

IMPACT, RECOVERY AND EMPLOYMENT

COVID 19 and Market Disruption



A Survey by Tech Mahindra Foundation

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ABOUT TECH MAHINDRA FOUNDATION

Tech Mahindra Foundation is the corporate social responsibility arm of Tech Mahindra Limited, a Mahindra Group Company. The Foundation set up in 2007, as a Section 25 Company (referred to as a Section 8 Company in the Companies Act, 2013), has been working tirelessly in the areas of education, employability and disability, with a keen focus on corporate volunteering.

The Foundation works with the mandate that 50% of its beneficiaries are women and 10% are Persons with Disabilities. Over the years, the Tech Mahindra Foundation has impacted 290,425 direct beneficiaries across all the programs. Additionally, Tech Mahindra Foundation continues to serve the nation through the 566 COVID Relief Programs across 17 states.

OUR FOCUS AREAS

EMPLOYABILITY

SMART (Skills-for-Market Training) is the Foundation's flagship employability program to empower youth from economically backward urban communities. It provides them with the requisite employability skills through structured training programs, ensuring that they are placed in suitable dignified jobs. The Foundation has been implementing the SMART program by establishing a network of SMART Academies and Centres – run both directly and through other partner implementing agencies.

EDUCATION

The Foundation works in Government schools through its ARISE (All Round Improvement in School Education) program with the objective of holistic development of children in these schools. Moreover, Shikshaantar is the Foundation's training program focusing on teacher empowerment and capacity enhancement through modern-day subject matter and pedagogical practices. The Foundation has also launched Mobile Science Lab, where a bus equipped with hands-on activities of EVS (Sciences) visits the Government schools to facilitate the learning of students from Classes 3 to 5.

DISABILITY

The Foundation believes that there is Ability in Disability. With the focus on creating an inclusive world and providing a life of dignity and confidence, we are working in the area of education and skill development for children and youth with disabilities, respectively. This is done through ARISE+ (All Round Improvement in School Education for Children with Disabilities) and SMART+ (Skills-for-Market Training for Persons with Disabilities). ARISE+ is a program that encourages children with disabilities to become a part of mainstream education. The SMART+ program focuses on providing employable market-related entrepreneurial skills and opportunities to youth with disabilities.

VOLUNTEERING

Corporate Volunteering lies at the heart of Tech Mahindra Foundation's ethos. Employees volunteer and contribute to driving positive social change while simultaneously enhancing their own capacities for empathy and compassion. This is how we #RiseforGood!



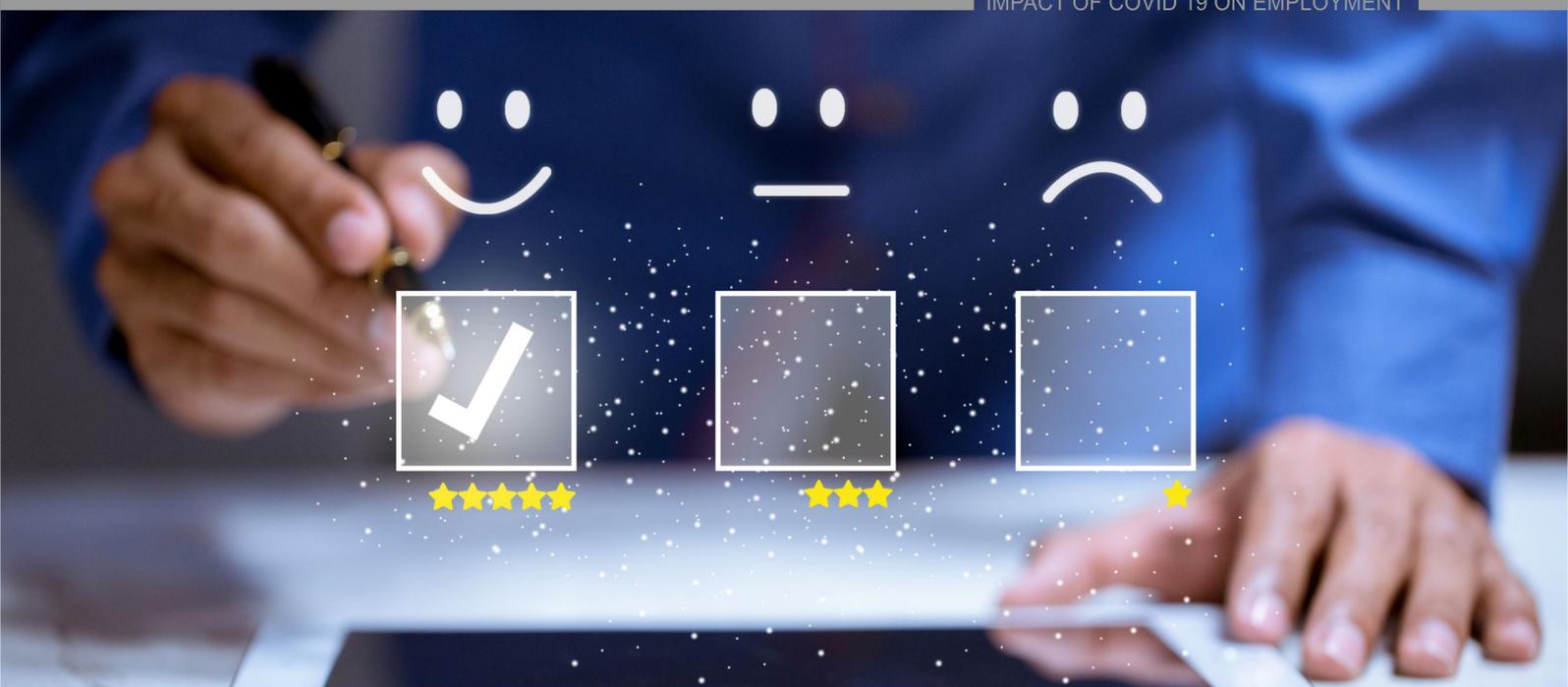


TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	1
List of Abbreviations	2
Abstract	3
1. Introduction	4
2. COVID 19 and its Impact on the Jobs in India	5
3. About this Survey	6
4. Survey Methodology	7
5. Statement of Findings & Analysis	8
i. Representation of Respondents	8
ii. Impact of COVID-19	9
a. Impact on Workforce	9
b. Impact on Business (Revenue Generation)	10
c. Change in Mode of Operation	13
iii. Post-COVID Business Recovery (Sales/Revenue)	14
iv. Hiring Trend analysis (Entry Level Jobs)	15
a. Key Job Roles (Sector wise)	17
b. Skills for Employment	18
v. Hiring of People with Disabilities (PWD's)	19
6. Recommendations	20
7. References	21

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Number of Employers based on Sector

Figure 2: Number of Employers based on Employee count

Figure 3: Number of Employers based on Annual Turnover

Figure 4: Impact of COVID on Workforce

Figure 5: Impact of COVID on Business Sale/revenue

Figure 6: Sector wise impact of COVID on Business

Figure 7: Change in Mode of Operation Post-COVID

Figure 8: Post COVID Business Recovery

Figure 9: Hiring Trend April 2021

Figure 10: Key Skills for 21st Century

Figure 11: Skill Requirement for Employability

Figure 12: Do you hire PWD's?

