

EVIDENCE CENTRE
TE POKAPŪ TAUNAKITANGA

COVID-19 STAFF SURVEY 1

May 2020



**ORANGA
TAMARIKI**
Ministry for Children

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

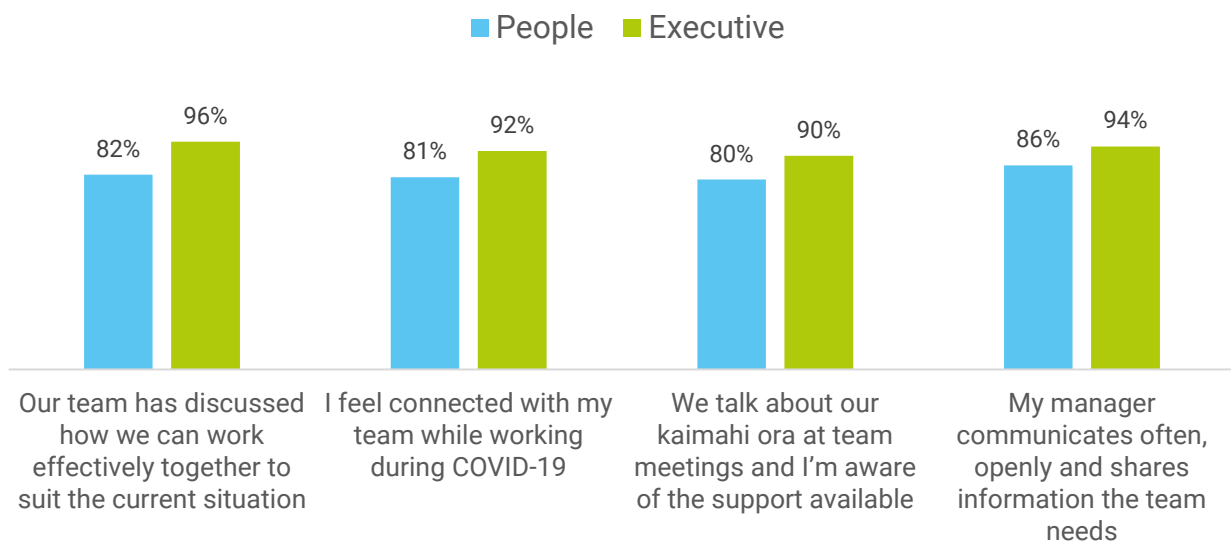
Introduction

Oranga Tamariki staff were invited to take part in a survey about their COVID-19 work experiences. there were 1882 responses giving a 33% response rate. The survey opened on Monday 13 April and closed Friday 17 April.

A follow-up is recommended for the week of 28 April following entry to alert level 3.

Overview

Across each of the questions and the demographics, staff as a whole felt well supported with an **overall average score of 82%.**¹ There is some difference in the ratings made by Executive / Managers in comparison to staff, with Managers having higher scores than staff.



Action points

Two areas that could be improved are in the supply of equipment (screens and PPE) and in the timeliness of information with about a third of respondents unhappy with these.

The most frequently mentioned areas staff would like more support were material equipment such as screens, desks and chairs. There were substantial numbers of comments that appreciated the existence of the Digital Workplace and how well it has worked. The restriction of using only Skype was commented on particularly when communicating with providers and caregivers. The ability to use Zoom in particular was missed.

¹ The score is calculated by weighting the responses to a 7-point Likert scale: Strongly Disagree at 0%, Disagree at 20%, Somewhat Disagree at 40%, Somewhat Agree at 60%, Agree at 80% and Strongly Agree at 100%. Don't Know has no score associated with it. The weighted responses are then summed to give the final score.

Non-material additional support included the need for understanding that work/life balance has been impacted, especially for those with children. Some people mentioned that working from home and using equipment at home required extra power and heating.

Participation

Overall participation rates were satisfactory with an overall response rate of 33% (1882 respondents).

