

THE WORLD

WE MAKE

An Employee Perspective

Billions of employees around the world have had to re-engineer their lives in an incredibly short time period. What we have experienced isn't new anymore nor is it normal yet. China, and parts of Asia Pacific, have led the way in reopening economies and businesses. While old habits die hard, what will the future look like in one to three years? How will employer and employee behaviour change?

In this second issue of the new ENGINE series "The World We Make" we focus on the experiences of employees from APAC to provide insights and greater clarity into what the future of work may look like.

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General Sentiment:

Three waves of surveys with citizens across Asia Pacific since May highlight that there is still a great deal of concern about the Coronavirus with 95% either very concerned or somewhat concerned. Outlined in the following figure are the levels of concern by country by wave of research and there is limited variation. The level of concern has been slightly lower for those in Thailand and Australia compared to other countries, however, still remains high. Across the three waves, an average of 4% of Australians indicated that they were not at all concerned and an average of 2% for those in Thailand.

% Somewhat or Very Concerned about Coronavirus by Country

	Wave 1 (May)	Wave 2 (Jun)	Wave 3 (Aug)
Australia	89%	80%	89%
Hong Kong	99%	96%	100%
Indonesia	100%	98%	100%
Japan	99%	89%	95%
South Korea	95%	95%	89%
Malaysia	100%	97%	99%
Singapore	99%	94%	96%
Thailand	88%	83%	86%
Taiwan	99%	99%	99%
TOTAL	96%	92%	94%



When thinking about the Coronavirus (COVID-19) the biggest concerns across Asia Pacific were about the impact of COVID on the economy both locally (93%) and globally (92%), whilst there was a bit of a gap with how that translated to individual circumstances with 79% of people indicating they were concerned about their job/business, albeit still a substantial area of apprehension.

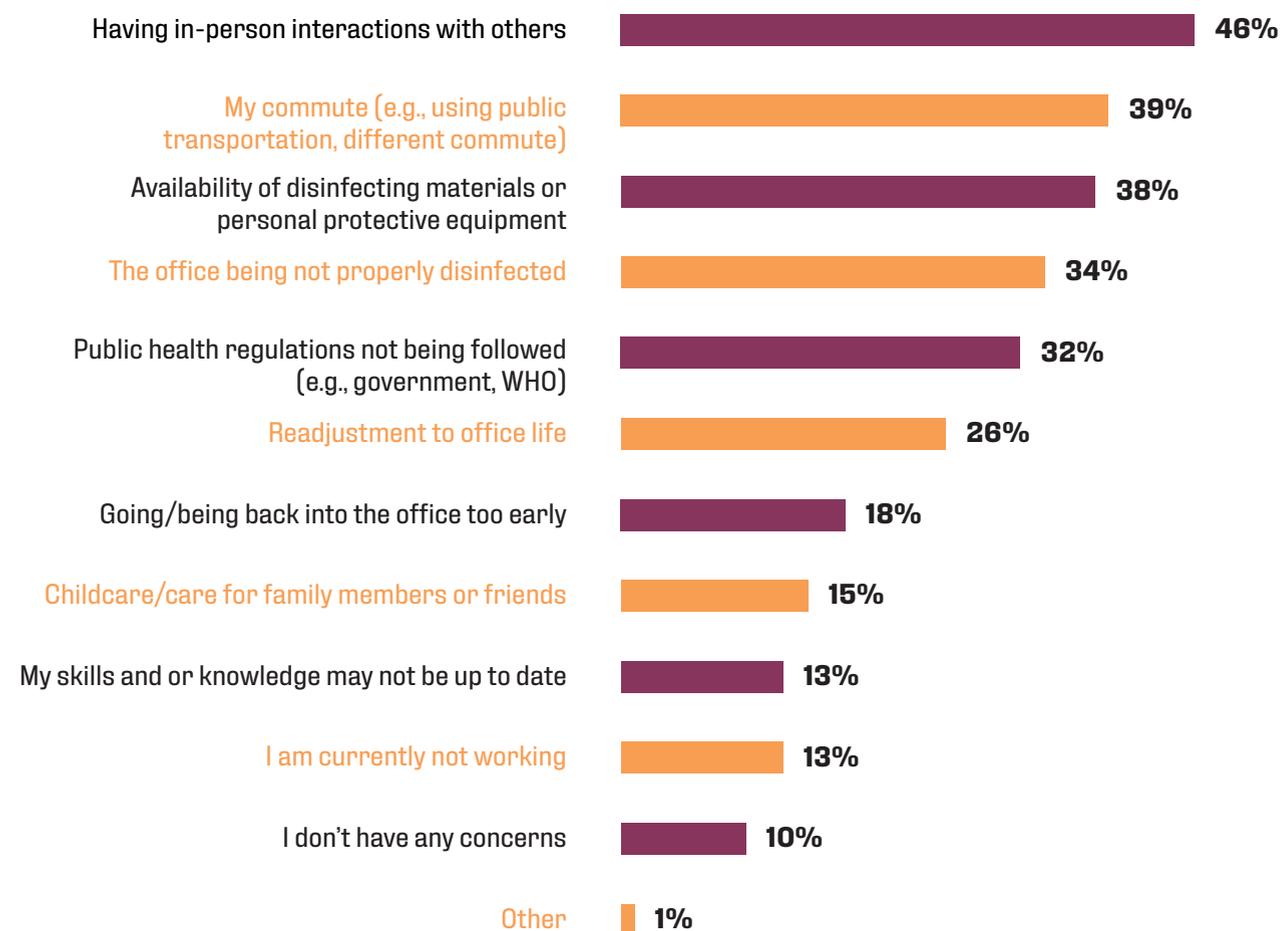
When thinking about the Coronavirus (COVID-19) how concerned, if at all, are you personally about...

