

RESTART & RECOVERY:

COVID-19 IN HAMILTON SURVEY

The world's economy has been shaken by the global COVID-19 pandemic, shutting down cities, millions of people losing their jobs, and ultimately taking the lives of many people. Hamilton was no exception; and the COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on our city, our economy, and our labour market.

- The pandemic has cause Hamilton unemployment rates to fluctuate drastically in 2020: 4.9% in February, 12% in June, and 10% in August.
- Women, low-skilled workers, and youth were most impacted by the pandemic
- The top three industries in Hamilton showing the greatest job losses were:
 - Healthcare and social assistance
 - Accommodation and food services
 - Information, culture, and recreation



There is a long road to recovery ahead for our community.

Workforce Planning Hamilton knew it was important to understand the impact COVID-19 had on Hamilton businesses and this survey was aimed at local employers to gather real time information. The survey was open from August 10 to 19th 2020, to all sectors and sizes, and focused on main aspects of business. We received 244 responses, and although this may not be a statistically significant result, the aggregate data collected will provide insight to how Hamilton businesses are faring during these challenging times (for most). The breakdown of businesses that completed the survey shows a good representation reflecting Hamilton's economic make-up.

WPH worked in partnership with the Mayor's Economic Recovery Taskforce members to distribute the survey throughout Hamilton businesses. The Taskforce, representing a diverse cross-section of the economy, provides multi-sectoral leadership and direction to guide Hamilton's economic recovery, creating an aggressive, action driven plan for immediate, near-term results.

Size Profile

78% 1-19 EMPLOYEES **14%** 20-99 EMPLOYEES **7%** OVER 99 EMPLOYEES

BUSINESS PROFILES

Industry Profile

	Retail trade	30%
	Healthcare and social assistance	25%
	Arts, entertainment and recreation	23%
	Professional, scientific and technical services	22%
	Accommodation and food services	22%
	Other services (except public administration)	21%
	Construction	20%
	Manufacturing	19%
	Educational services	14%
	Real estate and rental and leasing	9%
	Finance and insurance	9%
	Transportation and warehousing	7%
	Information and cultural industries	7%
	Administration and support, waste management and remediation services	6%
	Wholesale trade	3%
	Public administration	3%
	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	2%

Essential Services

A list of essential services was released by the government allowing certain industries and sectors to remain open so the impacts on different sectors vary greatly.

- The employers we heard from were nearly evenly split as essential and non-essential businesses.
- 92% of **Arts, entertainment and recreation** employers were not included in the essential services including gyms, theatres, art galleries, dance studios
- 85% of **Manufacturing** employers were considered essential services and were able to remain open during the lockdowns.

WORKFORCE IMPACT

Was your organization growing, declining, or staying the same - pre-pandemic and during the pandemic?

- Overall, 65% of employers said they were growing pre-pandemic, however, only 15% said they were growing during the pandemic. 2% of employers said they were declining before the pandemic began and that increased to 55% of employers reported declining business during the pandemic.
- Hamilton is well known for its restaurants, food and drink culture, and no employers from **Accommodation and food service** stated they were declining pre-pandemic, however 73% reported a decline during the pandemic.
- **Retail trade** has been significantly hit by the closures as 75% of employers reported they were growing and no **Retail trade** employers reported a decline pre-pandemic however, 42% reported a decline in growth during the pandemic.
- **Construction** is the only sector that reported somewhat of a steady experience through the pandemic with reports of 40% of employers stating they are staying the same.



Employer Voice: We are part of the community of Hamilton and as a result municipalities should support the local business in Hamilton first. We see this happening in other municipalities since it is almost impossible to obtain work in these other locations. We ask everyone to support local business – Construction employer.



If you are hiring, how difficult is it to find a suitable candidate during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- 23% More difficult to find suitable candidate
- 17% No change
- 4% Less difficult to find suitable candidate
- 55% I am currently not hiring

- 55% of businesses were not hiring however more than half of the businesses hiring reported it was more difficult to find a suitable candidate.
- **Other services** and **Manufacturing** were the only two sectors to report there was no change with regards to finding suitable candidates however nearly 40% of employers from both sectors reported they were currently not hiring.

