

# LAW FIRM WELFARE SURVEY

APRIL 2021



simon tupman  
helping professionals transform their practices



# SUMMARY

This is a summary of a snapshot survey conducted by myself in March 2021 to assess the impact of Covid-19 on law firms globally. The online survey aimed to identify what had changed for better or for worse, whether the changes were permanent or temporary, and what changes firms planned to make to their operations as a result of the events of the past twelve months.

There were 53 responses from representatives from firms in Australasia (43%), United Kingdom (38%), with the balance coming from the USA, Mexico, South America, India, Ireland, Nigeria. Responses came predominantly from Managing Partners/Principals (38%), Partners (22%), and Executive managers (21%).

The survey was brief, covering just thirteen questions of either a qualitative or quantitative nature. The replies to each of those questions are summarised in this report on the following pages. The main conclusions I draw from this survey are:



- Firms are much busier now compared with this time last year. Work flows, cash-flow, productivity and profitability have improved or increased. To some, this has come as a surprise. However, this 'positive' may have come at a price, with some firms suggesting that the effects of COVID-19 have impacted negatively on morale, health and well-being and team culture.
- Remote/flexible working/working from home is here to stay with many respondents suggesting that there will be more, rather than less in future. In spite of its numerous benefits (e.g., less commuting, more family time), many have missed face-to-face contact and the opportunity to socialise with colleagues. Firm leaders will be looking to find a new working equilibrium.
- In spite of the uncertainty and apprehension many respondents feel about the future, the majority (80%) remain optimistic about the outlook for their firms over the next twelve months.
- More training and improved technology are high on the wish-list of most respondents looking to function more effectively as a result of COVID-19.
- Firms are more accepting of change. As one respondent wrote, "What was previously considered impossible is now considered possible."

My thanks to all those who participated in this survey. I hope you find these results of value. Should you wish to receive a copy of the full survey, please contact me directly.

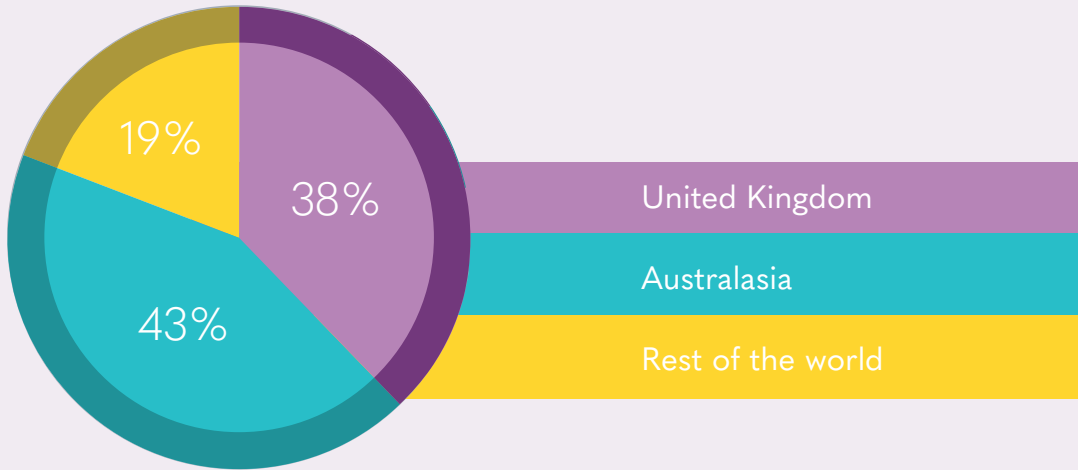
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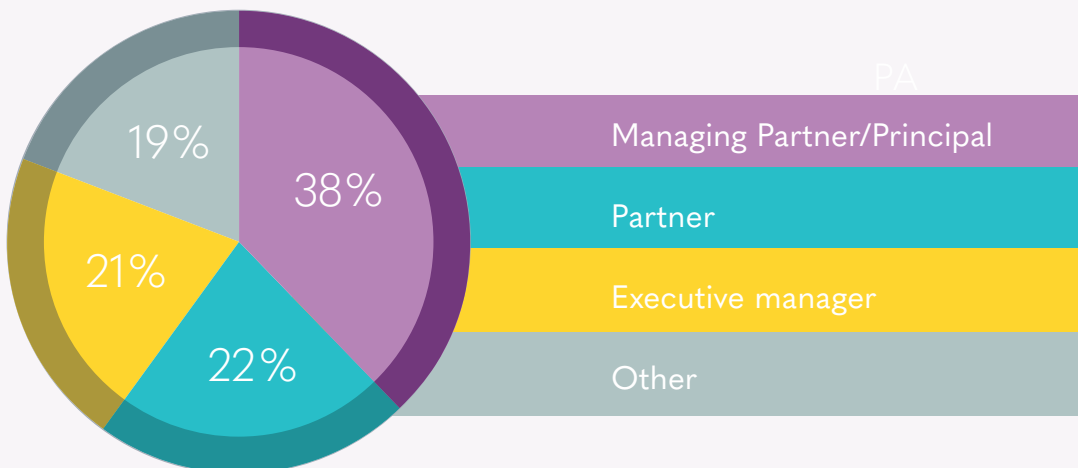
# QUESTION 1