However, participation from Youth Justice Services (18%) was noticeably lower. In addition, Youth Justice Services provided the lowest ratings for the questions compared to all staff. This suggests that working with this group on issues and to increase participation may be useful and prudent especially given their size in proportion to all staff (21%).

Regionally, there were quite large differences in participation rate with the highest coming from Taranaki (64%) and the lowest West Coast (13%) and Manawatu-Whanganui (25%).

Demographic differences

For the analysis, we looked at the ratings between Corporate, Māori staff, Policy and Organisational strategy, Services North, Services South, Care Services, Youth Justice and Social workers.

There was little difference seen between each of the demographics. The only notable difference is that Corporate, Māori and Policy and Organisational Strategy provided higher ratings in comparison to Social Workers and Youth Justice.

There were no notable differences between the ratings of Māori and staff of other ethnicities.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

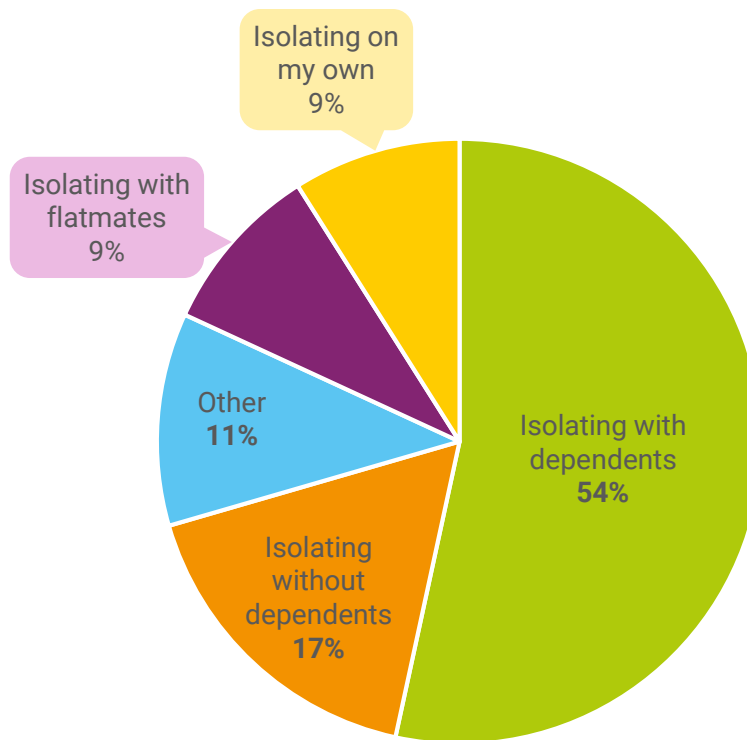
All questions – ranked by question



What proportion of your normal work can you now do remotely?

Option	Count	%
More than 50%	805	43%
100% of my work is done remotely	707	38%
About 50%	216	11%
None	75	4%
Less than 50%	66	4%
Not working at the moment	13	1%

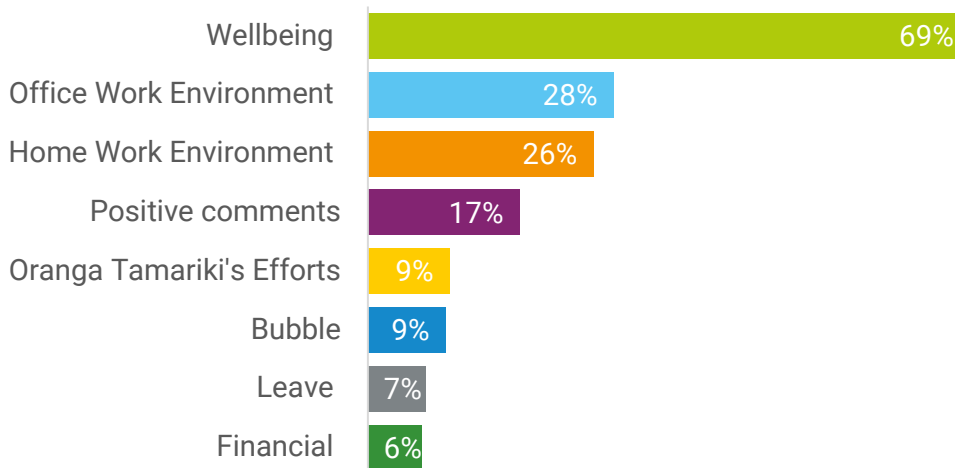
Which of the following best describes your situation?



QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Those in my 'bubble' and I are doing well under the circumstances?

This survey highlighted many responses surrounding mental health and wellbeing. One of the most common things was parents struggling to juggle work and childcare. Many stated that they weren't coping having to maintain their usual workload while also having to care, teach, and entertain their children during this time. Below is a chart of the high-level themes that emerged.



Wellbeing

Other wellbeing responses that were identified include anxiety/cabin fever, struggling to stay focused and motivated, feeling isolated, and other non-related family/individual issues.

"As a single parent with no supports due to COVID I am expected to work my full hours, care for my children and meet their emotional and physical needs as well as educate them. My manager just keeps telling us that our work will be checked and that we have to meet unrealistic expectations. No support."

High-level theme	Sub-theme	# of comments	% of all who responded	
Wellbeing	Struggling with work vs childcare	50	23%	23%
	Mental health / anxiety / cabin fever	34	16%	16%
	Struggling with workload / output	17	8%	8%
	Physically alone	12	6%	6%
	Child(ren) struggling	9	4%	4%
	Impacting other non-related family / individual issues	9	4%	4%
	Other	16	8%	8%

Home and office work environment

The home and office work environments were also frequently referenced in responses to this question. A few responses raised concerns about the office environment concerning the lack of PPE gear and issues within the work bubble (people not social distancing, not sticking to rostered bubbles). In relation to the office environment, most responses were people questioning the need to continue working in an office space. This response flowed onto the idea that it was unnecessarily increasing their risk of being exposed to the virus, putting themselves and their bubbles at risk.

"...I accept that I am a government worker and need to continue to provide a service, but I could have done all my duties from home and not had to come into the office. This would have meant I could continue to have supported my mum, but my situation was not considered."

Other responses related to how individuals and their bubble were doing within their home work environment. Concerns surrounding the lack of equipment (devices, monitors, furniture) to support healthy work environments was a regular comment. Although there were many responses from workers praising their managers, there was a small number of responses voicing frustrations with management and communication.

"...Some managers are saying – let's be flexible and others are saying please record all the work you are doing in your calendars - which is perceived as micromanaging and being checked up on. Can management just 'be kind' and say - do what you can, be flexible, look after yourself - and mean it. Now is not the time to try and micromanage those who are less productive – it comes across as mean spirited."

Office work environment

High-level theme	Sub-theme	# of comments	% of all who responded	
Office work environment	Issues within the work bubble	21	10%	10%
	Want to work from home when possible	15	7%	7%
	At higher risk of being exposed	13	6%	6%
	PPE resources/instructions	11	5%	5%

Home work environment

High-level theme	Sub-theme	# of comments	% of all who responded	
Home work environment	Lack of work equipment / healthy work set-up	17	8%	8%
	Issues with manager communication	13	6%	6%
	Harder to communicate / miscommunication	13	6%	6%
	Other	12	6%	6%

Good feedback



"We have 11 + a dog in our bubble and I am able to work in a room that I have set up, it's bright, airy and I don't get disturbed. I also keep in touch with my work colleagues when needed."

"Access to work through internet, helpdesk, mobile phone is very efficient. Much appreciated. As a new employee I was able to be provided and set up prior to the COVID19 lockdown. Thank you for the Home Page Pataka and information updates these also help being connected."

Oranga Tamariki efforts

- Lack of confidence in the overall response of OT
- Oversight on Social Workers
- Overload of Information



"I don't believe my social workers do feel 100%. They report that they feel vulnerable and confused by the plethora of tasks and directions that are coming out of Head Office or Regional Office. On the one hand they are being told business as usual and on the other hand they are taken to task because they have visited the home albeit sticking to social distancing criteria. They are having administrative tasks fired at them left, right and centre which is taking them away from actually supporting their clients and they feel that they don't have the protectiveness afforded to other government workers."