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BFSI: Banking, Financial services and Insurance

CMIE: Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy

ILO: International Labour Organization

IMF: International Monetary Fund

ISLE: Indian Society of Labour Economics

ITES: Information Technology enabled Services

NSO: National Statistics Office

PWD's: People with Disabilities

RBI: Reserve Bank of India

WESP: United Nation in its World Economic Situation and Prospects

ABSTRACT

COVID 19 is an unprecedented event in human history that has caused waves of disruptions across the world. Sparing none, the pandemic has challenged almost every facet of human life. There has been a devastating impact on livelihood, healthcare and employment. Small and big industries and businesses have been adversely affected. Against this backdrop a survey has been carried out to understand the impact of COVID 19 on different sectors and what has been their pattern of recovery. This may support the skill development initiative to re-align their mode of operations to ensure better livelihood for people in entry level jobs. Findings suggest impact of varied degrees on different sectors in terms of revenue generation, workforce capacity and business. Due to pre-COVID slowdown, sectors like manufacturing, automobile and construction have been impacted widely with hospitality, retail, tourism and aviation being other sectors with severe impact. More than 40% employers belonging to smaller organisations reduced their workforce owing to pandemic while 30% employers indicated hiring new employees. 46% employers reported significant loss of revenue while 4% employers had to shut their operations completely. Work from home was the strategy adopted by most of the employers to keep their operations running during COVID. However, as things started to return to normal, 53% employers have restored their operations from office. Hiring trends indicate a positive news with 53% employers on hiring spree as the things returned to normal. ITES-BPO, BFSI, education, automobile, healthcare, manufacturing, e-commerce, electronics, hospitality and logistics are the major sectors with greater jump in hiring trends in April 2021 as compared to July 2020. Aligning the skilling ecosystem to market requirements with synchronised efforts towards various aspects of skill development can generate better employability prospects to beneficiaries in entry level jobs.



INTRODUCTION

The year 2020 has witnessed the onset of one of the most devastating pandemic in the human history. Within a very short span of time the novel coronavirus - COVID 19 linked pandemic has spread rapidly across the globe slowing down economy while entrapping the world in a severe lockdown. This has not only affected the health of the people but also the income and employment. Countries across the world are now adopting strategies to reduce the health risk from the virus by building up their health care and vaccination strategies and also economic recovery strategies to counter the economic impact of the lockdown. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director K Georgieva has acknowledged *“World economy is in a recession and way worse than the global financial crisis of 2008. It is a crisis like no other & never in the history of IMF, we have seen the world economy coming to a standstill”* (International Monetary Fund, 2020).

To curb the spread of the virus, India announced nationwide lockdown and restrictions that were enforced through state and central machinery. Economic activity was severely impacted due to the shutdown. With everything from businesses to education institutions being shut, lives and livelihoods of the people were severely disrupted. None of us could have even imagined the mass exodus of migrants during the lockdown. This crisis also brought to forefront the rigour and dedication of people in healthcare and other essential services. This has exposed us to the inadequacy of the systems indicating large-scale overhaul needed in the healthcare infrastructure and the importance of the social security schemes. As per the forecast by IMF, India’s economy is projected to contract by 4.5 percent following a longer period of lockdown and slower recovery than anticipated in April 2020. United Nation in its World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2020 report pegged India’s growth rate at 1.9 percent (United Nations, 2020). Government of India has economic packages to revive the economy from the pandemic linked downturn.

Atmanirbhar Bharat packages announced by Finance Ministry, and phased unlocking that began from 8th June onwards helped to revive the economy to some extent. Phased unlocking, precautionary measures and aggressive vaccination campaign saw people returning to their normal lives. While this was a new normal with restrictions and precautions, there was a sense of relief and ease among people. While the country was still grappling with the initial shock to recover various services and industries and assess the availability and opportunities for entry level jobs, the second wave of COVID 19 hit the nation again and much harder around April, 2021.



COVID 19 AND ITS IMPACT ON THE JOBS IN INDIA

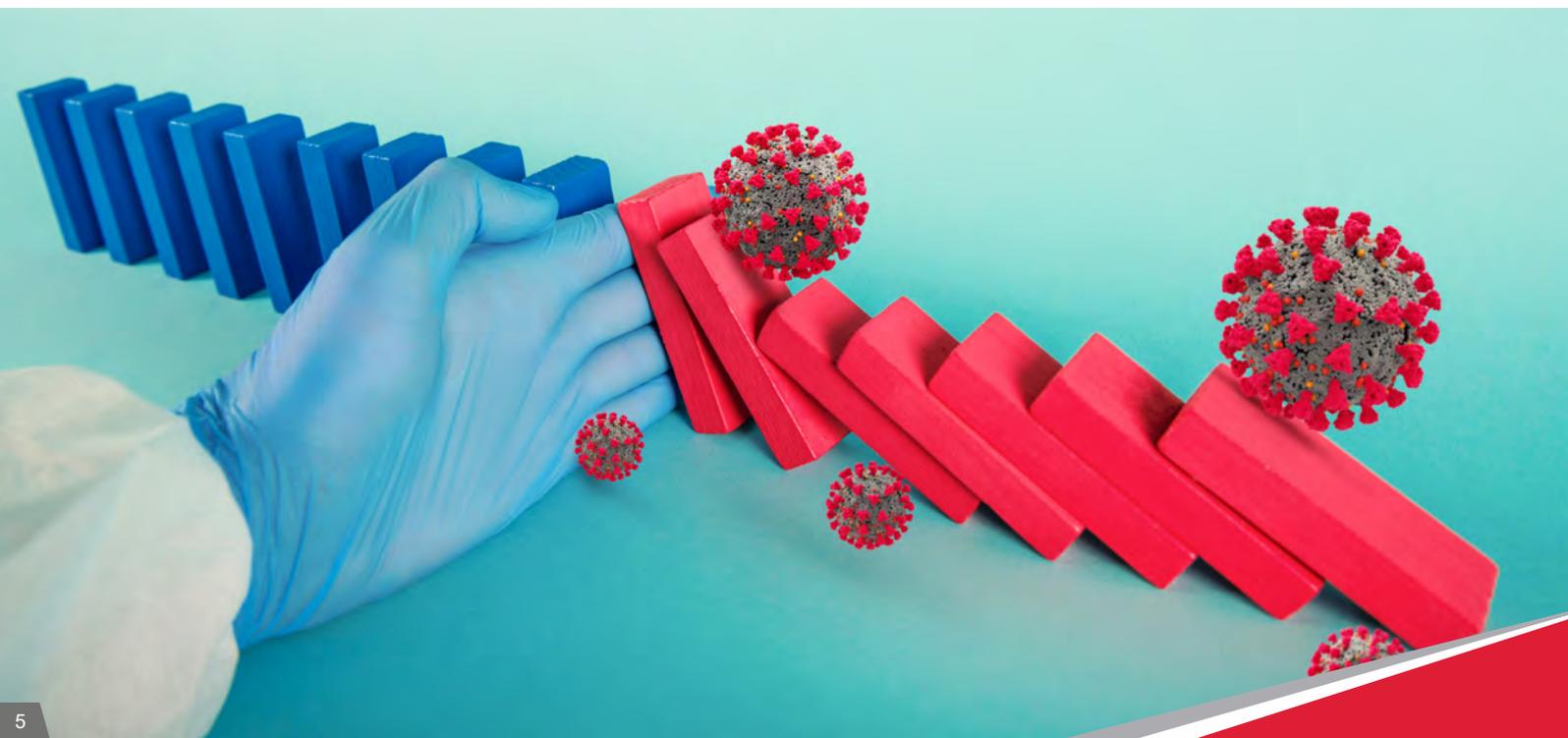
As per the survey conducted by Indian Society of Labour Economics (ISLE) in 2020, job loss was the most immediate and severe impact of COVID 19, while slower economic growth and rising inequality are the long-term impacts. Job loss was seen more prominently in the younger population and women (Indian Society of Labour Economics, 2020).

International Labour Organization (ILO) has pointed out that 1 in 6 young people have lost job due to COVID 19. More women have lost jobs in comparison. According to the survey conducted by Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), jobless rate has gone up to 27.1% based on the information collected through the survey that ended on 3rd of May 2020 (Vyas, The jobs bloodbath of April 2020, 2020).

