

# COVID-19: The impact for Global Mobility and the mobile workforce

PwC Global Mobility - Pulse Survey 2 Results



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PwC ran a second global pulse survey to help People Leaders and Global Mobility teams understand how other companies are adapting to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on their globally mobile workforce.

This survey moves on from the initial crisis stage to look at how companies are re-evaluating the current situation, planning for the future and assessing what it means for their global workforce and mobility programmes.

The survey ran for ten days, closing on 22 June 2020, with over 250 companies participating.

You'll find the global results in this report. All responses have been aggregated and anonymised.

We hope you find the results insightful.

Keep well and stay safe.

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# 1

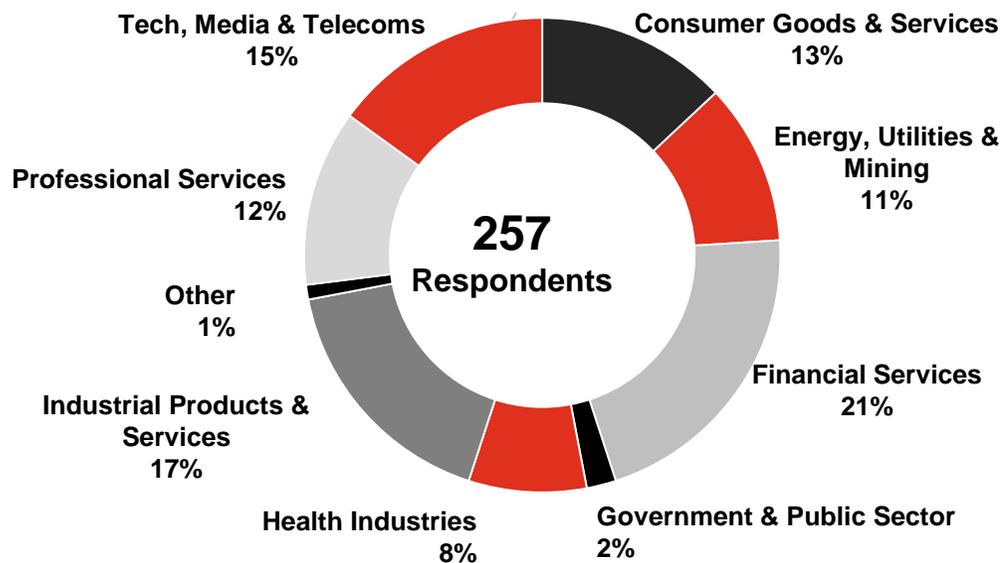
## COVID-19: The impact for Global Mobility and the mobile workforce

### Overview and respondent demographics

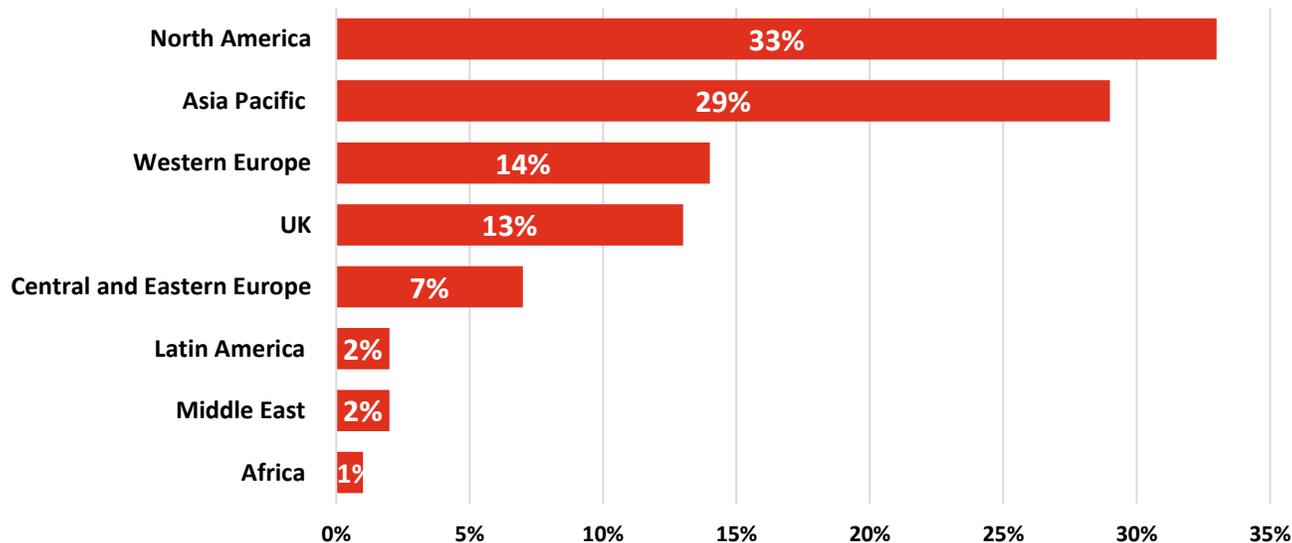
#### Overview of respondents



#### Breakdown of industry sector



#### Breakdown of company HQ location



Please note: For all responses percentages have been rounded; in some cases participants were able to select multiple answers and in some cases participants did not respond to all questions.

The survey looked at the actions companies are taking in relation to their globally mobile workforce across three areas:

1. Planned and current moves
2. You and your team
3. Future of workforce mobility



### 1. Here and now: planned and current international moves

- Around half of companies continue to allow some employees to **start their 'move' by working from their home country**, with a similar amount offering a **change of arrangement** – e.g. to virtual working or commuting
- Over half of companies **increased comms** with their mobile employees, almost half provided **non-cash support** (e.g. flights, temp accommodation, extended medical coverage) and a third provided more **compliance support** (e.g. immigration, tax)



### 2. You and your team: what are you focused on?

- Aside from running Business as Usual, top priorities are **workforce planning** in the context of the **changing immigration, tax and compliance environment**, and managing **the impact of remote working**. Reviewing **policies and support** for mobile employees is also a key focus over the next 6 months. Only 3% say work has slowed down
- Almost half of companies said that **strategic projects** remain a priority to be delivered



### 3. The new normal: what will the future of mobility look like?

- Almost a third of companies now expect the outbreak will have a **fundamental impact** on how workforce mobility is viewed and the need for international moves. This is up from 12% in Pulse Survey 1. Meanwhile a quarter expect a return to business as usual and the **same volume** of moves – down from 44% in Survey 1
- Almost a third of companies expect a **decrease in international moves**. The biggest decreases are expected to be International Business Travellers, Long Term and Short Term Assignments
- Almost half of companies say **international remote workers will increase**. Less than a quarter of companies say they don't expect to adopt international remote working
- In terms of **planned changes** to how companies run their mobility programme, top responses are that there will be **increased focus on who moves and why**, on **employee wellbeing and support** and on being **cost effective**

# 3 | Survey results

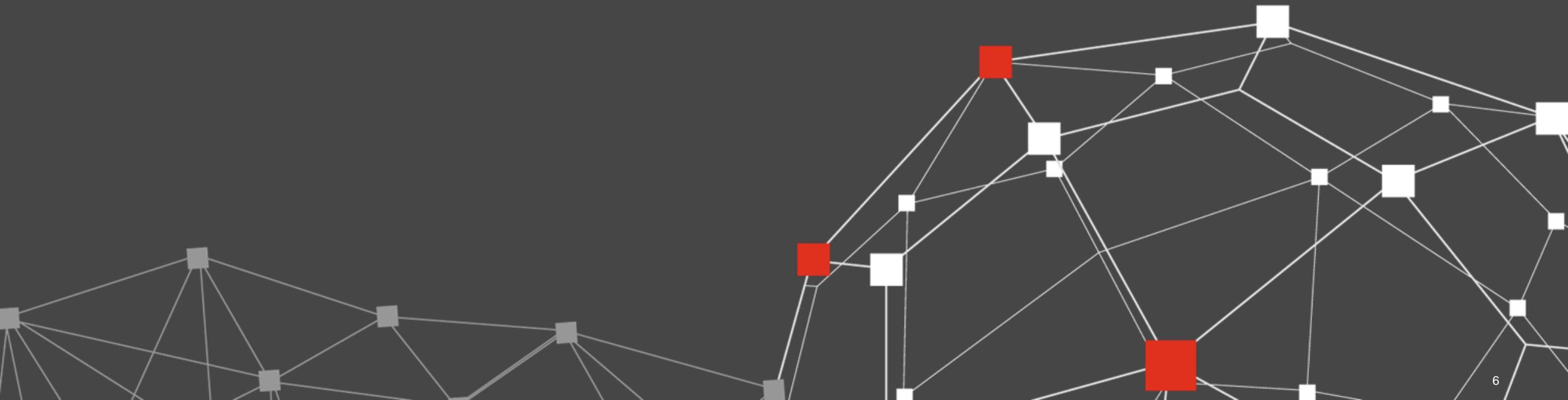
3.1: Here and now: planned and current international moves

3.2: You and your team: what are you focused on?

