



BUSINESS AGILITY
INSTITUTE

COVID-19 & Business Agility

IMPACT REPORT

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Editor: Christopher Ruz



Business Agility Institute, 2020

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Table of Contents

- Key Findings..... 1
- 1 Introduction 2
- 2 Demographics 3
- 3 Findings 8
- 4 Conclusions..... 12

List of Figures

- Figure 1. Respondents by country 3
- Figure 2. Percentage of respondents by last role and employment type 3
- Figure 3. Percentage of respondents by experience level 4
- Figure 4. Percentage of respondents by number of certifications held 4
- Figure 5. Percentage of respondents by certification type..... 5
- Figure 6. Percentage of companies by size 5
- Figure 7. Percentage of companies by transformation team size 6
- Figure 8. Percentage of companies by the duration of agile and business agility transformations... 6
- Figure 9. Percentage of companies by industry 7
- Figure 10. Percentage of respondents by active employment..... 8
- Figure 11. Percentage of companies by role change..... 8
- Figure 12. Percentage of transformational roles lost (in a company) due to COVID-19 9
- Figure 13. Percentage of roles lost compared to roles gained since the end of March 2020 9
- Figure 14. Time spent in search of employment 10
- Figure 15. How has mental health changed since COVID-19..... 10
- Figure 16. Are you seeking work at the moment? 12

Key Findings

The Business Agility Institute conducted an investigation into the impacts of COVID-19 on the circumstances of Agile coaches and transformation leads, as well as the roll-on impacts upon ongoing agile transformations. Two parallel surveys collected 343 responses from across the Business Agility community. After a multi-factor variance analysis of the responses, the only clear correlation that could be drawn from the data was a link between the duration of an agile transformation and the likelihood of an organisation to retain their coaches. Specifically, organizations that had only been practicing agile for 1-2 years were almost twice as likely to have ended engagement with their coaches than those who had been engaged for 4 or more years in their transformation.

1 Introduction

The economic fallout from the global COVID-19 pandemic has been unprecedented in scope, both on an individual and broader industry level. Previously stable business opportunities have been destabilised. Organisations in the midst of experimental change have been forced to either retreat towards safe structures, or cement that change through aggressive evolution.

One of the Business Agility Institute's many goals is to help organisations and individuals learn, lead, and transform their methods of working according to the values and principles of business agility. However, in the face of sudden and unexpected upheavals in the business community, it is important to understand the impact and obstacles from COVID-19 on organizational transformations and the agile / business agility community itself.

As such, the Business Agility Institute conducted an investigation, with the aim of analysing the impact of COVID-19 on the circumstances of agile coaches, transformation leads, etc. The focus for the research was to better understand how agile transformations had been affected by the ongoing pandemic, whether coaches in the business agility community had retained or lost their engagements, and whether there were any factors influencing whether or not a coach retained their employment. The goal was to discover patterns or insights that might help those in the community who had lost jobs and livelihoods.

Over a ten week period, two parallel surveys were conducted, seeking input from agile practitioners of all certification levels, regions, and employment types. Each survey was specifically targeted at respondents depending on whether they had retained or lost their engagements over the preceding months. The two surveys consisted of either 20 or 21 questions, and jointly collected 343 confidential & anonymous responses.

In collaboration with research psychologists from the Neurotech Institute, the results of the survey shed light on the true extent of the damage caused by COVID-19 to agile coaches and transformation leads, while also leaving questions regarding how agile coaches can ensure job stability during times of turbulence.

2 Demographics

2.1 Individual Demographics

343 respondents shared their insights across both surveys (those employed and those unemployed). This broad cross-spectrum of respondents represent 47 countries, over 40 unique industries, and highly varied job titles and experience levels.

