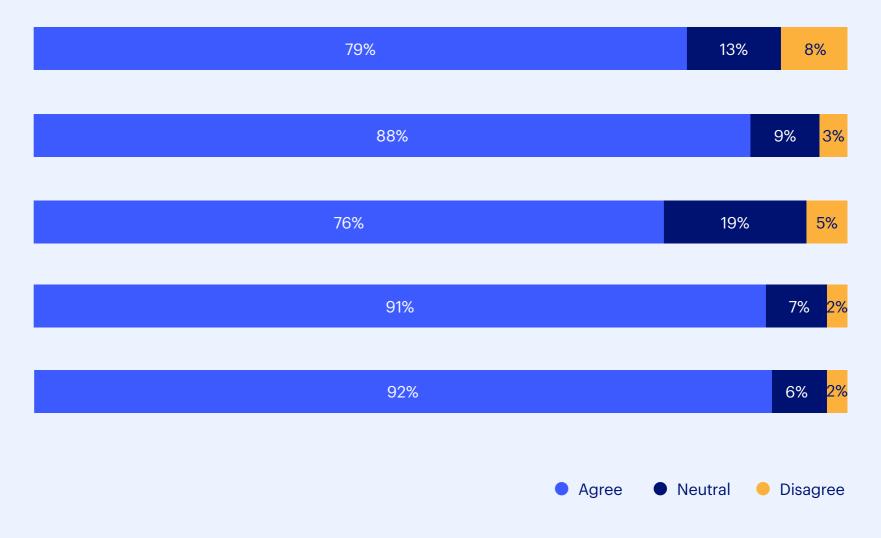
The **bright spots** for employees are support from managers and feeling safe while they work from home

Employees in the **financial services** industry report the most positive sentiment

High Employee Engagement Across All Survey Questions

Question

Results

1. I am as productive at home as I am in the office.

79%	13%	8%

2. I have the tools and resources I need to work productively.

88%	9%	3%

3. I feel connected to my colleagues.

76%	19%	5%

4. I feel supported by my manager.

91%	7%	2%

5. My company is taking the appropriate measures to address the current situation and provide employees with peace of mind.

92%	6%	2%

● Agree   ● Neutral   ● Disagree

03 Gender Insights

Men reported higher dissatisfaction on support and productivity

Compared to female respondents, male respondents were:

97% more likely to strongly disagree that their company is taking appropriate measures
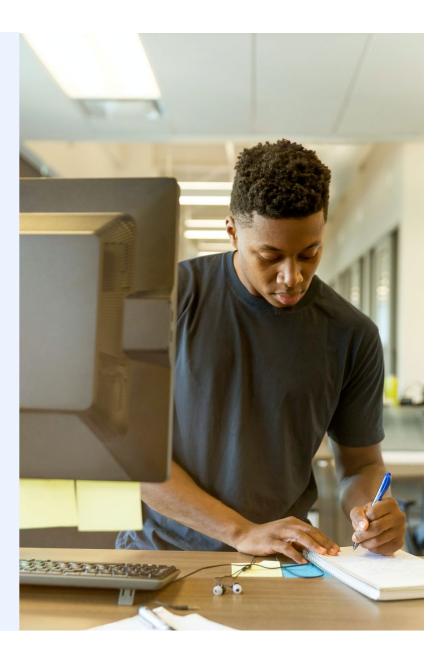
75% more likely to strongly disagree that they feel supported by their manager

38% more likely to strongly disagree that they're as productive at home as they are in the office

BEST PRACTICE

One Team, Many Voices

To address the gender gap, Rachel Ernst, Reflektive's VP of Employee Success says, "For any team working on company-wide or department-wide action plans, make sure there's representation across gender, team, department, and location. When all voices are heard, companies can develop the right programs and solutions to address employee needs."

04 Department Insights

We uncovered interesting discrepancies when we analyzed survey data by department. The shift to remote work has impacted groups differently, resulting in varying levels of productivity, engagement, and connectedness.

HR and Legal teams report the lowest rates of productivity

HR and Legal & Compliance teams reported that they feel less productive -- about **12%** and **16%** below average, respectively. These two teams are most heavily impacted by the crisis. HR practitioners are working overtime on workforce planning, employee connectivity, and the new role that they're playing in their company, causing them to feel stressed and overwhelmed. Similarly, legal teams need to keep up with a flood of new legislation, adding to their stress as well.

