



Quality Consultants Limited

**THE COVID
RESPONSE**
The Employee Perspective

SEPTEMBER 2021

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In the early stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic, when companies began to shut down on-site operations and employees retreated to their homes to work, we conducted a study about employees' new experience of [working from home](#). As organizations and employees started going back to their workplaces and tried to adjust to the "new normal" of living with the virus, we sought to find out how they were responding to and coping with the Pandemic.

In 2021, we offered our clients the option of including COVID-response questions in their employee surveys, so that they could get feedback on their employees' perception of their organization's response to the Pandemic, how employees themselves were coping with it, its impact on employee engagement levels, and what organizations needed to do to improve employees' experience as they return to their workplaces.

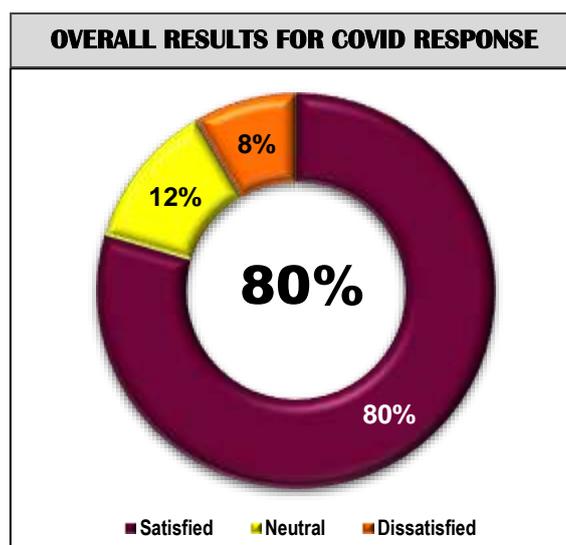
The data for this report comprise responses from 1,284 employees from several companies in Trinidad and Tobago, who participated in their company's annual or biennial employee survey. Questions covered employees' perceptions of management's response to the Pandemic, companies' internal communication about the Pandemic, and employees' wellbeing in the Pandemic.

Data were collected during the first half of 2021, and commenced before the roll-out of COVID vaccines to the public. Therefore, no quantitative data on vaccine acceptance are included in this report. However, some employee comments on vaccination are included at the end of the report. We are presently in the process of collecting quantitative data on vaccine acceptance and vaccine policies, and these findings will be published at a later date.

This report presents the cumulative findings of multiple surveys, and outlines the insights gained and their implications for responding to and managing the Pandemic in local organizations.

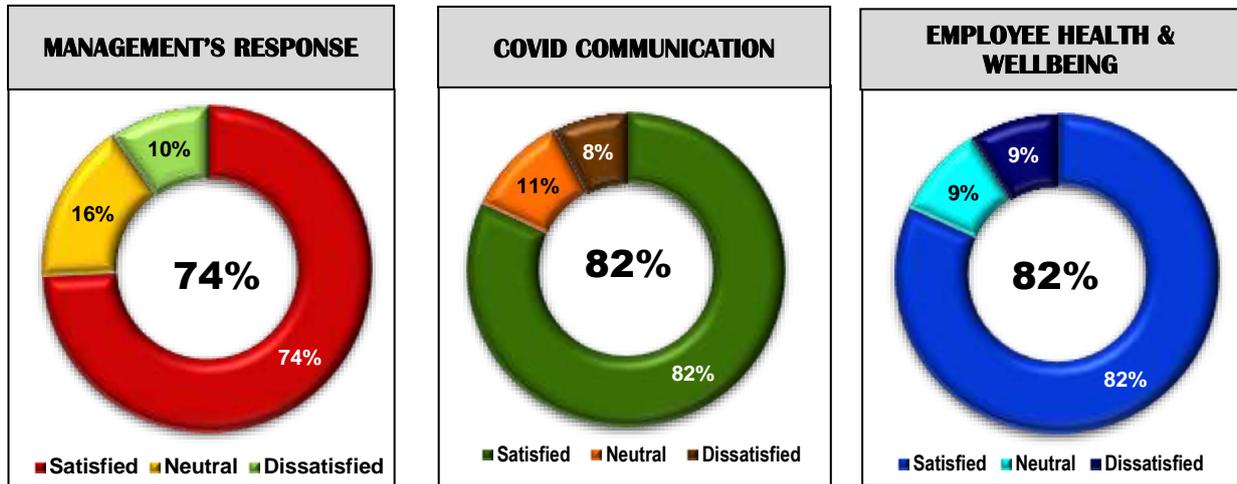
THE HIGHLIGHTS

THE COVID RESPONSE: Overall Results



- **Four out of five employees are happy with their company's and their own response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.**
- **Fewer than 10% are unhappy.**
- **Just over 10% are neither happy nor unhappy.**
- **Employers' HR practices, leadership and management/employee relations have the greatest impact on employees' responses to the Pandemic.**
- **Employees' engagement levels tend to be affected by their company's response to the Pandemic.**

