

Find out more  
[www.thebci.org](http://www.thebci.org)



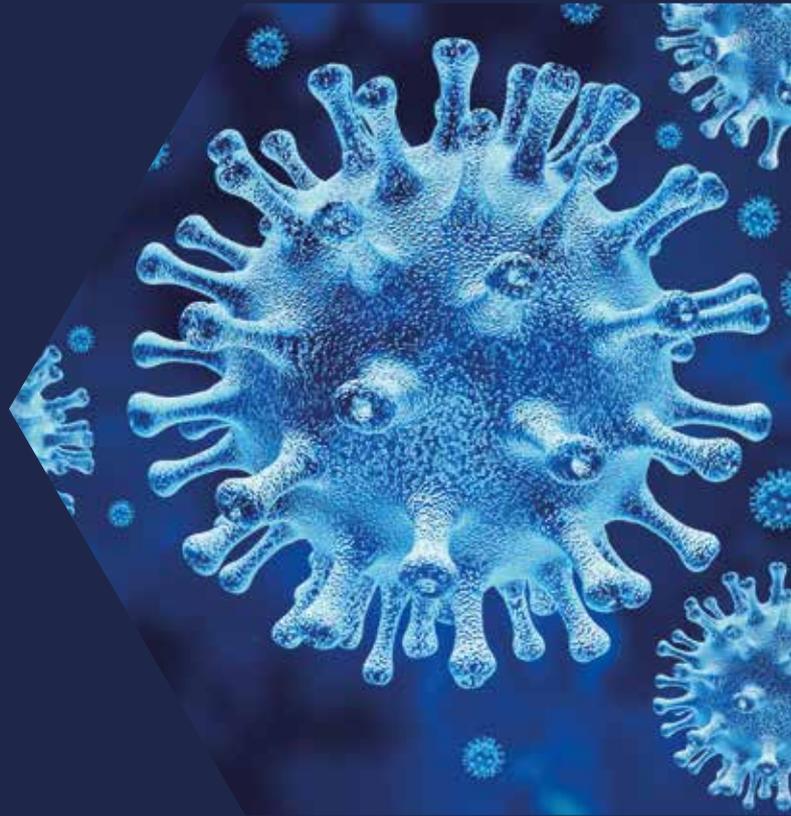
# Coronavirus

## A Pandemic Response



# Contents

5	<b>Executive Summary</b>
12	<b>Organizational preparedness and initial pandemic response</b>
27	<b>Pandemic planning</b>
34	<b>Staff Preparedness and Rehearsing/Exercising</b>
39	<b>Information Gathering and Retrieval</b>
46	<b>Recovery</b>
55	<b>Post-Coronavirus and the New Normal</b>
61	<b>Annex</b>



# Foreword

It's no exaggeration to describe the response to the COVID-19 Pandemic as the largest and most significant disruption event that has occurred in the working lives of Business Continuity professionals. The coronavirus has impacted on individuals, organizations and societies and will reshape many of them. The responses set out in this report provide a powerful account of the effect the COVID-19 Pandemic has had on organizations and how the Business Continuity profession has responded.

On one hand, the results provide a practical demonstration of the benefits of a comprehensive, well maintained Business Continuity programme as recommended by the BCI's Good Practice Guidelines. Organizations that had a tested pandemic plan in place report that they were able to respond quickly and competently. Other organizations with active horizon scanning capabilities detected the initial signs of the coronavirus while it was emerging in Wuhan, allowing them to provide early warning to senior management and a gain a head-start in response preparations.

However, other responses suggest that the speed and scale of the COVID-19 Pandemic took many organizations by surprise. Even organizations that had pandemic plans in place often found that they were closer to national or regional epidemic plans, that did not readily adjust to the broad impact and global nature of the coronavirus disruption. COVID-19 has been described as a 'Grey Swan' event, one that is both predictable and extremely disruptive, but its infrequency means it is considered unlikely to occur and so preparations are often overlooked until its effects are all too apparent.

The pandemic has raised the profile of the Business Continuity and organizational Resilience disciplines and demonstrated the valuable role of Business Continuity within organizations. This increased attention means that nearly two-thirds of respondents look forward to increased investment in the Resilience of their organization "at all levels". Such unfamiliar visibility presents an opportunity for our profession to maximise and build on.

As the world moves into a post-pandemic stage, many organizations will adopt new operating methods discovered under 'lockdown'. Offices may be occupied more flexibly, or not all, as a new understanding of the 'workplace' takes hold. As a consequence, Business Continuity practitioners will need to look again at their organizations, revisit response priorities and reimagine continuity solutions. Continuity plans and exercising methods will need major overhauls.

We have a short window of about 3 to 5-years before corporate memory fades. We must reinforce the relationships that have been built with other Resilience professionals during the pandemic period to ensure these connections endure. While we have the attention of the most senior levels of the organization, we should explore how temporary measures put in place in response to the pandemic have a value and utility beyond COVID-19. It may mean stepping outside the normal Business Continuity comfort zone to show how continuity workarounds and measures can bring organizational benefits to areas such as staff productivity and well-being, but this is a step that is well worth taking.

**Tim Janes**  
Hon FBCI, Chair of the BCI



## Foreword

This report is an important one for the Business Continuity profession, showing where we have succeeded and where we have not when it comes to COVID-19 - our biggest ever challenge as practitioners.

The report's survey responses very clearly show the scale of the impact of COVID-19: less than a quarter of businesses plan to go back to their old model as we start to emerge from this initial phase of the pandemic; and as time moves on, even those who are confident that they can return to business as usual may quickly find that there is no way back to the old model for any organization.

As the World Health Organization has been working hard to point out, COVID-19 is here to stay. It is something that society will have to adjust to: the "new normal" is not something that will be temporary.

So, organizations will need to adapt and Business Continuity professionals will also need to adapt: to new operational circumstances, but also to a new position within the organization.

Pre-pandemic organizations mainly operated in a world where Business Continuity awareness and management was the realm of specialists. In the new normal the board is going to want to get much more involved and CEOs are going to be asking a lot more questions about Business Continuity and Organizational Resilience. For Business Continuity managers, the challenge will be having the ability to take the esoteric language of the Business Continuity profession, to translate it for the board, and to relate it to the wider business strategies.

Business Continuity may well become a common board role, but it will need some rebranding and rethinking to move it away from its current specialist approach.

This report shows that Business Continuity professionals have a key role in helping their organization navigate the new landscape. This is the opportunity to show that Business Continuity is really worth the investment of time and money; this is the time to display the real value that the profession offers.

**Jon Ezrine**

Chief Executive Officer, Assurance Software, Inc.



# Coronavirus - A Pandemic Response Executive Summary





## Executive Summary

**Although Business Continuity departments were involved in early horizon scanning activity, they were typically involved when the operational response was instigated:** Where the Board (Executive Team) were leading the response, Business Continuity teams were typically engaged when the operational response was instigated. Many Executive Teams were unwilling to engage Business Continuity before sensitive strategic issues relating to the response were resolved. Therefore, when the Executive Team were leading the response, 34.2% of Business Continuity professionals were engaged before 1 February 2020. When Business Continuity were leading the response, 53.9% were engaged before 1 February.

**Although 40% of organizations had a pandemic plan, it did not guarantee success in the response:** Many organizations had built plans around previous pandemics or, in some cases, epidemics. Although two-thirds of organizations who had a pandemic plan reported a success, other organizations adopted an impact-based planning strategy instead and interviews demonstrated good success with these plans. However, agility has remained the crucial word for professionals throughout the pandemic: nearly a quarter are reviewing recovery plans daily throughout the pandemic.

**Those who had rehearsed plans found their response was more successful:** There have been many stories of how organizations hurriedly rehearsed plans at the outset of the pandemic: one of the most reported was Lloyd's of London which closed its underwriting room for the first time in 330 years as part of its pandemic plan. However, the time taken for rehearsing is clearly worthwhile: 72.7% of organizations who had rehearsed their pandemic plan in the last six months reported their staff were prepared for the pandemic compared to 35.0% of organizations who had not rehearsed their plans.

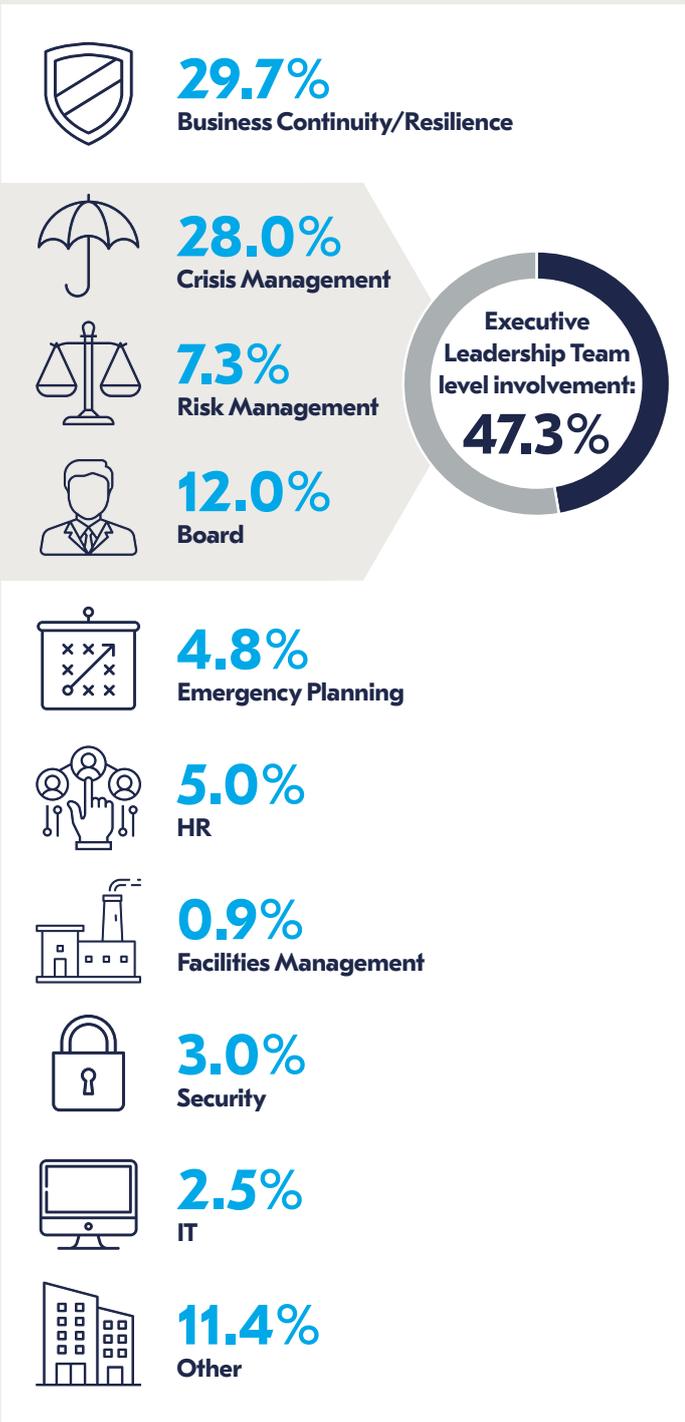
**Business Continuity professionals anticipate being heavily involved in the recovery phase:** Just 10% of professionals will not be involved in the recovery process, and two-thirds (65.3%) have already been involved. Given the uncertain nature of the path to the new normal, it would be advisable that Business Continuity are heavily involved in the response process.

**Less than a quarter of organizations plan to return to the "old normal":** Just 24.8% of organizations plan to go back to their old business model post-pandemic. Many organizations have explored new ways of working during the pandemic and, for some, have discovered business opportunities. They therefore feel reverting to their old model is no longer viable. Others are concerned that their products and services will no longer have the demand required and are concerned about the financial impact if they fail to change their business models. Whatever the path the organization takes, Business Continuity professionals will have to write plans, assess risks and build a set of documentation for their "new" business.

### Organizational preparedness and the initial response

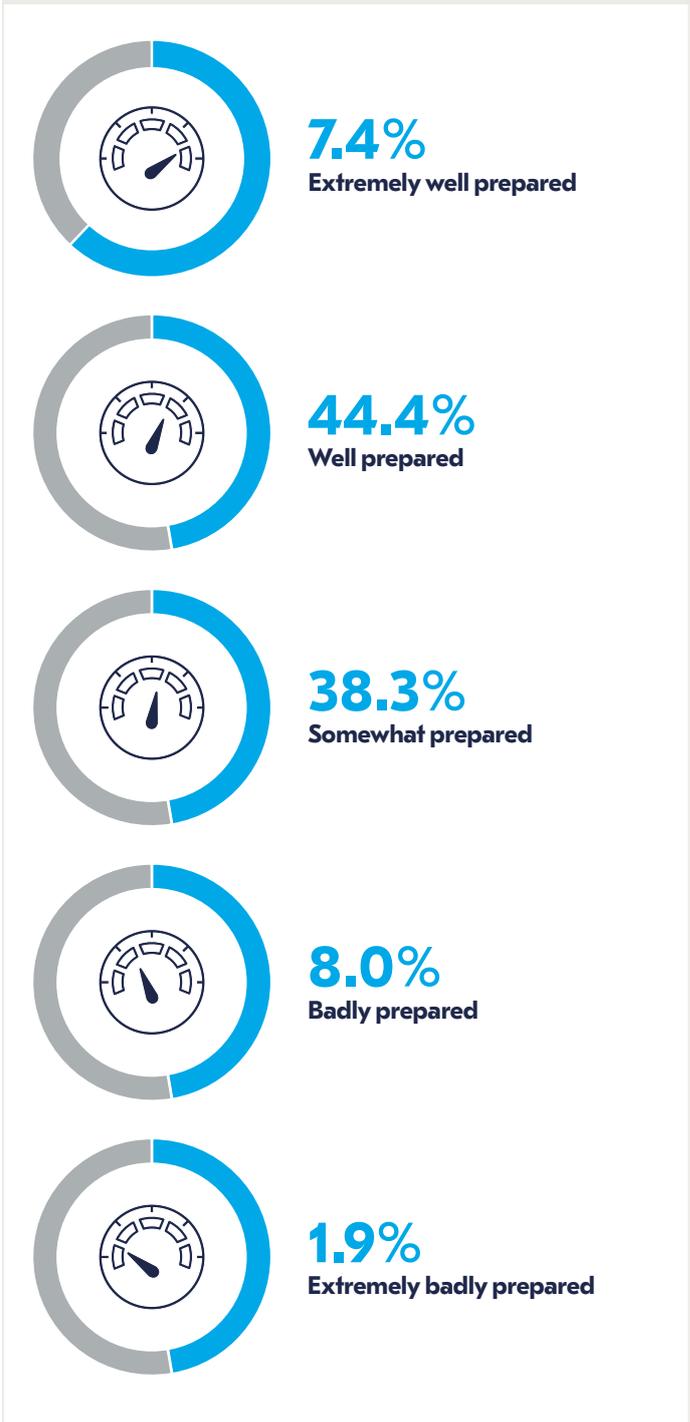
Whilst Business Continuity departments are normally tasked with leading the operational response, the Executive Leadership Team was responsible in nearly half of organizations

#### Departments responsible for leading the response to COVID-19



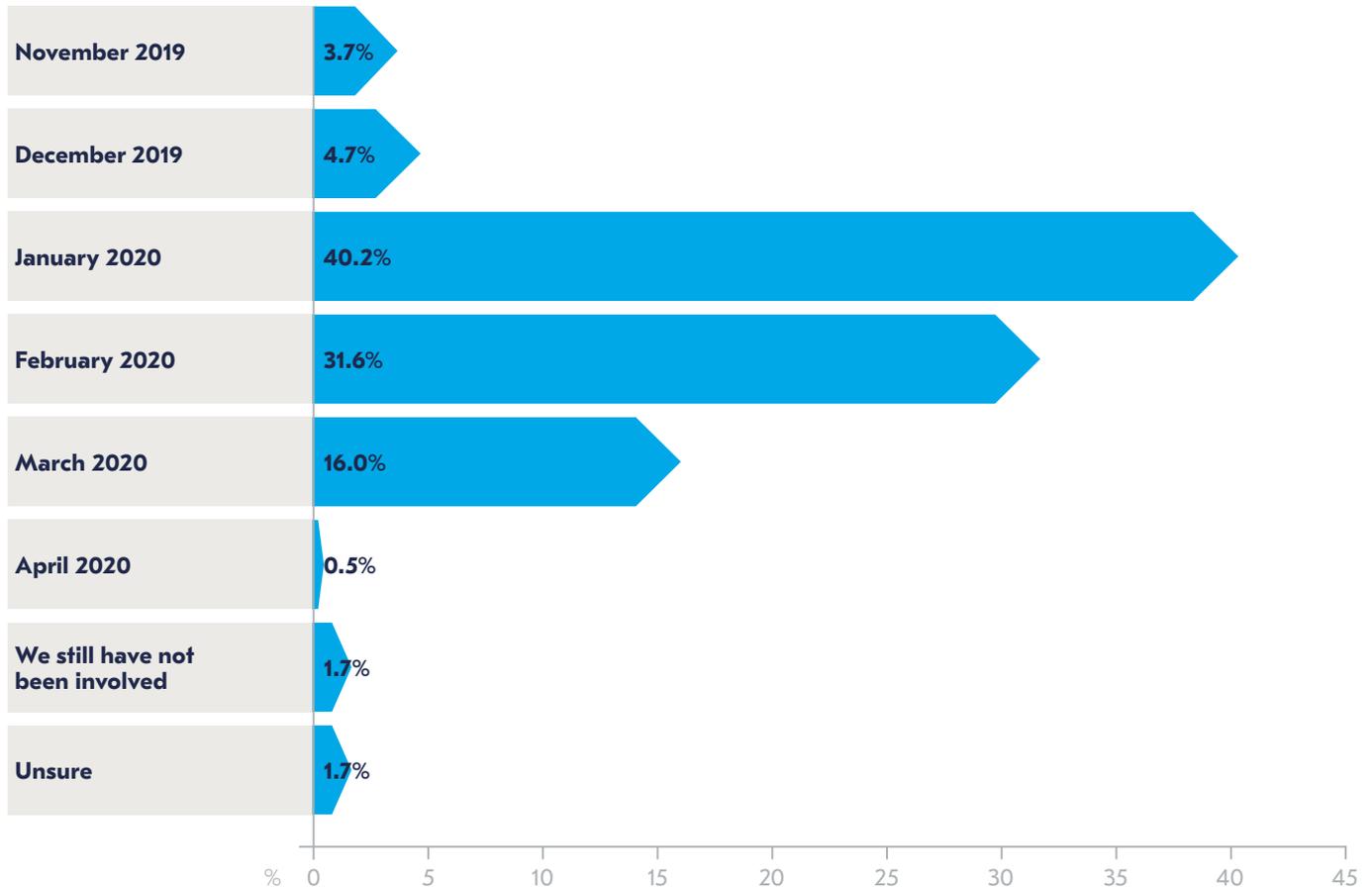
Most organizations were well prepared for the pandemic, although many overlooked supply chain issues and the impact measures such as social distancing would have on the organization

#### The level of preparedness of organizations



Although Business Continuity professionals often had early involvement in the response due to horizon scanning activities, most were typically not brought in until operational decisions had to be made

### The month that Business Continuity professionals became involved in their organizations' responses to COVID-19



### Pandemic planning

The presence of a pandemic plan does not always lead to a more successful response: some organizations had success through consequential, rather than hazard-based, planning

### The percentage of organizations who considered their plans a success based on type of plan



**56.8%**  
Pandemic-specific plan



**48.8%**  
Generic plan



**11.7%**  
No plan

Although most professionals believed the leadership of the organization had done a good job, many reported some significant failures in their planning processes

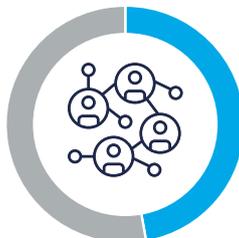
**Positive attributes of the planning process reported by professionals**

(percentage of respondents who selected each attribute)



**64.2%**

Leadership were well prepared to lead and co-ordinate the response



**47.2%**

The planning process was inclusive and involved all departments



**47.0%**

The planning process recognised the importance of agility in the response

**Negative attributes of the planning process reported by professionals**

(percentage of respondents who selected each attribute)



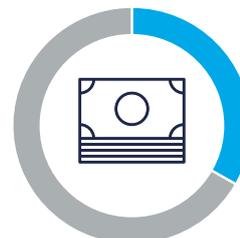
**49.0%**

The effect of a global lockdown had not been considered



**41.1%**

The planning process had not considered that the organization would not return to the "old normal"



**32.9%**

The planning process had not considered the financial impact the crisis would have

**Staff preparedness and rehearsing/exercising**

Half of organizations had adequately prepared staff for the COVID-19 pandemic, although those which had exercised plans most recently were the best prepared

**The percentage of respondents who felt staff were prepared for the pandemic**



**35.0%**

Never rehearsed a pandemic plan



**72.7%**

Rehearsed plan in the last six months

## Information gathering and retrieval

Government information is most frequently used by organizations, with the importance of corroborating all information sources appreciated

### Percentage of professionals using types of data sources once a week or more



**94.8%**

Government announcements and briefings



**92.3%**

Global sources (e.g. WHO)



**78.3%**

Trusted news sources



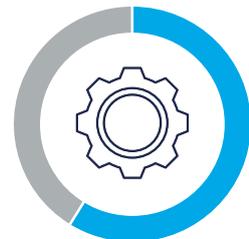
**67.2%**

Sector peers



**62.0%**

Company advisors



**58.8%**

Industry associations

A single department is normally given the task of collating information. However, it is the board or senior strategic personnel who typically do the analysis, using the data in tandem with strategic management information