3.3: The new normal: what will the future of mobility look like?



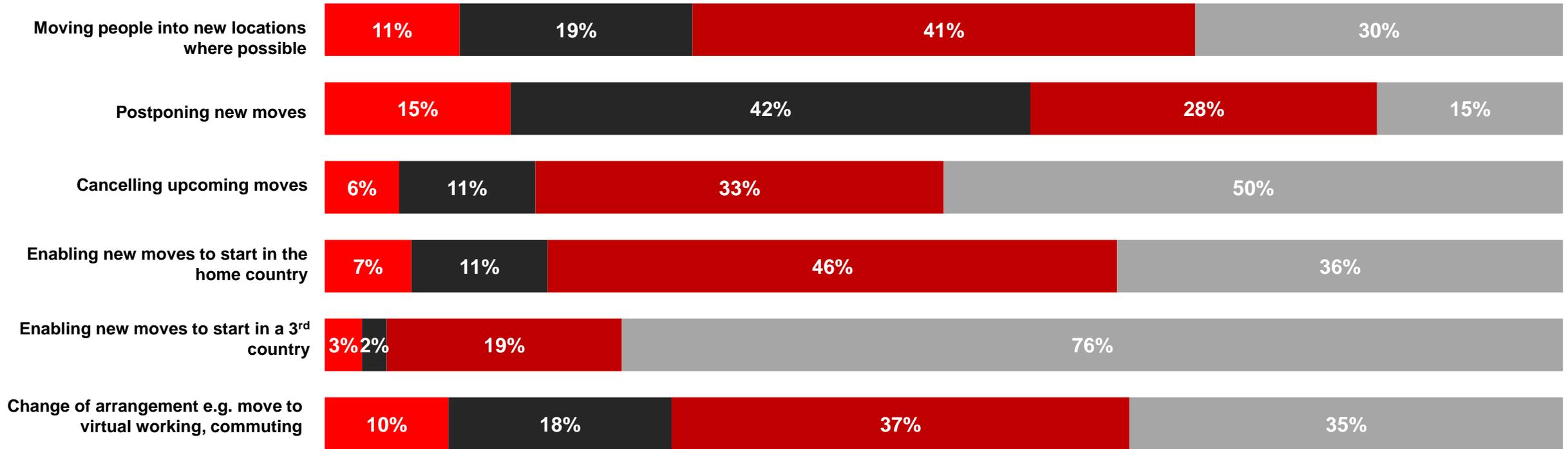
# 3.1 | Here and now: planned and current international moves



# 3.1 | COVID-19: The impact for Global Mobility and the mobile workforce

Here and now

## 1. What are you doing for upcoming international moves?

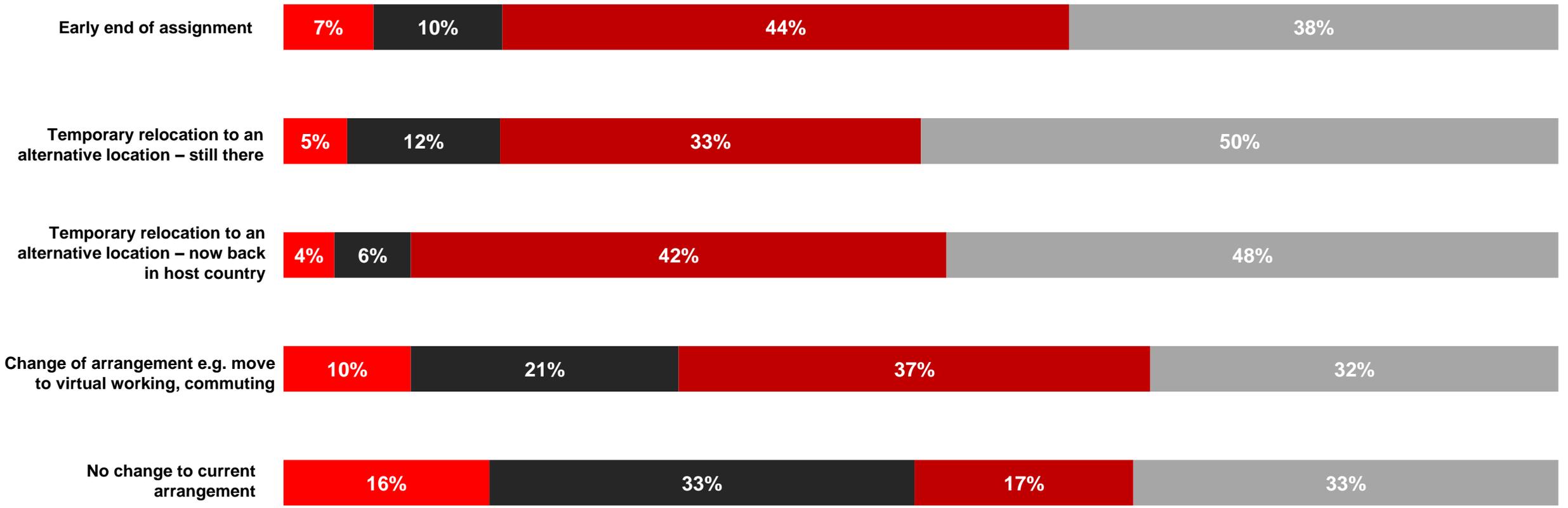


# 3.1 | COVID-19: The impact for Global Mobility and the mobile workforce

Here and now



## 2. What options are you offering to mobile employees currently on assignment or transfer?



# 3.1 | COVID-19: The impact for Global Mobility and the mobile workforce

Here and now



Sharing insights: what companies are offering to mobile employees currently on assignment or transfer and to those with upcoming international moves:

““ The ability to **work flexibly or from an alternative location** is in place for "stranded" employees due to border closures.

““ We have **extended the majority of assignments** where the employee cannot repatriate back to their home country.

““ We are reviewing whether people can **start their assignment from their home country** and remote working arrangements on a case by case basis. These will be **temporary solutions only**.

““ All international one way transfers have been put **on hold** or are due to start in their current locations.

““ We are **working with the business** to review next steps for employees who have returned home temporarily and addressing early repatriations case by case.

““ Employees who are currently on assignment and who were supposed to repatriate in the next few weeks will be requested to **extend the assignment**, whilst employees who were due to start and replace current assignments have been cancelled.

““ We are working virtually, but **only until** the borders and curfews are lifted.

““ Where assignees asked to work elsewhere, we have **not covered the cost**, just **supported the request**.

““ We offered repatriation to all mobile employees, but **most** have chosen to stay on assignment.

““ Most new moves are postponed until the **start of 2021**.

““ We will be moving assignees on short term and long term assignments **as soon as we can**, respecting visa and border rules.