Customer Success teams struggle with engagement

During this time of uncertainty, Customer Success (CS) teams are more likely to report lower engagement versus their peers. CS teams are **1.3X more likely to feel unsupported** by their manager and are least likely to agree that their company is taking appropriate measures to address the current situation. CS employees were more impacted by not being in the office with their peers. They specifically struggled with cross-functional communication.

In the survey comments, many CS employees cited challenges getting answers from their peers. Given the longer turnaround time for their responses, CS teams may feel more stress and pressure from customers.

IT & Support teams give high marks to their company's efforts

One of the bright spots in the departmental results was that IT & Support teams report **very high satisfaction rates.** This group has the highest:

- Peer connection
- Manager support
- Satisfaction with the actions of their company

Aaron Giles, Director of IT at Reflektive, finds these results consistent with his observations. "IT teams are comfortable using technology tools remotely, and can more easily adapt to this new environment. Helping our colleagues navigate this new normal - and ensuring they have what they need to work from home productively - also gives us a lot of satisfaction in our work."

BEST PRACTICES

Boost Productivity
When teams report lower productivity, Rachel Ernst recommends taking a quick follow-up survey - or developing a small taskforce - to better understand what is causing this issue. "For instance, if we learn that a team is overwhelmed with work at this time, we can partner with their leaders to better prioritize and chart a path forward."

Foster Cross-functional Communication
When employees struggle to get the product information they need, Marc Caltabiano, Chief Product Officer at Reflektive, recommends "having a process in place whereby all employees can post questions to a dedicated product channel in their communication tool. At Reflektive, experts in San Francisco or India will respond within 24 hours at the latest."

05 Industry Insights

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Another meaningful indicator for employee sentiment during COVID-19 is the respondent's industry. We uncovered discrepancies among ecommerce, financial services, gaming, and advertising employees in particular.

Employees without productivity tools feel less connected and supported

We saw a correlation between a lack of productivity tools and a broader sense of disconnectedness among respondents. The employees most impacted by this were in ecommerce and manufacturing. Both groups of employees were less likely to have the tools needed to work productively.

In a similar vein, both manufacturing and ecommerce employees reported lower rates of satisfaction versus their peers.

Manufacturing Employees

46% more likely to disagree that they have helpful tools and resources

32% feel very strongly about employee connection (compared to 40% of all respondents)

Ecommerce Employees

111% more likely to disagree that they have helpful tools and resources

34% feel very strongly about employee connection (compared to 40% of all respondents)

56% feel very strongly about manager support (compared to 70% of all respondents)

BEST PRACTICE

Integrate into Productivity Tools
Having the right tools can make a difference in employee sentiment. Many respondents were grateful to have Slack, Microsoft Teams, and Gmail to communicate with their managers and colleagues. Reflektive's integrations with these platforms help to drive alignment and connectedness while workers are remote.

MORE RESOURCES

Getting the most of out of your productivity tools with Reflektive

Read now →

Financial services employees report the most positive sentiment

The industry in which employees feel the most connected, supported, and happy with their company's efforts is financial services.

Financial Services Employees

9% more likely to feel very connected

9% more likely to feel very supported by their manager

Financial services employees may have higher engagement because of the the resilience they developed during the 2008 financial crisis.

Remote productivity not linked to remote work experience

Strangely, there is an inverse correlation between employees with the flexibility to work remotely - such as advertising and gaming employees - and their ability to stay productive while remote.

Gaming and Advertising Employees
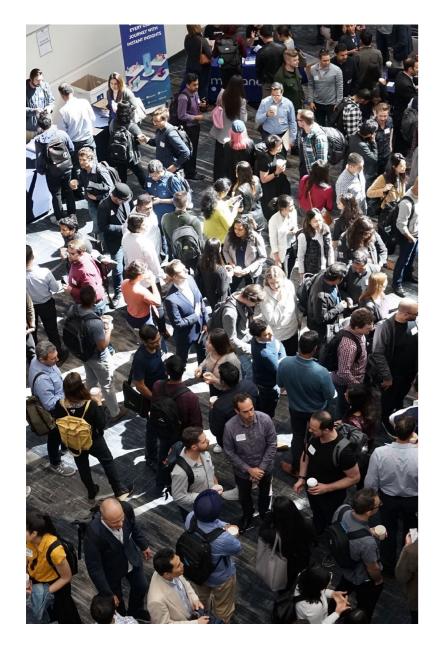
19% and **10%** less likely, respectively, to report high productivity

Advertising employees in particular say that it's difficult to separate home from work and "get into the groove". Employees in creative industries may benefit more from peer interaction, such as whiteboarding in the office. Without these in-person connections, staying productive is more challenging for them.

