



POST-PANDEMIC LEADERSHIP

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1 INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented serious challenges around the world, impacting both employees and leaders across various sectors. Globally, post-pandemic leadership has become a topic of interest, with a fundamental need to better grasp the shifting demands for leadership competencies. An effort was made to bring a unique Saudi viewpoint to this research study to help current and future leaders understand and better address the changing requirements of the teams they will lead.

The Post – Pandemic Leadership Report is closely linked to the Misk Foundation's Leadership Track. The findings are intended to provide knowledge to our leadership programs and have a deeper influence on our beneficiaries, who are Saudi Arabia's future leaders. Furthermore, it is part of our ongoing efforts to expand our knowledge in critical areas of interest for the Foundation and establish thought leadership.

1068
respondents
surveyed

26
senior
leaders
interviewed

351
leadership
traits
explored

22
leadership
competencies
identified

Executive summary

The scope of the research study in this report is national, covering the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It explores the methodology, findings and actions derived from an in-depth research study of post-pandemic leadership competency requirements. It employs quantitative and qualitative research methods to engage employees and senior leaders across all sectors of the business eco-system.

Methodology

A comprehensive survey was conducted on the requirements and experiences of more than 1,000 Saudi professionals. They were from various sectors, regions, and demographics. A series of focus groups and interviews (26 in total) were held with senior leaders. The findings of this research study were informed and supported by a global literature review of academic and professional literature. This methodology has guaranteed that the findings of this report are based on solid research on leadership.

Leadership competencies

This report focuses on twenty-two high level leadership competencies that are relevant to the post-pandemic period in Saudi Arabia.

<i>A Sustainability Mindset</i>	<i>Empathetic Communication</i>
<i>Agility & Flexibility</i>	<i>Excellence & Aptitude</i>
<i>Being Purpose Driven</i>	<i>Health & Wellbeing</i>
<i>Boldness</i>	<i>Innovation</i>
<i>Change Management</i>	<i>Managerial Skills</i>
<i>Collaboration</i>	<i>Positive Mindedness</i>
<i>Conservatism</i>	<i>Principled Leadership</i>
<i>Continuous Self-Development</i>	<i>Putting People First</i>
<i>Decision Making</i>	<i>Remote Leadership</i>
<i>Diversity & Inclusion</i>	<i>Resilience</i>
<i>Emotional Intelligence</i>	<i>Strategic Thinking</i>

High level outcomes

While the COVID-19 pandemic had a worldwide influence, this research study focuses on the effects and observations from a Saudi perspective. It is vital to convey the huge impact that Vision 2030's communication and adoption have had in uniting the business sector and accelerating transformation.

In summary, comprehending leadership styles and experiences during the pandemic has revealed crucial topics for all Saudi leaders to consider.

- The importance of people-centred leadership.
- Benefits of digitally transformed business practices that are game-changing.
- The ever-increasing need for more collaboration and business resilience.

Five actionable insights

All individuals who are interested in leadership can benefit from this research study. Whether they are experienced business leaders, young professionals, or designers of leadership programs. In fact, a practical mentality is required to turn the study findings into actions. To this purpose, the report contains the following five actionable insights that can be taken step by step into current working methods:

- 1** *Cultivate trust in the workplace*
- 2** *Communicate with humility*
- 3** *Learn about psychological health and wellbeing*
- 4** *Accelerate digital transformations and technology adoption*
- 5** *Build resilient leaders and organizations*

2 HIGH-LEVEL FINDINGS

The major findings of the research study are summarized in this section. Notably, Appendices A and B of this report provide a thorough analysis of the twenty-two leadership competencies, as well as a demographic breakdown. The findings are broken down into four key categories, as below:

- A - The most significant shifts:** This category summarizes the overall most notable shifts in how research participants evaluate leadership competencies.
- B - Leaders and employees:** This category details employees and senior leaders' assessments of leadership competencies.
- C - Sector differences:** This category evaluates how employees and leaders in Saudi Arabia's various sectors feel leadership competencies have evolved over time.
- D - Differences by age and gender:** This category highlights noteworthy findings across age and gender demographics, revealing some shared collective experience as well as subtle differences in leadership experiences.

Top 5 ranked competencies by importance for pre-, during- and post-pandemic

Data from a survey of 1068 people

Rank	Pre-Pandemic	During the pandemic	Post-pandemic
1	Principled Leadership	Principled Leadership	Health & Wellbeing
2	Empathetic Communication	Empathetic Communication	Principled Leadership
3	Excellence and Aptitude	Managerial Skills	Managerial Skills
4	Collaboration	Health & Wellbeing	Excellence and Aptitude
5	Boldness	Agility & Flexibility	Empathetic Communication

A. The most significant shifts

Everyone had to swiftly adapt to new ways of life and work as the pandemic spread throughout the world. This category describes the major research study findings of how these shifts print an impact on leadership in Saudi Arabia.

Since the start of COVID-19, employees across Saudi Arabia have embraced innovative ways of working.

Many people began to switch from office to remote working during the pandemic. Employees had to set up their own home offices for several months in order to adjust to the new method of working.

As the Kingdom went into the pandemic and restrictions were placed, it was unsurprising that Remote Leadership grew in importance more than any other leadership competency. However, from the peak of the pandemic to the beginning of the post-pandemic period, this competency's value decreases slightly.

Remote Leadership has a wide range of leadership implications. An important component for leaders is the digitization of work - how lead-

ers facilitate the seamless integration of digital processes into their teams' everyday workflows with agility and effectiveness. It is essential for leaders to be able to efficiently assign and manage work without meeting their employees in person, maximize the talent they have, and develop trust in their teams.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, the necessity of leadership skills such as collaboration and innovation, as well as remote leadership, has grown. New digital and disruptive working methods have had a considerable impact on leadership teams' ability to collaborate and drive innovation in the workspace.

Unlocking people's full potential requires a comprehensive approach centered on their wellbeing

When it comes to the wellbeing of the team, people-centered leadership has been more vital since before the pandemic. Leaders must be aware of the physical and mental health implications of work, but they must also have emotional intelligence and empathy in order to successfully manage and communicate with their teams.

According to survey findings, employees during the post-pandemic period value leadership competencies like Health & Wellbeing, Princi-

pled Leadership, and Empathetic Communication more than ever.

As per senior leaders interviewed, it was mentioned that they have a greater chance to engage honestly with their employees by focusing on their wellbeing. For this, they would be rewarded with the commitment and excellence of a high-performing group of people whose essential human needs are addressed and respected. So that they may thrive professionally through their work.

Health & Wellbeing
makes the **2nd** biggest
jump in importance
out of all **22** traits

Principled Leadership

2nd of 22

in overall importance

**Empathetic
communication**
ranks **5th** out of **22** in
overall importance.

Dealing with and anticipating crises are seen as key and lasting leadership competencies.

As a response to the pandemic, many business's ability to handle crises and remain resilient are now being scrutinized. Lessons from the pandemic and best practices must be followed if we are to be ready for future challenges, both anticipated and unexpected.

In fact, senior leaders consistently highlighted Resilience as one of the most important leadership competencies to have gained prominence in the wake of the pandemic. Fast adaptability, decision-making, and crisis resolution were cited by interviewees in their responses to questions.

Agility & Flexibility
makes the **3rd** biggest
jump in importance
out of all **22** traits

Resilience ranks as
one of the most frequently
mentioned leadership
competencies highlighted
in interviews

Change Management
makes the **5th** biggest
jump in importance
out of all **22** traits

As we emerge from the pandemic, it is increasingly crucial for leaders to be guided by a purpose and vision.

Cultivating the ability to lead with a purpose and an eye towards the future is an important cluster of leadership competencies that are closely linked. According to the results of the survey, competencies like A Sustainability Mindset and Diversity & Inclusion have gained significant credibility.

Employees expect their leaders to be accountable, committed to a vision and purpose that extends beyond profit and survival, and to con-

duct business with integrity and sustainability for the benefit of future generations.

Several leaders have emphasized the positive energy that comes from being part of a team with "a common goal and a shared destination" in interviews. In this regard, many have cited Vision 2030 as the primary influence on their individual and their organization's contributions to a larger goal.

From the period "during the pandemic" to "post-pandemic", A Sustainability Mindset showed the largest growth in importance

From the period "during the pandemic" to "post-pandemic", Diversity & Inclusion showed the 2nd largest growth in importance

A Sustainability Mindset was one of the most frequently mentioned competencies by leaders in interviews.

B. Leaders and employees and how their experiences compared

This category examines senior leaders' unique perspectives and compares them to the employees they oversee using survey data. While less experienced employees do not have decades of senior leadership wisdom to shape their views, senior leaders' perspectives differ significantly from those of the people they manage in today's world.

Leaders have spoken out about how the pandemic has taught them to be more patient and empathetic with their employees, as well as more open to new ideas and adapt development of resilience-based competencies. A further discussion with peers and coaches may be necessary in light of these findings.

Leaders and employees had overlapping views on the importance of leadership traits during and post-pandemic

This table highlights the leadership competencies showing the largest changes in importance since pre-pandemic alongside the highest ranked competencies post-pandemic, split by leaders and employees. (Data is taken from a survey of 1068 people and 26 interviews with leaders)

Largest changes in importance from "pre-pandemic" to "post-pandemic"		Highest ranked competencies post-pandemic	
Leaders	Employees	Leaders	Employees
Resilience	Remote Leadership	Collaboration	Health & Wellbeing
Collaboration	Health & Wellbeing	Agility & Flexibility	Principled Leadership
A Sustainability Mindset	Agility & Flexibility	Putting People First	Managerial Skills
Health & Wellbeing	A Sustainability Mindset	Resilience	Excellence & Aptitude
Remote Leadership	Change Management	Strategic Thinking	Empathetic Communication

Unique findings from the senior leaders' perspective

Boldness is a necessary characteristic of leaders – yet when used appropriately, it enables leaders to form the strongest bonds with their employees.

Before the pandemic, boldness was viewed as a crucial leadership competency for leaders, but it has declined in importance for employees, who value it less in their future expectations than they did prior to the pandemic.

It may seem obvious that a senior leader needs to be bold in a crisis, and some sectors, such

as healthcare workers, found Boldness become more essential during the pandemic. Employees have strongly said that, in the aftermath of the pandemic, they are drifting away from the need for assertive and hierarchy-driven leadership, which has declined in comparison to other competencies.

Leaders should keep this in mind while weighing the need of being bold and making swift choices when confronted with a crisis versus making sure their employees needs are met. Maintaining high levels of team morale

and productivity will require finding the perfect balance between these two factors. Achieving this balance means leaders must demonstrate empathy in their communication; always keeping the needs of their teams in mind.



While everything has changed, leaders have been put into a position where they must rely on their own expertise and existing skillset to handle new challenges.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of effective leadership. Where decision-making and crisis management are within the purview of leaders. Those competencies have been put to the test in a variety of ways through the pandemic and the post-pandemic times. In which we now find ourselves.

Some leaders mentioned Saudi Vision 2030 in interviews, indicating that it had already encouraged them to consider how to manage the risks and opportunities of significant challenges. As a result, leaders reacted calmly to the pandemic rather than fearfully.

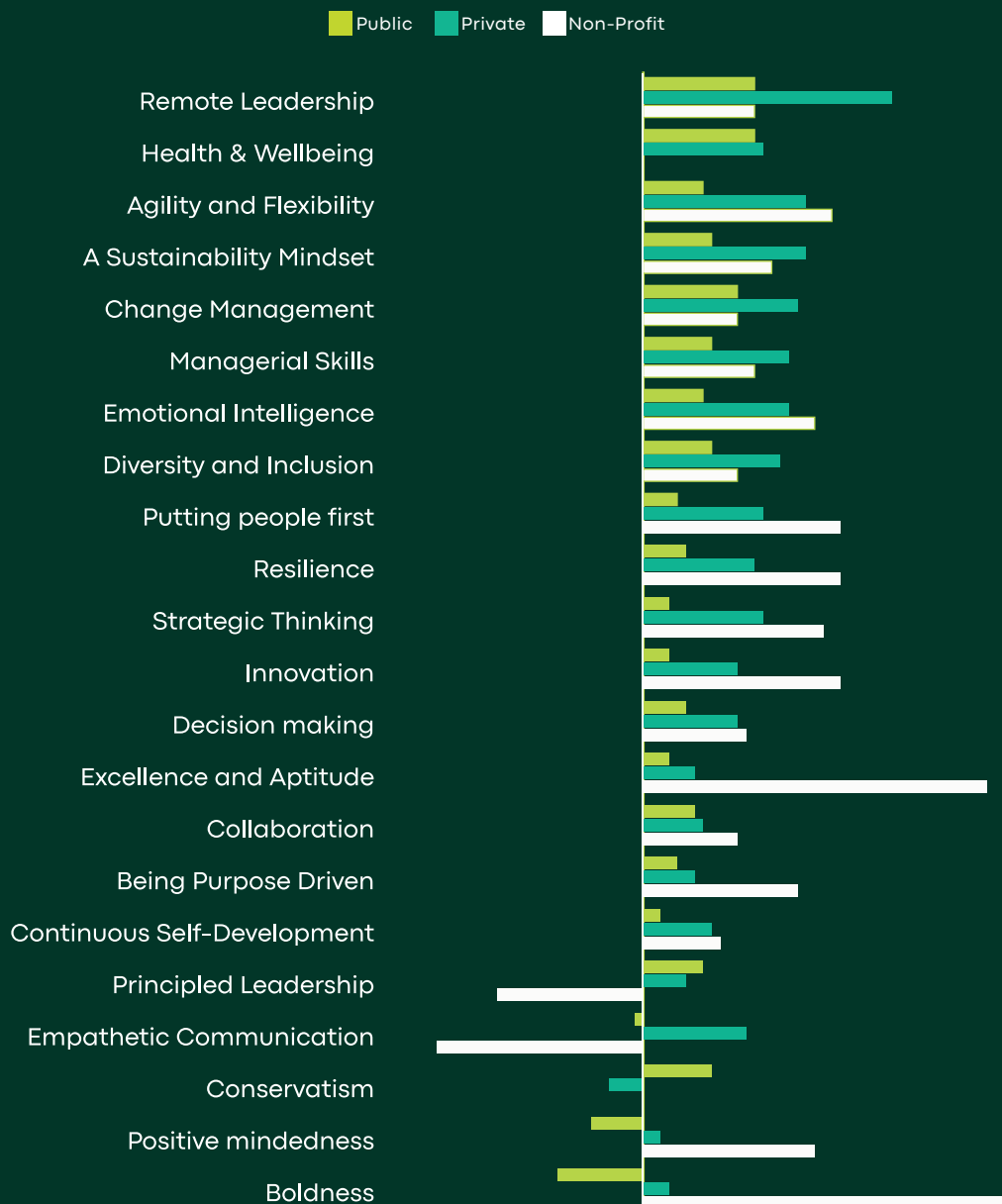
C. How sectors differed

Organizations experienced significant disruptions strategically and operationally due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, different sectors perceived this effect differently because they were already operating within their own set of challenges and standards. The main research findings on how leadership demands were affected across several sectors in Saudi Arabia are presented below.

Different sectors placed varying importance on leadership traits

This graph shows how employees in different sectors described the changes in importance of leadership competencies between pre- and post-pandemic periods. Positive (bar to the right) indicates an increased importance.

(Data from a survey of 1068 people)



Key trends across Sectors

Public sector findings

Public sector organizations, on the whole, felt less pressure to change their leadership styles than private sector organizations.

Public sector employees were less likely than private sector employees to feel compelled to alter their leadership styles because of the pandemic's widespread consequences.

When it comes to delivering crucial services, this may reflect a preference for adhering to tried-and-true methods where market rivalry is less of a factor than it is in the for-profit sector. The sector's progress toward Vision 2030 may also be a contributing factor to the more noticeable changes and advancements that have already taken place.

The pandemic has been a stimulus for dynamic and flexible leadership in the Public sector, with a focus on coping with change, and succeeding through it.

As a direct consequence of the pandemic, public sector leadership has become more dynamic and adaptable, with an emphasis on dealing with change and thriving through it.

Change Management as a leadership competency is becoming more important among public sector personnel.

New forms of working including remote and hybrid working, as well as digital collaboration have been adopted by the public sector. Furthermore, leaders who are able to guide their organizations through crises and transformation are of equal significance.

As a response, public employees value active rather than passive management styles, especially among those who can take the initiative and provide managerial influence into teams. Employees in the public sector are seeing less value in the old-school leadership competencies of domination and boldness.

Public sector employees are leaving the pandemic with a newfound emphasis on Health & Wellbeing.

People-centered leadership and a comprehensive approach to wellbeing were highly valued early in the pandemic. Employees' emphasis on health and wellbeing increased substantially during the height of the pandemic, but it has since decreased drastically as employees in the public sector enter the post-pandemic period.



Private Sector findings

The Private sector was more reactive than the Public sector in how it adapted its leadership response to COVID-19.

Throughout the pandemic, we have seen variations in leadership adaptation across sectors. The public sector tended to remain with tried-and-true leadership methods throughout the pandemic. While the private sector has shown a more significant shift in how they see leadership.

appears that private sector organizations are being expected to adhere more methods. This can be seen in the statistics, as 18 of the 22 leadership competencies have shown a higher change in relevance among private sector employees than among their public sector peers.

In light of drastically shifting business dynamics that may not be affecting the public sector. It



Non-Profit sector findings

When compared to other sectors, non-profit organizations displayed a particular trend.

Non-profit organizations (NPOs) were renowned for adhering to a particular pattern that was separate from both private and public sector organizations. Respondents as a whole put a lot of attention on attributes like high performance, excellence, boldness, and positive thinking, while putting significantly less emphasis on traits like principled leadership and empathetic communication.

This is likely related to needs that NPOs have. For example, principled leadership and

empathetic communication may already be commonplace and thus not be perceived as urgently needed. Employees in the young and expanding sector, on the other hand, are more focused on establishing and succeeding than in more established organizations due to the sector's young and growing nature. The pandemic's disruption is likely to be significantly more severe for companies that did not have the same level of stability prior to the outbreak of COVID-19.

After the pandemic, NPOs are focusing on bold leadership, quality, and being purpose-driven.

Since COVID-19, NPOs have placed a high importance on leadership competencies defined by excellence, aptitude, and competence. In a nutshell, NPOs will see the greatest improvement in their employees' skills when their leaders adopt and embody high performance and activity.

As NPOs emerge out the pandemic, strategic and purpose driven leaders are in high demand. Due to the peak of the pandemic, there has been a noticeable change in these two competencies. It is now more important than ever for leaders to be able to anticipate the future and act effectively.