High-level theme	Sub-theme	# of comments	% of all who responded		
Oranga Tamariki efforts	Lack of confidence in the overall response of the organisation	9	4%		4%
	Other	11	5%		5%

Bubble

- Fluctuating dynamics/confrontation with bubble members
- Bubble members are essential workers

"Doing fairly well, however we only recently begun living together and have been having small verbal arguments that are tiring."

High-level theme	Sub-theme	# of comments	% of all who responded		
Bubble	Fluctuating dynamics / confrontation with bubble members	10	5%		5%
	Bubble members are essential workers	9	4%		4%

Financial concerns and leave

- Unsecure/unaccommodating partners/bubble members employment
- Money Stressors
- Paid Leave/Annual Leave

"I have had leave declined due to not giving enough notice even with having more than enough staff. I am a single mother of two; it's ridiculous. Can't give notice if we didn't know this was going to happen."

Leave

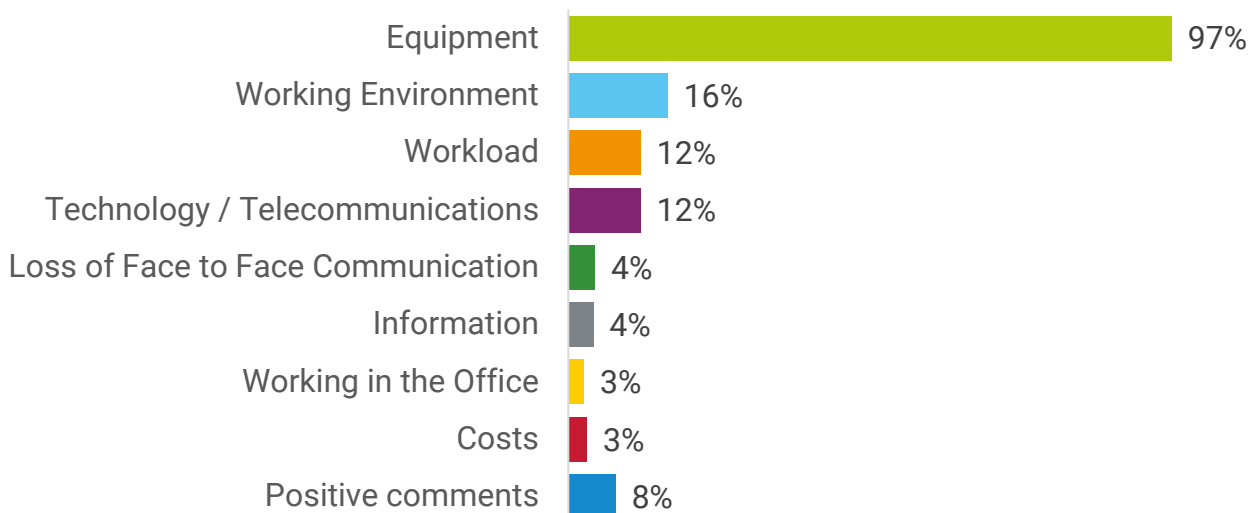
High-level theme	Sub-theme	# of comments	% of all who responded
Leave	Annual leave	12	6%
	Other leave	2	1%

Financial

High-level theme	Sub-theme	# of comments	% of all who responded
Financial	Money stressors	8	4%
	Unsecure / unaccommodating partners / bubble members employment	5	2%

Given the circumstances, I feel confident I have what I need to work as effectively as I can during this time.

This survey highlighted some key areas that are impacting the confidence in workers. One of the major themes was equipment, or the lack thereof. Due to most people now working from home, many responses explained that working only on a laptop is very difficult. The reasons for these responses were mainly due to workers being used to working on multiple screens/monitors in the office. Below is a chart of the high-level themes that emerged.