Along with the job loss, another major challenge faced by the young population is the disruption in education as schools, colleges, and skilling centres have closed down. They got caught in a pincer grip of unavailability of job-oriented training and lack of jobs due to disruption in businesses. Most immediate impact of the lockdown in terms of job loss was on the daily wage labourers and small businesses. Millions of people have lost their jobs. Hospitality, tourism, manufacturing, construction and retail are some of the worst affected sectors. The markets and businesses reopening after the lifting of the COVID 19 induced restrictions, built hope for better job opportunities.

However, the second wave of COVID 19 brought things to a halt once again. As per the report by CMIE, second wave of coronavirus has hit the informal sector more. Over 10 million Indians lost their job in the second wave of coronavirus. Between July 2020 to March 2021, employment rate was mostly close to an average of 38% which fell to 36.8% in April 2021 and 35.3% in May 2021 (Vyas, Disproportionate fall in urban male jobs, 2021).

The second wave of COVID 19 saw a greater number of deaths as compared to the first wave however the loss of employment has been lesser. During the first wave, unemployment rose to 24% immediately after the lockdown and started to decline as the lockdown eased and returned to pre-COVID levels eventually. However, during the second wave, restrictions were lesser and less strict and therefore there was not much impact on the employment rate. As per CMIE, unemployment rate declined to 7% in January 2021 which again rose to 9% in May 2021 owing to the second wave of pandemic (Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, 2021). However, during the second wave, restrictions were lesser and less strict and therefore the impact on the employment rate was not as severe as in the first wave.



ABOUT THIS SURVEY

This survey was conducted against the backdrop of completion of 1 year of COVID 19 with the objective to understand the impact of COVID 19 on various sectors in terms of their resources, business function, mode of operations during the months of April - July 2020 and understand their recovery post lockdown. Another key objective of this survey has been to understand how the job markets are opening across the sectors after the intense and long period of unemployment and job loss.

With a vision of providing skilled workforce to market and making the youth employable, Government of India has been focusing on skill development vigorously through its various initiatives. Tech Mahindra Foundation has been working in the space of skill development since 2012, having started with 3 Centres. At present the Foundation runs more than 90 skilling centres through its implementing partner NGO's and runs 7 SMART Academies directly as part of its skilling initiative. The Foundation has till date trained more than 1,00,000 youth and placed approximately 70-75% of those trained youth. With all the focus on skilling, it becomes imperative to understand how COVID 19 has affected various sectors and what the post pandemic job market would look like. This eventually would help in restructuring the skilling programs to be of the utmost advantage to the youth as well as close this gap of available jobs and the availability of skilled workforce.

During the collection of the data and writing of this report, India witnessed the second wave of COVID 19, leading to state-imposed lockdowns and restrictions. This second wave has altered the circumstances. The survey was conducted between April 2020 to February 2021. Secondary resources and available data have been analysed to draw inferences on the changes in market scenario during the second wave. However, the inferences in the report pertain the period between April 2020 to February 2021. A similar kind of employer survey was conducted by Tech Mahindra Foundation in July 2020 and some inferences were also drawn from that survey to understand the evolution of markets through the different phases of the pandemic including the first wave.



SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Cross-sectional exploratory study was undertaken to understand the impact of COVID 19 on various sectors, recovery and hiring trends in entry level jobs. The primary data is collected from the employers across various sectors using an online questionnaire tool. The sample for the study was selected using the “Convenience Sampling”. Convenience sampling helped in collecting data from the accessible participants willing to be part of the study. A mix of quantitative and qualitative questions were asked using the online survey tool. The questionnaire was divided into three core sections. First section looked at understanding the impact that pandemic had on the business across the sectors in terms of workforce and revenue. The second section explores the recovery across the sectors after the re-opening. The third section has attempted to understand the trends and timelines with respect to hiring for entry level jobs along with hiring trends for people with disabilities.

Description of the respondents for the survey is given below:

- Data from 316 employers was collected through the online survey from the employers belonging to various sectors ranging from Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES); automobile; Banking, financial services, and insurance (BFSI) and others.
- Through this survey we have reached out to employers in Hyderabad, Pune, Delhi-NCR, Bangalore, Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chandigarh, Mohali, Vizag, Bhubaneswar, Nagpur among others.

For secondary data and literature review this report has referred to reports available from KPMG, Grant Thornton, Deloitte, CMIE and other newspaper reports.



STATEMENT OF FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

i. Representation of Respondents

316 respondents were reached through the online survey conducted between the periods of March-April 2021. According to figure 1, 2 & 3 these respondents are primarily the employers/companies from different industries of different sizes in terms of their workforce and turnover. The classification of the respondents have been given in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Number of employers based on sector

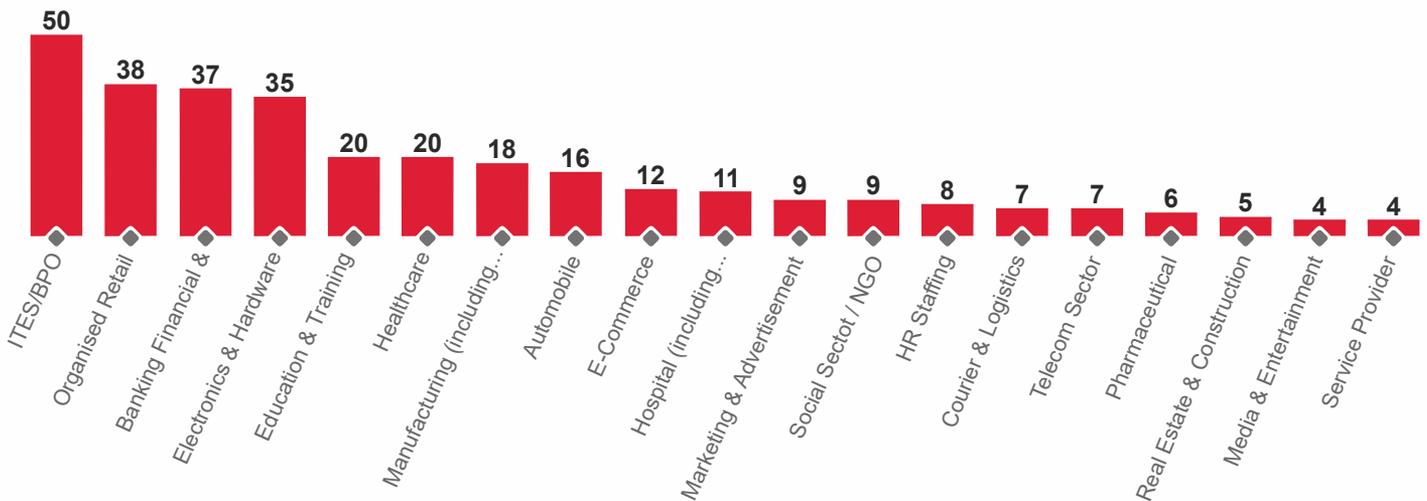


Figure 2: Number of employers based on employee count

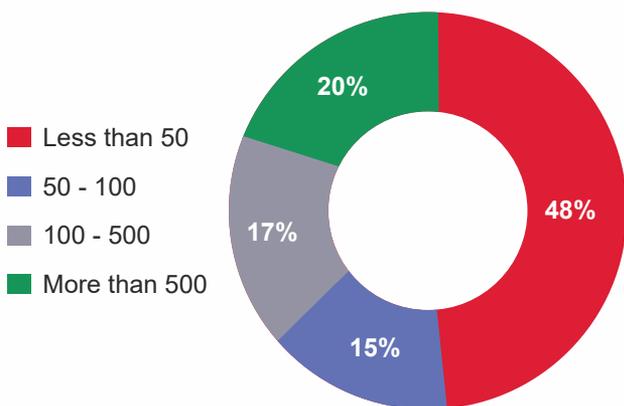
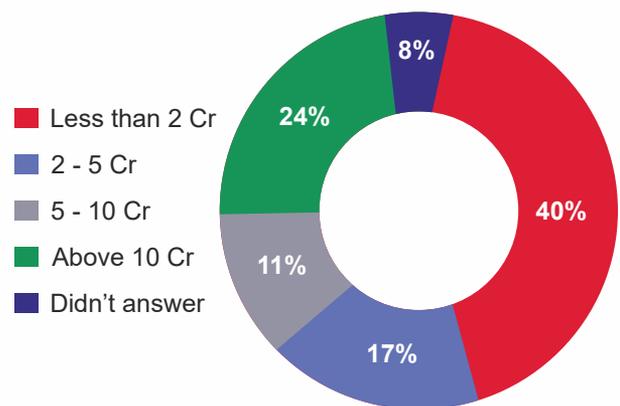