	% Somewhat or Very Concerned
Your local economy	93%
The world economy	92%
Being around strangers	87%
The health of elderly in your community	86%
Healthcare system being able to cope	85%
Your personal health	85%
Your household financial position	82%
Your job/business	79%
The availability of foodstuff	70%

The biggest concerns people have about going back into the workplace is having in-person interactions with others followed by commuting and the availability of disinfecting materials or PPE. Interestingly, 24% of Australians don't have any concerns about going back to the workplace and Australians were far less concerned about the commute with only 15% being concerned compared to 39% overall.

What are your main concerns about going back or being back in the workplace?

Wave 3: July



The Pros and Cons of a Truly Flexible Workplace:

Prior to COVID-19, the benefits and drawbacks of a truly flexible workplace were clear as highlighted in a recent article by Heather Inkes (MAPS), the National Chair, APS College of Organisational Psychologists. Inkes (2020) synthesised a range of research on this and [summarised](#) these perks and pitfalls as follows:

Perks

Boosts productivity	Positive work-life balance
Better employee performance	Benefits working families
Lower staff turnover	Supports working mothers in particular
Greater job satisfaction	

Pitfalls

Loss of social connection	Depression/anxiety
Difficulty 'switching off' from work	Social disconnection can hinder team creativity
Overworking	Can reduce team cohesion
Stress	May restrict career opportunities

COVID-19 has moved even the most traditional of organisations to need to have greater flexible working policies and associated arrangements. Over half (57%) of employees want blended working arrangements (a mix between the home and office) compared to 24% who want to work in the office and 20% who want to remain working from home.

Thinking to a time when the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is over, what would be your ideal working scenario?

Total Asia Pacific
Wave 3: July



33%

A blend of mostly working from home/remotely with occasional time in an office/on site location



24%

Working in an office/onsite location



24%

A blend of mostly working in the office/on site location with occasional days from home/remotely