Which of the following best describes your business/organization's status as of the week of August 10th – August 19th, 2020?

- The pandemic has affected businesses ability to operate at full capacity and some businesses were not able to operate at all. More than half of the businesses reported they were open and operating at partial capacity and 7% at the time reported they were closed.
- Only 9% of **Arts, entertainment and recreation** employers reported they are open and operating at full capacity – demonstrating a significant decrease through the pandemic.
- **Healthcare and social assistance** are a sector that have been heavily relied on during the pandemic but employers have reported only 64% of businesses are open and operating at partial capacity.
- 52% of businesses reported they were essential services however only 30% were operating at full capacity.



Open and operating at partial capacity	55%
Open and operating at full capacity	30%
Other (please specify)	8%
Temporarily closed, planning to re-open as soon as possible	4%
Temporarily closed, unsure if re-opening/ considering permanent closure	2%
Permanently closed	1%
Considering permanent closure	0%

If your organization had separations since the pandemic was declared in mid-March, how many separations were in the following categories?

Dismissals: **2%** Permanent Layoffs **23%**
 Quits **14%** Temporary Layoffs **55%**
 Retirements **6%**

51% of businesses reported they were open at partial capacity

– however this may still result in businesses having to lay off employees in order to remain open. Temporary layoffs was the largest separation during the pandemic.

Many businesses were forced into temporarily laying off staff as they were unable to pay their wages with little to no income, however knew their staff would be able to receive the CERB benefit.

- **Other Services** employers reported an equal amount of quits and temporary layoffs
- **Retail trade** employers reported nearly 80% of layoffs were temporary
- 85% of **Manufacturing** employers reported they were essential businesses, however 75% of this sector had separations, including 79% of separations as temporary layoffs and only 2% were permanent layoffs. It's eye-opening the severe impact the pandemic has also had on sectors that were open and functioning as an essential service still with such high numbers of separations.



Employer Voice: A very difficult time – the Federal wage support CEWS program is the only reason we have not laid off – but still losing money each month and not sure how much longer we can maintain taking a loss before we need to lay off. – Manufacturing employer

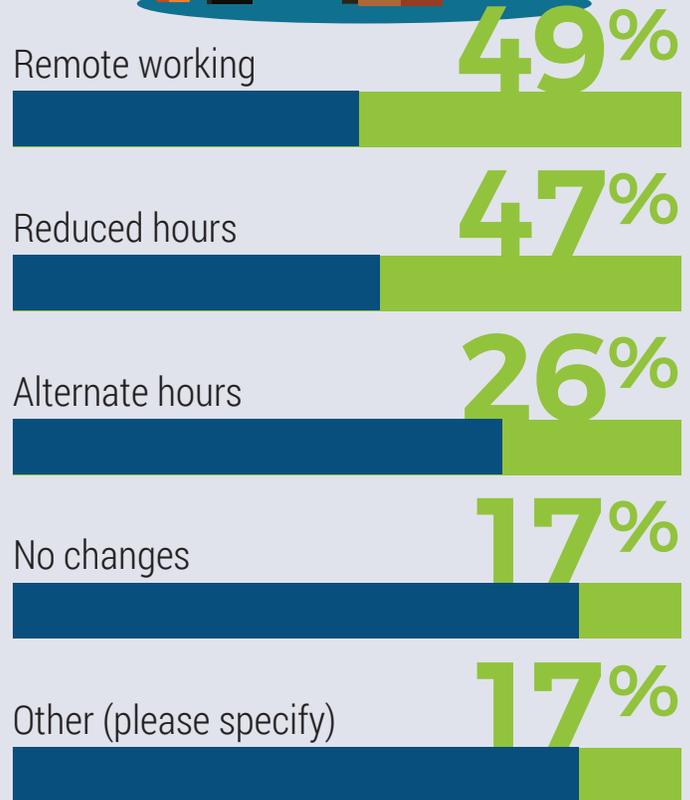


WORK ARRANGEMENTS



How have work arrangements changed in your business?

