

Six insights to get the most from your ISO certification

Ideas from ISO certified
firms on taking their
management systems
to the next level

ISO Insights Report 2020

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The Summary

In the last 12 months, a lot has happened to people and organisations the world over. COVID-19. Recession. Climate change. These events have impacted heavily on compliance and on meeting ISO standards.

During July and August 2020 we surveyed over 100 organisations to seek what value they are getting from being certified to ISO standards and what impact these world changing events have had on them.

The insights from this survey indicates some significant changes have occurred over the last 12 months.

The 6 insights were:

1. There appears to be fewer manual-based management systems. There is a noticeable movement to SaaS-based management systems like Mango.
2. There has been a drop off in satisfaction from being certified to ISO standards.
3. There appears to be a significant drop off of senior management commitment to meeting ISO standards.
4. The employee commitment to ISO standards has reduced in the last 12 months.
5. The satisfaction with the performance of external auditors has reduced.
6. Meeting customer requirements is now the main reason for gaining ISO certification. Previously improving processes, reducing waste and reducing costs was the main reason for seeking ISO certification.

Insight #1

The number of manual-based management systems are reducing. There is a noticeable movement to SaaS-based management systems like Mango.

The survey found that the percentage of respondents, with manual-based management systems, reduced dramatically in the last 12 months. It dropped down from 50% to 32%.

It is assumed that to counter that, the number of SaaS-based (or Cloud-based) and in-house developed electronic systems (like Sharepoint) increased significantly.

This insight is something that we have predicted for years but have never had the hard data to back it up.

For many years we've been advocating that QHSE Professionals should look to save time and money and implement an online SaaS-based management systems. It just makes good sense.

Having products like Mango in place means you can spend less time on compliance activities such as updating policies or procedures, updating spreadsheets and so on.

The time saved can be put into making business improvements.

This means doing things like "Going to the Gemba", conducting Kaizen events or conducting improvement projects.

These activities will help make your organisation more efficient and at the same time more resilient to recessions and pandemics.

Takeaway

Stop wasting your time doing manual-based compliance activities. Instead, focus on doing value-adding business improvements.

Insight #2

There has been a drop off in satisfaction from being certified to ISO standards.

Data from the survey findings suggests that in the last 12 months there has definitely been a drop-off in satisfaction with the value received from ISO certification.

I believe that with the pressure just to keep organisations afloat, this has impacted on maintaining ISO management systems.

It is really difficult to determine cause and effect here, but there was significant drop off of satisfaction with being ISO certified in the last 12 months.

This is also reflected in the general drop-off in interest in searching standards like “ISO 9001” in Google. Here is a chart from Google Trends highlighting this drop-off in interest from 2004.

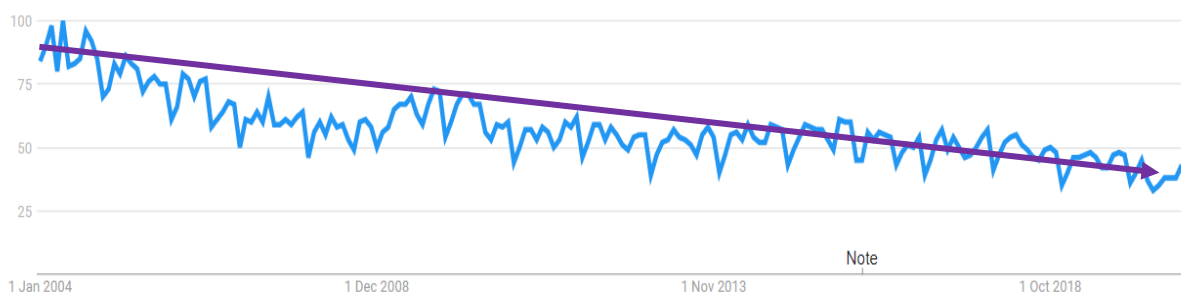


Figure 1: Google Trends for the Search term “ISO 9001” Since 2004.

Takeaway

Is there a drop off in satisfaction with ISO certification in you organisation? I there is put in some business improvement projects to rectify this.

Insight #3

There appears to be a significant drop off of senior management commitment to meeting ISO standards.

In the previous ISO Insights Report in 2019, there was an important finding around Management and Leadership; “The more your Leadership team is committed to their management systems, the greater the level of satisfaction from being certified to the international standards”.

The findings in this year’s 2020 report indicates that there has been a perceived drop in the Management commitment to ISO Management Systems in the last 12 months.

This drop is very concerning for organisations that are certified.

As per the 2019 report, the common understanding is that if your Leaders (at all levels in the organization) are committed to your management systems then you will get improved compliance and you will successfully pass your external audits. If your Leaders aren’t committed to ISO Certified systems then this makes your job as a Compliance Professional more difficult.

Takeaway

This is something you continually have to work on.

Engage with your Senior Management Team and discuss the value they get from your management systems.

Ask your leaders the following:

“Why are they less committed?”

“Is there something that can be fixed quickly?”

“Is the culture not conducive to these management systems?”

“Are our systems too bureaucratic?”

From the replies work hard to get an improvement in commitment.

Insight #4

The employee commitment to ISO standards has reduced in the last 12 months.

A finding from the previous year's ISO Insight Report 2019, acknowledged that if you have a committed Leadership team, the greater the level of employee participation in your management systems.

However this survey has found that employee commitment to your ISO certified management systems has reduced significantly in the last 12 months.

It's crucial that you get employee involvement, engagement and participation in your management systems. It is proven that if you get that, then you have an enhanced compliance with standards, regulations and laws. That enhancement will mean likely achievement of your objectives like "improved quality", "safer workplaces" and "reduced pollution".

Takeaway

You will need to survey your own employees to see if they are experiencing this same reduced employee commitment.

If you do find this drop-off, then work hard on some strategies to get the commitment levels up.

These strategies could include increase training, recognition rewards, staff surveys, enhanced employee participation in developing systems and employee reps at a Board Level.

Insight #5

The satisfaction with the performance of external ISO auditors has reduced.

When organisations get certified to ISO standards, there really is no way for us looking in and knowing whether they are satisfied with their external auditors. Most organisations just want to get a certificate on the wall. Most don't care about the auditors, they just want the certificate. That's how they get measured by their bosses. If the certificate is on the wall then job done!

But anecdotally, we know that most organisations aren't happy with their external Certification Body auditors.

There are many stories about that. One common one is if you just talk to the auditor about their favourite hobby, in this case motorbikes, then you are guaranteed to get certified. Your system could be the worst in the world but if you know about motorbikes, distract the auditor and talk endlessly about them, then here's certificate.

For external auditors the more non-conformances they raise, the more work they have to do writing the report. Then there is time faffing around getting the non-conformances cleared and closed-off. Then when they are closed there is more administration for the auditor to get through.

Who needs the hassle? It's just easier to raise no non-conformances.

External auditors want an easy life. Too many non-conformances means more conflict. Most people want to be conflict avoiders – so don't raise non-conformances.

Takeaway

What can you do?