06 Insights by Company Size

Employees at larger companies have higher engagement than their peers at smaller organizations

Compared to Small Companies

Workers at organizations with over 1,000 employees are:

Almost **50%** more likely to feel strongly connected to their peers

50% more likely to strongly agree that they're as productive at home

Compared to Mid-sized Companies

Workers at large companies are:

21% more likely to feel strongly supported by their manager

26% more likely to strongly agree that they have the tools and resources to work productively

Larger companies have more resources and staff to better address the needs of their workforce. Per Jackie Ward, Chief Human Resources Officer at Newport Group, "We had anecdotal feedback that childcare was a concern for our people working remotely during COVID-19 but Reflektive's Coronavirus Sentiment Survey gave us much deeper insight into that challenge. We were able to respond by providing more tools and resources on our intranet for working parents and educating managers to use their check-ins to look at how we could better support working parents through flexible working."

07 Employee Challenges

Despite the positive responses overall from employees, their comments highlighted a number of challenges that they face while working remotely. From their home office set-up to feelings of isolation, employees chimed in on their true sentiment -- and what employers can do to help.

Lack of Alignment

A major obstacle for employees while they work remotely is communicating effectively, and aligning on key priorities. Some respondents wanted more direction to ensure that they were marching towards the same goal.

BEST PRACTICE

Drive Alignment
Driving alignment - and prioritizing the most important initiatives - is crucial for companies and employees to successfully navigate this time of uncertainty. Goals, check-ins, and 1:1 tools can help workers stay aligned with their managers and peers. HelpSystems ran Reflektive's Coronavirus Sentiment Survey, and identified a need for more frequent team communications. Ali Jonswold, Manager of Workplace Experience, HelpSystems, says, "To stay in-sync with their colleagues, we're encouraging employees to have weekly check-ins with teams and managers. Reflektive's 1:1s help our managers understand what is top-of-mind for employees, and have richer conversations that enable them to work better during this time of change."
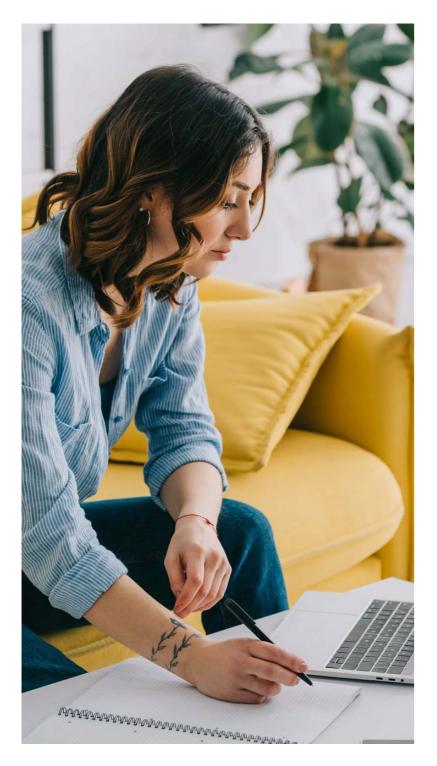
HOW REFLEKTIVE HELPS

Increase performance by 3x with better company, team, and individual alignment

See Goals →

Increase employee retention by over 3x with better 1:1 meetings

See 1:1s →

Isolation and Lack of Meaningful Connection

Despite the prevalence of Slack messages, texts, and emails, employees cite feelings of loneliness while they work remotely. The current pandemic exacerbates employee circumstances, particularly for those who live on their own. Some respondents cited a desire for frequent virtual gatherings to boost morale.

Uneven Technology Adoption

Another major challenge that we observed was inconsistent technology usage by employees. Some workers said they were new to certain platforms and unable to "figure them out". Other employees said that their peers were using different technology, which made it challenging to get work done.

BEST PRACTICE

Create Opportunities for Connection
"When we ran our Coronavirus Sentiment Survey here at Reflektive, we found that employees were seeking more meaningful connections. We decided to roll out a weekly CEO Fireside Chat, weekly social hours, and a social calendar so folks can engage with peers across teams. Feedback has been great so far -- we plan to keep these initiatives going." -- Greg Brown, CEO, Reflektive

BEST PRACTICE

Use an Intranet Page
Aaron Giles, Director of IT at Reflektive, recommends creating an intranet page dedicated to technical resources. It can include software available to employees, how-to guides, and best practices for adoption. This will give employees visibility into what software other departments are using, and can help limit software redundancy. The goal is to prevent teams from adopting "software silos", which can eventually inhibit your company's culture by creating information and communication blocks.

