



## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 outbreak has caused a global health emergency and an economic slowdown impacting millions of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) around the world, including the Pacific region. As international tourism plays a major role in local Pacific economies, travel bans and restrictions on gatherings in particular are affecting businesses across this region.

Pacific Trade Invest (PTI) has commissioned Fifth Quadrant, an independent research agency, to run a regular survey to understand the ongoing effects of COVID-19 on the Pacific’s private sector. The 12<sup>th</sup> wave of PTI’s Pacific Business Monitor surveys includes responses gathered from 1 to 14 March 2021, from 136 businesses across the Pacific region, including 63 female-led/owned businesses.

This report includes data from the top three Pacific countries that provided responses, giving insight into the nuances between different Pacific countries and the effect COVID-19 is having on the private sector.

It is a long road ahead and through the regular PTI Pacific Business Monitor surveys, the objective is to provide governments, donors and stakeholders with valuable data on how businesses in the Pacific are coping.

## ABOUT PACIFIC TRADE INVEST

The PTI Network is an agency of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and is the Pacific’s leading trade and investment promotion agency.

With offices in Australia, China and New Zealand, the PTI Network develops and promotes trade and investment across international markets.



## IMPACTS ON BUSINESSES IN THE PACIFIC

- The extent and severity of COVID-19 on Pacific businesses has remained relatively stable, with 80% (91% Fiji) reporting a negative impact.
- 81% (75% Fiji) of businesses reported a decline in revenue due to COVID-19, which is consistent with last wave.
- 69% (58% Fiji) are confident that their business will survive the COVID-19 crisis.

## CHALLENGES & SUPPORT NEEDED

- The top three challenges facing businesses as a result of COVID-19 are:
  - » Impact of closed international borders (86% Pacific, 92% Fiji)
  - » Not knowing how long the crisis will last (81% Pacific, 92% Fiji)
  - » Poor cashflow (80% Pacific, 88% Fiji)
- The top four initiatives businesses require assistance with are:
  - » Financial support (55% Pacific, 50% Fiji)
  - » Review financial position (46% Pacific, 25% Fiji)
  - » Diversify business (26% Pacific, 33% Fiji)
  - » Improve online-commerce capabilities (25% Pacific, 21% Fiji)
- 59% of female-led businesses report having barriers that prevent them actioning initiatives to support their business, compared to 34% of male-led businesses.

## PERSONAL IMPACTS ON BUSINESS DECISION-MAKERS

- The negative toll on mental health has worsened, with 65% (79% Fiji) reporting a negative impact on their mental health.
- The proportion of businesses reporting a very negative impact on community wellbeing has decreased to 28% (48% Fiji).

# CURRENT IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON BUSINESSES IN THE PACIFIC



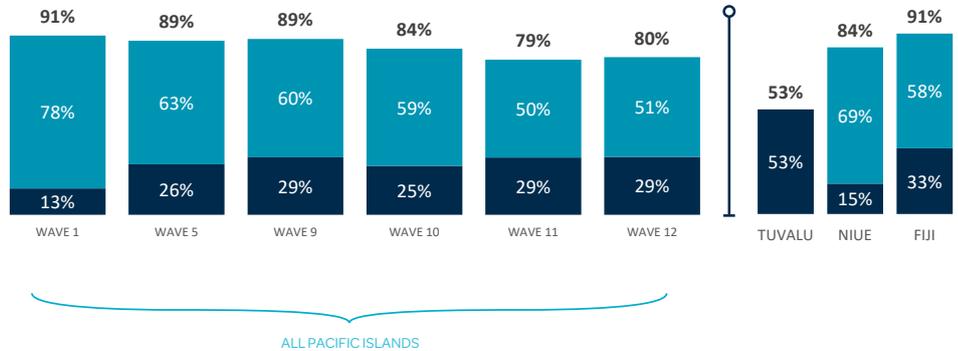
**91%**  
FIJI

REPORTED A NEGATIVE IMPACT DUE TO COVID-19

COVID-19 continues to have a negative impact on businesses as borders remain closed. The severity of impact has remained relatively stable this wave, with 80% (91% Fiji) reporting a negative impact.