Boldness is the leadership competency which is both highest growing and of most importance for NPO employees

Excellence & Aptitude

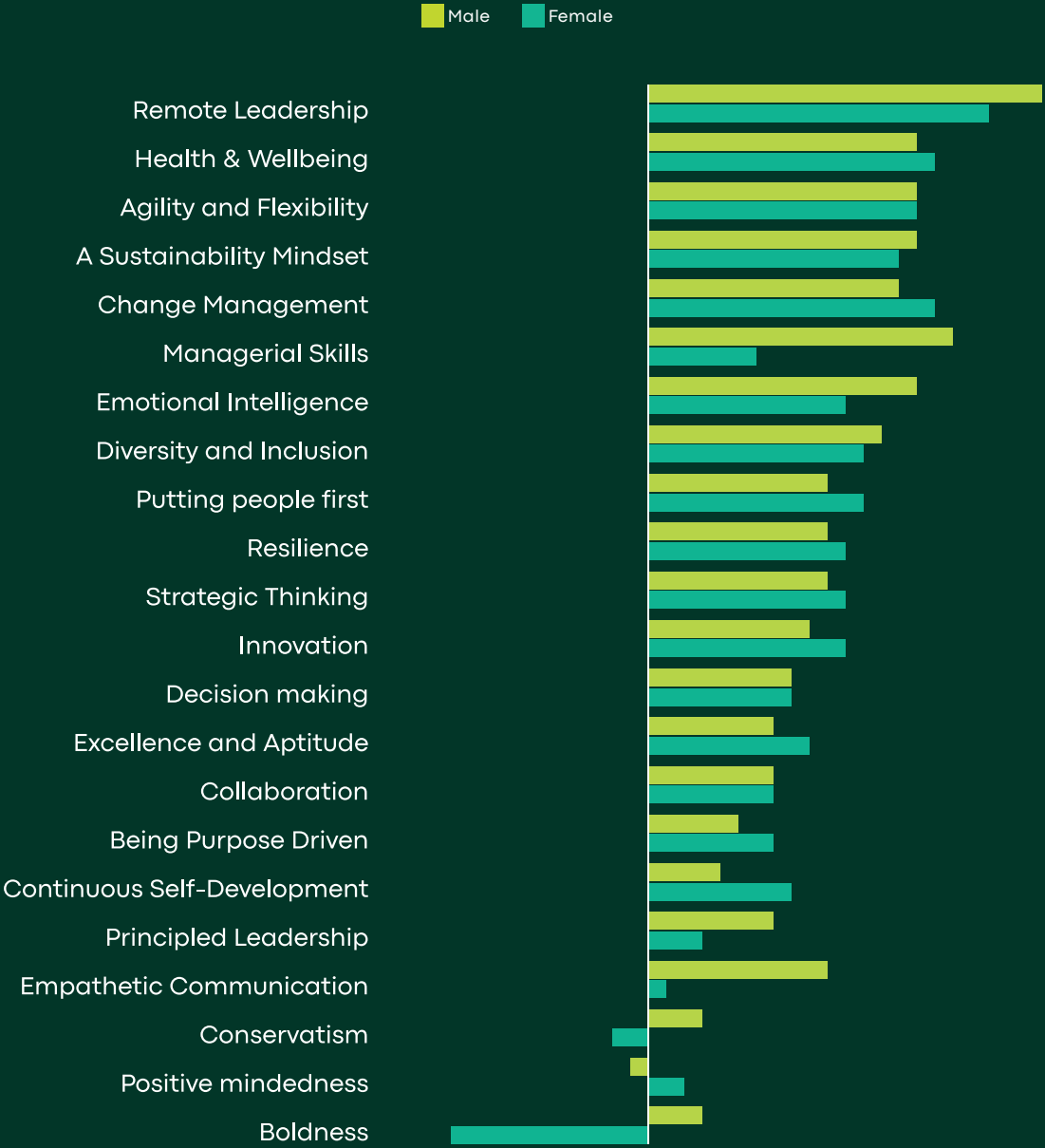
2nd of 22

in overall importance for NPO employees

In the Non-Profit sector, there has been a slight shift away from valuing Empathetic Communication, especially in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic.

Changes in importance between pre- and post-pandemic periods by gender.

Positive indicates an increased importance.
Data from a survey of 1068 people



D. Differences by age and gender

The impact of COVID-19 on professional life across many areas of society will be mirrored by the research findings. Leadership competencies have risen in prominence. This is discussed further below in the context of Saudi Arabia.

Managerial Skills

1st of 22

in importance for 45+
year olds
(other age groups ranked
Health & Wellbeing top)

Remote Leadership is
by far the highest
growing competency
in importance for
31-44 year olds

Conservatism ranks as
least important, and
2nd most diminishing
competency, for
women

Principled Leadership

1st of 22

in importance for
males

Wisdom of experience

Leaders who are able to see the future with purpose and vision are sought after by more senior employees. When it came to valuing their leaders, employees over the age of 45 tended to favour leaders who could see beyond the immediate needs of the business and instead focused on the bigger picture. This suggests that people over the age of 45 appreciate leaders that put sustainability, diversity, and inclusion, as well as strategic thinking, at the top of their priority list.

Accordingly, for Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 to be a long-term success, it is essential that the country's leaders have the competence to see the big picture. Senior leaders are aware of this, as well as the fact that the pandemic has sparked the development of long-term competencies like Strategic Thinking, which are now more comprehensive than they were before.

Comparing and contrasting the more experienced and less experienced employees

The study's participants, both the youngest and oldest age groups, place a high value on leaders who are adept in a wide range of competencies.

The leadership competencies that connect most strongly with 18 to 30-year-olds and individuals over 45 are those that relate to successful and active professional involvement as a leader. Managerial Skills, Excellence and Aptitude are leadership competencies that describe how capable, confident, and accurate leaders can carry out management and professional responsibilities. These are competencies that were highly valued by these groups both before the pandemic and throughout the post-pandemic time for these people.

In the post-pandemic period, younger employees have been seen to favour leaders that encourage continuous self-development and progress, with an emphasis on sharpening and developing their own abilities via education and learning.

For older employees, the surprise and excitement of observing an abundance of talent and brilliance in their teams, as seen by the activity and initiative of younger employees working through the new area of a worldwide pandemic, has been highlighted.

Since COVID-19, leadership competencies associated to excellent performance have increased in relevance for senior individuals, in sharp contrast to their younger colleagues. These competencies in a leader are now much more significant than they were before.

The pandemic created a new bridge between older and younger leaders, as well as less experienced employees. The following generation is now better positioned to create conditions for future Excellence & Aptitude. Thus, they will be enhanced and remained in the leadership competencies of the Kingdom for the next generation.

Key findings from mid-level experienced employees

When it comes to leadership, employees between the ages of 31 and 44 place a high priority on being able to adapt to and flourish in ever-changing situations. Whilst also valuing new ways of working. Agility & Flexibility, as well as Change Management and Resilience, are strongly linked to these competencies.

Aside from the fact that leaders must be able to allow remote working, this is also a matter of how they accept the new soft skills that may be gained by working and communicating online rather than face-to-face. This generation has a balance of competing work and personal

requirements, which necessitates the use of remote people leadership, technology innovation, and new kinds of engagement.

Leadership that embraces new and creative methods of working and cooperating has always been coveted by mid-level experienced employees. The most significant development for this group since the beginning of the pandemic has been the implementation of Remote Leadership, that enables successful remote working environments.

Key findings that reflect gender differences and similarities

Females and younger professionals are increasingly empowered.

Female and junior employees have turned away from traditional and conservative modes of leadership. Traditional modes of leadership refer to management styles which are hierarchical and maintain a strong power distance between leaders and subordinates. In these traditional modes of leadership, females and younger people may have often felt unempowered.

The pandemic, following on from the profound social changes that have taken place in recent years, has precipitated a large shift in how these two demographics have experienced professional life. An emerging key finding is that there has been a strong shift away from valuing bold, assertive, and conservative leadership approaches across the course of the pandemic.

Most male and female employees place a high importance on innovative ways of working.

There are small differences between male and female employees when it comes to how they want to work. The results of this study reveal that both males and females enjoy the move to Remote Leadership. It encompasses distant and hybrid ways of working, as well as remote people management and new ways of collaborating through innovative digital methods.

In the post-pandemic time, female employees have discovered that innovation and collaboration are essential leadership competencies that rank among their most significant values in leaders. In addition, female's pre- and post-pandemic assessments of leadership competencies showed the highest change in

relevance due to these new methods of working. females over the age of 30 are the only demographic in the findings set where Remote Leadership is regarded higher as a leadership competency today than it was at the peak of COVID-19. As we have emerged from the pandemic peak into the post-pandemic time, it has diminished in relevance for all other demographic groups.

Similar patterns appear when it comes to male employees. In terms of how employees regard leadership, the most significant increase in importance was shown in the competencies connected to innovative methods of working. males, on the other hand, began to notice this

difference very immediately after the outbreak. New methods of working may have a long-term impact on certain males and result in significant shifts in their professional lives. According to findings from the survey, the value of Remote Leadership has already decreased since the pandemic time has ended.

People-centered and empathetic leadership competencies are valued by both males and females.

Both females and males agree that it is critical for leaders to show greater empathy and understanding for the needs of their employees, both in terms of work and personal life. Leaders who prioritize their employees' health & well-being, communicate openly and empathetically, and emphasize the health and wellbeing of their employees are preferred among male and female responders.

There are also gender disparities in how these leadership competencies are seen and appreciated. It was clear from the research study

This increasing freedom and flexibility in working arrangements has been praised by females from the beginning of the pandemic. It may be considered as a more durable, permanent change in their judgment of leadership competencies.

that females already valued these leadership competencies before the pandemic, and they value them much more now

However, the pandemic changed male's attitudes toward empathetic and employee-oriented leadership, which had previously been less valued. As a consequence of that, males have placed an increased emphasis on these competencies. So recently they consider their evaluations highly for nurturing such competencies.

"Having leaders who can communicate at a personal and emotional level with people around them in the organization was important."

- Senior leader in a government department

"This pandemic has made us realize how to be more sophisticated in how we manage business within the organization, how to achieve efficiency, change traditional perceptions about work, and foster a leadership culture within the organization to motivate its employees (specifically those of the young generation) to complete the journey of achievement and realize the vision of the organization."

- Senior leader in the private sector

3 ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS

1

Cultivate trust in the workplace

2

Communicate with humility

3

Learn about psychological health & wellbeing

4

Accelerate digital transformations & technology adoption

5

Build resilient leaders & organizations

1. Cultivate trust in the workplace

All individuals are aware of the sudden movement toward home and hybrid work that occurred during and after the pandemic.

Before COVID-19, the physical presence has played a great role in managing and leading businesses. Meaning, being physically with the team members was viewed as proof of work delivery and efficiency. It was necessary for leaders to adapt the way they accomplish goals via employees in light of the constraints on movement, which were imposed.

For this crucial transition in leadership and management to take place, employees had to be trusted to do their responsibilities and meet the organization's targets no matter where they were or how much oversight they were receiving at the time. For this method of team management and leadership, a number of hurdles had to be overcome, among them the need for improved methods of communication and the acquisition of new skills and tools.

This change in working methods has a wide range of effects on different sectors, with some flourishing and others struggling to adapt. That being said, there is a general appreciation for the different leadership style that was required to support and train team members and students who were working and learning remotely. In order to do this, leaders have to develop leadership and management styles that prioritize employee empowerment, responsiveness to their needs, and a focus on achieving specific goals in a spirit of mutual commitment.

Personal characteristics such as caring and honesty, as well as external factors such as sharing information and establishing trust, all contribute to trust. Building trust-based connections and cultures will be crucial for corporate leaders and employees in the future, regardless of how the team performs.

"I learned a lot from my team during the pandemic. I discovered unique talented individuals, and based on that, I started to empower them, strengthen their talents, and assign them tasks that match their skills. For example, one employee who demonstrated creativity, I started to empower them and utilize their talents in internal and external communication with clients. As for those with outstanding relationship management skills, I started assigning them tasks I had never given them before the pandemic."

- Senior leader with expertise across the private and public sectors

Actions to cultivate trust in the workplace

CEO and leadership team	Trainers and leadership program designers	Early career professionals
High level actions for your Board level people plan	Specific learning goals and objectives	Actions you can take individually
<p>Establish the highest priority features of trust* within your organizational culture that enable trust to be cultivated in your people and teams. Each organization's blend of these features needs to be created purposefully to consistently create the conditions to cultivate trust. In the first instance, undertake a culture measurement exercise (e.g., Barrett Values Centre tools) to understand and seek alignment with employee needs and organizational goals, which will identify the areas of strength, alignment and opportunity.</p> <p>Note - According to the Trust Matrix, created by Stephen Covey (Speed of Trust) and adopted by Richard Barrett (creator of the Barrett Model, author of The Values Driven Organization) there are 12 key features that build a trusting environment – Caring, Transparency, Openness, Honesty, Fairness, Authenticity, Skills, Knowledge, Experience, Reputation, Credibility and Performance.</p>	<p>In addition to general courses on managing people, leaders in Saudi Arabia could benefit from the following learning goals:</p> <p>Learning goal - mastering the skills of digital leadership through the following leadership objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To learn how to quickly and effectively instil trust in times of urgent and sustained crisis with digital collaboration and communication tools and platforms. ● To master the art of empowered delegation in the absence of physical meetings and presence. 	<p>Communicate your individual needs openly, honestly and continually with your manager and employees by agreeing a structure against which you can complete a regular line-management discussion.</p> <p>Be curious and learn about your own values and character and their application in your day-to-day work life, to enable you to be your best, authentic self at all times.</p>

2. Communicate with humility

The pandemic has had tremendous influence on people's work arrangements, as well as their education, health care, and daily routines. There is a genuine empathy among leaders of the challenges faced by employees in adapting to a constantly shifting environment.


Holistic leaders have acknowledged the value of their abilities and style in caring for employees in all aspects of their lives, such as their family and social conditions. Regardless of those who are content with an agreed-upon employee value offer.

Empathetic Communication has been highly regarded by leaders who have shown this competency of leadership. Leaders have indicated a commitment to maintain this competency beyond the pandemic. With empathy, you do not just think about what you want to say; you think about what you really want to say and how you want to say it.

There is evidence of increasing customer and community involvement and cooperation during the pandemic period, with the genuine purpose of improving service, becoming more efficient, and speeding up digital working methods. As a result, authenticity in communication may be seen both within and outside of the organization.

The workplace environment is undergoing rapid change as a result of youth appointments across the business ecosystem and the empowerment of females.

This certain growth in diversity through increased inclusion and skill development will be facilitated by leaders who continue to enhance their empathic communication competency.



"As leaders at the executive level, we started working on instilling concepts such as transformational leadership and emotional leadership, which are two very important styles in this period, as it has become crucial to understand the emotions and sentiments of employees to address them during challenging times"

- Senior leader in the public sector

Actions to communicate with humility

CEO and leadership team	Trainers and leadership program designers	Early career professionals
High level actions for your Board level people plan	Specific learning goals and objectives	Actions you can take individually
<p>Review recruitment methods for leadership appointments and ensure attributes of authenticity, empathy and holistic people leadership are part of the selection criteria.</p> <p>Review existing 360 feedback processes / people engagement surveys to ensure they include the competence of communicating with humility.</p> <p>Invite observational feedback from your direct reports for specific instances of high impact empathetic communication. Ask your team to keep detailed notes of your comments in 10 meetings per month and review with your coach or trusted advisers.</p>	<p>In addition to general courses on communication, leaders in Saudi Arabia could benefit from the following learning goal and learning objectives:</p> <p>Learning Goals - mastering the art of communicating with humility through the following learning objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To communicate with authenticity, empathy, and care with particular focus on how different types of meetings are introduced, framed and concluded. ● To design communications strategies that cater to the needs of internal stakeholders that increase the personal visibility of key leaders by featuring their detailed notes, or their voices via audio or video content. 	<p>Consider your people leadership skills gaps if your ambition is to lead teams, taking care to develop soft skills.</p> <p>Invite observational feedback from your peers for specific instances of high impact empathetic communication and create conditions for collaborative improvement by keeping verbatim notes for a small number of your peers to review together for specific improvements in your communication skills.</p>

3. Learn about psychological health & wellbeing

Employee motivation, engagement, and satisfaction have long been a source of concern for businesses. Concerns like these are backed up by a well-documented link between these factors and overall performance. Physical well-being has become increasingly important for organizational leaders as COVID-19 has become more widely spread. Health and safety regulations, occupational health support, subsidized gym memberships, and other preventive measures were implemented within organisations.

Nevertheless, the COVID-19 pandemic illuminated the next phase of leaders' dedication to workplace health and wellbeing. The pandemic has a profound effect on employees' psychological health & wellbeing since they are now required to balance dynamically shifting situations over which they have little control.

For instance, when national level quarantine regulations were applied, parents struggled with balancing priorities between work and home-schooling for their children.

Many struggled with such changes. Professionals have experienced disruption to their routines and standards, whether this is the safety and frequency of seeing friends and family or the impact of travel restrictions. All of these psychological difficulties affect each individual, but leaders now have to manage from a whole new psychological baseline.

Employee psychological safety and well-being has been shown in academic studies to have a significant impact on individual, departmental, and organizational performance. However, until the pandemic's extreme circumstances showed their importance, many leaders minimized these concerns. To establish collective psychological resilience inside their organizations and maintain the sustainability and continuation of work despite difficult situations, successful leaders in the pandemic and post-pandemic world must prioritize psychological safety and wellness as a strategic aim.

"The skill that emerged after the transition to hybrid work was the leaders' awareness of the importance of managing the psychological dimension of employees within the organization, as the health and psychological trauma of the Coronavirus pandemic was already profound"

- Senior leader in the public sector

Actions to learn about psychological health and wellbeing

CEO and leadership team	Trainers and leadership program designers	Early career professionals
High level actions for your Board level people plan	Specific learning goals and objectives	Actions you can take individually
<p>Learn deeply about the influence and impact of psychological safety in the workplace by engaging with an expert or potential hire who can champion efforts to address topics that have been opened up by the pandemic so that an organizational approach to workplace psychological safety can be developed.</p>	<p>In addition to general courses on Managing People that focus on motivating employees, and performance management, leaders in Saudi Arabia could benefit from the following learning goals and learning objectives.</p> <p>Learning goals - mastering holistic people management through the following learning objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To understand the link between psychological health and performance at the individual, departmental and organizational levels. ● To explore how to measure key psychological health and wellbeing related criteria. ● To create interventions that address psychological health and wellbeing components in teams, small groups and 1:1, potentially learning directly from health care professionals and educators about 1:1 communication in this context. 	<p>Find a mentor who is a role model for people centred leadership - demonstrating the power of caring for the whole person.</p> <p>Enrich your own understanding of your own psychological wellbeing by engaging in courses and learning development opportunities presented as options in your workplace.</p> <p>Avoid the assumption that because you feel unaffected at the moment, you do not need to address issues of psychological wellbeing.</p>

4. Accelerate digital transformations and technology adoption

Workplace digitization has been steadily increasing for several years, while home-life digitization is rapidly increasing, fuelled by social media, wearables, and smartphones.

The pandemic drove digital transformation throughout sectors, extending coverage across most organizations' entire value chain, from internal operations to customer interactions to integrated health and care records. Through necessity, the pandemic has pushed digital adoption at a pace that even the most optimistic CIOs and CTOs could not have anticipated.

Advanced technologies have also been brought into focus with senior leaders. They begin developing business cases for investments in advanced analytics, cloud computing, and technological infrastructure. The strategic objective is to assist organizations in combating the pandemic's consequences.

For organizations that had adopted digital transformation before the pandemic, it played a pivotal role. In other words, if a company strives to develop technology-based products as quickly as possible, it may gain an advantage during the pandemic. On the other hand, some organizations prospered and demonstrated beneficial cases that can be used as benchmarks for future investment appraisals.

The pandemic has hastened and catalysed these irreversible shifts, reinforcing the need of technology adoption and digital transformation leadership. There will be measurable resilience advantages built into every digital transformation business case going forward. When severe disruptions occur, organizations will be better equipped to deal with them.

"Digitization has emerged and grown significantly since the beginning of the pandemic and as a result of it. Organizations that do not implement digitization will find themselves out of pace"

- Senior leader in the public sector

Actions to accelerate digital transformations and technology adoption

CEO and leadership team	Trainers and leadership program designers	Early career professionals
High level actions for your Board level people plan	Specific learning goals and objectives	Actions you can take individually
<p>Place a greater demand on your suppliers and digital champions to find platform-based and collaborative ways of digital working to bring leaders together to share best and new practices for digital transformation and technology adoption and support other organizations who are less mature in the area.</p> <p>Ask your chief analyst or equivalent leader to define measures of improvement and delivery for digital transformation from the pandemic period so forward-focused business cases for digital investment can be made.</p>	<p>Review existing digital skills and technology programs to ensure they are aligned with the pace of change and demands in the workplace.</p> <p>While existing digital transformation modules typically cover all key components that leaders need to acquire for being able to accelerate digital transformations and technology adoption, it is recommended that such modules be included in all leadership development programs. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leadership in a highly digital environment. ● Leading and motivating remote teams. 	<p>Make the enhancement of digital skills an essential part of your personal development plan.</p> <p>Learn about and write a reflective learning piece about the pandemic-driven digital transformation of an organization you admire, and collaborate with others in a small team to construct a commentary to submit for publication.</p>

5. Build resilient leaders and organizations

The ability to maintain company continuity in the face of an unexpected crisis is referred to as organizational resilience. In other words, resilience relates to anticipating and preparing for such disruptions.

