

# Vision Australia Employer Research

Quantitative report

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**Project no.** 31385  
**Date:** 28 May 2021

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28 May 2021

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## EMPLOYER RESEARCH

Dear Reeni,

Enclosed is the report for the research study with employers.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the terms and conditions of the proposal dated 16 March 2021.

Please contact Belinda Aanensen if you have any questions regarding this report.

We acknowledge and appreciate the assistance provided by yourself in the performance of our work with regards to this project.

Yours sincerely,



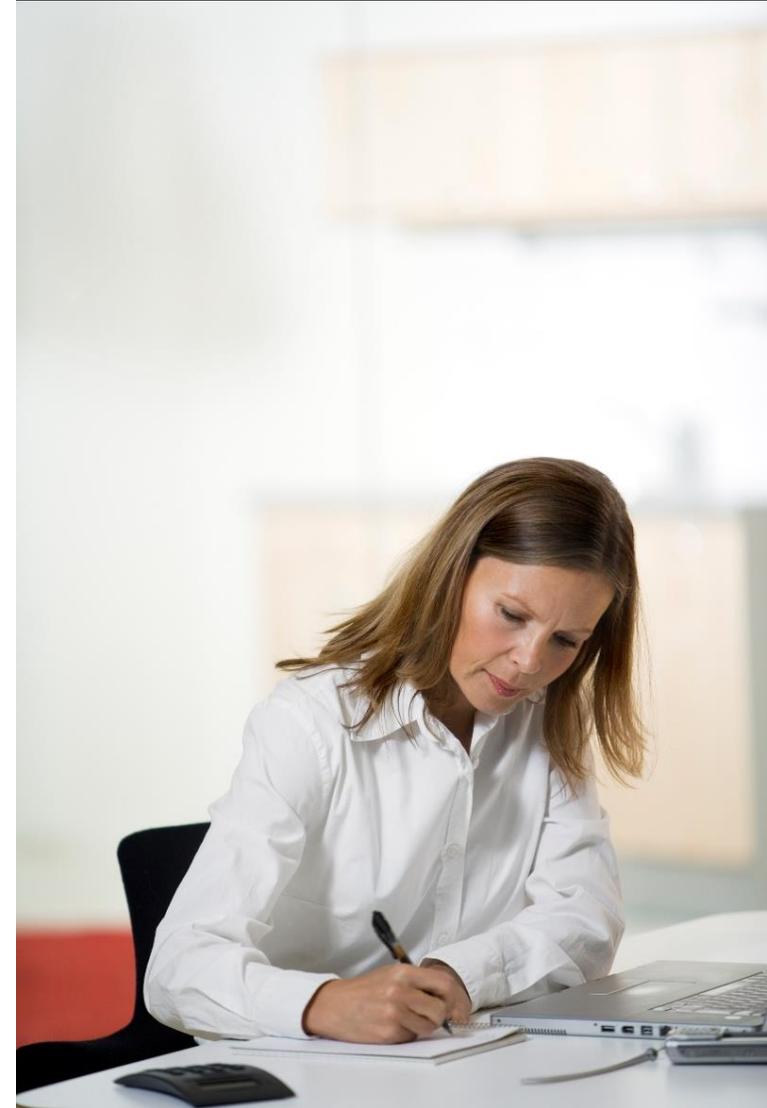
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*EY Sweeney is accredited under the International Standard, ISO 20252.*

*All aspects of this study have been completed in accordance with the requirements of that scheme.*

*Also please note that EY Sweeney's liability is limited by a scheme approved under professional standards legislation. A copy of the scheme can be obtained from us upon request.*



# Introduction

## Report disclaimer

Our Report may be relied upon by Vision Australia for the purpose set out in the scope section/proposal only pursuant to the terms of our engagement letter dated 16 March 2021. We disclaim all responsibility to any other party for any loss or liability that the other party may suffer or incur arising from or relating to or in any way connected with the contents of our report, the provision of our report to the other party or the reliance upon our report by the other party.

# Introduction

## Context

Vision Australia offers a range of employment services to people who are blind or have low vision, such as preparing them for work and connecting them with job opportunities.

However, research shows that many employers hold negative attitudes towards employing someone who is blind or has low vision. It appears that this issue may be getting worse over time, with significantly more people with a vision condition reporting discrimination or barriers to employment in 2018 compared to 2012 research.

## Upcoming campaign

Cutting through to employers and challenging their perspectives requires a creative approach.

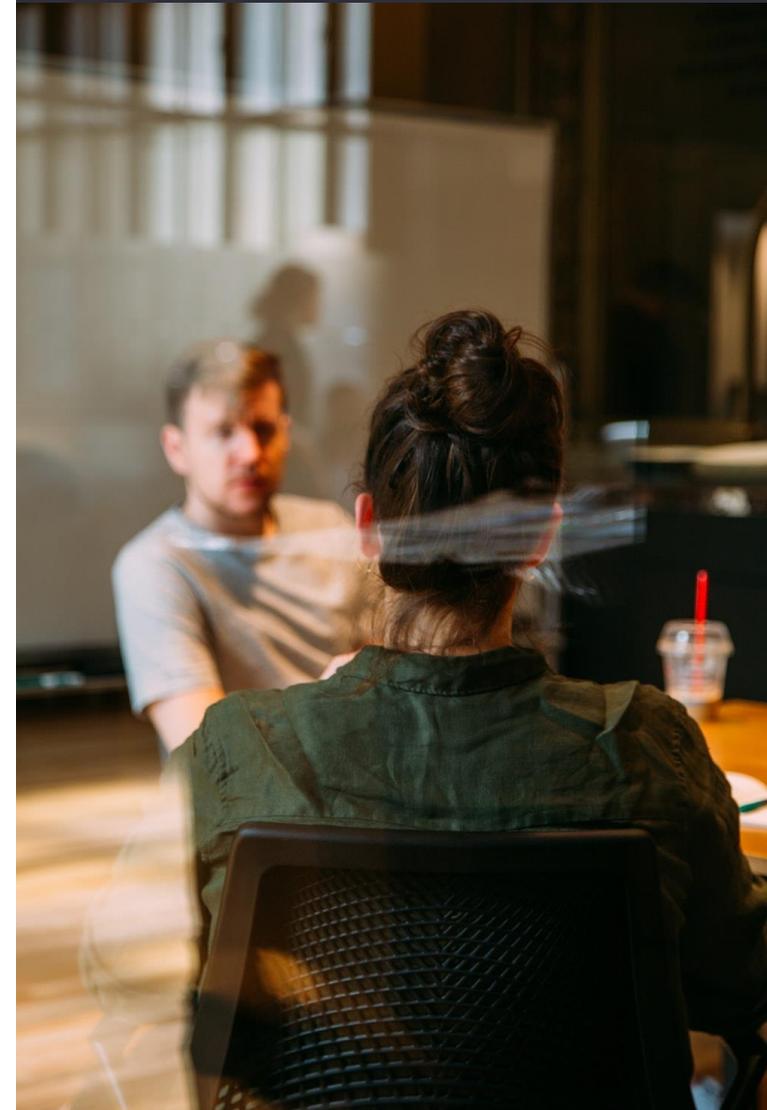
To address this issue and change employer attitudes, Vision Australia will soon be launching a targeted public affairs campaign. The campaign will have two aims:

- ▶ Reduce negative perceptions of candidates who are blind or have low vision
- ▶ Raise awareness of the supports and services available to candidates who are blind or have low vision, thereby showing employers that it is easy to employ these candidates.

