



EMPLOYERS IN THE SPOTLIGHT:
**THE CALL FOR COMPANIES TO
HELP END THE COVID-19 CRISIS**



DECEMBER 2021

Overview

Since March 2020, in partnership with KRC Research and United Minds, Weber Shandwick has been examining U.S. consumers and workers as the COVID-19 pandemic persists. While the majority of employees continue to say their employers have put safety above profits since early in the pandemic – with our latest polling reflecting 67% in agreement, down slightly from 72% in May – the demanding cry now is for employers to help end the COVID-19 pandemic.

To lead in a polarized and changing environment, while striving to meet business goals, manage back-to-office plans and sustain employee civility. This is no easy feat – particularly with diminishing optimism, deep divisions driven by socio-economic factors and a workforce that is burned out and ready for change.

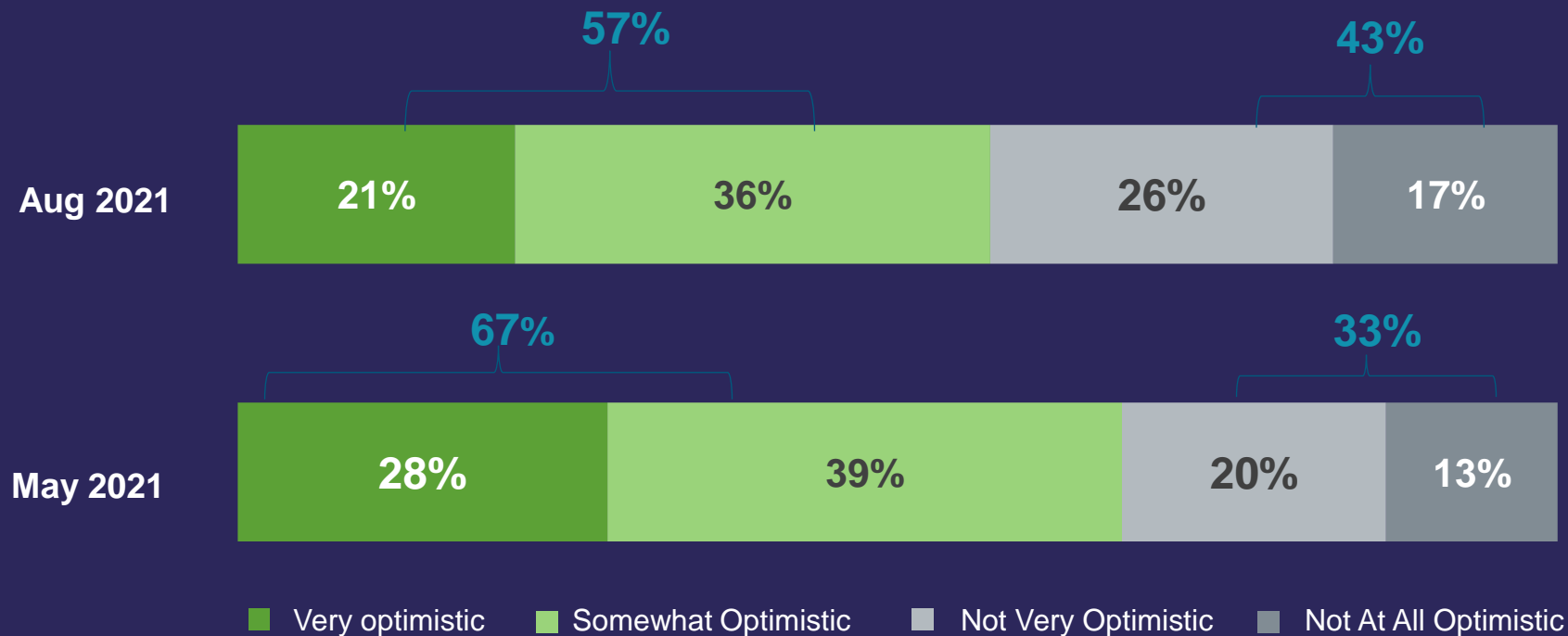
But as our latest research and mandates from the White House show, the private sector is being called on do its part to end this crisis.

This survey was conducted by Weber Shandwick and KRC Research on August 23-25, 2021, with a sample of just over 1,500 adult consumers and workers, demographically weighted to align with the U.S. adult population based on U.S. Census data.



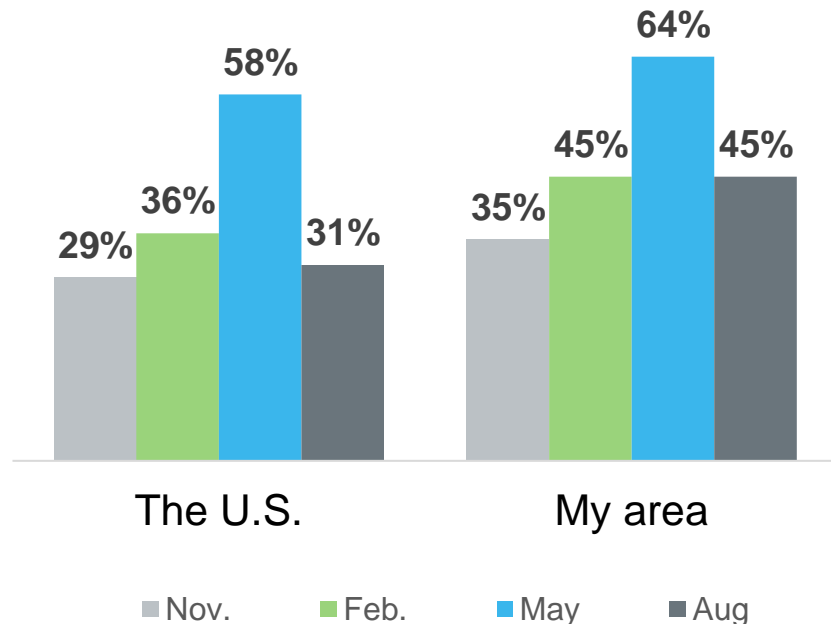
Optimism in the country's direction has eroded by 10 points since May.