Lack of Timely, Consistent Updates

At the company-wide level, employees also expressed frustration about the lack of consistency in messaging and communication. Some respondents said that they heard conflicting messages from different teams across their company.

BEST PRACTICE

Concerted, Company-wide Communications

For this issue, Rachel Ernst recommends concerted, company-wide communications. Email communications should come from the C-Suite, and be sent to all employees. Weekly all-hands meetings or fireside chats provide a forum for executive updates, and for employees to ask questions as well. Additionally, messages should be reiterated in multiple channels so employees are more likely to remember them. "When we have an all-hands meeting, we always follow-up with an email communication and the PowerPoint slides so employees have that information on-hand. We also discuss what important information needs to be cascaded down to teams in our weekly executive staff meetings," says Rachel.

Low Empathy for Employees' Personal Circumstances

Finally, companies can do a better job of considering employees' personal circumstances. Some employees cited burnout with work and home responsibilities, and felt that their situations were not adequately acknowledged by their company.

BEST PRACTICE

Be Mindful

It's a delicate balance to continue striving towards business goals while being mindful of the myriad stressors on employees. After running the Coronavirus Sentiment Survey, the Reflektive leadership team decided to offer a Mental Health Day to all employees. Rachel Ernst says, "The pandemic has impacted employees in different ways, but they continue to put so much effort into their work at Reflektive. We thought it was important to give employees a day of rest and recuperation."

Financial uncertainty
lacking empathy
Feeling supported
Management is supportive
Need more company wide meetings
Things are going well
Anxiety around global pandemic   conversations take longer
food subsidy distractions at home
sufficient resources available
Feeling isolated   Less productive at home
Feeling connected Need more resources
concerns around job security   Regular updates are appreciated
lacking timely, consistent communication
workload is too high   More video conferencing   Show empathy
more productive working from home
too many meetings   miss face to face interaction   collaboration is challenging
home office setup isn't sufficient
difficult to disconnect from work   Video Conferencing helps maintain connections
Managing workload & caring for children is challenging
Transparency is key Focus on mental health   Promote work/life balance
Technical Difficulties   Lacking manager support
Focus on employee safety above government mandates difficult to communicate
More informal opportunities to connect

Word cloud on the most common phrases from employee comments

08 Employee Bright Spots

There are several reasons for companies to be optimistic about employee sentiment! Notable wins for companies include employee appreciation for their "safety first" mentality, strong manager support, and higher productivity.

Increased Productivity

One of the most prevalent comment themes from employees was feeling higher productivity when they work from home. Employees cited the lack of commute and fewer distractions from colleagues as the main reasons that they were able to accomplish more at home.

Support from Managers

Employee performance was also boosted by strong relationships with management. Managers are providing empathy, and helping to drive "employee-first" mentalities at companies.

Per Rachel Ernst, "Nothing unites humans more than a good struggle. This means managers and employees are in the same boat with what they are experiencing. This time of uncertainty creates a unique opportunity to build empathy and deepen rapport between employees and managers."

Feeling Safe

Finally, employees were appreciative that employers prioritized safety first and foremost. During this time of crisis, employees feel gratitude that their companies are doing what they can to keep workers healthy. Employees can more easily stay engaged and productive when they're not worrying about their health as well.

09 Conclusion

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There are many reasons for companies to be optimistic during this time of uncertainty. Many employees feel that they can stay productive and engaged while they're working remotely. Additionally, managers and peers are exhibiting more empathy, driving feelings of connectedness and support.

However, as companies adjust to "the new normal", they need to continue prioritizing effective communication, alignment, and cross-team collaboration. "We're excited about the positive results from the survey," says Rachel Ernst. "But more work needs to be done. With the right programs and initiatives in place, companies can really make employees feel together -- even when they're apart."

10 Appendix

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These tables include employee sentiment breakdowns by industry. A score of 5 represents "Strongly Agree", and a score of 1 represents "Strongly Disagree". Each column represents the percentage of employees who marked that particular score. The top row represents the overall results.