- Almost half of all employers reported remote working and reduced hours as a change in work arrangements. The ability to work remotely is limited by sector based on the type of work. For example, the majority of employers in the **Accommodation and food service** employers did not have the option for staff to work remotely, resulting in only 10% of employers reporting remote working as an option used.
- 80% of **Manufacturing** employers reported that less than half of their staff were working remotely.
- There were many other options provided that employers adopted to pivot their working arrangements including:
 - » Online or telephone consultations and orders
 - » Home delivery when previously was not an option
 - » Contactless/curbside pickup
 - » Online sales while stores were closed
 - » New health and safety protocols in place



What percent of your staff is working remotely?

- Overall 44% of employers reported less than 25% of their staff are working remotely and only 35% of all employers reported the majority of the staff are working remotely.



Are you considering remote working for your staff after the pandemic has ended?

- The pandemic has shown employers that a shift in working arrangements is possible for many sectors and companies and may become part of new permanent working arrangements. 49% of employers will have employees working either part-time or fully remote after the pandemic demonstrating businesses are open to pivoting traditional working arrangements.





To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Overall, our employees have been more productive working from home



Overall, the well-being of our employees has improved as a result of working from home



● STRONGLY DISAGREE ● DISAGREE ● NEUTRAL ● AGREE ● STRONGLY AGREE

- Nearly half of all employers were neutral about employees being more productive working from home and the well-being of their employees improving since working from home. For some employers, this was the first time staff may have been working from home and there are many other aspects they needed to consider for the well-being and productiveness of their staff as opposed to working in their regular work environment with less distractions and no threat of a pandemic.



Which of the following obstacles is your remote workforce facing if any?