Overall, how are you feeling about the current direction of the United States?



There has been a dramatic rise and fall in the belief that COVID-19 is mostly under control and efforts are working.

Percent Agree:
Coronavirus is mostly under control in...



Percent Agree:
Efforts to stop the spread of coronavirus and bring it under control are working.

	May	Aug.	Change
TOTAL	74%	50%	-24
Northeast	72%	56%	-16
Midwest	77%	50%	-27
South	72%	47%	-25
West	75%	51%	-24
Republican	72%	51%	-21
Democrat	78%	54%	-24
Independent	68%	34%	-34
Fully vaccinated	83%	54%	-29
Not vaccinated	65%	39%	-26



80% of Americans agree companies should help end the pandemic.

*63% say very important (up 16 pts since May)

Important Issues for Business & Employers to Help Solve %	May	August
Drive economic growth and create jobs	84	87
Increase access to affordable health care	75	82
End the coronavirus pandemic	75	80
Reduce crime and uphold public safety	72	80
Reduce misinformation and disinformation	74	80
Protect national security	*	80
Improve America's reputation globally	69	77
Ensure the integrity of elections	64	76
Rebuild the country's infrastructure	*	76
Maintain U.S. leadership in the world	*	75
Reform the immigration system	61	73
Reduce gun violence	64	72
Make it easier for citizens to register and vote	59	71
Increase # vaccinated against COVID-19	67	70
Reduce income disparities	71	70
Advance racial equality and address systemic racism	*	69
Tackle climate change	64	68
Reform law enforcement practices	59	66

* Not asked in May 2021

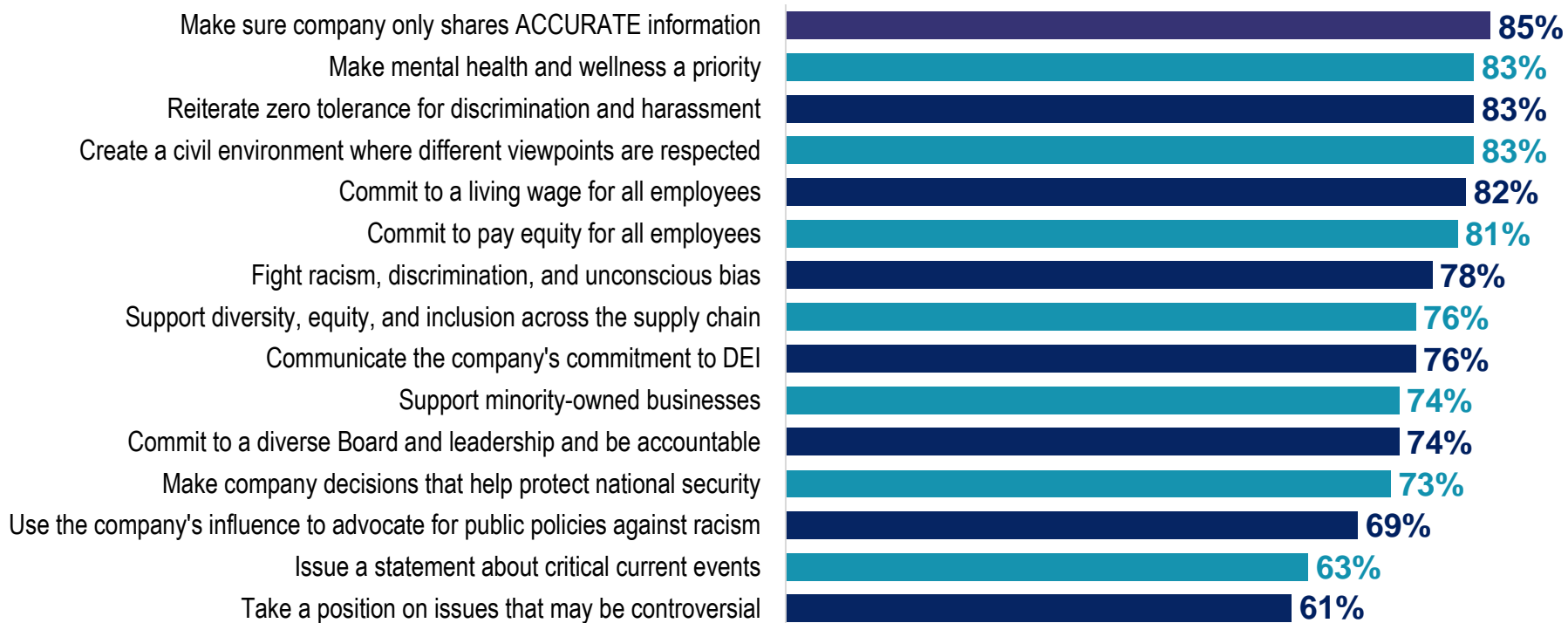


Most employees expect their employer to create safe and equitable workplaces — and to speak up on certain societal issues.

EMPLOYED:

How important are each of the following for the company or organization you work for to do?

(Very or somewhat important)



65%

of employees and 61% of consumers agree that American businesses are increasingly a constructive force for positive change.