### Departments responsible for collating COVID-19-related data

**36.7%**

A single business unit (e.g. risk management)

**14.3%**

The Senior Leadership Team

**8.0%**

Individual departments (with no department managing it)

**24.9%**

Individual departments (with a single department / point person collating data)

**16.2%**

Other

### Departments responsible for analyzing COVID-19-related data

**40.9%**

A single business unit (e.g. risk management)

**20.2%**

The Senior Leadership Team

**6.0%**

Individual departments (with no department managing it)

**16.0%**

Individual departments (with a single department / point person collating data)

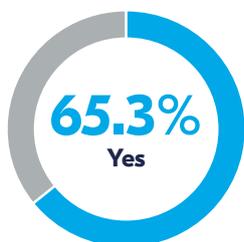
**16.9%**

Other

## Recovery

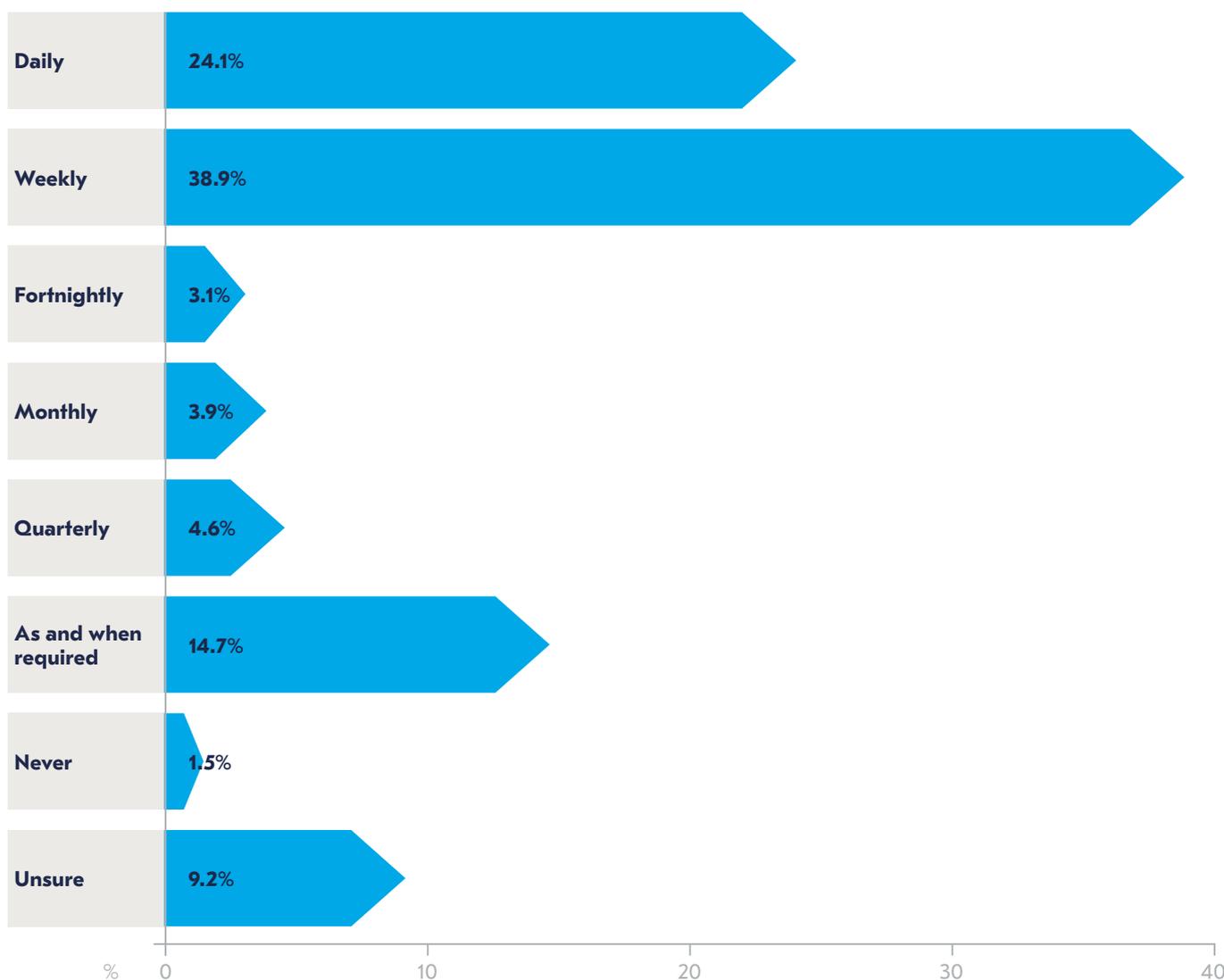
Two-thirds of Business Continuity professionals are involved in the strategic recovery planning process; a higher figure than at the beginning of the response phase

Is the Business Continuity Function involved in the recovery process?



Nearly two-thirds of professionals will be reviewing the recovery plan at least once a week, with a quarter reviewing daily

The frequency of review of the recovery phase and plan during the pandemic

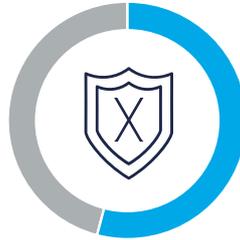


Less than a quarter of organizations plan to go back to the "old normal"

Percentage of organizations planning to go back to their pre-pandemic business model



**24.8%**  
Will go back to their old business model



**54.1%**  
Will not go back to their old business model



**21.2%**  
Are unsure what business model they will return to

Professionals can see many opportunities in the post-pandemic world

Positive attributes which will apply to organizations post-pandemic: Top 5 responses



**68.0%**  
More homeworking opportunities for staff



**65.6%**  
Business Continuity and Resilience will have more attention from board level



**64.1%**  
Improved processes going forward for grey swan events



**62.5%**  
Improved technology resources



**58.6%**  
Better communication processes

The future still holds uncertainty for most

Concerns for organizations post-pandemic: Top 5 responses



**63.4%**  
Financial instability



**45.0%**  
Low staff morale



**38.2%**  
Less demand for products in the "new normal"



**36.0%**  
Loss of talent



**30.2%**  
Customer attrition

**On 1 January 2020, global news outlets reported that the World Health Organization (WHO) was in ongoing contact with China about an “unidentified outbreak of viral pneumonia” and that 27 people had currently undergone treatment in hospital with seven in a “serious condition”.<sup>1</sup> What was still unknown on 1 January, however, was that the date of the first known infection in the Hubei province could be traced back to a 55-year-old man on 17 November 2019<sup>2</sup>.**

Although the most diligent Business Continuity professionals were aware of the “viral pneumonia” prior to January (our survey shows that 5.4% of Business Continuity/Resilience professionals became involved in their organization’s response prior to January 2020), most organizations were still unaware or, at the very least, unconcerned about the potential threat the virus could have on the globe.

Testament to this was data from the BCI Horizon Scan Report 2020 where non-occupational disease ranked second from bottom of the list of future concerns for Resilience professionals. This showed that despite the early signs, worries about a global pandemic wreaking havoc on the world in 2020 was at the bottom of most practitioners’ list of concerns.

Nevertheless, as news of the virus spread, Governments started to introduce measures to control the outbreak of the virus. Initially, guidelines were around hygiene and sanitisation, but soon stricter rules were put into place around global travel (e.g. isolation for those returning from high risk countries) social distancing and lockdown.

Most organizations followed their own Governmental advice: the UK, for example, entered a nationwide lockdown on 23 March 2020 and offices were advised to close and only allow keyworkers and essential staff on the premises. The United States invoked lockdown on a county-by-county or state-by-state basis with varying degrees of severity<sup>3</sup>. Many have praised the response of New Zealand, which imposed its highest degree of lockdown on 26 March when the country only had 100 cases. As of 22 April, there were only 124 reported deaths from the virus and the infection rate was declining<sup>4</sup>.

The varied governmental responses across the globe led to some organizations choosing to adopt more measures such as working from home, travel restrictions and social distancing before their respective Governments insisted on it. IBM, for example, asked all staff to work from home “wherever possible” from 27 February, nearly a month before the first stay-at-home orders were made in the United States. Goldman Sachs limited non-essential business travel from the end of February<sup>5</sup>, and Sony Pictures Entertainment closed its London office two-weeks before lockdown measures became widespread<sup>6</sup>. Some offices went to a “split teams” model with a view that if infection occurred in one team, they still had another team. JP Morgan was one company that adopted this model, announcing it was sending some staff to their recovery centres in Farnborough and Croydon on 6 March<sup>7</sup>.

Although illnesses such as Ebola and Zika have affected the globe more recently, the largest major outbreak is widely considered to be SARS. This respiratory syndrome hit the headlines back in 2003, so most senior executives leading their organizations through the current pandemic will be doing so for the first time. Furthermore, given SARS only ever reached “epidemic” status and did not have the global scale and rate of infection of COVID-19, plans based around the SARS epidemic will not consider the severity of a highly virulent pandemic. This has led to diverse responses and, for the most extent, only time will tell which have been the most successful strategies to have been adopted.

This report will examine the responses of organizations, the involvement of Business Continuity, the effectiveness of plans and how businesses are looking towards recovery. From the survey results and a series of in-depth interviews with senior professionals, the report can also serve as guidance for organizations should a similar incident invoking such widespread global lockdowns be invoked.

1. Huang, K (2019) 'World Health Organisation in touch with Beijing after mystery viral pneumonia outbreak', South China Morning Post, 1 January 2020. Available at: [www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3044207/china-shuts-seafood-market-linked-mystery-viral-pneumonia](http://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3044207/china-shuts-seafood-market-linked-mystery-viral-pneumonia) (Accessed: 4 May 2020).
2. Ma, J (2020) 'Coronavirus: China's first confirmed Covid-19 case traced back to November 17'. South China Morning Post, 13 March 2020. Available at: [www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3074991/coronavirus-chinas-first-confirmed-covid-19-case-traced-back](http://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3074991/coronavirus-chinas-first-confirmed-covid-19-case-traced-back) (Accessed: 4 May 2020).
3. Various (2020) 'Timeline of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States'. Wikipedia. Available at: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline\\_of\\_the\\_2020\\_coronavirus\\_pandemic\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_2020_coronavirus_pandemic_in_the_United_States) (Accessed: 4 May 2020).
4. Worldometers (2020) 'New Zealand Coronavirus Cases'. Worldometers. Available at: [www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/new-zealand](http://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/new-zealand) (Accessed: 4 May 2020).
5. McGregor, J (2020). 'How IBM, Goldman Sachs, PwC and others are responding to the coronavirus threat to the global workplace'. Seattle Times, 5 March 2020. Available at: [www.seattletimes.com/business/how-ibm-goldman-sachs-pwc-and-others-are-responding-to-the-coronavirus-threat-to-the-global-workplace](http://www.seattletimes.com/business/how-ibm-goldman-sachs-pwc-and-others-are-responding-to-the-coronavirus-threat-to-the-global-workplace) (Accessed: 4 May 2020).
6. Heathman, A (2020). 'Coronavirus got you working from home? Here's the tech to keep you sane indoors'. Evening Standard (5 March 2020). Available at: <https://www.standard.co.uk/tech/coronavirus-working-from-home-tech-out-of-office-a4379176.html> (Accessed 4 May 2020).
7. Williams-Grut, O (2020). 'Coronavirus: City bankers prepare to go to Basingstoke and Croydon'. Yahoo Finance (6 March 2020). Available at: [uk.finance.yahoo.com/news/coronavirus-covid-19-canary-wharf-hsbc-ubs-jp-morgan-goldman-sachs-121311233.html](http://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news/coronavirus-covid-19-canary-wharf-hsbc-ubs-jp-morgan-goldman-sachs-121311233.html) (Accessed 4 May 2020).

# Organizational preparedness and initial pandemic response



## Organizational preparedness and initial pandemic response

- **The Board is leading the response in most organizations, with Business Continuity leading the operational response**
- **Early horizon scanning saw some professionals involved in the response before January 2020, but over half had yet to be involved by the end of January**
- **Just one in 14 respondents felt their organization was “very well prepared” going into the pandemic, with one in 10 believing it was badly prepared or worse**
- **Resilience professionals had widespread praise for their IT departments’ responses during the pandemic, although there were certain operational areas where more involvement was required**

The Crisis Management Team (which is normally a subset of the Board<sup>8</sup>) are leading the response in 28.0% and Risk Management (which normally has a Board level representative) are leading the response in 7.3% of organizations. These percentages, coupled with the responses which say just the Board is managing the response, means the Board are leading the response in 47.3% of cases. For 29.7% of organizations, it is Business Continuity who are leading the response. Whilst it is the Board who are making the corporate decisions, it is frequently the Business Continuity Manager who is advising them of the actions to take.

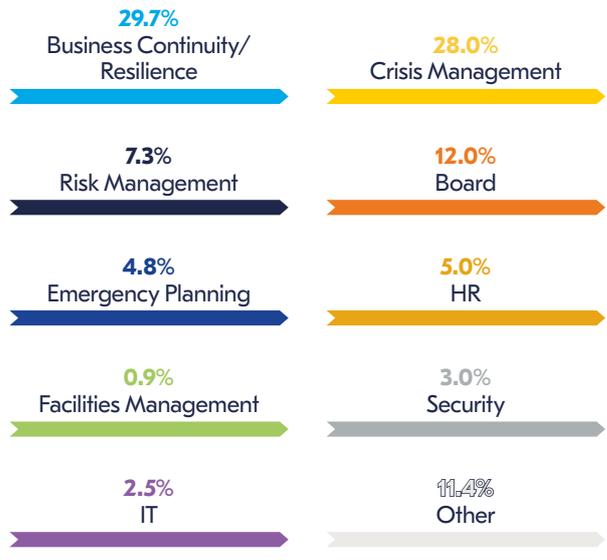
Thanks to the the horizon scanning activities carried out by Business Continuity and Resilience departments, many organizations were alerted of the threat of COVID-19 before Government announcements. This helped assure the involvement of Business Continuity teams in the early stages of the pandemic.

8. “The Board”, for purposes of this report, is defined as the executive/senior leadership team

**“It was in January I decided to brief the Board and tell them that we’d been keeping a watching brief so far. However, now we need to move into major incident mode and involve the relevant teams and people.” I really felt WHO are behind the curve: we were waiting for was a global pandemic and that was what we were waiting to hear in order to take it seriously. However, this didn’t come so my communication with the Board was that it was not a global pandemic at this point, but we need to keep a watching brief. We have leadership team meetings every Wednesday and, from that point, I would do a five minute update on coronavirus.”**

Head of Risk, Financial Services, United Kingdom

When asked who was responsible for leading the response, 11.4% of respondents answered “other” to this question. When interrogating these “other” responses, most indicated that the response was being managed by a pandemic working group or response team with representatives from every department. In most cases, these working groups were being led by someone at Board level, a Business Continuity, Resilience manager or crisis manager.



**Figure 1.** Which department is leading and/or coordinating the Coronavirus response within your organization?



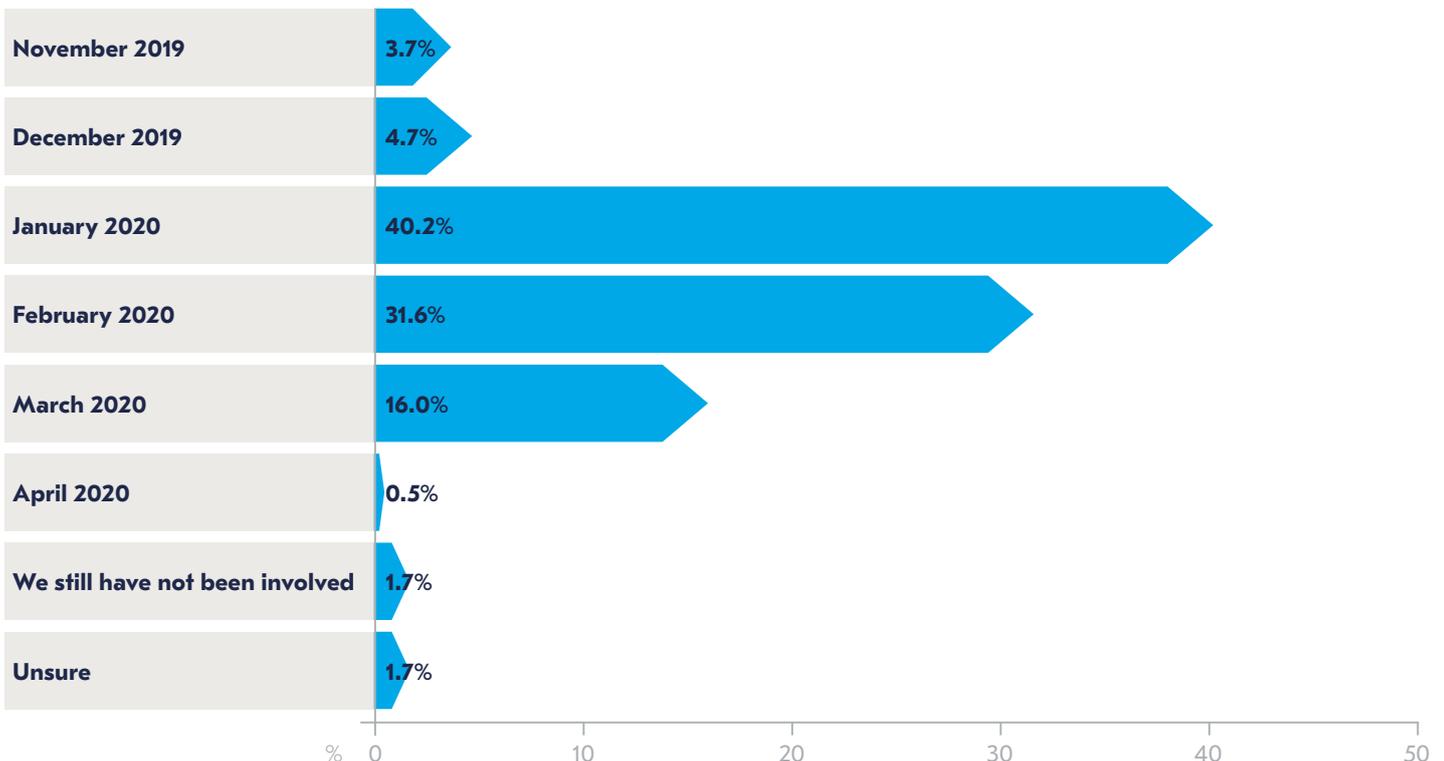
The first known COVID-19 infection was traced back to 17 November 2019, and the report shows that 3.7% of Business Continuity professionals became involved in their organization's pandemic response in the weeks following this to the end of November. Research reveals that this response was largely related to information gathering and horizon scanning activity; a "watching brief".

By the end of December, some 8.4% of Business Continuity professionals had been involved in the response. Interestingly, it was Australasian and American organizations who started involving their Business Continuity department pre-2020, with 10.2% and 9.8% of organizations in those regions respectively instigating their response between November and December 2019. Another reason for this early reaction by companies outside Asia is that more than 300 of the world's top 500 companies have a presence in Wuhan. As a comparison, in Asia, only 5.3% of organizations involved Business Continuity in the same early phase.

In January 2020, most Business Continuity/Resilience professionals became involved in their organization's response (40.2%), with a further 31.6% becoming involved in February. By the end of March, one in five Business Continuity/Resilience professionals were still not involved in their organization's pandemic response. Although a further 16.5% were involved fairly late (either March or April), 1.7% of respondents claimed that, by survey close, they had yet to be involved.

For some organizations, the need to get Business Continuity involved early in the operational side of the impact was not crucial. Some organizations already had a universal remote working policy with everything delivered online, for example. For these companies, Business Continuity would only kick in if sickness struck or they had supply issues. For other organizations, Business Continuity were only brought in when there was a need for them to lead the response to the operational impact (i.e. when workers were sent to work from home, resource issues due to sickness, site closures).

## In which month did the Business Continuity team become involved in your organization's response to the pandemic?



**Figure 2.** In which month did the Business Continuity team become involved in your organization's response to the pandemic?

Those Business Continuity departments that became involved at the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic tended to be those that were also involved in horizon scanning processes. Interviews with survey respondents suggested that it was their flagging of the situation and how it was progressing that saw them become involved with the Board at an early stage. Over two-thirds (68.4%) of respondents - who participated in the organization's response prior to February - said that their involvement "identified the potential for business disruption through horizon scanning activity and alerted the organization". This compares to just 40.7% of those who were involved in March or later.

Some professionals reported that Business Continuity was brought to the table too late as the response was being led by the Board, who were reluctant to be the first mover in their industry that brought in strict controls. However, there should be some sympathy for the Board's response: with organizations reporting share price drops due to supply chain issues in the early stages of the pandemic, Boards may be wary of declaring their own organization's response before their peers. Furthermore, issues such as furloughing staff and/or redundancies are highly sensitive, and many Boards will want to address these issues before getting Business Continuity involved.