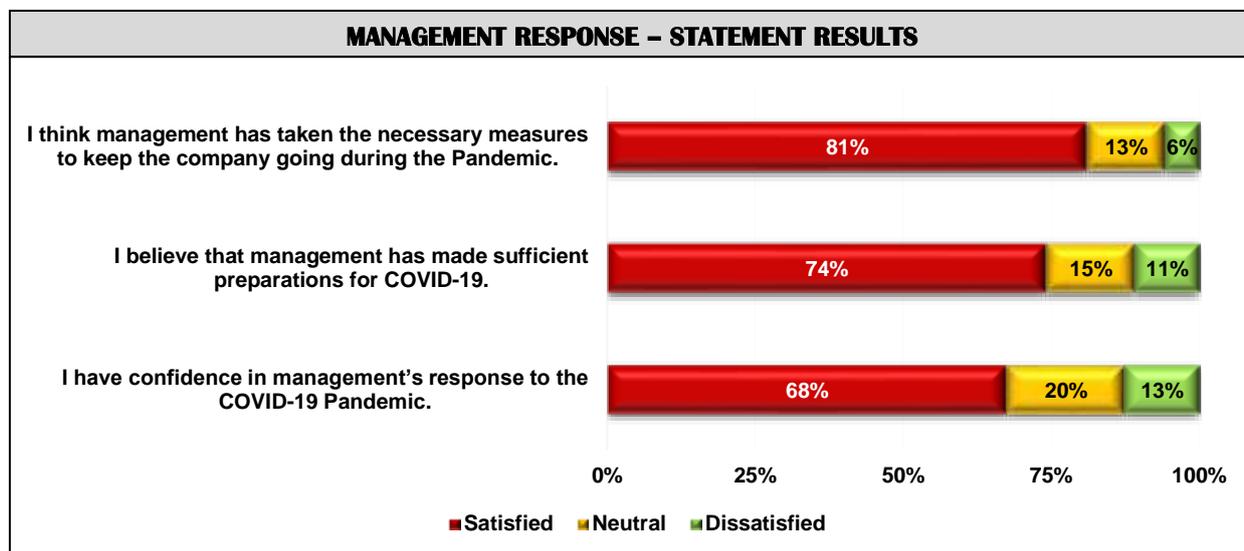
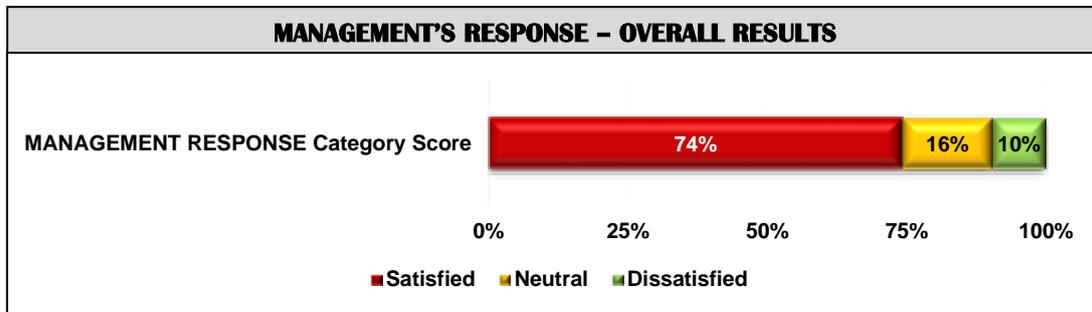
THE HIGHLIGHTS (cont'd)



- ✓ **Three out of four employees give their management high marks for their response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, 10% are not impressed, while 16% are unsure.**
- ✓ **Four out of five employees are satisfied with their company's internal communication about the Pandemic, 8% are dissatisfied, and 11% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.**
(Percentages add up to more than 100% due to rounding error.)
- ✓ **Similarly, four out of five employees feel positive about their mental health and wellbeing in the Pandemic, 9% are not positive, while the same number are neutral.**

THE RESULTS

MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE



Most employees agree that their management has taken the necessary steps to ensure business continuity during the Pandemic. Fewer than one in five don't think so.