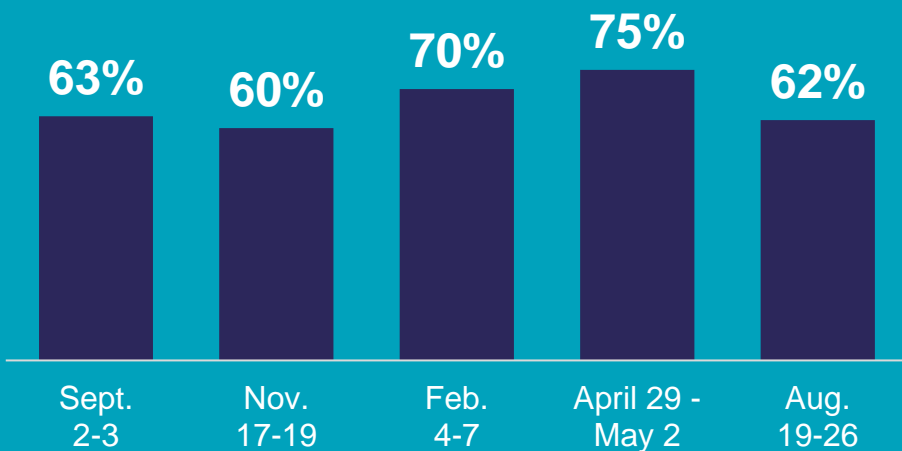


Trend: Confidence in businesses and employers.

ALL ADULTS

Businesses and employers are taking the right actions to stop the spread of coronavirus to bring it under control
(Percent very or somewhat confident)

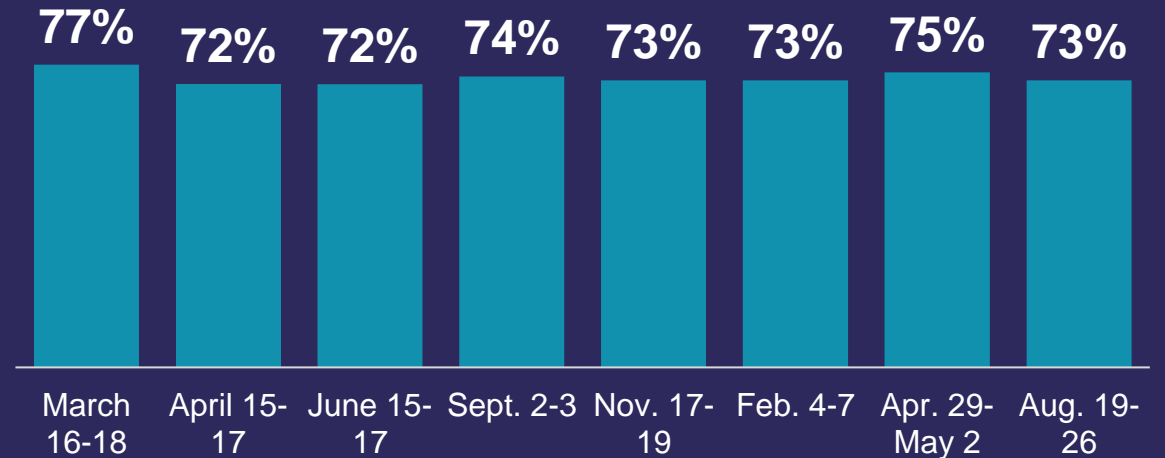
-13 points since May



THOSE EMPLOYED

My employer's response to the coronavirus is exactly what it should be
(Percent strongly or somewhat agree)

Employee confidence in employers has remained strong since the pandemic started



Companies that have communicated effectively through the pandemic have established strong reputations among employees.

74%

agreed that their employer is communicating effectively about the COVID-19 situation—
36% strongly agreed

Employees were asked if their employer is communicating effectively about the COVID-19 situation.

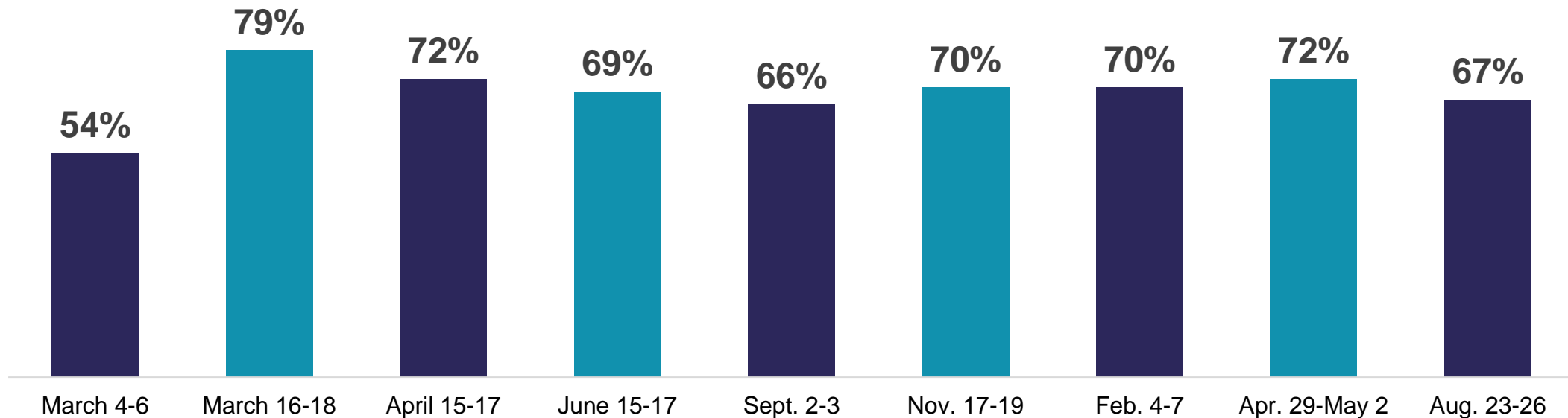
August 2021	Employer Communicated Effectively	Employer Did Not
Very satisfied with my job	86%	49%
Proud to work for my employer	90%	47%
My employer's response is exactly what it should be	86%	37%
Employer puts safety of workers above profits	79%	35%



Employees say their employers have put safety above profits since early in the pandemic.

In early March, when just over half agreed that their employer put worker safety ahead of profits (a third disagreed and many were unsure), only 42% had received information about company policies and actions related to the coronavirus. Those who received information from their employer were far more likely to report their employer put worker safety above profits (75% vs. 44%). By mid-March, 81% reported receiving employer communications, and perceptions of safety rose to 79% in parallel.