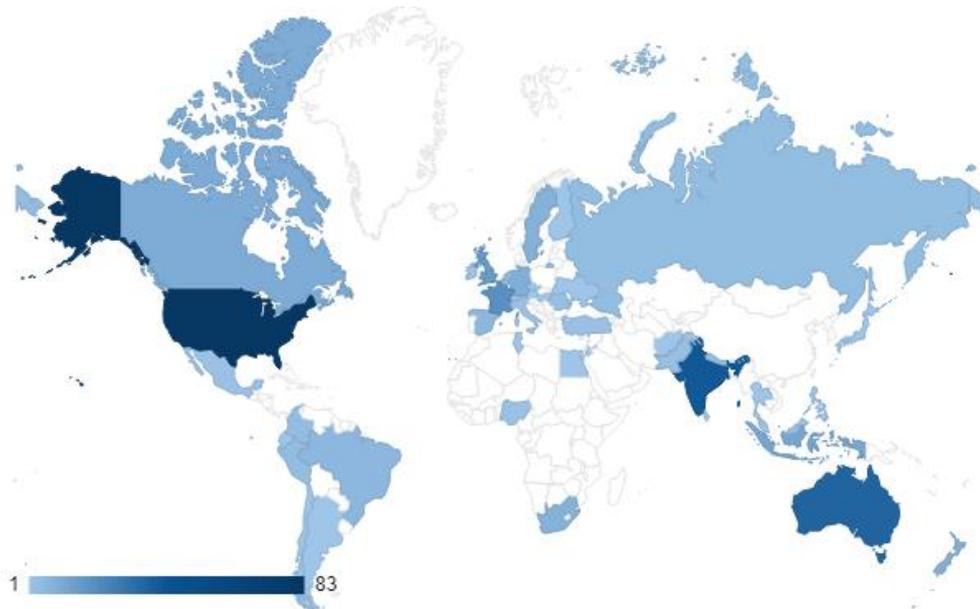


Figure 1. Respondents by country

Percentage of Respondents by Last Role and Employment Type

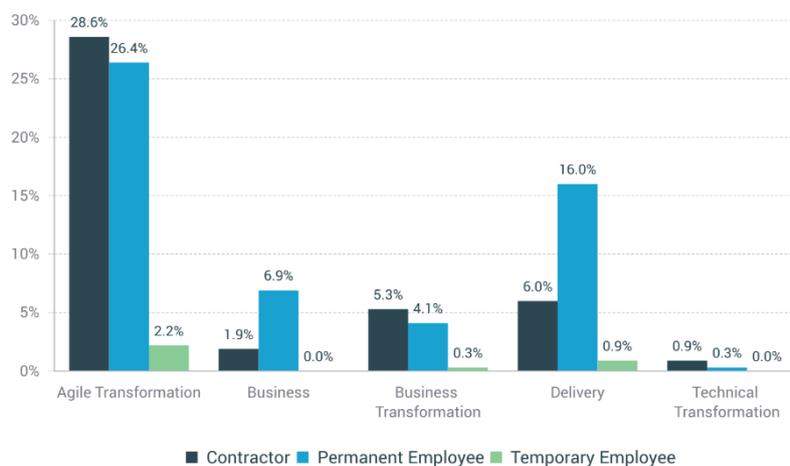


Figure 2. Percentage of respondents by last role and employment type

Percentage of Respondents by Experience Level

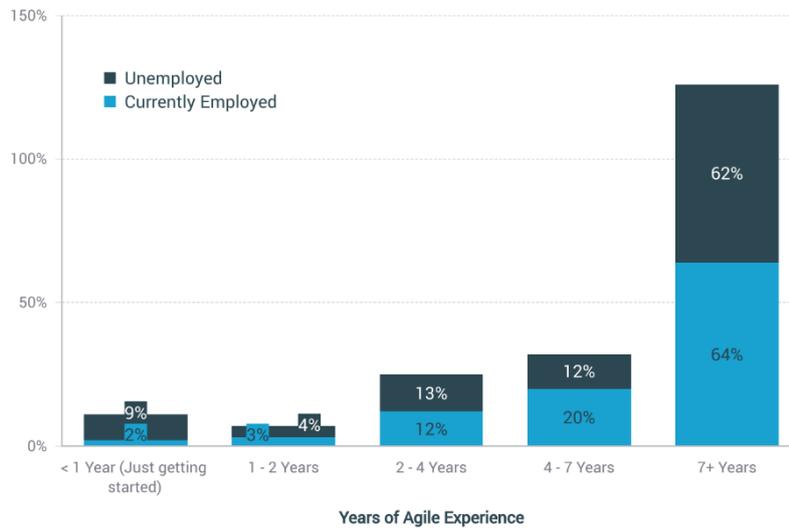


Figure 3. Percentage of respondents by experience level

Respondents came from a wide variety of business agility backgrounds, and with differing levels of experience and certification. The majority of respondents held two or more certifications, with only 14% of respondents holding no agile certification. Of those with certifications, 37% of respondents had foundational agile certifications, 27% had professional agile certifications, and the majority of the remainder were split between master level, coaching, and other certifications.