	1	2	3	4	5
I am as productive at home as I am in the office.	**1.93%**	**5.80%**	**13.45%**	**25.74%**	**53.08%**
Advertising	1.60%	8.00%	14.80%	27.20%	48.40%
Consulting	1.62%	2.70%	7.01%	25.34%	63.34%
E-commerce	2.36%	8.40%	14.96%	21.52%	52.76%
Financial Services	1.08%	3.99%	10.77%	25.21%	58.96%
Gaming	3.23%	3.76%	15.59%	32.80%	44.62%
Healthcare	2.24%	5.70%	11.91%	23.25%	56.90%
Manufacturing	3.04%	8.45%	18.58%	30.07%	39.86%
Media & Entertainment	0.50%	3.00%	15.50%	28.50%	52.50%
Real Estate	4.16%	12.24%	21.71%	31.64%	30.25%
Retail	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	15.00%	70.00%
Software/IT Services	1.84%	6.39%	15.28%	25.35%	51.14%
I feel connected to my colleagues.	**1.01%**	**4.16%**	**19.25%**	**35.50%**	**40.09%**
Advertising	0.40%	4.00%	18.40%	39.60%	37.60%
Consulting	1.35%	2.43%	14.02%	29.65%	52.56%
E-commerce	1.03%	4.62%	19.74%	40.51%	34.10%
Financial Services	0.80%	3.13%	18.72%	33.64%	43.71%
Gaming	1.60%	5.32%	14.89%	41.49%	36.70%
Healthcare	1.33%	3.82%	16.77%	34.71%	43.37%
Manufacturing	0.34%	4.70%	22.82%	39.93%	32.21%
Media & Entertainment	1.20%	6.26%	19.44%	35.42%	37.68%
Real Estate	0.46%	5.50%	27.98%	36.47%	29.59%
Retail	0.00%	0.00%	30.00%	35.00%	35.00%
Software/IT Services	1.18%	4.30%	20.95%	35.98%	37.59%
I feel supported by my manager.	**0.74%**	**1.67%**	**6.59%**	**20.58%**	**70.42%**
Advertising	0.79%	1.98%	6.75%	19.84%	70.63%
Consulting	1.63%	1.36%	8.13%	24.12%	64.77%
E-commerce	1.03%	2.82%	11.54%	28.97%	55.64%
Financial Services	0.64%	1.09%	4.95%	16.21%	77.11%
Gaming	1.59%	2.12%	6.35%	20.11%	69.84%
Healthcare	0.89%	1.86%	5.64%	18.71%	72.90%
Manufacturing	0.40%	1.99%	7.97%	25.90%	63.75%
Media & Entertainment	0.40%	2.67%	8.28%	21.76%	66.89%
Real Estate	0.23%	0.91%	5.02%	23.97%	69.86%
Retail	5.00%	0.00%	5.00%	15.00%	75.00%
Software/IT Services	0.54%	1.29%	7.19%	22.32%	68.67%

	1	2	3	4	5
I have the tools and resources I need to work productively.	**0.88%**	**2.35%**	**9.36%**	**28.48%**	**58.94%**
Advertising	0.00%	1.20%	9.24%	26.10%	63.45%
Consulting	1.62%	0.81%	4.32%	25.68%	67.57%
E-commerce	2.58%	4.23%	18.31%	32.39%	42.49%
Financial Services	0.38%	1.65%	7.03%	26.35%	64.60%
Gaming	0.53%	2.67%	6.42%	33.69%	56.68%
Healthcare	1.46%	1.75%	6.52%	24.63%	65.63%
Manufacturing	0.67%	4.03%	13.76%	31.21%	50.34%
Media & Entertainment	0.94%	3.22%	12.20%	28.95%	54.69%
Real Estate	0.46%	1.61%	11.01%	36.70%	50.23%
Retail	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	5.00%	85.00%
Software/IT Services	0.54%	3.35%	10.48%	30.67%	54.97%
My company is taking the appropriate measures to address the current situation and provide employees with peace of mind.	**0.67%**	**1.24%**	**6.40%**	**23.38%**	**68.31%**
Advertising	1.46%	2.92%	6.57%	26.28%	62.77%
Consulting	1.87%	0.53%	3.74%	20.59%	73.26%
E-commerce	0.00%	2.05%	6.41%	27.95%	63.59%
Financial Services	0.64%	1.21%	5.62%	21.76%	70.77%
Gaming	0.52%	1.05%	4.19%	18.85%	75.39%
Healthcare	0.47%	0.87%	7.02%	22.81%	68.82%
Manufacturing	0.00%	0.67%	7.67%	25.33%	66.33%
Media & Entertainment	0.66%	0.93%	6.91%	28.95%	62.55%
Real Estate	0.23%	0.00%	2.05%	16.14%	81.59%
Retail	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	15.00%	75.00%
Software/IT Services	1.17%	2.56%	9.49%	25.05%	61.73%