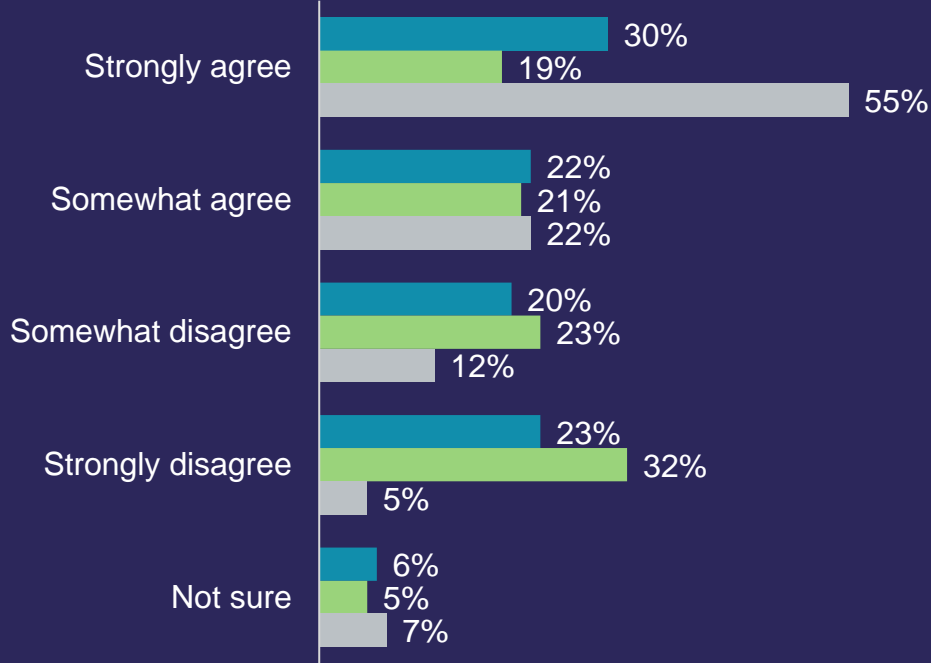
Percent Employed Agree: My employer puts the safety of workers above profits.



Mixed feelings about right of business to require proof of vaccination. Those not vaccinated feel it is a matter of privacy.

Should businesses be allowed to...	Employees to provide proof	Customers to provide proof
Yes	48%	43%
No	28%	28%
Depends on type of business	20%	21%
Not sure	5%	4%

My vaccination status is a private matter and I should not have to share my status with anyone



■ Total ■ Fully vaccinated ■ Not vaccinated



There is bipartisan support for employer mandates for masks, vaccines and other measures that ensure the health of employees in the workplace.



Employers should have the right to require employees to...

Get vaccinated for COVID-19 or show proof of a negative COVID-19 test in order to come into the workplace with other employees (Among those employed)



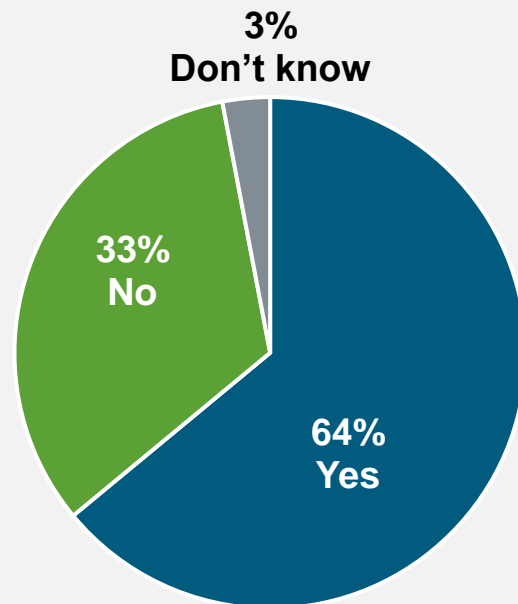
Wear masks on the job in the workplace (Among those employed)



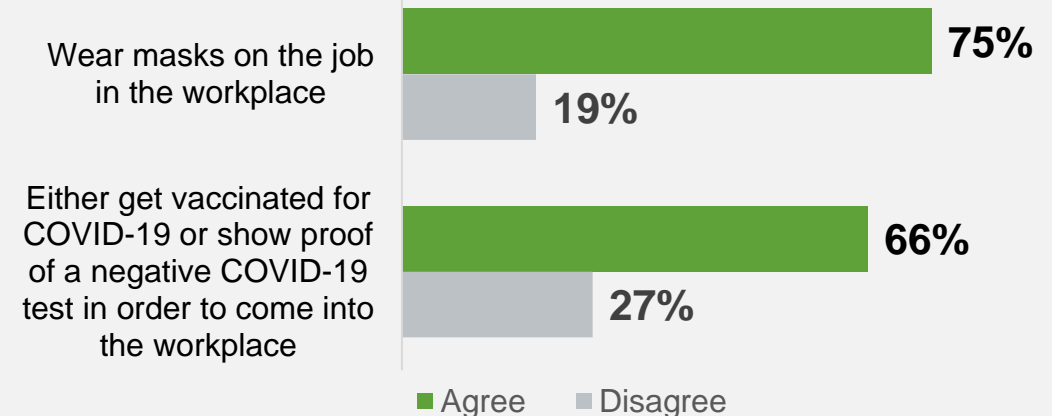
Two-thirds report their employer has encouraged employees to get vaccinated.

About the same number agree their employer should have the right to require either vaccination or proof of negative COVID-19 test. Three quarters believe employers should have the right to require masking.