Percentage of Respondents by Number of Certifications Held

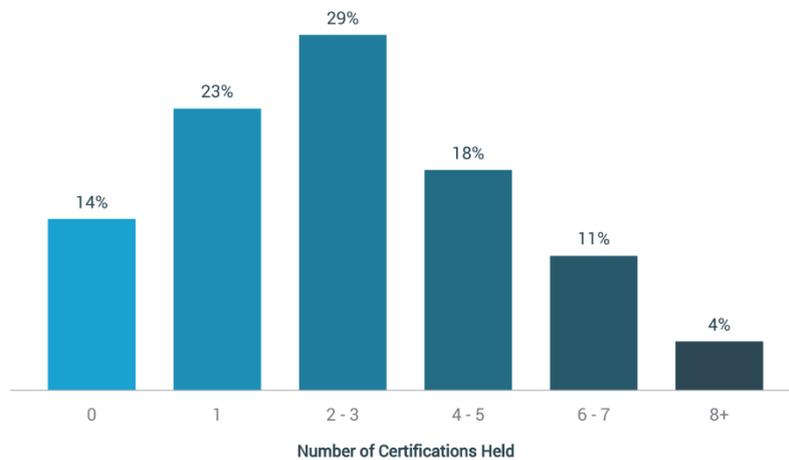


Figure 4. Percentage of respondents by number of certifications held

Percentage of Respondents by Certification Type

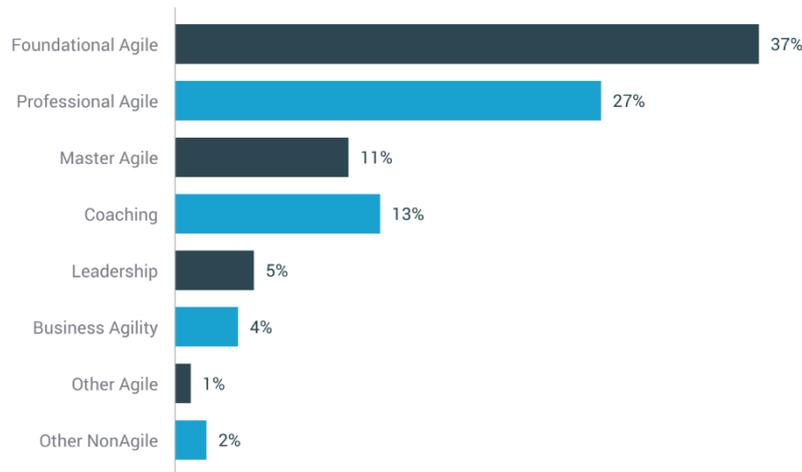


Figure 5. Percentage of respondents by certification type

2.2 Company Demographics

The majority of respondents were employed (or had most recently been employed) in large organisations, with 52% working for organisations of more than 1500 employees.

However, large organisations do not necessarily correspond with large agile teams. Approximately 61% of respondents worked in smaller transformation teams of 20 or fewer agility professionals. Only 17% were employed in teams larger than 100.