Shop around your Certification Bodies and find an auditor that you will get value from. Not just a consultant but a professional auditor that will look you in the eye and tell you that your systems are crap and aren't working.

Insight #6

Meeting customer requirements is now the main reason for gaining ISO certification.

This is an interesting finding. Last year the main reason for seeking ISO certification was all about improving processes, reducing waste and reducing costs. Something has changed.

This suggests that organisations are more worried about winning work because the customer said they need to be ISO certified.

From my view, with Covid-19 making organisations rethink their overall strategies, there is a tendency to refocus on just “staying in business”. If that means winning work at all cost; then securing work is becoming more important than continuous improvements activities.

This short term thinking could be costly for organisations. Just focussing on winning work, can mean that organisations are at a greater risk, long term, of going out of business. They become so focussed on increasing income and reducing costs then customers may suffer from a lack of support.

I guess that is what Senior Management and Boards of Directors are thinking right now.

Takeaway

It's a misnomer to focus in income and reducing costs forever.

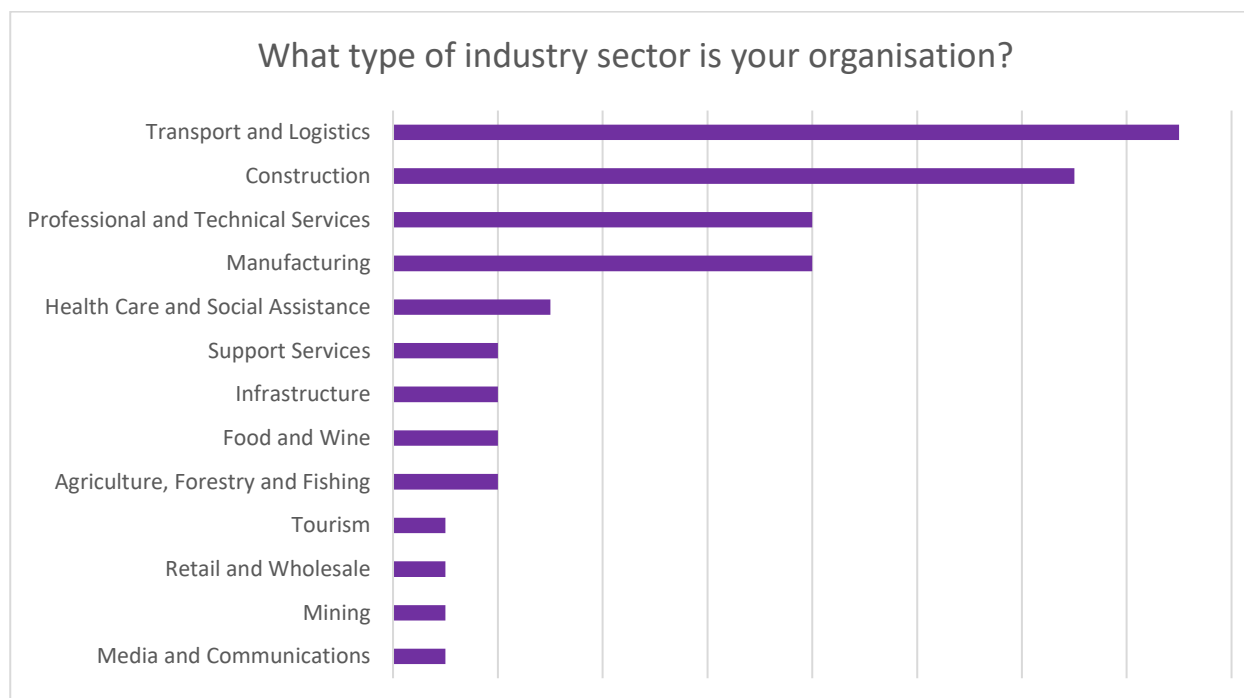
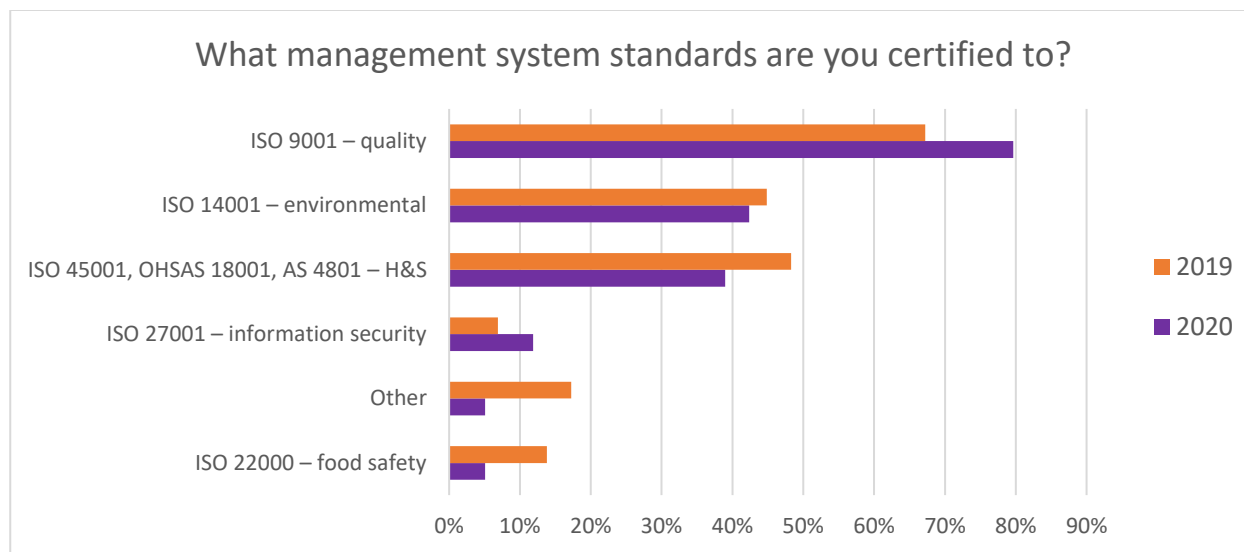
Making business improvements and total customer focus are the “secret sauce” for the long term security of businesses.