Figure 3: Number of employers based on annual turnover



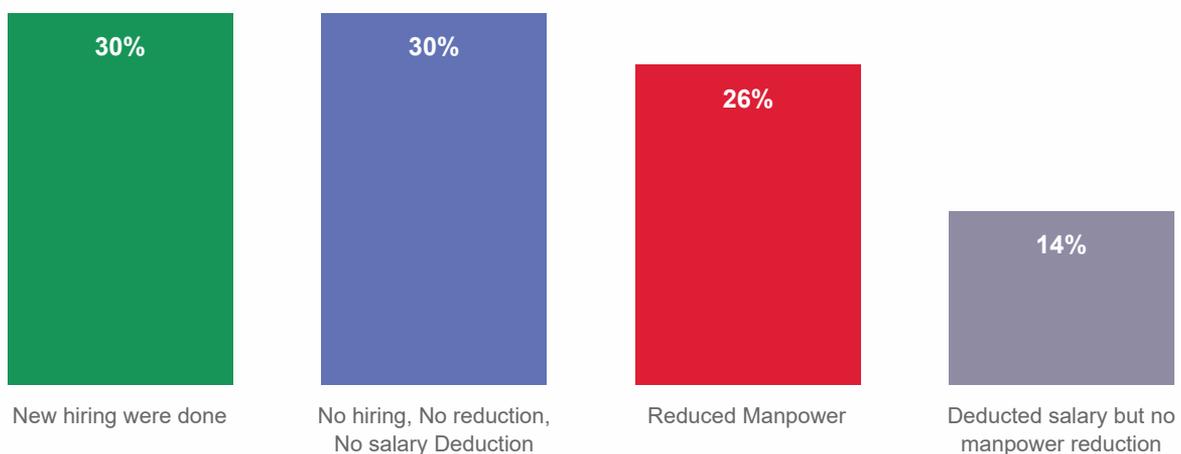
ii. Impact of COVID 19

The most immediate effect of COVID in 2020 was loss of business and livelihood across the sectors and industries. The impact was seen in both formal and informal sectors. According to CMIE the most immediate job loss due to COVID 19 has been among daily wage labourers and those employed by small businesses.

Some of the industries like manufacturing, construction and automobile among others were already going through a phase of low growth prior to COVID (Kishor, 2020). Pandemic induced lockdown further aggravated the problem and added to the woes. This segment of the survey looks at how various sectors have been impacted due to COVID 19 of April 2020 and July 2020.

a. Impact on Workforce

Figure 4: Impact of COVID on Workforce



According to figure 4, of the 316 employers, 30% employers hinted at hiring new employees while 30% maintained that there was no change in their workforce status i.e., there were no new hiring. But the existing staff was also retained without any pay loss. 26% employers reported having reduced their staff owing to COVID while 14% employers reported to have retained the staff but at reduced their salaries.

With lockdown in place, there were many incidents of people being laid off due to loss of business or the operations being halted completely, especially in cases where transition to work from home was not feasible. However, there was a directive by the government of India to refrain from such acts of laying off. When such actions were taken, relevant government machineries intervened to prevent the damage to the employees (Business Today, 2020). Another reason for these layoffs was the uncertainty associated with the pandemic. The immediate situation looked extremely grim with no predictable timelines for recovery.

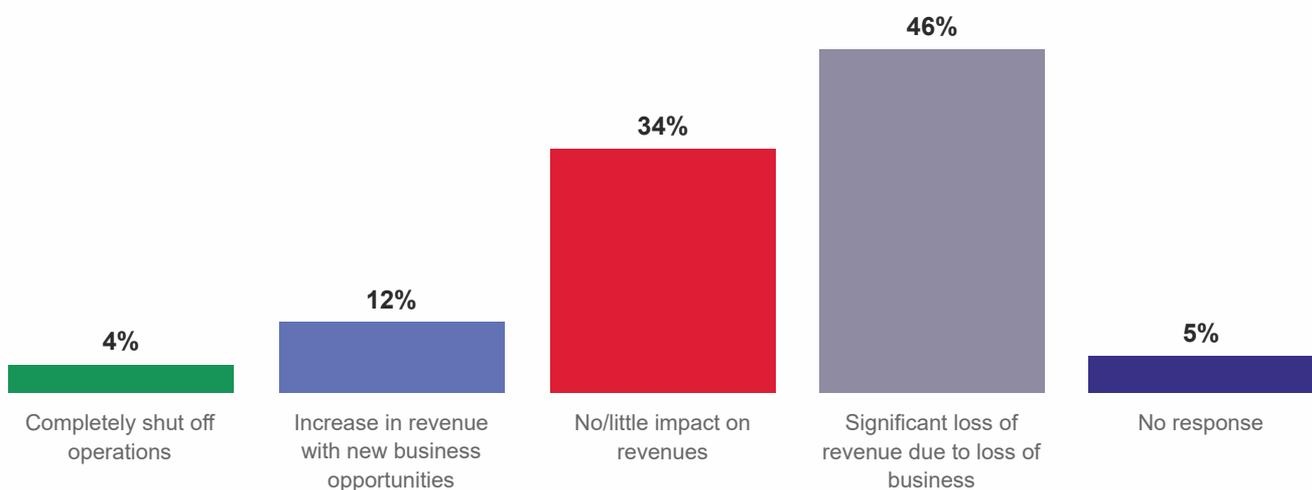
More than 40% of the employers reporting reduction in workforce due to the pandemic were small organisations with employee count of less than 50 and annual turnover of less than 2 cr.

b. Impact on business (Revenue Generation)

The most immediate impact of halting of business activity was seen on the business in terms of revenue generation of the industries/companies. However, this impact is varied based on the nature of operations. The industries that were quickly able to adapt to the work from home scenario during the lockdown phase did not suffer much damage as compared to industries which were either not able to adapt or whose business operations that could not be carried out from home.

As per this survey, 46% employers reported significant loss of revenue due to loss of business while 34% reported no/little impact as shown in figure 5. While 4% employers had to completely shut off their operations due to the pandemic, 12% had increased revenue during the pandemic according to figure 5. Of the 144 employers reporting significant loss of revenue, 63% belong to the category of small organisations with annual turnover less than 5 Cr.