It goes beyond risk management to predict and prepare for such situations. This ensures organizational continuity and survival despite little or significant disruptions. While there is no one certain approach to create more resilient organizations. The four actionable insights mentioned above play a crucial role in organizational survival over time and in the face of adversity and turbulence.

Resilience is an important leadership competency in the post-pandemic world, which is unsurprising. In fact, it is extremely critical to have resilience strategies in organizations as mentioned above. Therefore, Individual leaders can respond and act effectively to circumstances as they emerge.

While individual resilience is difficult to teach (it is also a character trait), practical efforts can be done to guarantee the robustness of an organization's business continuity plans and crisis management operations, allowing leaders to manage change and uncertainty."



"I believe that the current situation in terms of competencies is that the trick is continuous change, as those facing difficulty in change, face difficulty in staying in the game"

- Senior leader in the Ministry of Energy

Actions to build resilient leaders and organizations

CEO and leadership team	Trainers and leadership program designers	Early career professionals
High level actions for your Board level people plan	Specific learning goals and objectives	Actions you can take individually
<p>Working across the business ecosystem, create a virtual center of excellence for Saudi business continuity best practice; ensuring any adoption of international best practices for subcomponents of resilience are adjusted and applied to the Saudi business and cultural context. This center of excellence could be initially created by a small network of senior business leaders coming together to build the infrastructure for this sharing and lifting of knowledge to begin.</p> <p>Establish a documented playbook of pandemic best practice risk management and business continuity methods to capture the specific lessons learned and methods used for integration into documented resilience and recovery plans.</p>	<p>Learning goals - mastering the skills of building resilient organizations through the following learning objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To explore the 4 phases of resilience including anticipation, withstanding, recovery, and adaptability/ repositioning. ● To analyse global and local hazards necessary for anticipating future disruptions. ● To create an effective business resilience plan that ensures business continuity and protects assets such as people, operations, and infrastructure. 	<p>Create a habit of learning from every situation through requesting feedback and using a personal development learning log.</p> <p>Set Google alerts for a topic you find particularly interesting related to business continuity and actors in a supply chain or value chain you would like to know more about. With a learning partner, review the alerts at the end of each month and keep a structured log of observations and opinions about business continuity best practices and supply chain resilience.</p>

4 APPENDIX A: DEEP DIVES

A. Glossary

Term	Definition
Health & Wellbeing	Leaders' physical and psychological care of employees, through the implementation of measures, precautions, or interventions targeted at promoting employees' good health in the post-pandemic time
Agility & Flexibility	The capacity of leaders to adjust quickly and accurately to changing external environmental stimuli and establish alternative plans. Leaders displayed Agility & Flexibility in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic by being composed yet active in the face of a novel health crisis.
Managerial Skills	A combination of general management attributes required for the day-to-day organization and administration of businesses, combined with clusters of traits which represent managerial communication, and effective management of personnel.
Diversity & Inclusion	The work environment in which leaders can create for their team. Equality is a crucial component of this competency.
Putting People First	The emphasis of a leader on people-centered leadership — leading with humility, awareness, and consideration.

Term	Definition
Strategic Thinking	Beyond tactical delivery and operations, a leader's capacity to think strategically. Problem solving and visioning are among the qualities, as are networking and creating inter-company relationships.
Innovation	The qualities and capabilities that a leader must have to innovate and achieve growth. This entails being creative and open-minded, as well as knowing innovation concepts and technology. Disruptive thinking, innovative thinking, and pioneering thinking are all traits covered in this skill.
Decision Making	A group of skills that a leader must have in order to make good judgments. This skill emphasizes evidence-based decision making and a leader's capacity to be decisive, swift, and strong in their decisions when necessary. Some of the most prominent characteristics for this skill center on the significance of making judgments based on evidence.
Excellence & Aptitude	The leader's talents and perceived ability to do the task at hand efficiently and expertly. This skill encompasses a set of characteristics centered on the leader's intellect, as well as experience, knowledge, and capability.
Collaboration	How teams collaborate efficiently both internally and externally, for example through partnerships. Collaboration is centered on the concept of developing relationships and working with people. A leader must know how to develop a collaborative, team-oriented, and cooperative culture.
Being Purpose Driven	The goals, objectives, and directions that a leader might set to get his or her team to pull in the same direction. The ability to be clear and focused on these goals, as well as a leader's ability to impart knowledge, are crucial aspects to the skill.
Continuous Self-Development	A leader who provides opportunity for his or her team to grow and flourish. Education, learning, and training are essential. The leader must be aware of the team's and their own growth requirements in order to properly fulfill these leadership characteristics.

Term	Definition
Principled Leadership	It is about the leader's values and personality. Leaders are expected to be accountable, fair, devoted, and industrious, as well as to have integrity.
Empathetic Communication	The characteristics of how a leader can communicate with understanding and patience. It goes beyond what is expected of a leader in terms of communication that we see in Managerial Skills. It emphasizes the way in which leaders should do so effectively and empathetically.
Conservatism	A set of characteristics that are frequently linked to more conventional attributes of leadership. This competence primarily emphasizes leadership attributes like strictness and severity. There are also themes of authority, seniority, and caution.
Positive Mindedness	A leader's character should be enthusiastic, passionate, and optimistic. The relevance of a positive-minded leader for a team is demonstrated by this collection of characteristics.
Boldness	A leader's personality and capacity to move things ahead, embodying a set of characteristics that include strong leadership, as well as themes of authority and domination.
A sustainable mindset	Leaders' initial actions in the workplace are based on a set of beliefs, attitudes, and expectations. It promotes resource management that is prudent, ethical, and does not jeopardize future generations' capacity to satisfy their own needs.
Emotional Intelligence	Leaders' capacity to empathize with colleagues, solve common obstacles, and reduce conflict. All of these are through understanding, using, and managing their own emotions in good ways.
Remote Leadership	The pandemic has facilitated a significant transformation in working culture. Where the change with leaders and employees is by adopting remote working, remote people management, and digitization of work streams as a long-term and sustainable alternative to in-person work.

Term	Definition
Change Management	The controlled management of development and change efforts within businesses. In light of COVID-19, this could include changes to business dynamics and new developments, which resulted
Resilience	It refers to a set of characteristics that describe a leader's character and capacity to persist the essential features, which lead to the ability to overcome adversity and navigate a crisis.
Pre-Pandemic	The two years immediately before the COVID-19 pandemic became of global attention in March 2020.
During the pandemic	The first few months after the pandemic unfolded, when governments resorted to imposing restrictions on public life.
Post-pandemic	The period currently experienced, where there is some return to normal life, and the wide availability of vaccines.

B. The 22-competency deep-dive

In this chapter we explore each of the 22 competencies that were identified during the research, providing an in-depth look at their meaning as well as key insights from the survey data and interviews. The 22 competencies are ordered from the competency that the showed the largest change in importance pre- to post-pandemic, to the least.

Remote Leadership has shown the largest change in importance since the start of the pandemic

Changes in importance between pre- and post-pandemic periods. Positive indicates an increased importance.

Data from a survey of 1068 people



REMOTE LEADERSHIP

Change in importance: **Largest increase** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **18th**

Key traits:

Ability to explain work

Remote working

Remote People Management

Delegation

Remote Leadership relates to the marked shift in working culture that has been enabled by the pandemic, with leaders and employees embracing remote working, remote people management and digitization of workstreams as a long-term and sustainable alternative to in-person working.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic competencies, Remote Leadership showed the largest rise in importance among survey respondents, of all the competencies emerging in this research.

However, this competency also showed the largest fall in importance, when comparing the importance of leadership competencies at the height of the pandemic versus the post-pandemic period. This could imply that Remote Leadership could become less important over the longer term for certain demographics in Saudi Arabia.

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group



By Gender

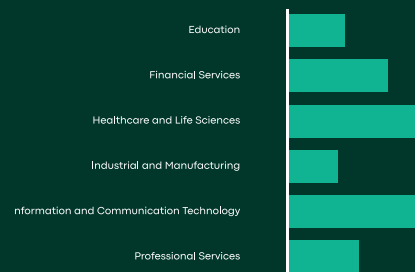


Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry

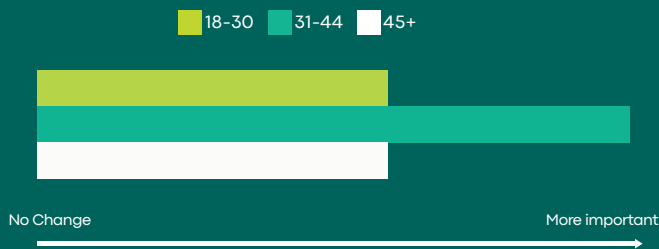


"First, the old belief that people can only work in the office at the workplace was demystified, as circumstances have proven that this is not true and that you can work from anywhere in the world."

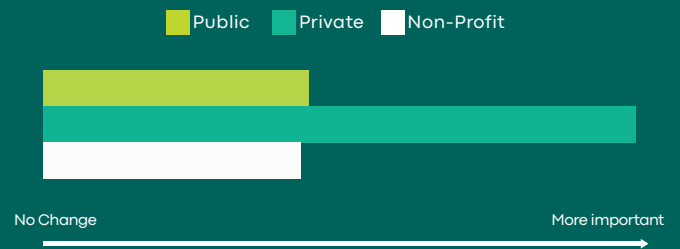
- Financial sector leader

Key Insights

Change in importance score pre to post pandemic for Remote Leadership, by age group



Change in importance score pre to during the pandemic for Remote Leadership, by sector



Survey data insights

Remote Leadership is the leadership competency with the largest shift in importance, across the research study

This leadership competency has risen unanimously in importance.

31–44 year-olds value Remote Leadership highest

Remote Leadership has seen a significant jump in importance for all age groups among survey respondents, but has seen the biggest shift among 31-44 year olds. Among this demographic in particular, there may be individuals who have young children, where Remote Leadership represents an important means to achieve the best balance between work and home life. Indeed, among 31-44 year olds, Remote Leadership has seen an

unparalleled jump in importance since pre-pandemic levels, and importantly, has not decreased much in importance since the height of the pandemic.

The Private sector values the competency highly, and did so particularly at the height of the pandemic

When comparing pre-pandemic to post-pandemic competencies, survey respondents from the Private sector valued Remote Leadership around twice as highly as Public and Non-Profit sector respondents. Moreover, for Private sector respondents, Remote Leadership saw the biggest jump in importance among all leadership competencies when comparing the two timeframes “pre-pandemic” and “during the pandemic”.

Interview insights

For organizations already on a digital transformation journey, the pandemic accelerated expected benefits from digital tools that enable remote and hybrid working.

This catalysed innovation and inventiveness from employees who could express their talents in different ways with new digital collaboration tools.

Expectations were exceeded for some leaders to the extent there are now irreversible expectations for efficiency gains and the reduced demand to travel.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Change in importance: **2nd largest increase** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **1st**

Key traits:

Firmness to ensure safety

Following Up

Taking precautions

Security

Health & Wellbeing relates to physical and psychological care of employees by leaders, through their provision of measures, precautions or interventions aimed at supporting the good health of employees in the context of post-pandemic life.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic competencies, we see that this competency demonstrated the 2nd largest shift in importance, after Remote Leadership.

It is important to note that Health & Wellbeing is considered marginally more important now, than it was in the height of the pandemic. This is evidenced by the comparison of the data for the periods "during the pandemic" to "post-pandemic". Among our survey respondents as a whole, we are seeing a continued focus on Health & Wellbeing as a leadership competency.

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group



By Gender

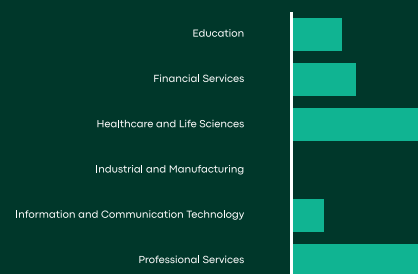


Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry

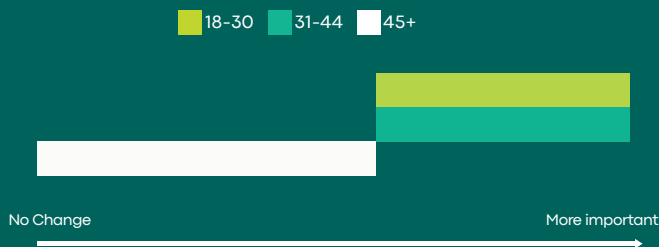


"The skill that emerged after the transition to hybrid work is the leader's awareness of the importance of managing the psychological dimension of employees within the organization, as the health and psychological trauma of the Coronavirus pandemic was already profound."

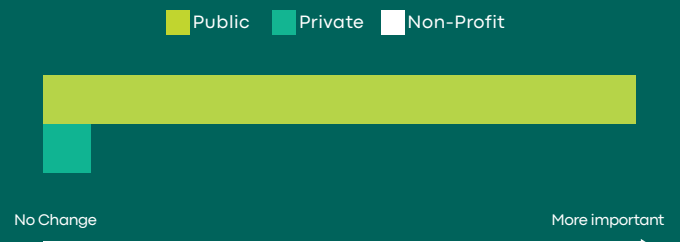
- Utilities industry leader

Key Insights

Change in importance score during the pandemic to post pandemic for Health & Wellbeing, by age group



Change in importance score pre to during the pandemic for Health & Wellbeing, by sector



Survey data insights

45+ year olds valued this highly during the height of the pandemic, but less so in the post-pandemic period

Health & Wellbeing shows strong importance across all age groups, but the trajectory of this leadership competency varies between them. 45+ year old survey respondents valued Health & Wellbeing particularly highly at the height of the pandemic, and there is a relative shift away from this leadership competency in the post-pandemic phase.

Women prize a Health & Wellbeing focus highly in leaders

For women, this competency was ranked their most important in the phases "during the pandemic" and "post-pandemic".

We can see a Public vs. Private and large vs. small dichotomy

For Public sector respondents, Health & Wellbeing saw the biggest jump in importance among all leadership competencies when comparing the two timeframes "pre-pandemic" and "during the pandemic". Private sector respondents, by contrast, showed the biggest shift towards Remote Leadership in the same timeframe. We see exactly the same patterns play out for larger vs. smaller organisations. For organisations of >250 employees, Health & Wellbeing again saw the highest jump in its importance. For start-ups, it was not so highly prized.

Interview insights

The pandemic has catalysed a new appreciation and awareness of the impact of psychological health and wellbeing. Leaders express empathy and care for the psychological challenges for work and family life presented by the pandemic.

The need for leaders to keep up to date with the latest information from health sector leaders also influenced leaders to consider how best to collaborate with health and wellbeing stakeholders.

There are examples of leaders experiencing these changes as a profound influence on their leadership.

AGILITY & FLEXIBILITY

Change in importance: **3rd largest increase** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **8th**

Key traits:



Agility & Flexibility relates to the ability of leaders to adapt to changing external environmental stimuli, and to develop alternative plans with speed and accuracy. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, Agility & Flexibility was demonstrated by leaders in their ability to be composed but dynamic in the face of a novel health crisis.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic competencies, Agility & Flexibility demonstrated the 3rd largest shift in importance, among 1,068 survey respondents.

This competency has also sustained its importance in the minds of our survey respondents, when comparing the current post-pandemic period against the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has not shown a decrease in importance over this time period.

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group



By Gender

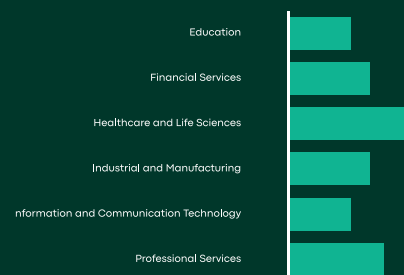


Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry

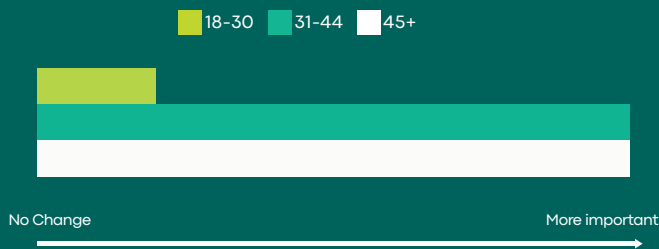


"As a leader, I have always been highly flexible, but the pandemic, in particular, taught me that whatever plan was in place, the leader and the organization must be flexible, fast-paced, and innovative."

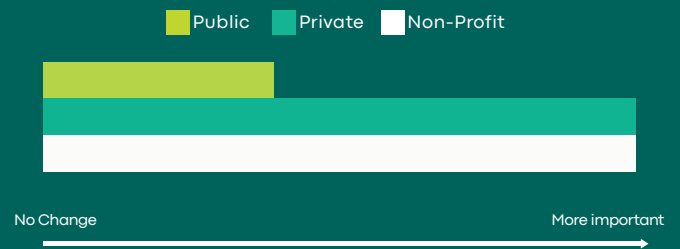
- Public sector leader

Key Insights

Change in importance score pre to post pandemic for Agility and Flexibility, by age group



Change in importance score pre to during the pandemic for Agility and Flexibility, by sector



Survey data insights

Young people place only marginal additional value on Agility & Flexibility, in light of COVID-19

Agility & Flexibility increased in importance across all age groups. For 31-44 year olds and 45+ year olds, there was a greater increase in importance in Agility and flexibility than there was for 18-30 year old survey respondents. 31-44 year olds and 45+ year olds ranked Agility & Flexibility as four times more important than their younger counterparts.

The Private and Non-Profit sectors are key drivers of Agility & Flexibility as a post-pandemic leadership competency

Overall, we can observe that the Private and Non-Profit Sectors place a higher importance on Agility & Flexibility in the post-pandemic context, than pre-pandemic (this graphic can be seen in the overview diagram on the previous page).

A deeper look into the period “pre-pandemic” and “during the pandemic” also demonstrates that Agility & Flexibility became far more important, at a factor of more than double, for the Private and Non-Profit sectors than for the Public sector.

Interview insights

Leaders refer to the need to be adaptable and open-minded to new ideas when reflecting competencies related to Agility & Flexibility.

Leaders also refer to their responsibility to role-model Agility & Flexibility in their teams, encouraging employees and supply chains to think proactively about the challenges to overcome.

For some, this competency was reawakened by the pandemic and it is referred to with a spirit that implies leaders wish to maintain the prominence of their Agility & Flexibility in their leadership.

A SUSTAINABILITY MINDSET

Change in importance: **4th largest increase** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **13th**

Key traits:

Sustainability

Sustainable Development

Thinking of the Future

A Sustainability Mindset relates to the set of beliefs, attitudes and expectations that leaders use to make default actions in the workplace. It emphasizes use of resources which is careful, made with respect to social justice, and which does not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic leadership competencies, A Sustainability Mindset shows the 4th largest shift in importance, seen in the survey data.

Importantly, this competency shows the highest shift in importance of all 22 leadership competencies presented in this study, when we compare the two time periods “during the pandemic” and “post-pandemic”. This means that people value A Sustainability Mindset more highly in the ongoing post-pandemic period, than they did at the height of the pandemic.