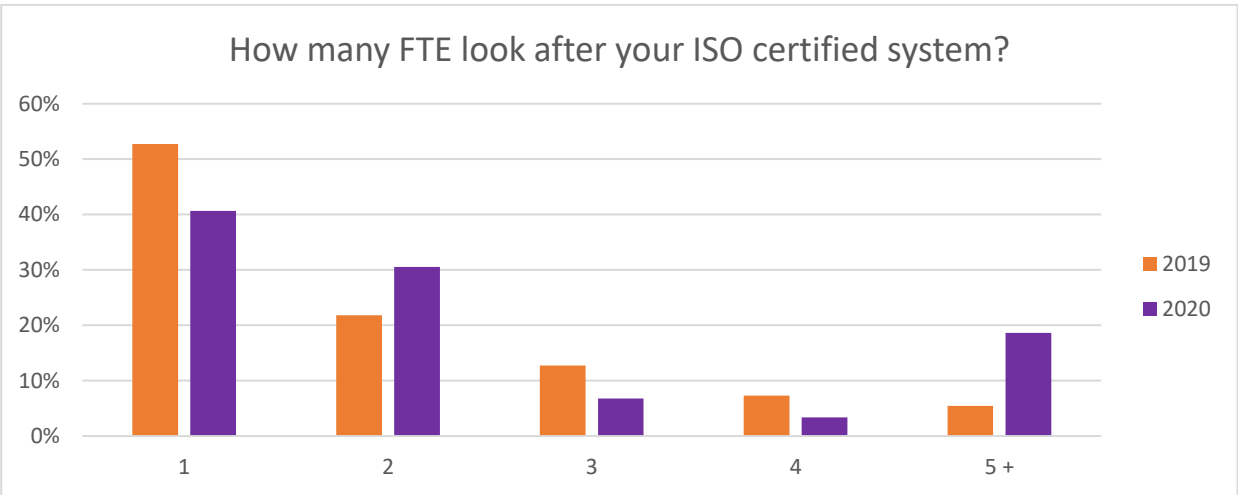
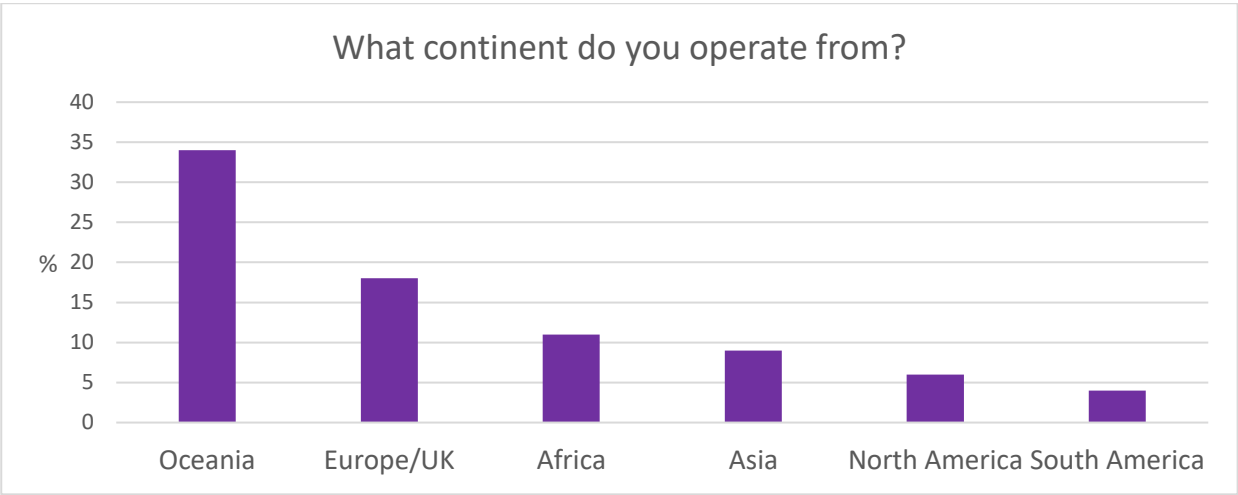
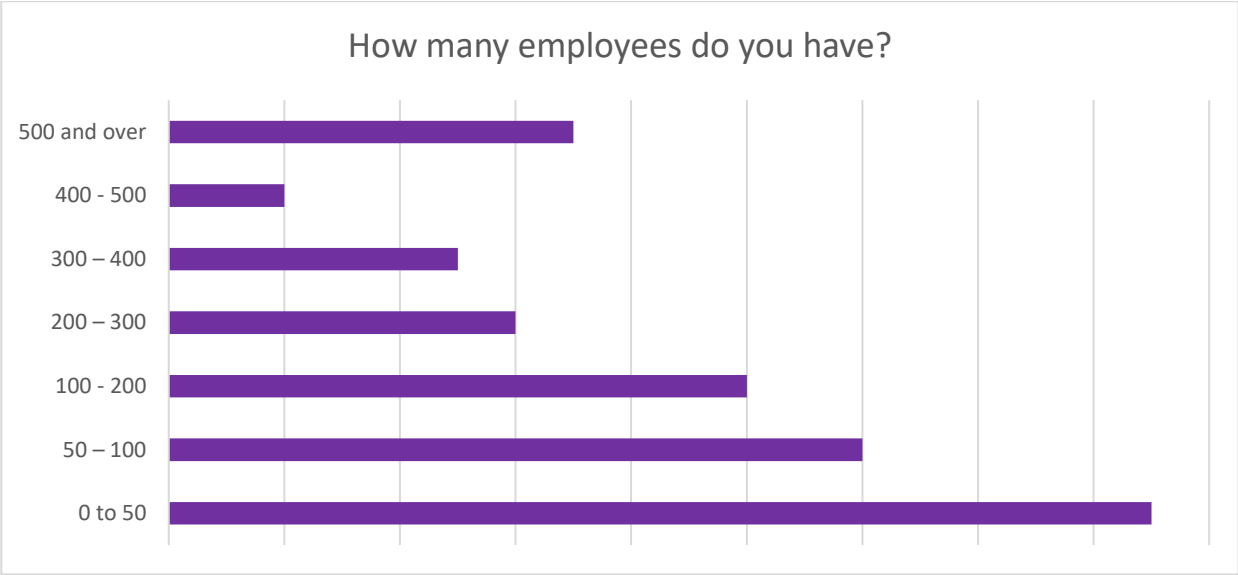
The Data

Survey Duration:

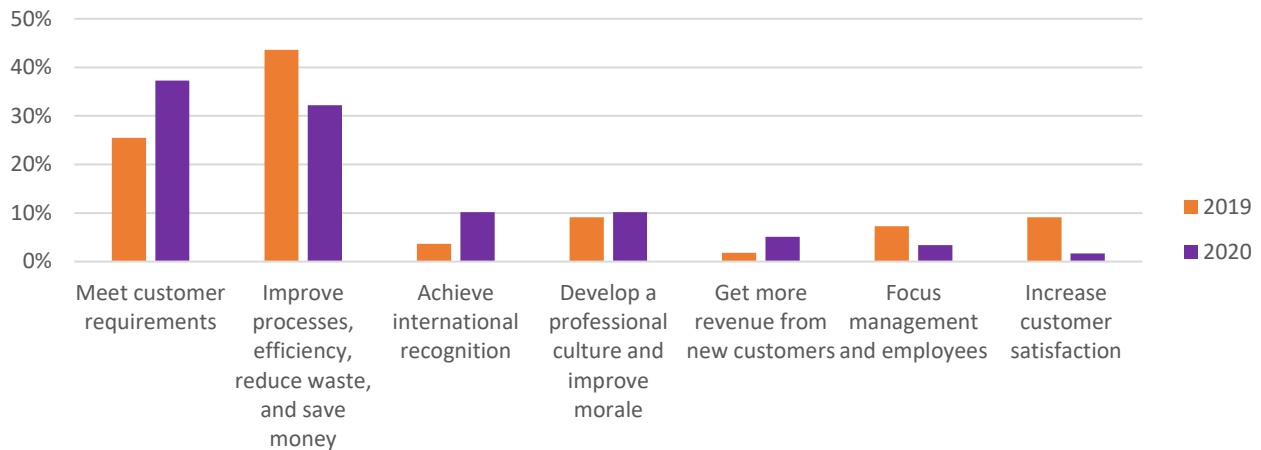
1 July – 31 August 2020

Total number of participants in the survey: n = 110

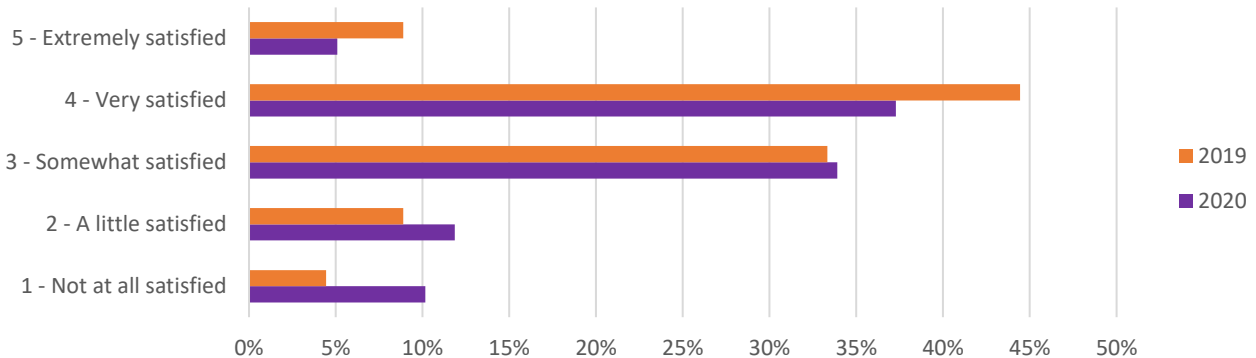




What is the main reason for maintaining certification to a standard in the future?



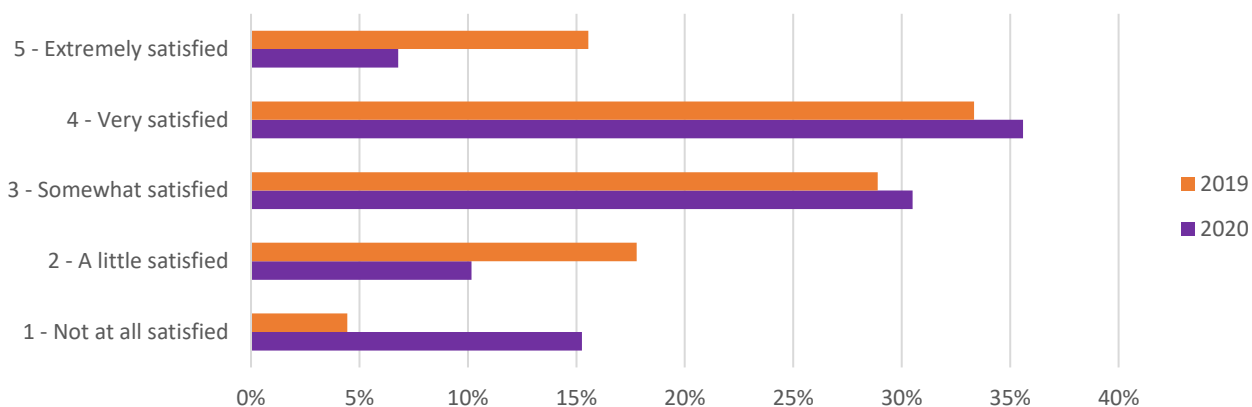
Are you satisfied with the value you get from being certified to standards?



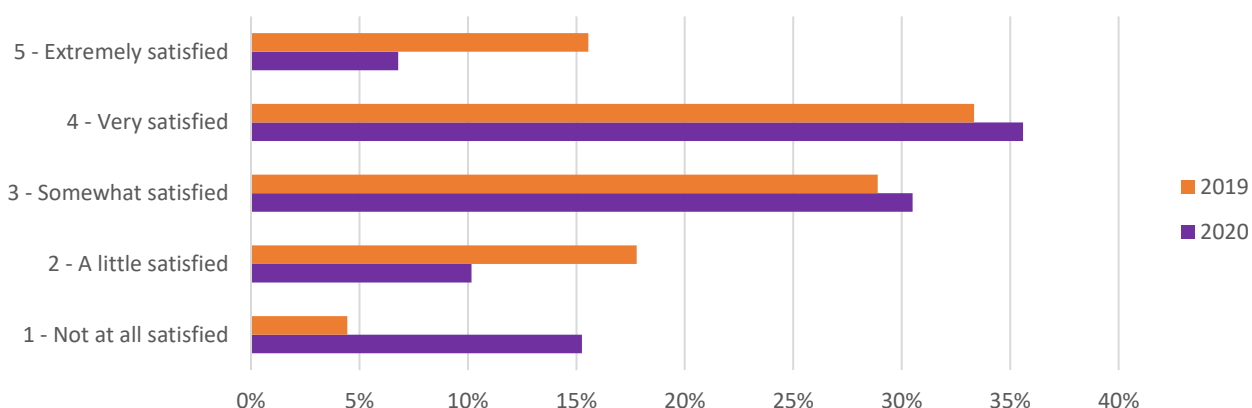
Certification Satisfaction Rating - Weighted Avg



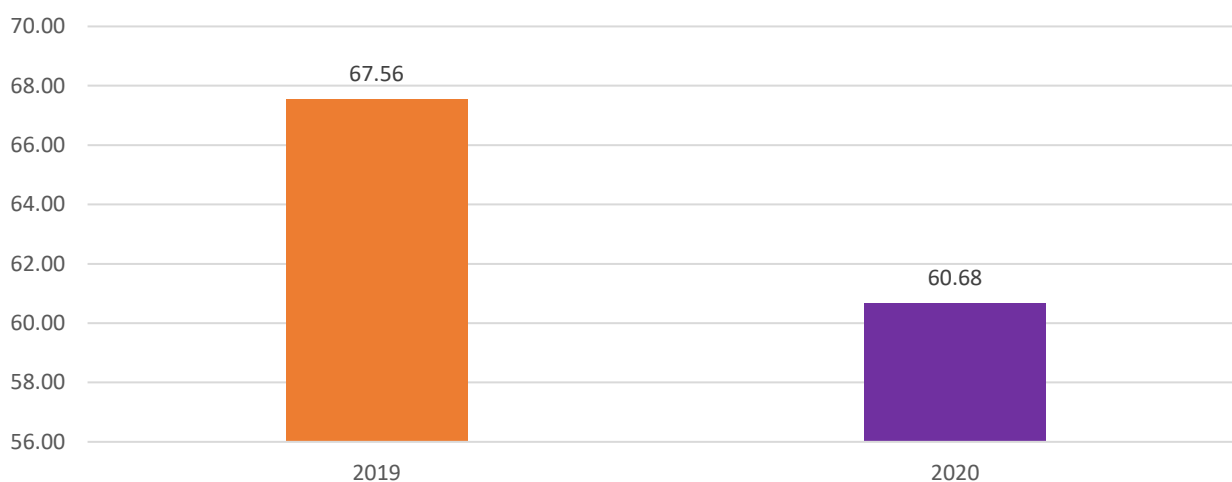
Are you satisfied with the value you get from your external auditors?