## REPORTED A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON BUSINESS\*

Very negative impact      Slightly negative impact



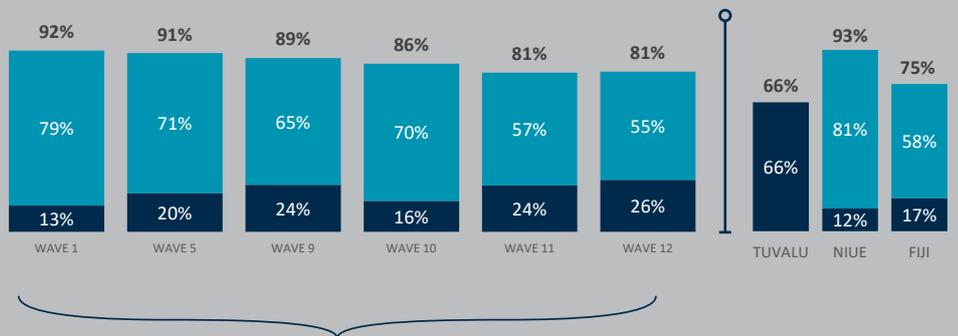
**75%**  
FIJI

REPORTED A DECLINE IN REVENUE

81% (75% Fiji) of businesses continue to report a decline in revenue due to COVID-19. The severity of revenue impact has slightly improved, with 55% (58% Fiji) reporting a significant decline in revenue.

## REPORTED A DECLINE IN REVENUE\*

Significant decline      Slight decline



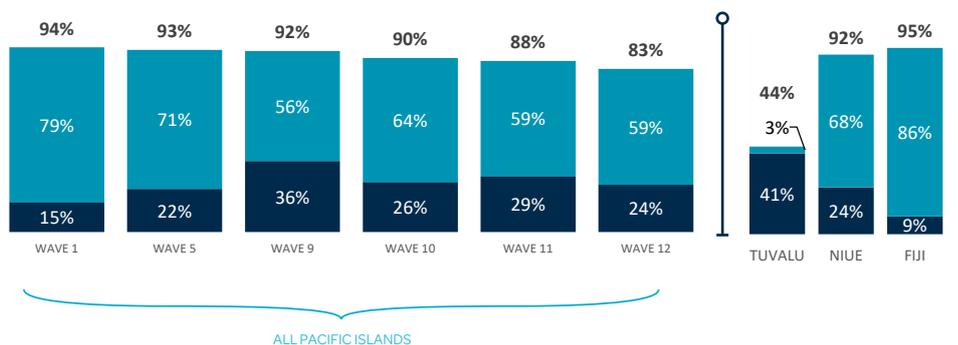
**95%**  
FIJI

BELIEVE COVID-19 HAS NEGATIVELY IMPACTED THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Negative perceptions of the local economy have also decreased this wave, with 83% (95% Fiji) reporting a negative impact on the local economy.