Has your employer encouraged you to get vaccinated?
(Among those employed)

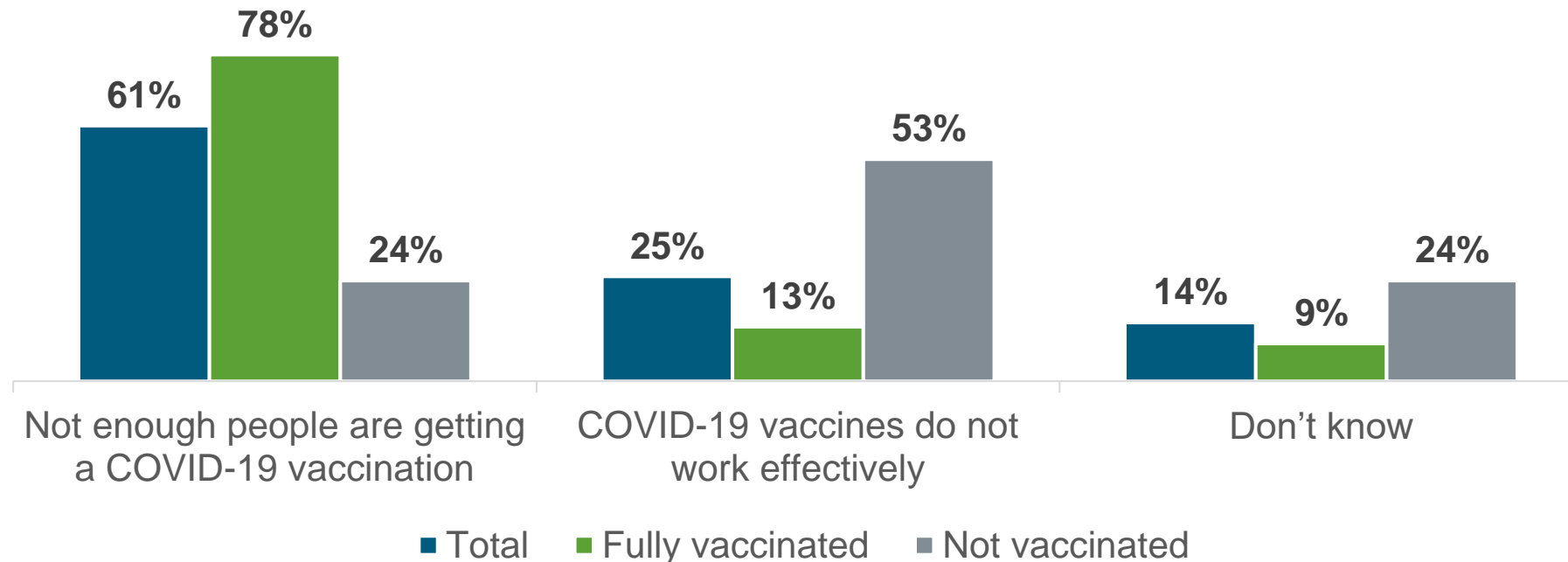


Employers should have the right to require employees to... (Among those employed)

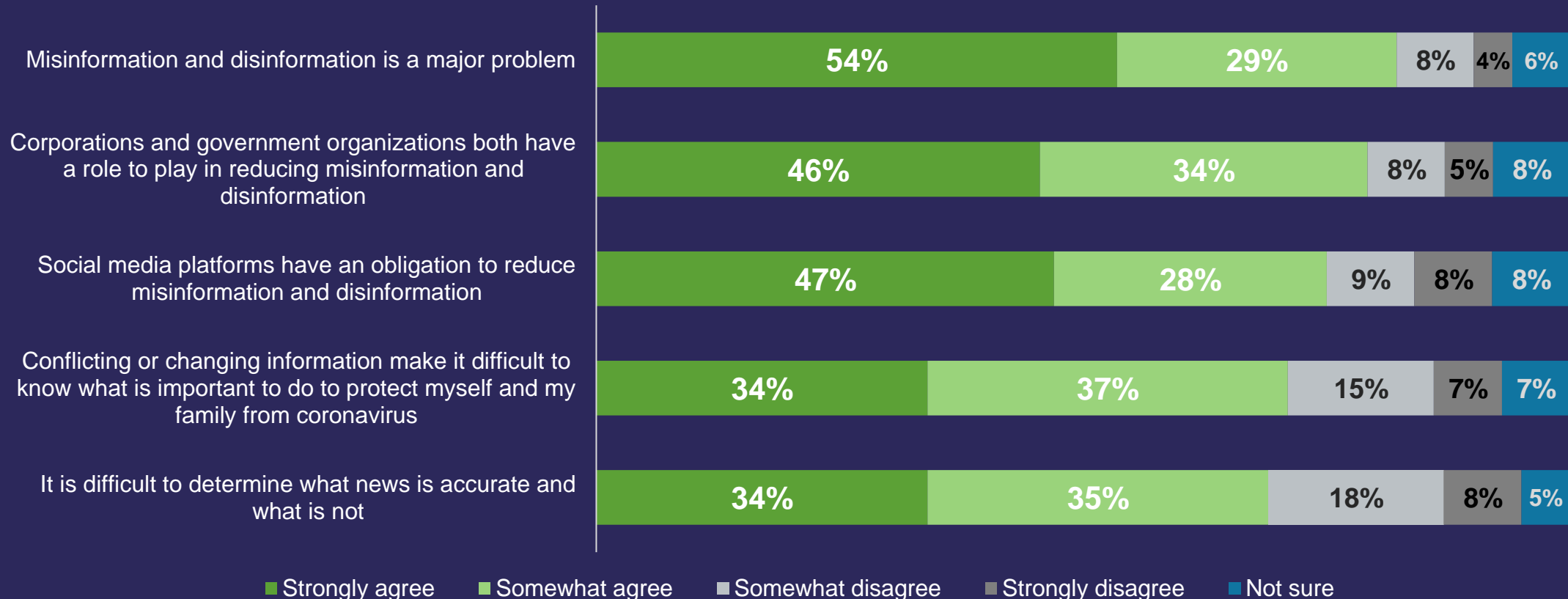


Nearly 80% of the vaccinated — and a quarter of the unvaccinated — say that the main reason COVID-19 is spreading now is because not enough people are getting vaccinated. Half of the unvaccinated say it is because vaccines do not work effectively.