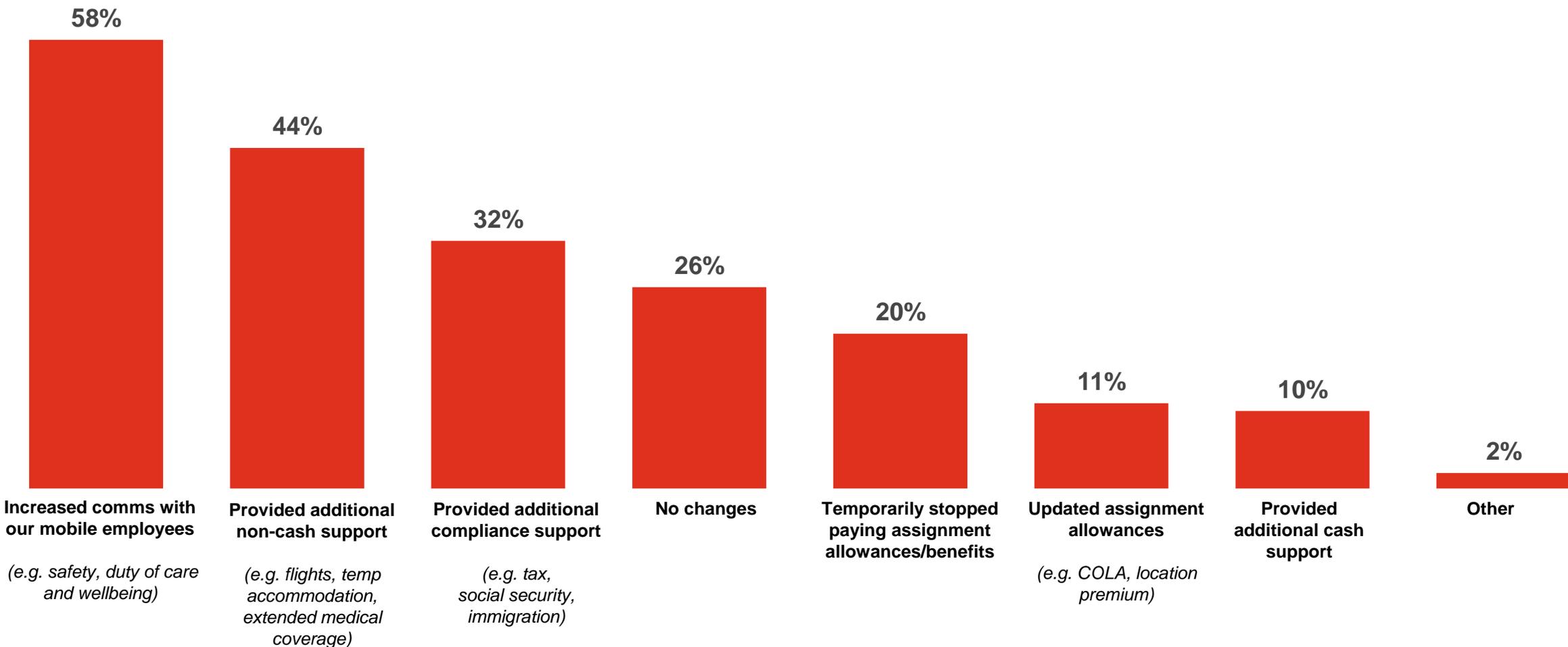
““ **Most new moves have been put on pause** except for where assignees are repatriating back to their home country.

# 3.1 | COVID-19: The impact for Global Mobility and the mobile workforce

Here and now



## 3. To date, what changes have you made to the support you give to your mobile employees?



# 3.1 | COVID-19: The impact for Global Mobility and the mobile workforce

Here and now



## Sharing insights: additional support companies are providing to their mobile employees:

“ Everyone in the company received 2 weeks pay. A few assignees preferred to return to their home country in the short term.

“ A review of taxation may be required after assignments have been resumed as usual.

“ We have **stopped paying COLA, Mobility Premium and Location Allowance** for employees who returned home for more than 3 months.

“ We have **provided additional compliance support** where necessary for stranded employees. No major changes to expat packages in general but we are addressing any one-off concerns as needed.

“ We have given cash in lieu of unused home leave benefit.

“ Allowances **have either been modified or ceased** for those who have returned home or to another location.

“ A couple of international local hires resigned to return to their home country at the start of the outbreak.

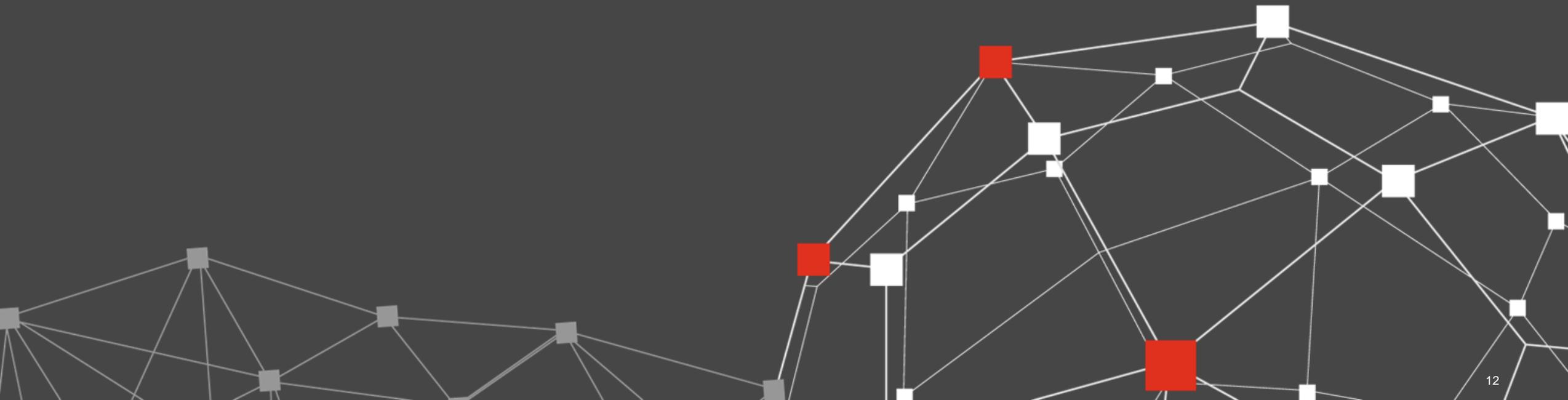
“ We have replaced the gym membership benefit with a cash allowance while gyms are not accessible.

“ We have allowed expats to utilise their home leave benefit, however International Transfers have been treated the same as other local employees.

“ All but one of our assignees have now returned home.

“ For assignees remaining on assignment but in quarantine, nothing changes. For those who returned home to quarantine, the **company paid for additional costs and removed host allowances until assignment resumes.**