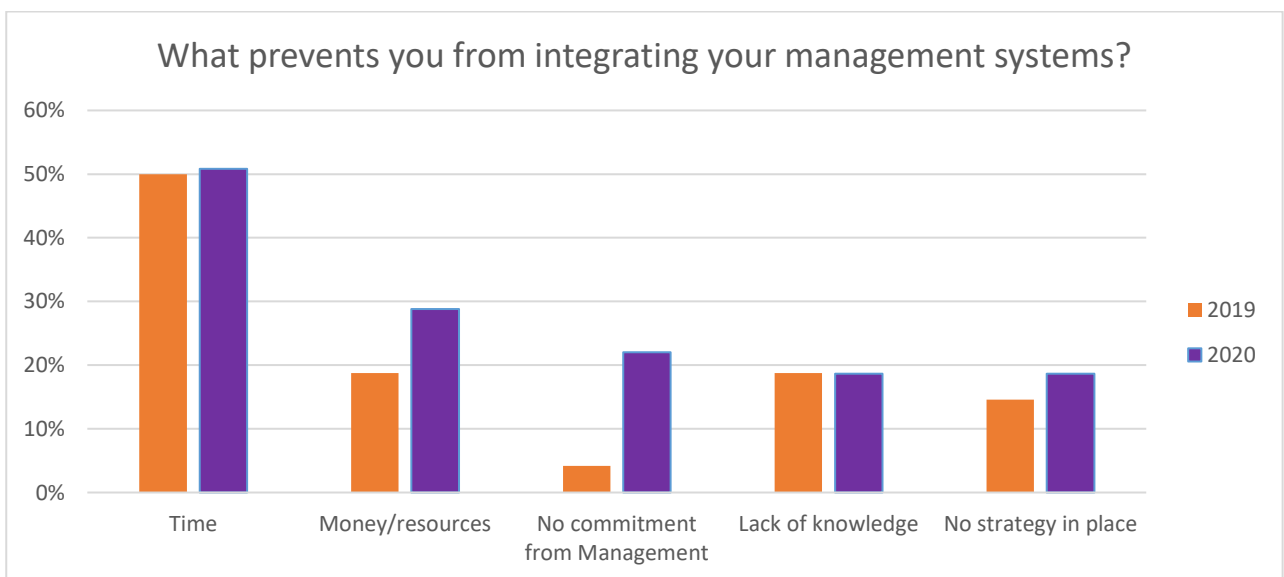
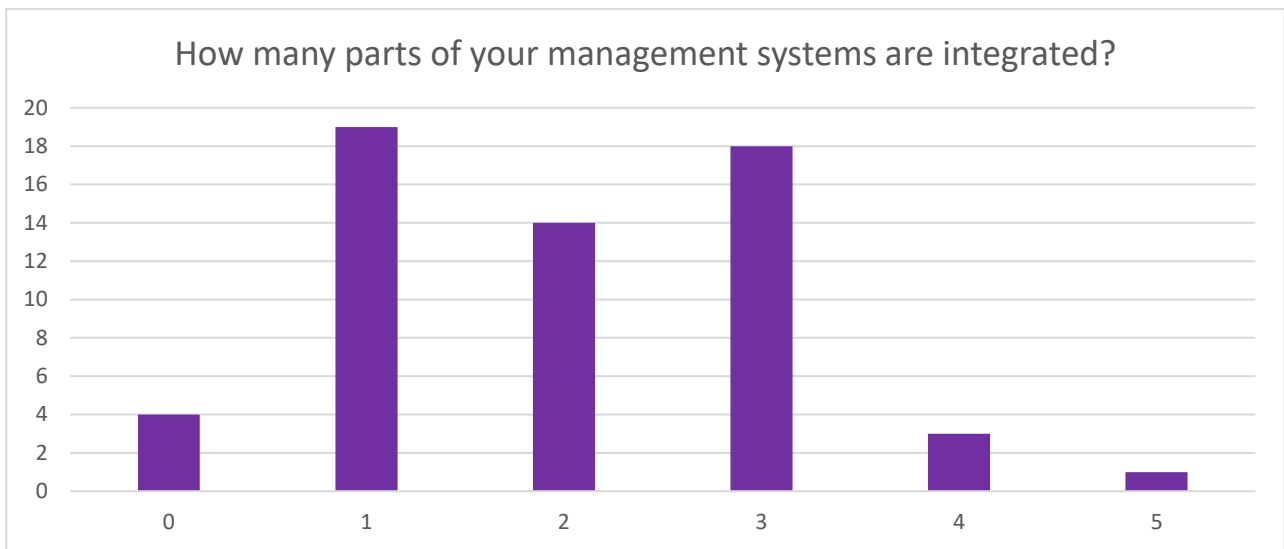
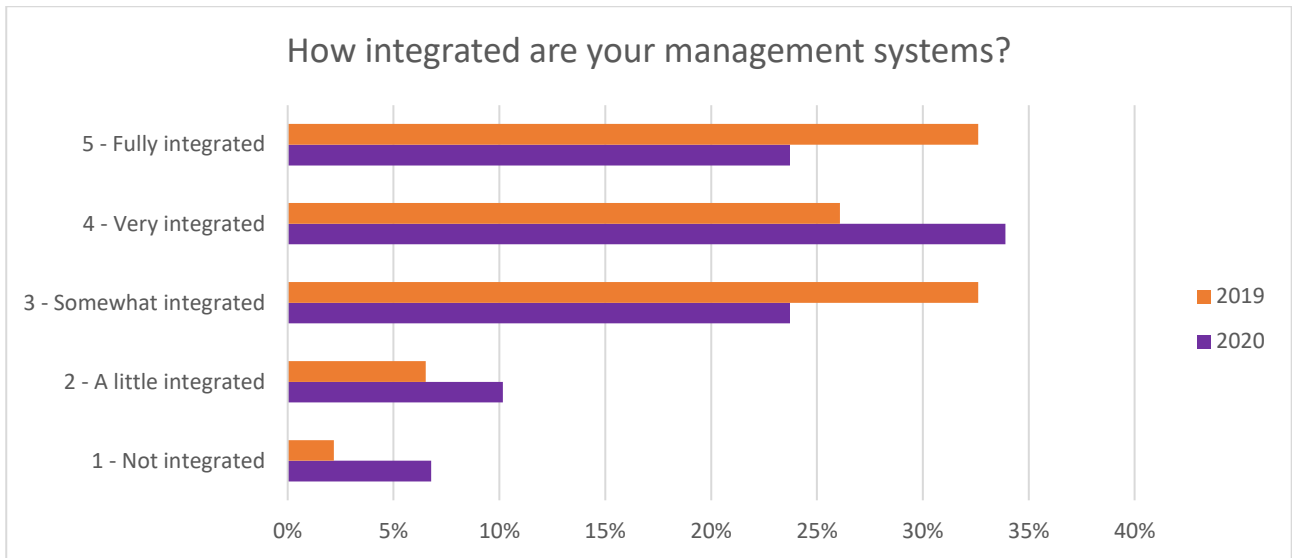


Are you satisfied with the value you get from your external auditors?