The numbers decline somewhat when employees assess their management's preparedness for the Pandemic, with three out of four saying that management has prepared sufficiently, while about one in ten disagrees.

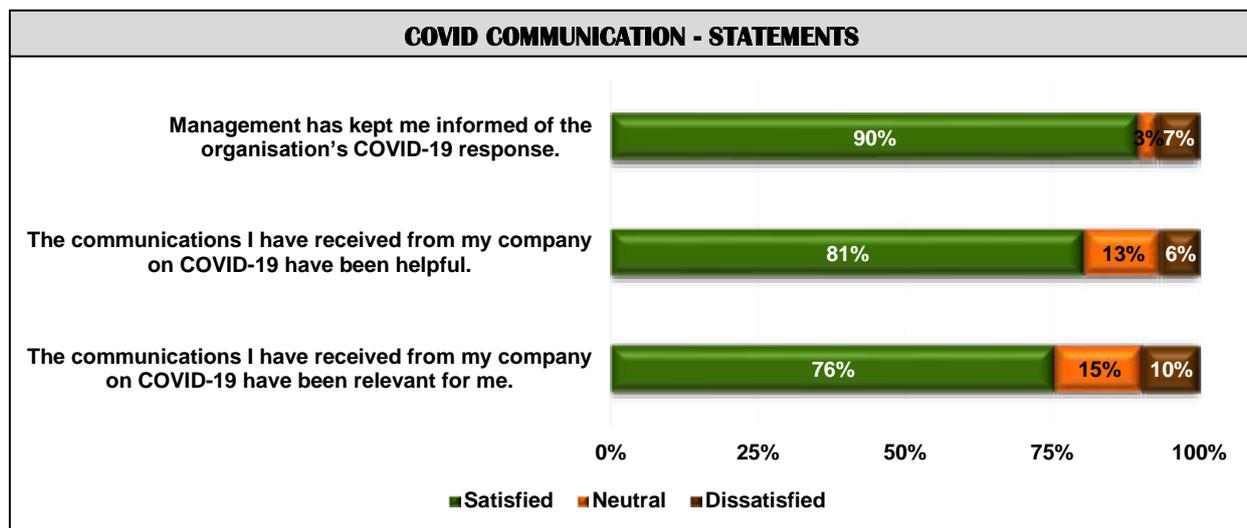
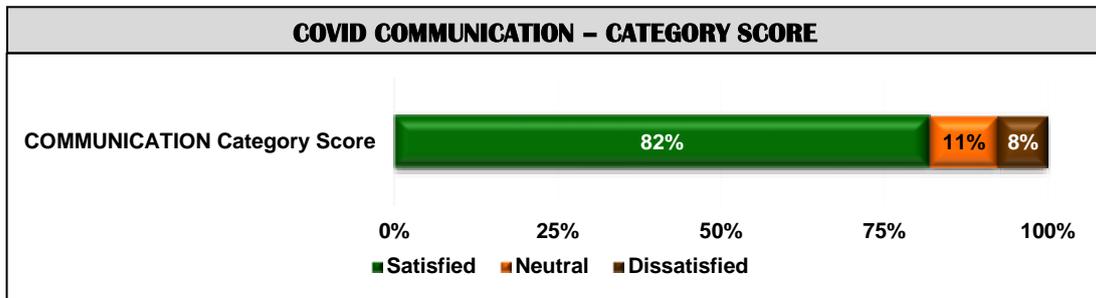
The numbers decline further when employees indicate their confidence in their management's response. Employees seem to be suggesting that their companies were more interested in business continuity than anything else.

A company's leadership, HR and communication practices were found to impact employees' assessment of its business continuity and preparation for the Pandemic, and employees' confidence in their management's response to it.

Employee engagement was also found to be affected by employees' assessment of their management's response to the Pandemic, with engagement increasing with approval of management's response.