What one of the following do you think is the main reason that COVID-19 is spreading now? (Forced choice)

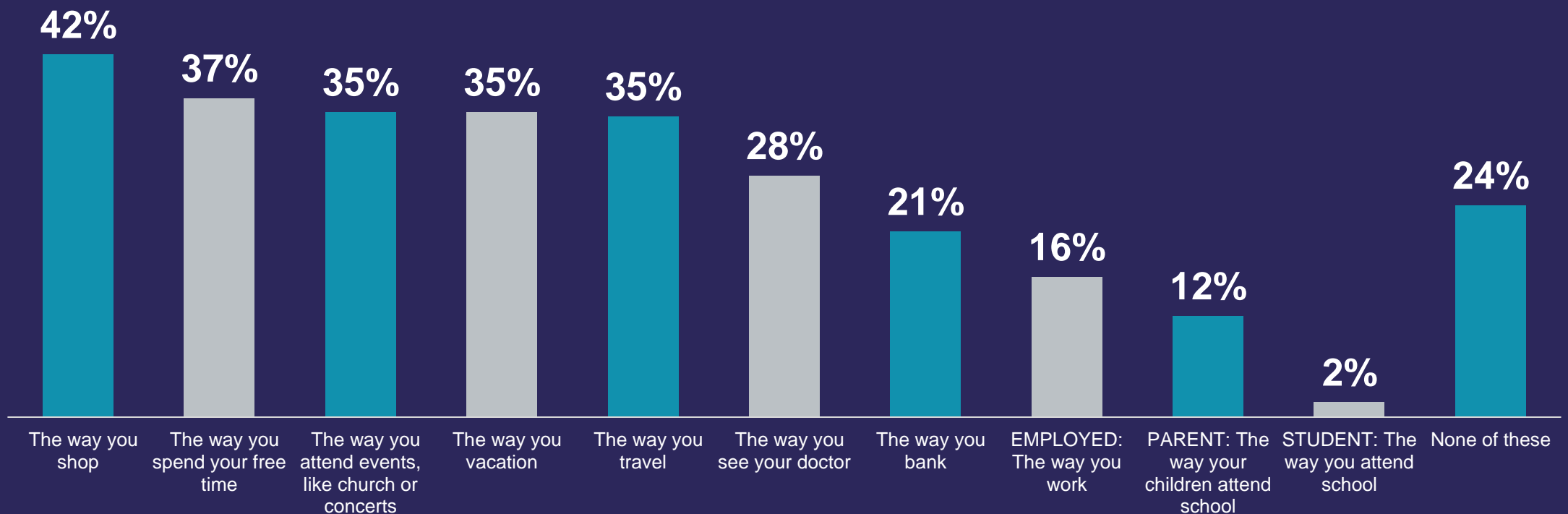


Mis- and disinformation are recognized as major problems — and 3 in 4 admit they have a difficult time knowing what news is accurate. Corporations and government have a role in solving the challenge.



The pandemic has fundamentally shifted the way we live. Three-quarters of Americans (76%) have made changes to the way they live their lives since the start of the pandemic.

Have you made any changes in the way you do each of the following since the start of the pandemic?



Employees split into three groups when it comes to how they want to work in the future — a third want to go into the workplace full-time, about a third want to split their time between home and workplace, and the remainder want to work from home full-time.

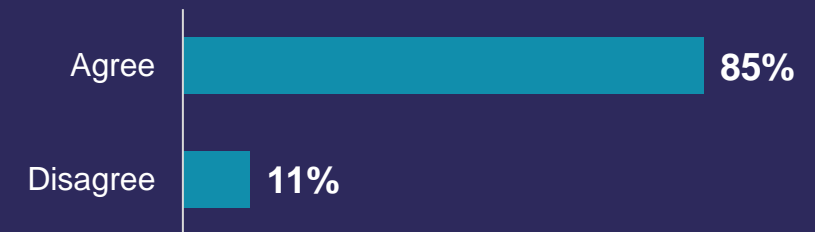
What is your personal preference for the way you work for an employer?

(Among those whose jobs can be performed from home)



I have proven that I can work productively from home and so my employer should not require me to go back to the workplace.

(Among those working from home)



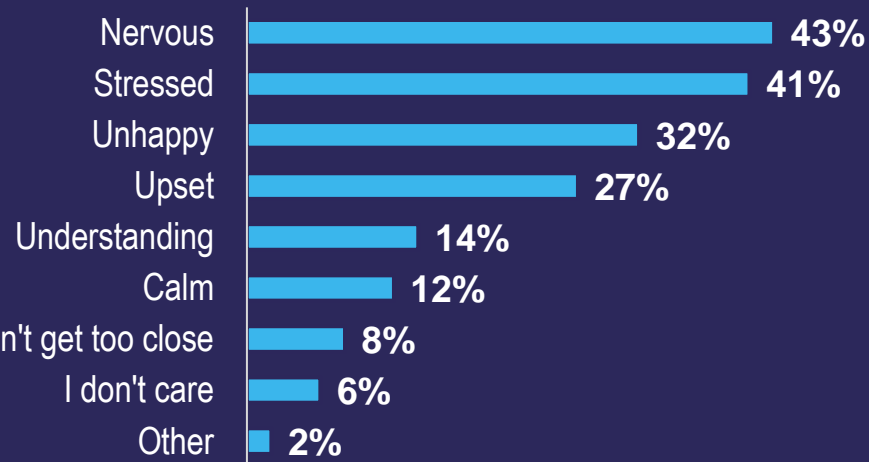
I do not think it is fair that I have to go into work while others can work from home.