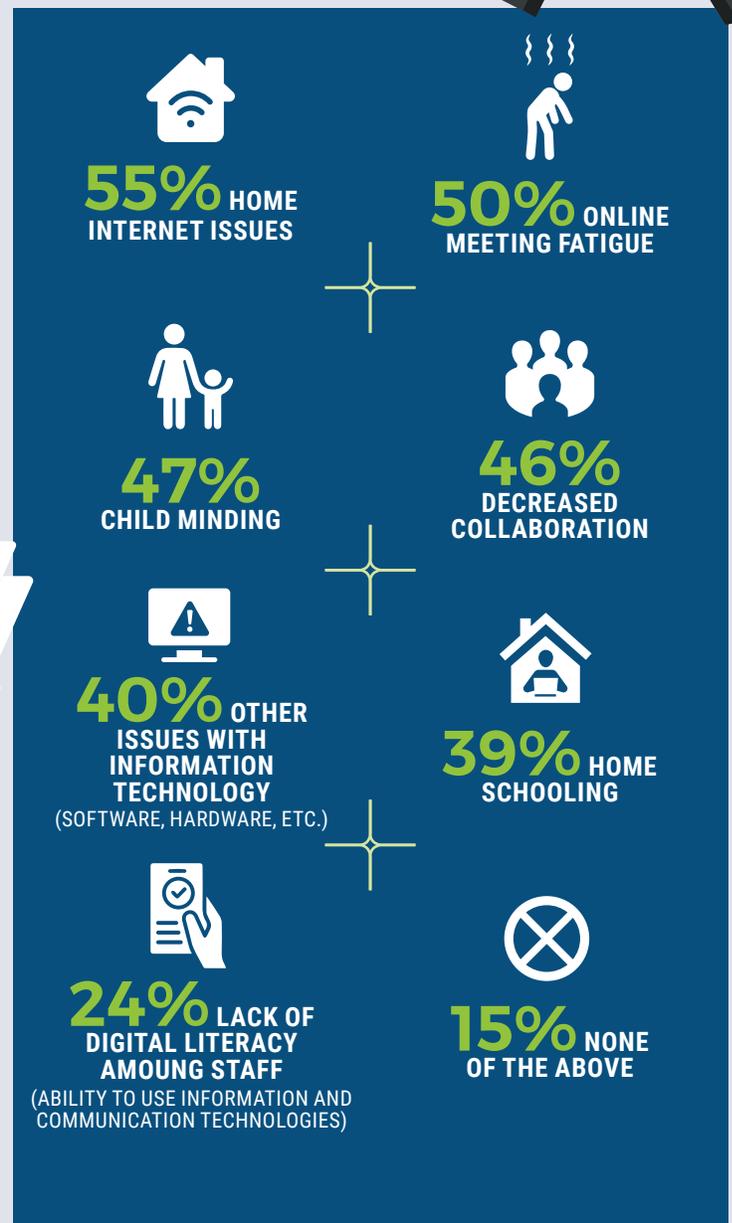


- Internet issues, online meeting fatigue, and child minding were reported as the top three obstacles faced through remote working. With so many people working remotely, internet speeds have been slowed down. Schools and childcare centers were closed since March so for many parents working remotely also had to care for children at home.

Do you need additional information about managing staff remotely including virtual hiring and on boarding?

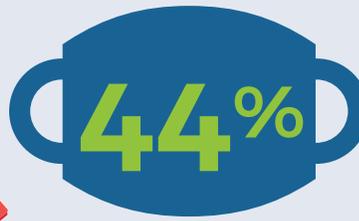


- For many businesses, remote working was introduced as a necessity to keep business functioning and allowing workers to keep their jobs in a safe manner, however this does not mean all business were equipped or prepared for remote working. Despite this, 82% of businesses reported no need for additional information and supports to manage staff who were working from home.



WORK SAFETY

Does your workplace require personal protective equipment (PPE) for your workers and or your customers?



require PPE for customers

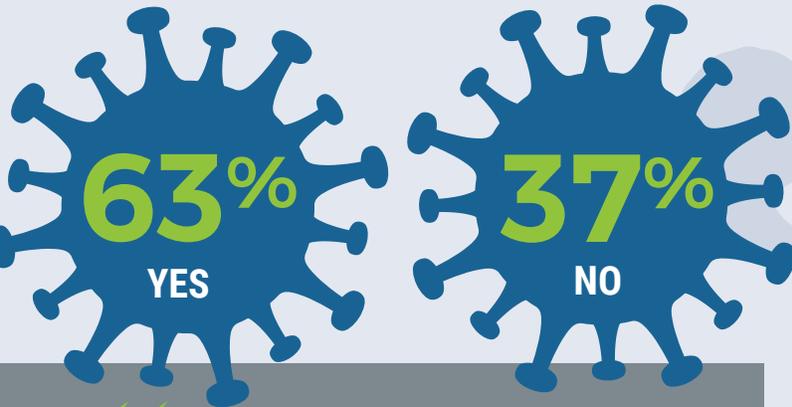


require PPE for workers

23% do not require PPE

Have you developed a crisis response plan in the event of an outbreak at your business/organization?

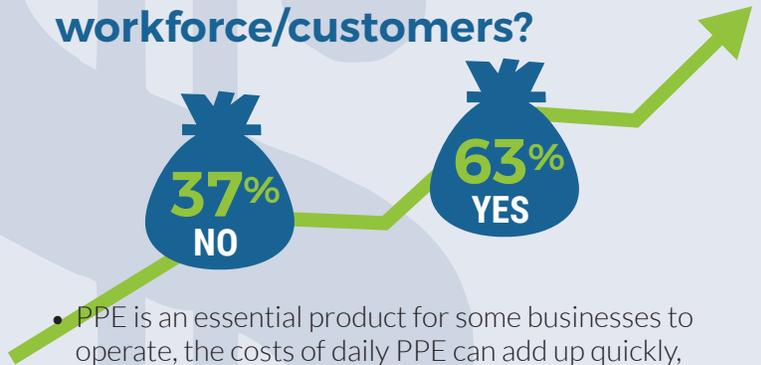
Most businesses seem to be aware of the importance of a crisis response plan to protect the safety of their staff, customers and the community. There are many free resources and templates to create a safety plan on the Ontario Public Health website.



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Employer Voice: As of August 2020, we have resumed full operations with a COVID-19 Safety plan and general guidelines on social distancing, limitations on in-person meetings, extra daily cleaning practices by all employees. We are somewhat optimistic that if we continue to deploy and follow best practices in these areas that we will be able to sustain business – Manufacturing employer

Are you concerned about the additional cost of PPE for your workforce/customers?