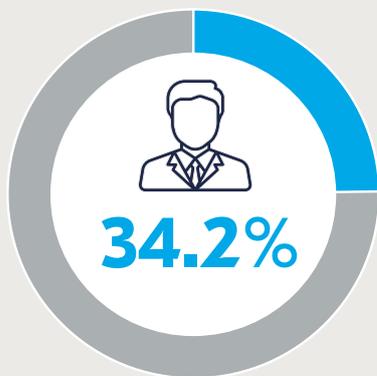
**"Realistically, our first communication about the significance of the virus came from our Chinese office was around 21 January. We'd also picked up in terms of our own horizon scanning about six, seven, eight days before that. At that point, I had informal discussion with my colleague and said, "Think we need to be watching this. Let's start doing a bit of a deep dive until we find out a bit more." So, it was around 15 January that we started to monitor things closely."**

Head of Risk, Healthcare Sector, United States

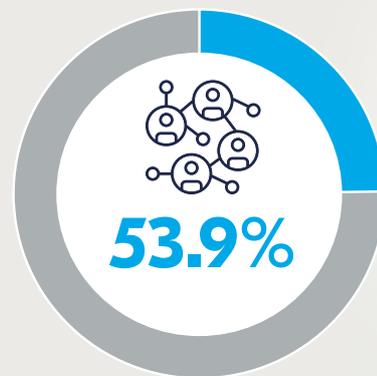
**"Senior management were initially relying on WHO, CDC, ECD stuff which we were feeding them as well as our own intelligence. But we also asked them to "listen to what's happening." We were getting pretty good intel from our Business Continuity team leads, from other countries, from our peers and from our HR partners that were telling us that people are getting really spooked about this. Amongst those in our industry, there are a number of people who are quite well linked in with our peers."**

Head of Risk, Healthcare Sector, United States

### Were Business Continuity/Resilience professionals involved in the organization's response before February 2020?



Response led by Board



Response led by Business Continuity professionals



However, the involvement of Business Continuity/Resilience depended on which department was leading the COVID-19 response. For those who responded that the Board was leading the response, only a third (34.2%) reported that Business Continuity/Resilience was involved in the organization's response before February 2020. In contrast, where Business Continuity/Resilience professionals and teams were put in charge to lead the pandemic response, over half (53.9%) were involved before February.

**"It's all about the seat at the table. I suspect that there's many people like me around the country who have been plodding along and had plans in place, doing testing and cranking the handle. And now people have finally realised "Oh, my goodness, we do need them." I think people are finally saying "oh, that's what she does!" and we will finally get Boards taking Resilience seriously"**

Operational Resilience Manager,  
Financial Services, United Kingdom

When asked what their primary role was when first involved in the pandemic response, over two-thirds of respondents (67.6%) reported their involvement was on an operational basis and to help their organization implement plans such as social distancing and staff rostering. In the "other" comments section, several respondents commented that Business Continuity/Resilience was given the job of supporting the crisis management team during the response; something which would be the expected procedure. Others further cited that under the crisis management team's leadership, Business Continuity was tasked with ensuring that the operational part of the response was effective – again, an expected role for Business Continuity in many organizations.

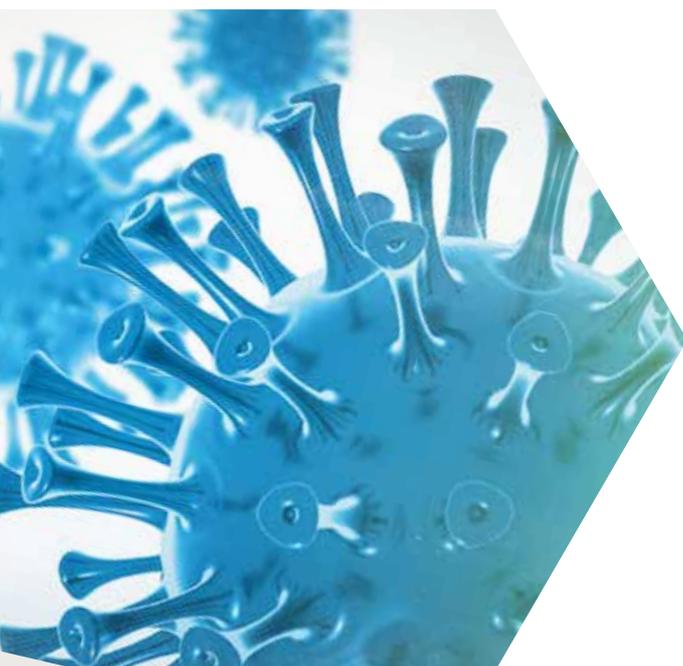
**"I got brought into a post on our Operations Board near the beginning of our response and we're now meeting weekly. We dealt with communication, we dealt with remote working, and we dealt with prioritising areas of the business that would essentially keep the lights on such as paying invoices, paying the staff and paying other suppliers."**

Funding Manager/Business Continuity,  
Leisure & Hospitality Industry,  
United Kingdom

Whilst many organizations had a Business Continuity plan in place, interviewees reported that they had to make significant adjustments to pandemic plans or their more generic plans in order to ensure their operational response was effective. This ties in with the responses from the survey: over half of respondents (54.9%) claimed that they used their knowledge of the business and continuity management skills to help the business adjust their current Business Continuity plans to the current situation. The word "agility" was used a significant amount by interviewees showing the importance being placed on ensuring that plans can be adapted quickly to suit the current global situation.

**"So, for some part we were prepared. After SARS many years ago, all airlines were prepared with kits and personal protective equipment. Every aircraft was prepared with face masks, gloves, shields, etc. But the number of stock was absolutely limited so we had to change our plans pretty quickly. So we were prepared in some points, but we could have done better in adding more stock or getting the earlier involvement of Business Continuity and business Resilience."**

Emergency Response Manager, Aviation Industry, Italy



**“We held an interim debrief to see if there was anything we want to change in the way we’re doing things now, and maybe there are some improvement actions we will leave until the incident is over.”**

Business Continuity Manager,  
Public Sector, United Kingdom

**“The pandemic plan is the only hazard specific plan we have. The last one was written a while ago and it hadn’t taken into account that we had moved buildings twice since then. I discovered this last year when I was new to the role and was able to update the plan in time.”**

Manager, Public Sector, New Zealand

Our interviews further showed that many professionals were tasked with either constructing a new pandemic plan for their organization or were given the responsibility of updating a previous plan when the pandemic broke out. Our research showed that whilst many organizations did have a pandemic plan, a significant proportion were based around previous pandemics or epidemics such as H1N1 or SARS. Both these pandemics required a different response, as they occurred in the first ten years of the century, when working conditions were very different and remote working was not so widespread.

As previously discussed, horizon scanning was one the primary reasons for organizations to involve Business Continuity professionals in their pandemic responses, with 58.8% of respondents claiming this was their role when they were first involved.

Some respondents reported that whilst horizon scanning was useful in alerting their organization about the crisis, as the pandemic has progressed, many other departments started seeking news and updates from a variety of sources — often unverified (e.g. from social media). This meant that Business Continuity professionals had the additional task of ensuring their corroborated sources were the ones used for horizon scanning purposes.

However, while unverified sources can be dangerous to rely on with corroboration, intelligent monitoring of social media can provide early insight to breaking stories before they are picked up by news wires. Again, caution must be made when using social media as a source of information before sharing. Some professionals have also been using information gathered from their peers and after collating it and verifying it, sharing any pertinent story in a newsletter.



**“Later, as the pandemic grew and got more serious, the issue started affecting them psychologically more than before so they were doing a lot of their own news scanning. They were saying “I got some information and I want to share it.” And so it was because of this that we started a very cooperative way of working. We had a pandemic-specific email address that everyone can write to with content they pick up on, but that email was then surveyed by me and the health and safety people. So this means the information can be shared, but it has to be checked first.”**

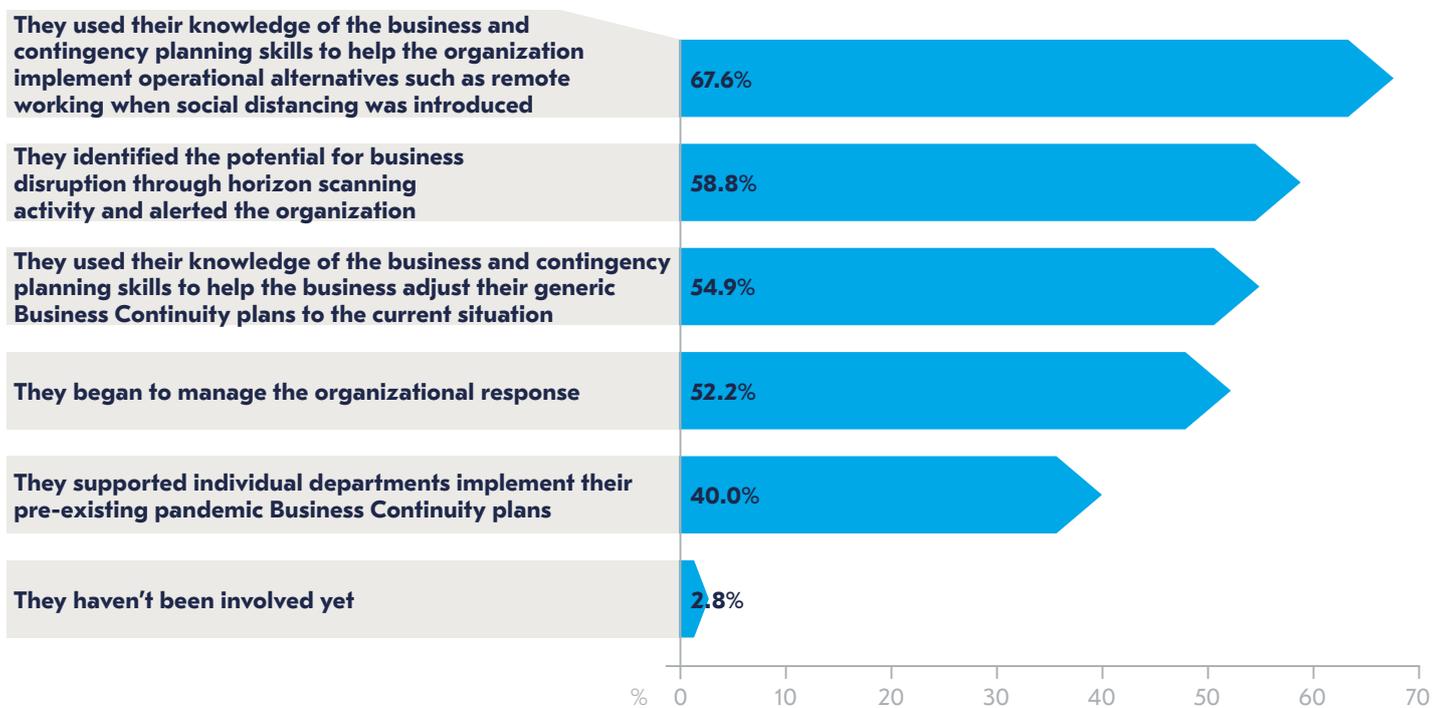
Emergency Response Manager,  
Aviation Industry, Italy

Over half of respondents (51.2%) said their first involvement in their organization’s response was to manage the operational response. For many professionals, this meant co-ordinating a network of individuals around the organization to lead a combined response. Other professionals reported that some departments were not used to taking such a reactive role and this caused issues at the beginning of the response efforts.

**“I’ve got a network of around 20 people throughout the business that I meet with regularly who are known as the operational Resilience champions. I’m more of a coordination sort of governance role, really. But we are all involved in the response efforts”**

Operational Resilience Manager,  
Financial Services, United Kingdom

### What was Business Continuity’s role at this stage?



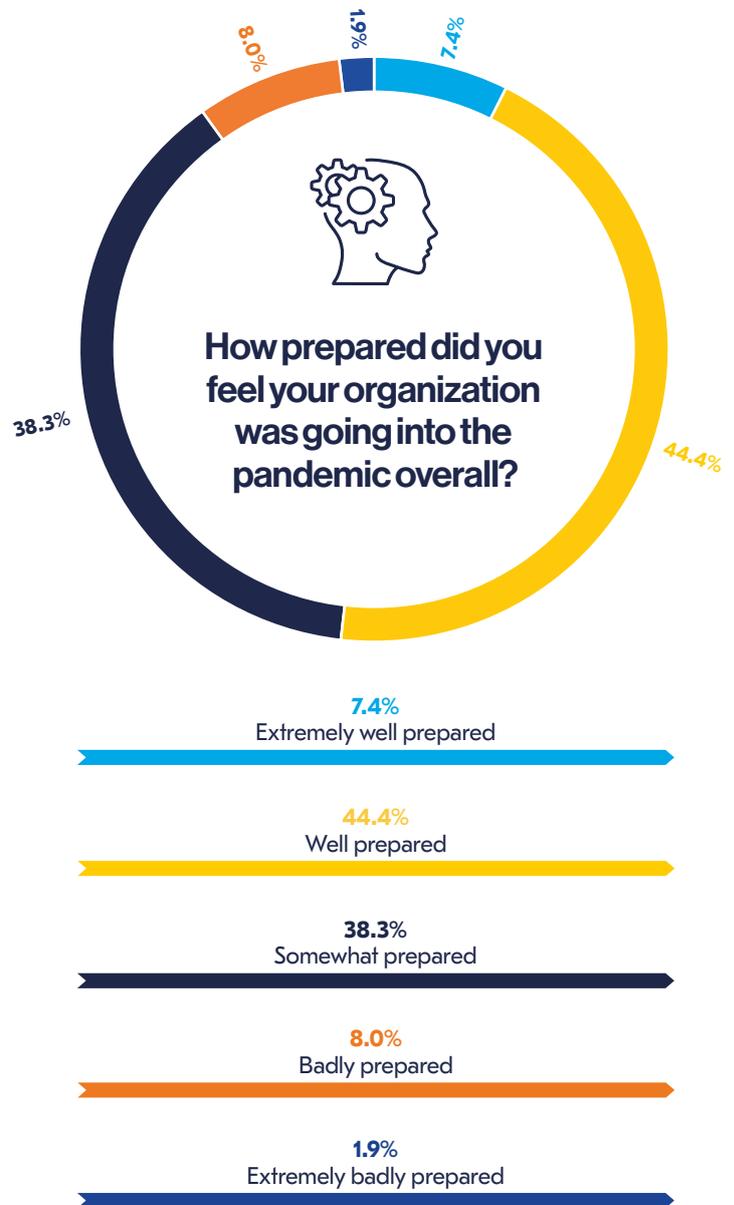
**Figure 3.** What was Business Continuity’s role at this stage? Please tick all that apply

7.4% of respondents claimed to be “very well prepared” going into the pandemic, with a further 44.4% of respondents reporting they were “well prepared”. This response came primarily from professional services and the banking sector where flexible working and working from home policies were already in place. In contrast, the manufacturing, creative and leisure industries were less likely to perceive themselves as well prepared.

**“Oh yeah. We’re really lucky. We have a distributed workforce and working from home is part of our culture. We’re a high-tech firm and it would be really daft if we weren’t able to manage at least this far.”**  
 Head of Risk, Financial Services, United Kingdom

Some organizations reported having advanced pandemic plans in place and felt very well prepared going into the pandemic. However, the unpredictability of the pandemic and the severity of the global lockdowns threatened the success and effectiveness of the response plans.

For example, an interviewee in the financial services sector reported that their organization had a comprehensive pandemic plan which had been rehearsed shortly before the COVID-19 outbreak. An integral part of this plan was splitting their team in half so that one team could work at a recovery site and the other would work in the office. However, when it came to putting the plan into action, the organization was refused access to the recovery site because its primary office had not been closed. This aspect had not been highlighted during the exercise to either party. Luckily, the organization was well prepared and was able to revert to its backup plan and ensure that everyone, even call centre staff, could work from home. It was this level of attention in the organization’s plan which helped them to continue operating without disrupting the service to their customers.



**Figure 4.** How prepared did you feel your organization was going into the pandemic overall?

Cyber security was the area where organizations felt they were most prepared going into the pandemic, with 78.7% of respondents believing their organizations was “very well prepared” or “well prepared”. This tallies up with respondent surveys, with many praising their IT departments on their response to cyber issues and ensuring systems and devices were secure heading into the pandemic.

When it came to homeworking, organizations’ preparedness was varied: 63.8% of respondents felt their organization was “very well prepared” or “prepared” for employees working from home. Although many organizations had part of their staff prepared for homeworking (e.g. professional services organizations, some financial services companies), others had staff whose positions were not suited to working from home (e.g. factory floor staff, call centre staff, some positions within the financial sector).

Many organizations encountered delays in ensuring that their staff were set-up with equipment to effectively work from home. Others reported encountering problems with networks not being able to cope with so many staff working from home. Nevertheless, most organizations later reported that these early “teething problems” had been resolved, they admitted that valuable time was lost in the process. This shows the importance of having an exercised and tested plan in place for universal remote working.

**“We quickly got the remote access licenses, got the computers, and then we all went home. So working from home works now, and it worked from day one, but there was a lot of rush to get to a position where we are now. Even though our Chief Information Officer is new, they did an excellent job getting it all ready.”**

Manager, Public Sector, New Zealand

**“We’ve got workforce of just over 500, 250 of which are in a call centre. Half of the workforce could work from home relatively easy. We then went out to all the staff and asked who could work from home and who had the facility to do it. For those that couldn’t, we immediately started sourcing equipment. So, we had our first order in for extra kit around about 3 March – 20 days before we entered into lockdown.”**

Operational Resilience Manager,  
Financial Services, United Kingdom



Previous Business Continuity research has shown that many organizations were slow sharing internal communications relating to COVID-19 to their workforce. Many respondents did not receive information relating to their organization's response until mid-March. Others found that their organizations were slow to set up remote meetings to ensure staff could be kept informed with company news and strategy while working from home<sup>9</sup>. It was therefore surprising to see that three-quarters of respondents (74.7%) felt their organization was "well prepared" or "very well prepared" when it came to internal communications.

The two options where organizations felt least prepared were for the supply and demand issues arising from the pandemic, and also social distancing. Just over half of respondents (50.8%) believed their organizations was "very well prepared" or "well prepared" for the former, and 53.0% for the latter. Both these options have arisen from unique characteristics of this pandemic which may not have been included in the most detailed pandemic plans, but not in epidemic plans.

Such results tally in with recent COVID-19 research from the Business Continuity: the fortnightly Organizational Preparedness report showed that just 16.2% of organizations had changed suppliers to help meet supply and demand issues in the 20 March edition, but by 17 April, nearly a third had done so<sup>10</sup>. Social distancing is something which most organizations were aware of as a concept but was rarely considered within planning documentation. A search for "social distancing" on Google Trends shows that the term has never gained widespread coverage previously, even during previous pandemics and epidemics such as H1N1 or Ebola<sup>11</sup>.

For organizations where close contact is required such as in manufacturing, retail or transport and logistics, measures had to be implemented quickly at a time when many Governments were still writing the rules themselves<sup>12</sup>. Going forward, organizations will need to be aware of these new rules to keep their employees safe and their production operative.



**"We had a small pandemic plan which was to put PPE equipment onboard planes but was really generic as it was just around barrier protection. We had no plans around social distancing or similar. The plan was too generic to be of any use in this occasion."**

Emergency Response Manager,  
Aviation Industry, Italy

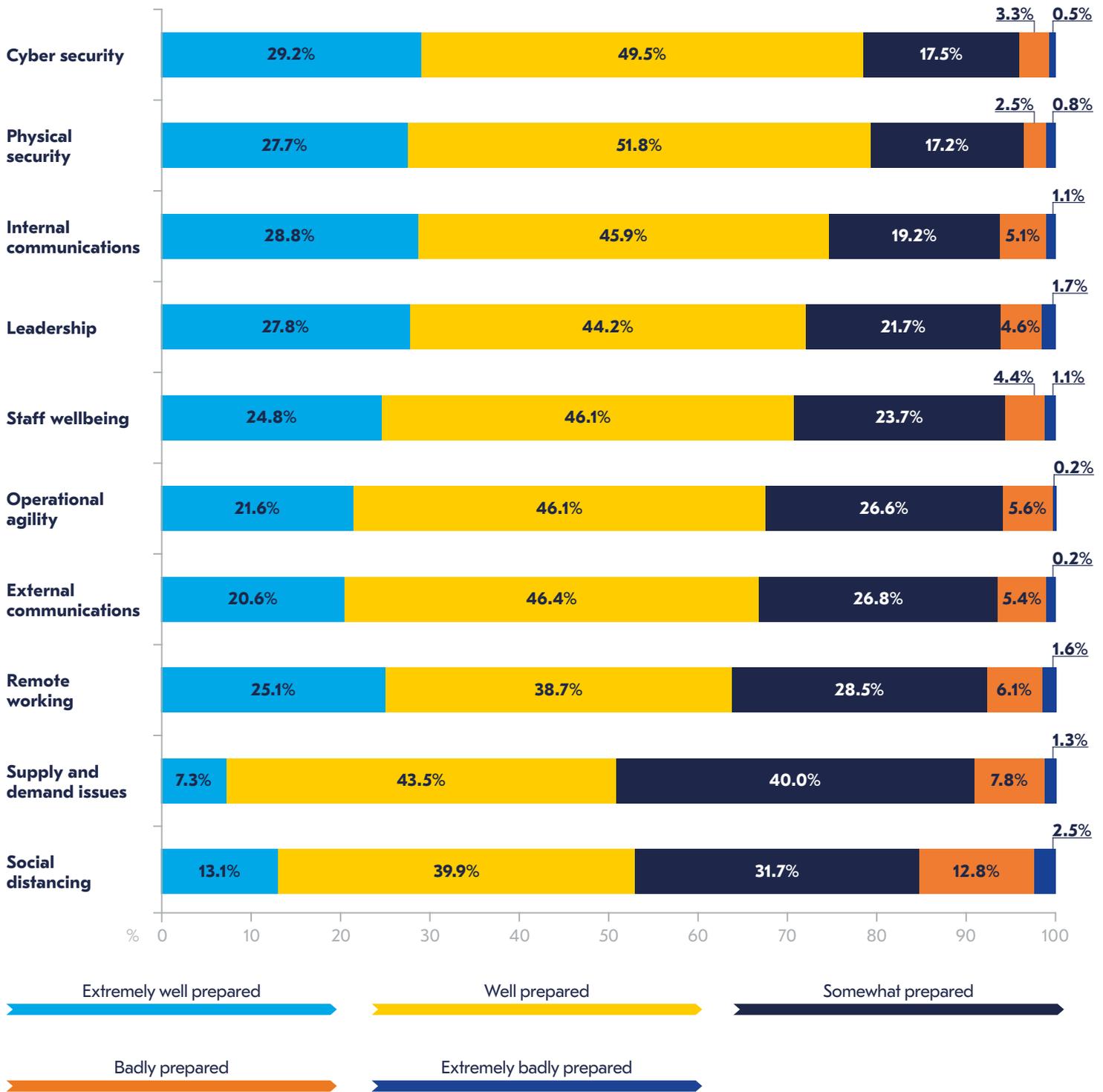
9. BCI, The (2020). Coronavirus Organizational Preparedness Report; Third Edition. Available at: [www.thebci.org/resource/bci-coronavirus-organizational-preparedness-report-third-edition.html](http://www.thebci.org/resource/bci-coronavirus-organizational-preparedness-report-third-edition.html) (Accessed 4 May 2020).