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group



By Gender

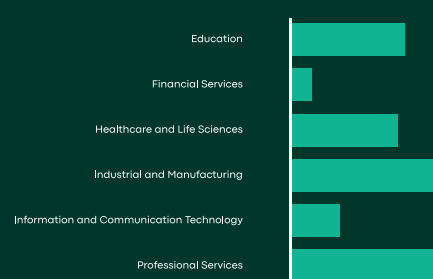


Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry

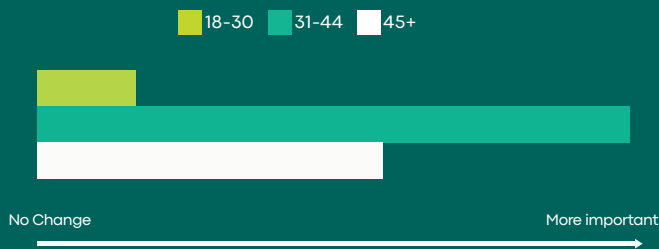


"During this stage, we reshaped energy at the local and international levels, especially that after the coronavirus pandemic, more interest was given to green energy and it became hugely popular. One of the most prominent initiatives that have been established is the Saudi Green Initiative."

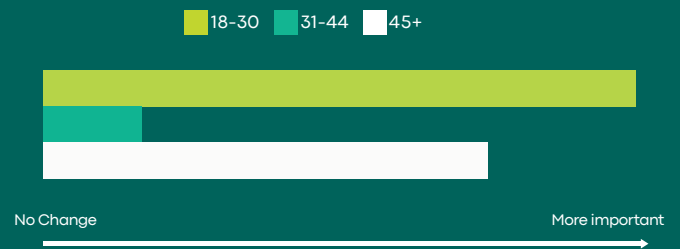
- Central government leader

Key Insights

Change in importance score pre to during the pandemic for A Sustainability Mindset, by age group



Change in importance score during the pandemic to post pandemic for A Sustainability Mindset, by age group



Survey data insights

Younger Saudi Arabians are continuing to value this competency very highly in the post-pandemic period...

For 18-30 year old survey respondents, A Sustainability Mindset is among the competencies which shifted most in importance between the phases "during the pandemic" and "post-pandemic".

The only other leadership competency which shifts more than A Sustainability Mindset for this demographic is "Positive Mindedness".

...But younger Saudi Arabians did not judge this competency to be of much higher importance at the height of COVID-19

Despite the initial finding that younger Saudis value this competency in the post-pandemic phase, we see a contrasting picture during the height of the pandemic. For 18-30 year olds, A Sustainability Mindset made almost no increase in importance between the periods "pre-pandemic" and "during the pandemic". Instead, across this period, Remote Leadership, alongside empathy-led competencies such as Putting People First and Principled Leadership, were those that gained most in importance.

Interview insights

Leaders refer to the importance of making reasoned decisions with incomplete and changing information, whilst holding maximum focus on holistic impact and outcomes.

Moreover, leaders experiencing benefits from their organization's response to the pandemic, are thinking ahead.

For those improvements accelerated by the pandemic, most obviously related to digital transformation efforts, leaders offer their views on the importance of making changes stick.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Change in importance: **5th largest increase** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **19th**

Key traits:

Change mindset

Change management

Change Management relates to the controlled management of development and change efforts within businesses. In light of COVID-19, this could include changes to business dynamics and new developments which result uniquely from the pandemic. However, Change Management does not include aspects such as crisis management and continuity which are included in the separate leadership competency of Resilience, within this study.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic competencies, Change Management shows the 5th largest shift in importance, evidenced by the survey data.

Change Management increased substantially in importance among survey respondents between the periods "pre-pandemic" to "during the pandemic". Yet it only became marginally more important moving into the post-pandemic period.

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group



By Gender

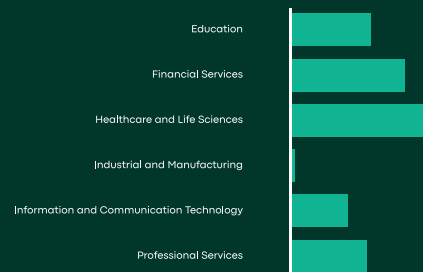


Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry

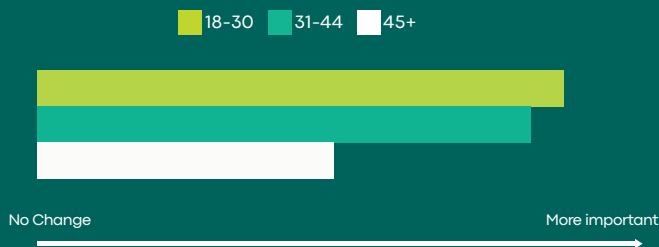


"During the pandemic, I started to focus on how to lead during a major digital transformation period and how to align the desires and aspirations of the new generation of workers and employees."

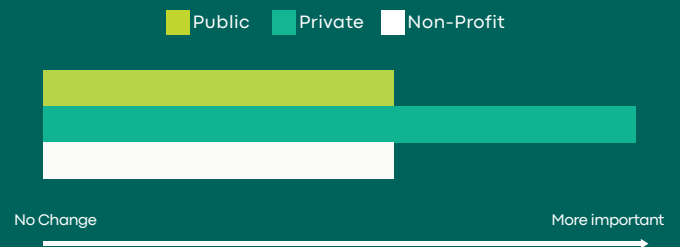
- Public sector leader

Key Insights

Change in importance score pre to post pandemic for Change Management, by age group



Change in importance score pre to post pandemic for Change Management, by sector



Survey data insights

Senior employees place less value on Change Management than their younger peers

For 18-30 year old and 31-44 year old respondents, Change Management represented the 1st and 2nd largest shifts in importance among all leadership competencies, respectively. For 45+ year olds, however, it had the 15th largest shift. This indicates that age of respondents was the strongest driver of the importance of Change Management as a leadership competency in the post-pandemic period. On average, 18-30 year olds placed almost twice as much importance on this competency than 45+ year olds.

The Non-Profit sector only marginally values Change Management, compared to Public and Private sectors

There is an especially large contrast between the Non-Profit sector, and other sectors for how Change Management is valued post-pandemic. For Private and Public sector employees respectively, Change Management showed the 5th and 3rd largest changes in importance (out of 22 competencies) - scoring highly for both of these sectors. For Non-Profit sector respondents, Change Management ranked a lowly 17th; showing only a marginal increase in importance.

Interview insights

The pandemic accelerated established change programmes for some leaders, especially with scope related to digital transformation.

These leaders also offer a view that the pandemic can be thought of, and managed as, a profound opportunity for change and improvement.

For organizations with less mature digital transformation programmes, the pandemic catalysed new change activities through necessity, for example with remote & hybrid working.

There is appreciation for Vision 2030 being the origin of change initiatives in the Kingdom.

MANAGERIAL SKILLS

Change in importance: **6th largest increase** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **3rd**

Key traits:

Offers incentives

Time management

Organized

Economic

Managerial Skills relate to a combination of general management attributes required for the day-to-day organization and administration of businesses, combined with clusters of traits which represent managerial communication, and effective management of personnel.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic competencies, Managerial Skills shows the 6th largest shift in importance, evidenced by the survey data.

The survey data shows that Managerial Skills was especially important as a leadership competency at the height of the pandemic, but has since dropped marginally in importance, as we move into the current post-pandemic phase. Nonetheless, there is a significant overall increase in importance of Managerial Skills from its pre-pandemic level, to its current post-pandemic position.

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group



By Gender

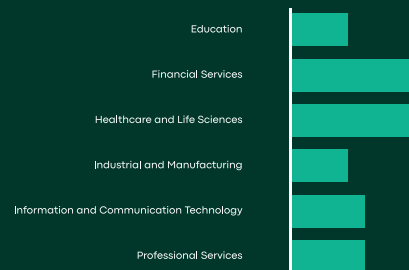


Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry



"Instead of talking to our clients two or three times a week, we started talking to them and communicating with them more than three times a day to learn more about their challenges and explore possible best practices together."

- Public sector leader

Key Insights

Ranking of importance for
Managerial Skills, by age group

	Pre	During	Post
18-30	1	6	2
31-44	14	2	9
45+	11	2	1

Ranking of importance for
Managerial Skills, by gender

	Pre	During	Post
Male	14	2	6
Female	2	4	2

Survey data insights

Managerial Skills is a significant and valued leadership competency for both younger and more senior employees

For 45+ year olds, Managerial Skills shows the highest pre- to post-pandemic change, of all leadership competencies. It rises in importance from the 11th most important competency (out of 22), to the leading competency.

For younger employees aged 18-30, a different profile of importance can be seen – with Managerial Skills being very highly prized again. It was seen as the most important leadership competency pre-pandemic, and falls to the 2nd most important competency post-pandemic. Only the 31-44 year old age group saw this competency as only moderately important.

Men have placed newfound importance on Managerial Skills, yet it has always been important for women.

Male survey respondents placed only moderate importance on Managerial Skills as a leadership competency before the pandemic. For them, it rises sharply in importance at the height of the pandemic, and now places 6th out of 22 competencies. For females, Managerial Skills were the 2nd most important leadership competency pre-pandemic. Now in the post-pandemic period, it occupies the same position.

Interview insights

There are important references to managerial fundamentals throughout the interviews conducted. For example, when leaders refer to changes in the way they communicate corporate key messages to their teams, they are grounded in the essential managerial responsibility to communicate, but they layer on top of this details of new ways of working.

There is appreciation of how a core of solid, essential managerial skills are needed to make the most of the innovation and transformation potential of the pandemic.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Change in importance: **7th largest increase** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **20th**

Key traits:

Sensitive

Friendly

Listening

Sympathetic

Tolerating Mistakes

Emotional Intelligence relates to leaders' ability to understand, use, and manage their own emotions in positive ways to empathize with employees, overcome shared challenges and defuse conflict.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic competencies, Emotional Intelligence shows the 7th largest shift in importance, evidenced by the survey data.

We observe in the survey data that Emotional Intelligence rose in importance at the height of the pandemic. Across all competencies, it demonstrated the 2nd largest jump in importance between the periods "pre-pandemic" and "during the pandemic". Conversely, it has then marginally fallen in importance since we have entered the post-pandemic period.

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group



By Gender

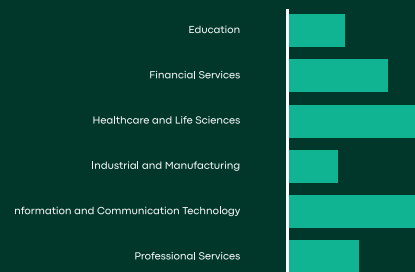


Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry

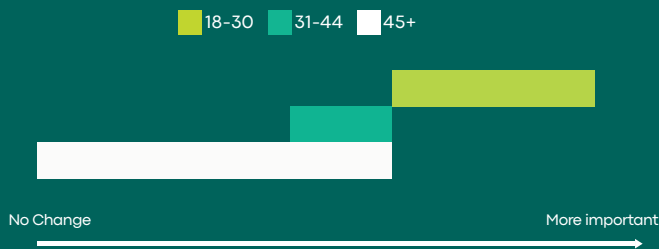


"If I were to reduce this stage to one key leadership skill, I would say emotional and social intelligence and the ability to deeply touch other people's lives."

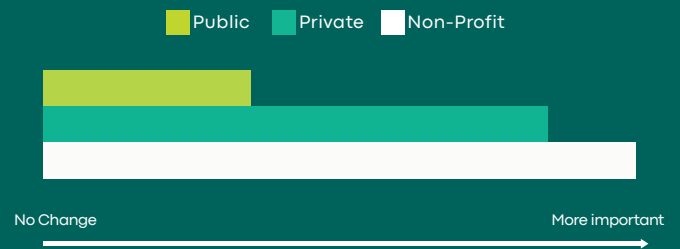
- Technology industry leader

Key Insights

Change in importance score pre to post pandemic for Remote Leadership, by age group



Change in importance score pre to during the pandemic for Remote Leadership, by sector



Survey data insights

Emotional Intelligence is continuing to grow in importance for younger people, but over the past year its importance has decelerated for their more senior peers

Emotional Intelligence shows a positive change in how survey respondents across all age groups valued it, when we compare the “pre-pandemic” and “post pandemic” periods. However, there is a difference in the trajectory of this change, which manifests differently for different age groups. Younger Saudi Arabians are the only group which values Emotional Intelligence higher in the post-pandemic phase, than at the height of the pandemic. Conversely, their older peers value this competency lower in our current period, than in 2020.

The Public sector shows the most modest increase in importance for Emotional Intelligence as a competency

When observing the shift in importance of Emotional Intelligence between “pre-pandemic” and “post-pandemic” periods, a distinction between sectors becomes clear. Survey respondents from the Public sector suggest only a modest increase in importance for Emotional Intelligence. By contrast, Private sector respondents demonstrated over twice as large a jump in importance for this competency, and Non-Profit sector respondents showed around 3 times as large a jump.

Interview insights

Some leaders have profound appreciation of the impact of emotional intelligence on their handling of the implications of the pandemic. This can be easily expressed through stories of personal impact on individuals or frequently occurring family scenarios.

It is clear for some leaders that the application of their emotional intelligence competency is a feature of personal leadership style they intend to remain prominent going forward.

Emotional intelligence can be referred to alongside cultural and social intelligence.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Change in importance: **8th largest increase** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **12th**

Key traits:

Diversity

Inclusion

Equality

Diversity & Inclusion relates to the work environment in which leaders are able to create for their team. Equality is a crucial component of this competency.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic competencies, Diversity & Inclusion, shows the 8th largest shift in importance, evidenced by the survey data.

The survey data shows that the importance of Diversity & Inclusion has increased overall from “pre-pandemic” to “post-pandemic”, showing a small decrease in importance in the period from “pre-pandemic” to “during the pandemic”. However, there was a large shift in importance in the period from “during the pandemic” and “post-pandemic” – during this period, Diversity & Inclusion saw the 2nd largest increase in importance, only behind A Sustainability Mindset.

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group

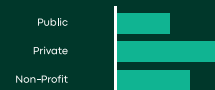


By Gender

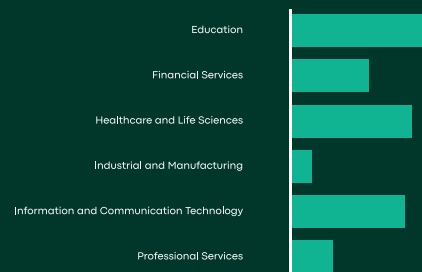


Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry

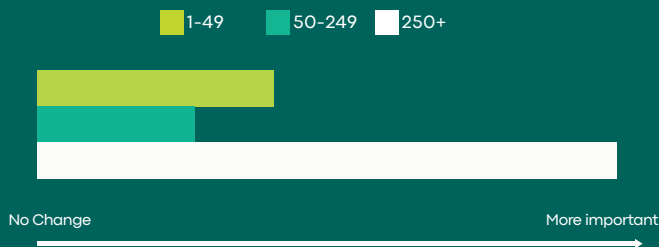


"We started to question limiting women to a certain stereotype under convictions that were not necessarily based on clear and explicit matters. Consequently, many women were assigned leadership positions."

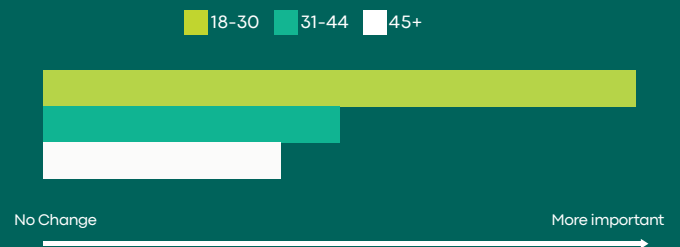
- Public sector leader

Key Insights

Change in importance score pre to post pandemic for Diversity and Inclusion, by company size



Change in importance score during the pandemic to post pandemic for Diversity and Inclusion, by age group



Survey data insights

Large organisations represent the largest driver for the increase in importance of Diversity & Inclusion

Survey respondents from organisations with over 250 employees rated "Diversity & Inclusion" to have the second highest jump in importance since the pre-pandemic time, behind only Remote Leadership. This is in contrast to both medium and small organisations, who only experienced a modest increase in importance for this leadership competency.

Although 18-30 year olds are not the main driver for the increasing importance of this competency, they value it highly since the height of COVID-19

Survey respondents above the age of 30 show the greatest overall shift in the importance of Diversity & Inclusion from the "pre pandemic" to the "post-pandemic" period. However, we see that 18-30 year olds demonstrate the greatest rise in importance of this competency across the phases "during the pandemic" to "post-pandemic". Across these two time periods, Diversity & Inclusion has the 3rd most significant jump in importance, among all competencies.

Interview insights

References to Diversity & Inclusion focus on the empowerment of youth and how new remote and hybrid ways of working enable diversity of thinking and delivery.

Embracing diversity from the influence of Saudi youth is traced back to Vision 2030, and there is appreciation for how embracing the innovation and spirit of youthful leaders made a tremendous contribution to the pandemic response.

Causing some surprise, new digitally-based ways of working also revealed impressive benefits and novel outcomes from diverse use of new tools.

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

Change in importance: **9th largest increase** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **16th**

Key traits:

Humility

Awareness

Accommodating

Considerate

Putting People First relates to a leader's focus on people-centred leadership – leading with humility, awareness and consideration.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic competencies, Putting People First, shows the 9th largest shift in importance, evidenced by the survey data.

The survey data shows that Putting People First became more important at the height of the pandemic, with a large increase in importance between “pre-pandemic” and “during the pandemic”. Moving into “post-pandemic”, the importance of Putting People has decreased slightly.

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group



By Gender

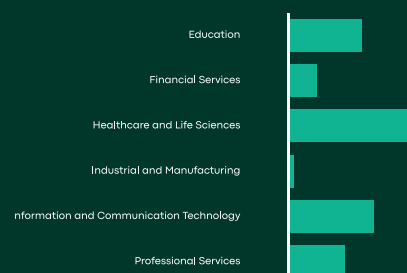


Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry

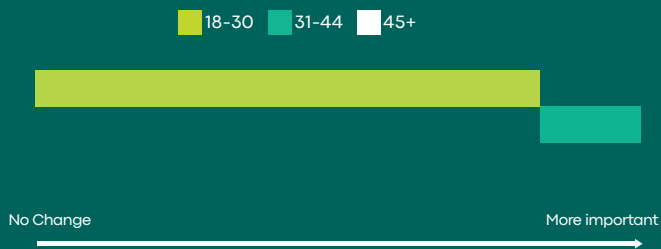


"In our organization, we have tried over and over again to discover the best situation for us and for our employees, and this required us to listen and deeply feel their needs and act accordingly."

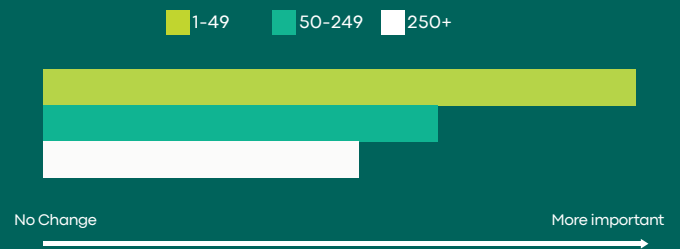
- Local government leader

Key Insights

Change in importance score during the pandemic to post pandemic for Putting people first, by age group



Change in importance score during the pandemic to post pandemic for Putting people first, by age group



Survey data insights

Putting People First became more important post-pandemic for all age groups, but it has decreased in importance for young people since the pandemic peak

The change "during the pandemic" to "post-pandemic" is negative for 18-30 year olds, which is different to other age groups where it became slightly more important.

Non-Profit sector employees offered a bigger jump in importance for this competency than Private or Public sector peers

For Non-Profit sector respondents, Putting People First represented a relatively large shift in importance, from pre-pandemic to

post pandemic periods. It represented the 5th largest jump across all competencies for this sector. By contrast, there was almost no change in importance for Public sector respondents.