*Where are you based?*



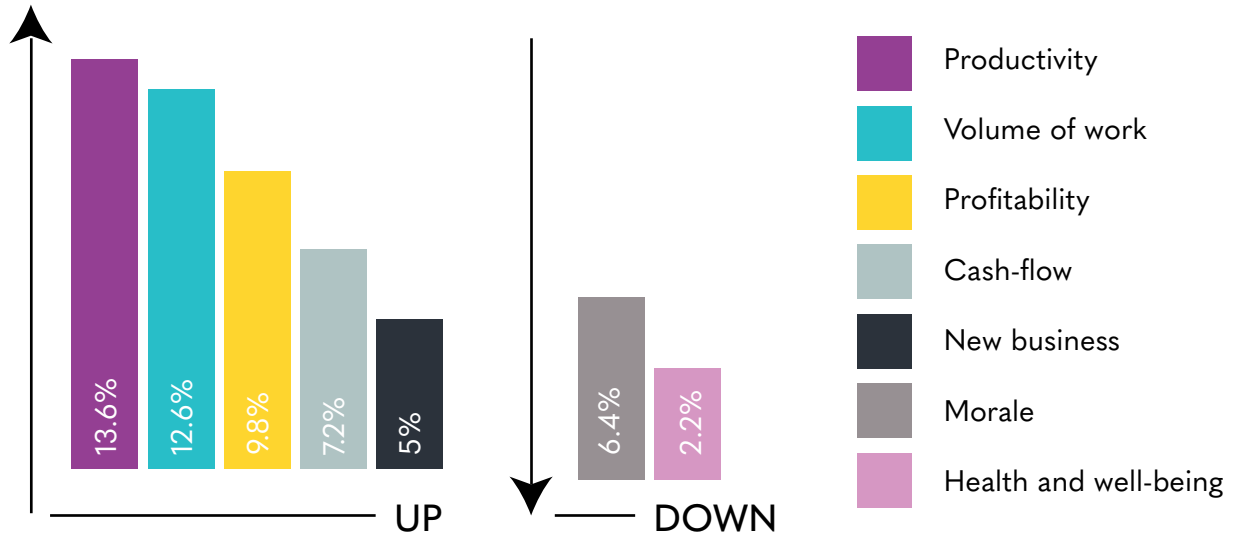
# QUESTION 2

*Please indicate your role?*

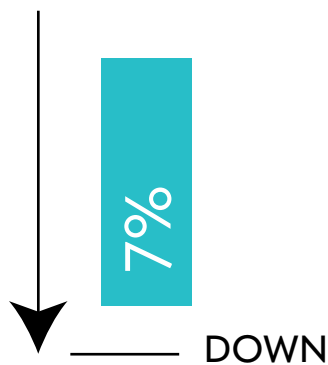


# QUESTION 3

Compared with this time last year, to what extent is your firm better or worse off?



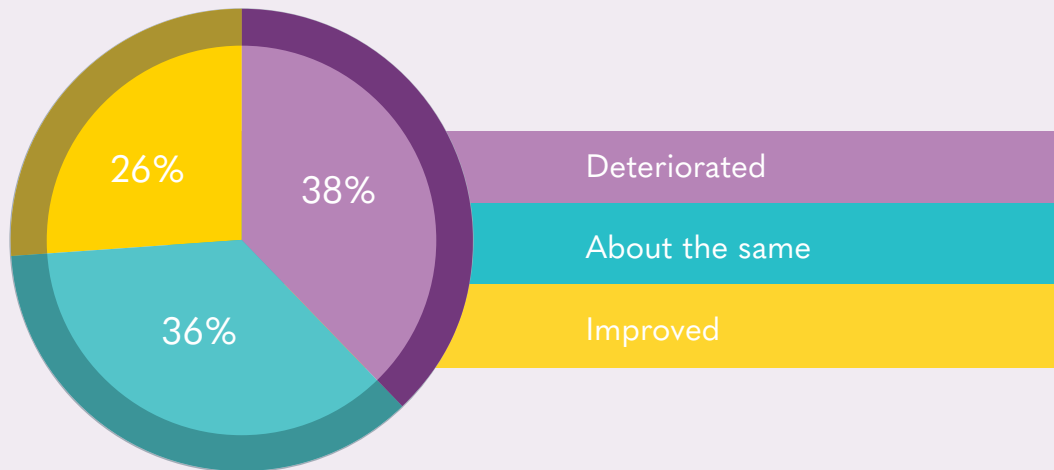
# QUESTION 4



Compared with this time last year, how is your mental and emotional well-being?