## 3.2 | You and your team: what are you focused on?

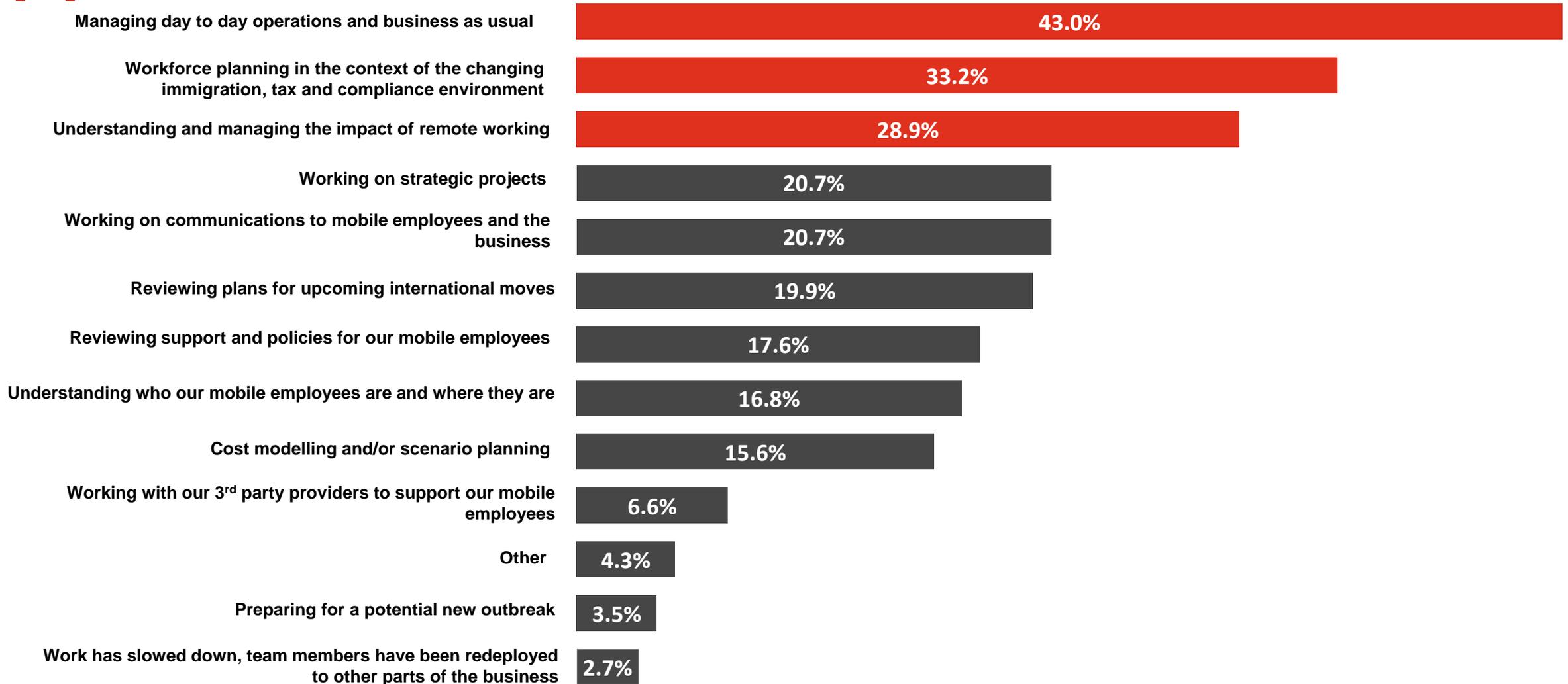


# 3.2 COVID-19: The impact for Global Mobility and the mobile workforce

## You and your team



### 4. Aside from knowing your people are safe and well, what are the top three things keeping you busy right now?

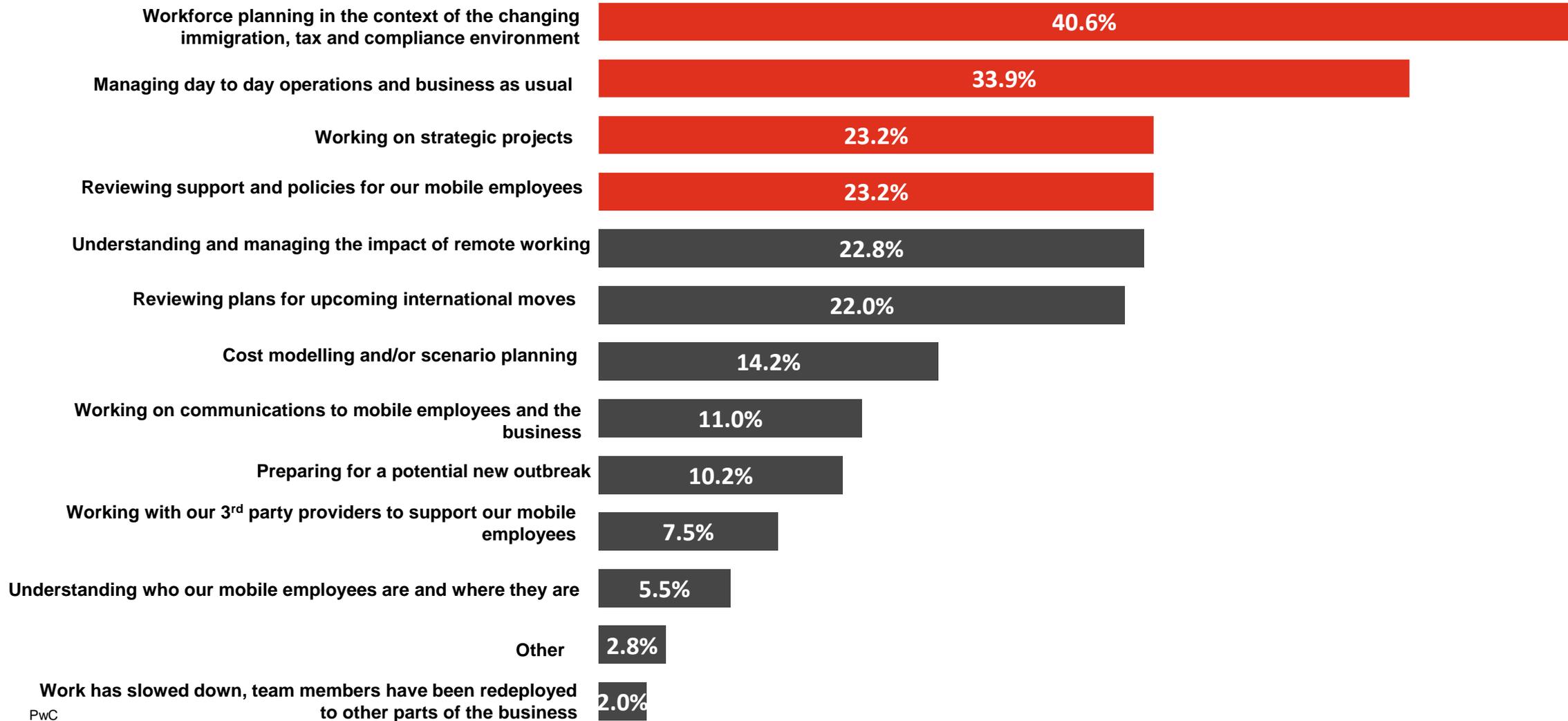


# 3.2 COVID-19: The impact for Global Mobility and the mobile workforce

## You and your team



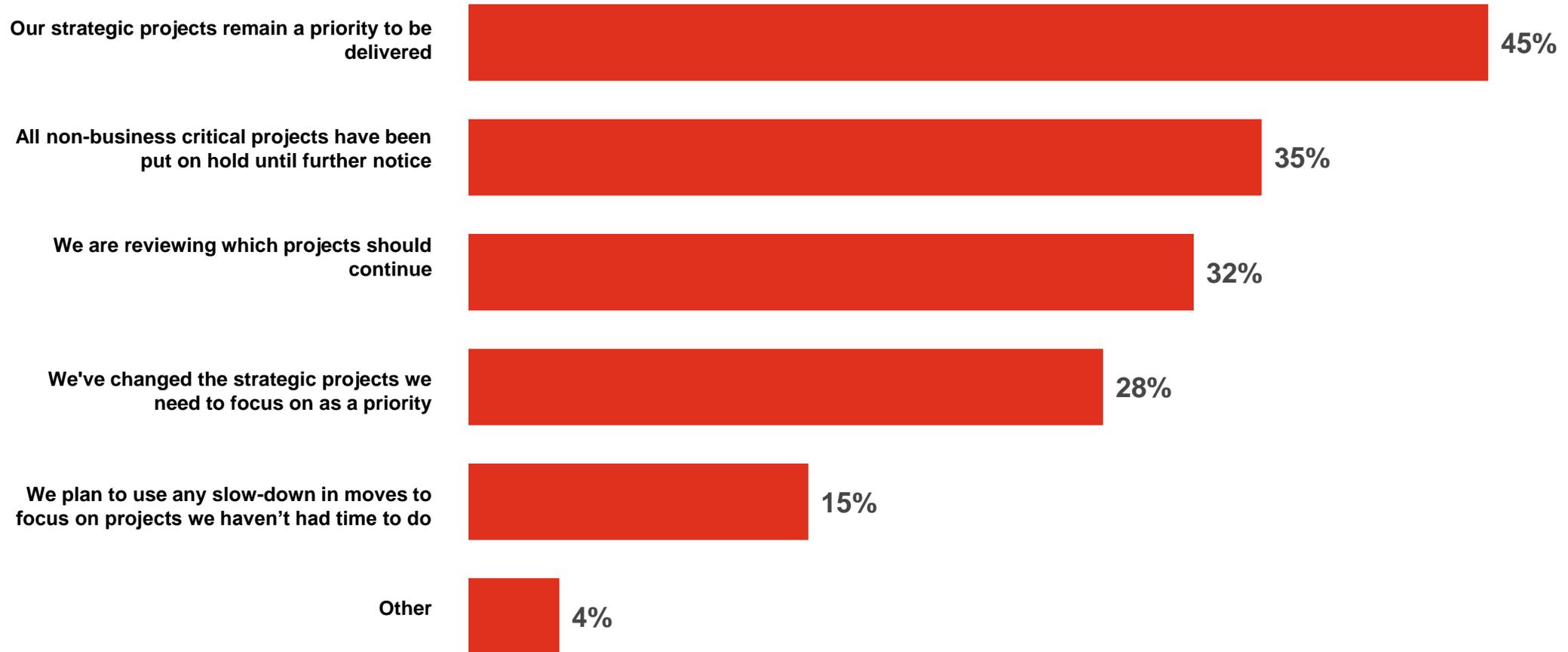
### 5. And what do you think the top three things will be that will keep you busy in the next three to six months?



# 3.2 COVID-19: The impact for Global Mobility and the mobile workforce

## You and your team

### 6. What impact are you seeing on strategic mobility projects?



# 3.2 COVID-19: The impact for Global Mobility and the mobile workforce

## You and your team



### Sharing insights: what teams are focused on:



We will need to **re-align the mobility services** we offer to meet the requirements of a changed business and social landscape. We need to **complement the more traditional models** for deploying skills across borders with alternative arrangements - building knowledge in our team and across our stakeholders to address new complexities and risks; and develop the systems and processes to efficiently operationalise them.



We are **managing a combination of different mobile employees** who want to work remotely out of a different country for a temporary period of time - but who do not actually want to relocate or change roles. They don't fall under the existing program, so we need to track them and **create new policies and principles**.



In reality our main concern is **working with suppliers**. Some of them have been impacted so there are some delays in deliveries.



We are reviewing **the exchange rate effects** due to COVID.