(Among those working from the workplace)

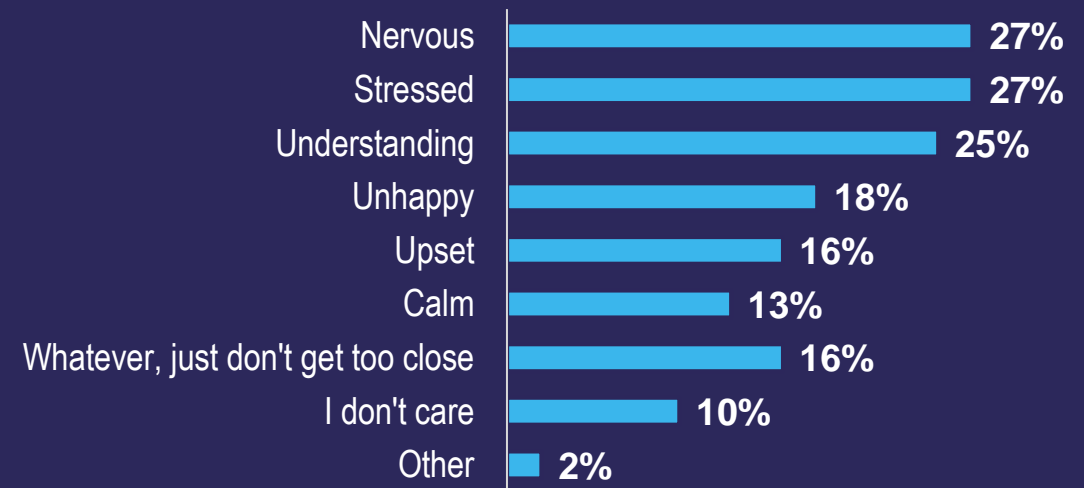


Workers that have been working remotely will be more nervous and stressed than those who are currently going into the workplace if their employer does not require vaccination or proof of negative COVID-19 test results.

How will you feel if your employer requires you to go into work when other employees are not vaccinated or providing proof of a negative COVID-19 test result?
(Among those working from home)



How do you feel that your employer requires you to go into work when other employees are not vaccinated?
(Among those going into workplace)



(Both among those employed and not very comfortable going to work with unvaccinated)



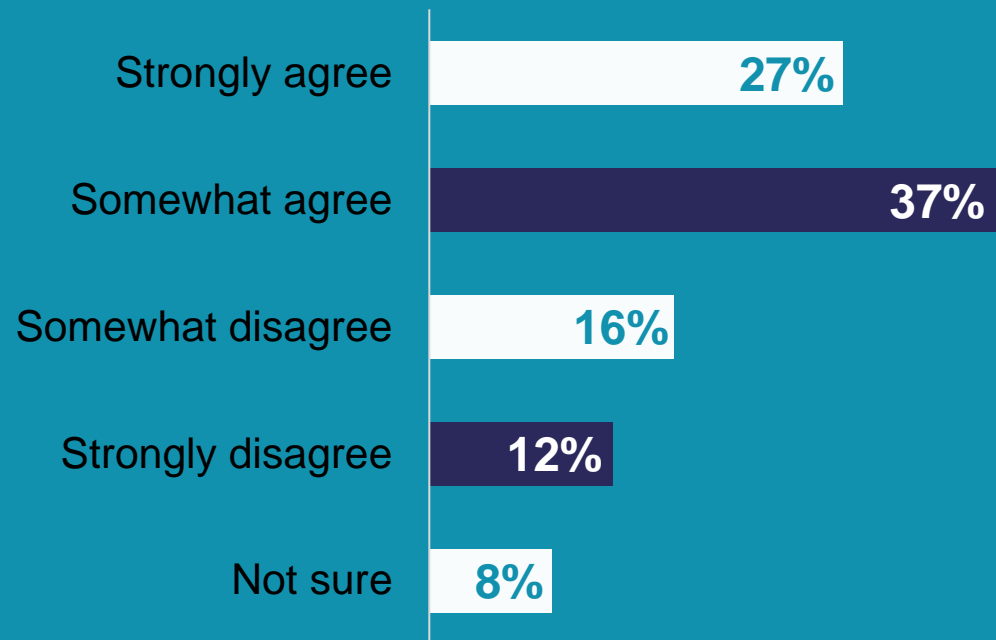
Mental health is a worry as many employees are experiencing burnout. Employers appear to be providing at least some resources to help.

58% of employees worry about their mental health and wellness

49% are experiencing work burnout

23% disagree that current working conditions are exactly what they need to do their best