- PPE is an essential product for some businesses to operate, the costs of daily PPE can add up quickly, and businesses may not have room in their budgets for PPE as an added expense with reduced revenues. Overall 63% of employers reported they are concerned about the costs for their workforce. 71% of **Accommodation and food service** employers were concerned about the cost as PPE.
- 80% of **Construction** employers were also concerned about the cost of PPE for their staff.

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Employer Voice: Our business provides a day program to individuals who have developmental disabilities and our clients are supported through funding which has not been increased in many years. How am I to recover PPE, cleaning supplies and ventilation costs when I cannot recoup those costs from our clients? – Health care and social assistance employer

How valuable would the following be to your organization in addressing workplace safety?



The highest need for workplace safety concerns is clear industry guidelines on sanitation and physical distancing. 52% of employers reported that it would be extremely valuable to learn more about how to keep their workplace safe.

Do you have enough PPE available (either in stock or access to PPE) for your employees/customers to safely remain open for the next 6 months?



36%

Yes, we have enough PPE available for the next 6 months

53%

We have enough PPE available, but not sure if we have enough for the next 6 months

11%

No, we do not have enough PPE in stock and/or are unsure if we can get access to it for the next 6 months

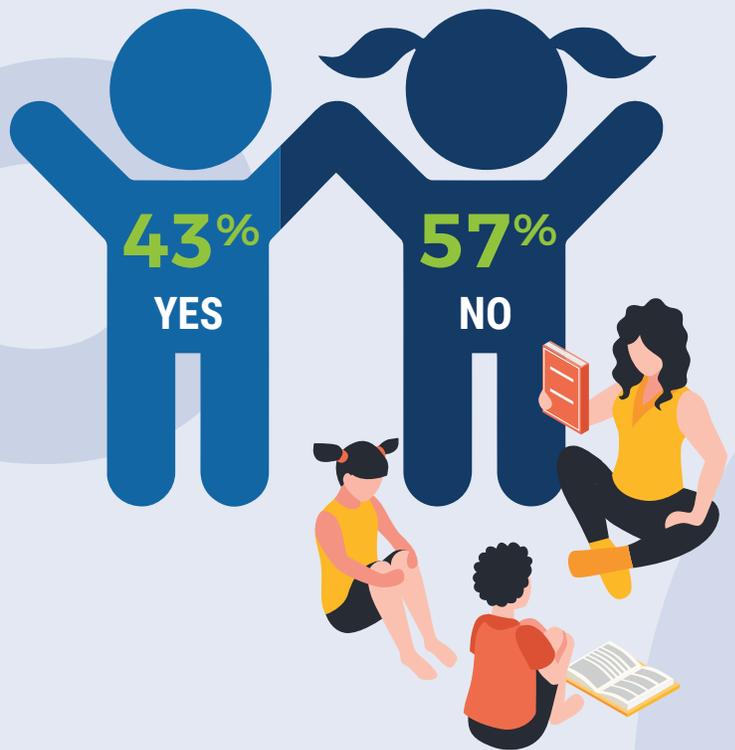


- 55% of employers reported they have enough PPE but not sure if they have enough for 6 months
- As the pandemic grew, the availability of PPE became scarce. Retailers limited quantities of PPE to purchase to ensure we did not have a shortage for the essential services. PPE is more widely available now for businesses and the public. However, if a second lockdown is planned for the near future will we experience the same shortage?
- The results suggest that the majority of employers report there is no certainty around enough PPE being widely available for the next 6 months of business.

NEXT SIX MONTHS

Is available childcare a concern for any of your workers?

- 57% reported that childcare wasn't a concern for their employees
- **Manufacturing** and **Education service** employers were the only sectors in which employers raised childcare as a concern. 68% of **Manufacturing** employers were concerned about childcare for their employees, and 70% of **Education services** identified childcare as a concern for their employees.



Have you developed new business strategies to guide your business operations for the next 6 months in light of COVID-19?