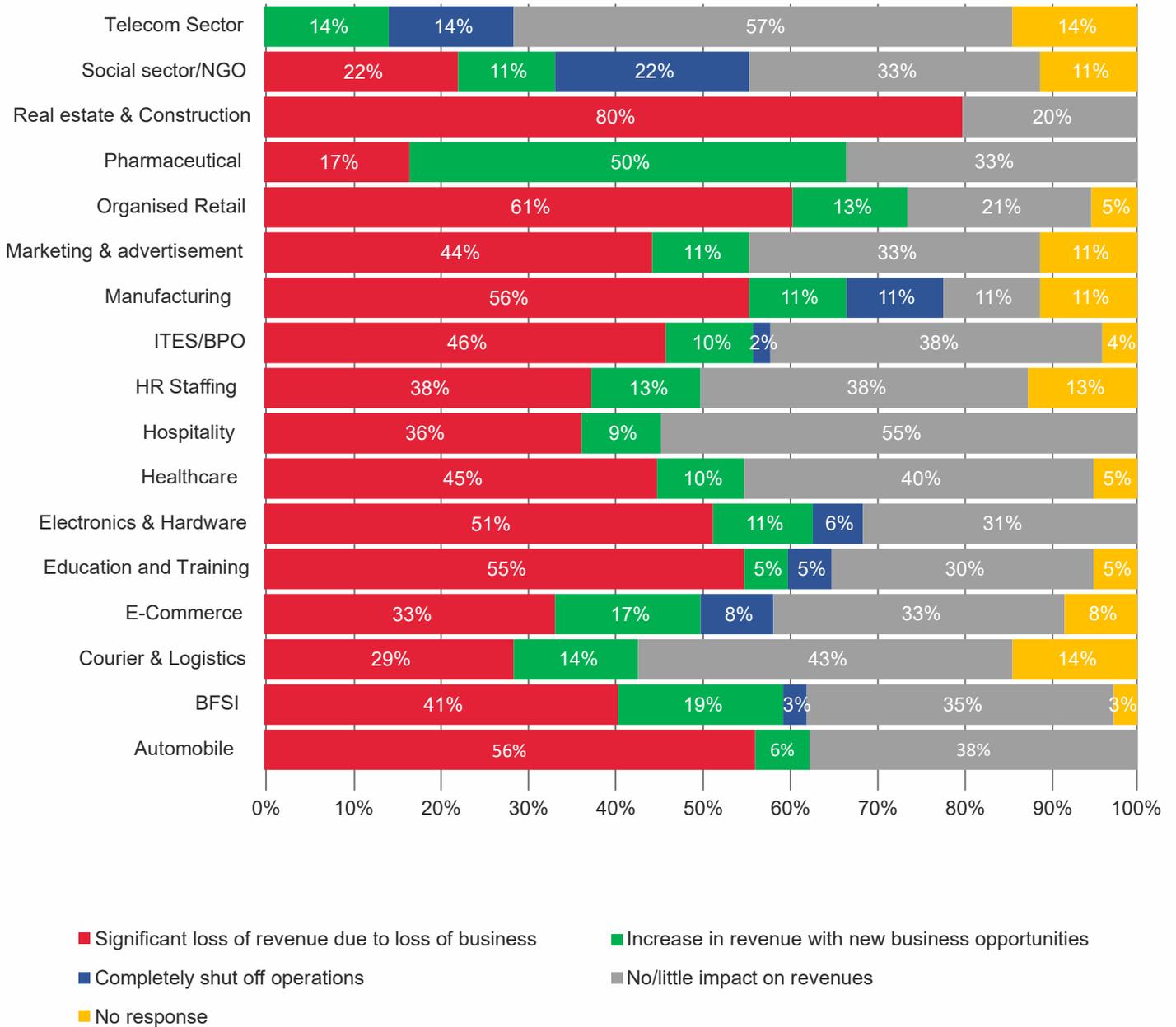
Figure 5: Impact of COVID on Business sale/revenue



Of the 316 respondents, Real estate & construction, Automobile, Retail, Manufacturing, Education and electronics are the major sectors where more than 50% employers have reported significant loss of revenue. With complete halt in manufacturing and exports-imports, automobile was another sector that was significantly impacted. Automobile sector was already facing weak demand before the pandemic hit. Demand from the consumers and consumer sentiments to spend during the pandemic post pandemic and had reduced. Hence, impacting the automobile sector significantly.

Real-Estate / construction is one of the major employers within the country. It was also the most severe hit due to the nation-wide lockdown and economic shut down. While some operations may have shifted to digital mode, majority of the construction work is field based. Analysis by KPMG revealed a daily loss of Rs 30,000 Crore to the construction sector while also indicating a reduction in investment in the infrastructure projects by 13-30%.

Figure 6: Sector wise impact of COVID on Business



Organised retail was another sector where more than 60% employers reported significant loss of revenue due to loss of business while close to 34% employers reported either little impact or increase in sales. This mixed pattern of response could be because organised retail comprises of both essential and non-essential commodities.

While the non-essential commodities were completely out of access for people, essential commodity employers could continue with their business as regular. Also, even after the phased lifting of lockdown and starting of regular operations of businesses, people were still hesitant to go out in public places.

In **Education**, 55% employers reported significant impact on revenue due to loss of business. Apart from revenue, the sector overall was impacted with complete education system transitioning to online mode combined with issues related to capacity, resources and digital access. Skilling centres were adversely impacted due to the closure of educational institutions. With educational institutions shut, the sector felt the heat of the pandemic with the challenge of fee, salaries of teachers, rents and online learning. Education is one area where along with the business, consumers have also been adversely impacted. With schools closed, students faced disruption in the learning cycle. Though, E-learning was initiated in schools, colleges and skilling institutions, this came with its own challenges in terms of unavailability of smart phones and internet data. On the other hand, it was a completely new experience for the teachers as well to switch to a digital mode of education.

ITES-BPO and BFSI were the two sectors with mixed reactions coming from its employers. 54% employers in BFSI and 48% employers in ITES (Information Technology enabled Services) reported little impact on business or increase in revenue. With banking being an essential service and the potential to shift its operations from home, the impact was not severe. Similarly, with operations for most of the industries moving to home set up, demand for ITES services increased many folds. While there would have been loss of business in both the sectors depending on the business entity and their nature of operations, yet both the sectors survived the shock of the pandemic.

Employers from travel and tourism sector were not part of this survey. However, travel and tourism, aviation and hospitality bore the maximum brunt of COVID 19 pandemic. Tourism, and hotel industry were impacted greatly. All the bookings for official events, personal vacations were cancelled and in many cases the hotels were converted to quarantine facilities. Survey conducted by Jones Lang LaSalle Inc. (JLL India) in April 2020 with the key operators of hotel industry highlighted that over 60% of respondents had up to 10% of their total hotels serving as quarantine facilities predominantly in key markets. Some of these hotels providing rooms for the “Vande Bharat Mission”. which was the massive evacuation mission by the Government of India to bring back the stranded Indians in the wake of COVID 19 pandemic. However, as per this survey, 6 of the 11 employers from the hotel industry reported no/little impact on business. These were the companies which could translate their dine-in option to take away. Since delivery of food continued to be the part of the essential services, these companies were able to continue their operations because even though people refrained from moving out, they wanted to enjoy the outdoor meal in their comfort of their homes. An increased workload keeping parents busy. This leads to increased demand for food delivery (Forbes India, 2020).

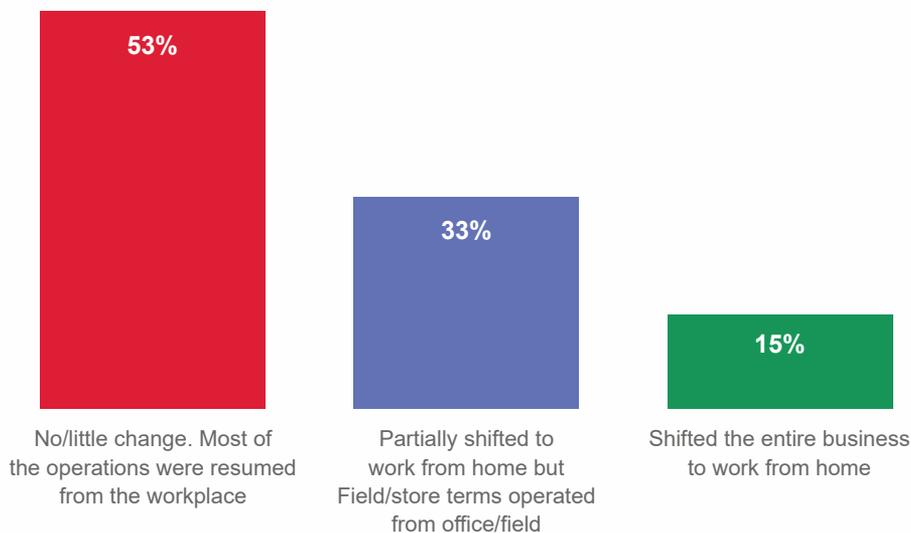
c. Change in Mode of Operation

With the onset of pandemic, lockdown and work from home, a 'new normal' was felt across all communities including the business fraternity. New normal was defined as working from anywhere (outside office spaces). There have been spate of webinars, on-line discussions and media communication discussing the impact of COVID 19 pandemic on the entire scenario of the industries and reorganisation of business.