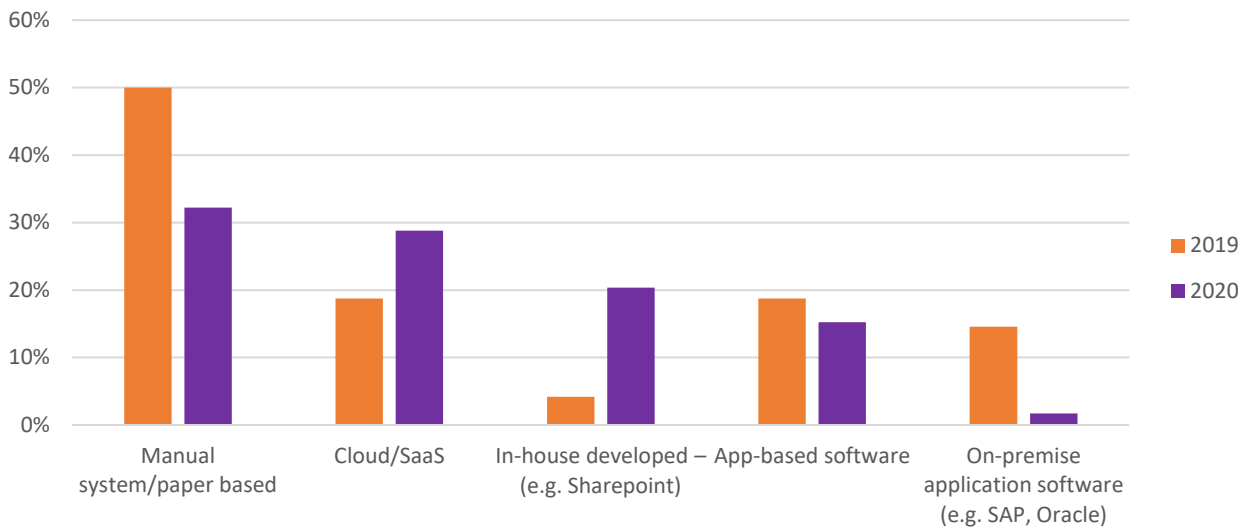


External Auditor Satisfaction Rating - Weighted Avg

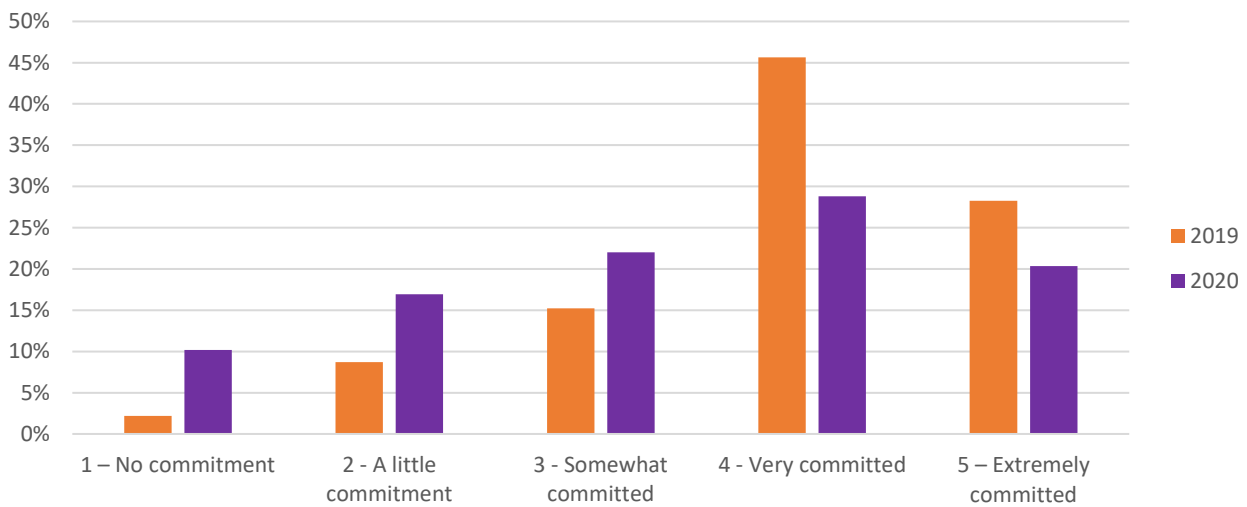




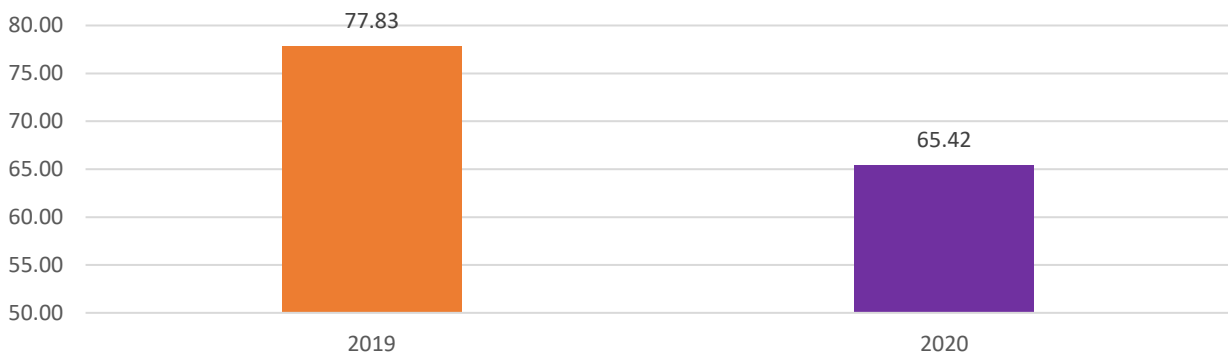
What tools do you use for maintaining your compliance systems?