10. BCI, The (2020). Coronavirus Organizational Preparedness Report; Third Edition. Available at: [www.thebci.org/resource/bci-coronavirus-organizational-preparedness-report-third-edition.html](http://www.thebci.org/resource/bci-coronavirus-organizational-preparedness-report-third-edition.html) (Accessed 4 May 2020).

11. Google Trends; Search term "social distancing". Available at: [trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=all&q=%22social%20distancing%22](https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=all&q=%22social%20distancing%22) (Accessed 4 May 2020).

12. Cooper, J (2020). 'How confusion about government lockdown rules is affecting the lives of people with autism'. Wales Online (17 April 2020). Available at: [www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/how-confusion-government-lockdown-rules-18100775](http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/how-confusion-government-lockdown-rules-18100775) (Accessed 4 May 2020).

### How prepared did you feel your organization was going into the pandemic in the following areas?



**Figure 5.** How prepared did you feel your organization was going into the pandemic in the following areas?

# Preparing for the Unexpected

## Dr Sandra Bell



A pandemic, a disease that has spread across many countries and affects a large number of people, can pose multiple challenges for a business. The challenges depend on many factors including the epidemiology of the disease (e.g. how easily it is transmitted, its propensity to cause disease, how severe that disease is etc.) and the decisions made by governments, organizations, communities and individuals in the face of the disease. With so many variables a pandemic will always create a situation that is complex, uncertain and dynamic. This means that operational, tactical and strategic decisions regarding the response and recovery will always need to be based on information regarding the current situation and assumptions about the future. However, with respect to businesses, there are three constants: (1) governments will implement measures to slow or stop the spread of the disease to ensure healthcare providers can cope at peak demand and buy time for a vaccine to be developed; (2) those measures will almost certainly have an adverse economic impact; and (3) the scope of a pandemic is global by definition and therefore any dependencies that organizations have, e.g. global supply chains or distribution channels will also be impacted<sup>13</sup>.

Preparing for a pandemic is therefore a non-trivial task for a business. Flexibility must be embedded into any planning and organizations need to prepare for the impacts of any health protection measures implemented by governments across the globe as well as the impacts of the disease itself. In accordance with the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005)<sup>14</sup> government will seek to limit the public health measures taken in response to disease spread to those “that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks, and which avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade”. However, it should be noted that travel restrictions, border closures, school closures, hand and respiratory hygiene, self-isolation for sick individuals, minimization of contact with others, cancellation, restriction or modification of mass gatherings, social distancing measures, adjusted working patterns and advising households to minimize their level of interaction outside the home are all measures that governments are encouraged to consider.

When thinking about preparing for a pandemic the first question that a business should ask itself is therefore if it is planning to continue operations regardless of what health protection measures are implemented. Many organizations, for example UK emergency responders, do not have a choice as they are required to do so via legislation<sup>15</sup>. However, those that are not providing key services to the citizen can choose to try to continue trading in an altered form (e.g. implement an interim operating model) or completely shut down and wait for restrictions to be lifted. This is possible because IHR 2005 also requires countries to carry out national-level financial planning that includes emergency funding interventions to offset any financial impact of their health protection measures. Suspending operations or restricting them to a few service or product lines allows the business to use the time to plan for the post-pandemic environment.

In severe situations this may be a smart strategic choice as restricting operations will contribute to the social distancing efforts and also ensure that some businesses are well placed to emerge the precarious into the economic environment that emerges and start rebuilding the economy.

However, for those that are either required to continue or wish to continue they should make provision to be able to operate with some, or all, of the health protection measures listed in the WHO influenza guidance. Ensuring that their Business Continuity Planning Assumptions include the ability to operate priority activities with the restrictions that are possible in a pandemic situation is a good start. However, the business should also ensure that they have good crisis leadership, management structures and policies that are appropriate for an interim operating model. An interim model that requires social distancing, adequate IT infrastructure to support it together with communication as well as human resource management capabilities to support their staff through the situation. Likewise, they need to be able to make and implement rapid strategic decisions to cope with supply and demand fluctuations and adverse economic pressures at the same time as designing a business that will be competitive in the post-pandemic environment.

However, a note of caution: Although pandemics are recurring events their characteristics are highly unpredictable and, although plans and capability are useful, agility is the key. The planning for 2009 H1N1 (swine flu) pandemic was largely based on the previous three pandemics all of which were severe: 1918 Spanish flu, 1957 Asian flu and 1968 Hong Kong flu. The biggest problems that the response to H1N1 faced concerned issues in adapting national and subnational responses adequately to a more moderate event.

13. World Health Organization (2017). Pandemic influenza risk management: a WHO guide to inform and harmonize national and international pandemic preparedness and response. Available at: [apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/259893](https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/259893). License: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO (Accessed: 4 May 2020).

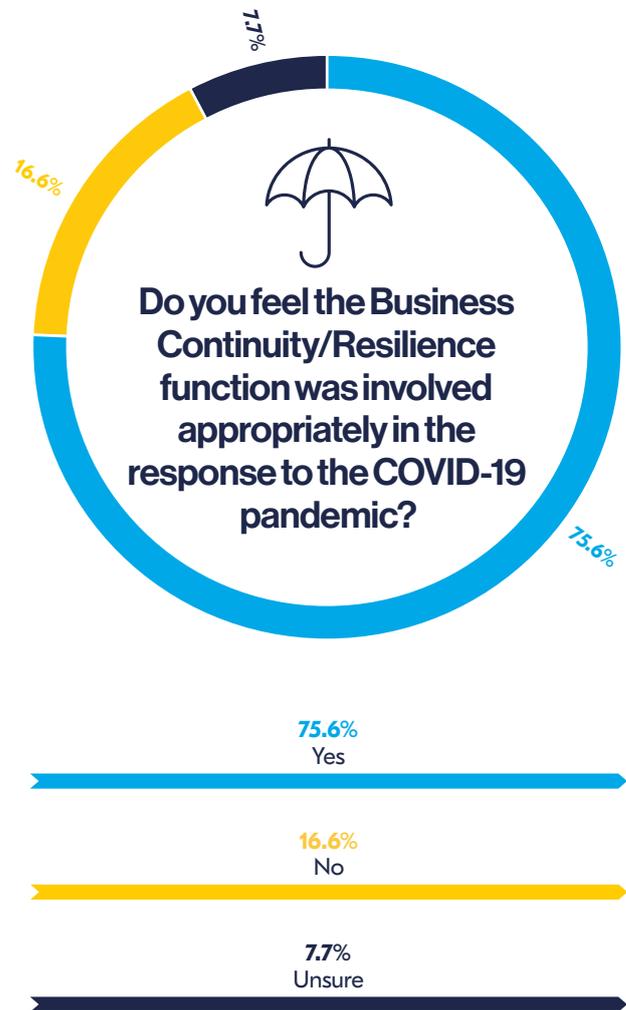
14. World Health Organization (2008). International Health Regulations (2005). Available at: [www.who.int/ihr/publications/9789241596664/en/](https://www.who.int/ihr/publications/9789241596664/en/) (Accessed: 4 May 2020).

15. UK Cabinet Office (2013). Preparation and Planning For Emergencies: Responsibilities Of Responder Agencies And Others - Detailed Guidance - GOV.UK. Available at: [www.gov.uk/preparation-and-planning-for-emergencies-responsibilities-of-responder-agencies-and-others](https://www.gov.uk/preparation-and-planning-for-emergencies-responsibilities-of-responder-agencies-and-others) (Accessed: 4 May 2020).

Despite the varied responses, over three-quarters of professionals (75.6%) believed that the Business Continuity/Resilience function was involved appropriately in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, although with 16.6% believing they were not involved appropriately, it is worth considering the reasons why for future planning. The reasons cited in the comments in the survey centred around four themes:

- **Crisis management or Risk had taken control of the response:** Respondents frequently voiced frustration that the Crisis Management or Risk department had “taken over control” of the situation and had excluded the Business Continuity/Resilience team when operational assistance was required.
- **Early decisions were regarded as “alarmist”:** A notable minority of respondents said their plans had been dismissed as “alarmist” or “unnecessary” by the Board, despite early alerting about the effect it could have on the business. Again, the Board normally has its own strategic agenda which, at some points during the response, will need to be shielded from employees for confidentiality reasons.
- **The Board took over and ignored any plans:** Some respondents reported that the Board had resumed control of the response and implemented measures such as working from home without consulting any Business Continuity plans. A telling quote was “too many senior managers trying to take the operational lead without training.”
- **“Siloing” of information:** Respondents commented that information was being held by other departments, typically Crisis Management or HR, and it was not being shared with Business Continuity leading to a lack of cohesion on the response phase.

Such responses further raise the importance of ensuring organizations adopt a non-siloed approach to working and that the operational responsibility of the Business Continuity department remains visible to the Board. One of the positive themes noted in the comments to this question was that many professionals said that the Board had now learnt that Business Continuity/Resilience should have been involved earlier and would be in future.



**Figure 6.** Do you feel the Business Continuity/Resilience function was involved appropriately in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

# Pandemic planning



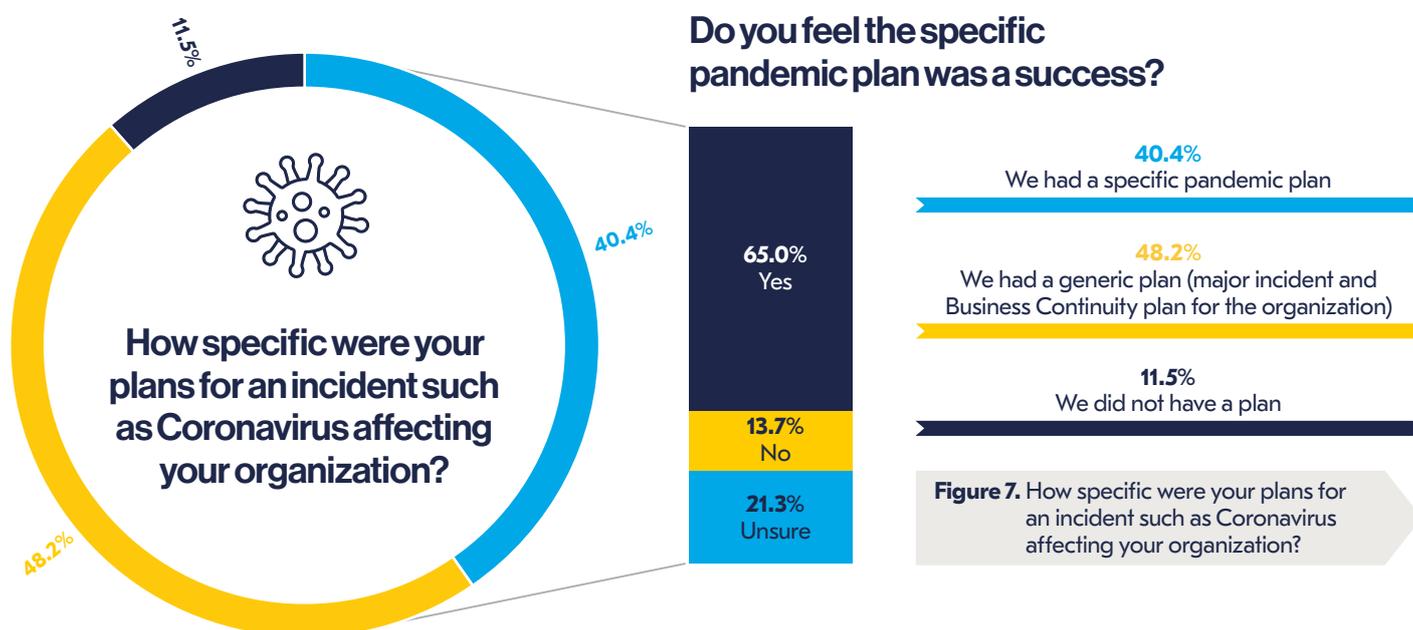


## Pandemic planning

- **The presence of a pandemic-specific plan led to a more successful response.**
- **Many organizations found they were able to elicit a very effective response through impact-based planning**
- **Most respondents believed their leadership had elicited a good response to the pandemic, although a siloed approach within some departments meant the operational response was not as good as it could be**

Just under half (40.4%) of respondents reported that their organization had a pandemic-specific plan, with a further 48.9% following a generic plan. 11.5% of organizations did not have a plan at all.

While it might be logical to assume that those organizations with a pandemic plan in place were more prepared and reactive to the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey results show this is not always the case. Around 63.4% of those who did have a pandemic plan stated that it was a success, but 13.7% claimed it was not and 21.3% were still unsure as to whether their plans had been successful or not. These results suggest that the success of the planning process is hard to identify at this stage and that time will tell if these plans were in fact effective or not.



As mentioned in the previous chapter, many organizations had pandemic plans in place that had been built using knowledge gained from previous pandemics and/or epidemics. However, given the different nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of these plans were not fit for purpose and many aspects of them were not applicable to COVID-19. Indeed, under three-quarters of organizations (73.1%) had updated their pandemic plans within the last two years, with a significant minority (6.9%) claiming only to have reviewed it in the last 10 years.

The SARS epidemic (2003) and the H1N1 pandemic (2009) had differing degrees of virulence and happened at times when working practices were very different from how they are now in 2020. Working from home and using technology to communicate with employees was not a common practice in the early part of this decade. In our survey, some organizations reported that their pandemic plans had not been updated since the previous pandemic and that there was no reference to homeworking or the use of technology.

In contrast, other organizations reported that they had no need for a pandemic plan and they had built plans around the consequences (e.g. multiple staff being away from the office) rather than the specific hazard (e.g. COVID-19). Some organizations admitted to finding this approach very successful and that they have no plans to add a specific pandemic measures into their suite of plans once the COVID-19 pandemic has passed.

**“Although our pandemic plan was useful in the build-up to the incident, it was our standard Business Continuity plans which really came into play. They covered the generic impact of staff not being able to access their usual place of work and we were therefore in a good place because most of the workforce were already enabled to work remotely.”**

Business Continuity Manager, Public Sector, United Kingdom

**“We didn’t have a specific pandemic plan. The question I suppose I have is, do we need one now? I’m not sure we do, even now.”**

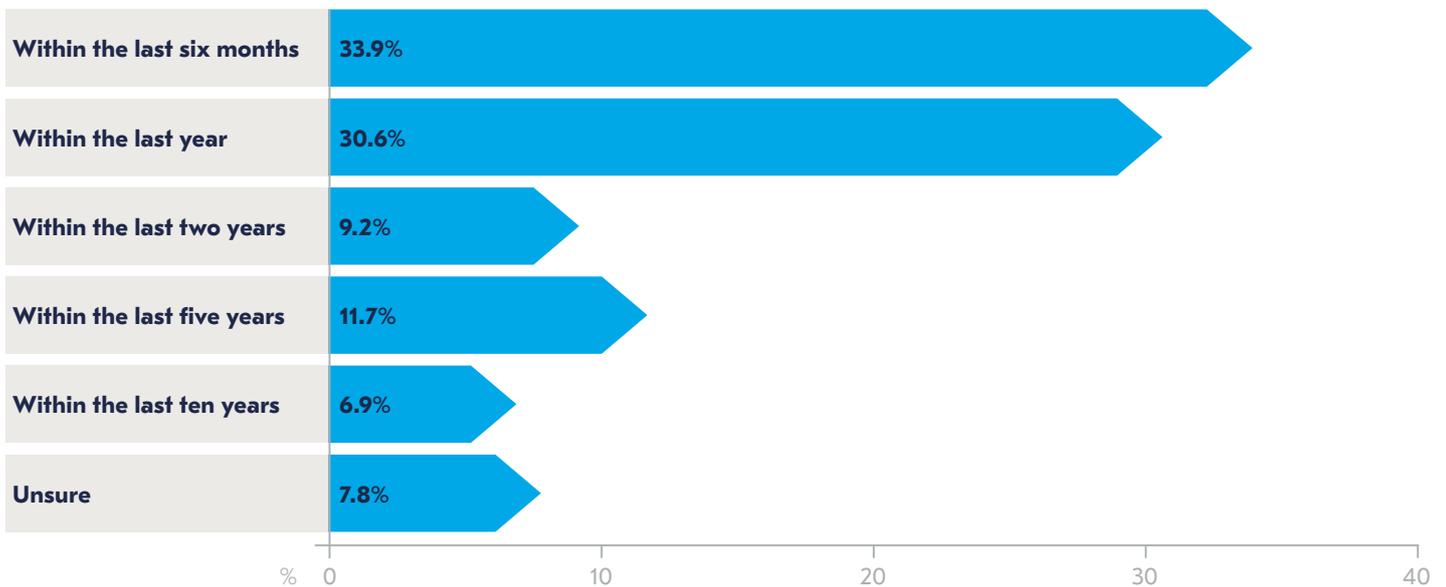
Funding Manager/Business Continuity, Leisure & Hospitality Industry, United Kingdom

In some regions, Governments and industry regulators have made it mandatory for organizations to have pandemic plans in place. For example, in Latin America, interview respondents reported being very prepared for the pandemic thanks to the strict requirements, particularly for regulated sectors, to have a pandemic plan which was also regularly rehearsed.

**“In this case here in Mexico and some countries in Latin America, Business Continuity is an obligation by law in sectors such as telecommunications and financial services. Furthermore, the law further requires that organizations need to have a Business Continuity plan for different scenarios. There are scenarios such as pandemics, cyber security, earthquakes or cyber-attacks.”**

ICMS & ISMS Consultant, Latin America

### If you had a specific pandemic plan, when was it last updated?



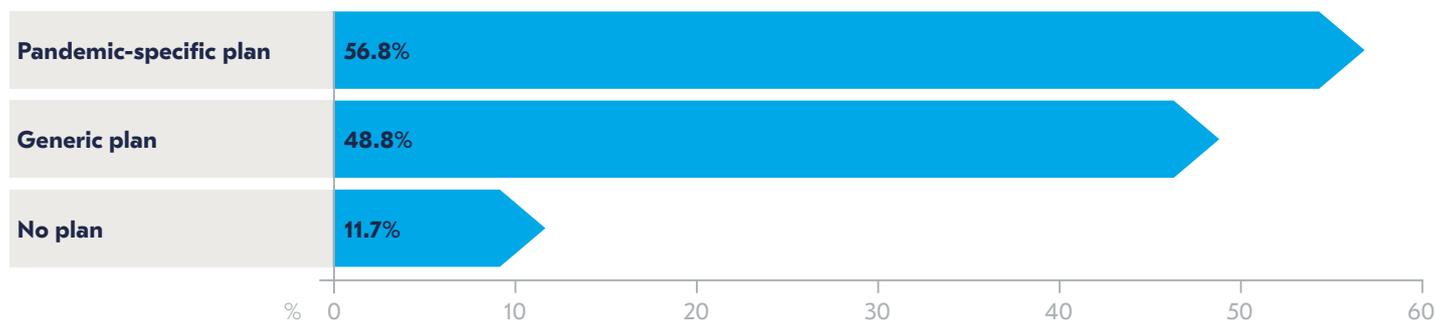
**Figure 8.** If you had a specific pandemic plan, when was it last updated?



Reponses to the survey show that the more specific the plan, the greater the success of the plan: 56.8% of those with a pandemic-specific plan considered their planning to have been a success compared to under half (48.8%) of those with a generic plan.

For those without a plan in place, just 11.7% reported their planning to have been successful. These results provide valuable proof of the effectiveness of Business Continuity planning that Business Continuity/Resilience professionals and practitioners can utilise to get buy-in from the Board to have a comprehensive Business Continuity plan going forward.

### Percentage who answered “yes” when asked if their planning had been a success



**Figure 9.** Percentage who answered “yes” when asked if their planning had been a success

In terms of leadership and response, the report showed positive results. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (64.2%) claimed that their leadership were well-prepared to lead and co-ordinate the response even in a continuously changing and uncertain environment.

Given that around half of respondents also claimed that Business Continuity/Resilience played an integral role in their organization's operational response, some of this high regard can be attributed to the successful early response of Business Continuity/Resilience teams.

However, despite the good response from leadership, from a collaboration point of view the responses were not so positive. Under half (47.2%) reported that their planning process was "inclusive" and involved all departments, meaning that many organizations adopted a siloed approach. Moreover, 17.0% of respondents also claimed that each department planned separately, which led to incoordination especially in the initial response to the pandemic.