Planning for the **reintegration** of mobile workers coming back to the office.



We are assisting in the efforts to review the potential **compliance implications** of remote working and stranded workers working outside of their payroll locations.

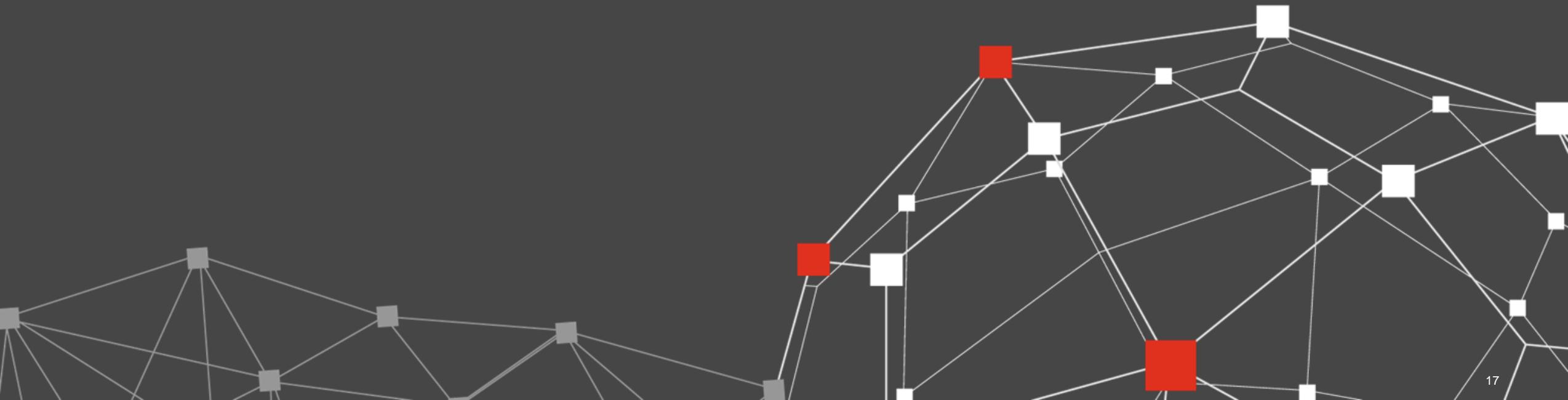


Some employees have relocated temporarily to a third country. We are busy managing this type of remote working and assessing the potential **compliance consequences for them and for our organisation**.



Most of our strategic projects are working towards **centralising HR**.

# 3.3 | Readiness for the new normal: What will the future of mobility look like?

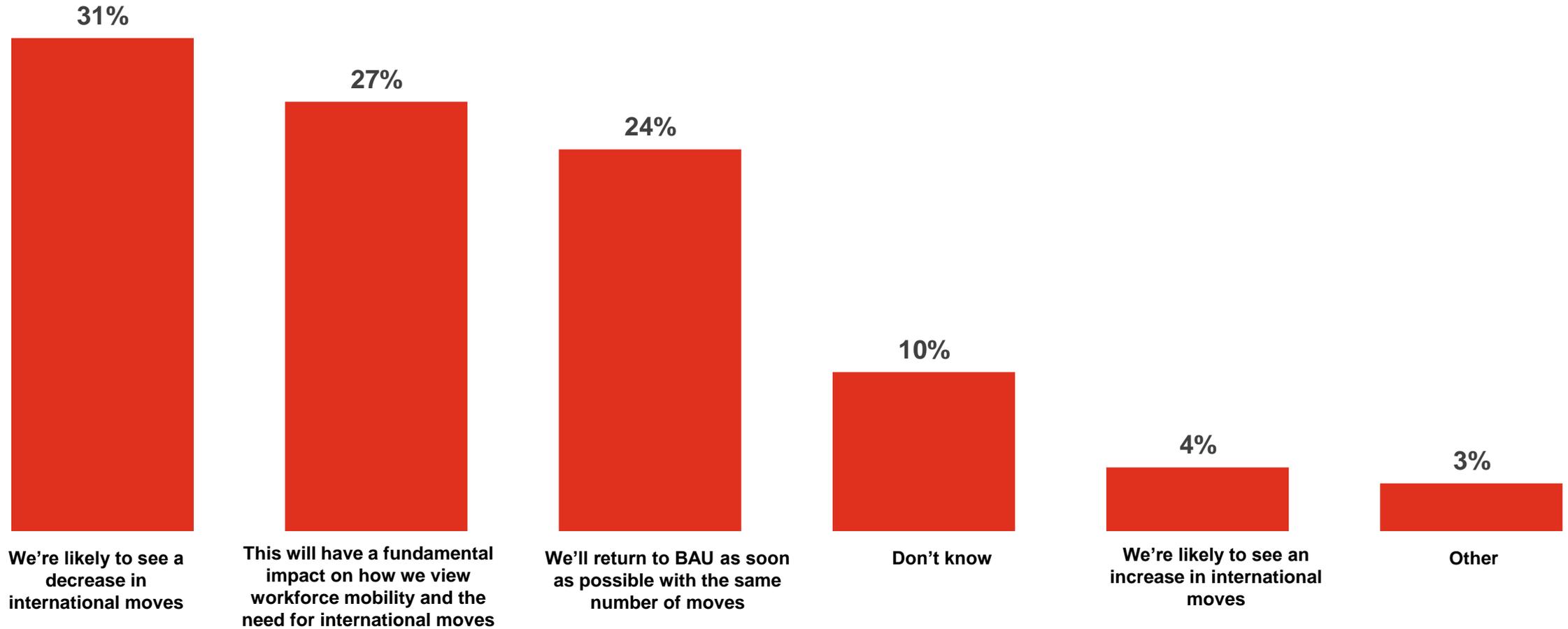


# 3.3 | COVID-19: The impact for Global Mobility and the mobile workforce

## Future mobility



### 7. What impact do you think the outbreak will have on mobility at your company in the future?



# 3.3 | COVID-19: The impact for Global Mobility and the mobile workforce

## Future mobility



Sharing insights: what companies predict the impact of the outbreak will have on mobility in the future:

“ “ We expect **the same number** of employees will work internationally, just maybe **in a different fashion**.

“ “ We are likely to see an increase in staff wanting **to work remotely from an international base**.

“ “ The **decrease in mobility will be temporary**. It will likely **grow again** in a year to a year and a half.

“ “ A reduction of future moves due to the financial crisis. As expat packages are very expensive company HQs will **reduce assignments and hire locally instead**.

“ “ We assume that the economy will slow down and businesses will be impacted negatively as a result, so there will **not be the same funds available** to support mobility in the future. We expect the number of moves to decrease especially when non critical.

“ “ We are likely to have **increased involvement with remote working** and the compliance that comes with it, as well as continuing our business as usual.

“ “ Although traditional mobility will always exist, we are focusing on getting set up to **manage more virtual assignments**.

“ “ It will change how we view the need for international moves - think first about **moving the work to the person**, instead of moving the person to the work.

“ “ **Business travel will go down**, and **long term assignments will go up**.

“ “ I think this will **change how we view where work is performed**, which may mean a reduction in some of move types and an increase in others.