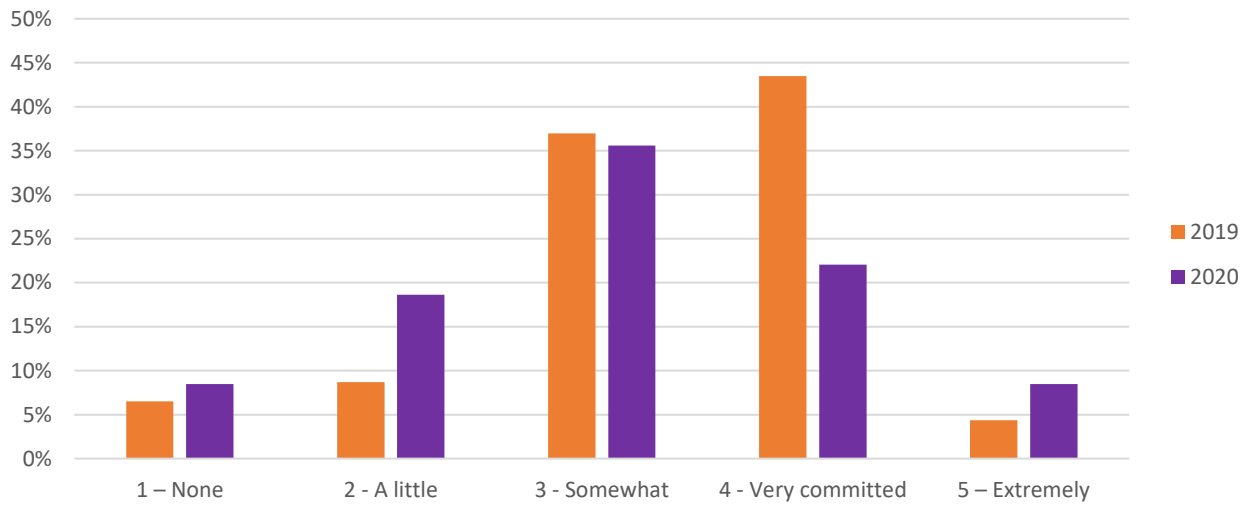
How committed are your Senior Management to your certified management systems?



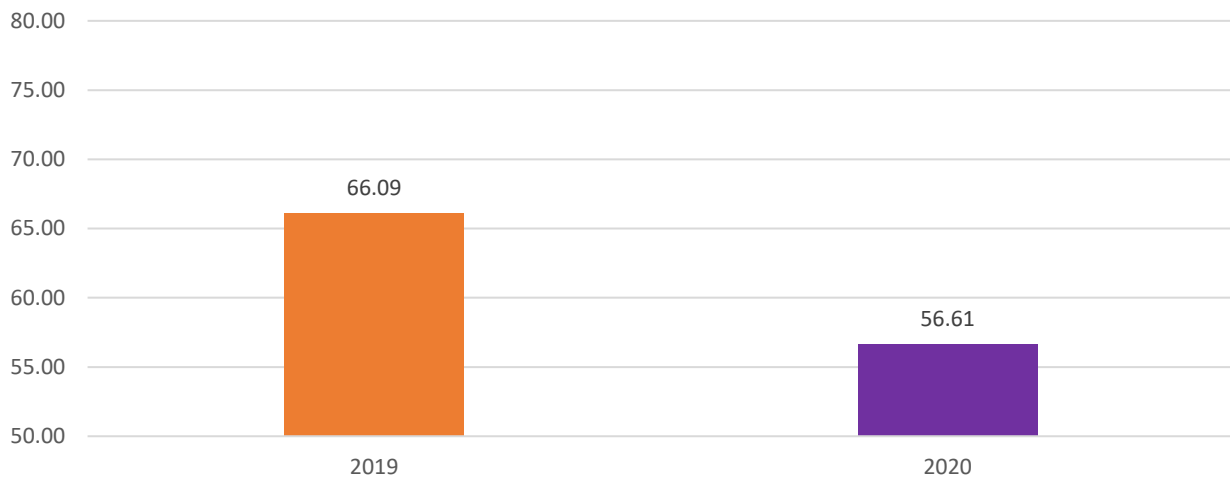
Senior Manager Commitment - Weighted Avg



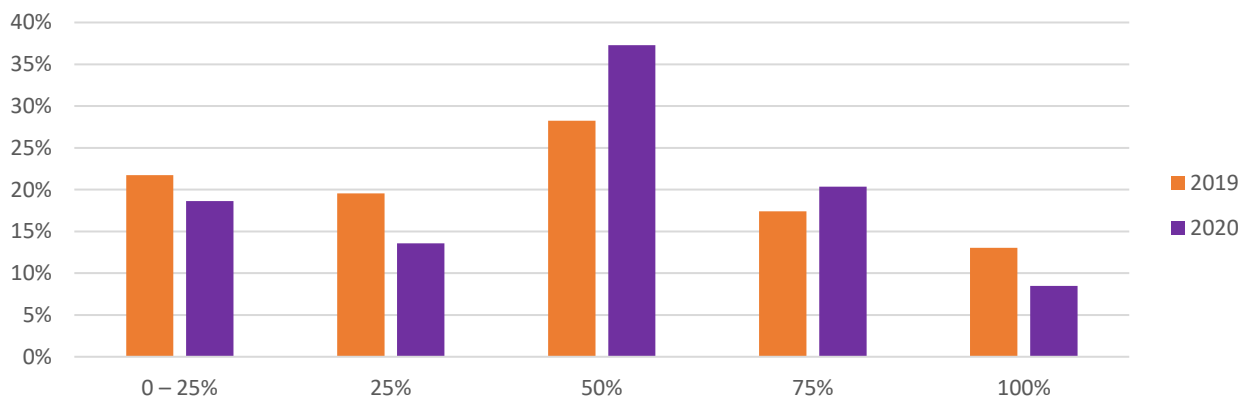
Do you have commitment and participation from your employees to your certified management systems?