## Role of this research

To support the campaign, Vision Australia required data to establish benchmarks of employer attitudes, and to be used as input into the campaign itself. Data from this study will be used for public relations activities prior to campaign launch. It was important that the sample size was sufficiently large and nationally representative in order to attract media coverage.

This document outlines the findings of this important study.



# Research methodology

## Overview

This employer research study involved the conduct of 1,003 7-minute online interviews conducted between 15 and 21 April 2021.

## Sampling

To be eligible for participation, all respondents were...

- ▶ Aged 18+
- ▶ Living in Australia
- ▶ Employed at a business operating in Australia
- ▶ Involved in activities related to hiring staff (as shown in table at right).

The final achieved sample structure is shown opposite.

Sample for the survey was drawn from an online market research panel. Sample was selected randomly, and no quotas were employed on the completed interviews. The sample was intentionally designed to allow all businesses to participate, to maximise the final number of surveys obtained. It was important that the sample size was sufficiently large and nationally representative in order to attract media coverage for the upcoming campaign.

## Weighting

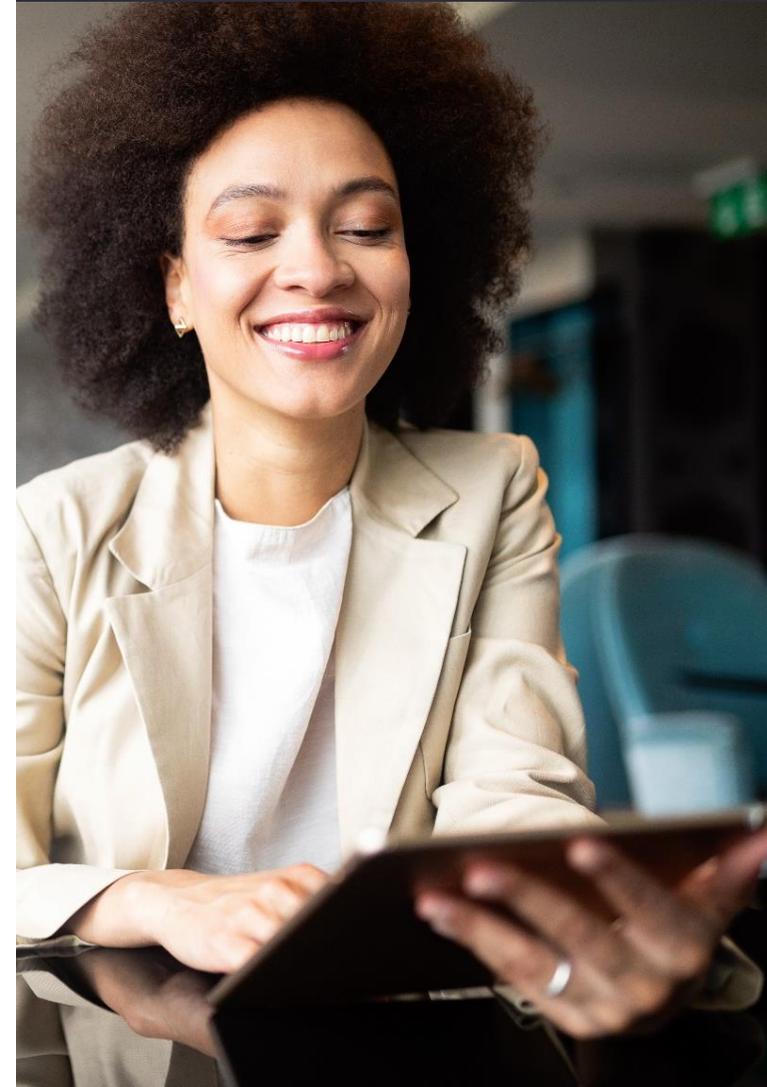
Data is weighted to the 2020 ABS Counts of Australian Businesses to ensure that it is representative of the population, based on number of employees.

Respondent sample structure				
		No. of Interviews #	Weighted %	<sup>1</sup> Max Margins of Error +/-
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,003</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Number of employees</b>	4 or fewer	158	40.6%	8%
	5 - 19	221	56.9%	7%
	20 - 249	319	2.3%	5%
	250 - 999	136	0.1%	8%
	1,000+	169	0.1%	8%
<b>Hiring involvement</b>	Making hiring decisions	694	78%	4%
	Reviewing CVs	707	75%	4%
	Interviewing	707	70%	4%
	Recruiting staff	618	68%	4%
	General HR activities	598	61%	4%
	Writing job ads	445	52%	5%
	Developing D&I plan	311	32%	5%
	Working with recruiters	354	28%	5%

<sup>1</sup>Maximum margins of error shown are based on a research finding of 50% at the 95% Confidence Interval.

## How to read this report

- ▶ **Base sizes and descriptions...** Base sizes indicate the number of respondents who answered a particular question. Base sizes and descriptions for each question are noted for each table and chart at the bottom of the slide, denoted by 'n='.
- ▶ **Statistical significance...** The statistical significance of one value being different from another is dependent on the amount of random variability (variance or standard error) in each of the subgroups and the size of the sample. A result is statistically significant if it is unlikely to have occurred by chance or random variation. To show changes and differences between subgroups, significant differences have been tested and called out (▲ ▼) where applicable. The testing throughout this report has been carried out at a 95% confidence level ( $p=0.05$ ). The probability of accepting a false result as true is 5%.
- ▶ **NET...** NET scores are included in the report, which includes the percentage of participants that have been homogenously grouped for the purpose of analysis (e.g., the sum of participants who rated 'strongly agree' and 'somewhat agree').



# Executive summary

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# 1 Mindsets towards hiring a person with a vision impairment

Only three in ten businesses in Australia are willing to adapt the job requirements to suit a person who is qualified for the role but has a vision impairment.

Half of people with involvement in recruiting staff have never even thought about hiring someone with a vision impairment.

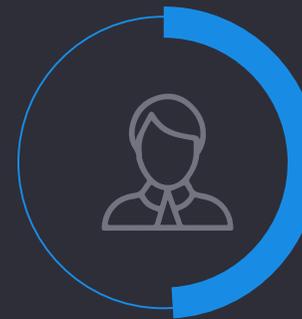
Eight in ten are not confident in hiring someone who has a vision impairment.

Together, these results suggest that many businesses are potentially missing out on hiring the best person for the job because they are not inclusive of all qualified candidates from the outset.



**30%**

Willing to adapt job requirements



**49%**

Never thought about hiring someone with a vision impairment



**83%**

Lack confidence in hiring someone with a vision impairment

## 2 Key barriers to hiring a person with a vision impairment

The strong majority (92%) of people involved in recruiting staff have concerns about hiring someone with a vision impairment, with the main areas of concern shown at right.

The data shows that many businesses believe they are not set up for people with a vision impairment. They see full sight as a requirement to doing the job, as that's how they do their jobs - but that's not necessarily how the job has to be done.

Often when it comes to doing something new or different, the challenge lies in helping people understand it is achievable. In this instance without burdensome effort or sacrifice on their behalf.

Businesses are making business decisions, not human decisions. Staff are time poor and busy. Unless they can't find anyone else to do the role, they don't think it's worth the (perceived) effort or sacrifice to hire someone with a vision impairment. They are potentially over-thinking the effort required, or degree to which the person with a vision impairment would be less efficient than others.