Percentage of Companies by Size

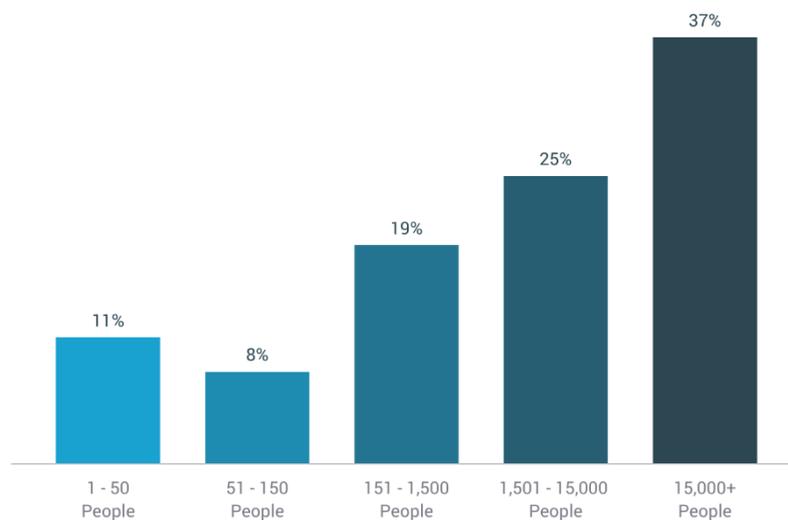


Figure 6. Percentage of companies by size

Percentage of Companies by Transformation Team Size

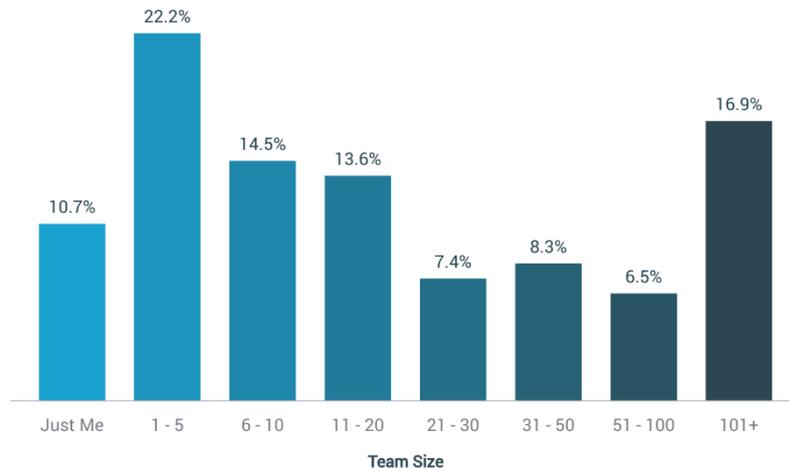


Figure 7. Percentage of companies by transformation team size

When it came to how long each respondent's organization (or most recent organization) had been practicing agile, most companies had only just started their transformation: ie, they had been engaged in business agility for less than two years. Only around 10% of respondents worked at organisations that had been engaged in transformations for four or more years.

Percentage of Companies by the Duration of Agile and Business Agility Transformations

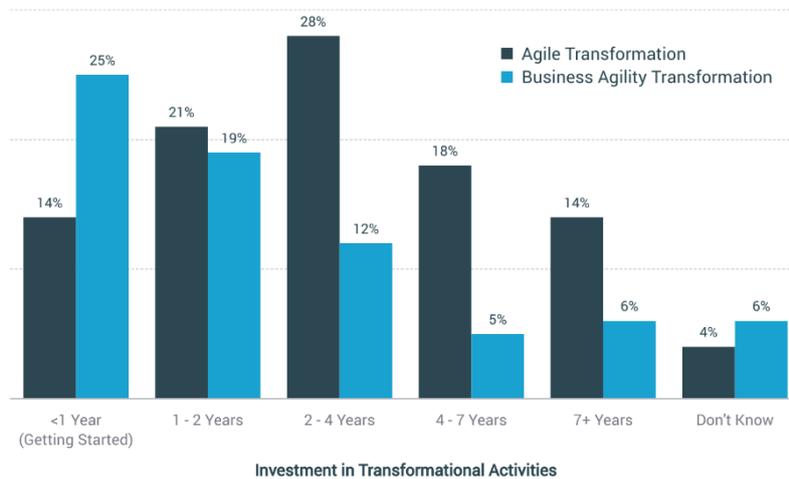


Figure 8. Percentage of companies by the duration of agile and business agility transformations

Respondent companies came from a broad range of industries. For the purpose of analysis, these were consolidated into a series of industry groupings for analysis. It should be noted that airlines and hospitality collectively made up less than 1% of respondents, so the evident impact to those industries is not represented in the analysis.