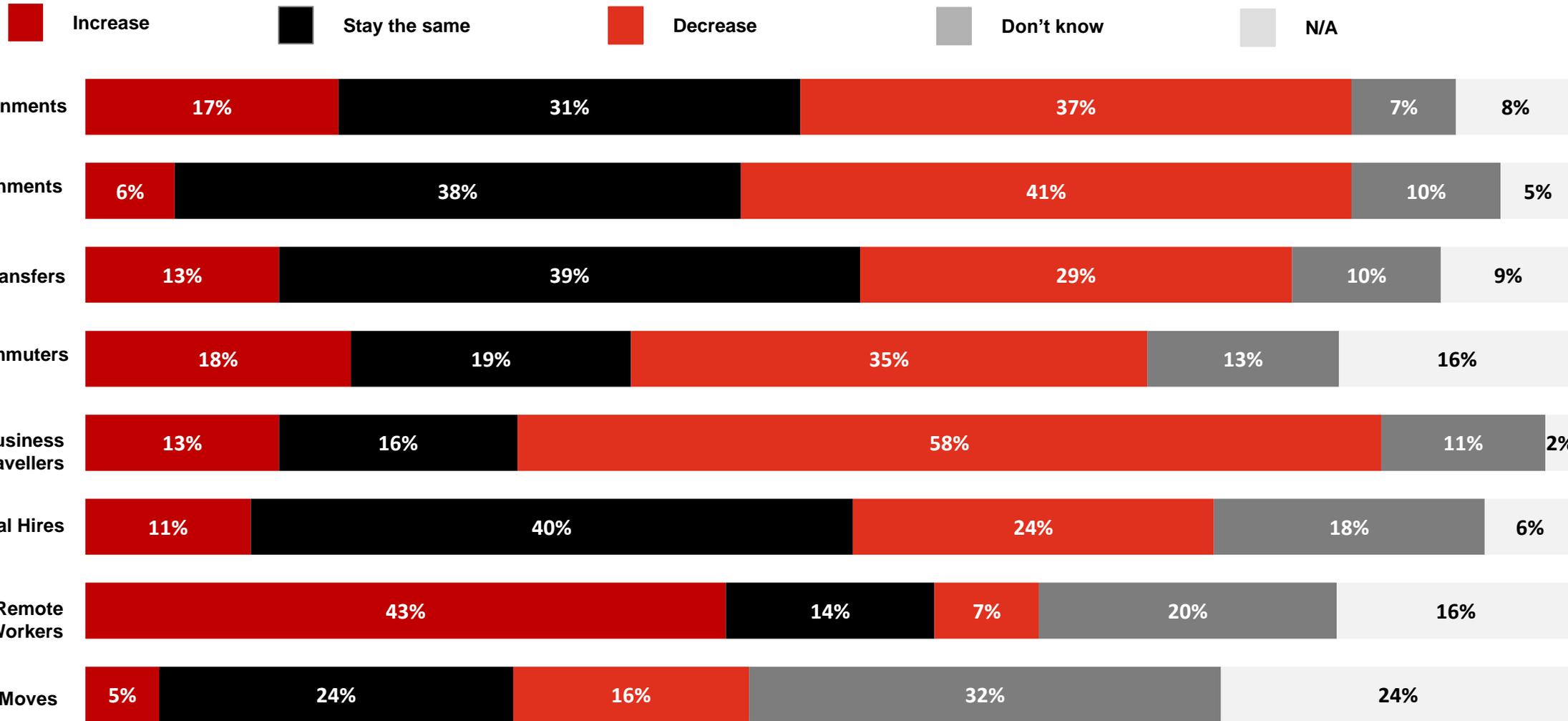
“ “ Our **assignee numbers** have already dropped significantly over the past few years. I think they will decrease further slightly going forward.

# 3.3 COVID-19: The impact for Global Mobility and the mobile workforce

## Future mobility



### 8. What impact do you expect to see in your company, on the following move types:

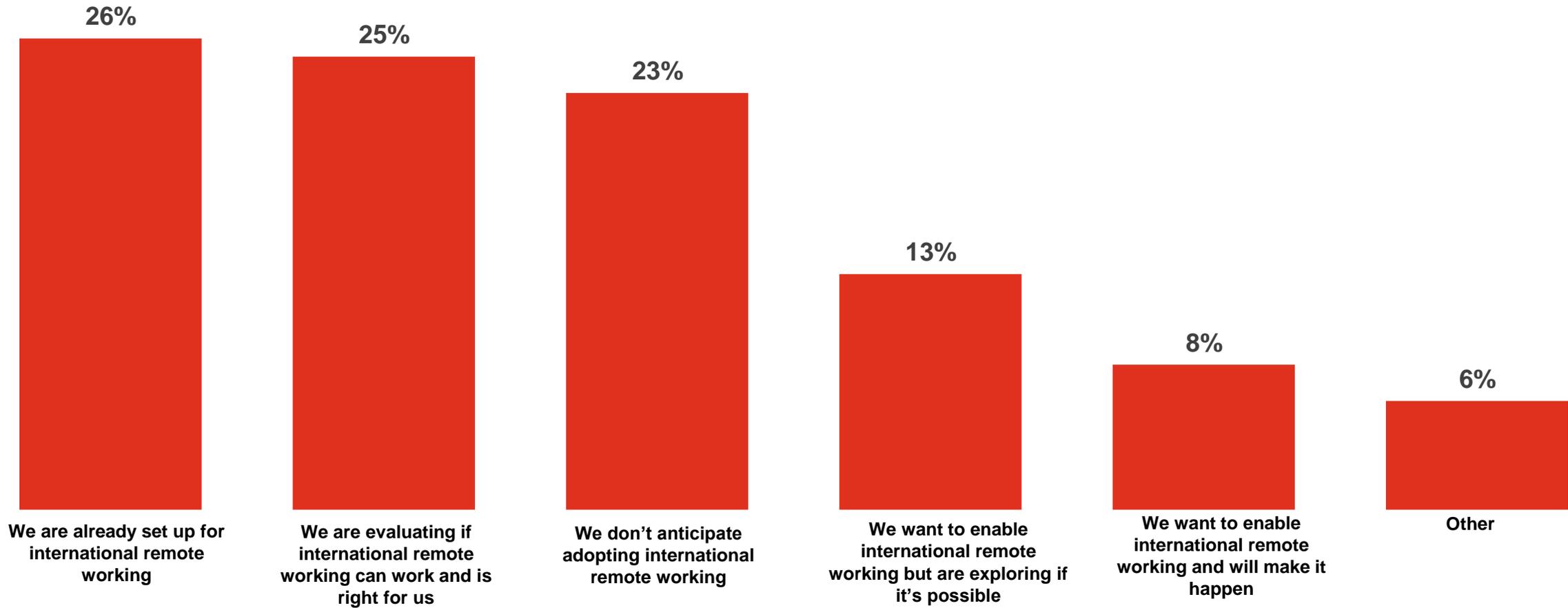


# 3.3 | COVID-19: The impact for Global Mobility and the mobile workforce

Future mobility

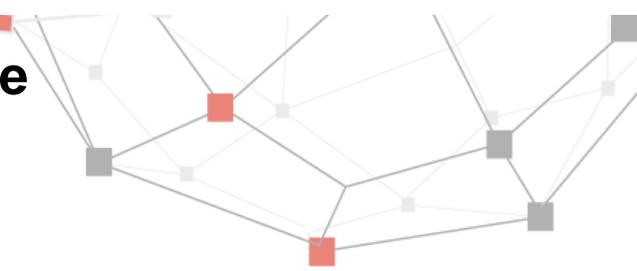


## 9. What impact has COVID-19 had on how your company views international remote working?



# 3.3 | COVID-19: The impact for Global Mobility and the mobile workforce

Future mobility



## Sharing insights: how companies view international remote working:

“ We will **make remote working happen where we can**, however there are compliance issues we need to investigate first. It may also be easier to support these requests in locations where we already have a presence.

“ International remote working is a **very small part** of our business.

“ We support remote workers in countries where we **already have a legal entity set up** to facilitate this. We are unlikely to consider entity registration and payroll administration for a few employees, unless there is a **business need** and possibility to **generate revenue** there.

“ International remote working has been **adopted as a necessity, not as a policy.**

“ There will be remote working on a **national** basis but for the moment not an international basis

“ As a mobility function we **want to enable** cross border remote working, but anticipate **many barriers.**

“ We wouldn't support any international remote working requests **driven by the employee.**

“ Our industry has **limited ability** for "work from home" due to its very nature.

“ International remote working has been **prohibited** for some time now; this position has been heavily discussed in recent times but leadership remains fully supportive it should remain that way given compliance, regulatory, and licensing risks.

“ To some extent we already embraced remote working, usually on a temporary basis. We've seen that it works so now we're **evaluating where it fits into our culture and long-term strategy.**