They may need a greater appreciation of the benefits of hiring someone with a vision impairment to justify the (perceived) effort.



**67%**

Risks



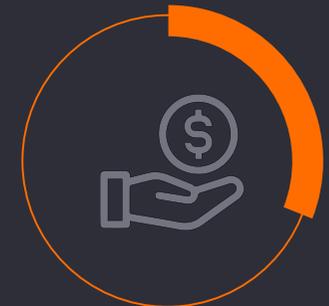
**56%**

Doubts over productivity



**35%**

Concerns about other staff ability to work with or manage the person



**31%**

Financial concerns

# 3 Changing the mindset towards hiring a person with a vision impairment

When asked to nominate what would make them more comfortable hiring someone who is qualified but has a vision impairment, the top factors relate to funding, safety, and staff, as shown at right.

Businesses lack confidence and often don't feel set up for vision impaired employees. There is no clear understanding of how they need to be set up differently to accommodate an employee with a vision impairment, and there's an underlying assumption that this is cost and/or time prohibitive.

Productivity is a key concern here, but encouragingly eight in ten (79%) businesses agree that they would be more open to employing someone with a vision impairment if they knew that with the right technology, a person who is blind or has low vision can be as productive as their fully sighted peers.

Once businesses know that the technology is available to help, the positive disposition to hiring someone with a vision impairment increases notably. This highlights the primary barrier is understanding, so increasing education / awareness should be the key step for Vision Australia.



**59%**

Want funding to support their business



**49%**

Want training for staff and/or management



**46%**

Want help with safety and/or their physical environment

# 4 Considerations for the campaign

Shown at right are the main problematic attitudes or mindsets which reduce the likelihood that a business will consider hiring a person with a vision impairment, along with suggested messaging to address these barriers.

Another suggestion for the campaign would be to provide case studies of senior, experienced, very qualified people with a vision impairment who are excelling in their careers. Real life examples of people with a vision impairment successfully contributing to the workplace would help bring the idea to life.



You're not giving your business the best chance of success by not considering all candidates



Hiring a person with a vision impairment is achievable, it's probably easier than you think



There is support (e.g. technology, funding, expert advice) out there to help you hire someone with a vision impairment



People who are vision impaired can be easily supported to be just as productive as people with full sight