**"One of the main disconnects we've had is getting people to act in a cohesive way. We also had lack of continuity between global sites: you were in the Berlin office, you actually knew that you needed to get hand gel and sort your cleaners out to make that they're cleaning more assiduously, tell people what the risks are, manage how the building's being done, those sorts of things. This didn't happen elsewhere and that was part of the disconnect."**  
 Head of Risk, Healthcare Sector, United States

From an organizational point of view, an encouraging 40.3% of organizations reported that they recognised the need to ensure that their operational resilience was maintained in addition to emergency and continuity measures. They also admitted that they were able to respond to the lockdown by drawing on redundancy and duplication within their systems. Rather surprisingly given the focus on operational Resilience in the financial services sector, only 44.0% of financial services companies answered this question positively.

One of the factors ignored by many respondents was that organizations had failed to consider the business impacts of a widespread global lockdown: 49.0% of respondents claimed not to have considered the business impacts of a widespread global lockdown and 32.9% had not considered the financial "hit" that organizations were going to face. At the end of April, around a third of the globe was under lockdown<sup>16</sup> which led many organizations to reconsider their financial and strategic position.

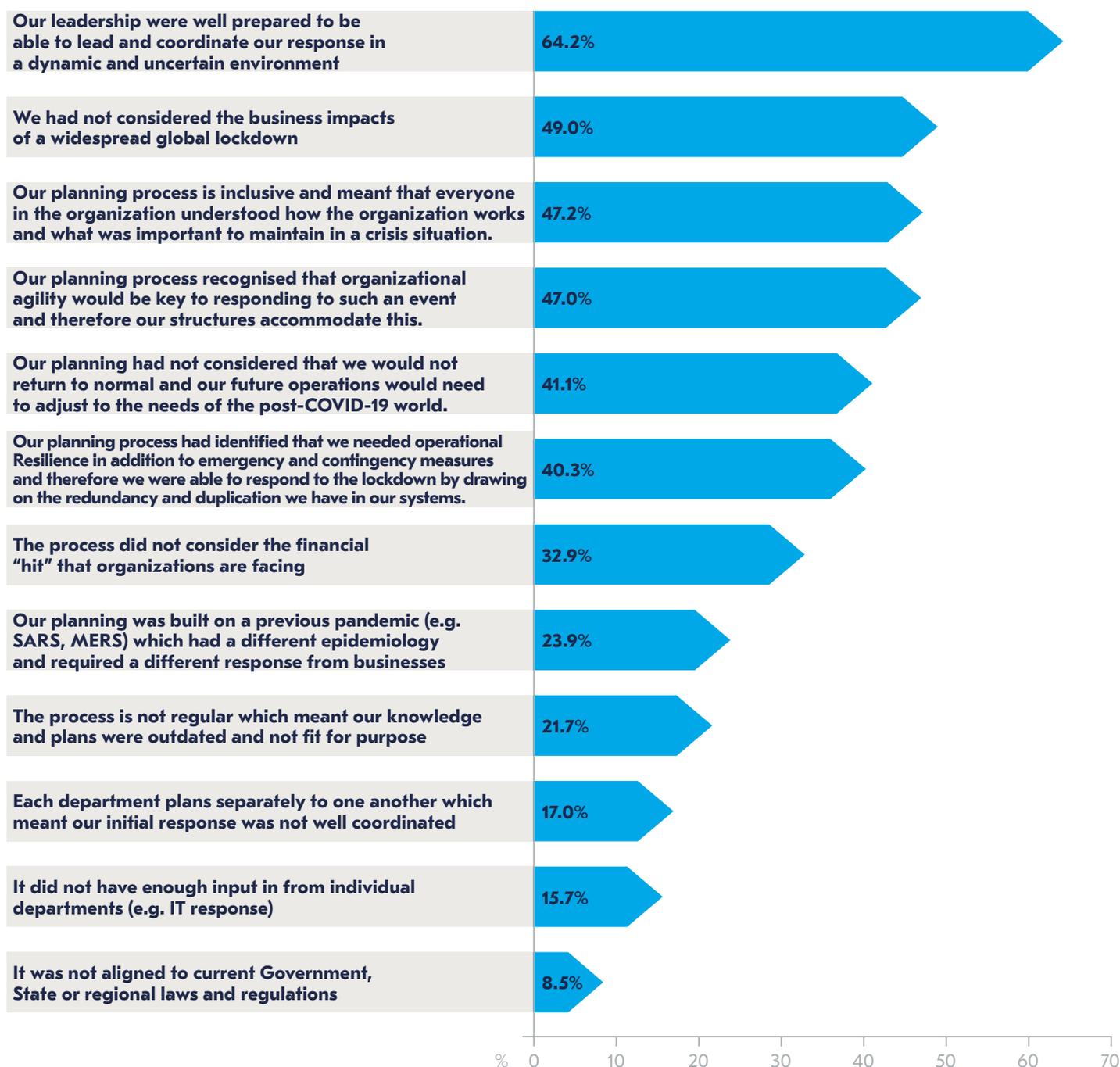
The BCI Coronavirus Organizational Preparedness report showed that organizations have only recently started to rectify their initial oversight of the financial hit of a global shutdown (i.e. the difference between a pandemic and an epidemic, the latter of which still forms the basis to many plans). Two-thirds of organizations are now undertaking a scenario-based analysis and/or financial modelling to determine what the 'new normal' could look like for their own businesses.

Although it has been previously mentioned that many organizations praised the response of individual departments (such as IT) during the crisis, a sizable minority (15.7%) claimed the planning process failed to have enough input from other departments. For example, departments such as HR were integral to the organizational response, yet there were cases where these departments remained in the background and failed to be reactive or proactive.

**"The standard players share my crisis management team table, conference call or zoom meetings. However, the team that really has more of a needed presence in these meetings is HR, usually they are responsive to associate needs and care with other continuity events but here, they need to be more proactive, reactive, versed in true life and death conversations, protecting our people with no grey areas for advice, intricately more involved with COVID-19. We've never, all our workforce generations that I manage or do Business Continuity for, gone through anything like this."**  
 Business Continuity Director, Manufacturing Services Sector, United States

16. Kaplan, J. Frias, L. & McFall-Johnson, M (2020). 'A third of the global population is on coronavirus lockdown'. Business Insider (30 April 2020). Available at: [www.businessinsider.com/countries-on-lockdown-coronavirus-italy-2020-3?r=DE&IR=T](http://www.businessinsider.com/countries-on-lockdown-coronavirus-italy-2020-3?r=DE&IR=T) (Accessed 30 April 2020).

### Which of the following applied to your planning process?



**Figure 10.** With respect to your planning process, please tick all that apply

## Staff Preparedness and Rehearsing/ Exercising





## Staff Preparedness and Rehearsing/Exercising

- Organizations who had recently rehearsed a pandemic plan were most prepared for Coronavirus
- Many organizations pre-empted their own Government's response – particularly those organizations with operations in Asia

Organizations were split when it came to evaluating the level of preparedness of their staff for the pandemic. 42.4% felt their staff were prepared, 42.3% felt their staff were not prepared and 15.3% were unsure.

One of the core components of staff preparedness is regular exercising of Business Continuity plans. Only a third (35.0%) of those organizations that had never rehearsed their pandemic plan felt their staff were prepared compared to three-quarters (72.7%) of organizations who had rehearsed their plans in the last six months.

Some organizations chose to rehearse plans as it became clear that the virus was spreading globally. One of the most reported examples of this was the insurance exchange, Lloyd's of London. Lloyd's closed its underwriting room for an entire day on 13 January – 10 days before lockdown measures were announced in the United Kingdom. This was done to stress test its Business Continuity plan in the event of a lockdown. The floor had not been shut since the market was launched over 330 years ago<sup>17</sup>.

**“Previous denial of access incidents had meant around 50% of the workforce working remotely. When it became clear to us that, in this case, most staff would have to work from home, we decided to test that. Then, when the lockdown happened, we were able to move to a situation with most staff working from home overnight.”**

Business Continuity Manager,  
Public Sector, United Kingdom

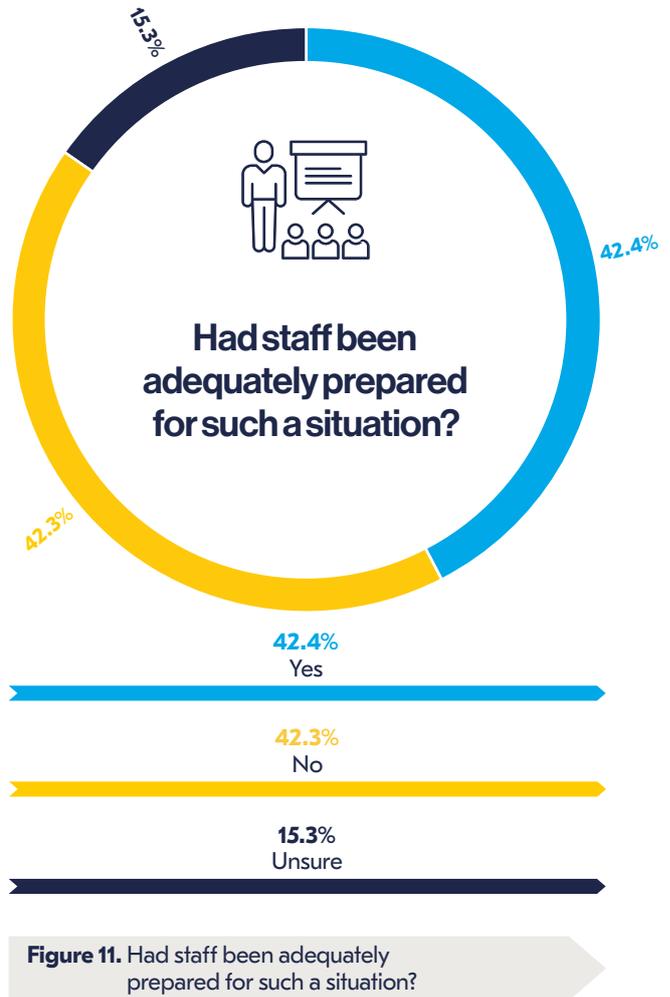
17. Martin, B (2020). 'Lloyd's of London shuts underwriting room in coronavirus stress test'. The Times (5 May 2020).

Available at: [www.thetimes.co.uk/article/lloyds-of-london-shuts-underwriting-room-in-coronavirus-stress-test-ghk2clv9x](http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/lloyds-of-london-shuts-underwriting-room-in-coronavirus-stress-test-ghk2clv9x) (Accessed 4 May 2020).

Business Continuity and Resilience professionals were hopeful of getting additional resource going forward due to the success of their departments in responding to the pandemic. Interviewees additionally commented that they were also hopeful that the pandemic would help them to get more buy-in for rehearsing and exercising Business Continuity plans going forward.

**“We struggle to get interest in what we do, like a lot of people. You do your plans, you do your tests – but you struggle to get them to do their tests and update their plans. We adopted a strategy 18 months ago about getting them to do their exercises on time but I think there will be a lot more enforcement now as well as a lot more interest from a senior level. We expect to be asked “What are you testing these guys on this year? Why are you doing it?” For the past three years, it’s been me asking people. I therefore think the organization will be a lot more open to testing.”**

Head of Risk, Healthcare Sector, United States



### When had you last rehearsed a pandemic response?



**Figure 12.** When had you last rehearsed a pandemic response?

One aspect of preparedness is looking at the timeframe when measures are adopted. Throughout the crisis, individual Governments have been providing information – some of it mandatory, some of it advisory – to individuals and businesses to follow during the pandemic. When respondents were asked how they were using this information, the most popular response (48.3%) was organizations following Government advice and implementing that advice within their own organizations. However, as mentioned in the introduction to this report, some organizations felt that they had to pre-empt their own Government’s advice in order to fully prepare their own organizations for the pandemic and the survey shows that over a third (37.6%) of organizations chose to do this.

As mentioned in the introduction, many organizations, particularly those in the financial services sector, chose to split their workforce and/or implement a universal work-from-home policy as early as February. Other organizations took the lead and advice from organizations in countries and regions where the pandemic had hit earlier. Some organizations reported that they had the advantage of having operations in Asia and were able to transfer the learnings there to their operations in other regions.



**“We adopted a ‘should we be working from home’ suggestion up within the organization rather than base it on when governments told us to. I’ve heard the same advice repeated throughout this pandemic: ‘If you follow governments all the time, as a company that’s not your agenda. That’s the government’s agenda.’”**  
 Head of Risk, Healthcare Sector, United States

**“We started planning things early because of some webinars we’d been listening to independently from the middle of January. The first cases in Italy were reported in late January so we were directly involved in the issue well before many other peoples’ countries. We also supported our operational partners in the early days of the disease which was consistent with spread in mid-February in the North of Italy before stopping all operations by the end of February.”**  
 Emergency Response Manager, Aviation Industry, Italy

**“We reverted to working from home on 18 March, the day the Government announced that schools would be closed. We cancelled all our [sporting fixtures] on the morning of the previous Friday. So, we pre-empted the Government lockdown by three days. This gave us time to get laptops and other IT arrangements sorted out.”**  
 Funding Manager/Business Continuity, Leisure & Hospitality Industry, United Kingdom

**37.6%**  
 We have made our own arrangements based on our own research and horizon scanning processes and pre-empted Government announcements

**48.3%**  
 We have been following Government advice and implementing this into our own strategy

**8.4%**  
 We have been following Government advice where possible, but there have been some instances where we have lagged behind

**1.1%**  
 We have been unable to follow government advice and keep our business operating. We have therefore been forced to choose between ceasing operation or shutting down.

**1.6%**  
 We have voluntarily chosen to shut down operations to allow our staff to help the delivery of critical capabilities such as home delivery and testing.

**3.0%**  
 Other

**Figure 13.** Most national governments have been providing advice for organizations and individuals to follow. Some organizations are choosing to anticipate Government advice or, in some cases, ignore it. Which of the following best matches your own organization's strategy?

An important part of an organization's crisis response is the external messaging strategy. Many organizations sent out email communications at the beginning of the outbreak to both their customers and suppliers regarding their response to Coronavirus.

Some organizations admitted that their response was slow for a number of reasons: a) they were waiting for Government guidelines before advising their customers and/or suppliers; b) they were worried about being the first to make an announcement in their industry and potentially losing customers or c) external communications were deprioritised in the response phase.

Despite these concerns, at the time of this survey, only one in ten organizations (9.4%) had failed to contact clients, suppliers and other stakeholders about their proposed actions during the pandemic – even though some readily admitted they were slow to do so.

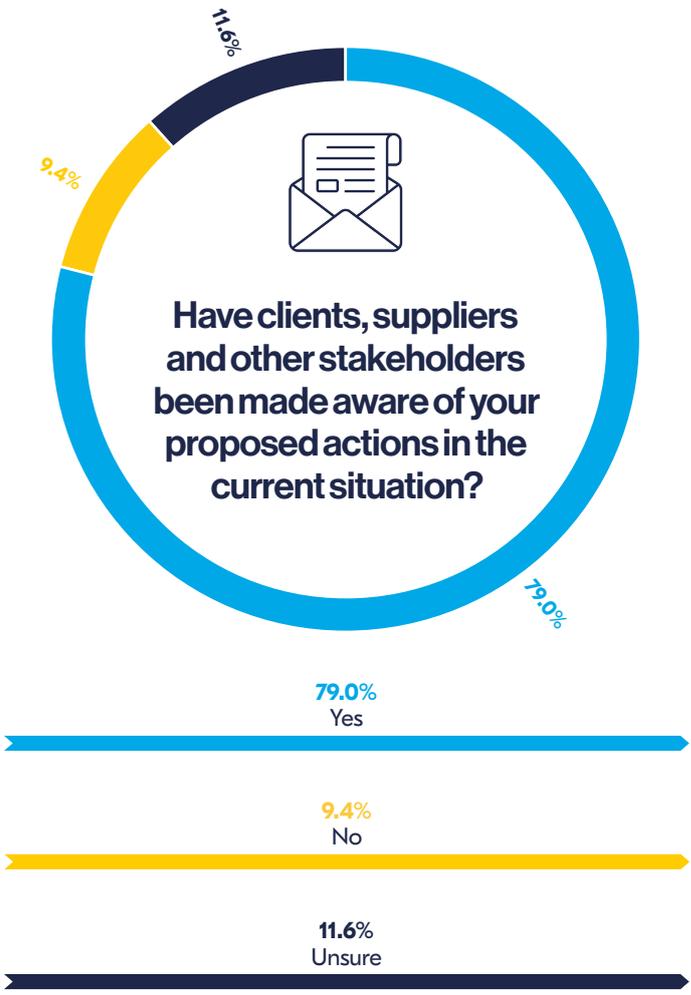
For some organizations, the importance of keeping valuable customers and suppliers informed of their organizations' strategy as well as ensuring the health and viability of their own suppliers was deemed crucial.

**"I'm really fortunate I'm in quite a small technology-based company as at the moment we're not feeling any pain whatsoever. Downstream, obviously I worry about that. I think one of the things that we've had to focus on more during this pandemic is our comms side. We had a debate around whether our strategy should be communicated on our website already at the start of the pandemic; some thought it should and others thought it shouldn't. In the end we made a conscious decision not to update our web pages with anything just yet because it was moving quite quickly. The government was changing its mind quite a few times. And then I think we're now at the point where our message is not going to change anymore unless to say relax."**

Head of Risk, Financial Services, United Kingdom

**"We contact our suppliers every single week and I've also sent out a pandemic checklist. We use a vendor platform so I'm able to send out communications such as a security questionnaire to all the critical vendors. So, every single one of our critical vendors is now in receipt of that. I also follow up on weekly calls just to make sure they're okay."**

Head of Risk, Financial Services, United Kingdom



**Figure 14.** Have clients, suppliers and other stakeholders been made aware of your proposed actions in the current situation?

# Information Gathering and Retrieval





## Information Gathering and Retrieval

- **Most professionals value the importance of official information sources**
- **Nearly a third of organizations use social media as an information source. Whilst its use is frequently dismissed, correct use of social media can provide a valuable early information source for breaking news**
- **Business Continuity and other Resilience professionals are normally in charge of collating information whereas information analysis, where information can be combined with strategic management information, is left to the Board or strategic personnel**

The importance of using reliable information to help guide an organization through the pandemic is vital. In the early stages of the pandemic, fake news regarding cures, false statistics and incorrect government advice was rife. In mid-February, the director general of the WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, called the situation an “infodemic” and claimed “fake news spreads faster and more easily than the virus, and is just as dangerous.”<sup>18</sup> Angela Merkel pleaded with Germans to “not believe rumours and only believe official communications” with other world leaders giving similar advice.

At about this time, various organizations put technology to use to try and stem the flow of “fake news”. On 27 April, WhatsApp reported that viral WhatsApp messages had dropped by 70% after it introduced a policy to stop messages being sent between users more than five times or being posted on more than one chat group at a time.<sup>19</sup> In India, many were arrested after spreading false news relating to Coronavirus. The importance of sourcing reliable news is paramount to ensuring a consistent and realistic response, as well as safeguarding employee physical and mental wellbeing.

Most professionals stated that they are relying on information provided in Government announcements and briefings. Less than 1% (0.71%) of those surveyed claimed never to use this as an information source. The second most consistently used sources of information are “trusted” news channels, with 55.1% of professionals using them once a day or more to make decisions. Some professionals reported that they found it difficult to get information cascaded down to them from Government departments that they had previously relied upon, with only limited information being made available to them.

**“Central government guidance and planning assumptions from a Business Continuity perspective has been limited, so having flexible Business Continuity plans ready to respond to government announcements has been important.”**

Business Continuity Manager,  
Public Sector, United Kingdom

Global sources (such as the WHO) are also used, even if not with quite such regularity as trusted news sources. Sources such as the WHO can provide valuable first insight into news relating to the pandemic. Some practitioners spotted news of the pandemic as early as November by relying on the WHO website.

**“I first picked up on the pandemic back in November as I scan the WHO website regularly. I was then able to pass the information onto the crisis management team.”**

Manager, Public Sector, New Zealand

Nearly a third (30.7%) of organizations are still using social media as a source of information. While this can provide news and updates from trusted information sources, it should be used with caution, and any information gathered from social media should be fully verified.

Industry associations and networking groups are also being used consistently. 58.8% of respondents stated that they use industry associations (such as The BCI) for information at least once a week, and 41.2% reported using industry networking groups.

18. Schaake, M (2020). ‘Coronavirus shows Big Tech can fight ‘infodemic’ of fake news’. Financial Times (24 March 2020). Available at: [www.ft.com/content/b2e2010e-6cf8-11ea-89df-41bea055720b](http://www.ft.com/content/b2e2010e-6cf8-11ea-89df-41bea055720b) (Accessed 4 May 2020).

19. Spring, M (2020). ‘Coronavirus: Viral WhatsApp messages ‘drop 70%’’. Business Continuity (27 April 2020). Available at: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-52441202](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-52441202) (Accessed 4 May 2020).

## What information are you using to inform your organization to make tactical and strategic business decisions during the pandemic?