20%

Working from home

Preferred Work Location by Country

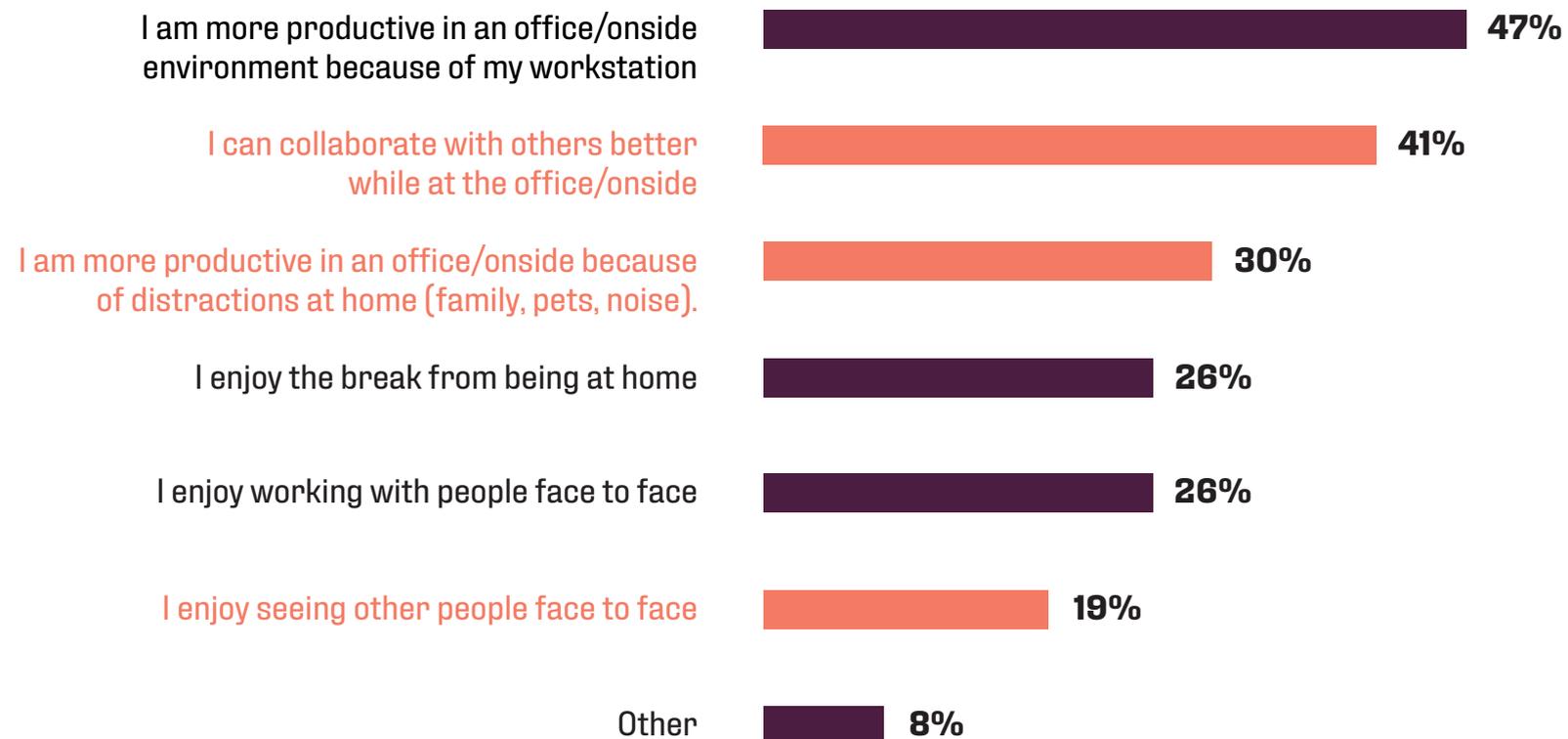
Looking at country differences, nearly half (49%) of people from Japan and nearly a third (31%) of Australians wanted to work in an office/onsite location whereas only 12% of Singaporeans felt this way.

	Working from home	A blend of mostly working from home/remotely with occasional time in an office/on site location	A blend of mostly working in the office/on site location with occasional days working from home / remotely	Working in an office/onsite location
Australia	28%	32%	8%	31%
Hong Kong	18%	33%	31%	19%
Indonesia	11%	39%	29%	21%
Japan	13%	21%	17%	49%
South Korea	14%	32%	27%	27%
Malaysia	32%	35%	15%	18%
Singapore	35%	29%	24%	12%
Thailand	21%	38%	23%	17%
Taiwan	13%	35%	25%	27%
TOTAL	20%	33%	23%	24%

But what of the 24% who want to work in the office? Our research found that the overriding factors were 'being more productive in an office/onsite environment because of their workstation' (47%) and in a similar vein 41% felt they 'could collaborate with others better while at the office / onsite'.