# Detailed findings

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DETAILED FINDINGS

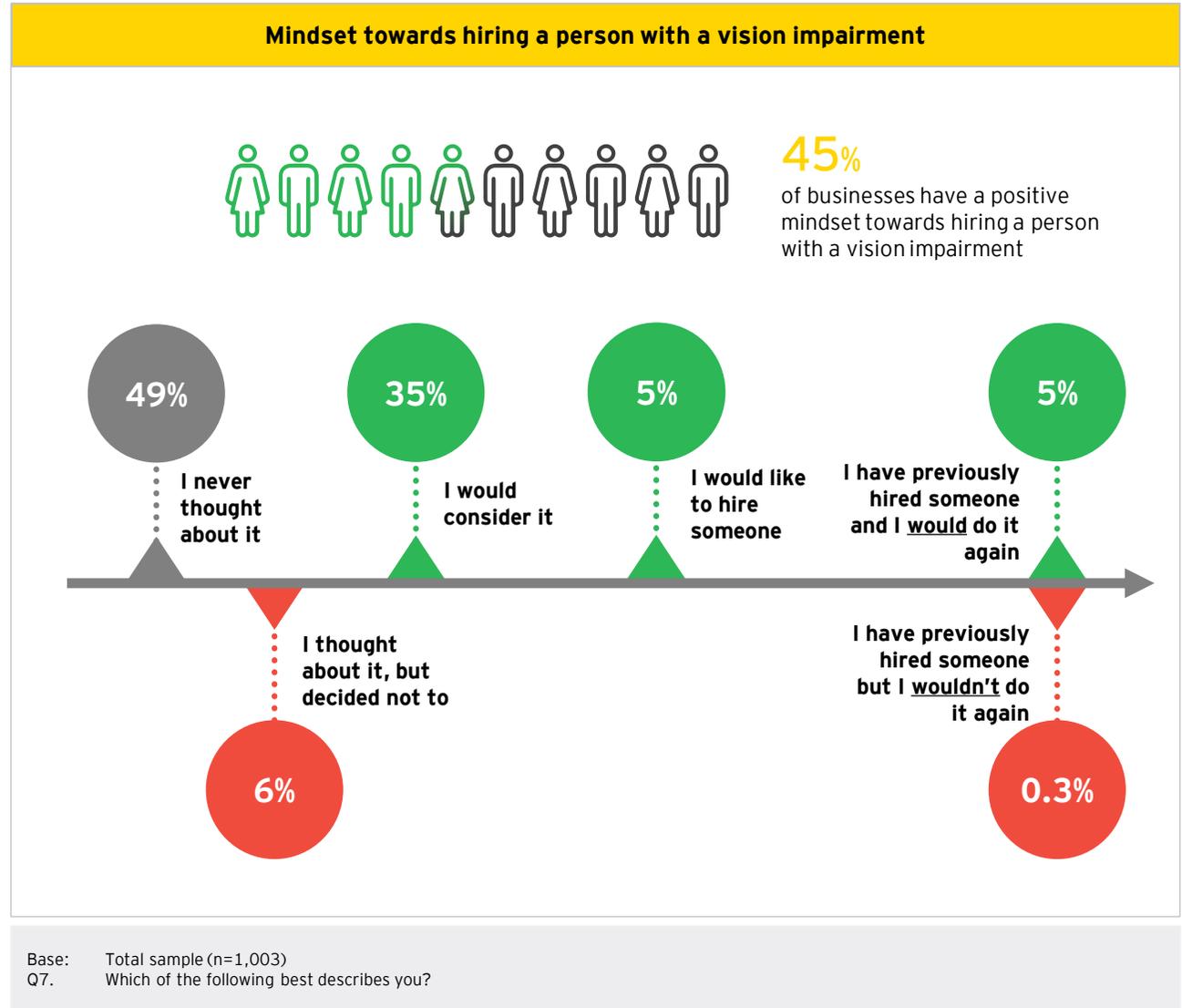
# Context

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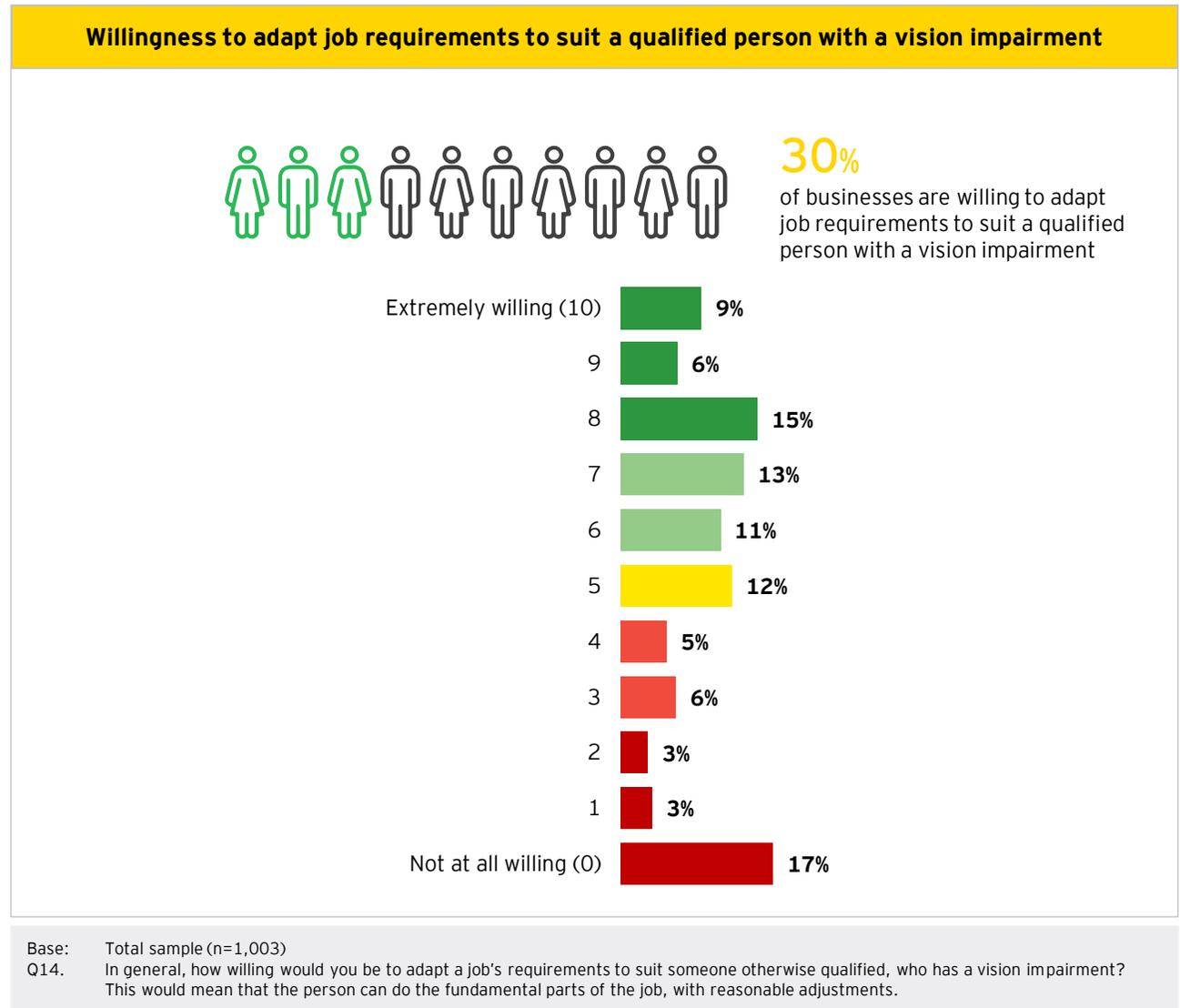
# Mindset towards hiring a person who has a vision impairment

- ▶ One in two (49%) people with involvement in recruiting staff have never thought about hiring someone with a vision impairment.
- ▶ Very few are opposed to hiring someone with a vision impairment (only 6% have outright decided not to).
- ▶ Mindsets vary significantly among businesses of different sizes. For example, one in two (53%) micro businesses with 4 or fewer employees have never thought about hiring someone with a vision impairment. This drops to one in three (34%) among medium-sized businesses with 20-249 staff, and declines further to one in four (24%) among the largest businesses with 1,000 or more staff.
- ▶ This suggests that some businesses (with fewer staff) may have not previously come across a candidate with a vision impairment, so they have not had to consider hiring someone with a vision impairment.
- ▶ The barriers to employing people with a vision impairment often relate to a lack of consideration or understanding, rather than a considered rejection of the idea. The challenge is to ensure that if a candidate with a vision impairment applies for a role, that they are considered equally with fully sighted candidates.



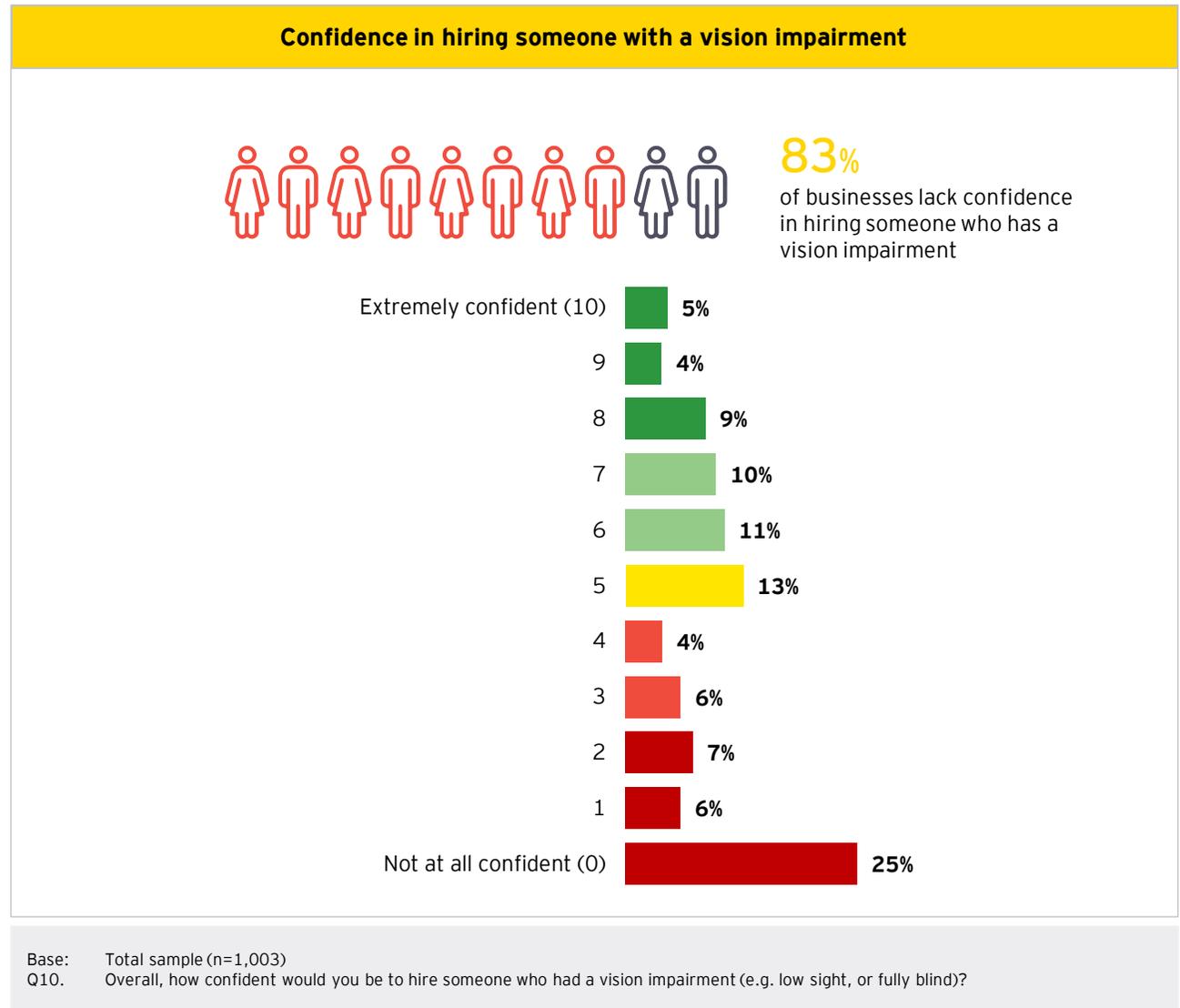
# Willingness to adapt to accommodate person with a vision impairment

- ▶ Only three in ten (30%) businesses in Australia are willing to adapt the job requirements to suit a person who is qualified for the role but has a vision impairment.
- ▶ Willingness to adapt is higher among businesses that have more inclination and/or more resources to devote to diversity and inclusion:
  - Those that have quotas or targets to hire people with a disability (61%)
  - Larger businesses (49% among those employing 1,000 or more people)
  - Those with a D&I strategy (42%)
- ▶ Willingness to adapt job requirements is also higher among businesses that are aware of the support available to help people with a vision impairment in the workplace:
  - Those aware of the Job Access program (40%)
  - Those who think technology can help people with a vision impairment be just as productive (37%)
- ▶ Sector differences are also evident and may reflect the nature of the work involved. Those in the education and training sector are most willing to adapt job requirements (57%) but those in the utilities sector are least willing (only 3% are open to adapting job requirements).