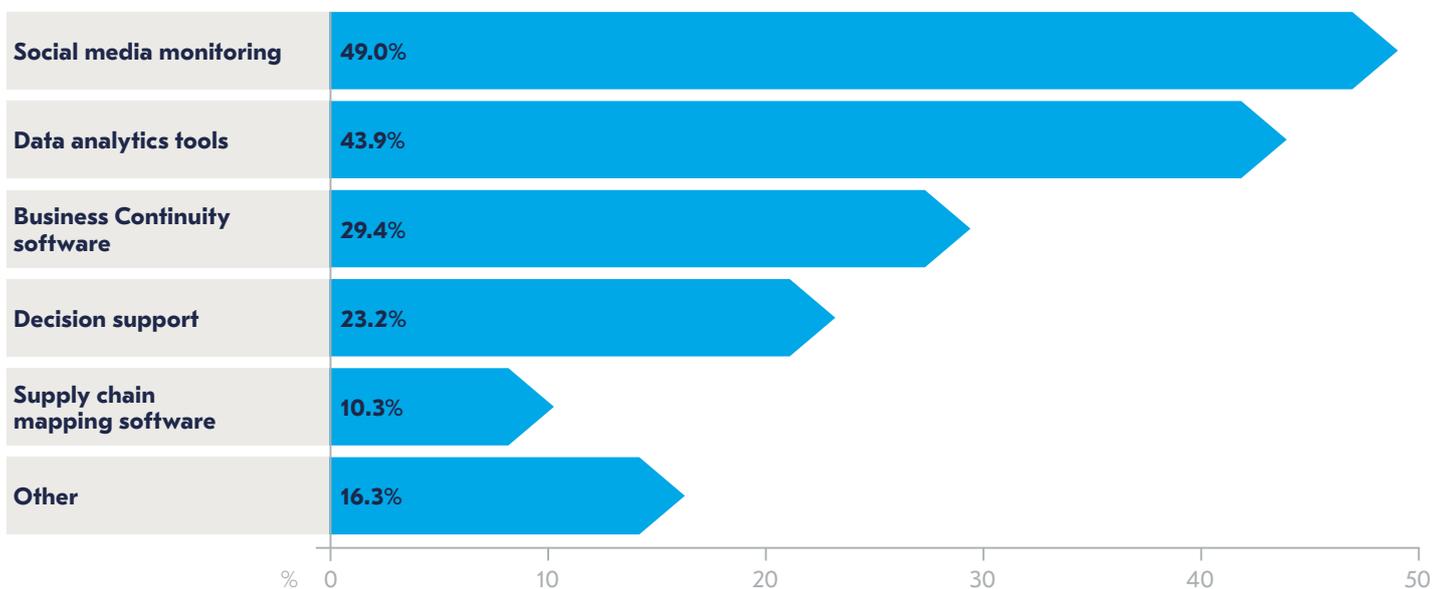


**Figure 15.** What information are you using to inform your organization to make tactical and strategic business decisions during the pandemic?

Whilst there has been significant attention on the use of technology for communication during the pandemic, technology has also been used to help with decision making, information gathering and horizon scanning. Over 43.9% of respondents said they were using data analytics tools to help with decision making and just under a third (29.4%) were using Business Continuity software.

Decision support technology, something which is being heavily used in clinical scenarios during the pandemic, is also being used by 23.2% of organizations and 16.3% of respondents claimed to be using other sources of information. Most responses also showed that professionals were continuing to use company-built spreadsheet models, typically built in Excel, for their decision making.

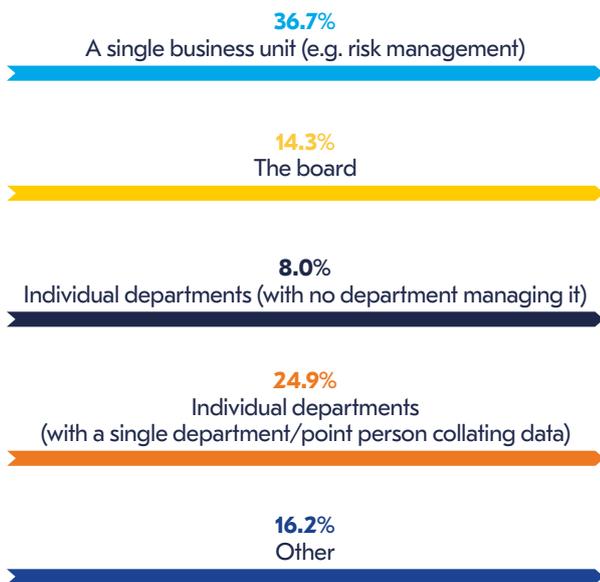
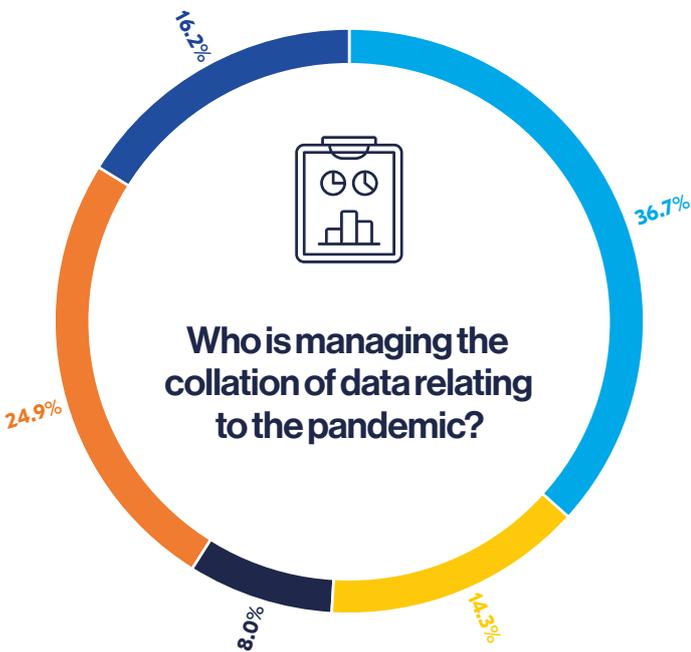
## Are you using any advanced data tools to help with your business decision making during the current crisis?



**Figure 16.** Are you using any advanced data tools to help with your business decision making during the current crisis?



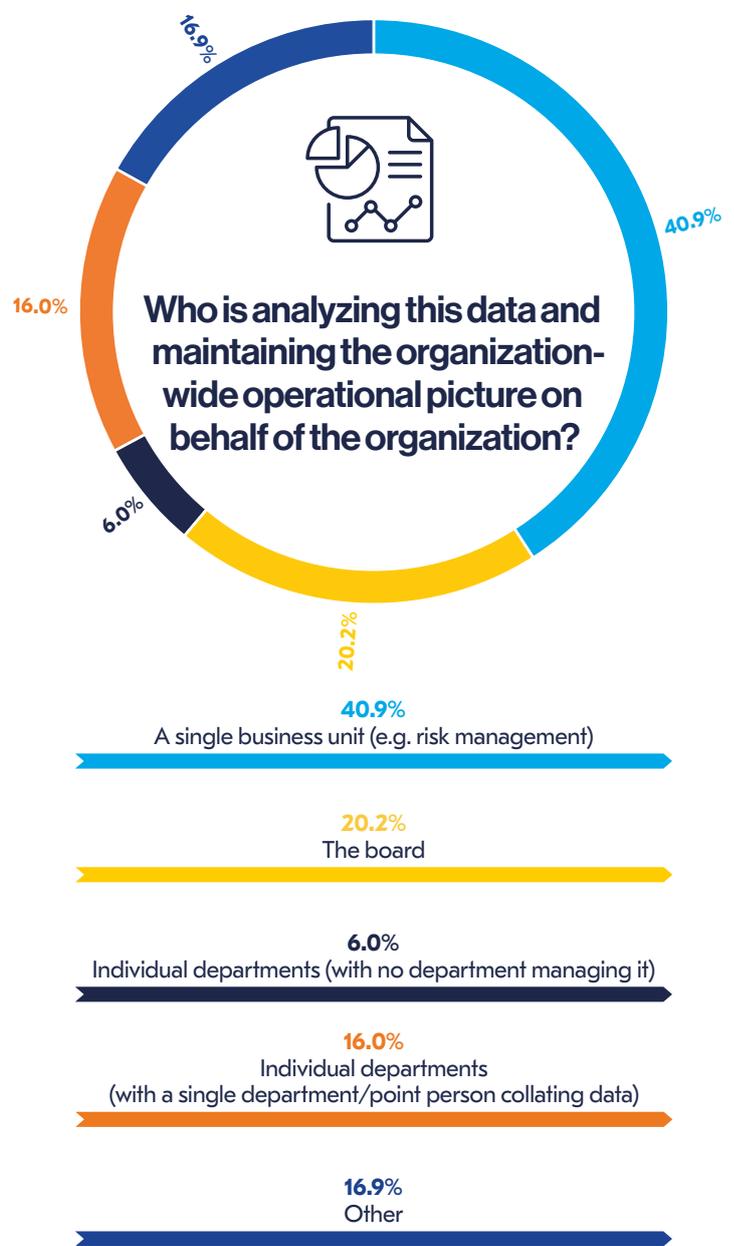
When it comes to information collation, organizations typically either have a single department such as risk management responsible for the collation (36.7%) or individual departments with a single point person managing it (24.9%). Encouragingly, only 8.0% of respondents claimed that individual departments were gathering information with no-one managing it. The last strategy can lead to duplication of effort and the 'siloeing' of information which can cause departments taking different views which could ultimately lead to disparate strategies forming throughout the organization.



**Figure 17.** Who is managing the collation of data relating to the pandemic?



When respondents were asked who was responsible for analyzing the information, a similar pattern emerged, although frequently the analysis of information was left to either the corporate strategy team or senior management itself. A fifth of respondents (20.2%) said the Board was responsible for the data analysis. The textual responses to the "other" option showed that other departments, which frequently took charge of the information analysis, were corporate intelligence, incident management, crisis management or a specially formed group to deal with COVID-19 information requirements. Having senior strategic staff analyze the information is a common practice, indeed, while a Business Continuity professional can collate information, the analysis needs to be carried out by the Board and/or senior strategy personnel so they can incorporate the information into the whole corporate picture.



**Figure 18.** Who is analyzing this data and maintaining the organization-wide operational picture on behalf of the organization?

# Recovery





## Recovery

- **By the beginning of May, over two-thirds of organizations were planning for recovery**
- **Business Continuity departments are more involved in the recovery stage than they were at the beginning of the response due to the uncertainty of the path to recovery**
- **Most organizations are adopting a cross-departmental response to recovery, with less evidence of departmental “siloing”**
- **Recovery plans are being reviewed very regularly with a quarter of organizations reviewing plans daily**

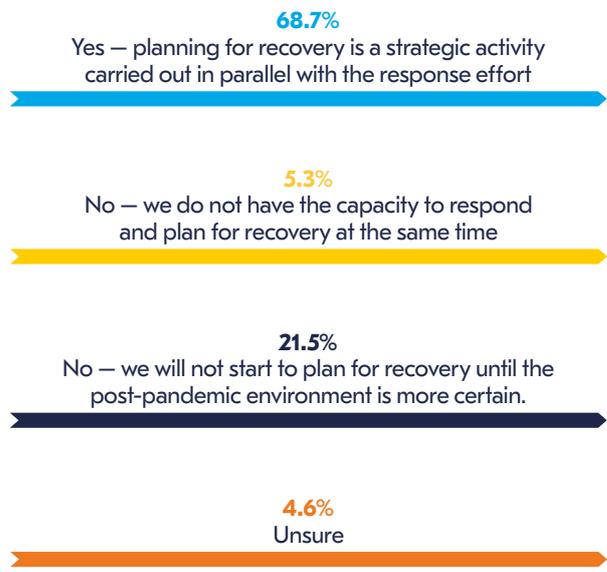
As of May 2020, many organizations still considered themselves to be in the response phase of their pandemic response, although the fourth edition of the BCI Coronavirus Organizational Preparedness Report showed that many organizations were now drawing up recovery plans. In the edition of 1 May 2020, 54.0% of respondents said that recovery plans had been drawn up (i.e. how the organization will move from the Business Continuity response phase to the recovery phase, and 58.3% of organizations had started planning to determine what the new operating model will look like.

The survey for this report showed a similar number of organizations starting to plan for recovery. In total, over two-thirds (68.7%) of respondents said that they were planning for the recovery phase, with this being viewed as a strategic activity which could be carried out alongside the response effort. One in five organizations (21.5%) said that the recovery phase will not begin until the post-pandemic outcome is more certain, and a small minority (5.3%) said that they did not have a recovery plan in place.

Such sentiments were also echoed in the interviews carried out for this report, with one respondent noting that the recovery phase was very much part of the whole Resilience process.

**“For us, recovery is a phase of your resiliency as well as wanting to be proactive as a business. So therefore, you must look at recovery. My colleague and I were talking about the need to prepare the business for recovery a month ago or more. We were having those discussions between the two of us as to how can we strategize this and what should we be looking at from the department to try and then stimulate the business. Even though we are still very much in the middle of the crisis, you still you need to be thinking yourself out of that crisis. So, the recovery was part of our strategizing from our department.”**

Head of Risk, Healthcare Sector, United States



**Figure 19.** Has your organization started to plan for recovery?

# Making recovery part of the Resilience process

## Dr Sandra Bell



There are several elements to resuming “business as usual” after a pandemic. In most situations that require a Business Continuity response the aim is to return operations to the pre-disruption state as fast as possible and then analyze and correct any organizational weaknesses that led to the disruption in the first place. The theory being that within the timescale of the disruption the external environment will not have changed significantly and therefore returning back to normal operations will not significantly disadvantage the organization.

However, in the case of a pandemic the timescale and the global impacts are often such that organizations that do not return to an altered state, that optimises themselves to the post-pandemic environment, are likely to be significantly economically disadvantaged.

The first element to consider regarding recovery is therefore the purpose, strategy, shape and form of the business that you wish to operate in the post-pandemic environment. Every global crisis leaves a legacy. Some of the changes are short term, surviving only as long as the collective memory. Some of the changes are localized and related to specific traumatic or heroic events. But many changes are long-term and structural, impacting both how we live our lives and how business is done.

Not all changes will be fully realized until after the pandemic. However, some are already evident. For example, with COVID-19 travel restrictions and social distancing have forced people to work from home, and during the pandemic we have seen an explosion of innovation around virtual meetings and knowledge sharing. Collaboration tools that were hitherto confined to tech savvy early adopters have now become mainstream while people experiment with new ways of doing business. It is highly unlikely that people, and businesses alike, will want to return to pre-coronavirus patterns of working due to the enhanced work-life balance, reduced carbon footprint, and increased collaboration they have found by being forced to innovate with digitalization.

This change will therefore open up new business opportunities that could transform many sectors including education, health and social care where travel restrictions and closures will have rapidly accelerated moves toward on-line delivery.

Likewise, COVID-19 has brought into sharp focus the dangers of relying heavily or solely on factories localized in single countries, which will force organizations to rethink their supply-chain strategies and although the demand for ventilators and masks is likely to drop from peak levels there will undoubtedly be an increase in public health awareness and an investment in the health sector opening up possibilities especially for organizations who have re-tooled to meet the current crisis.

Working out how to recover in a form that maximises competitive advantage in the post-pandemic crisis should therefore be the corporate strategists’ main focus from day one of a pandemic.

The second element to consider is the exit path. If restrictive health protection measures have been implemented the exit path is very likely to be precarious, with uneasy consumers, the potential for further pandemic waves, and problematic new health protocols. This means that Business Continuity measures for the priorities of the newly emerging business need to be in place before recovery starts if the organization is to survive the exit path.

Therefore, there needs to be Business Continuity effort working hand in glove with the corporate strategists to ensure that the exit path has a safety net. This means Business Impact Analysis and Risk Assessments on the new operating models, the defining of the new Business Continuity strategy, together with the design, implementation and testing of solutions - all before the organization embarks on the exit path.

The third element is health protection. Many workplaces will need to be altered to reduce the change of a reoccurrence. Some of the changes will be temporary but many will form a new way of working. Those risk controls will need to be designed, managed and maintained and — because they are likely to be regulatory — contingencies will also need to be implemented to ensure that they don’t fail.

All of the above takes time and requires input from right across the organization. If recovery planning starts after the response phase the organization will be on the back foot when it comes to winning back market share.

Two-thirds of respondents (65.3%) reported that Business Continuity/Resilience were involved in the recovery process, with a further 23.8% reporting that they would be. Only 10.9% of respondents said that Business Continuity would not be involved in the recovery process. This suggests that Business Continuity/Resilience is involved in the recovery phase more than in the initial response (comments in the *Organizational preparedness and initial pandemic response* section of this report showed that the Board and/or Crisis Management Team had greater involvement at the start of the response). However, given the exit path to the “new normal” will be precarious, it would be considered good practice for Business Continuity to be involved in the response.

Interview respondents frequently commented that they had a phased approach to recovery which worked in a similar approach to a phased lockdown, with different business units being involved at different points in time. When it came to people going back to the office, for example, some commented that they had learnt from the lockdown approach and were going to pay more attention to factors such as employee mental health during a phased return and were looking at multiple options and contingencies in the recovery phase.

Other organizations are finding they are being pushed into recovery perhaps quicker than they would have been due to customer, client or shareholder demand. Those involved in the recovery must find a clear balance between what is safe for staff but also satisfies the needs of stakeholders.

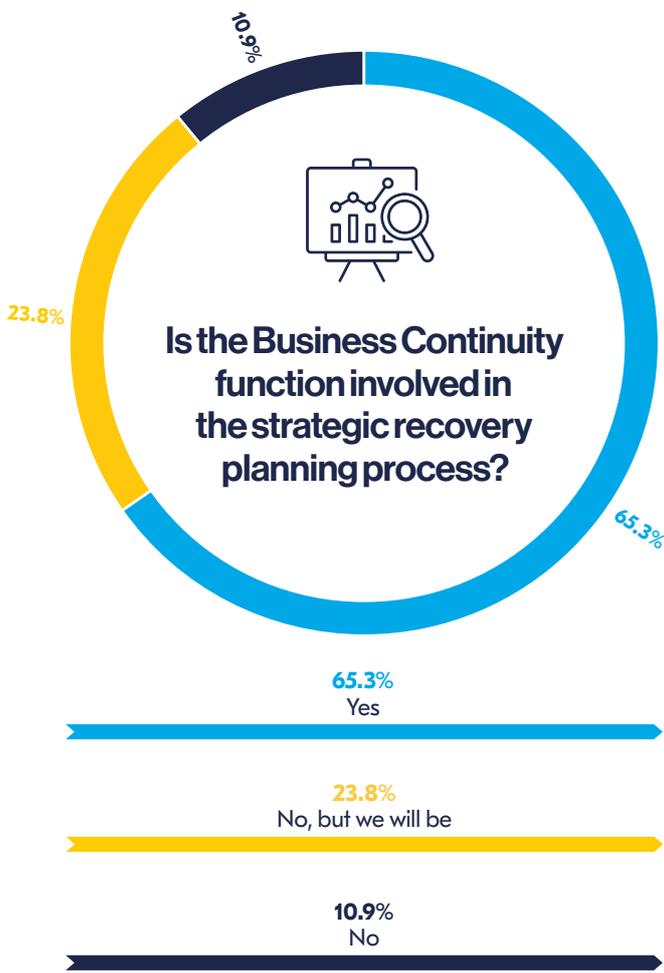
**“An operational group picked up on recovery independently because we hadn’t discussed it overtly. We mentioned at some of our crisis management team meetings that whilst we were in the middle of a crisis now, but do still need to be thinking about recovery. After that, we had a task force set up that started looking at it. I think partly because there’d been a client stimulus as well. As a company, we are aware we’re going to be reporting your Q1 earnings very soon. This means you’re going to have to be saying what you’re doing about recovery on those earnings calls, let alone everything else. It’s what people expect.”**

Head of Risk, Healthcare Sector, United States

**“We will be looking at a phased return in our recovery, whether people want to work alternate days from home and back at the office. It’s not the return to work, it’s a migration back to the office, because most of us are working anyway at home. We know some staff may be traumatised by the experience, particularly if they’ve been personally affected. Some may want to have their desks disinfected and others will feel they cannot yet return. We will be putting a few options in there on how to do it. There’s a whole load of things to think about for when someone says you can go back. At the moment, we’re on a thing called level four out of the four levels. Level four is basically the strictest state of emergency. Then we’d go to level three which will probably see schools start opening and certain nonessential shops will open still with physical distancing. Then we’ll go to level two and then level one, and we may not go back until we reach level one which could be a good few weeks yet.”**

Manager, Public Sector, New Zealand

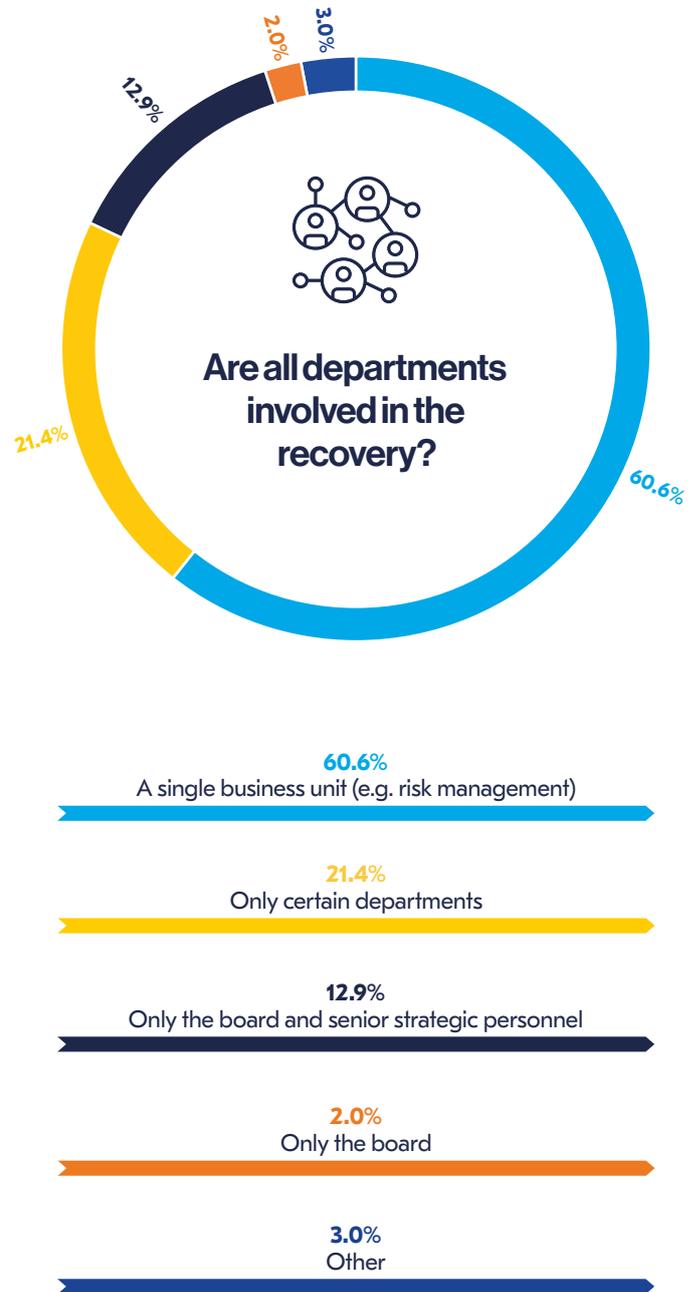




**Figure 20.** Is the Business Continuity function involved in the strategic recovery planning process?

In an echo of good organizational Resilience practice, nearly two-thirds of respondents (60.6%) commented that all departments were involved in the recovery process, with only 12.9% reporting that it was only the Board and other strategic personnel and 2.0% reporting that it was just the Board who were involved in the recovery process. It was mainly smaller companies which adopted this latter model.