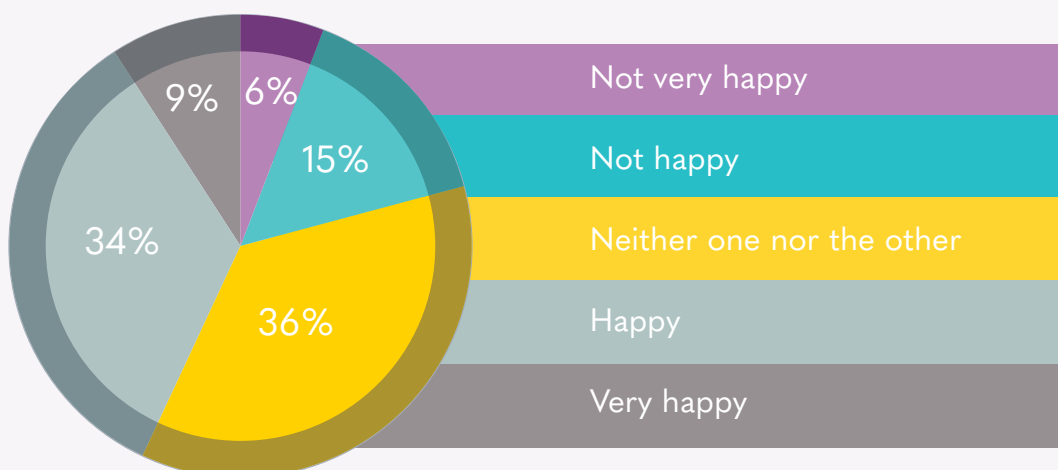
## QUESTION 5

Since the outbreak of COVID 19, has the quality of your working life improved or deteriorated?



## QUESTION 6

On a scale of 1 (not much) – 5 (very much), please indicate how happy you are with your working life at the moment.





## QUESTION 7

*What, if anything, has changed for the better in your firm as a result of COVID-19? (Random selection of comments.)*

*"More productivity, time efficiency."*

*"We've grown closer as a team as a result of the crisis."*

*"Staff prepared to go a little further for the common good."*

*"An increased focus on the basics of client service."*

*"A shift to allow part working at home, better business management, bi-weekly state of nation talks, - proof (we) can work remotely and be productive, and can work more paperless."*

*"Communication. It still isn't perfect but the situation has forced us to make a more concerted effort to communicate regularly."*

*"Greater emphasis on mental health well-being."*

*"We have more freedom, joy, balance and autonomy in our workplace culture."*

***"What was previously considered impossible, is now considered possible."***





## QUESTION 8

*What, if anything, do you think has changed for the worse in your firm as a result of COVID 19? (Random selection of comments.)*

*"Feeling of remoteness, lack of peer-interaction and pressure."*

***"Stress levels are a lot higher."***

*"Clients have become a lot more demanding."*

*"People are generally anxious about health and safety of friends and family."*

*"Resourcing is a significant issue where recruitment agencies are actively targeting employees."*

*"No child care & Zoom fatigue."*

*"It has created an expectation of flexible working habits, which may suit the individual who isn't that passionate about work but detracts from client service, productivity, collective learning and firm culture."*

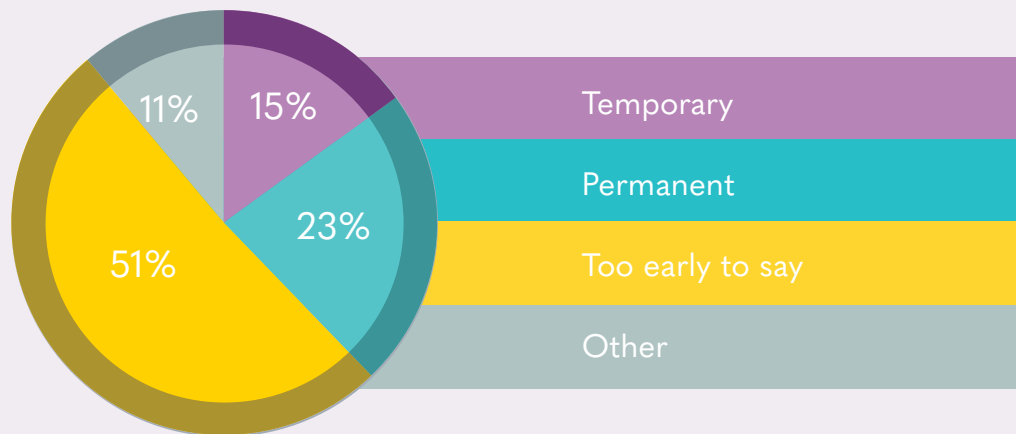
*"Selfishness and self-serving attitudes."*