# Confidence in hiring someone with a vision impairment

- ▶ There is a widespread lack of confidence underpinning some of the reluctance to hire someone with a vision impairment. Eight in ten (83%) businesses are not confident in hiring someone who had a vision impairment.
- ▶ Confidence in hiring someone with a vision impairment and willingness to adapt job requirements are highly correlated. That is to say, those who are most confident in hiring someone are also most willing to adapt job requirements to suit someone with a vision impairment.
- ▶ Both confidence in hiring and willingness to adapt are higher among those who understand the benefits of technology and are aware of the government's Job Access program. This suggests that although hiring a person with a vision impairment might at first seem 'too hard', once people understand that there is help available, they are more likely to consider and be confident in making this hiring decision.



# Summary

## KEY FINDINGS



- ▶ Many people involved in hiring staff have not previously considered hiring someone with a vision impairment.
- ▶ When prompted to consider this, it is clear that many lack confidence in employing someone with a vision impairment, and there is a great deal of reluctance to adapt a job's requirements to suit someone with a vision impairment.
- ▶ Overall, these results suggest that many businesses are potentially missing out on hiring the best person for the job because they are eliminating qualified candidates from the outset.



Will my workplace be safe for vision impaired people? Will they be able to perform their duties as well?

Micro business (4 or fewer employees)

The job that I would be offering would be too dangerous for them. They would not be able to operate in a business that requires a lot of reading of small print.

Jumbo business (1,000+ employees)

I immediately worry about how this person might fit into our work environment and any changes we would have to make so they don't fall and injure themselves.

Medium business (20-249 employees)

It wouldn't be a problem providing they could accurately use a computer.

Small business (5-19 employees)

Would still consider the applicant if they were able to demonstrate in their application how they manage their disability to effectively carry out their role.

Large business (250-999 employees)

Working in the manufacturing industry, good vision is a must and non-negotiable requirement due to safety reasons.

Micro business (4 or fewer employees)

DETAILED FINDINGS

# Key barriers

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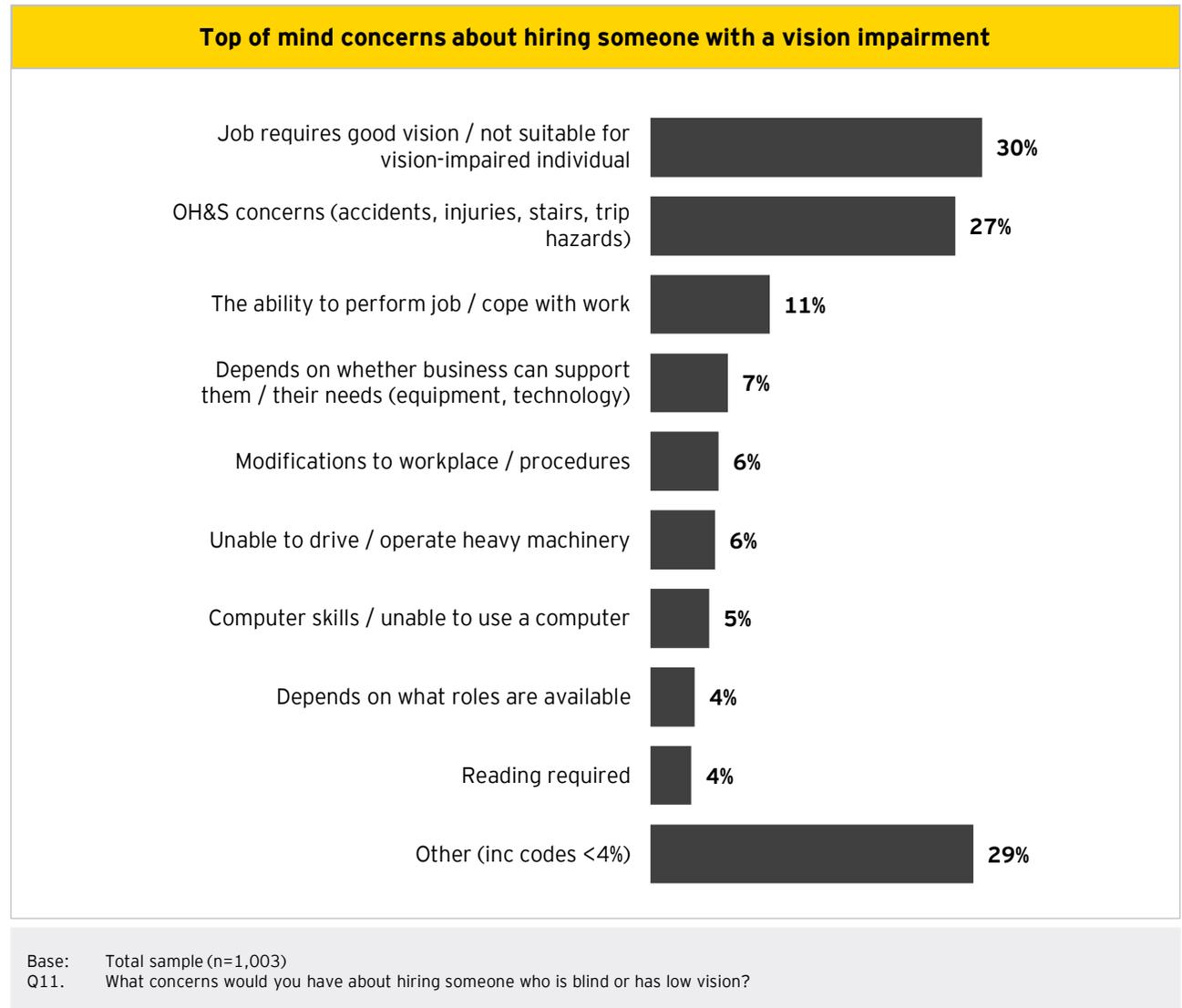


# Top of mind concerns about hiring a person with a vision impairment

▶ When asked, unprompted, what concerns they would have about hiring a person with a vision impairment, two key topics are mentioned:

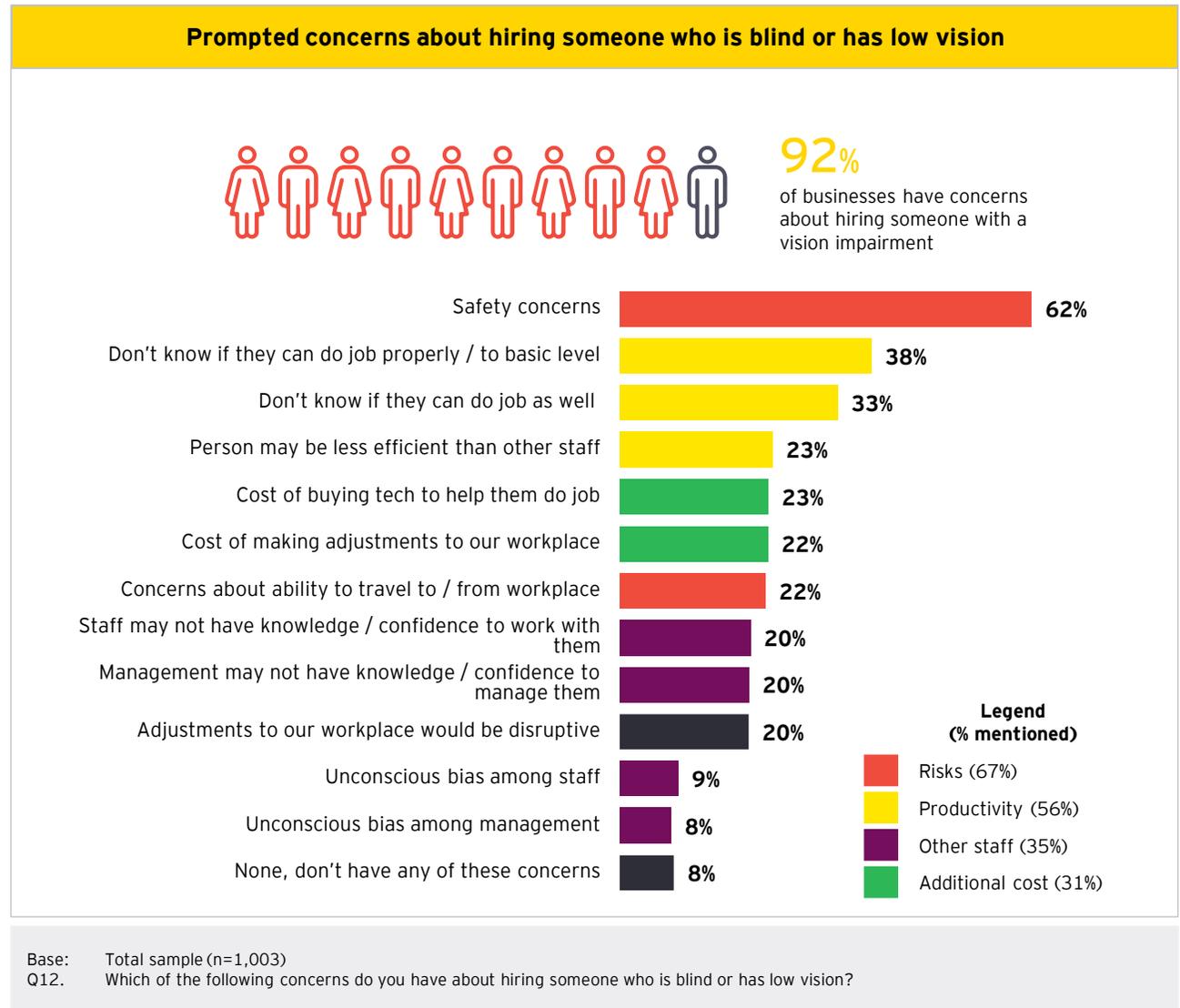
- Firstly, people involved in hiring tend to immediately believe that the jobs in their company require good vision or wouldn't be suitable for someone with a vision impairment. Note that this perception is less prevalent among businesses that employ more staff, potentially due a wider range of role types / functions at larger organisations.
- The second most common reaction is OH&S concerns, including the potential for accidents or injuries in the workplace. These concerns are widespread (regardless of number of staff) but particularly prominent in industries such as manufacturing.

▶ Overall, the concerns outlined at right suggest that many people involved in hiring do not believe their business is set up for people with a vision impairment - whether that be in terms of the roles on offer, activities undertaken at the business, physical environment, equipment available, etc.



# Prompted concerns about hiring a person with a vision impairment

- ▶ When prompted, the vast majority (92%) of people involved in recruiting staff have concerns about hiring someone with a vision impairment. Most commonly there are perceptions that hiring someone with a vision impairment will create additional challenges, risks, workload, and/or cost:
  - **Perceived risks** are most widespread (67%), particularly safety risks (62%)
  - **Doubts over productivity** are also common (56%) particularly doubts over whether the person could do the job properly or to a basic level with a vision impairment (38%)
  - Concerns relating to **other staff** are held by 35% of businesses, particularly whether staff will have the knowledge or confidence to successfully work alongside a person with a vision impairment (20%)
  - **Financial concerns** are also fairly common, with 31% mentioning concerns such as the cost of buying assistive technology (23%)
- ▶ Those who hold concerns over productivity are least likely to be willing to adapt a job's requirements to suit a person with a vision impairment, whereas those concerned about other staff are more willing to adapt a job's requirements. This suggests that people are more easily able to move past concerns about other staff, but productivity concerns are more limiting. Perhaps staffing issues could be readily resolved through training, but productivity concerns would be more persistent / less easily resolved.



# Key findings

## KEY FINDINGS



- ▶ Businesses tend to believe they are not set up for people with a vision impairment. When thinking about employing a person with a vision impairment, they tend to focus on the main profession itself (e.g. child care, defence, trades), rather than the range of roles / functions that the person could offer (e.g. computer-based activities). They see full sight as a requirement to doing the job, as that's how they do their jobs - but that's not necessarily how the job has to be done.
- ▶ Like everything - if people haven't done something before, the challenge lies in them understanding it is achievable. In this instance without burdensome additional effort or sacrifice on their behalf.
- ▶ Further, businesses are making business decisions, not human decisions. Staff are time poor and busy. Unless they can't find anyone else to do the role, they often don't think it's worth the (perceived) effort or sacrifice to hire someone with a vision impairment.
- ▶ They are potentially over-thinking the effort or sacrifice required, or the degree to which the person with a vision impairment would be less efficient than other staff. They may have a mindset of - what's in it for me?



Our workplace involves lots of moving around and locating specific items for customers. Computers are essential to the operation of our business.

Micro business (4 or fewer employees)

My place of employment requires people with a drivers license to deliver and install appliances. I do not believe that someone with a sight disability would be able to undertake the role. Others roles, other industries - no problem.

Micro business (4 or fewer employees)

What supports might they need for video conferencing (especially in a large room with others with a single screen)? How can we provide them with the supports they need to fully function in the workplace?

Large business (250-999 employees)

In such a small office it would be very disruptive to have to communicate in a different way: we use lots of hand written notes and the documents we process are in hard copy. People need to be able to pick up a contract for instance and read it.

Small business (5-19 employees)

How to support them, what to provide them with. how to ask them what they need in a respectful manner that is not awkward for both parties.

Medium business (20-249 employees)

No concerns about the person, just need to have an available job that they are suited for.