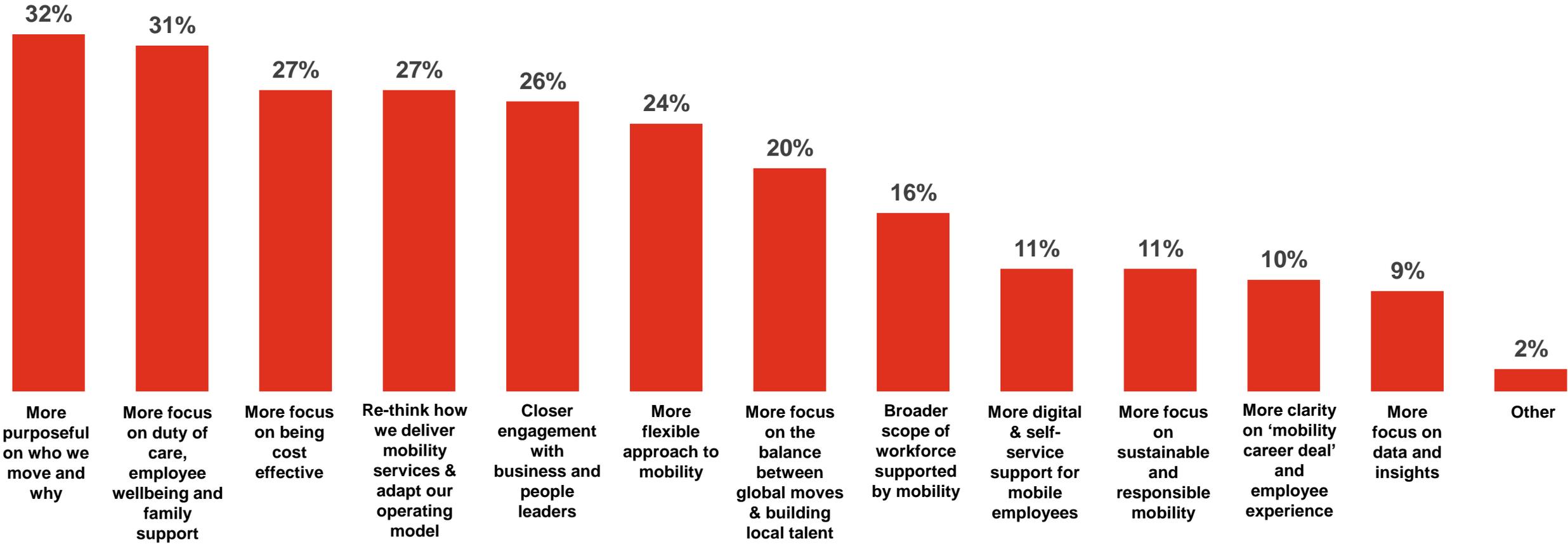
“ We are evaluating remote working on a **temporary** basis, but we don't want to adopt it on a permanent basis.

# 3.3 COVID-19: The impact for Global Mobility and the mobile workforce

## Future mobility



### 10. What changes do you predict there will be to how you run your mobility programme?



# 4 | Comparison results: April to June

## 4.1: Changing attitudes and expectations – comparing April and June results



# 4.1 | COVID-19: The impact for Global Mobility and the mobile workforce

## Survey Demographics – Respondent Profiles

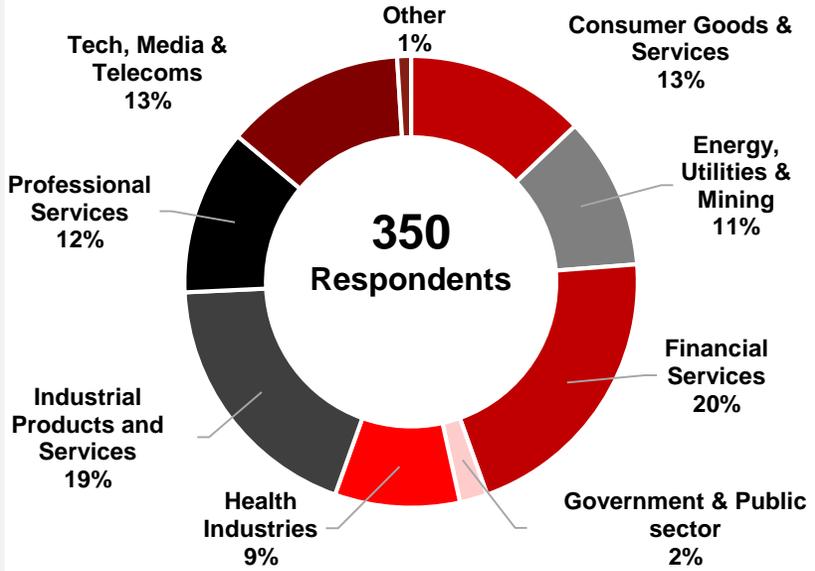
**Pulse Survey:  
April 2020**

**350**  
Companies

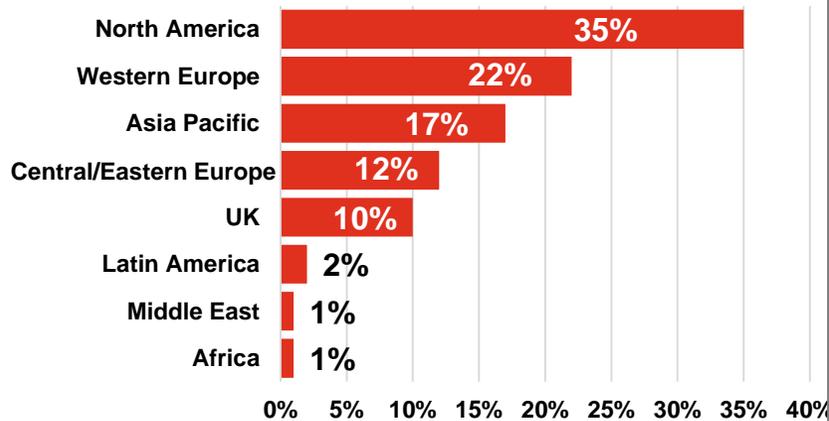
**8**  
Industry sectors

**40**  
Respondent countries

**Breakdown of industry sector**



**Breakdown of Company HQ**



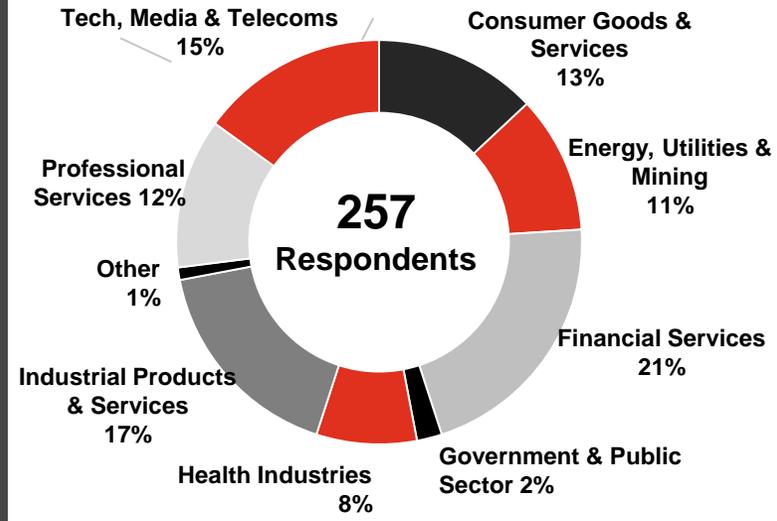
**Pulse Survey:  
June 2020**

**257**  
Companies

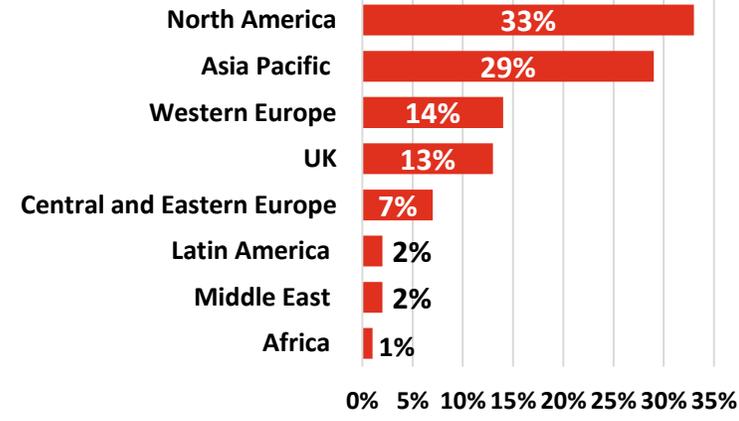
**8**  
Industry sectors

**33**  
Respondent countries

**Breakdown of industry sector**



**Breakdown of Company HQ**

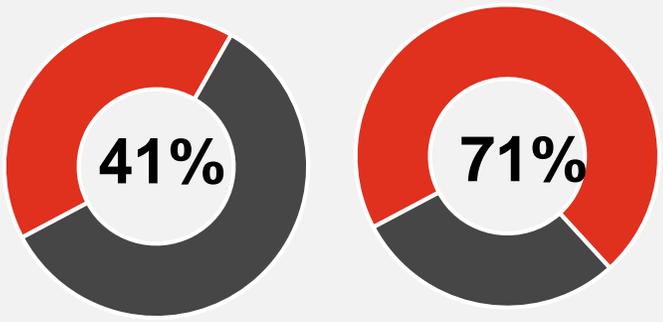


# 4.1 | COVID-19: The impact for Global Mobility and the mobile workforce

Changing attitudes and expectations – comparing April and June results

## Attitudes and expectations are changing, fast

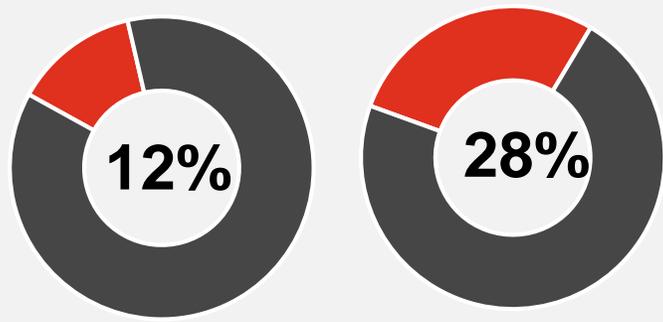
We are moving to people to new locations – where possible