In this section, we have tried to understand if this hypothesis of new normal was true or was it our situational analysis of the ongoing pandemic. Work from home is not something entirely new and many companies have already adopted the concept of flexible work hours and location. But there are other organisations that have never experimented with work from home or those who have operational constraints.

As per this survey, 53% employers reported having resumed their operations from office once the lockdown lifted. Retail, manufacturing, automobile, electronics, hospitality, healthcare, logistics and e-commerce are the main sectors where more than 50% employers have resumed their operations from the workplace. The very nature of these sectors/industries makes them to the old normal. BFSI also had 49% employers resuming their work from office. Employers started to go back as per the government regulations and on rotation basis. This eventually signalled towards the pre-COVID situation. The same would hold true for the impact of second wave.

Figure 7: Change in Mode of operation Post-COVID



Based on their operational activities and feasibility, 33% employers have also converted to a mixed kind of arrangement wherein the field/store teams operate from their place of work while the remaining teams can operate from home. Going further this can help eliminate the barriers of place and promote more diverse hirings across sectors. Social sector is one of the major employers falling under this category of employers.

While 15% employers have reported shifting their entire operations to home, none of the employers from automobile, manufacturing, construction and logistics have reported the same. ITES-BPO as a sector had mixed response rate with almost equal number of employers falling into each of the three categories. This also highlights the fact that to a large extent the work from home set up is more dependent on the nature of operations of an organisation.

In the same section, an effort was also made to understand how the work from home scenario changed from July 2020 to April 2021. As compared to 34% employers reporting most of their working from Home in July 2020, only 14% employers have reported the same in April 2021. Percentage of employers reporting Work from office on rotation basis or as per government directives increased from 38% in July 2020 to 66% in April 2021.

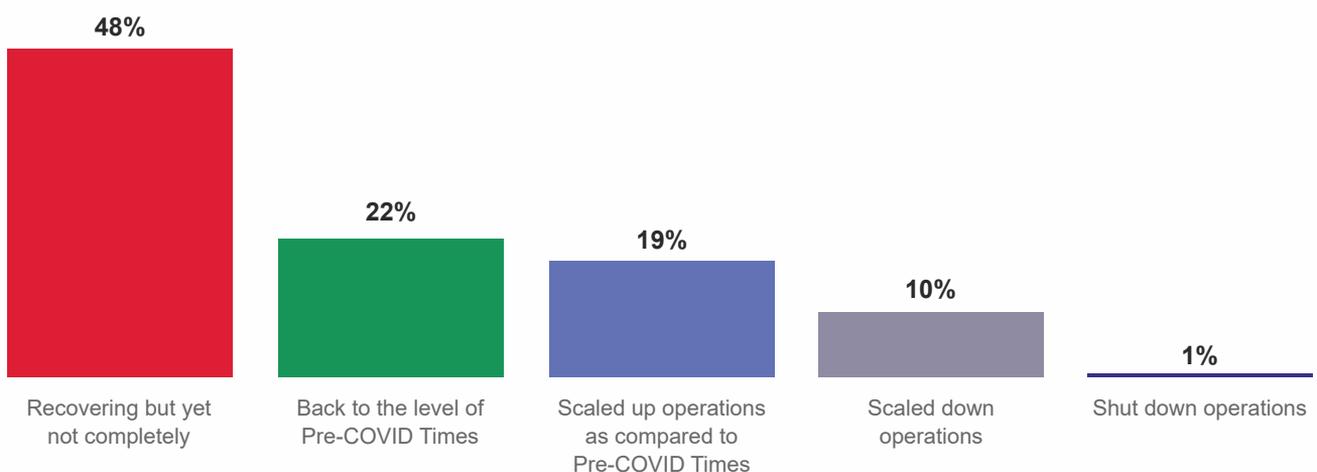
Though the work from home set up was initiated again by the end of April 2021 due to second wave of COVID, trends indicate that this will not last long and people will return to traditional method of office work once the situation normalises. However, what would be interesting to see is if this pandemic can bring more flexibility in mode of operation and if employers would be willing to make Work from Office non-mandatory.

iii. Post-COVID Business recovery (Sales/revenue)

With two quarters of sluggish growth in FY21, the economy showed some positive signs in Q3 and Q4. As per the data by National Statistics Office (NSO), GDP grew by 0.4% in Q3 of FY21 (The Wire, 2021). With economic activity slowly resuming, Q3 offered some respite to the downhill economy. GDP grew by 1.6% in the last quarter of FY21 before the second wave of COVID (Waghmare, 2021). Re-opening of economic activity coupled with financial packages by government to push the growth of various industries has generated some positive news for the downward spiralling economy.

As per this survey, 48% employers reported being on road to recovery but still not near the pre-COVID levels while 22% employers out of 316 total respondents reported having reached to pre-covid levels by March 2021. 19% employers even scaled up their operations.

Figure 8: Post COVID business recovery



ITES, BFSI, retail, manufacturing, automobile, education, social sector and marketing are some of the sectors where more than 50% employers have reported being on road to recovery, but the growth is not similar to pre-COVID era.

ITES-BPO as a sector had a mixed response with 40% employers stating incomplete recovery while 34% employers report being back to pre-covid times. 22% employers from the sector reported having scaled up their operations in the pre-COVID times. With great reliance on digital technology, ITES is one of the leading sectors weathering the storm.

As per a report by Grant Thornton “E-Commerce-Paving way for retail sector in India” E-commerce will be the way to bring retail sector back to its feet in the post COVID world. According to the report, key drivers for the e-commerce growth in India are increasing internet penetration, rising number of smart phone users and acceptance for digital payments.

According to an article by KPMG, re-alignment of auto industry in the post covid world will assist it to navigate through the challenges and keep up with the pace of growth. Online marketing, going digital, preference for personal mobility, innovative new features and growth of subscription models are going to be the key drivers for the recovery of the automobile sector according to the report by KPMG.

It will be sometime before we can see the sectoral recovery and overall growth in GDP of the country. Depending on the nature of the operations and industry, almost all the sectors fall into the five categories of recovery as shown in the figure 7.

This recovery would have been much better, had the second wave of pandemic not hit the nation again. However, as per the report by Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the impact of second wave of COVID will not be as extreme as the first wave owing to better preparedness among industries with respect to Work from home, online mode of operations, digital payments and localised nature of restrictions (Indian Express, 2021).

Manufacturing as a sector has been hit harder during both the phases of the pandemic owing to the fact that it cannot be transitioned to distant mode of operations and non-essential manufacturing was barred from operations during central and state wise lockdowns during both the waves of the pandemic.