Smaller companies offered a bigger jump in importance for Putting People First than larger organisations

Putting People First saw a larger jump in importance from survey respondents of companies with fewer than 50 employees. Moreover, these respondents also saw this competency as more important now than at the height of the pandemic. This was not the case for larger companies.

Interview insights

Leaders express great respect for the impact of the pandemic on family life, personal health and feelings of uncertainty for the future.

This manifests as new ways of leading, for example adapting to different blends of working patterns balancing home commitments and time in the office, or more personally interested ways of leading such as becoming very familiar with the family needs of specific employees.

Committing to a holistic perspective on supporting employees is a competency leaders wish to keep.

RESILIENCE

Change in importance: **10th largest increase** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **14th**

Key traits:

Resilience

Perseverance

Determination

Crisis Management

Resilience relates to a group of traits that refer to the character and the ability of a leader to persevere – the key traits hint at the ability to overcome hardships. In contrast to Change Management, Resilience includes a leader's ability to navigate a crisis.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic competencies, Resilience, shows the 10th largest shift in importance, evidenced by the survey data.

In the survey data, it can be seen that the increase in importance of Resilience was driven by the change between "pre-pandemic" and "during the pandemic". Going into the "post-pandemic" period, the importance of Resilience has seen a slight drop.

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group



By Gender

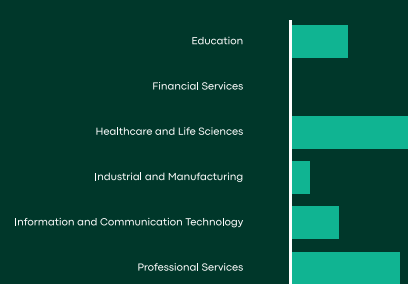


Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry

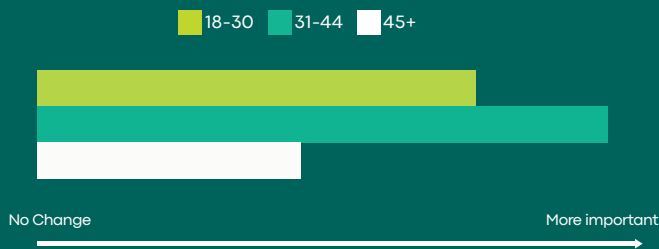


"A very good example of leadership here has been given in the efficiency of being calm and composed under extreme pressure situations like this one."

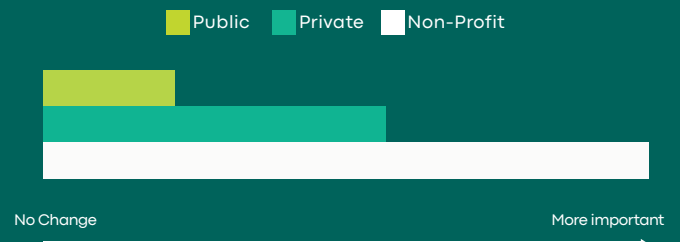
- Public sector leader

Key Insights

Change in importance score pre to post pandemic for Resilience, by age group



Change in importance score pre to post pandemic for Resilience, by sector



Survey data insights

A slight age divergence between the periods “during the pandemic” and “post-pandemic” can be seen

31-44 year olds see the sharpest rise in importance for Resilience, across all age groups. This is particularly the case between the periods “before the pandemic” to “during the pandemic”. Also, 45+ year olds score Resilience quite highly in raw terms pre-pandemic; this partially explains why their pre-pandemic to post-pandemic change is quite modest.

Non-Profit sector shows the largest increase for this leadership competency

For Non-Profit sector respondents, Resilience shifted strongly in importance, from pre-

pandemic to post pandemic periods. It represented the 4th largest jump across all competencies for this sector. By contrast, there was almost no change in importance for Public sector respondents.

Resilience has grown in importance particularly for the Professional Services and Healthcare industries.

For both of these industries, there is a substantial jump in importance for Resilience. But for the Professional Services industry in particular, Resilience rose from being the 10th most significant competency in terms of raw importance pre-pandemic, to being the 4th most important post-pandemic.

Interview insights

Leaders refer to technical elements of their organizations, and their own, resilience in terms of financial management and supply chain security.

Leaders evidently have renewed focus on contingency planning and attach importance to the skills needed to adapt to changing circumstances, sometimes with incomplete data to make fully informed decisions.

This also manifests for some leaders as their expressed commitment to keep promises they have made, against Vision 2030 and for their stakeholders.

STRATEGIC THINKING

Change in importance: **11th largest increase** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **14th**

Key traits:

Strategic thinking

Problem solving

Vision

Strategic Thinking relate to a leader's ability to think strategically, beyond tactical delivery and operations. The traits relate to problem solving and visioning, as well as skills such as networking and building inter-company relationships.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic competencies, Strategic Thinking, shows the 11th largest shift in importance, evidenced by the survey data.

The survey data shows that Strategic Thinking has shown a noticeable increase in importance since the "pre-pandemic" period going into the "post-pandemic period. This was largely driven by the increase in importance between "pre-pandemic" and "during the pandemic".

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group



By Gender

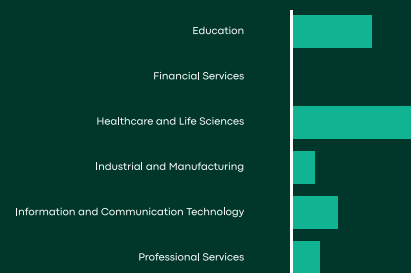


Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry

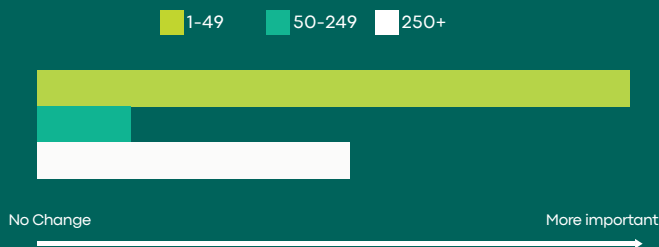


"Another very important competency is the ability of the leader to manage the organization from 360 degrees. I can't tell you how important this competency is right now. Now more than ever, executives need to focus on managing organizations on all dimensions and fronts."

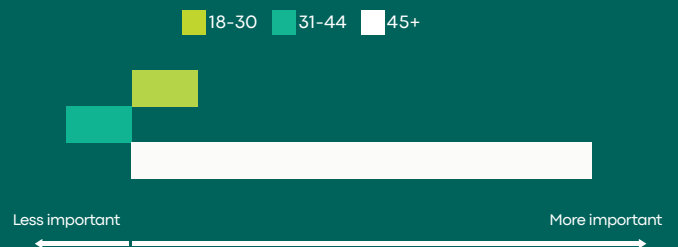
- Industrial sector leader

Key Insights

Change in importance score pre to post pandemic for Strategic Thinking, by company size



Change in importance score during the pandemic to post pandemic for Strategic Thinking, by age group



Survey data insights

Smaller organisations have precipitated the largest jump in importance for Strategic Thinking

For organisations with fewer than 50 employees, Strategic Thinking represented a very large jump in importance. Among all leadership competencies, it represented the highest jump in importance between pre-pandemic and post-pandemic levels.

Over 45s value Strategic Thinking more importantly since the height of the pandemic

More senior survey respondents are the only age cohort which demonstrate a jump in

importance for Strategic Thinking between the periods "during the pandemic" and "post-pandemic".

The Public sector is the only sector which sees Strategic Thinking as no more important than before COVID-19

For Private and Non-Profit sector respondents, Strategic Thinking is of importance in the post-pandemic, and also grew in importance from pre-pandemic levels. Indeed, for the Non-Profit sector, Strategic Thinking is actually of high and growing importance since the height of the pandemic.

Interview insights

The emphasis of strategic thinking has changed for leaders looking to express their strategy talent and experience.

Focus has moved towards proactively connecting topics and stakeholders for long-term benefit and problem-solving with more creative and digitally disruptive input.

Strategic thinking is catalysed by the pandemic to also be even more holistic. This builds from the stable framing provided by Vision 2030 and can now include leaders scanning global horizons for growth opportunities and future risks.

INNOVATION

Change in importance: **12th largest increase** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **7th**

Key traits:

Innovation

Technology

Creative

Open minded

Innovation relates to the skills and abilities that a leader requires to innovate and develop growth. This includes understanding innovation principles and technology as well as being creative and open-minded. Traits included in this competency also feature disruptive thinking, being progressive, and being pioneering.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic competencies, Innovation shows the 12th largest shift in importance, evidenced by the survey data.

The survey data shows that the importance of Innovation has shown a steady increase as we went through the periods defining the pandemic, moving from “pre-pandemic”, through the pandemic and as we move into a “post-pandemic” world.

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group



By Gender

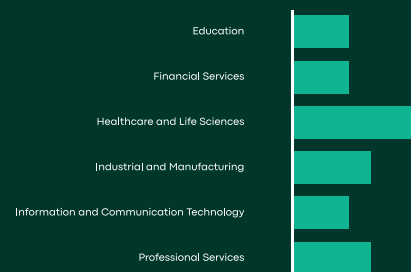


Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry

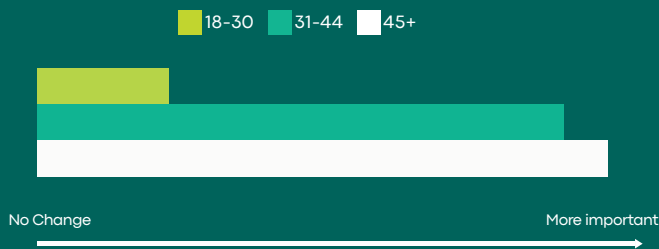


“There is a common factor that there is leadership capable of building an innovative environment that allows people to exercise their initiatives and abilities to work and continue to achieve.”

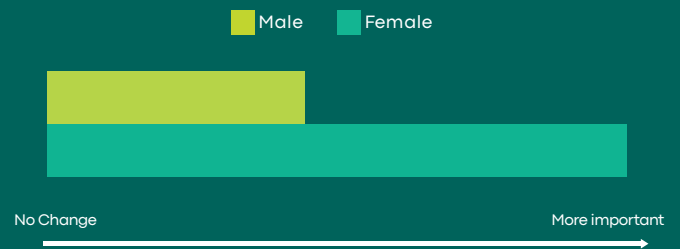
- Industrial sector leader

Key Insights

Change in importance score pre to post pandemic for Innovation, by age group



Change in importance score during the pandemic to post pandemic for Innovation, by gender



Survey data insights

18-30 year olds do not value this competency as importantly as their more senior peers

For younger survey respondents, Innovation only becomes very marginally more important than it was pre-pandemic. This is in contrast to their more senior peers, for whom the jump in importance for Innovation is around 4 times larger.

Females value Innovation more highly since the height of the pandemic

For female respondents, Innovation ranks as their most important jump out of all competencies, between the periods "during the pandemic" and "post-pandemic". This jump is

over twice as large as the corresponding jump for male survey respondents.

The Public sector valued Innovation highly before COVID-19, but sees no change to its importance post-pandemic

For both Private and Non-Profit sector respondents, Innovation saw a positive jump in importance between pre-pandemic and post-pandemic periods.

We do not observe this trend for the Public sector, but this can partially be explained by the fact that Public sector respondents scored Innovation as high in terms of raw importance before COVID-19.

Interview insights

Leaders recognise increasing influence and importance of digital ways of working as a critical driver for innovation.

For many leaders, the pandemic has accelerated planned technology innovation, for example with remote working digital platforms.

For other leaders, the pandemic is a catalyst for new innovation that must be maintained in their organization's future state.

This is frequently expressed as the transformation of manual processes that are now digitally automated. The pandemic offered no choice but to innovate.

DECISION MAKING

Change in importance: **13th largest increase** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **15th**

Key traits:

Evidence-based decision making

Decisive

Firmness

Decision Making relates to skills that are required from a leader to make effective decisions. Evidence-based decision making and the ability for a leader to be decisive, quick and firm in their decision making when required, are key themes for this competency. In particular, some of the traits of prominence for this competency focus on the importance of being evidence-based through making decisions.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic competencies, Decision Making, shows the 13th largest shift in importance, evidenced by the survey data.

The survey data shows that the importance of Decision Making increased as we went into the “during the pandemic” phase. This increase in importance persisted as we moved in the “post-pandemic” phase, where there was only a very small decrease in importance.

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group



By Gender

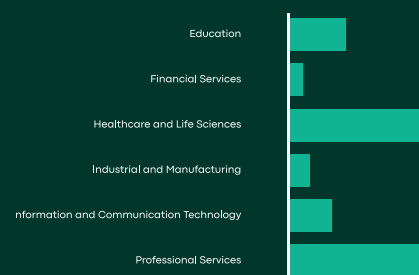


Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry

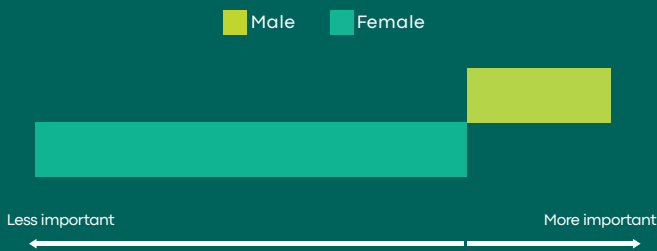


“We knew that we would never have all the information that we would need to make a decision.”

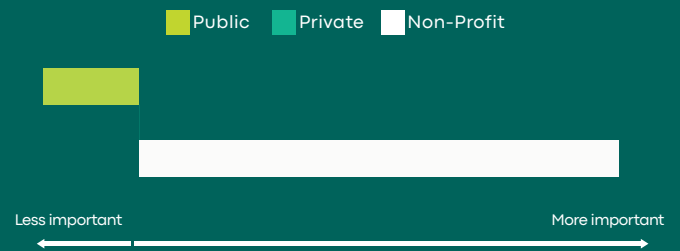
- Pharmaceutical sector leader

Key Insights

Change in importance score during the pandemic to post pandemic for Decision making, by gender



Change in importance score during the pandemic to post pandemic for Decision making, by sector



Survey data insights

Women value Decision Making less since the height of the pandemic

Both female and male survey respondents value Decision Making higher in the post-pandemic period than before COVID-19, and to an equal degree.

However, women view this leadership competency with less importance now than at the height of the pandemic. This pattern is not seen for male respondents.

Non-Profit employees value Decision Making more since the height of the pandemic

Similar to the previous point, the survey data shows that Non-Profit sector respondents view

Decision Making as more important now than in the "during the pandemic" period. Conversely, the Private and Public sectors show no change in importance for this competency across the two periods.

Professional Services and Healthcare sectors value Decision Making more in the post-pandemic period

For both of these industries, Decision Making displays a large shift in importance, compared to the pre-pandemic period. We see a more muted growth in importance for other industries such as Education, ICT and Financial Services.

Interview insights

Decisiveness with incomplete and changing information frequently emerges when leaders comment on their own experience of the pandemic.

Through necessity, leaders have evolved their decision-making skills to be quicker and when possible, more collaborative with more distributed input from more team members. Leaders also refer to the importance of staying up to date so decisions are informed as possible.

This requires leaders to integrate many new perspectives that previously were never taken into account, for example the Public Health perspective.

EXCELLENCE & APTITUDE

Change in importance: **14th largest increase** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **4th**

Key traits:

Intelligence

Skilled

Smart

Accurate

Excellence & Aptitude relates to abilities and the perceived abilities of the leader to competently and skilfully do the job that is required of them. This competency includes a cluster of traits around the intelligence of the leader, as well as experience, knowledge and capability.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic competencies, Excellence & Aptitude, shows the 14th largest shift in importance, evidenced by the survey data.

The survey data shows that Excellence & Aptitude exhibits a small increase as we moved into the pandemic, however the greatest increase in importance was seen in the period when we moved from “during the pandemic” to “post-pandemic”. During this period, Excellence & Aptitude showed the 4th highest increase in importance.

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group



By Gender

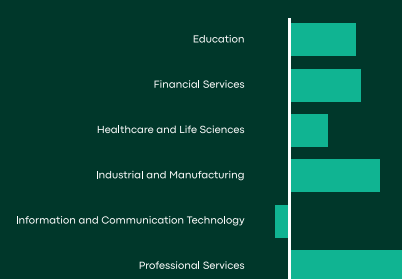


Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry

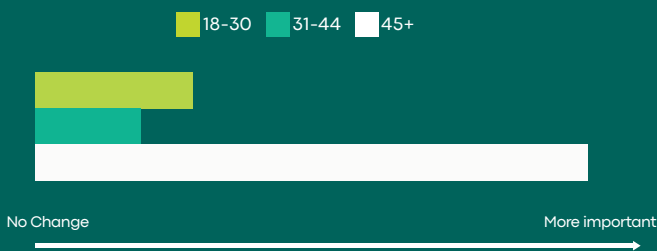


"I believe this requires leaders to be story-tellers and be able to gain and engage others in the journey."

- Public sector leader

Key Insights

Change in importance score pre to post pandemic for Excellence and Aptitude, by age group



Ranking of importance for Excellence and Aptitude, by sector

	Pre	During	Post
Public	3	10	5
Private	2	6	5
Non-Profit	19	15	3

Survey data insights

More senior survey respondents saw Excellence & Aptitude as hugely important post-Covid – it represents their 2nd highest jump in importance

This pattern is not seen for their younger peers, where the jump in importance is positive but very marginal. We can also observe the growing importance of this competency for 45+ year olds since the height of the pandemic too i.e. for “during pandemic” to “post-pandemic” shift.

Excellence & Aptitude is actually one of the most highly prized of all 22 competencies

It ranked 3rd in overall importance before the pandemic, and 4th in overall importance

post-pandemic. What manifests as an overall modest positive change in importance, owes itself to the fact that the competency was highly prized in importance to begin with.

The Non-Profit sector only placed value on Excellence & Aptitude since the outbreak of COVID-19

For this sector, it is the leadership competency with the largest shift in importance since before COVID-19.

There has been a growing importance of this competency for Non-Profit employees since the height of the pandemic, seen as a robust shift from the period “during pandemic” to “post-pandemic”.

Interview insights

Some leaders offer a view that the pandemic simply exacerbates the need for skills that many leaders have – expressed through decades of Excellence & Aptitude.

This is further supported by the assertion that the introduction of Vision 2030 was a more profound shift in expectations and needs than COVID-19.

Leaders rarely refer to their own excellence and aptitude but they do highlight how the pandemic has revealed strikingly impressive talent in their teams. Today’s senior leaders therefore provide a bridge for future Excellence & Aptitude to evolve and remain in the leadership traits of the Kingdom.

COLLABORATION

Change in importance: **15th largest increase** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **6th**

Key traits:

Collaboration

Cooperation

Teamwork

Collaboration relates to how teams effectively work together internally as well as externally, for example through partnerships. The idea of building relationships and dealing with others is a key theme in collaboration. A leader will need to understand how to foster a culture of collaboration, teamwork and cooperation.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic competencies, Collaboration, shows the 15th largest shift in importance, evidenced by the survey data.

The survey data shows that the importance of Collaboration has increased since before the pandemic and going into the “post-pandemic” period. This increase in importance has been seen both between “pre-pandemic” to “during the pandemic”, and “during the pandemic” to “post-pandemic”.

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group



By Gender

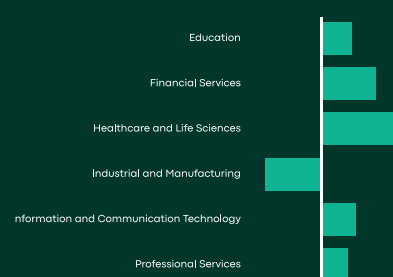


Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry



"Now more than ever, executives need to focus on managing organizations on all dimensions and fronts. In addition, it is important that executive leaders manage organizations systematically and socially. At this time, no organization can succeed without the success of its partners."