Equipment

The lack of equipment impacted respondents' home work environment: desks, office chairs, WIFI, and printer/scanners. Not having adequate equipment didn't just impact the efficiency of people's work, many respondents reported having eye strain and body pain which further reduced their confidence in working effectively. For frontline workers, PPE gear was a major reason for lack of confidence.

"It would have been useful to have our screens at home, working from a small laptop screen not only affects my eyes, neck and back but also affects my productivity as I'm not able to have multiple things up at once to refer to."

High-level theme	Sub-theme	# of comments	% of all who responded	
Equipment	Screens / monitors	147	37%	37%
	Home office / workstation	60	15%	15%
	Office chair	39	10%	10%
	PPE	35	9%	9%
	Desk	30	8%	8%
	Printer / scanner	30	8%	8%
	WIFI issues	14	4%	4%
	Other	27	7%	7%

Working environment

Issues surrounding the working environment was also explored through responses to this survey question. Respondents mentioned that the lack of privacy and space at home was making work more difficult during this time, with some extra concern for those who work with very sensitive information. Other issues included people feeling like they weren't receiving enough support or communication in reflection to this turbulent time. Multiple respondents explained feeling disheartened or lacking a sense of motivation which impacts their confidence in working effectively.

"Unfortunately, our manager appears to not be that trusting of us working from home, so it creates a very tense environment for us as staff. We have all the tools and technological equipment which is great. It's just the emotional support that is not there."

High-level theme	Sub-theme	# of comments	% of all who responded	
Working environment	Lack of privacy / space at home	17	4%	4%
	Little / no support	14	4%	4%
	Not enough communication	11	3%	3%
	Other	21	5%	5%




Workload

- Not enough work
- Less efficiency
- Unachievable workload
- Wanting to take paper files home

“As an admin worker I work a lot with paper-based files and not having access to these files at home strongly impacts on the work that I can do effectively. While I understand the reason for not having paper files at home, I think during lockdown it is a different situation. Being able to request files from Iron Mountain direct to my address and requesting pick up from my address would be beneficial.”

“...The job is harder given the emotional lockdown, distant from family and work pressure...”





“Upper management has added to my workload (additional COVID information into the system) and moved timeframes - All About Me plans, without considering that my workload has not actually changed. I still must do visits, court documents and maintain weekly communication with those on my caseload.”

High-level theme	Sub-theme	# of comments	% of all who responded	
Workload	Less efficiency	27	7%	 7%
	Unachievable workload	10	3%	 3%
	Other	9	2%	 2%

Technology / Telecommunications

Issues surrounding technology/telecommunication was another area that is impacting the confidence of people to work effectively. Some of the major themes were IT issues with software and services like Skype, Zoom, DW, and CYRAS. Multiple respondents suggested having more support and information on how to effectively use these resources while they must work from home.

“...We could do with more guidance about how to use the tools available to support remote working...”

High-level theme	Sub-theme	# of comments	% of all who responded	
Technology / Telecommunications	Zoom/Skype/CYRAS struggles	15	4%	 4%
	Trouble accessing certain software	14	4%	 4%
	IT issues	11	3%	 3%
	Give support on using tools to work from home	6	2%	 2%

Loss of face-to-face communication

- Struggle of FGCs
- Less effective not being face-to-face

"...with no face-to-face it is very difficult to get a true sense on what is going on for children and families, I suspect there is harm going down for women and children and there are no eyes on them to make reports of concern."

High-level theme	Sub-theme	# of comments	% of all who responded
Loss of face to face communication	Less effective not being face-to-face	15	4%
	Struggle of FGCs	2	1%

Information

- Overload of information
- Too many Skype meetings
- Information about what is available to work from home
- Information for frontline workers not prioritised

"There is so much information that is coming out and very little consistency across the board about how it is disseminated that some sites are working in some ways, and others possibly taking unnecessary risks. We are not actively prioritising the high-level work and our responses feel quite clunky when dealing with the routine and critical work."

"Information is provided in our daily Skype meetings. I feel we have been bombarded with emails, but our manager lets us know key information."