Percentage of Companies By Industry

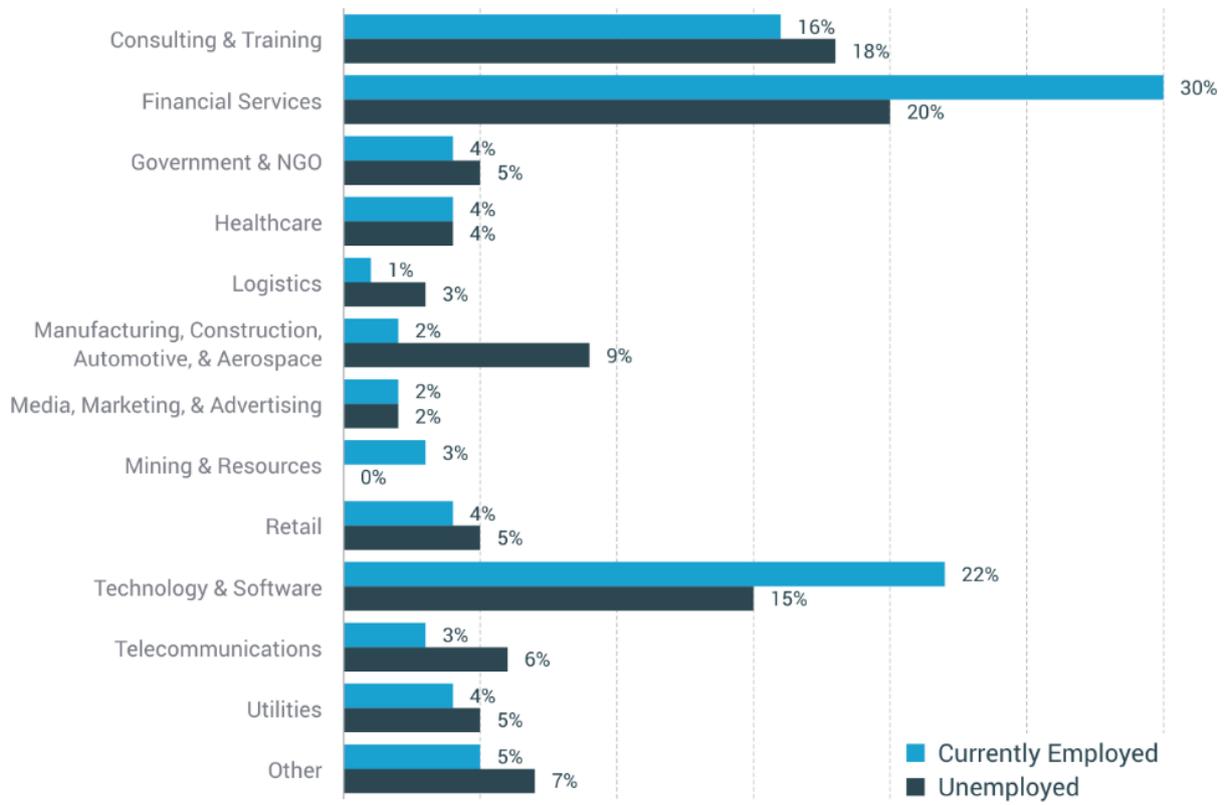


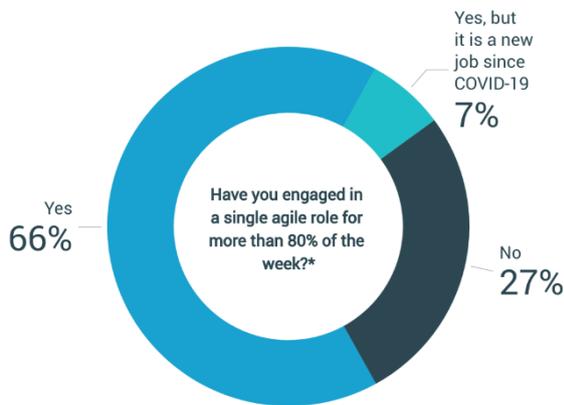
Figure 9. Percentage of companies by industry

3 Findings

3.1 Direct Impact

The first and most stark statistic gleaned from the impact investigation was that around 34% of agile coaches reported having lost employment since the beginning of the pandemic. Of those, over 50% reported that the loss of employment was as a direct result of the pandemic.