Jumbo business (1,000+ employees)

DETAILED FINDINGS

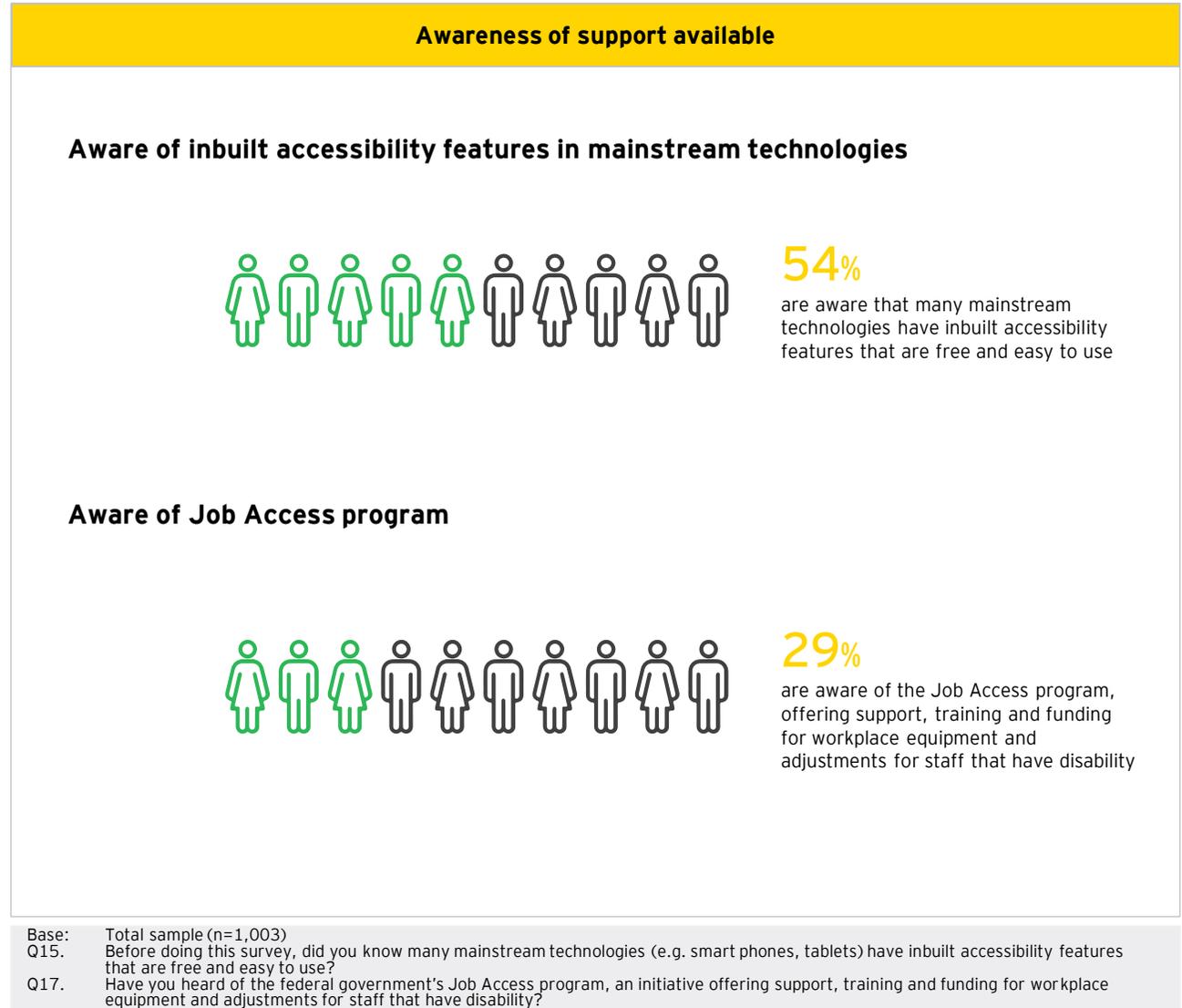
# Changing the mindset

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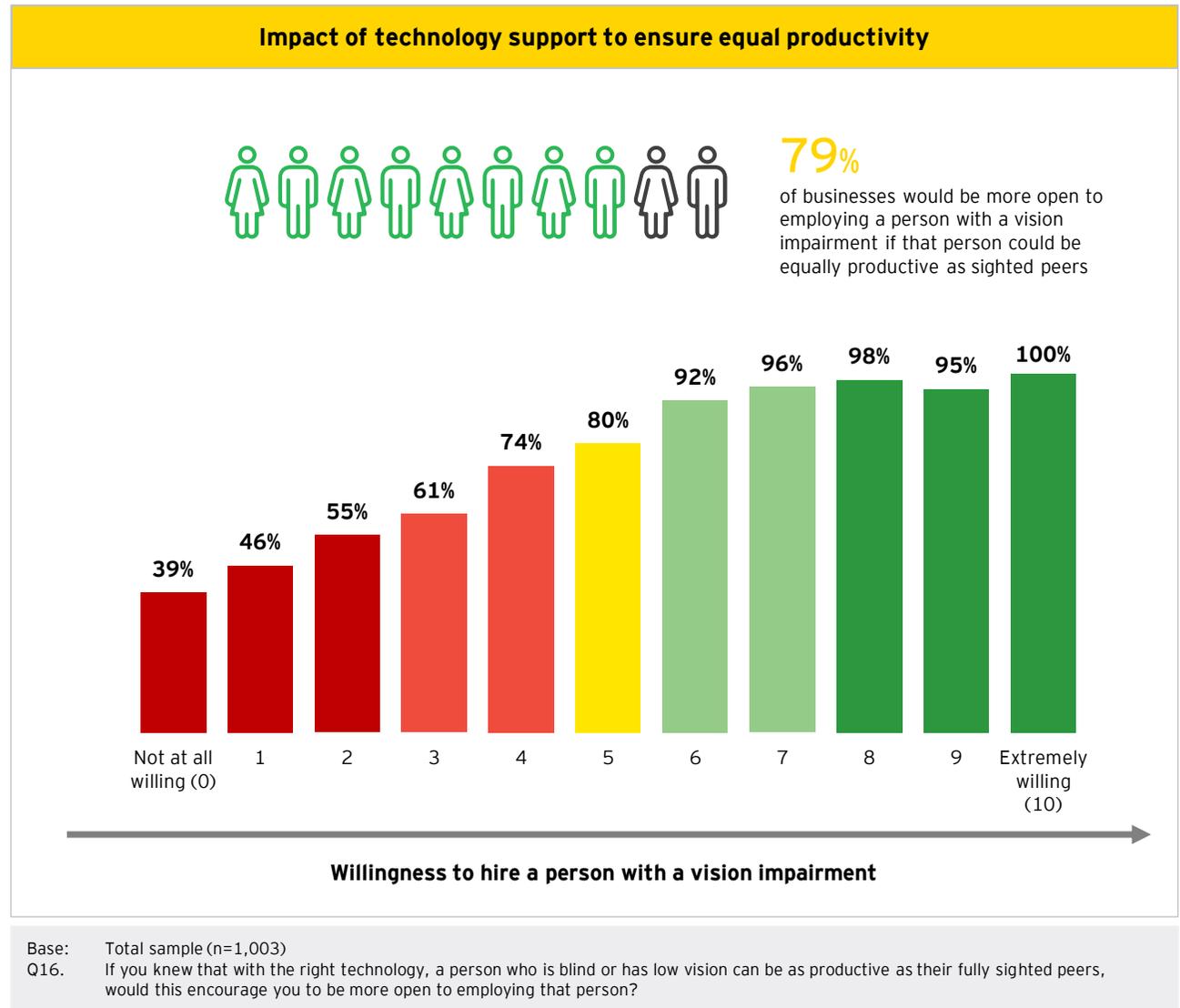
# Awareness of support available

- ▶ Half (54%) of people involved in hiring at businesses know that mainstream technologies have inbuilt accessibility features that are free and easy to use.
- ▶ Currently, only three in ten (29%) have heard of the federal government's Job Access program.
- ▶ Importantly, those who are aware of the Job Access program are more confident about hiring someone who has a vision impairment. Awareness of inbuilt accessibility features in mainstream technologies is not associated with greater confidence in hiring a person with a vision impairment. This suggests that support from technology itself may not be enough to help businesses become more confident to make this hiring decision - but training and funding may make a difference.