## BELIEVE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE LOCAL ECONOMY\*

Very negative impact      Slightly negative impact



\*Percentages rounded to nearest whole number

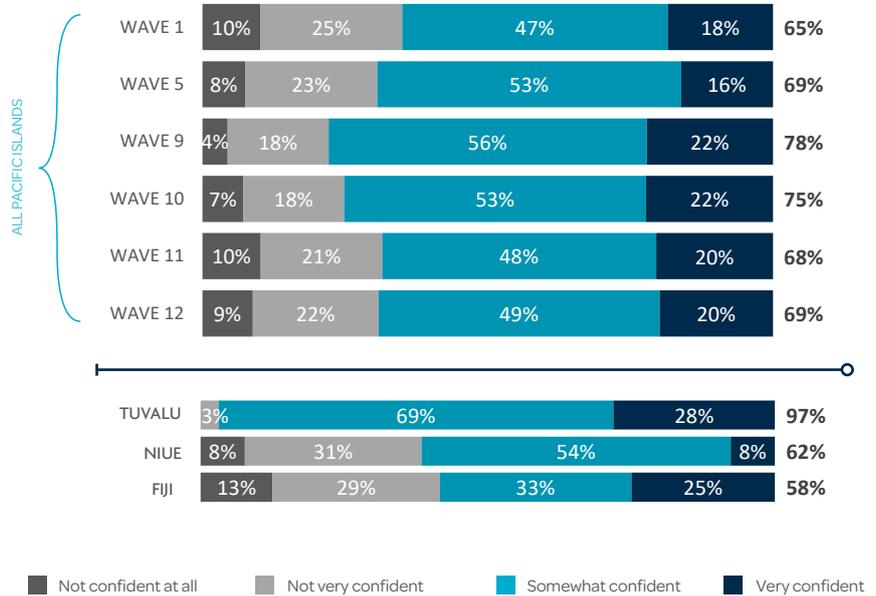


**58%**  
FIJI

ARE CONFIDENT THAT THEIR BUSINESS WILL SURVIVE THE COVID-19 CRISIS

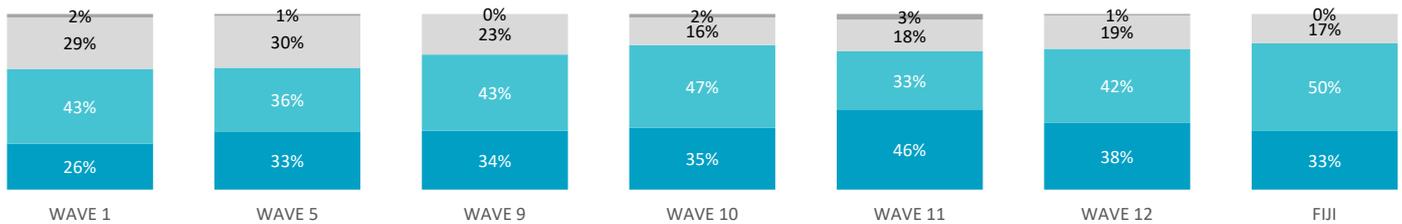
69% (58% Fiji) are confident that their business will survive the COVID-19 crisis.

## CONFIDENCE IN BUSINESS SURVIVAL AFTER COVID-19



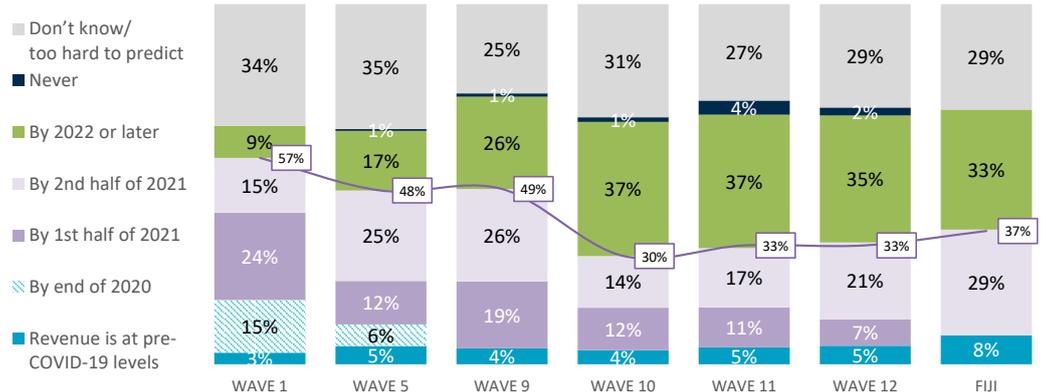
## BUSINESS STATUS

Permanently closed (dark grey), Temporarily closed (light grey), Partly operational (light teal), Operational (dark teal)



## WHEN WILL REVENUE RETURN TO PRE-COVID-19 LEVELS?

Expectations of returning to business as usual are consistent with the last wave, with one in three businesses (37% Fiji) expecting to return to business as usual by the end of 2021.