THE RESULTS

COVID COMMUNICATION

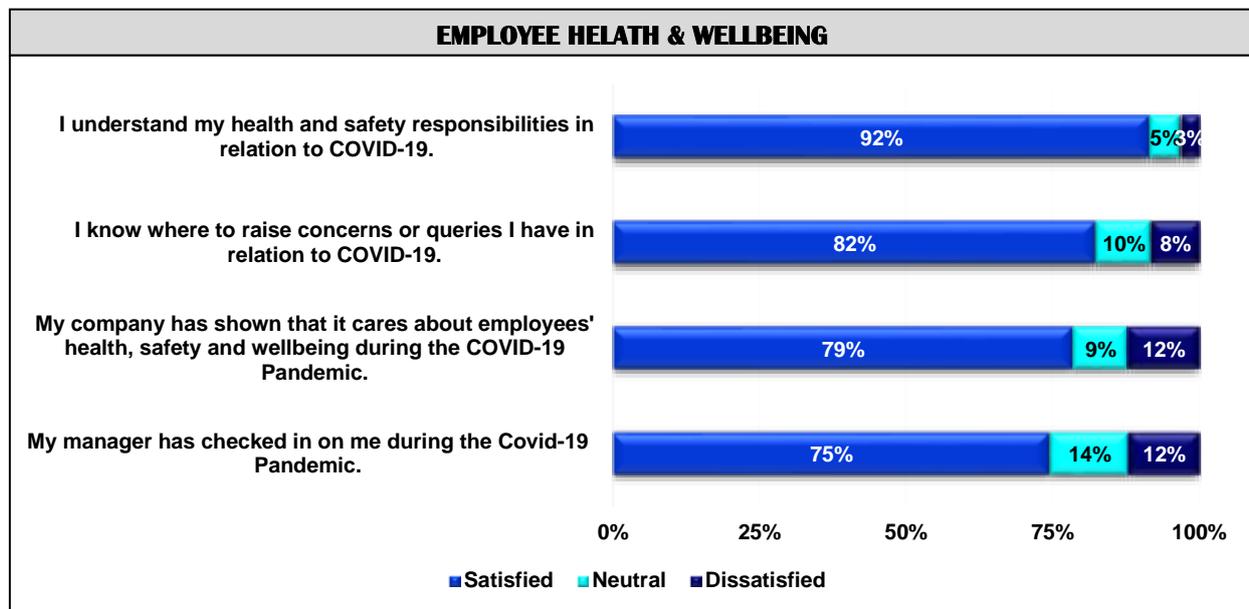
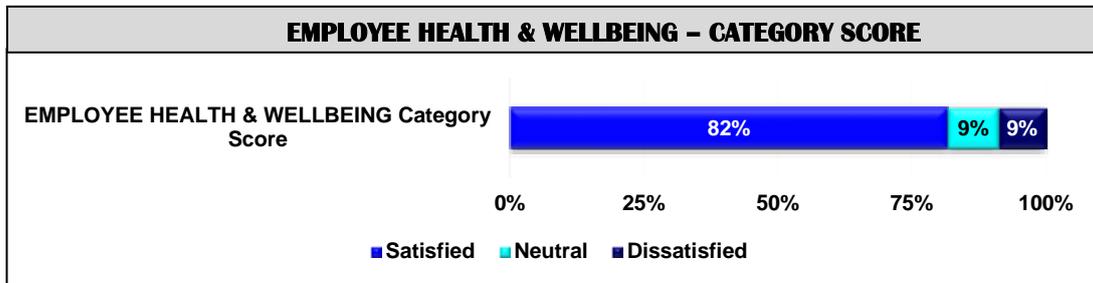


Management gets high marks for keeping employees informed about their company's response to the Pandemic and providing helpful and relevant information about the virus.

Internal communication and human resource practices were found to have the greatest impact on employees' overall assessment of their company's COVID-19 communication. However, the relevance of the communication to employees was not significantly correlated with any other company practice, suggesting that relevance of the information received was not as important as its helpfulness.

THE RESULTS

EMPLOYEE HEALTH & WELLBEING



Employees also rated their own response to the Pandemic highly, with almost all indicating that they understand their health and safety roles and responsibilities in the Pandemic. However, this statement was not found to be highly correlated with any other area assessed in our employee engagement surveys, suggesting that it neither influenced, nor was influenced by any other aspect of the employee's experience.