However, given the unprecedented nature of the pandemic, it would still be too early to predict the actual growth rate of the economy or the rate at which sectors will grow. The economy has started to absorb the shock waves from the pandemic and is growing slowly and steadily to stand on its feet.

iv. Hiring Trend analysis (Entry level jobs)

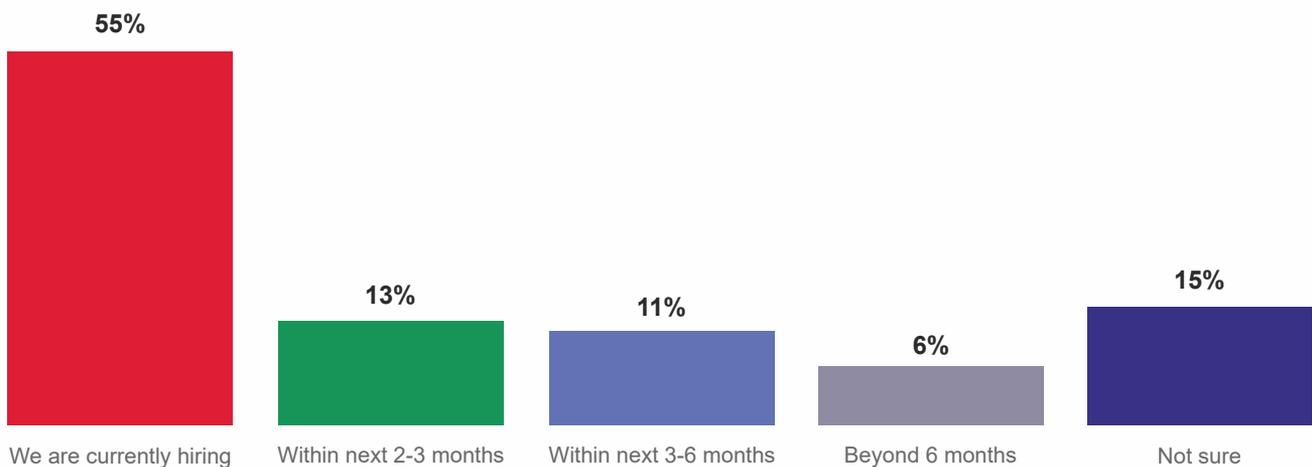
Understanding sectoral impact of pandemic and their recovery is not only important from the business perspective but also from employment perspective. With all other negative impacts of COVID, job loss was the most immediate impact in April 2020. Though there were policy directives from the government to prevent the same, yet the unemployment rate stood at 24% in April 2020 as per the data by CMIE. Though the unemployment rate started tapering from June onwards, it has been fluctuating constantly and has not been able to achieve steady decline (Economic Times, 2021). In February 2021, unemployment rate was 6.8%.

Skill development has been a major initiative of Government of India with both public and private sector organisations working towards it with the aim to make the people employable and provide them with decent livelihood while at the same time being able to make use of the huge demographic dividend of the nation and provide a skilled workforce to the market.

With COVID, skilling centres were also disrupted since almost all of them operated through the brick and mortar setting before the pandemic hit. Secondly, with loss of job opportunities, the candidates of these centres could not be employed due to unavailability of jobs and whatever little jobs were available went to candidates with more aligned skill set. Getting a sense of hiring trends across the sectors along with the nature of entry level jobs will be a good starting point for these skilling units to realign their operations and skilling initiatives to meet the market demand.

Through this survey, we are trying to understand the overall trend in hiring timelines along with the kind of roles that are available for entry level jobs across various sectors and the kind of skills market expects these candidates to have for the entry level jobs.

Figure 9: Hiring Trend April 2021



55% employers were hiring at the time of answering this survey i.e. in the month of March to April 2021 as compared 27% employers in July 2020. A similar kind of survey was conducted by Tech Mahindra Foundation in July 2020 to understand the hiring trends across various sectors. While the survey was being conducted back then, only 27% employers agreed to hire at that point in time as compared to 55% of April 2021. If taken in absolute numbers, number of employees hiring has gone up from 91 to 175 between July last year to April this year. This looks promising indicating better growth of sectors and opening of the job market space.

As per the latest survey, 13% were going to begin their hiring in next 2-3 months which is roughly around May-July while 11% employers indicated about their hiring process to begin in next 6 months and 15% were not sure when they were going to begin the hiring process. Percentage of employers being unsure about the hiring timelines also dipped from 24% in July 2020 to 15% in April 2021.

This also gives an insight into how the hiring trend and timeline has changed from July 2020 to April 2021 across the various sectors. While the sectors like BFSI & ITES in last were hiring back in July 2020 also, hiring spree increased for these sectors along with others in the last quarter of FY 21.

Sectors indicating major jump in hiring process from July 2020 to April 2021 are ITES-BPO, education, automobile, healthcare, manufacturing, e-commerce, electronics, hospitality and logistics. BFSI as a sector was hiring back then also and the number has only gone up since then.

With the second wave of the pandemic having spread its wings by mid-April 2021, the hiring scenario could have been altered also. However, with much lesser impact on economy, we expect the hiring trend to continue as it is in most of the sectors. Manufacturing and automobile are two sectors that could be impacted in terms of their hiring.

Along with the understanding of hiring timelines, what remains important is to understand the nature of job roles available for entry level jobs and the kind of skills employers look for in the candidates. This understanding will ultimately drive the skill centres to realign their curriculum & facilitation strategy to drive the maximum benefit of it to their candidates and enabling them to get the best in the market and creating an employable workforce.

While some job roles are hard-core technical being specifically aligned to a particular sector and requiring expertise in the domain, many of the job roles in entry level jobs are usually overlapping and the same skill set can be applicable to multiple sectors and therefore opening plethora of the opportunities for the candidates.

a. Key Job roles (Sector wise)

SECTOR	JOB ROLES
Automobile	Service Technician, Sales Executive
BFSI	Accounts Executive, Customer Relations Executive, Sales Executive (Telesales), Finance Analyst, Tele Callers
E-commerce & Logistics	Tele Callers, Warehouse Operations, Delivery, Pickers And Packers
Education	Office Administration, Tele Callers, Counsellors
Electronics	Technician-Wiring, Solar (Including installation), Sales & marketing
Healthcare	Medical Coding, Nurse, Front Office Executive
Hospitality	Team Member, Team Leader, Operations Executive
ITES-BPO	Customer Care Executive, Tele Callers, Data Analyst, Data Entry Operators, E-publishing, Bpo(voice & Non-voice)
Manufacturing	Welder, Sales, Accounts Executive, Fabrication
Retail	Customer Relations Executive, Sales Executive, Floor Coordinator, Accounts Executive
Construction	Sales Executive, Solar Installation

Above mentioned job roles across various sectors are initiation points for the candidates to begin their journey towards lifelong employability. The main idea here should be to make the candidates equipped enough to translate the entry level jobs into more aligned and satisfying career growth trajectory.

b. Skills for Employment

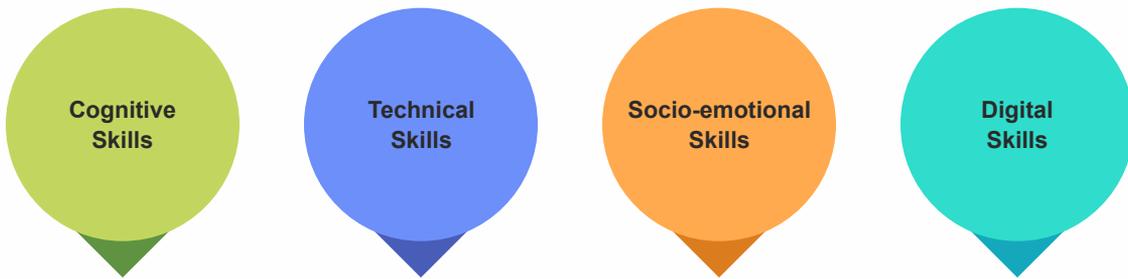
Each job role has certain hard skills and soft skills associated with it. Hard skills are the technical skills specific to the domain to which the job role belongs while soft skill are the interpersonal or transferrable skills that find their applicability across the streams and industries.

In 21st century and going forward, what would define success and employability of individuals is the amalgamation of the two. Skills define the employability and growth of an individual and the nation as well. Since it is the skilled adults that can drive the growth of nations by productively being part of its workforce. As per the World Bank report, there are huge gaps in basic literacy & numeracy of working age population with approximately 750 million people aged above 15 years which is 18% of the total world population (World Bank, 2021). The same report lists four key skills to succeed in the globalised markets of 21st century as shown in figure 9.