The fourth edition of the *BCI Coronavirus Organizational Preparedness Report* showed that over half (57.3%) of organizations have a Recovery Working Group set up to lead the organization through the recovery phase. Typically, these groups comprise of representatives from different departments who encourage a cross-departmental approach.



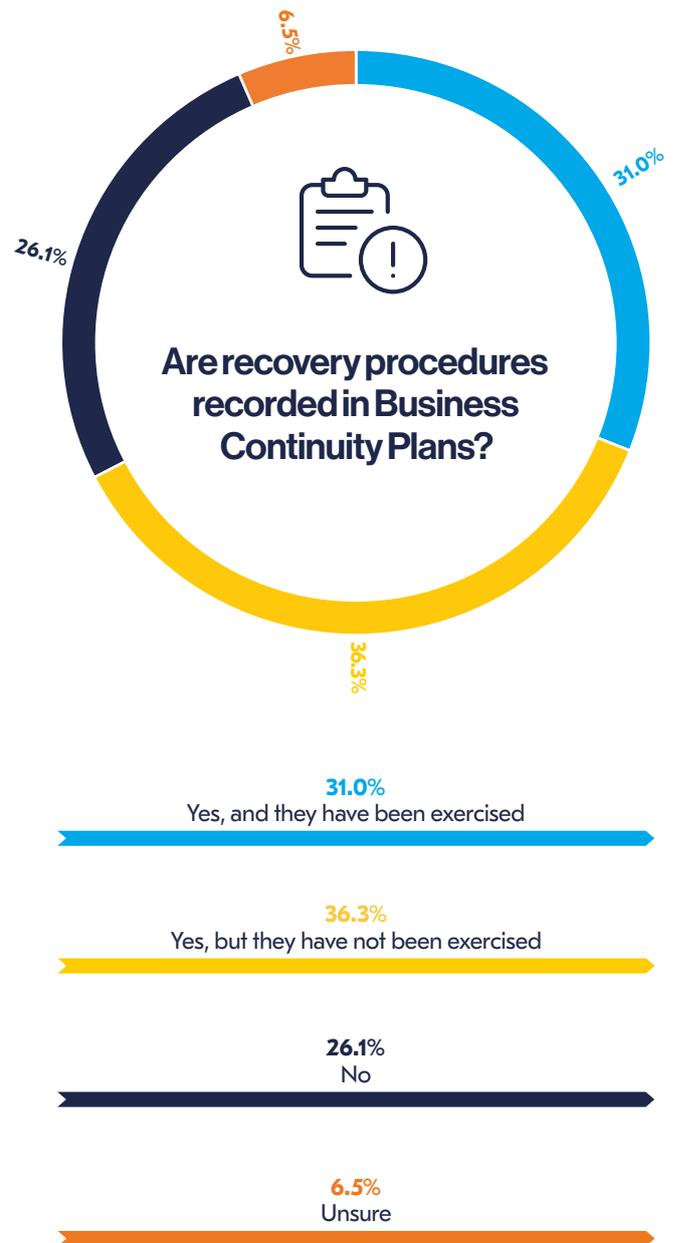
**Figure 21.** Are all departments involved in the recovery?

Coordinating recovery plans with individual department is crucial and a key element in improving organizational Resilience. Less than one in ten organizations (8.3%) reported that their organization does not coordinate its response with individual departments. The survey suggests it is the largest organizations that are worst when it comes to co-ordinating recovery plans. 17.4% of organizations employing 50,001-100,000 people reported that overall plans were not co-ordinated with individual department plans, whereas the figure was just 6.2% for organizations employing up to 250. This could indicate that information can be communicated more easily within smaller organizations, and large organizations tend to encounter more issues with information being 'silosed'.



**Figure 22.** Does your organization co-ordinate its recovery plans with those of individual departments?

When it comes to recording procedures in recovery plans, respondents were split: a third (31.0%) said they had been recorded and exercised, a further third (36.3%) said they had been recorded but not exercised, with a quarter (26.1%) saying they had not been recorded.



**Figure 23.** Are recovery procedures recorded in Business Continuity Plans?

# Recovery from a pandemic

## Dr Sandra Bell



From a Business Continuity perspective recovery normally means getting IT workloads back onto a production environment (either the original or a new one if the old one is beyond repair), ensuring plant and machinery work or are replaced and getting people reunited with their information, applications and machinery in a permanent workplace so they can resume the same tasks they did before the disruption. Even the most pragmatic texts on Business Continuity imply that you take the plan for invoking and reverse it<sup>20</sup>.

However, the exit path from a pandemic also involves a strategic organizational change, changes to health and safety protocols and practices, facilities restructuring to accommodate low contact doors etc. and enhanced access control, a potential new supplier base, an enhanced IT infrastructure to accommodate increased digitalisation of the business, a marketing strategy to say you are open for business and what business you are now open for to name but a few.

Most organizations will have existing processes and project and change management controls for the large scale and strategic changes. These are also things that are one-off projects and therefore not things that are susceptible to exercise and test.

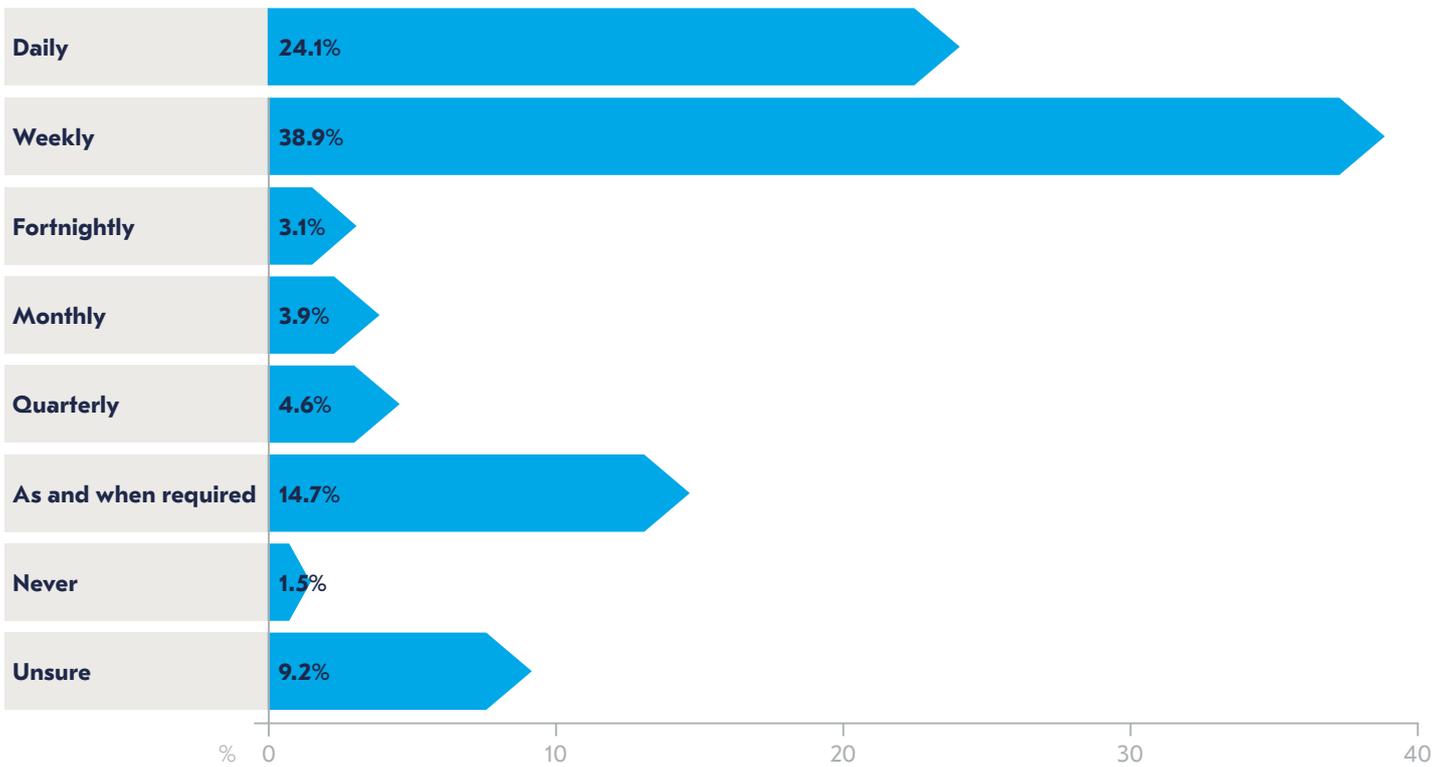
However, the ability to rapidly move workloads, people and equipment from specialised recovery capabilities such as Disaster Recovery environments, Work Area Recovery sites or remote working systems is something that should be as documented and practiced as the ability to move to them in the first place.

20. Watters, J. (2010). *The Business Continuity Management Desk Reference: Guide to Business Continuity Planning, Crisis Management & IT Disaster Recovery*. New York, New York: Leverage Publishing.

The fast-moving environment during the recovery means that most organizations will be reviewing their recovery plans every week or even more frequently: a quarter of respondents (24.1%) said that recovery plans would be reviewed daily, with 38.9% reviewing plans weekly. A further 14.7% said plans would be reviewed "as and when required". Although 9.2% were unsure how frequently plans would be reviewed, only one in ten organizations (9.9%) said that plans would be reviewed less frequently than every fortnight. With Government messaging changing daily and

new information being released by international agencies such as the WHO very frequently, ensuring recovery plans are updated regularly to ensure they are in line with this guidance is important. Furthermore, this is a period when networking groups such as BCI Chapters or industry forums can come into their own: sharing advice with similar organizations can help provide a) invaluable information that you may have missed within your own processes and b) help to corroborate that the processes you are following are correct.

### How often will you be reviewing the recovery phase and plan during the process?



**Figure 24.** How often will you be reviewing the recovery phase and plan during the process?

# Post-Coronavirus and the New Normal





## Post-Coronavirus and the New Normal

- **Only a quarter of organizations plan to revert to their old business model post-pandemic**
- **Increased use of technology will be the primary change, with over two-thirds of organizations saying they plan to deliver more events online**
- **Supply chains are set to see significant change: local sourcing of goods, greater due-diligence and alternations to just-in-time (JiT) models are some of the changes that professionals expect to see in the near future**

Less than a quarter of those surveyed (24.8%) believes they will return to their pre-pandemic business model, with over half (54.1%) claiming it will be different. Given the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, a fifth (21.2%) are still unsure about how their company will operate post-pandemic. With experts saying we may not even return to the “old normal” until as late as 2023<sup>21,22</sup>.

The working environment will also change dramatically, even after the original threat of COVID-19 has passed. Many organizations have experienced an upturn in productivity since workers have been at home, and an article by Forbes said returning to the ‘old normal’ is not an attractive option for many<sup>23</sup>.

The biggest change will be in the use of technology for communication. 81.3% of those surveyed said they plan to continue increased use of remote working post-pandemic, with a further 65.1% saying they plan to run more events in a virtual environment. The third highest rated choice is “investing in the Resilience of the organization”. One of the benefits COVID-19 has brought to the Business Continuity industry is an increased visibility and respect of the work of the department. The fact that nearly two-thirds of respondents (62.4%) believe that there will be increased investment in the Resilience of the organization “at all levels” is testament to the effect the increased visibility is having.

21. Sensi, J. (2020). ‘UK economy not expected to recover until 2023, study suggests’. Retail Sector (28 April 2020). Available at: [www.retailsector.co.uk/52097-uk-economy-not-expected-to-recover-until-2023-study-suggests/](http://www.retailsector.co.uk/52097-uk-economy-not-expected-to-recover-until-2023-study-suggests/) (Accessed 4 May 2020).

22. Freed, J. & Shepardson, D. (2020). ‘Airline industry braces for lengthy recovery from coronavirus crisis’. Reuters (3 April 2020). Available at: [www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-airlines/airline-industry-braces-for-lengthy-recovery-from-coronavirus-crisis-idUSKBN21K3KL](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-airlines/airline-industry-braces-for-lengthy-recovery-from-coronavirus-crisis-idUSKBN21K3KL) (Accessed 4 May 2020).

23. Jankowski, P. (2020). ‘Post COVID-19 Planning: Do We Really Want To Return To Normal?’. Forbes (28 April 2020). Available at: [www.forbes.com/sites/pauljankowski/2020/04/28/post-covid-19-planning-do-we-really-want-to-return-to-normal/#2e2abeb31688](http://www.forbes.com/sites/pauljankowski/2020/04/28/post-covid-19-planning-do-we-really-want-to-return-to-normal/#2e2abeb31688) (Accessed 4 May 2020).



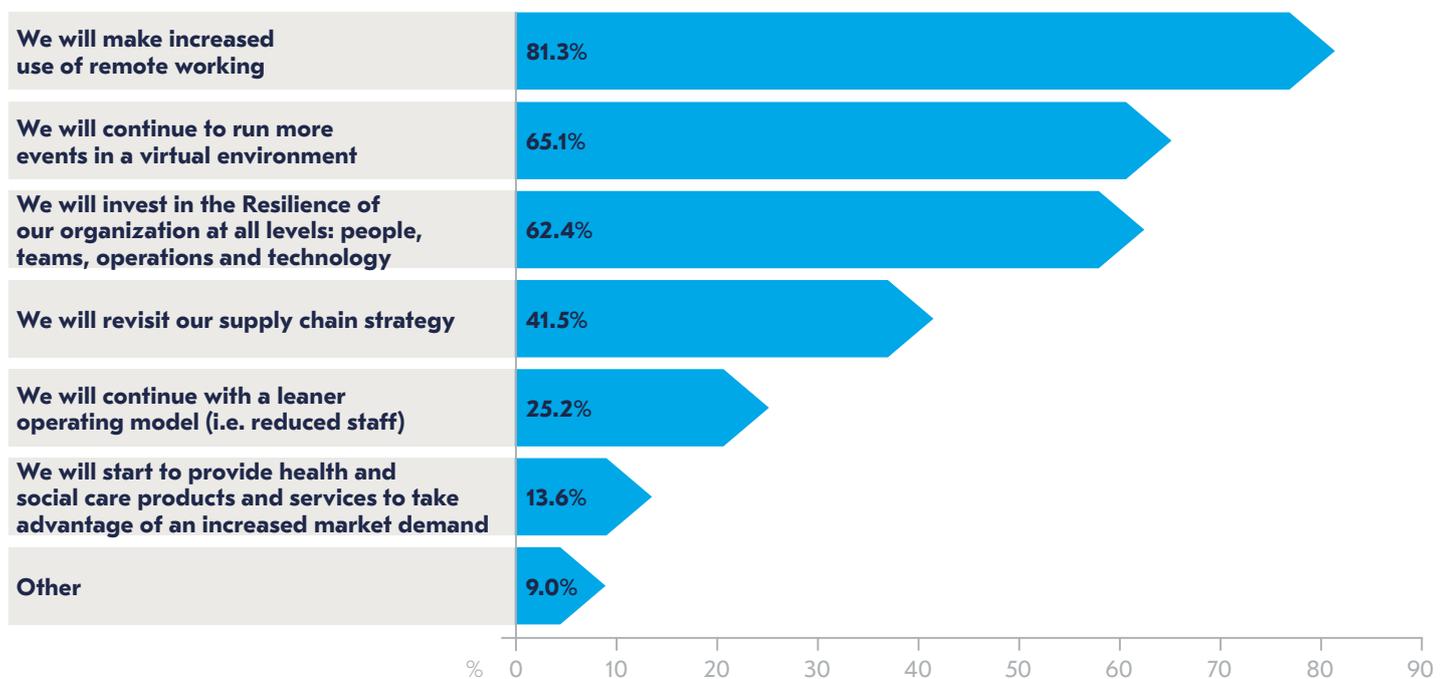
**“I think, as an organization, there will be a much better appreciation of what needs to be invested in terms of people, process, and technology. There will be increased interest in making sure that the company is resilient and better able to be adaptable and reactive to change.”**

Head of Risk, Healthcare Sector, United States

BCI research has revealed that around a third of organizations have made alterations within their supplier network during the COVID-19 outbreak and, with 41.5% of organizations anticipating changing their supply chain strategy post-pandemic, it would appear that some of these changes are likely to stay. Indeed, the Just-in-Time (JiT) manufacturing model that was pioneered by Toyota in the 1970s and is now used globally by most organizations has had its success challenged by the Coronavirus pandemic with organizations not being able to source parts in time.

Others have realised that despite having a double-sourcing strategy set-up, crucial parts have been sourced from the same supplier which has led to significant interruption<sup>24</sup>. Going forward, organizations will be reviewing JiT models, performing deeper due diligence of their critical suppliers (tier 2 and beyond) and perhaps considering more local sourcing.

### What changes do you anticipate making to your business model?



**Figure 25.** What changes do you anticipate making to your business model? Please tick all that apply:

24. Tong, S. (2020). “Just-in-time” manufacturing model challenged by COVID-19’. Marketplace (27 February 2020). Available at: [www.marketplace.org/2020/02/27/justintime-manufacturing-model-challenged-coronavirus/](http://www.marketplace.org/2020/02/27/justintime-manufacturing-model-challenged-coronavirus/) (Accessed 4 May 2020).

Some of these changes are likely to be led by organizational concerns arising from the pandemic. Financial instability is of greatest concern to Business Continuity/Resilience professionals, with nearly two-thirds (63.4%) citing this as a concern for them post-pandemic. However, whilst financial concerns are at the top of mind for most, less than one in ten respondents (9.3%) see insolvency as a concern for their organization, suggesting most expect to continue trading. Many of those that are particularly concerned are newer, fast growth businesses who are reliant on venture capital or private equity as investment sources and are concerned they may dry up. Others are businesses who were reliant on a single customer, particularly those in industries which may take longer to recover (such as the airline industry).

Low staff morale was ranked as the second greatest concern, with 45.0% of respondents believing this will be an issue going forward. Whilst BCI research shows that most organizations are now looking after the mental wellbeing of staff through the crisis through regular team/company calls and flagging of mental health services, many neglected this at the outbreak of the pandemic. With the longevity of response required during this pandemic, it is important that employee mental health is kept high on organizations' agendas.



Customer attrition and loss of customers to competitors are concerns for 30.2% and 17.2% respondents respectively. The most astute organizations have kept in touch with the largest customers throughout the crisis to ensure they are kept abreast with any organizational developments, whilst others will have been looking to diversify their client and product base to prevent losing customers throughout the pandemic. However, customer insolvency and/or new ways of working by a customer could lead to work being lost, and it is important to consider this in forecasting models.