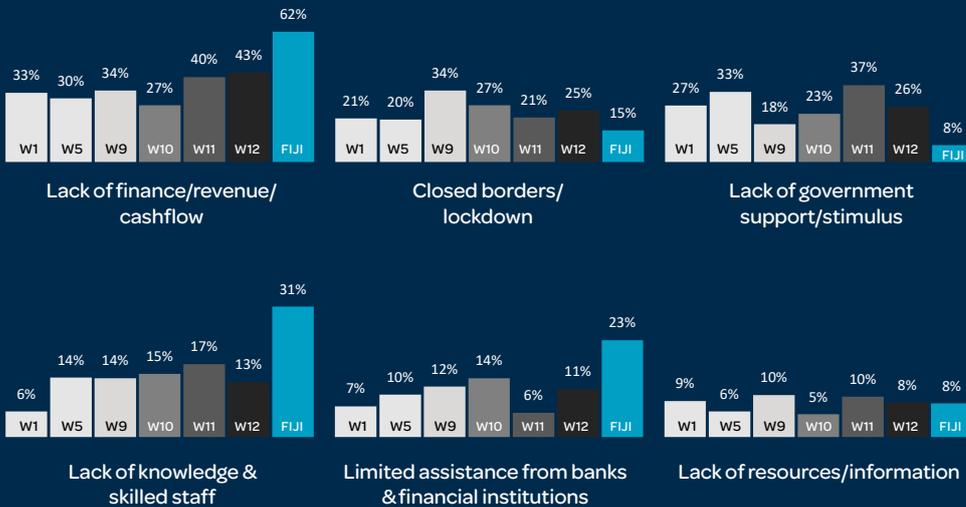
# ACTIONS TAKEN TO REDUCE COST/DAMAGE TO BUSINESS



**46%**  
58% FIJI

## BARRIERS TO ACTIONING INITIATIVES

46% (58% Fiji) reported that there are barriers preventing them from actioning initiatives to support their business.

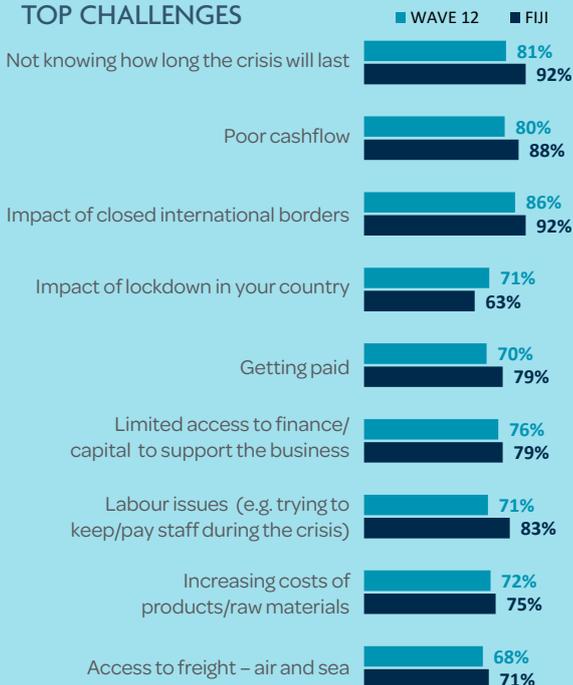


“High shipping costs, difficulties with online payment methods/costs, low & fluctuating cashflow.”  
– SME, Manufacturing, Fiji