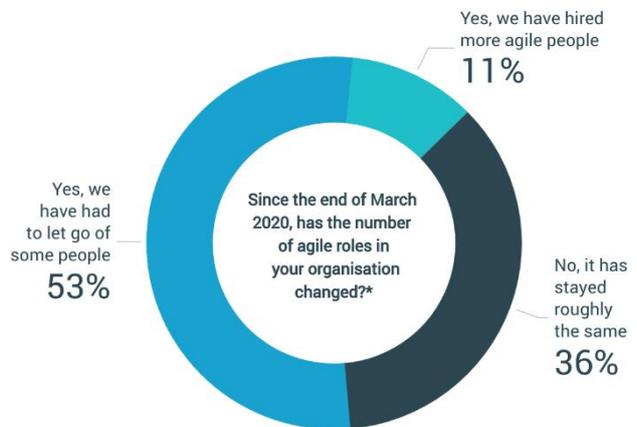
Percentage of Respondents by Active Employment



* when compared to pre-COVID-19 standard employment arrangements

Figure 10. Percentage of respondents by active employment

Percentage of Companies by Role Change



*specifically due to COVID-19

Figure 11. Percentage of companies by role change

In addition, 53% of respondents noted that their organisation had lost employees in agile roles specifically due to the impact of COVID-19 while only 11% of companies grew in that same period. This data point stresses the significance of the ongoing pandemic upon global industry regardless of size or sector. These losses were neither small nor targeted. While around a third of respondents who lost their jobs noted that they were the only business agility practitioner in their organization to lose employment (to the best of their knowledge), almost 40% of respondents said that their organization had lost half or more of their total agile coaching and transformation teams.

Percentage of Transformational Roles Lost (in a Company) due to COVID-19

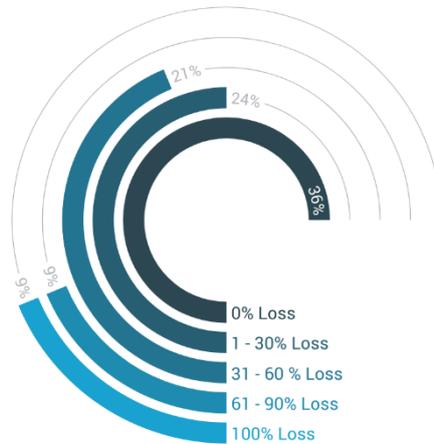


Figure 12. Percentage of transformational roles lost (in a company) due to COVID-19

Respondents, regardless of whether they were still employed or not, reported over 28,000 total job losses. The relatively small survey size provided insufficient data to extrapolate those losses across the entire agile and business agility industries, but a loose estimate works out to an average of over 80 people per company. Some small comfort can be taken from the fact that, at the same time, respondent companies hired a little over 650 agile and business agility staff.

Percentage of Roles Lost Compared to Roles Gained Since the End of March 2020

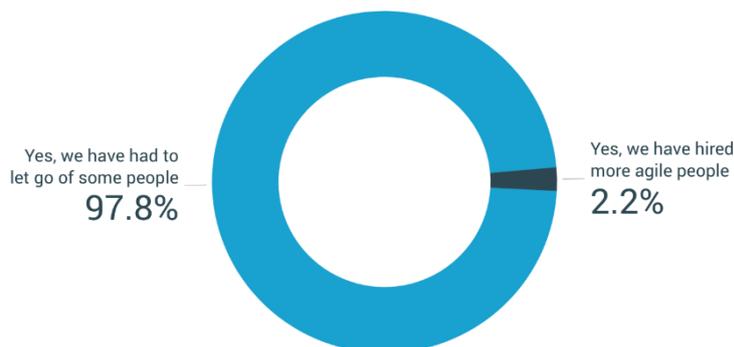


Figure 13. Percentage of roles lost compared to roles gained since the end of March 2020

Despite a gradual economic upturn since the earliest days of the pandemic, the impact of COVID-19 is yet to fully ease. A quarter of respondents who lost their employment noted that they had been unemployed for less than a month. That good news was tempered by the fact that almost 29% of unemployed respondents had been unable to find new employment in the agile or business transformation sector since the beginning of the pandemic. These numbers are striking when compared to the average time to find employment prior to the pandemic; 41% of currently

employed respondents reported taking less than a month to find their current role. On average it is taking 2-3 months longer to find work post-pandemic.