"Overall it would have been useful to know what is / was available to us to help those who are not quite set up to work from home for extended periods of time."

High-level theme	Sub-theme	# of comments	% of all who responded
Information	Overload of information	7	2%
	Other	9	2%

Working in the office

- Don't want to work in the office
- Breakdown of social distancing rules
- Want to return to the office

"My role is still working on the frontline, although a majority of my role could be done at home. We have been told it is essential we still come to our workplace. One day we are being told not

to have face-to-face contact with clients, then the next day we are told it is essential we talk with our clients in person. I have the equipment I need to work, but the guidance I am receiving from my workplace is not allowing me to work effectively, efficiently or consistently.”

“I don't think that anyone has asked me how I feel about working but held an expectation that I man the office as part of a rota system. Even though I understand that element of fairness in this instance it has overshadowed consideration to one's anxiety, fear and commitment to own whānau thus holding an expectation (without questions) that all have a turn to be on site.”

High-level theme	Sub-theme	# of comments	% of all who responded
Working in the office	Don't want to work in the office	4	1%
	Other	6	2%

Costs

- Allowance for work supplies
- Advanced pays
- Extra costs working from home

“I have used my own funds to purchase equipment for me to work in a production home office. I do feel an allowance for home office should be looked at.”

“I am currently working from home. There are concerns about the extra power, internet usage etc that is being used while I am here. It would have been appreciated if screens were provided.”

High-level theme	Sub-theme	# of comments	% of all who responded
Costs	Extra costs working from home	8	2%
	Other	4	1%

Is there anything else we could do to support you while we are working during COVID-19?

A large number of respondents indicated that they feel supported by their manager, organisation and/or the government. Many acknowledged the hard work and timely responses from the leadership team and the usefulness of the shift towards digital working. Below is a chart of the high-level themes that emerged.



Non-material

Desire for management to change its expectations of realistic work outputs – acknowledging that less work can be done while looking after children, being flexible with work hours, cutting out non-urgent work. Some strongly indicated that they felt micromanaged and demeaned by filling out worksheets, as if managers did not trust workers to do an honest day’s work.

In addition, some found it useful working from home and would like to continue doing so, while a smaller number wanted to work from the office.

Some wanted better mental health support, with examples ranging from motivational quotes to being able to take time off when able after lockdown. Some wanted additional leave, while others just wanted to be acknowledged somehow, beyond words, for their work during this time.

“Unrealistic work expectations when at home with children and having to prove that I have worked 8 hours each day, adding to a stressful situation I already feel.”

High-level theme	Sub-theme	# of comments	% of all who responded
Non-material	Childcare - this has an effect on working at home, productivity, stress	49	5%
	Change expectations and pressure of work / unrealistic KPIs	44	4%
	Concerned about working from office	37	4%
	Support mental health	26	3%
	Additional pay (extra costs) / borrow at own cost	24	2%
	Don't micromanage me, trust me to do my job	20	2%
	Work from home more - this is working well	20	2%

High-level theme	Sub-theme	# of comments	% of all who responded
Non-material - continued	Flexible working arrangements or less hours	18	2%
	Additional leave / acknowledge hard work	13	1%
	Work from office more	11	1%
	Support - other	10	1%
	Other - scanner, materials, miscellaneous Items	19	2%

Material

The largest need for material help was access to home office equipment – desks, chairs, second monitors and other supplies. People raised concerns about ergonomics, saying that the sudden shift away from comfortable equipment has had negative effects on their health and decreased their productivity, especially when working off a small laptop screen. Less common material support: help with IT systems, specific software, better telecom systems and better internet access. Some wanted financial support to cover added costs of working from home – internet, power, heating bills.

"I'd like a large screen rather than just the wee laptop screen, as I am suffering some eye strain. I have a monitor here at home I could use if I had the right connection cord(s) and knew how to fix it."