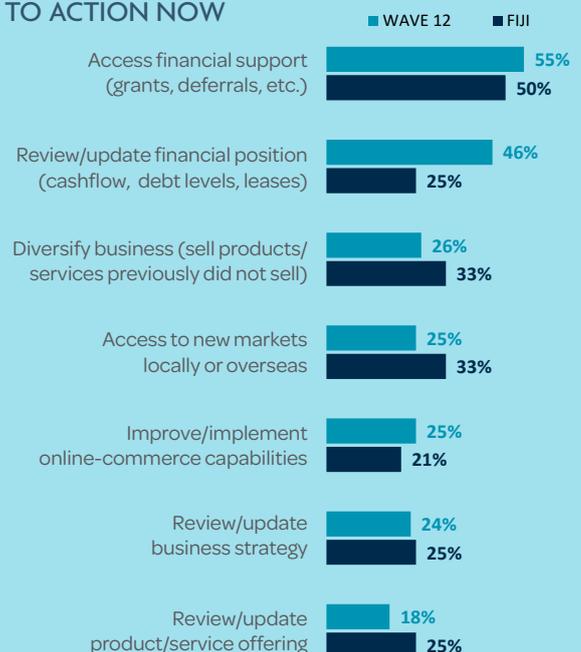
“Closed borders, no government dialogue for medium term planning, no financial assistance to meet fixed costs even though we are closed for business.”  
– SME, Tourism, Tonga

“Closed borders. Lack of access to online trade sites due to location. Niue does not meet the criteria for online trade because of our isolation and lack of trade routes.”  
– SME, Information, Media & Telecommunications, Niue

## TOP CHALLENGES

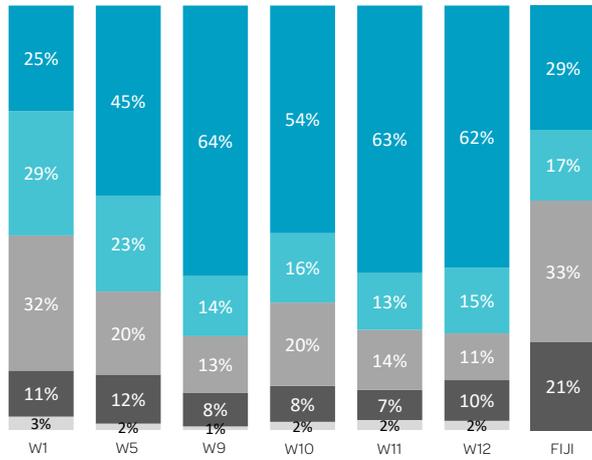


## TOP INITIATIVES NEEDED TO ACTION NOW



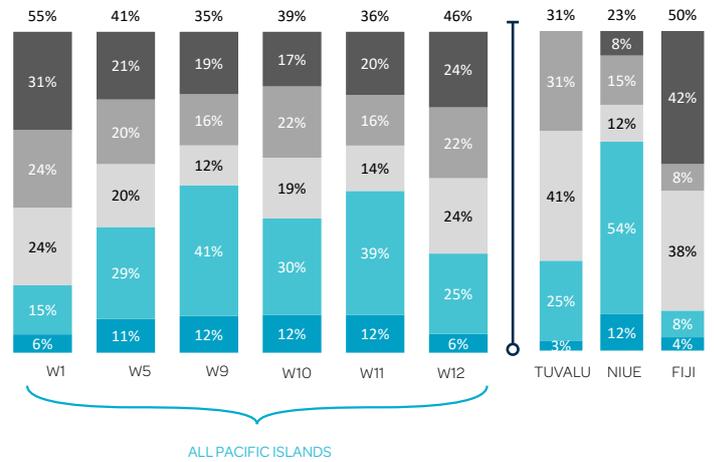
# GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

## HAS YOUR BUSINESS ACCESSED ANY SUPPORT?



Yes, the government has provided some support  
 Not yet, but we will require support from the government  
 Our government has not provided any support to businesses  
 No support required  
 Don't know