# Impact of technology support to ensure equal productivity

- ▶ Eight in ten (79%) businesses agree that they would be more open to employing someone with a vision impairment if they knew that with the right technology, a person who is blind or has low vision can be as productive as their fully sighted peers.
- ▶ This concept is quite compelling, even to those who had previously said they were not willing to hire a person with a vision impairment (four in ten would be more open to employing someone).



# Support to increase comfort in hiring a person with vision impairment

▶ When asked to nominate what would make them more comfortable hiring someone who is qualified but has a vision impairment, the top factors relate to funding, training, and safety:

- Six in ten (59%) would like **financial support**, in terms of funding to buy adaptive technology (47%) or funding to make changes to the physical environment (44%)
- One in two (49%) would like some form of **training**, in particular training for management in how to support a staff member with a vision impairment
- Also common is the request for help with safety (46%) - having an assessment of their physical environment by an expert who can recommend safety improvements.

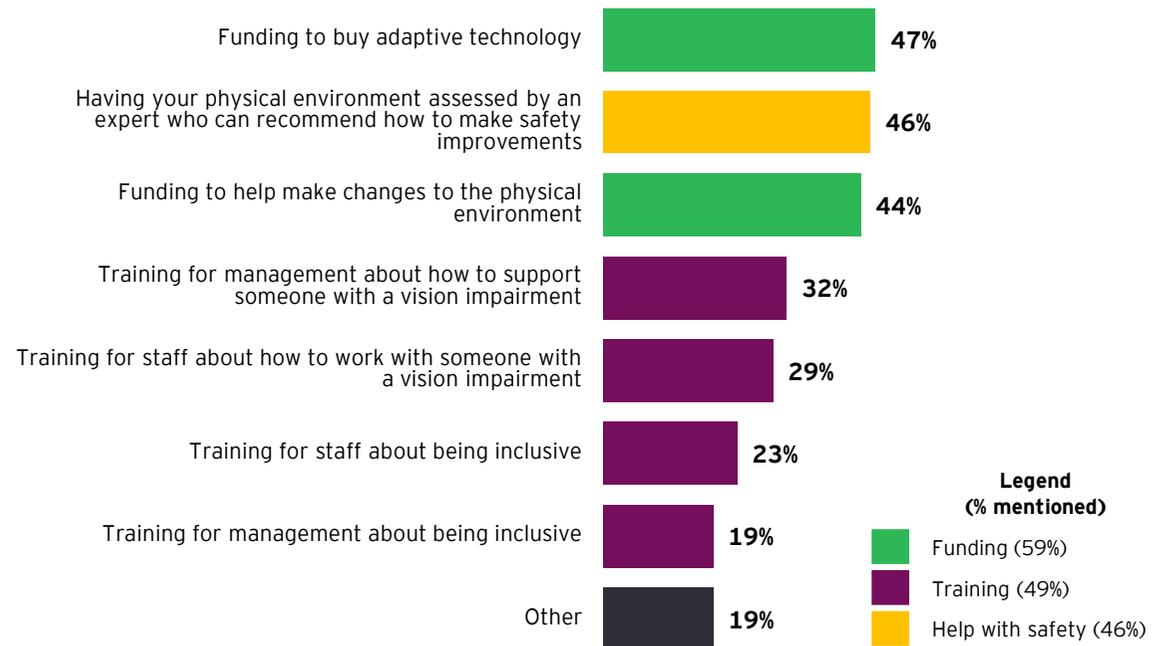
▶ Interestingly, the request for financial support is consistent across businesses of all sizes, however larger businesses are more likely to want some form of training for staff. Smaller businesses are more likely to say there is nothing that could be done to help make them more comfortable with this hiring decision.

## Preferred types of support to increase comfort in hiring a person with vision impairment



49%

of businesses say a form of training would make them more comfortable hiring someone with a vision impairment



Base: Total sample (n=1,003)  
Q13. What would make you more comfortable hiring someone who is qualified and able to do the job, but has a vision impairment?

# Key findings

## KEY FINDINGS



- ▶ Businesses lack confidence and often don't feel set up for vision impaired employees. There is no clear understanding of how they need to be set up differently to accommodate an employee with a vision impairment, and there's an underlying assumption that this is cost and/or time prohibitive.
- ▶ Productivity concerns are also prevalent and limit the willingness to consider hiring a person with a vision impairment.
- ▶ Encouragingly, once businesses know that technology and funding are available to help, the positive disposition to hiring someone with a vision impairment increases notably.
- ▶ This highlights the primary barrier is understanding, so increasing education / awareness should be the key step for Vision Australia.
- ▶ When considering the upcoming campaign, a 'quick win' could be messaging about helping other staff adapt.
- ▶ A longer term, but very important, messaging strategy would involve reducing concerns about productivity.



Our work requires good vision to complete all the tasks required so it is not something I would be able to do. Were I able to I would in a heartbeat as I have worked with vision impaired people in the past and found them to be effective, efficient and dedicated.

Micro business (4 or fewer employees)

I need to better understand if there are any road blocks to doing the job that can be overcome?

Micro business (4 or fewer employees)

A demonstration that this impairment doesn't slow them down in ANY way completing the job. For example, using 4 screens, and jumping between these screens and various programs every few seconds.

Large business (250-999 employees)

I work in a small bookshop, they would struggle with finding books on shelves and navigating the store. As far as I'm aware there would be no adaptive products to help. If we were a bigger store and could have someone on register all day and they could use it then I would not hesitate.

Small business (5-19 employees)

To consider someone with a vision impairment we would need a high level of funding to accommodate a loss of productivity in the office.

Medium business (20-249 employees)

Not so much inclusion training, but more understanding technical ways of working. Most training is on soft skills, limited amounts are on practical matters and day to day work flows.

Jumbo business (1,000+ employees)

# Suggested key messages for the upcoming campaign

- ▶ Shown at right are the main problematic attitudes or mindsets which reduce the likelihood that a business will consider hiring a person with a vision impairment, along with suggested messaging to address these barriers.
- ▶ Another suggestion for the campaign would be to provide case studies of senior, experienced, very qualified people with a vision impairment who are excelling in their careers. Real life examples of people with a vision impairment successfully contributing to the workplace would help bring the idea to life.

## Key barrier

## Key message

**49% have not even thought about hiring someone with a vision impairment**



**You're not giving your business the best chance of success by not considering all candidates**

**92% have concerns about hiring someone who is blind or has low vision**



**Hiring a person with a vision impairment is achievable, it's probably easier than you think**

**Only 29% are aware of the Job Access program**



**There is support (e.g. technology, funding, expert advice) out there to help you hire someone with a vision impairment**

**56% have concerns over productivity**



**People who are vision impaired can be easily supported to be just as productive as people with full sight**



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