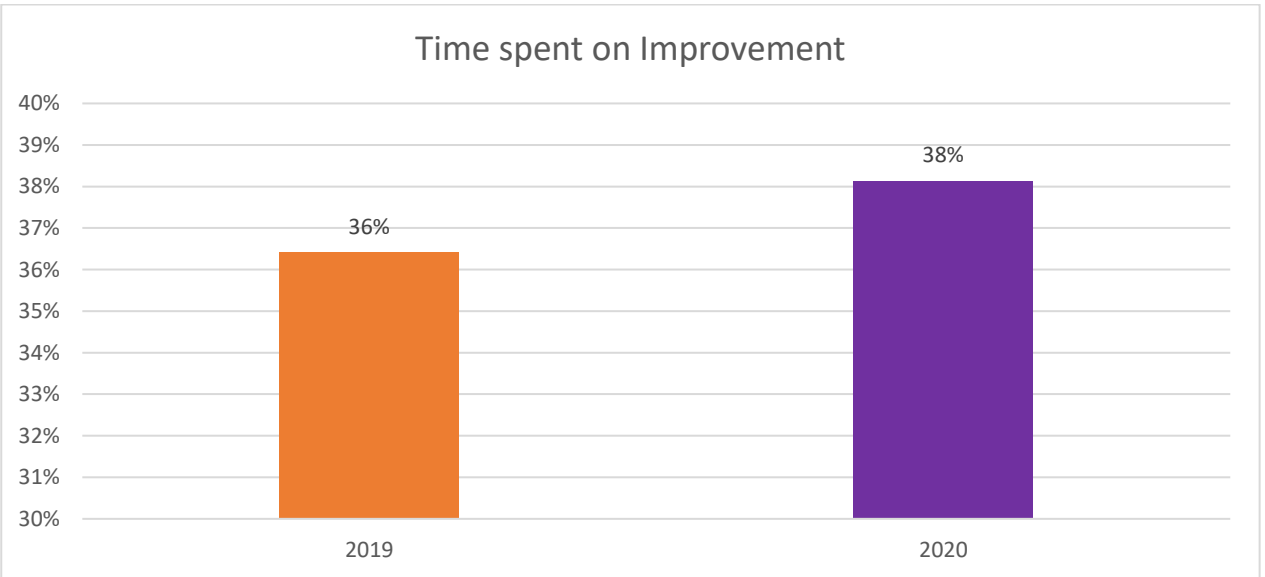
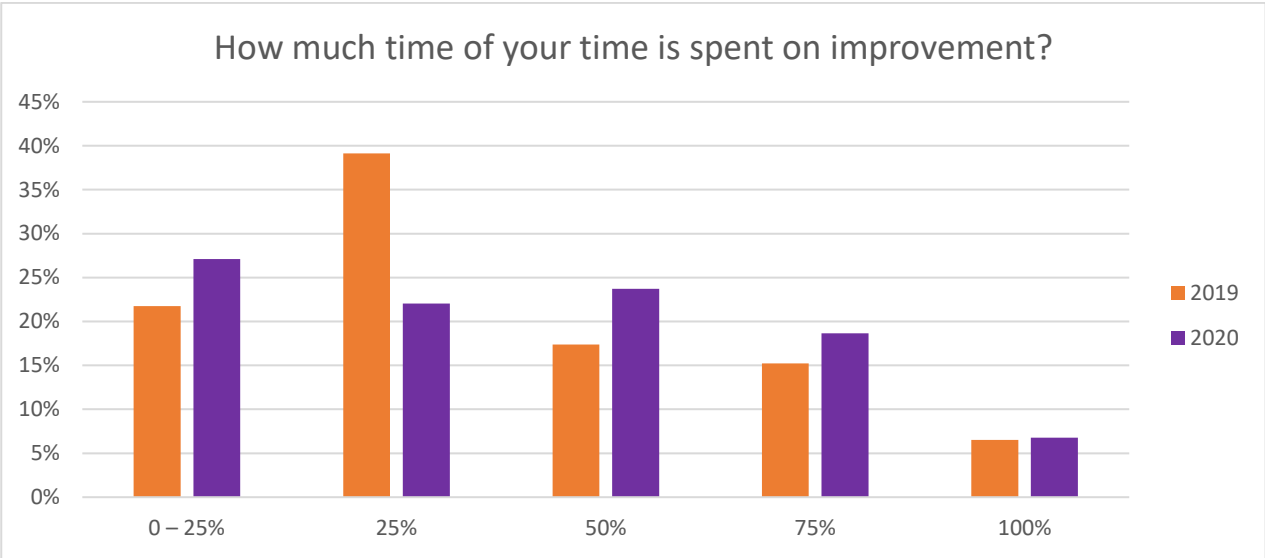
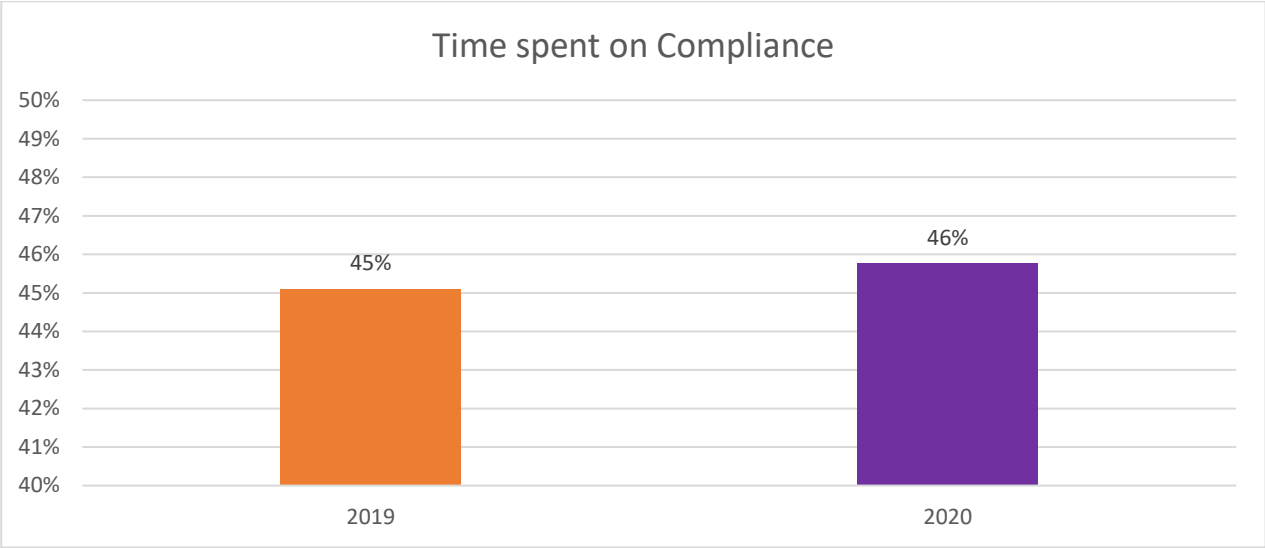


Employee Commitment - Weighted Avg



How much of your time is spent on compliance?





The Author

Here at Mango we created this **ISO Insights Report 2020** so that we could share some of the best business practice from being certified to international management system standards from ISO (International Organization for Standardization).

This report comes from an online survey we conducted during July 2020 and August 2020. The survey results come from 110 respondents from across the globe.

Our objective was to see if organisations are getting value from being certified to the following standards:

- ISO 9001 (quality)
- ISO 14001 (environmental)
- ISO 45001 (health and safety)
- ISO 22000 (food safety)
- ISO 27001 (information security)

The anonymous survey was conducted online via the Mango website and social media platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.

We last ran the same survey from May to July 2019. We have compared these results with last year. We were very interested to see if there has been any impact on satisfaction with ISO standards from the COVID-19 pandemic.

So how can you, as a QHSE professional, get some actionable items from this report? We're answering that question with **six (6) insights**; these are specific findings to help your compliance system grow, based on the data we've gathered.

I hope it proves an interesting and, more importantly, a useful read.



Craig Thornton
Owner/Director, Mango Limited

The ISO Insights Report

Mango created the ISO Insights Report 2020.

Mango's mission is to get everyone in your business involved and participating in your QHSE Systems. You can do this by integrating your Quality, Health, Safety & Environmental Management systems in the Cloud and on a Mobile App.

<https://www.mangolive.com/>

Disclaimer

This report is intended as a guide only. Readers are advised that before acting on any matter arising from this document, you should consult a Consultant Advisor.