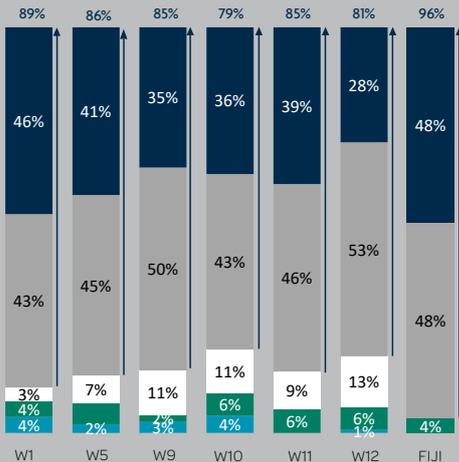
## SATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE



Extremely satisfied  
 Somewhat satisfied  
 Extremely dissatisfied  
 Somewhat dissatisfied  
 Neutral

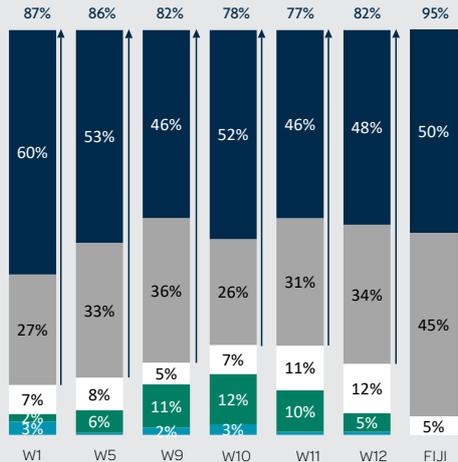
# PERSONAL WELLBEING

## WELLBEING OF THE COMMUNITY



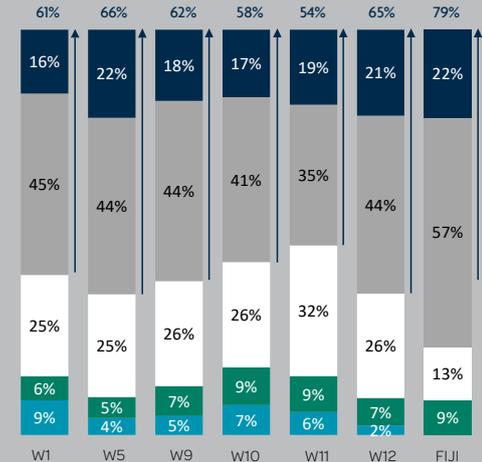
The proportion of businesses reporting a very negative impact on community wellbeing has decreased to 28% (48% Fiji).

## PERSONAL FINANCIAL SITUATION



COVID-19 continues to have a significant impact on business decision-makers' personal financial situation; those reporting a negative impact has increased to 82% (95% Fiji).