Four out of five employees say they know who to go to to raise their queries and concerns about the virus, and almost the same number say their company has shown that it cares about their health and wellbeing during the Pandemic. While an organization's HR practices and internal communication impacted employees' perception of their company's care for their health and wellbeing, no such relationship was found for employees' ability to raise concerns about the Pandemic, again suggesting that this may not have been seen as important by employees.

Three out of four employees reported that their manager had checked in with them during the Pandemic. Managers relationship with their employees, and the organization's leadership practices tended to determine whether or not managers checked in with employees.

COVID COMMENTS (edited)

Following are some examples of the comments employees made when asked what their company could do to improve its response to the Pandemic. All comments have been edited to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents.

Positive Responses

I believe the company has handled the pandemic well and has treated the employees fairly.

I don't think there is much more the company can do as there are numerous effective measures in place.

I believe that the company is already doing everything in its power to protect and keep all the employees safe at this time.

For me they are doing an excellent job in making sure that their employees are safe.

Communication Suggestions

Increase frequency of management check-ins.

Create an internal communication channel to counter the negative news about the pandemic in the public domain.

Employee Health & Wellbeing Suggestions

Find out each employee's needs and then see what the company can do to address them, as each person's situation during the pandemic is different.

Just continuously reach out to employees to ensure they are in a good place mentally and physically.

Put on mental health programmes as people's mental health could be suffering.

Counselling for employees affected by the pandemic.

Try to keep employees' as safe as possible and give us the tools we need to do our work.

Vaccination Suggestions

Assist employees and their immediate families with access to the vaccine.

Organise vaccinations at the work place for employees and family.

Educate employees about the need to get vaccinated.

Listen to employees' concerns about vaccination and provide information on the virus and vaccinations to avoid vaccine hesitancy.

Work-From-Home Suggestions

Allow more employees to continue working from home even after the State of Emergency.

Give more employees the option and resources to work from home during the Pandemic.

Provide assistance with Internet connectivity at home and an increased data package.

Improve technology and internal processes to make it easier to work from home.

INSIGHTS & IMPLICATIONS

Employers’ human resource management and leadership practices, as well as managers’ relationship with their employees had the greatest impact on employees’ perception of their organization’s response to the Pandemic. Specifically, organizations that provided employees with the proper environment to do their best, placed a high priority on employee health and safety, and gave them training and development opportunities, were more likely to be rated highly for their COVID response.

Similarly, organizations where employees felt the leaders could be trusted, had confidence in their decisions, and communicated their goals and objectives, were more likely to get high ratings for their COVID response.

Finally, companies in which managers and employees had mutual respect for each other, where the managers encouraged teamwork and collaboration among employees, treated them fairly and equitably, and showed genuine interest in their wellbeing, were more likely to receive high marks for their COVID response.

Perhaps not surprisingly, organizations that received high ratings for their COVID response also scored high on employee engagement.

The results of the study suggest that, in general, local organizations, to date, have done well in their response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. To continue to do well, in the eyes of their employees, organizational leaders and managers should build trust by being open and transparent with their employees, provide a safe and healthy enabling work environment, treat employees fairly, ethically and respectfully, and show genuine interest in their employees’ health, safety and wellbeing. These management practices will *redound* to the benefit of these organizations in terms of engagement levels, performance and productivity as they try to *rebound* from the effects of the Pandemic.

ABOUT QUALITY CONSULTANTS LIMITED

Quality Consultants Limited is a Caribbean Management Consulting firm specializing in organizational assessments, such as employee engagement and satisfaction surveys, culture and climate surveys, pulse surveys, and 360-degree feedback. Established in 1992, and incorporated as a limited liability company in 1998, Quality Consultants Limited provides management consulting services to clients throughout the Caribbean.

To date, we have worked with over 100 local and regional organizations across the English, Spanish and Dutch-speaking Caribbean, and have surveyed in excess of 100,000 employees. We have also executed numerous consulting projects for regional and international agencies such as the Caribbean Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Organization of American States, the International Labour Organization, and the European Union.

We believe that human beings shape the social organizations to which they belong, and are, in turn, shaped by them. Hence, our mantra is “Improving Organizations, Improving Lives.”

For further information about us, visit our website at www.quality-consultants.com.

QUALITY CONSULTANTS LIMITED

7 Lynch Drive,
Maraval,
Trinidad & Tobago

Phone: (868) 628-2750

Email: admin@quality-consultants.com

Website: www.quality-consultants.com