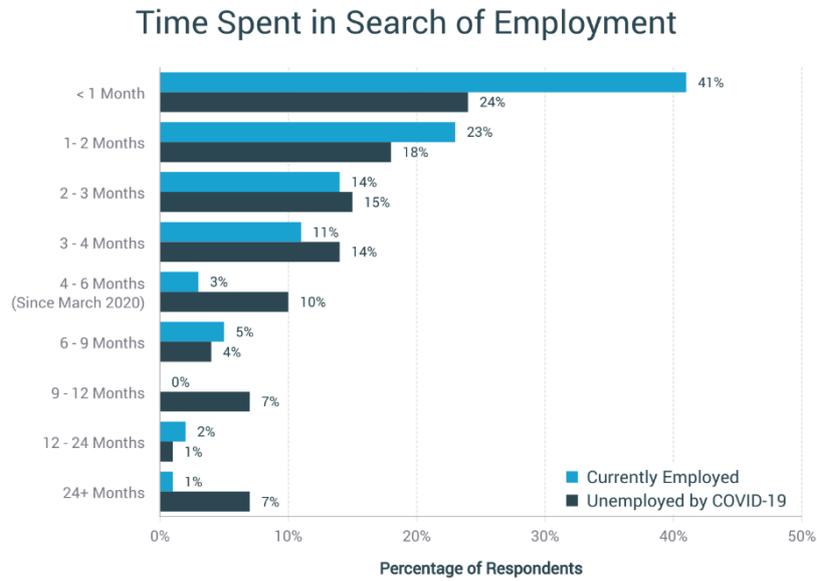


Figure 14. Time spent in search of employment

The final question asked of both sets of survey respondents was to share how their mental health had changed since COVID-19. Unsurprisingly, those who were unemployed during the pandemic experienced a decline in mental health more severe than their employed peers. However, it should also be noted that 42% of employed respondents and more than a quarter of unemployed respondents found their mental health had improved overall.

How Has Mental Health Changed Since COVID-19

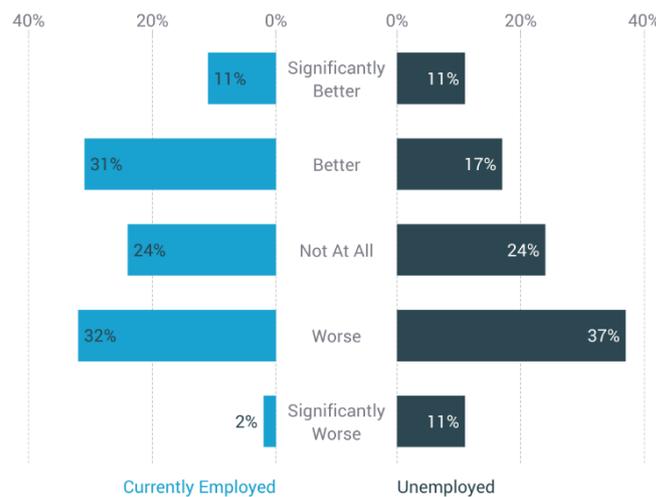


Figure 15. How has mental health changed since COVID-19

3.2 Patterns

One of the initial motivations in undertaking this research was to help those in the agile and business agility communities impacted by COVID-19. Specifically, the Business Agility Institute

hoped to identify tangible patterns that separated organisations whose transformations had stopped from those who were investing in and expanding their transformations.

Unfortunately, the high-level summary is that very few patterns were discovered in a detailed analysis of the data. After a multi-factor variance analysis to account for related survey characteristics, very few correlations or patterns remain. The only statistically significant characteristic is that organisations who have been on an agile journey for over 2 years are significantly more likely to have kept (or be hiring) agile and transformation staff post-COVID-19.

A detailed examination of respondent data suggested correlations between current employment status and the nature of contracts: permanent employees were seemingly almost twice as likely as contractors to have retained their positions. Likewise, employees who had been employed by a single organisation for four years or more were significantly more likely to still be employed, while respondents who had been with their organisation for under two years made up more than 70% of the recently unemployed.

