

Impact of COVID-19 on employees in Vietnam, May 2020

Key findings

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on employment in Vietnam, despite the health crisis being well contained:

- A majority of employees reported their **hours and pay were reduced**, or they **received a pay cut**, and some employees took **unpaid leave or were suspended**. Only 40% of employees could report that COVID-19 had no impact on their job.
- A total of 7 out of 10 families **lost income**.

However, nearly 70% of employees reported they were able to be **equally productive** during the crisis. Of those who felt their productivity had decreased, men were more likely to report anxiety and stress, while women mentioned increased housework and child care.

Domestic duties and child care increased for everyone, but women were disproportionately affected.

Importantly, 50% of respondents said COVID-19 had a **negative impact on their mental well-being**, and 34% said COVID-19 had a **negative impact on their physical well-being**.

What these findings mean for employers:

- Consider permanently adopting flexible work policies – most employees are equally productive working from home.
- Review how the firm manages performance, identifies talent, and develops leadership. The domestic situations of employees may not be obvious, and their contributions may be hidden or perceived differently, depending on factors such as how much ‘face time’ they have in the office.
- A high proportion of employees are suffering from mental health challenges. Consider employee assistance programs, mental health support, and the longer-term impact of this crisis on staff.
- Ensure women and men are both represented in COVID-19 management committees, to capture and respond to their different experiences.

Results and analysis

1. Impacts on employment situation

Many people lost their jobs in the lockdown; however, this survey focused on people still employed, to gain insights into managing a workforce during a crisis, which could assist firms during recovery.

Among those surveyed, 60% of employees reported their jobs had been affected, with 38% reporting reduced work hours and receiving less pay, and 12% reporting their pay was cut. Only 3% of respondents reported having more work hours.

Lockdown had lifted in Vietnam prior to the survey period, and 69% of respondents reported working from their normal workplace. Findings showed 8% more women than men working from home (30% compared with 22%), or a new space set up by their company (women 5% compared with men 2%).

Despite the changes, most employees reported they were equally productive as they were before the crisis, but women (71%) were significantly more likely to report this than men (62%) (see Figure 1).

Among the 30% of male and 22% of female employees who reported they were less productive at work, men were more likely to report this was due to anxiety and stress about the situation, and women were more likely to report this was due to inadequate facilities and increased housework/child care.

Figure 1: Has COVID-19 impacted your work productivity?

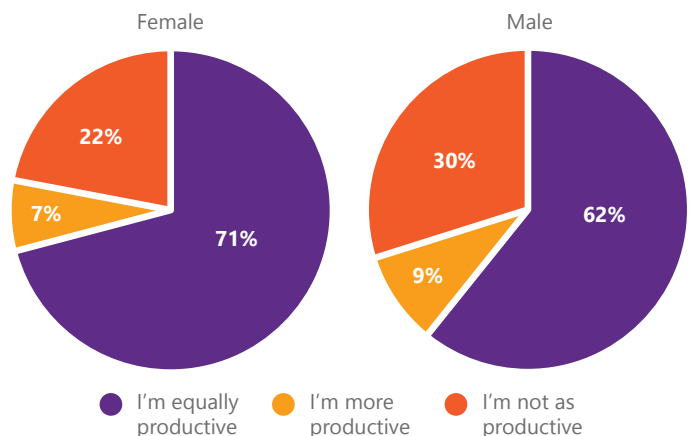


Figure 2: As a result of the COVID-19 situation, has your household income changed?