Employer provides resources to help me manage my mental health and wellness

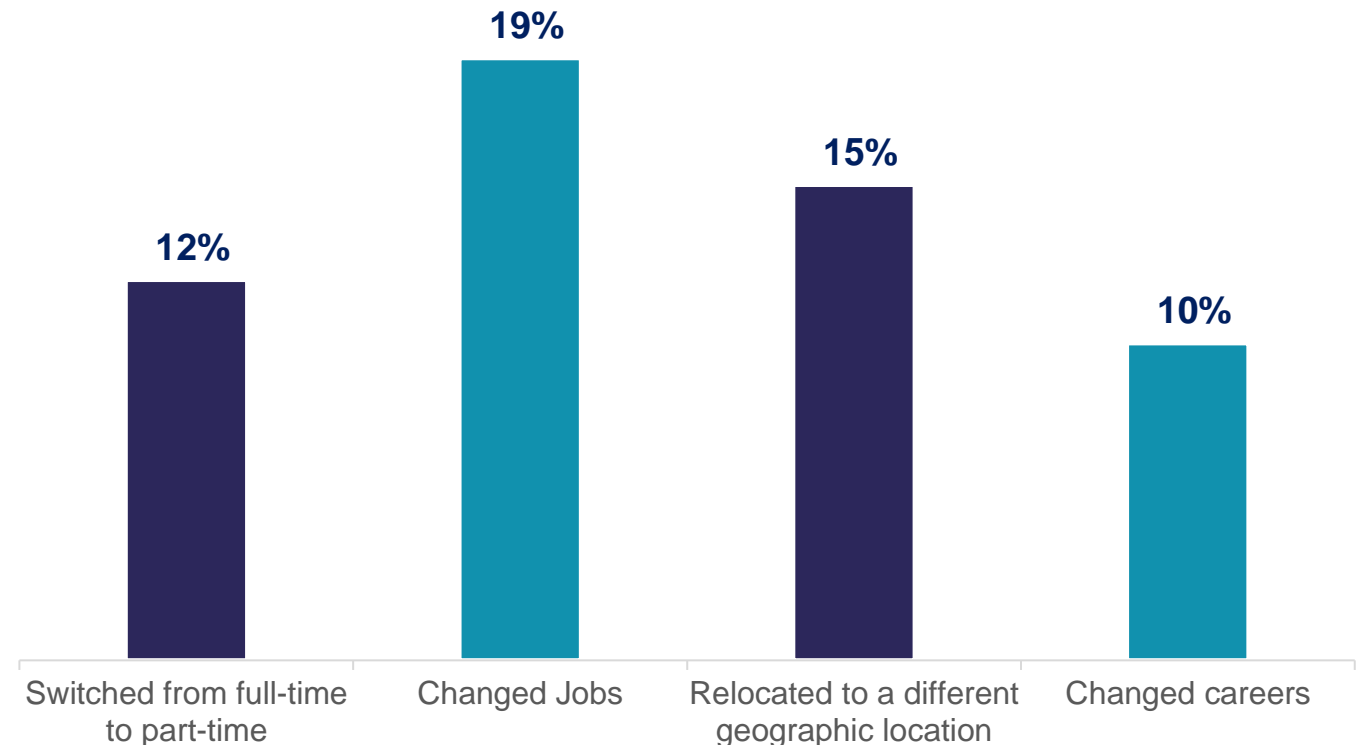


For employees, the pandemic has prompted reevaluation and life changes — and a third think they will change jobs in the year.

44% have made life changes since the pandemic started; only 56% have not:

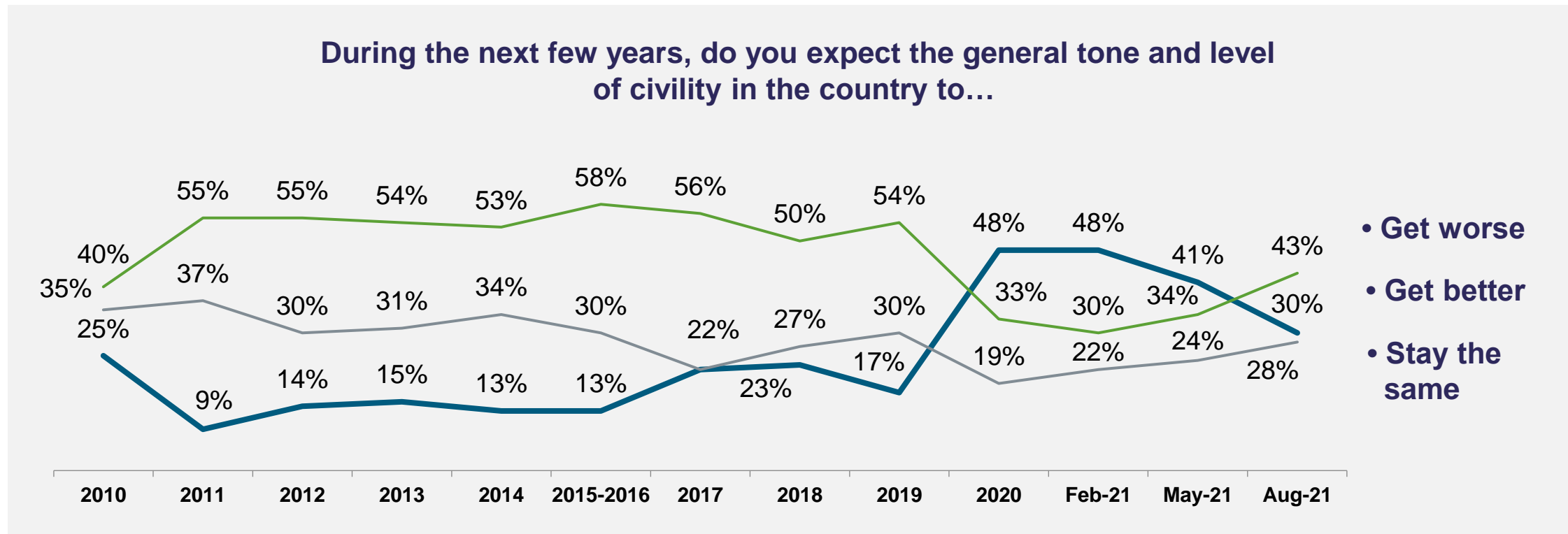
56% say employee turnover is a problem where they work

30% think they will change jobs in the next year



As the pandemic continues, perceptions of civility in America wanes, though workplaces largely provide respite from incivility

In Nov. 2020, nearly half (48%) of adults and more than half (55%) of workers said they expected the general tone and level of civility in the country to get better — which is down to 30% overall and 37% among workers as of August 2021.



The general tone in our country is seen as mostly uncivil and disrespectful among employees working in service and trade jobs.

Overall, employers are providing civil spaces:

79% of employees agree that the general tone in their place of work is civil and respectful—15% disagree. (August 2021)

Compare that to the general tone of the country:

39% of consumers agree that general tone in our country is civil and respectful—54% disagree. (August 2021)

Service and trade employees, with more direct contact with consumers, are most impacted:

54% in professional jobs

38% in service jobs, and

35% in trade jobs

agree that general tone in our country is civil and respectful.



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