The multi-factor variance analysis adjusted these results based on the location, experience, and circumstances of the respondent. As a consequence, many initial results were found to have no statistical significance. For example, links were established between the respondent's location and the nature of respondent's employment. This suggests that permanent agile coaches are not necessarily less likely to lose their employment. Rather, certain regions have a larger proportion of contractors as compared to permanent employees, and a disproportionate number of responses from these regions has created false relationships between data sets.

A similar lack of statistical significance was noted amongst other responses. Data regarding the size of respondent's organisations initially appeared to indicate that agile coaches were as much as 50% more likely to have become unemployed if they were previously employed by organisations of under 150 people, as compared to those in larger organisations. However, after the total number of respondents and nature of each organization was taken into account, it was deemed that there was no significant correlation to be found.

However, as mentioned above, one statistically significant indicator remained post-analysis: the length of time an organisation has been engaged in a transformation. In this case, the longer a company had been practicing business agility, the more likely they were to retain agile coaches throughout the pandemic. Those organizations who had only been practicing agile for 1-2 years were almost twice as likely to have ended engagement with coaches than those who had been engaged for 4+ years in their transformation.

Given the intent of this report, it is of interest to note that, unadjusted for multiple comparisons, respondents with more than 4 years agile experience or have worked with their employer for more than 2 years are also more likely to be engaged post-COVID-19.

No other combination of characteristics (whether permanent or contract employment, high or low salary, company size, or region) was statistically correlated to whether a company continued to engage their transformation staff.

4 Conclusions

After multi-factor variance analysis of over 340 survey responses, no statistically significant correlations were found that directly related coaches' experience, training levels, location, employment type, the size of agile transformation or the size of the company to their likelihood of retaining employment throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The one correlation that could be clearly made was between the duration of an agile transformation and the likelihood of an organisation to retain their coaches.

With half of respondents having lost work during the pandemic period, and half of those directly attributing their loss of employment to COVID-19, the importance of mutual support inside the agile and business agility community has never been more stark. Of those who lost their jobs, only 15% of respondents have since found new positions. 76% are still actively seeking work, while almost 10% - whether due to personal reasons, or on account of the economic anxiety and exhaustion associated with the pandemic - are not seeking employment at all.

If there is one ultimate conclusion to take from this impact report, it is that some economic upheavals come in waves too tall and broad to be avoided. Instead of hoping the wave will pass by, the best thing the business agility community can do in difficult times is to join together and create networks of mutual support, so that agile coaches and transformation leads stay active and ready for the return of a more stable economic landscape.

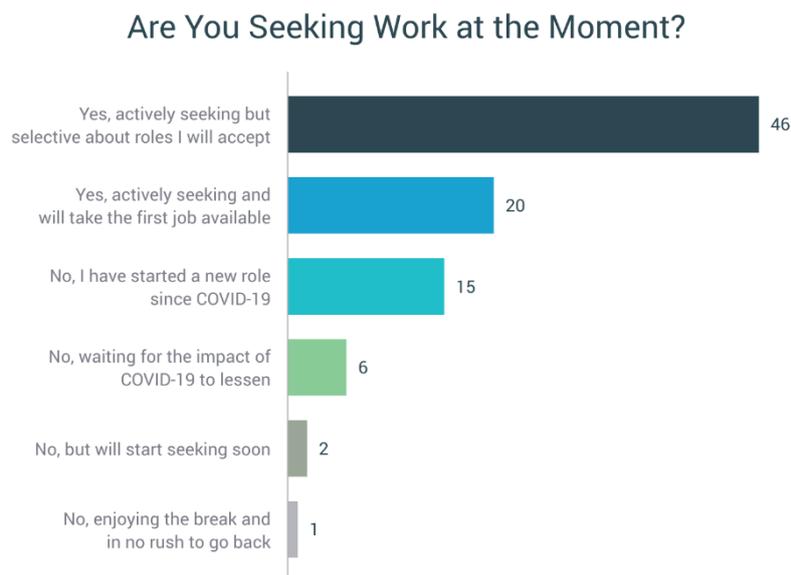


Figure 16. Are you seeking work at the moment?

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