*"Absence of face-to-face contact with Partners and staff."*



## QUESTION 9

*Do you consider the changes to be temporary or permanent?*



## QUESTION 10

*What changes, if any, are you planning on making to the way you operate as a result of COVID-19? (Random selection of comments.)*

*"More flexible working."*

*"Fresh strategy, revamp internal HR policies, better tech' support."*

*"Outsourcing of roles such as typing and call answering."*

***"Greater focus on leadership, care and mentoring of staff."***

*"A rethink of how we use office space – it will be much more around coaching and collaboration. A social hub."*

*"Permanent allowance of working from home (WFH)."*

*"Fresh way of thinking, different strategy, focus on value rather than volume."*

*"Increased investment in culture and brand."*

*"New KPI's; possible different strategic direction."*

*"Delivering the tailored support and environment that works for each team member; this might be flexible working arrangements, working from home etc."*



## QUESTION 11

*What, if anything, would help you or your firm to function better?  
(Random selection of comments.)*

*"Training, empathy and support."*

*"Technology coaching."*

***"We need to grow and develop our technology capability across the firm to support new ways of working and servicing our clients."***

*"Create a greater awareness of well-being throughout the firm."*

*"Empathy from clients and a good night on the beer."*

*"Better technology to facilitate internal communication, and training on how to manage staff well-being when working remotely."*

*"Quality time with colleagues for brainstorming and strategic thinking."*

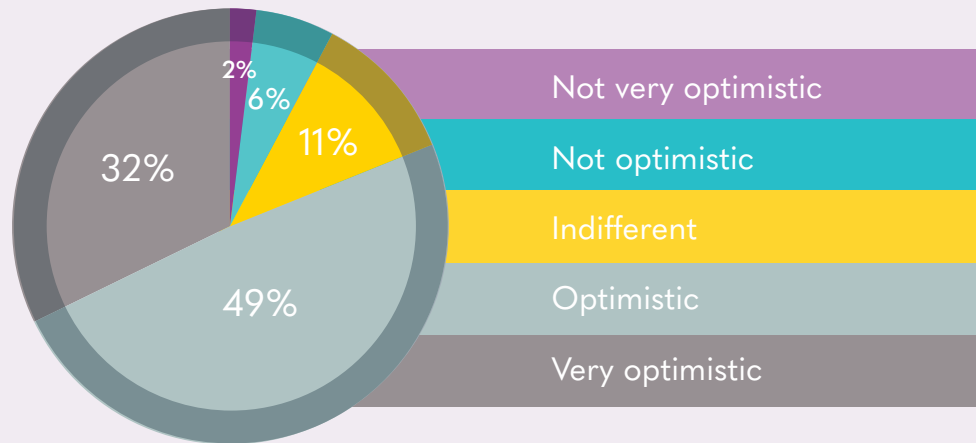
*"A holiday."*

*"More people in the office – remoteness creates remote/distanced practices."*

*"Elimination of COVID-19."*

## QUESTION 12

On a scale of 1 (not very) – 5 (very), please indicate how optimistic you are about the outlook for your firm over the next 12 months.



## QUESTION 13

Anything else you would like to add? (Random selection of comments.)

*"Rebuilding confidence is an important task over the next year."*

*"It has been a very draining year for many – crisis management stayed at that footing for many months and only in the last few has moved to more 'normal'."*

*"Things have been up and down but overall a great year for us."*

*"It has been a very unusual time; I hardly expected business to boom but it has!"*

*"I think the world has changed and people's expectations/goals/wellness have changed resulting in uncertainty... I think more than ever we will need strong leadership at the top."*

*"We are in our third lockdown and this one is seriously damaging staff morale. We have not had a staff outing or any type of team-building in a year which is demoralising for all workers."*

***"From challenge comes opportunity; disruption is nearly always good for lawyers."***

*"Clients increasingly demand instant attention – maybe exacerbated by their own stress from C-19 and maybe a growing trend anyway."*

*"Remoteness has driven the silo practices and has hampered the collaborative ones."*



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