- The majority of businesses either completed or are working on developing new business strategies. We must remember there is always new information and regulations being released in regards to protocols and expectations of businesses so new business plans will be a constant working progress until further information is available.
- 25% of employers from **Health care and social assistance** sectors reported they have not completed a new business strategy but want to.
- 26% of **Construction** employers said they will not develop a new business strategy



Employer Voice: What could be really helpful is to collect new ideas and best practices that companies have come up with, and then share them so we can all learn from each other.



Do your workers face any transportation issues getting to your business either through access to or timing of the HSR buses?

- HSR was running on a reduced schedule for many weeks of the pandemic and have slowly been reintroducing routes and frequency, which may explain why 81% of employers reported not worrying about their employees using HSR to get to work. Also if many people were working remotely then transportation would not be an issue for some employers.



If you have completed a cash flow projection for the next 6 months, what best describes your situation?

Employer comments indicated that if businesses are allowed to remain open and the economy continues to improve then businesses will be okay. Many businesses reported fear of a second lockdown and do not know how they could cope if this happens again. The businesses claiming they are okay for the next 6 months may not include those who have to go into a second lockdown. Many employers were thankful for government assistance and bank loans and in some cases employers said it was the difference between permanent closure and being able to stay afloat.



Employer Voice: “Another economic shutdown would cripple our business. We were able to hold on for the first by destroying any and all of our savings. Another would mean permanently closing our doors”
– Retail trade employer

CONFIDENCE IN CONSUMER DEMAND



How has the demand for your products/services changed since COVID-19?



- With layoffs, job uncertainty, and the threat of COVID-19 spreading it has been a challenging time for both consumers and businesses. 42% of employers reported a decrease in the demand for their services/products. With businesses closed and people out of work consumer demand was very low. Only 8% of employers reported their demand for products/services increased significantly.



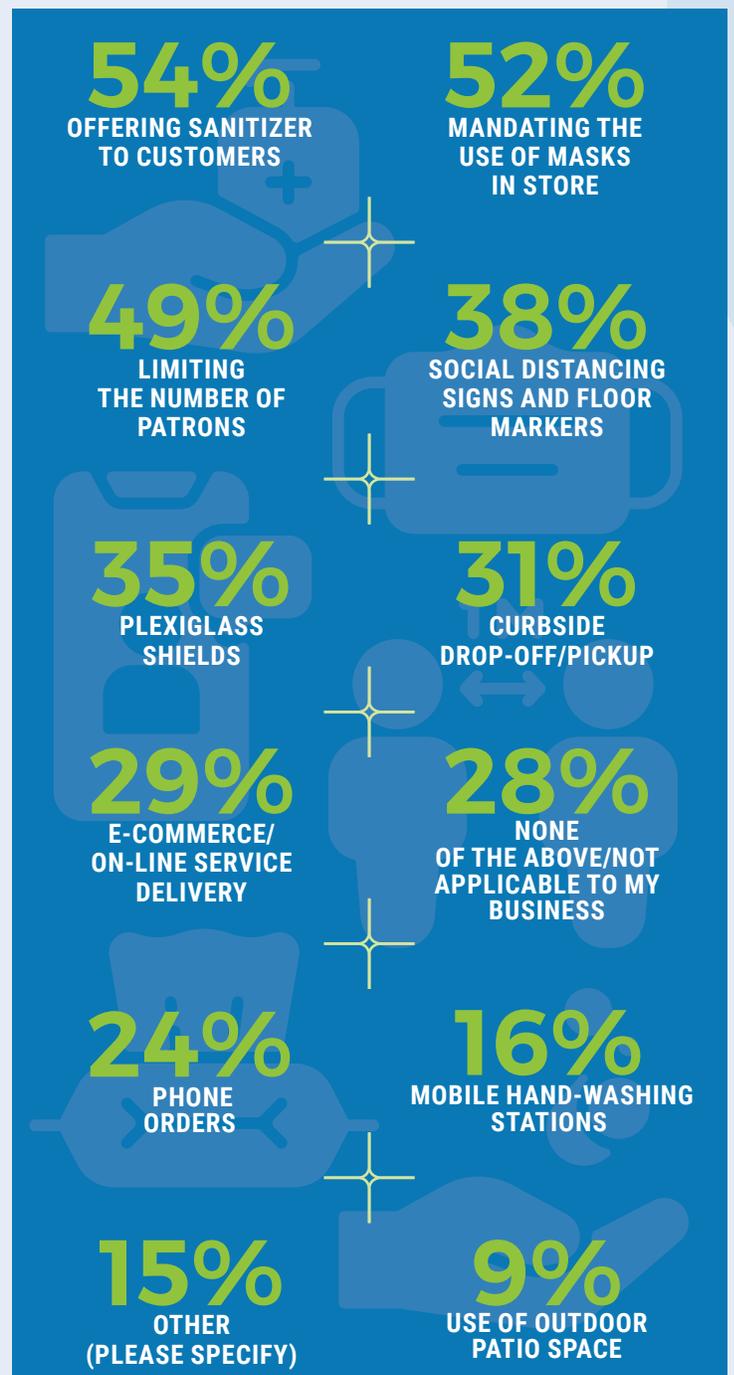
Employer Voice: With the nicer weather and patio open we are covering our overheads with reduced staffing due to volume. There appears to be some reluctance to be inside and will have a negative impact on our business when the weather starts to cool and into winter. – Accommodation and food service employer