High-level theme	Sub-theme	# of comments	% of all who responded
Material	Screen or second monitor	63	6%
	Home office - full or part of, unspecified	39	4%
	Chair	20	2%
	Other - scanner, materials, miscellaneous Items	20	2%
	Ergonomics - wanting help with / expressing dissatisfaction / pain	19	2%
	Better telecommunication system	18	2%
	Desk	16	2%
	Printing - either a printer or access to printing	13	1%
	Better support from IT / systems	12	1%
	Other - scanner, materials, miscellaneous Items	11	1%

Communications

Staff wanted clear, timely, straightforward messages about current protocols and guidelines, saying that COVID response variation between organisations, regions and sites was confusing. They wanted fewer emails and unnecessary meetings, with remaining communication being condensed, clear and to the point. Planning for future restriction levels and clear guidance on this was common. Some wanted better consultation with frontline staff when making decisions. On the other hand, others wanted more meetings with their managers or wider team.

“The amount of comms coming out about COVID-19 (team, regional, national, union) is kinda getting too much and I find myself skimming through...”





High-level theme	Sub-theme	# of comments	% of all who responded	
Communications	Have what I need - feel supported by manager and / or organisation	65	6%	6%
	Clear, timely messages on current practice, policies and guidelines	35	3%	3%
	Misc - physical exercises, wine and beer, hairdresser	25	2%	2%
	Condense / reduce comms emails / make them specific to sites / regions	23	2%	2%
	Consult with frontline and other staff	11	1%	1%
	Digital Workplace - positive experience and feedback of this	11	1%	1%
	Other	20	2%	2%

COVID-related

Many indicated concern about work practices putting them at risk of infection through the unnecessary need for staff to work from offices when they felt that they could work from home just as effectively. Some wanted either a clear rationale for this or to start working from home. Others raised concerns that this contradicted Ministry of Health guidelines and felt like their health and safety did not matter.

A lot of people wanted PPE gear, with the wider theme of wanting to be kept safe at work, either now or at resumption of level 3. A small group of outlier responses highlighted that better training and education about the need for PPE could reduce its demand.

“No one even knows the office is open...like in after-hours duty, if you are on green and scheduled to be in the office you can just as easily be called out from your home.”

High-level theme	Sub-theme	# of comments	% of all who responded		
COVID-related	PPE gear, sanitiser	50	5%		5%
	Keep us safe / safety training / test staff / sanitise and clean places	43	4%		4%
	Help maintain bubble - work sometimes breaks it	33	3%		3%
	Clear future planning - levels drop, where to, guidance	27	3%		3%

Other

Some expressed very pro- or anti-union views. Very few said there was too much focus on COVID and surprisingly, not many expressed concerns with job security. Ergonomic discomfort and email overload seemed to affect people's desire to be on the computer, this may have skewed survey participation.

APPENDIX 1: SURVEY CONTENT

For questions 1-10 below, the respondent is given the option of a 7-point Likert scale:

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly Disagree
- Don't know

1. *Those in my 'bubble' and I are doing well under the circumstances*
2. *Information provided on our organisation's approach to managing COVID-19 is clear, relevant and timely*
3. *My manager communicates often, openly and shares information the team needs*
4. *I am confident the organisation has taken appropriate precautions to keep me safe and well while working*
5. *I feel connected with my team while working during COVID-19*
6. *We talk about our kaimahi ora at team meetings and I'm aware of the support available*
7. *Given the circumstances, I feel confident I have what I need to work as effectively as I can during this time*
8. *Our team has discussed how we can work effectively together to suit the current situation*
9. *My manager and I have discussed my personal situation and work expectations during COVID*
10. *Our organisation has effective provisions for supporting employees caring for dependents impacted by COVID-19*
11. *Which of the following best describes your situation?*
 - Isolating with dependents
 - Isolating without dependents
 - Isolating with flatmates
 - Isolating on my own
 - Other (please explain)
12. *What proportion of your normal work can you now do remotely?*
 - Not working at the moment
 - None
 - Less than 50%
 - About 50%
 - More than 50%
 - 100% of my work is done remotely
13. *Is there anything else we could do to support you while we are working during COVID-19?*