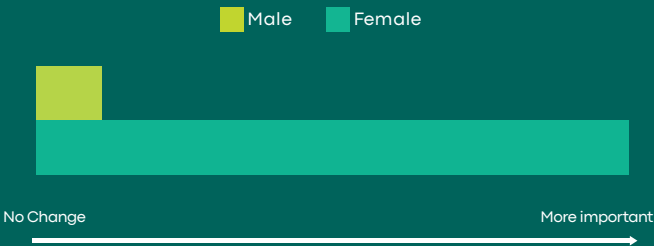
- Industrial sector leader

Key Insights

Ranking of importance for Collaboration, by period

Pre	During	Post
4	11	6

Change in importance score during the pandemic to post pandemic for Collaboration, by gender



Survey data insights

This competency was highly prized to begin with

Collaboration was scored as the 4th most important leadership competency in the pre-pandemic period. This partly explains why the growth in importance of this competency over the course of the pandemic has been modest.

Women value Collaboration far more highly now than at the height of the pandemic

For both women and men, there has been an equal growth in the importance of Collaboration over the course of the pandemic.

But for women, it is the leadership competency with the biggest shift in importance across the periods “during the pandemic” to “post-pandemic”.

Younger people value Collaboration more highly now than at the height of the pandemic

18-30 year old survey respondents are the only age group for whom Collaboration has grown in importance between the periods “during the pandemic” and “post-pandemic”. For other age groups, Collaboration remained equally important across these two periods.

Interview insights

Supply chain collaboration stands out as a key area where leaders have adapted, for example from occasionally engaging and relying on many others to communicate, to having a personal interest in the health and stability of key stakeholders and their place in the value chain with multiple times per day interaction.

This collaborative effort is driven by immediate necessity and best intentions. It is not yet referred to as a designed component of business operations, but this is where the long-term growth opportunity lies if these new competencies are maintained – making exceptional collaboration part of routine work.

BEING PURPOSE DRIVEN

Change in importance: **16th largest increase** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **10th**

Key traits:

Being purpose driven

Focus on objectives

Direction

Being Purpose Driven relates to the goals, direction and objectives that a leader can set to align the team to pull in the same direction. Being clear and focused on these goals and being result-oriented are key attributes to the competency, as well as for a leader to provide wisdom.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic competencies, Being Purpose Driven shows the 16th largest shift in importance, evidenced by the survey data.

The survey data shows that the importance of Being Purpose Driven increased noticeably going into the height of the pandemic. This explains the increase in importance of Being Purpose Driven between “pre-” and “post-” pandemic. There was only a slight increase in importance from “during the pandemic” to “post-pandemic”.

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group



By Gender

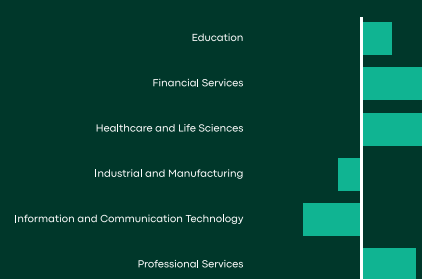


Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry

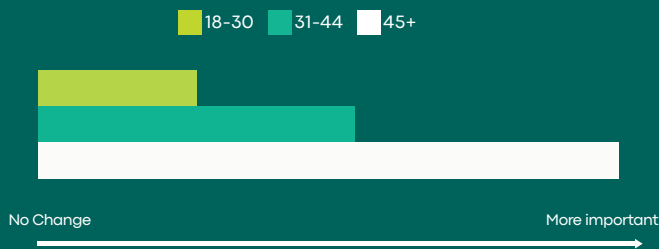


"I believe that Saudi Arabia is unique in instilling this feeling among its citizens and organizations, which is a sense of desire to grow, develop and change and constantly search for the best."

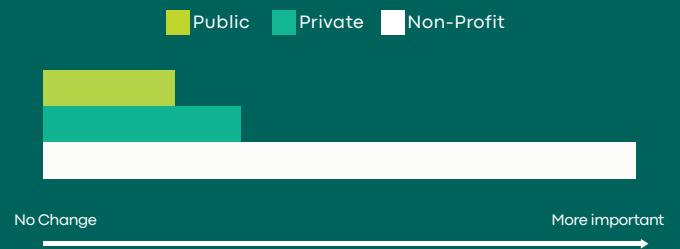
- Central government leader

Key Insights

Change in importance score pre to post pandemic for Being Purpose Driven, by age group



Change in importance score pre to post pandemic for Being Purpose Driven, by sector



Survey data insights

Being Purpose Driven was generally ranked as of high importance before the pandemic

Survey respondents ranked this competency 6th out of all 22 competencies in terms of its overall raw importance for the “pre-pandemic” period.

Age is a large driver for the change in importance of this competency

Older survey respondents demonstrated the greater change in importance for Being Purpose Driven than their younger peers. Yet across all age groups, the change in

importance between the “pre-pandemic” and “post-pandemic” periods was moderate.

The Non-Profit sector shows large growth in importance for this competency, far higher than Public or Private sectors

Both Private and Public sector respondents demonstrated a very modest increase in importance for Being Purpose Driven as a leadership competency. This is a great contrast to respondents from the Non-Profit sector, whose growth in importance for this competency was over 3 times larger than that of their peers.

Interview insights

A clear repeating theme in the interviews is the vital importance of Vision 2030 in leaders' sense of purpose in their response to the pandemic.

Progress with Vision 2030 already inspired leaders with clear and shared purpose, so the leadership reaction to the pandemic for some was an extension of a journey already started.

There are consistent references to the importance of collaboration and wider Saudi societal benefit, so being purpose driven in the leadership response to the pandemic is more about holistic purpose for greater good.

CONTINUOUS SELF-DEVELOPMENT

Change in importance: **17th largest increase** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **11th**

Key traits:

Development

Learning

Education

Continuous Self-Development relates to a leader providing opportunities to their team to continuously develop and improve. Education, learning and training are key to this, with the leader needing to be conscious of the team's, and their own, development needs to satisfy these leadership facets effectively.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic competencies, Continuous Self-Development shows the 17th largest shift in importance, evidenced by the survey data.

The survey data shows the importance of Continuous Self-Development increased consistently as we moved through each phase of going into the pandemic and out. Between the three time periods, the importance increased modestly.

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group



By Gender

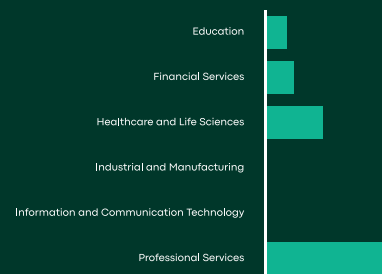


Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry

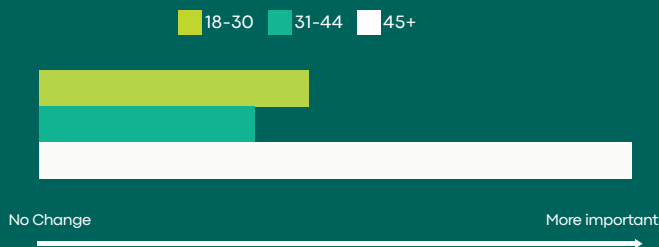


"We don't wish for the pandemic to ever happen again, but it truly helped leaders understand the importance of considering all possibilities and being cautiously optimistic to secure themselves and their organizations and to recognize their decision magnitude of impact."

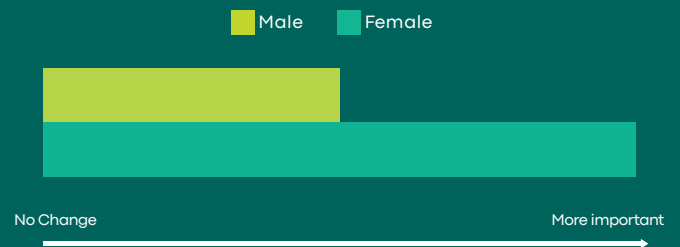
- Travel industry leader

Key Insights

Change in importance score pre to post pandemic for Continuous Self Development, by age group



Change in importance score pre to post pandemic for Continuous Self Development, by gender



Survey data insights

More senior respondents value Continuous Self-Development higher than their younger peers

The overall increase in importance for Continuous Self-Development from pre-pandemic levels is modest. Yet for respondents over the age of 45, there was a fair positive shift in importance for this leadership competency.

A strong shift in importance was not observed for younger respondents, who only showed a very modest change for Continuous Self-Development.

Women value Continuous Self-Development more than men

Female survey respondents demonstrated an increase in importance for Continuous Self-Development which was twice as large as that for men. Men in general displayed a very marginal growth in importance for this competency.

Professional Services has seen the biggest growth in importance for Continuous Self-Development

This jump in importance is higher than for any other industry. For most industries represented in the survey, this leadership competency has either been stable in its importance or only grown very marginally, since before the pandemic.

Interview insights

Interviewees offer reflective comments on the impact of the pandemic on their own learning journey.

This can manifest as leaders referring to the need to learn and adopt digital ways of remote and hybrid working and learning more about health and wellbeing through information received from healthcare leaders.

Comments about self-development refer to experiential learning, including learning from members of staff who leaders might not otherwise have engaged with in a pre-pandemic working environment.

PRINCIPLED LEADERSHIP

Change in importance: **18th largest increase** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **2nd**

Key traits:

Responsible

Commitment

Just

Integrity

Principled Leadership relates to the character and morals of the leader. The competency describes the expectation for leaders to be responsible, fair, committed and hardworking, with integrity.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic competencies, Principled Leadership, shows the 18th largest shift in importance, evidenced by the survey data.

In the survey data, Principled Leadership is the highest ranked competency pre-pandemic and the importance of Principled Leadership continued as we entered into the pandemic. Further emphasis was placed on the competency throughout the pandemic response - with the increase in importance predominantly being driven in the period between "pre-pandemic" and "during the pandemic".

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group

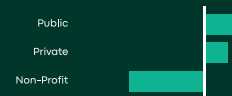


By Gender

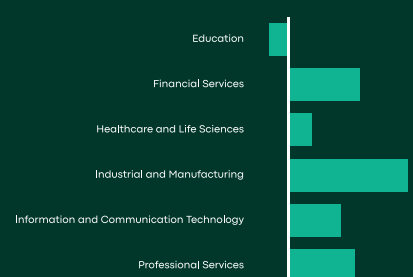


Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry



"Perhaps the biggest change in the context of business is greater awareness among organizations about the difference between managing the organization and the organization's leadership."

- Local government leader

Key Insights

Ranking of importance for
Principled Leadership, by period

Pre	During	Post
1	1	2

Ranking of importance for
Principled Leadership, by gender

	Pre	During	Post
Male	1	1	1
Female	4	3	7

Survey data insights

Principled Leadership is one of the most treasured leadership competencies

The lack of change across the time periods is accounted for by the fact that Principled leadership scored highest in overall importance for leadership competencies pre-pandemic, and during the pandemic, and 2nd highest in overall importance for post-pandemic. What manifests as an overall modest positive change in importance, owes itself to the fact that the competency was highly prized in importance to begin with.

The most important leadership competency for men

Principled Leadership is rated as the most important leadership competency for men pre-pandemic, during the pandemic, and

post-pandemic. Therefore, men are the main drivers for the high importance overall of this competency.

Over 45s, and Non-Profit sector respondents both show a decline in importance for this competency

This is the case for the Non-Profit sector, and for survey respondents over 45 years old. For these demographics, Principled Leadership was actually rated as less important a leadership competency post-pandemic than pre-pandemic.

There is also a decline in importance between the periods "during the pandemic" to "post-pandemic", which is rather pronounced for the Non-Profit sector.

Interview insights

Leaders refer to their personal commitment to their people, their customers and their suppliers with respect and drive.

Many comments from many leaders reveal a deep passion to do the right thing in highly challenging conditions.

Once again, the influence of Vision 2030 can be felt when leaders refer to their responsibility to their nation. Leaders refer to keeping their promises, making responsible decisions with as much supporting information as possible and continuing to empower the next generation of leaders.

EMPATHETIC COMMUNICATION

Change in importance: **19th largest increase** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **5th**

Key traits:

Patience

Understanding

Honesty

Kindness

Empathetic Communication relates to the characteristics of how a leader is able to communicate with understanding and patience. It goes beyond what is expected of a leader in terms of communication that we see in Managerial Skills, and emphasizes the way in which leaders should do so effectively and empathetically.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic competencies, Empathetic Communication, shows the 19th largest shift in importance, evidenced by the survey data.

Empathetic Communication is a highly valued skill, ranking 2nd in importance pre-pandemic to Principled Leadership. In the period from “pre-pandemic” to “during the pandemic” we see an increase in importance, however moving into “post-pandemic” a small decrease is seen.

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group



By Gender

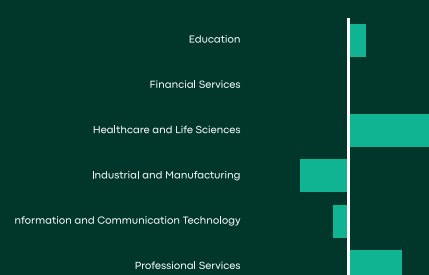


Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry

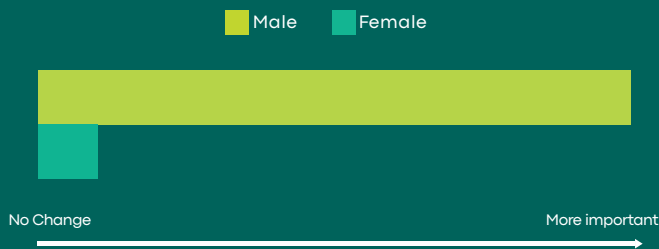


"It was important to know the personal stories of employees as well as the challenges and dilemmas they face at the family and health levels, in addition to providing them with support and advice."

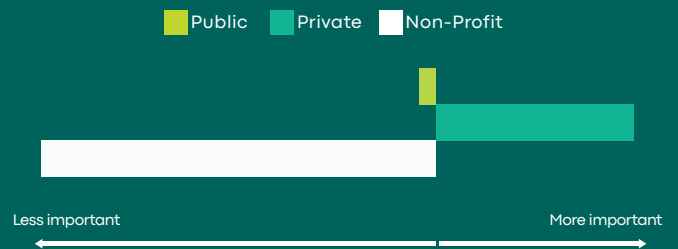
- Local government leader

Key Insights

Change in importance score pre to post pandemic for Empathetic Communication, by gender



Change in importance score pre to post pandemic for Empathetic Communication, by sector



Survey data insights

In general, Empathetic Communication is one of the most valued leadership competencies in raw terms

The lack of change across the time periods is accounted for by the fact that Empathetic Communication scored 2nd in overall importance for leadership competencies pre-pandemic, as well as during the pandemic, and 5th highest in importance for post-pandemic. What manifests as an overall modest positive change in importance, owes itself to the fact that the competency was highly prized in importance to begin with.

For men, Empathetic Communication jumped in importance. For women, it remained stable

The modest increase in importance of this leadership competency owes itself to the fact that female survey respondents did not rate Empathetic Communication more highly in the post-pandemic period than pre-pandemic. By contrast, men did so, and by a fair amount.

Non-Profit sector shows a large decline in importance for this competency, which goes against the grain

This is true when we compare all time periods. It showed a particularly steep decline from "pre-pandemic" to "during the pandemic", where we see the opposite to be true for Private and Public sector respondents.

Interview insights

Empathetic communication references reveal how leaders used their heart and soul to connect with their people to help ease their experience of the pandemic.

Leaders offered their own vulnerabilities and stories of overcoming challenge to inspire and connect with those going through the many varied impacts of the pandemic.

This expression of humanity for some leaders represented a very welcome restoration of skills that were not being used to their full potential – the pandemic has released even more human capital potential in senior leaders.

CONSERVATISM

Change in importance: **20th largest increase** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **22nd**

Key traits:

Strict

Serious

Cautious

Conservatism relates to a group of traits that often relate to more traditional aspects of leadership. Leadership traits such as strictness and seriousness feature heavily in this competency. Themes of authority, seniority and prudence are also present.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic competencies, Conservatism shows the 20th largest shift in importance, evidenced by the survey data.

The survey data shows that Conservatism has increased only marginally in importance between the "pre-pandemic" and "post-pandemic" period. There was a noticeable increase in importance between "pre-pandemic" and "during the pandemic", however this gain was primarily reversed as we came out of the pandemic.

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group



By Gender



Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry



"Crisis management requires a balance between having a firm management style while at the same time having the ability to win and align others in one direction to cope with the crisis."

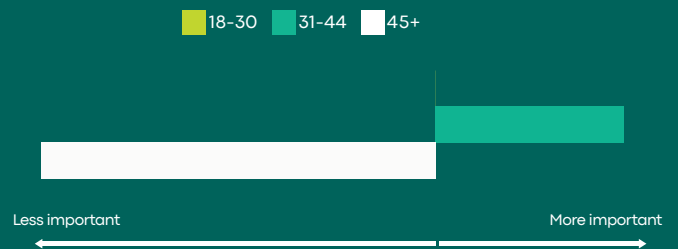
- Industrial sector leader

Key Insights

Ranking of importance for Conservatism, by gender

	Pre	During	Post
Male	19	21	21
Female	22	16	22

Change in importance score pre to post pandemic for Conservatism, by age group



Survey data insights

Conservatism is rated the least important leadership competency in the post-pandemic period

Despite there being a modest positive change in importance of this competency, it is in raw terms the competency which scored the lowest in terms of overall importance among survey respondents.

Women valued Conservatism slightly higher in the height of the pandemic, but its importance has since fallen even more sharply

Conservatism was ranked the least important leadership competency of all 22 studied, for female survey respondents. Despite a brief rise in its stated importance for the period "during the pandemic", it then fell sharply again to its pre-pandemic levels.

For senior employees aged 45 and over, this leadership competency has fallen drastically in importance

Conservatism was not a frequently cited leadership competency among survey residents. Yet among 45+ year olds who did class it as important, Conservatism went from being the 2nd most important leadership competency pre-pandemic, to being the least important competency in the post-pandemic period.

Conservatism was valued strongly by Healthcare workers at the peak of the pandemic

This is a unique finding among the industries studied, reflecting the critical, specific leadership style which was valued at a time of great crisis.

Interview insights

Leaders refer to the importance of making quick decisions in response to the pandemic without losing balance or focus on the knock-on effects.

This caution is addressed by seeking as much information as possible in the time available, but accepting the overall picture might be incomplete.

So, whilst preferences for prudent decisions were expressed, conservative norms were challenged by the many varied implications of the pandemic.

Balancing conservatism with new ways of working for some leaders became a core message in their expression of their response to the pandemic.

POSITIVE MINDEDNESS

Change in importance: **No change** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **21st**

Key traits:

Confidence

Goodness

Enthusiasm

Positivity

Positive Mindedness relates to the character of a leader to be optimistic, enthusiastic and positive. This group of traits come together to show the importance of a positive minded leader for a team.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic competencies, Positive Mindedness showed no overall change in importance, placing second from bottom among all competencies, as seen in the survey data.

The survey data shows that the importance of Positive Mindedness didn't change between the "pre-pandemic" period and the "post-pandemic" period. Going into the pandemic, the importance of Positive Mindedness decreased, the only competency to do so. However, going from "during the pandemic" to "post-pandemic", the importance of Positive Mindedness increased back to "pre-pandemic" levels.

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group



By Gender



Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry



"The current business context forces the leader to recognize the magnitude of the challenge ahead and at the same time maintain high and positive morale in meeting these challenges...Humans can only do their best when they have positive feelings about themselves and their surroundings."