April 2020

June 2020

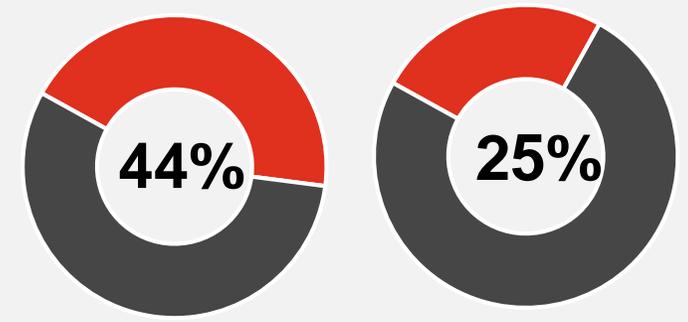
This will have a fundamental shift on how we view workforce mobility and the need for international moves



April 2020

June 2020

We'll return to Business as Usual as soon as possible, with the same number of moves



April 2020

June 2020



More companies now expect that the COVID-19 outbreak will have a **fundamental impact on how we view workforce mobility**

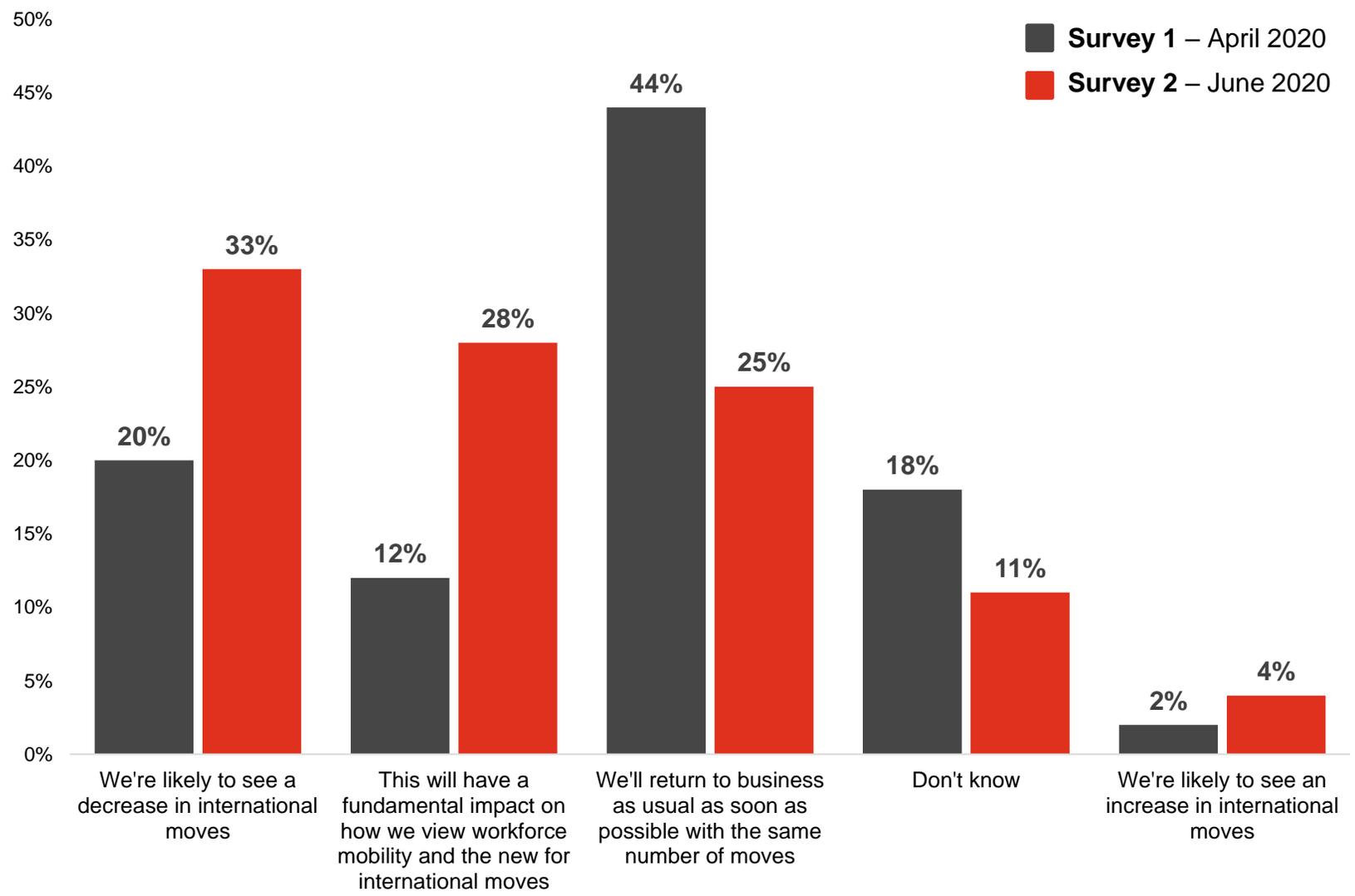


Fewer companies envisage returning to business as usual with the same number of moves – with an expected shift towards evaluating and determining whether remote working is right for the company

# 4.1 | COVID-19: The impact for Global Mobility and the mobile workforce

Changing attitudes and expectations – comparing April and June results

**Q: What impact do you think the outbreak will have on mobility at your company in the future?**



## Impact on strategic projects:

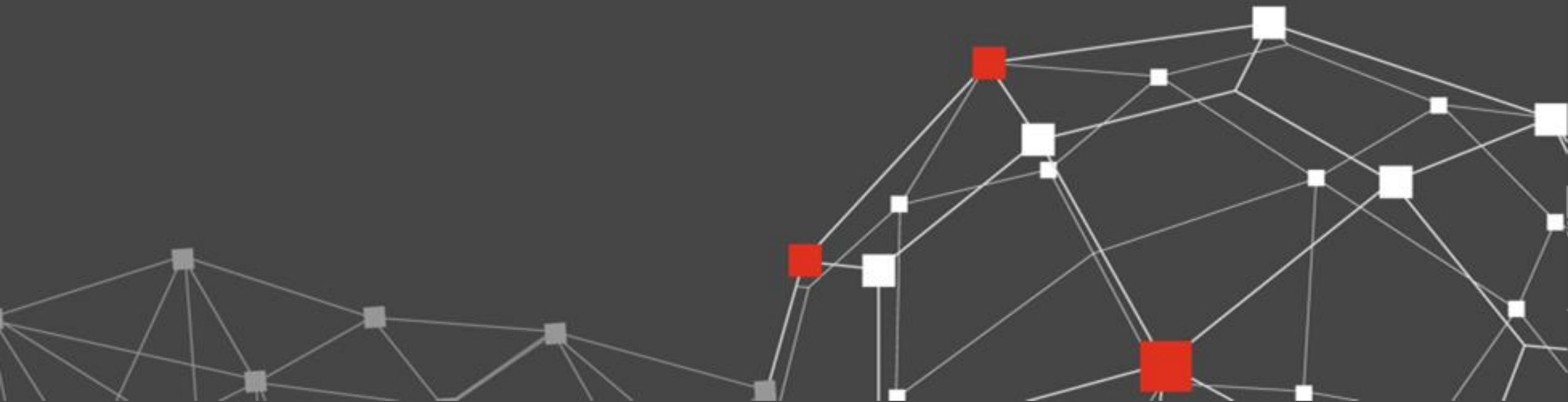
**45%**  say strategic projects remain a priority to be delivered (compared to 41% in April)

**35%**  reported that all non-business critical projects have been put on hold until further notice (compared to 30% in April)

**32%**  are reviewing which projects should continue (compared to 31% in April)

For our latest insights and resources, please visit:  
<https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/crisis-solutions/covid-19.html>

If you have any questions please get in touch with your regular PwC contact who will be happy to help.



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