Do you need additional supports to assist you in pivoting your business to a different business model?



- A large majority of businesses reported they did not need supports to pivot their business model. During the pandemic, there were some resources to access for Hamilton employers to support with pivoting their businesses such as creating e-commerce sites.

If you deal with the public, which of the following customer-facing practices did your organization adopt in response to COVID-19?



HIRING INTENTIONS

If you are planning to hire, estimate how many hires will be in the following categories?

Overall, 36% of employers planned to hire, from our survey that represents 89 employers hiring new positions. From these 89 employers, 506 jobs will be added in the next six months for Hamilton job seekers to explore.



Sector Spotlight

- 43% of **Arts, Entertainment and recreation** employers reported their future hires will be professionals
- **Other services** and **Retail trade** employers reported their future hires will be mostly across all positions listed
- 27% of **Health care and social assistance** future hires will be administrative and clerical jobs
- 82% of **Accommodation and food service** future hires will be service workers
- 41% of **Construction** sector employers said their future hires will be trades workers

If you are planning to hire, estimate what percentage of your new hires will be:



This shows the type of hire by percentage breakdown – an employer could select more than one option which is why it does not add up to 100%.

- 89% of **Manufacturing** sector new hires will be full-time permanent.
- The **Construction** sector employers said 40% of hires will be Full-time permanent and 40% will be part-time contract.

"When putting contracts out for tender, give first considerations to suppliers in Hamilton"

"Hamilton needs to be patient, we've made it this far and Hamilton has handled the challenge well, people are adapting to the changes, let's keep it up until we are confident that we are not putting ourselves at risk of sliding back into a lockdown."

"We will not close. We will do everything in our power to recover"

"Hamilton has taken exceptional steps in the business reopening phase"

"Current environment is challenging and we are all in this together. Supporting each other might ease the pain"

CONCLUSION

We received many rich and thoughtful comments from Hamilton employers throughout this survey and we would like to conclude by sharing employer voices.



BUY LOCAL: LET'S SUPPORT HAMILTON BUSINESSES

In these tough times, it is important we remember to support our local Hamilton economy! Here are a few tips!

- Order dinner or catering from a Hamilton restaurant
- Purchase groceries from an independently owned store
- Shop on your local streets for gifts and clothes
- Engage with your favourite Hamilton businesses social media: like, comment & share
- Utilize Hamilton businesses instead of looking in other communities
- Leave positive reviews on websites and search engines
- Promote and recommend your favourite local businesses

Workforce Planning Hamilton is funded by the Ministry of Labour, Training, and Skills Development to do research for Hamilton's local workforce development, providing evidence-based analysis, and transforming local labour market information into workforce planning solutions that contribute to a prosperous Hamilton community, engaging a broad range of labour market stakeholders. We would like to thank all the businesses that provided feedback for this project and to our partners that helped share the survey throughout Hamilton.



Workforce Planning Hamilton
Planification de main d'oeuvre de Hamilton