**“We have a lot of big bank clients, major organizations. We must keep those guys happy in a sense of comfort that we’re controlling things. We have regular update calls with them.”**

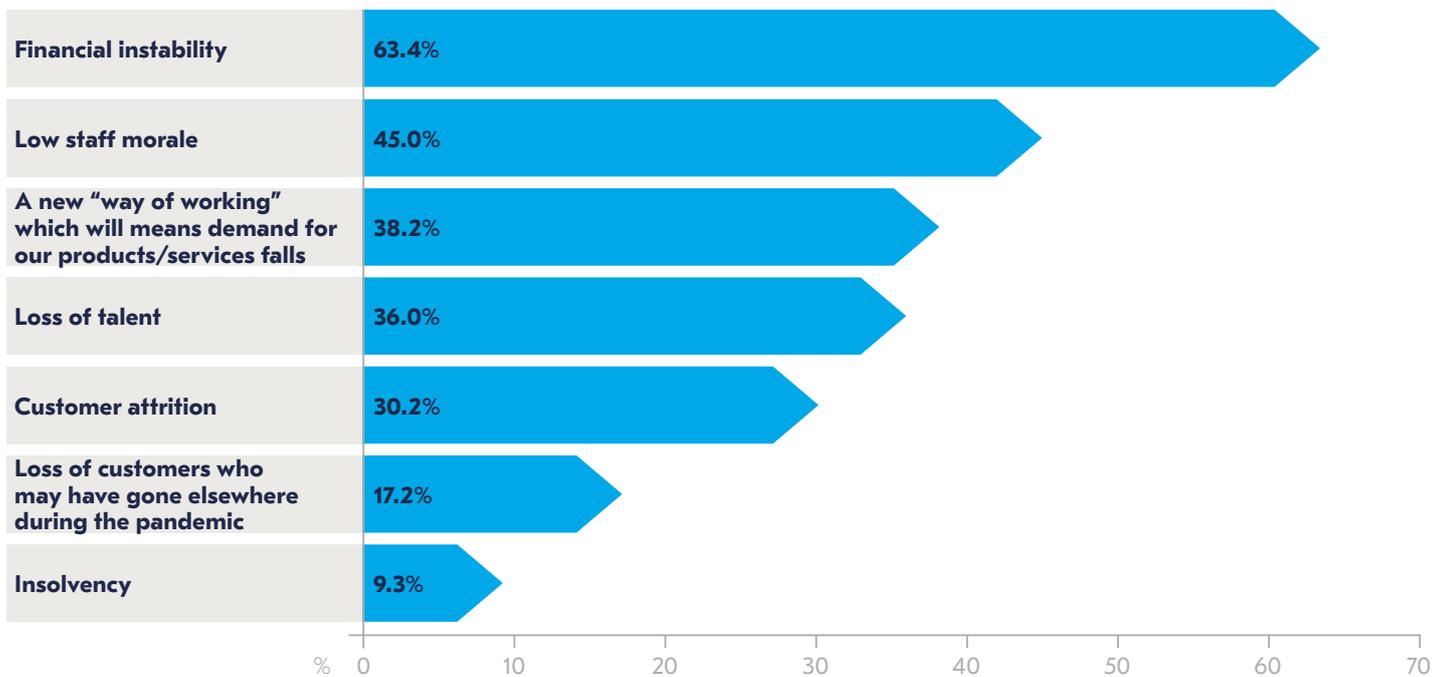
Head of Risk, Financial Services, United Kingdom

Loss of talent is also a concern for over a third (36.0%) of organizations. Whilst some may have concerns that employees may leave if a competitor has been able to manage the pandemic response favourably and will be recruiting post-pandemic, many will be concerned that they will lose talent because new operating conditions mean the organization cannot afford to keep them on. Some employees may also feel compelled to leave due to a dislike of new processes: a Harvard Business Review article suggested that up to 38% of employees may become disengaged from an organization when significant changes to working practices are brought in<sup>25</sup>.

Whilst many organizations will not be able to control some of the changes they will have to introduce, awareness of the effect it has on staff is something which can be controlled. Regular updates on potential changes to working practices and allowing staff to bring up any potential issues early on can help to mitigate future staff attrition.

25. Harvard Business Review (2013). The Impact of Employee Engagement on Performance. Available at: [hbr.org/resources/pdfs/comm/achievers/hbr\\_achievers\\_report\\_sep13.pdf](https://hbr.org/resources/pdfs/comm/achievers/hbr_achievers_report_sep13.pdf) (Accessed 4 May 2020).

**Which of the following are concerns for your organization post-pandemic?  
Please tick all that apply:**



**Figure 26.** Which of the following are concerns for your organization post-pandemic? Please tick all that apply:

However, in the sea of negativity, there are some positive attributes to have emerged from this pandemic: over two-thirds of organizations (68.0%) will be actively seeking more work-from-home opportunities for staff and 46.7% will be introducing more flexible working structures. Working from home will help to reduce staff travelling time and, providing tools are made available for staff to communicate, productivity can be increased: a recent study showed that remote employees work 1.4 days extra per month than their office based counterparts<sup>26</sup>. 42.9% of respondents also said that they will have better processes in place to manage the mental wellbeing of staff due to learnings made or, for some organizations, neglect of mental health during the pandemic.

For Business Continuity and operational Resilience professionals, respondents are confident that there will be increased attention on their roles and responsibilities post-pandemic which, in turn, will help to ensure additional financial and people resource for Resilience-orientated activities. Two thirds (65.1%) feel that there will be a greater attention on Business Continuity and Resilience from the Board, and 60.2% are confident of getting more organizational buy-in for training and exercising procedures.

**"It's really highlighted the need for a Business Continuity person and I think there's a lot more respect given for the role than there has been. I've had comments saying that are really pleased they brought me on Board in May last year and how it's been invaluable during the pandemic."**

Manager, Public Sector, New Zealand

**"I think the organization will be a lot more open to testing. Previously you were always trying to take people away for training and they viewed it as two hours away from what they should be doing. I'm confident now people will be much more open to taking the time out to do training."**

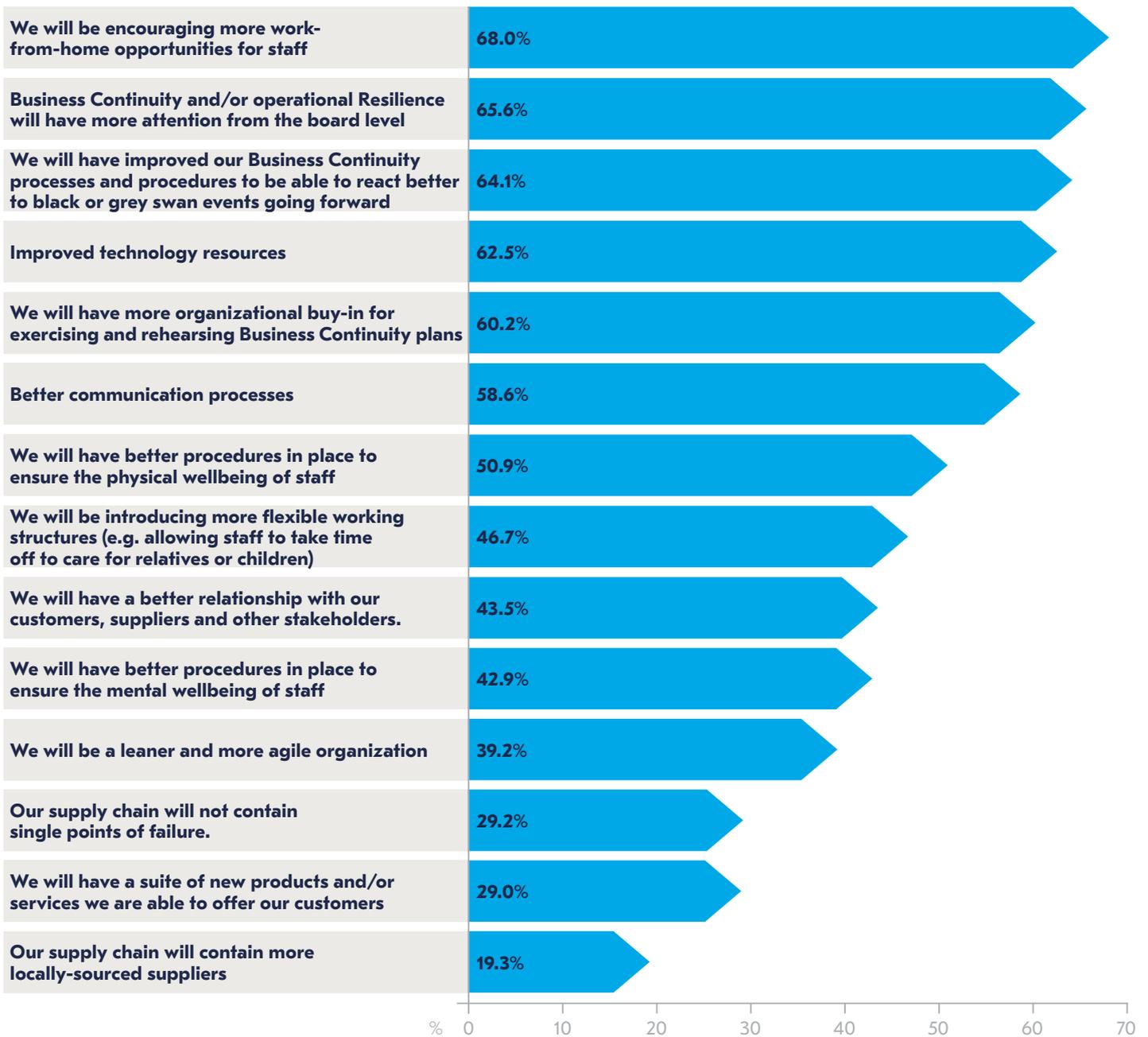
Head of Risk, Healthcare Sector, United States

26. Caramela, S (2020). 'Working From Home Increases Productivity'. Business News Daily (31 March 2020). Available at: [www.businessnewsdaily.com/15259-working-from-home-more-productive.html](http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/15259-working-from-home-more-productive.html) (Accessed 4 May 2020).

Changing customer dynamics was also a positive cited by many respondents: 43.5% believed they would now have a better working relationship with stakeholders post-pandemic, and just under a third (29.0%) have used the time to develop new products and services for customers which they feel will have a positive impact on revenues post-pandemic.

For others, many have learnt lessons for supply chain management: 29.2% will work to ensure their supply chains do not contain a single point of failure, and 17.6% believe their supplier network will contain more locally sourced suppliers.

### Which of the following positive attributes do you anticipate will apply to your organization post-pandemic?



**Figure 27.** Which of the following positive attributes do you anticipate will apply to your organization post-pandemic? Please tick all that apply

# Annex





**Respondents**



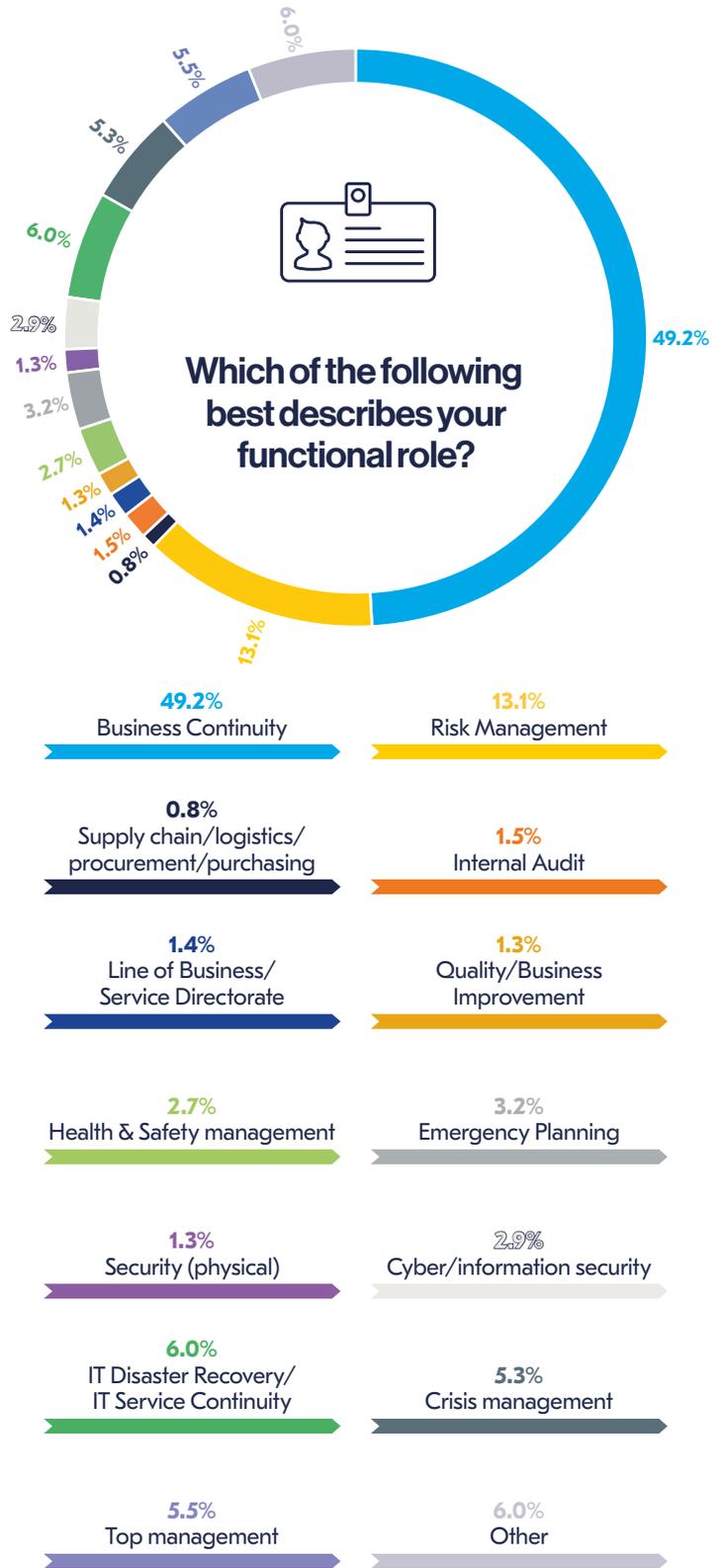
**Countries**



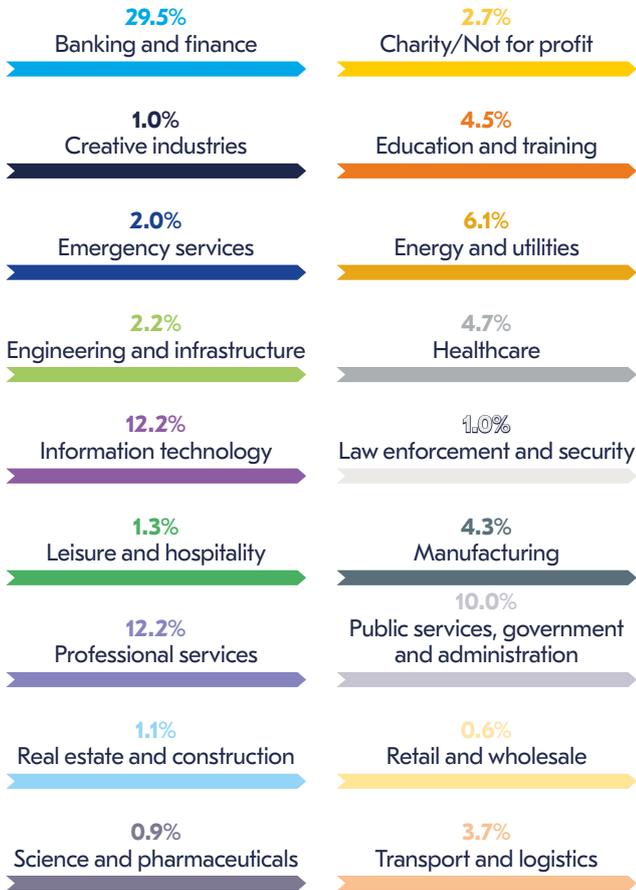
**Sectors**



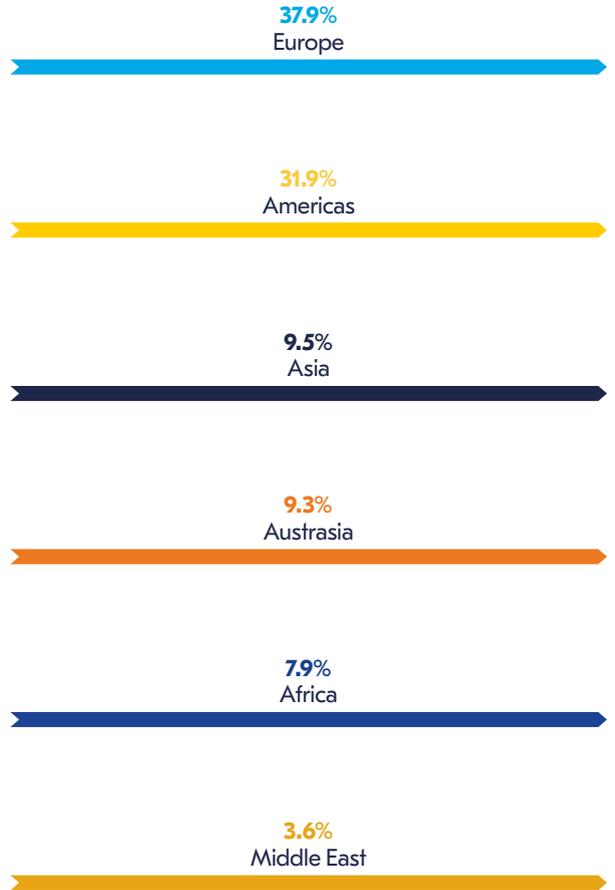
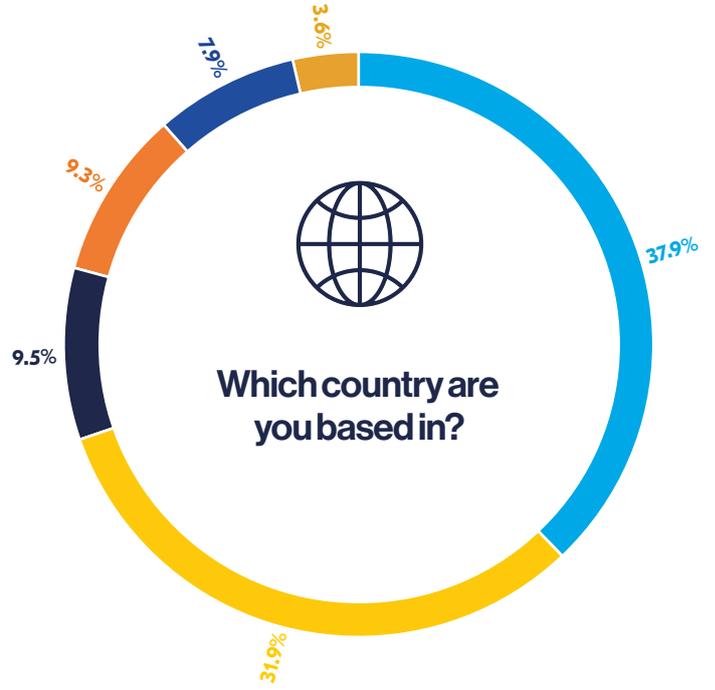
**Respondent Interviews**



**Figure 28.** Which of the following best describes your functional role?



**Figure 29.** What sector does your company belong to?



**Figure 30.** Which country are you based in?



**Figure 31.** Approximately how many employees are there in your organization globally?



**Figure 32.** What is the approximate global annual turnover of your organization?



## About the Author

### Rachael Elliott (Head of Thought Leadership)

Rachael has twenty years' experience leading commercial research within organizations such as HSBC, BDO LLP, Marakon Associates, CBRE and BCMS. She has particular expertise in the technology & telecoms, retail, manufacturing and real estate sectors. Her research has been used in Parliament to help develop government industrial strategy and the BDO High Street Sales Tracker, which Rachael was instrumental in developing, is still the UK's primary barometer for tracking high street sales performance. She maintains a keen interest in competitive intelligence and investigative research techniques.

She can be contacted at [rachael.elliott@thebci.org](mailto:rachael.elliott@thebci.org)



## About the BCI

Founded in 1994 with the aim of promoting a more resilient world, the Business Continuity Institute BCI has established itself as the world's leading Institute for Business Continuity and Resilience. The BCI has become the membership and certifying organization of choice for Business Continuity and Resilience professionals globally with over 9,000 members in more than 100 countries, working in an estimated 3,000 organizations in the private, public and third sectors. The vast experience of the Institute's broad membership and partner network is built into its world class education, continuing professional development and networking activities. Every year, more than 1,500 people choose BCI training, with options ranging from short awareness raising tools to a full academic qualification, available online and in a classroom. The Institute stands for excellence in the Resilience profession and its globally recognised Certified grades provide assurance of technical and professional competency. The BCI offers a wide range of resources for professionals seeking to raise their organization's level of Resilience, and its extensive thought leadership and research programme helps drive the industry forward. With approximately 120 Partners worldwide, the BCI Partnership offers organizations the opportunity to work with the BCI in promoting best practice in Business Continuity and Resilience.

The BCI welcomes everyone with an interest in building resilient organizations from newcomers, experienced professionals and organizations. Further information about the BCI is available at [www.thebci.org](http://www.thebci.org).

### Contact the BCI

+44 118 947 8215 | [bci@thebci.org](mailto:bci@thebci.org) | 10-11 Southview Park, Marsack Street, Caversham, RG4 5AF, United Kingdom.



## About Assurance Software

Leveraging decades of experience, Assurance Software pairs expert guidance with purpose-built software to simplify preparation and ensure quick restoration of critical operations. Following its 2019 merger with ClearView Continuity and 2020 acquisition of Avalution Consulting, which merged with BC Management in 2019, Assurance now offers comprehensive business continuity consulting, software, staffing and data research solutions to 900+ customers throughout the United States and the United Kingdom. Assurance is strategically and financially backed by Resurgens Technology Partners, a technology focused private equity firm based in Atlanta, GA.

For more information, visit [www.assurancesoftware.com](http://www.assurancesoftware.com).



## About ClearView

ClearView is a powerful, yet easy to use, software solution which enables organizations of all sizes to effectively manage business continuity. ClearView is a fully integrated package: whether you are developing plans, running exercises, managing incidents, or communicating with employees, you can manage everything quickly and efficiently within ClearView.

For more information, visit [www.clearview-continuity.com](http://www.clearview-continuity.com).

---

**BCI** 10-11 Southview Park, Marsack Street,  
Caversham, Berkshire, UK, RG4 5AF

[bci@thebci.org](mailto:bci@thebci.org) / [www.thebci.org](http://www.thebci.org)