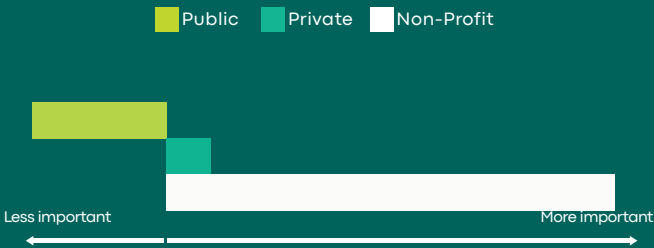
- Industrial sector leader

Key Insights

Ranking of importance for Positive mindedness, by age group

	Pre	During	Post
18-30	4	22	20
31-44	19	22	22
45+	3	5	9

Change in importance score pre to post pandemic for Positive mindedness, by sector



Survey data insights

18-30 year olds show a significant overall decrease in importance for this leadership competency

18-30 year olds were the demographic for whom Positive Mindedness decreased in importance over the course of the pandemic. This is especially true over the time periods “pre-pandemic” to “during the pandemic”, where Positive Mindedness fell from being the 4th most important leadership competency, to being the least important one.

A strong industry divergence is present for Positive Mindedness

Some industries such as Healthcare and Industrial & Manufacturing rate this competency as less important in the post-pandemic period. Other industries such as ICT value it more in the current post-pandemic period than before the pandemic

Non-Profit sector shows an increase in importance for this competency

There is a strong positive shift in importance for Positive Mindedness among Non-Profit sector survey respondents. However, this positive change is counterbalanced by a negative change in importance seen across Private and Public sector survey respondents.

Interview insights

Leaders respectfully refer to the pandemic as an opportunity for organizational evolution and growth. This positive mindedness then sets a tone for leadership teams to embrace the challenges of the pandemic as efficiency improvement opportunities.

Some leaders refer to extreme improvements in productivity so the combination of positively minded leadership inspiration with other key features of the response to the pandemic, such as Remote Leadership, drive tangible results. These in turn for some leaders stimulate feedback loops where positivity drives further positivity through results.

BOLDNESS

Change in importance: **Small decrease** | Post-pandemic importance rank: **17th**

Key traits:

Strength

Courage

Passion

Ambitious

Boldness relates to a leader's character and ability to drive things forward, encapsulating a group of traits which include assertive leadership which also touches on themes of authority and dominance.

When comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic competencies, Boldness was the worst performing leadership competency. It showed a drop in overall importance, placing last out of 22 competencies, as evidenced by the survey data.

The survey data shows that Boldness was the only competency which showed a drop in importance between "pre-pandemic" and "post-pandemic" periods. There was a slight increase in importance for Boldness going into the pandemic, however as we move out of the pandemic, respondents saw Boldness as increasingly less important.

Change in importance

Between pre- and post- pandemic.
Increase indicates competency has become more important



Demographic breakdown

By Age Group



By Gender

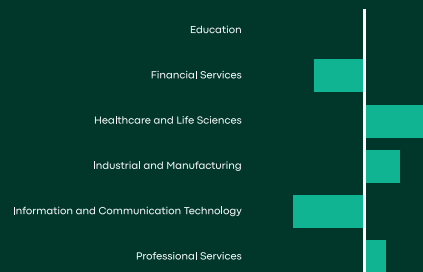


Industry breakdown

By Sector



By Industry

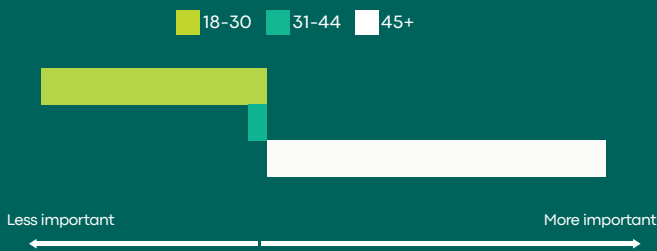


"I believe that leaders should set great goals for themselves and for their organization and push to achieve these goals."

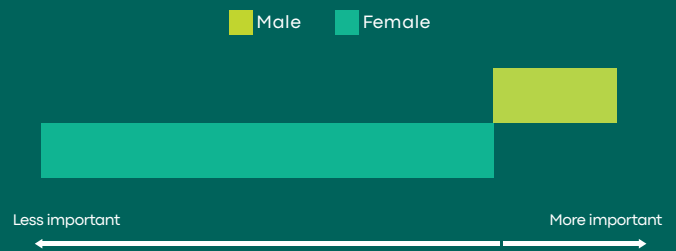
- Pharmaceutical sector leader

Key Insights

Change in importance score pre to post pandemic for Boldness, by age group



Change in importance score pre to post pandemic for Boldness, by gender



Survey data insights

Age is a very strong driver for the performance of this leadership competency

Boldness is the only one of our 22 emerging leadership competencies to become less important after the pandemic than before it. Age is one of the key factors for explaining this trend. Younger employees valued it significantly less, and older employees valued it significantly more; this dichotomy is shown clearly in the survey data.

Gender is likewise a very strong driver for Boldness decreasing in importance

Similarly to age, we see a difference in how men and women valued this competency. For women, Boldness saw a significant drop in

importance between the pre-pandemic period and the post-pandemic period, whereas for men it increased in importance overall.

In particular, females aged 18-30 were responsible for a sharp decrease in importance of Boldness.

The Non-Profit sector shows a steep increase in importance for Boldness

For the Non-Profit sector, Boldness goes from being the 15th ranked competency in importance pre-pandemic, to the 2nd highest ranked competency post-pandemic. This steep growth in importance is the highest among all leadership competencies for Non-Profit sector respondents.

Interview insights

References to boldness most frequently emerge when discussing the influence of Vision 2030 setting the tone for the transformation of Saudi Arabia before the pandemic.

Boldness in response to the pandemic is expressed in stoic but softer terms, revealing deep intrinsic motivation to meet the needs of others through troubling times. So, explicit references to being bold are less frequent than might be expected – but there is no lack of ambition. Leaders are certainly expressing their desire to maintain transformed ways of working that drive exceptional benefits.

5 APPENDIX B: METHODOLOGY

A. Research methodology and approach

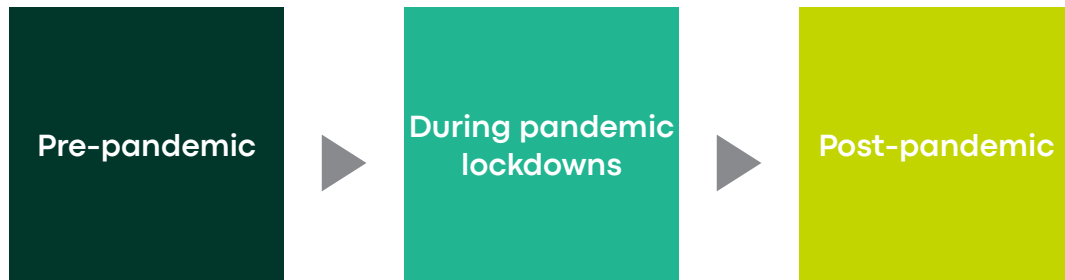
Methodology

To better understand how leadership competencies changed as a result of the pandemic and to better understand what skills future leaders need to thrive in today’s business context, this research study has been designed based on two key parameters.

- 1) Triangulation: The principles of Source and Method triangulation have been adopted to ensure that data is collected from leaders themselves, as well as from others who are on the receiving end of this leadership. The use of multiple data collection tools ensured that a depth and breadth of views and experiences were captured.

Source	Method
Desk review	Scientific literature and professional publications
Existing documentation	Misk reports and Competency Model
Leaders	Interviews
Managers	Focus Groups
Employees	Survey

2) Segmentation: The guiding hypothesis of this study entailed that leadership skills may not only be different before and after the pandemic, but also at different stages of the pandemic. Accordingly, data were collected relating to three distinct phases: the two years before the pandemic; immediately after the start of the pandemic; and the post-pandemic period. The latter period is defined as the most recent period after the rollout of vaccination programs and a return to some levels of normality in certain areas of life and work.



Data Collection Tools

Desk Review & Existing Documentation

A variety of scientific and technical literature was reviewed in order to identify any leadership competencies that were found to be important following the start of the pandemic. Academic articles were then systematically reviewed, as well as reports from academic bodies and publications such as ILO, McKinsey, Harvard Business Review, UN, UNDP and other similar entities, using the following key terms:

Leadership + competencies + competency model + skills + attributes + KSAOs + traits + post pandemic + agile/agility + adaptable/ adaptability + resilient/resilience + covid 19 + managing pre and post pandemic

In addition to literature from established academic bodies and thought leadership entities, academic journals were studied to identify relevant peer-reviewed studies which elaborated on leadership competencies, and existing leadership frameworks.

Existing documentation from the Misk Foundation was also reviewed, particularly the Foundation's leadership competency model. This literature provided a Saudi Arabia-relevant cultural focus and context for leadership traits and competencies, which helped to ensure that the research approach remained grounded in a local context.

In total, 15 documents comprising academic papers, peer-reviewed journals and Misk Foundation materials were reviewed as part of the desk-based research portion of this study, from which an initial list of 14 leadership competencies emerged.

Synthesis of Desk Review & Existing Documentation

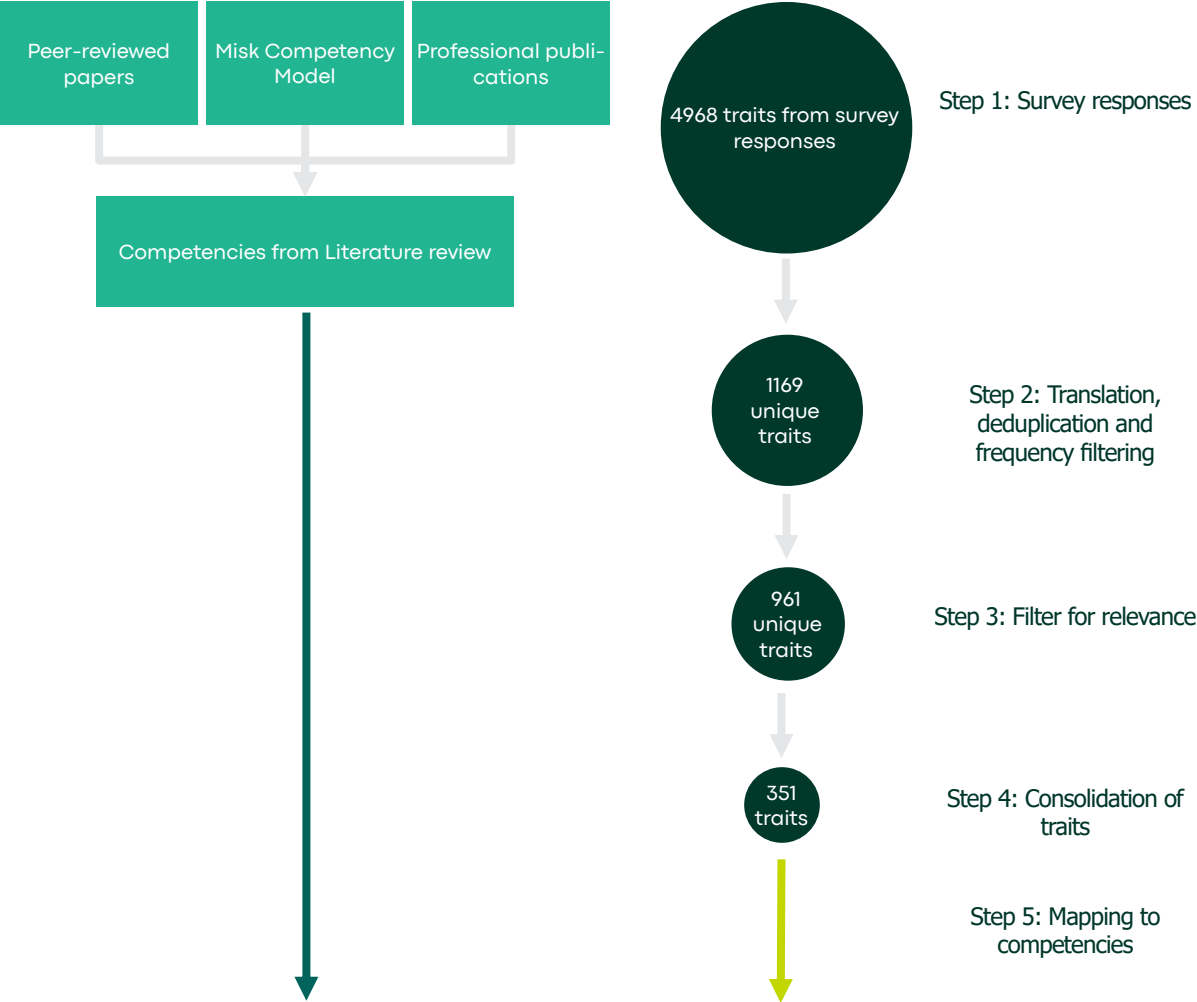
Summary of competencies for post-pandemic leadership – Professional publications

	*UNDP (Jun 2020)	Forbes (Jul 2020)	Deloitte (2021)	UN (Feb 2021)	Gartner (Apr 2021)	HBR (Apr 2021)	McKinsey (Apr 2021)	Horton (Aug 2021)	PA (Sep 2021)
Be agile and flexible		Adaptable & flexible	Adapting & resilience		Increase agility & flexibility	Be flexible		Adapt & change; agility – quick thinking	Agility
Put people first	Be optimistic; emotional intelligence		Skills not roles; culture of trust & confidence	Emotional intelligence active -listening; coaching, mentoring & regular feedback	Focus on skills not roles; career development; employee experience	Humble; integrity; great listener; empathy, authenticity; accrue support; form coalitions and partnerships	Be kind; thankful; positive; be aware of physical & mental wellbeing	Empathy; compassion	Put people first; be aware of biases to different ways of working; understand what individuals need from the team
Be purpose driven	Purpose-driven not plan-driven	Future goals	Organizational purpose	Clear vision & strategy					
Under-stand tech & data-driven decision making	Fast decisions with incomplete data		"Phy-gital" environment		Address inequalities of on-site and remote working; digital collaboration; follow best-practice use of employee data	Under-stand what technology can do; understand impact of technology on people's lives		Data-driven decision making; go fully digital	Build inclusive & connected hybrid teams
Innovate & collaborate			Collaboration & engagement			Innovate & try new things; have the courage to fail & allow others to fail		Promote collaboration with diversity	Encourage experimentation

Summary of competencies for post-pandemic leadership – Professional publications

	Campbell (Jun 2020)	Dirani et al (Jul 2020)	Diab-Bahman et al (Dec 2020)	Amis (Mar 2021)	Donald (May 2021)
Be agile & flexible		Balance, adaptability, flexibility & resilience	Employees expect flexibility in working hours		Speed; adaptability; creativity
Put people first	Social connections, justice, equity, identity and community	Inter- & intra-personal skills, stress management, promote emotional stability	Family obligations; hybrid working	Understand how inequities have deepened	
Be purpose driven		Social awareness			Achieve societal goals
Understand technology & data-driven decision making		Make quick decisions; technology for learning, networking needs & enabling alternate working locations			Measurement of value of speed, innovation & adaptability; early change identification & critical thinking; analysis
Innovate & collaborate	Collaboration	Tap into collective leadership			Innovation for ongoing change

The 22 leadership competencies identified in this research study were derived through a thorough and robust methodology.



22 leadership competencies identified in this research study

14 emerged in the desk-based literature review		8 emerged in data analysis
A Sustainability Mindset	Diversity and Inclusion	Boldness
Agility & Flexibility	Emotional Intelligence	Conservatism
Being Purpose Driven	Health & Wellbeing	Empathetic
Change Management	Innovation	Communication
Collaboration	Putting people first	Excellence & Aptitude
Continuous Self Development	Remote Leadership	Managerial Skills
Decision Making	Strategic Thinking	Positive mindedness
		Resilience

Data Collection Approach

Both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered and assessed through this research study; qualitative data in the form of interviews and focus groups, and quantitative data in the form of a survey.

Interview & Focus Group - qualitative data

Interviews and focus groups were designed in a manner that was targeted to executives and business leaders, and followed both exploratory and confirmatory approaches.

First, data were collected in an exploratory manner - that is, without guiding participants to talk about particular areas of leadership but instead presenting questions to elicit free responses from them. These took the form of open-ended questions about changes in the business context, as well as changes in leadership skills in particular, felt across the course of the time periods studied.

In the subsequent section of the exploratory interview approach, participants were guided to specific areas of leadership, based on established and recognised models of leadership extracted from the literature review (including the 'EFQM' model). This was done, in the event that the participant did not allude to these specific areas within their previous answers. This approach helped ensure a more complete coverage of leadership skills relating to all aspects of the business (e.g. employees, strategy, customers etc).



Additionally, the interview and focus group design incorporated the 'Critical Incident Technique' (Flanagan, 1954), which involves asking respondents to consider specific examples where they have seen both positive and negative practices. This method relies on a 'storytelling' approach to ensure that critical and specific information from participants is captured (and to mitigate the risk of vague and general responses), even if participants were not using technical terms for competencies.

Focus groups were designed in a manner similar to the interview, in terms of content; however, the questions were modified into activities to ensure all focus group participants had the chance to express their opinions. For example, instead of only asking questions about what competencies were needed pre and post pandemic, participants were first asked to write these down individually before any discussion.

Synthesis of Interview & Focus Group

Interviews and focus groups were analyzed following the principles of 'Template Analysis' (King, 2006), which outlines an approach of thematically analyzing qualitative data. A first layer of analysis sought to identify references to the 14 leadership competencies established through the desk-based research, which had been mapped against the Misk competency model. New competencies were only created in situations where none of the existing themes fit some element of the data.

To ensure quality and minimize subjective bias, a panel of three coders worked on the data, meeting regularly to consolidate findings.

Survey - quantitative data

Similarly, the survey was developed following an exploratory-confirmatory approach. Participants were first prompted, in either English or Arabic language (at their preference) to provide a list of the most important competencies associated with leadership across the three phases of our analysis, without having been biased with any confirmatory suggestions. The specific question asked of survey respondents at this stage was "What were the 3 most important traits, skills or competencies for workplace leaders to have, in order of importance?", across each of the three periods studied. This took the form of a freely-given text response, so respondents were able to use their own language and expression in their response.

They were then provided with a list of competencies to rate for 'importance' on a 3-point Likert scale for each of the three time periods analysed (pre-pandemic, immediately after the pandemic, and as we move into a post-pandemic world). The list consisted of traits extracted from the literature review (confirmatory approach), as well as traits entered by the user (exploratory approach). This method allowed the identification of the most important leadership competencies participants valued during the three phases, as well as identifying the 'extent' of their importance. The data were analysed, with insights pulled out through relative comparisons - between different demographics, sectors, industries and time-periods.

Data validation and consolidation

Once quantitative data had been gathered through the deployment of the survey, several steps were necessary. These took place to firstly validate the data, ensuring its quality and relevance, and secondly to consolidate the vast dataset into a practical set of terms which could be analyzed with meaning. The following process was undertaken to achieve this:

- **Translation:** surveys which had been completed in Arabic were translated by linguistic experts into English, with translators ensuring to retain the meaning of the skills and competencies provided by survey respondents in their translation.
- **Deduplication:** wherever multiple instances of the same words had been provided, they were deduplicated to refine a long list of traits to a more concise one without duplicates.
- **Frequency filtering:** each survey response was then ranked in terms of its prevalence within the survey responses. At this stage, some survey responses were excluded from further consideration if they had only been mentioned once in the entire survey. This was done to enable a practical analysis of the most important and most frequently-mentioned traits. After this stage, just under a thousand traits remained for analysis.

- **Relevance filtering:** The filtered responses were then examined analytically for their relevance to leadership skills, knowledge, and attributes. Any responses not relevant to leadership were excluded at this stage.
- **Consolidation:** The remaining final list of relevant traits was then consolidated into a more concise list of traits, by grouping words which had almost entirely the same meaning into a meaningful and consolidated single grouping. For example, the traits “making decisions”, “decision-making”, “decisive”, could all be grouped into the single trait “Decision making”.
- **Grouping into competencies:** A final qualitative assessment was undertaken by researchers to assign the 351 consolidated and relevant traits into the final list of 22 leadership competencies presented in this research study. Of these 22 competencies, 8 of them emerged from the survey and interview data, whereas 14 had already been identified at the desk-based research stage.