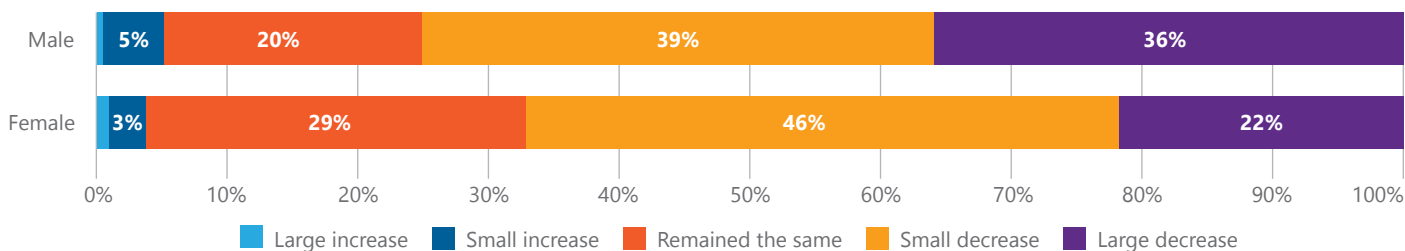
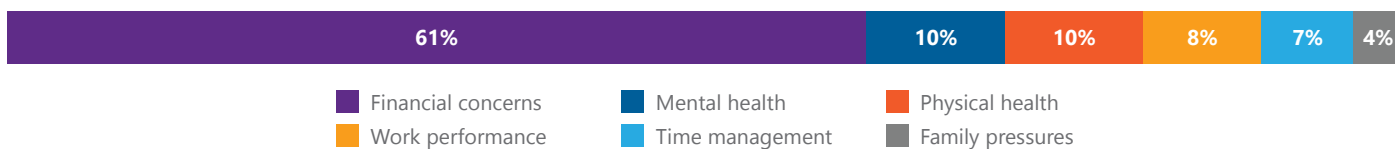


Figure 3: What has been the most challenging issue for you during COVID-19?



Throughout the crisis, many employers provided some form of support to their employees. The most commonly offered support was protective equipment (received by 41% women and 34% men), and flexible work arrangements (provided to 36% women and 30% men). Some respondents also reported being offered full paid leave, with more men than women receiving this support (28% compared with 15%), and accommodation during quarantine (10% men compared with 4% women).

2. Impacts on household income and responsibilities

A total of 6 out of 10 adults reported a decrease in individual income, and 7 out of 10 reported a decrease in household income due to COVID-19.

More men than women reported a decrease in individual and household income, and men were significantly more likely to report a large decrease in income (see Figure 2). This may be due to the men often holding more senior roles than the women.

Nearly 80% of women respondents and 64% of men reported an increase in time spent on cleaning. For employees with children, 70% of fathers reported an increase in the time they spent on child care, and this was also reported by 54% of mothers.

In addition, 5 in 10 employees reported feeling more pressure to do household work and child care, with more men than women reporting an increase. Among respondents who reported their household responsibilities had increased, the main reason was that family members, including children and the elderly, needed care at home.

3. Impacts on health

During COVID-19, employees reported that financial concerns was overall the most challenging issue for them (see Figure 3).

When it came to their health, almost half of all respondents (46% women and 51% men) reported a negative impact on their mental well-being due to COVID-19.

Worries about the current situation and financial concerns were the main reasons.

Nearly 60% of respondents reported that both their own and their spouses' employment was affected as a result of COVID-19. Amongst this proportion of employees, a concerning majority of 92% reported that their mental well-being has been negatively affected.

Overall, about one third of respondents also reported a negative impact on their physical well-being due to COVID-19 (32% of women and 37% of men). This increased to two thirds of respondents when both their own and their spouses' employment status was affected.

Personal safety and exhaustion from increased domestic burdens were the top two reasons among women for feeling negative impact on physical well-being. Among men it was personal safety and an inability to exercise.

A total of 56% of women reported exhaustion due to increased domestic burdens as a reason for the negative impact of COVID-19 on their physical health. This was 12% higher than for men (34%).

Overview of survey

The Vietnam Business Coalition for Women's Empowerment and Investing in Women commissioned a survey of 300 men and 300 women employees, aged from 18 to 60, from large private sector firms. Only respondents still employed during the survey period were eligible to complete the survey. Half of the respondents worked for firms with more than 1000 employees, and half with 200 to 1000 employees.

Respondents were from senior management (18%); middle management or technical experts (49%); and support work, tradespeople or labourers (34%). They represented a wide range of economic sectors, and over 80% were in full-time, permanent positions. A census click methodology was used.

The aim of the survey was to understand impacts of COVID-19 on the work and personal lives of employees. At the end of March 2020, Vietnam started to lock down cities and specific areas in a city. Restaurants, cafes, shops, and businesses catering to the public were shut down and street vendors were told to stay home. On 23 April, the quasi-lockdown came to an end and the country re-opened for business. The survey was open from 7 to 19 May 2020, so employees were generally allowed to return to their place of work by the time the survey was deployed.