This survey in addition to Job roles has also tried to understand the skill requirement of these employers. The key theme emerging out of the entire data is the skill combination as given in figure 9.

Along with domain specific technical skills, Communications skills including ability to speak better and coherent English, interpersonal skills, art of selling, Basic IT skills, aptitude, being able to push themselves and the desire to learn and grow are some of the key skills indicated by majority of the employers as the pre-requisite for entry level jobs in the selected job roles.

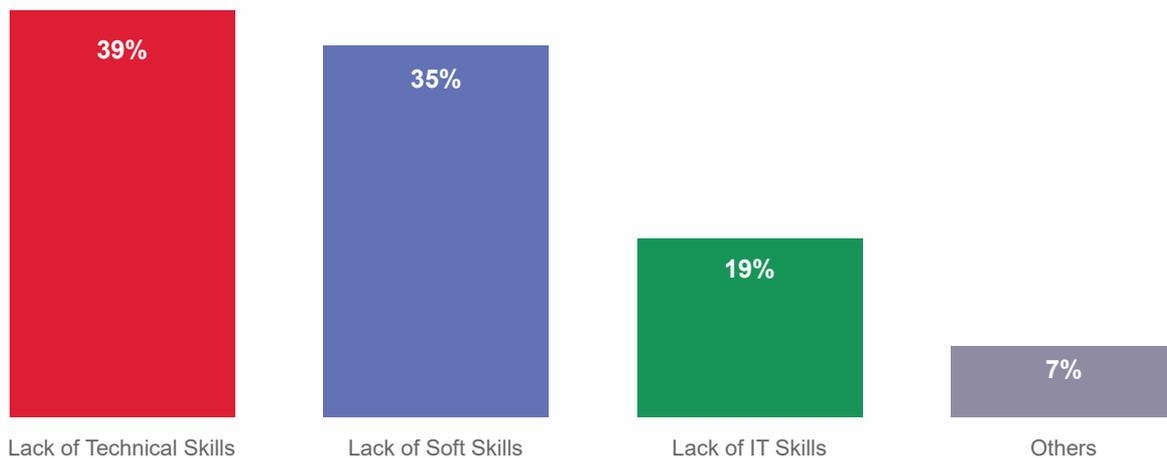
Figure 10: Key skills for 21st Century



Source - World Bank

Probing further, this survey attempts to understand the challenges employers face in hiring of right fit candidates or placing them in the above context. We are attempting to understand the skills that candidate lack that makes it tough for the employers to get the right candidate. Figure given below indicates the key challenges faced by them.

Figure 11: Skill Requirement for Employability



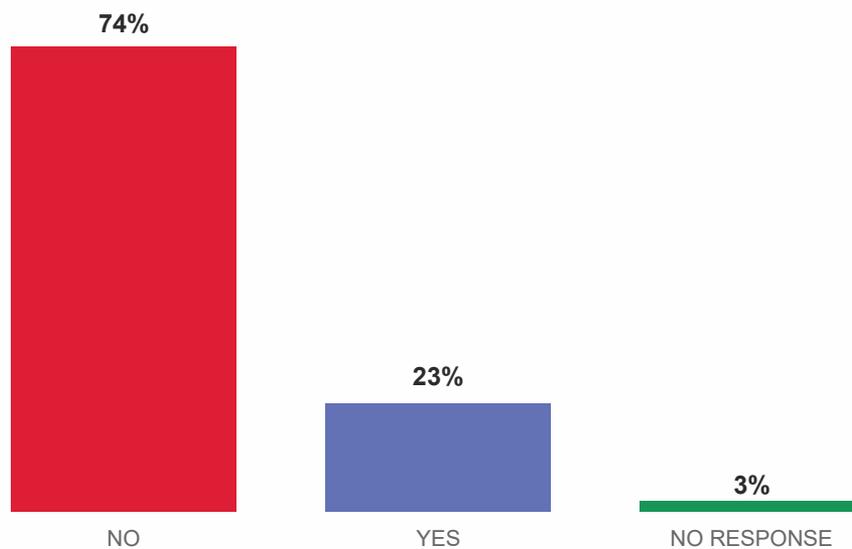
There are also other issues like candidates looking for higher salary, lack of technical skills among local candidates, unwillingness of candidates to go for sales and marketing jobs and lack of aptitude.

v. Hiring of People with Disabilities (PWD's)

This pandemic has been difficult for everyone. But the People with Disabilities face their own set of challenges – ranging from health-related issues to being more vulnerable to the virus with limited access to healthcare facilities. This section of the society is already facing marginalisation & discrimination owing to their disability. With multiple factors at play, the main reason is lack of trust in the capabilities of these people. This lack of trust is not only evident among the employers but also among their own parents and their own association. The constant nagging and fear of being mocked makes them lose faith in their own abilities.

This survey also looked at the employment opportunities available for PWD's in the open market space. The results can be an opportunity to identify the key issues surrounding the employment of PWD's.

Figure 12: Do you hire PWD's?



Only 23% out of 316 employers agreed to hiring persons with disabilities. Top sectors indicating positive hiring space for PWD's are ITES-BPO, Retail, Hospitality, Social sector & Education. In all these sectors at least 2 out of 5 employers are willing to hiring persons with disabilities.

As per the report published by Tech Mahindra Foundation on “Disability and Employment” (Tech Mahindra Foundation, 2019), though employers would like to call themselves as equal opportunity employers and inclusive, they themselves struggle with the societal discrimination pertaining to PWD's. Lack of trust in productivity of PWD's and lack of sensitivity and awareness among employers and their staff also leads to them being cautious about hiring PWD's. Hiring of PWD's is usually taken as a social cause.

However, the challenges are not restricted to employers alone and there is need for better skill building through training and counselling for the PWD's as well. This report by Tech Mahindra Foundation highlights the concerns of PWD's with respect to job location, job timing and career prospects.

Though the pandemic has been tough, but it can also open the doors of opportunities for these people (Kurian, 2020). With the pandemic and digital transformation of the workplaces, more opportunities can be created by sensitizing the employers towards PWD's while simultaneously creating more skilled and confident individuals who can be an asset to the organisation. Along with this, focus has to be on developing an understanding of learning style of each type of disability while at the same time focussing on certain specific strengths associated with each disability type and working towards enhancing the same and complementing it with the job requirements. This will be a step forward to make them employable and increase their confidence.

5. Recommendations

During these difficult pandemic times it will be challenging to improve employability and to create job opportunities. Persons with disability are specially vulnerable. This therefore makes it necessary to adopt strategies to address these challenges.

• Focus on End-to-End skill development of candidates

The main motive of the skilling centre should just not be to train the candidates in technical/domain skills while letting other skills remain unattended. Holistic programs focussing on multi-dimensional skill development with emphasis on quality and completion should be designed and implemented. This will also ensure long term employability of the candidates wherein they themselves are motivated enough to take their careers towards new horizons.

• Creating a more market aligned strategy

Emphasis should be on leveraging the local employers (Including Pan-India employers with local base) to understand the markets needs in short run and long run and accordingly curating the training program.

• Experimenting with closed loop model of training

Closed loop model of training wherein the focus is on delivering training program as per the needs of a specific employer and the employers themselves can assist with content and on-job training for such candidates.

• Focus on apprenticeship

Nothing creates better learning experiences than having the opportunity to live it. Being able to get the industry experience through working in the industry before the main job can prepare the candidates for upcoming challenges in much better way.

• Advocacy for sensitization of employers towards PWD's

Change does not come on its own always. Employment for PWD's will take much more than just training them in domain specific skills. Sensitizing employers about hiring of PWD's and helping them navigate through the challenges of employing PWD's can create better opportunities for PWD's in long run.

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