## MENTAL HEALTH

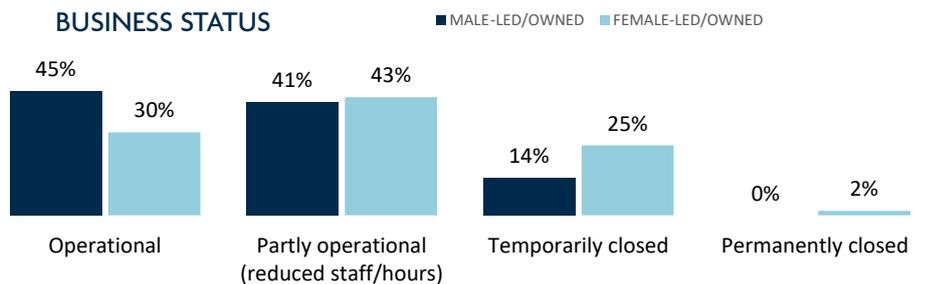
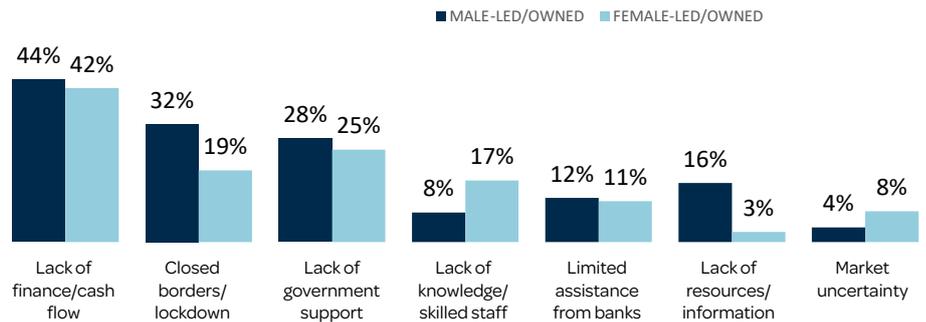
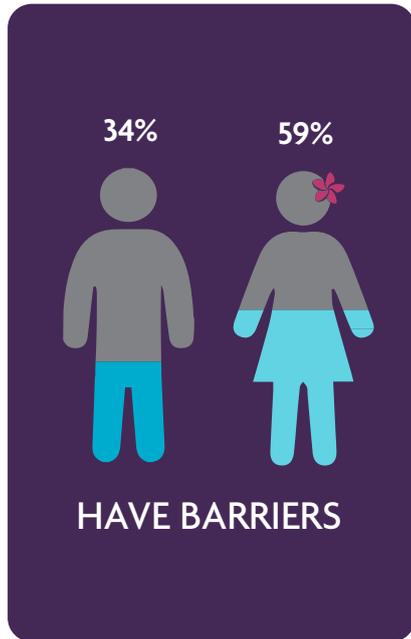


The negative toll on mental health has worsened since last wave, with two thirds reporting negative impact on their mental health (79% Fiji).

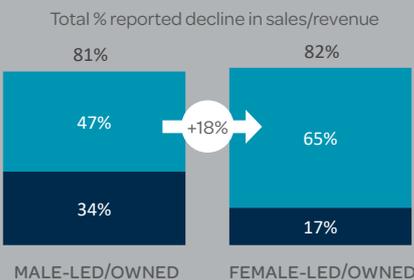
Very negative   Slightly negative   No impact   Slightly positive   Very positive

# IMPACT ON FEMALE-LED/OWNED BUSINESSES IN THE PACIFIC

## BARRIERS PREVENTING ACTIONING OF INITIATIVES

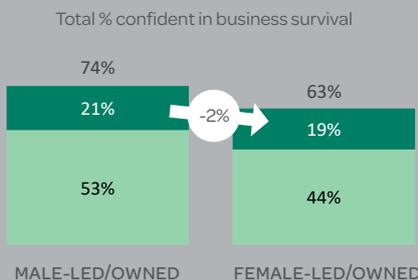


### IMPACT ON BUSINESS REVENUE



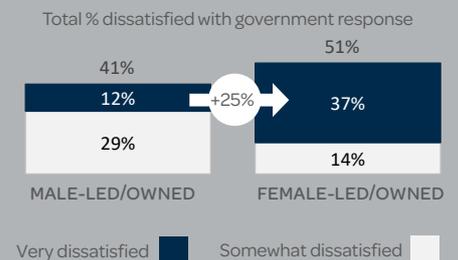
Significant decline in sales/revenue ■  
Slight decline in sales/revenue ■

### CONFIDENCE IN BUSINESS SURVIVAL



Very confident ■  
Somewhat confident ■

### SATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE



Very dissatisfied ■ Somewhat dissatisfied ■

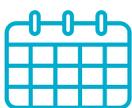
### % have received government support



\* Percentages rounded to nearest whole number

## METHODOLOGY

This is the twelfth wave of PTI's Pacific Business Monitor surveys



Responses were collected 1 – 14 March 2021



5-minute questionnaire



All surveys completed online



All respondents are decision-makers/owners in small and medium-sized businesses



A wide selection of industry sectors are represented



The information in this report is based on 136 respondents from across the Pacific region

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



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