Why would you like to work in an office/onsite location?

Total Asia Pacific Wave 3: July



And What about Work-Life Balance and Wellbeing:

A total of 46% are more satisfied with their work-life balance during the pandemic compared to before. Whilst for just over a third (36%) there has been no change.

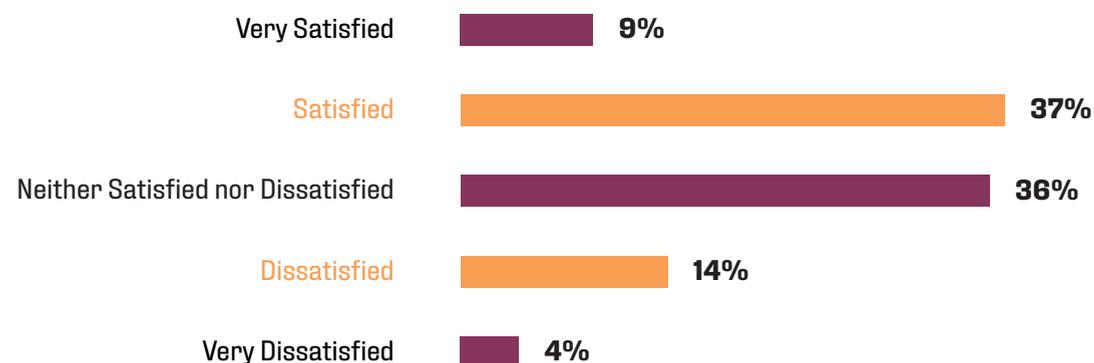
Those in Thailand are most satisfied with work-life balance (65% satisfied) whilst those in Japan were most likely to be dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (42% dissatisfied). For Australians, 55% were satisfied, 30% no difference and 15% dissatisfied.

Key reasons for increased satisfaction around work-life balance included the time back in the day due to no commute and the flexibility to be able to manage caring and household responsibilities much more easily than when having to be in an office.

“MAINTAINING BALANCE IN THE MIDST OF AN UNCERTAIN PANDEMIC IS CERTAINLY A SATISFACTION IN ITSELF.”

Conversely, where people were dissatisfied with their work-life balance, key reasons included salary reductions and lack of job security, concerns around health and safety in general and where employees are not able to work from home and work overload.

Wave 3: July



“THE SPREAD OF CORONA HAS SHAKEN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY, WHICH HAS HAD A MAJOR IMPACT ON MY BUSINESS. I HOPE THE CORONA VACCINE WILL COME OUT SOON AND STABILIZE.”

As we continue down the path to a new world of work ENGINE shares the top eight things businesses should consider:

- 1. Don't force people back into the office** – most want a blended approach to flexible working and there are still many fears even if there are no instances of COVID in their country, state or local environment. The genie is well and truly out of the bottle – you shouldn't go back to the good old days of everyone in the office, every day.
- 2. Consider how you can re-design your workspaces** to provide further collaboration spaces. This doesn't mean consulting with everyone for every decision but making space for your employees to collaborate will enhance everyone's experiences, particularly since most have largely had to do this online and not face to face for several months. Of course, appropriate physical distancing should be observed.
- 3. Continue with the heightened communication from leadership to employees** – we have seen staggering improvements in employee engagement with companies that have had leaders communicating on a regular basis – why stop now?
- 4. Wellbeing will continue to have heightened importance** and is critical to having a sustainably engaged workforce.
- 5. Work-life balance** needs to be monitored and considered carefully. Organisations everywhere have felt the pinch, think about productivity versus wellbeing of employees. What is the tipping point for your organisation? Hopefully not, “You're lucky to have a job.”
- 6. Similarly, think about how you can reward your workforce in different ways apart from monetarily.** As Simply Red highlights, “money's too tight to mention” for most organisations in this current economic environment

These next two points may be obvious, but we will call them out anyway:

- 7. Ensure you provide an induction offsite with your staff** prior to getting them back into the premises (if you haven't already).
- 8. Carefully review your policies and procedures** around workplace flexibility

Contact Us



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There has never been a more important time than now to focus on how to correctly treat your employees, your customers, and your colleagues. Businesses who do this correctly will reap the benefits far into the future.