List of competencies derived after data collection and validation stages

<i>A Sustainability Mindset</i>	<i>Empathetic Communication</i>
<i>Agility & Flexibility</i>	<i>Excellence & Aptitude</i>
<i>Being Purpose Driven</i>	<i>Health & Wellbeing</i>
<i>Boldness</i>	<i>Innovation</i>
<i>Change Management</i>	<i>Managerial Skills</i>
<i>Collaboration</i>	<i>Positive Mindedness</i>
<i>Conservatism</i>	<i>Principled Leadership</i>
<i>Continuous Self-Development</i>	<i>Putting People First</i>
<i>Decision Making</i>	<i>Remote Leadership</i>
<i>Diversity & Inclusion</i>	<i>Resilience</i>
<i>Emotional Intelligence</i>	<i>Strategic Thinking</i>

Data analysis

Several steps were taken to ensure an effective analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative data could take place.

For the quantitative data, the survey responses against a 3-point Likert scale had originally rated leadership competencies as “Not very important”, “Important” or “Extremely important”. These were given a quantitative rating from zero to two respectively, which allowed a quantitative scale to be created, against which all leadership competencies could be measured. Against this scale (effectively, an “importance” scale), data were aggregated and assessed in the form of two measures: raw importance scores, and the degree to which importance scores had changed across the time periods studied. These two measures of “raw importance” and “change in importance” form the basis of the analytical research presented in this study.

The combination of these two measures is important, as it enables the research to present a holistic view of the leadership competencies; not only defining what has changed, but also defining what has remained important.

For the quantitative data collected through interviews and focus groups, the interviews were coded one by one using a coding template. Within this template, each interview transcript was examined line by line, and any mentions of relevant leadership competencies, traits or attributes were noted in the template, against the time period they referred to. These mentions of traits were tagged to specific lines in each interview, and were then mapped against the overall leadership competency to which they referred. In this way, competencies could be assessed, and also contrasted against the emerging pattern from the survey data.

Interpreting the findings from this research study

The 22 competencies that emerge from this research study should all be viewed as important. There are two data points which evidence why this is so.

Firstly, in collecting the data which fed into this research, survey respondents and interviewees were asked to present the most important skills, leadership traits and competencies of leaders across the timeframes studied. Therefore, if a competency emerged in the survey data, it is important by definition. Leadership competencies which were not valued by survey respondents or interviewees would not have emerged in either the survey data, or the interviews.

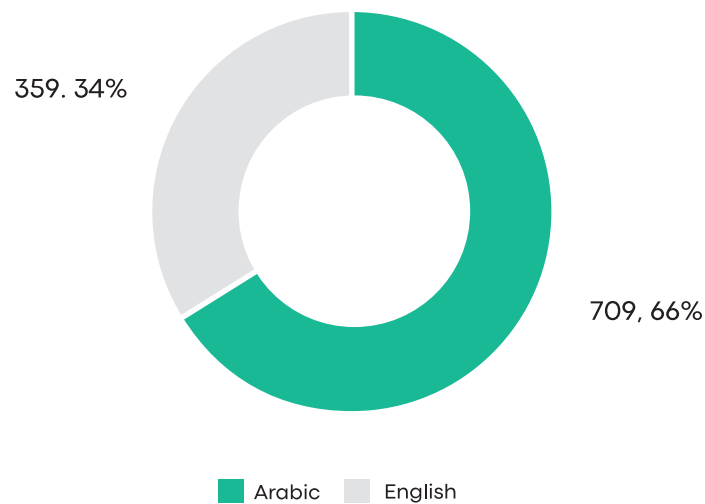
The second data point is that survey respondents were found, on average, to have rated each of the 22 emerging leadership competencies between “somewhat important” and “very important”, in their assessment of the competencies across the studied timeframes.

Therefore, the 22 leadership competencies presented in this report are not to be interpreted as a league table of leadership competencies, where the competencies are ranked in order of importance. Rather, they have all emerged as relevant parts of a leader’s toolkit, which can be applied in specific ways.

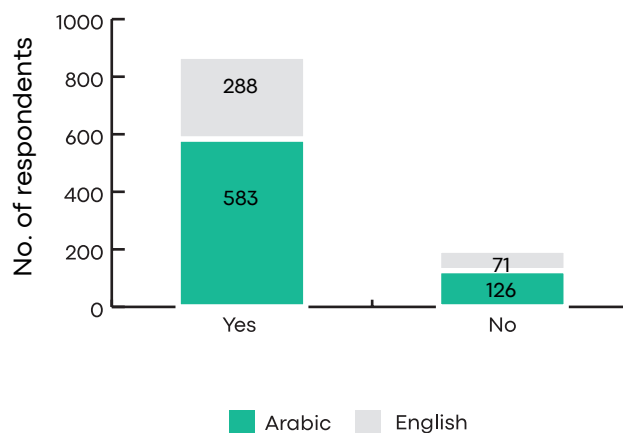
B. Demographics of survey respondents

In this section, we present the demographic breakdowns of the 1,068 survey respondents whose responses formed the basis of the quantitative analysis.

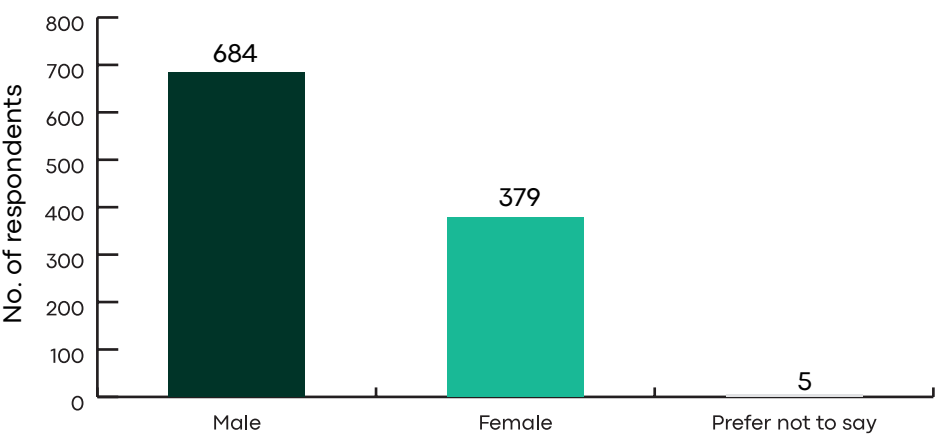
Responses by language



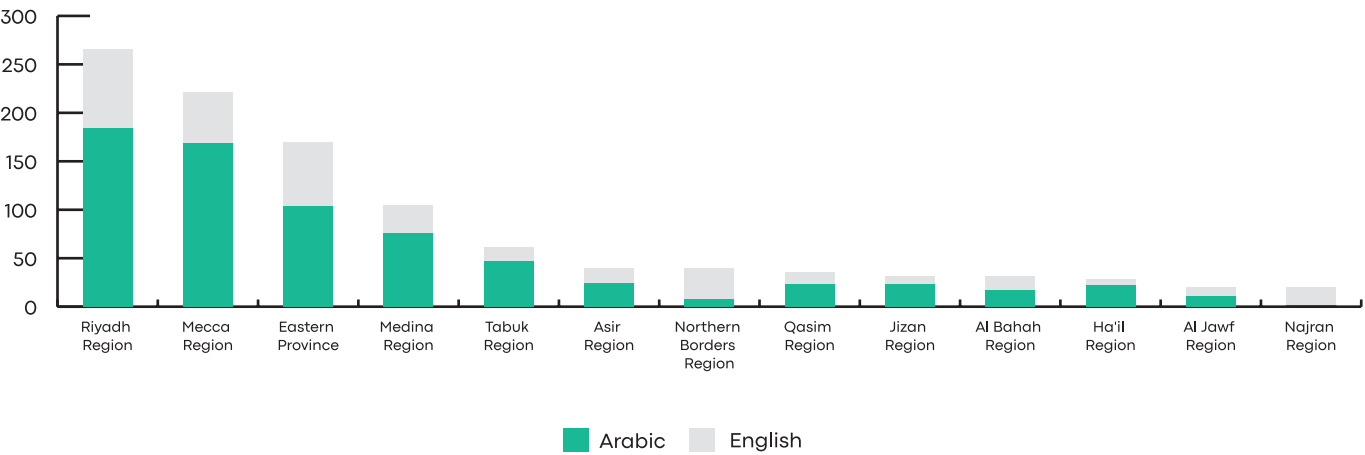
Responses by nationality



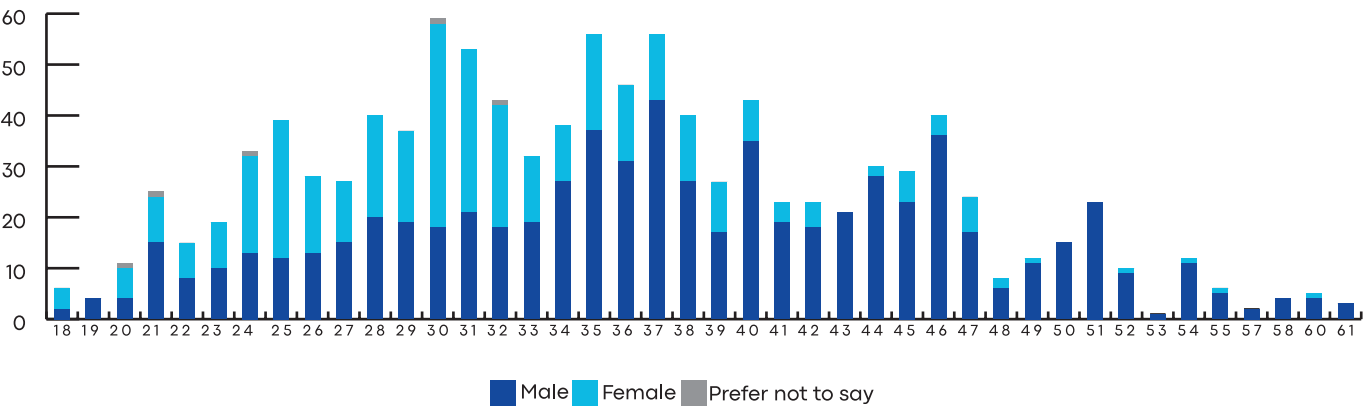
Responses by gender



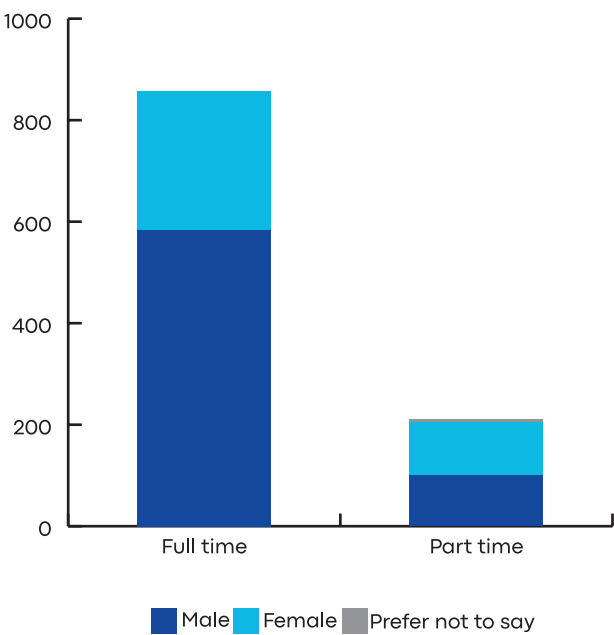
Responses by city



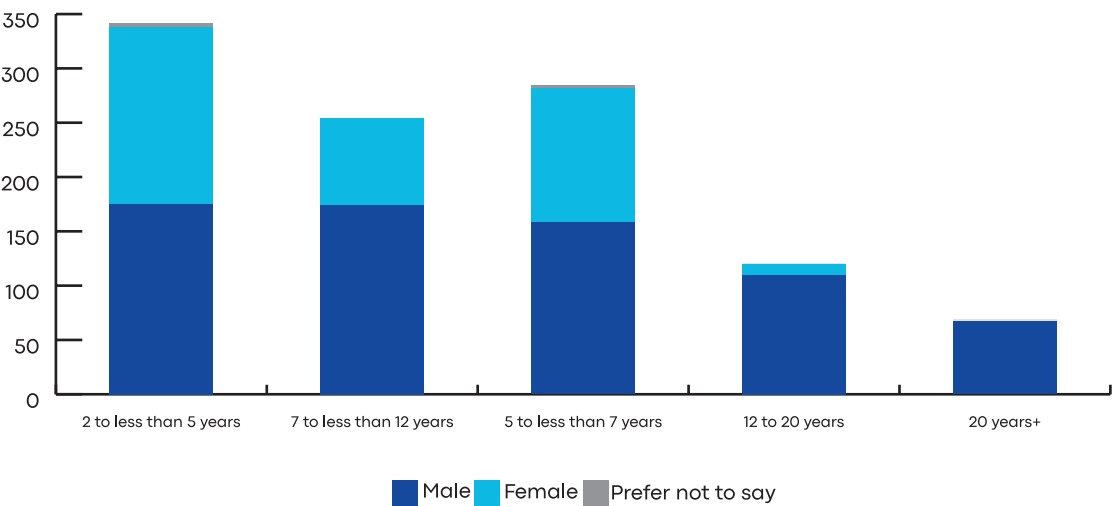
Responses by age



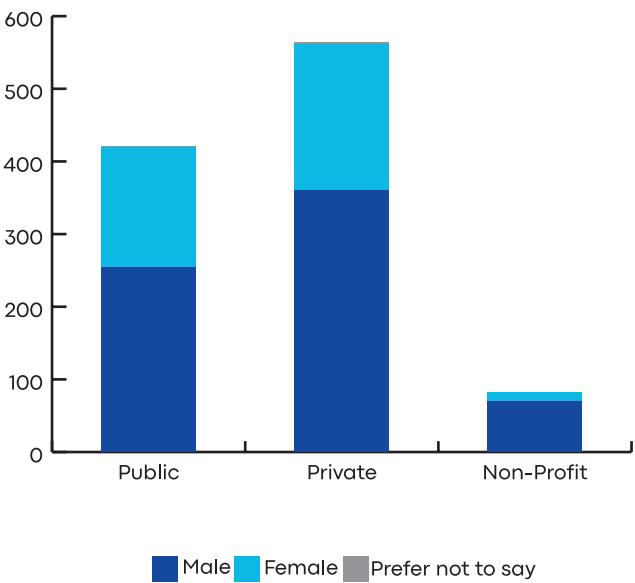
Responses by employment status



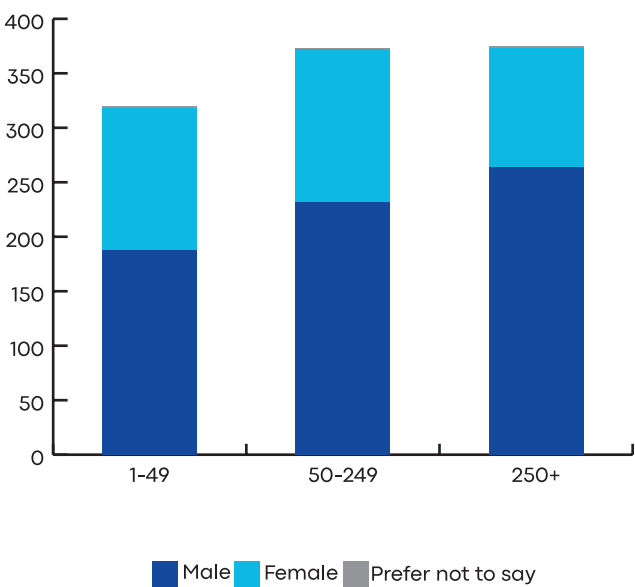
Responses by employment tenure



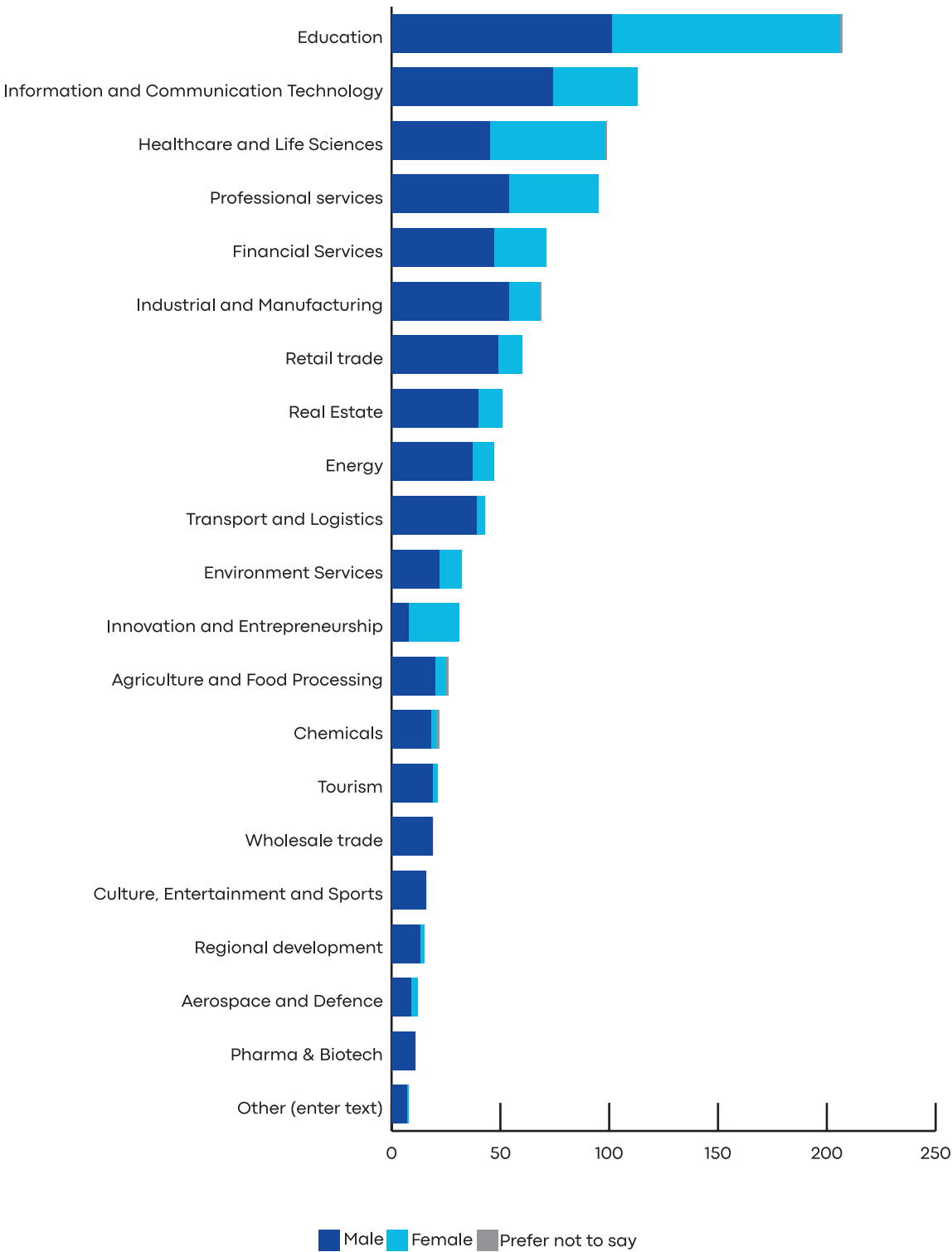
Responses by employment sector



Responses by company size



Responses by industry





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