

ROAD TO RECOVERY: COVID-19 BUSINESS INSIGHTS SURVEY

Results Report

September 2020



Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie
Commission de planification de la main-d'oeuvre de Grand Erie



OUR VISION

A skilled, resilient workforce contributing to dynamic communities and their economies



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Partners:

- County of Brant Economic Development
- City of Brantford Economic Development
- Norfolk County Economic Development
- Haldimand County Economic Development
- Six Nations of the Grand River Development Corporation
- Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
- Venture Norfolk
- Brant Skills Centre
- Enterprise Brant
- Literacy Link South Central
- Haldimand Norfolk Ontario Works
- Wilfrid Laurier University
- Six Nations Polytechnic
- Fanshawe College
- Conestoga College
- Mohawk College
- Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board
- Grand Erie District School Board
- St. Leonard's Community Services
- Community Living Brant
- Community Resource Service
- Grand Erie Business Centre
- Brantwood Community Services
- Grand Valley Education Society
- YMCA
- GREAT
- NPAAMB
- SCOR
- OMAFRA
- Chamber of Commerce groups
- Business Representatives
- The Competitive Workforce Coalition of Canada

A special thank you to all survey respondents, who remain confidential, whose time and inputs have contributed towards broadening our understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing Grand Erie's business community at this time.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdowns shocked businesses and the workforce across the Grand Erie area in an unprecedented manner starting in March 2020. A few months in, as businesses began to contemplate, prepare, and execute plans to reopen, community organizations looked to identify interventions required to address the needs of the labour market in the immediate future.

Also, in March 2020, the Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie (WPBGE) started formulating plans for the Grand Erie COVID-19 Recovery Task Force. This task force brings together local businesses, government, and community organizations from the six communities that we serve to establish strategies for a safe and successful recovery. The Recovery Task Force recognized the need for evidence-based decision making and strong, impactful actions driven by and for the community. With this vision in mind, the group examined the needs of businesses within the communities of Six Nations, New Credit, City of Brantford, and Brant, Haldimand, and Norfolk counties.

Through research, discussions, and consultations with local employers and agencies, the following four key themes were prioritized. These formed the foundation for the Grand Erie COVID-19 Recovery Survey.

- Changes in Consumer Demand and Preferences
- Workplace Safety and Confidence
- Shifts in Skills in Demand
- Remote Working

Questions were developed to assess the impact of COVID-19 on local employers and evaluate the demand for various strategies and solutions to address their emerging needs.

The survey was conducted online between July 6, 2020 to Aug. 14, 2020 and engaged 195 businesses across various sectors within the Grand Erie region.

This report dives into the results of the survey, revealing critical shifts in the business landscape and noting differences by sector and business size. Key findings include:

- Significant decrease in demand for goods and services among one-third of businesses
- Wide-spread concerns about access to PPE in the short and medium term
- High levels of interest in skills training to support recent shifts in skills-in-demand
- Challenges with hiring in the current atmosphere



Each section concludes with a series of recommended community supports ranked based on value to businesses. Based on the findings some recommendations are summarized below:

- The development of a multi-fold strategy to support business growth, involving digital marketing training for businesses, 'shop local' campaigns directed by the local government, and investments in regional and international supply chain development
- Frequent, targeted messaging to businesses and consumers on proper health and safety guidelines, training for staff on sector-specific practices and increased availability and subsidization of PPE for businesses
- Identification and development of essential and custom skills training (for current employees) as well as reskilling/upskilling opportunities (for job seekers) to support workforce development
- Infrastructure improvements such as increased broadband coverage to allow for remote work to continue long-term
- Continued in-depth analysis of challenges faced by businesses, gained through discussions and interviews with local business representatives

The findings of this survey, detailed below, are intended to provide residents, businesses, and government leaders across Grand Erie with the knowledge they need to make informed action plans as we travel down the road to recovery.



OVERVIEW

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 marked a time of great uncertainty for businesses across the globe. The ensuing lockdowns disrupted international supply chains, restricted travel and tourism and brought economies to a halt. Nationally, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fell 11.5% in the second quarter of 2020 due to decreases in business investments and international trade, marking the steepest decline since the Second World War. In Brantford, the unemployment rate more than doubled over the course of several months, climbing from 5.9% in March to 12.6% in June¹.

At the beginning of May, over 40% of Grand Erie employees were out of work due to COVID-19 based on the Grand Erie Worker Impact Survey Results. While the month of July saw a small dip in unemployment as some residents returned to work, many questions lingered about the economic impact of the virus and the subsequent structural impact on our business community. Five months later, the impacts of the pandemic remain significant within the communities of Brantford, Brant, Haldimand, Norfolk, Six Nations and New Credit.

In March 2020, the Workforce Planning Board brought together local businesses, government, and community organizations to form the Grand Erie Recovery Task Force and guide the region towards a safe and successful recovery. Through research and consultations with the community, a set of priorities for the business community were identified.

In June 2020, the task force developed the Grand Erie COVID-19 Recovery Survey. The purpose of the survey was twofold:

- (a) To assess the impact of COVID-19 on local employers, and
- (b) To evaluate the demand for strategies and solutions to address the emerging needs of employers

A total of 195 businesses across the Grand Erie region participated in the survey, providing unique insight into the challenges presented by COVID-19, as well as the budding opportunities.

Significant negative impact was noted by over one third of businesses. Like in other parts of Canada, local tourism and retail sectors were the hardest hit. As lockdown restrictions were lifted, businesses bounced back, eager to pick up momentum again. Their feedback, however, indicates that the road to recovery is long, and dependent on collaboration between the business community, government leaders and local organizations to determine a coordinated action plan based on established key priorities.

¹ March to July 2020 Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey



METHODOLOGY

The Grand Erie COVID-19 Recovery Survey was developed and distributed by the Workforce Planning Board in partnership with the Grand Erie Recovery Task Force, a group of 50+ individuals invested in the recovery of our community. It includes representatives from:

- Economic Development
- Municipal Government
- Literacy and Basic Skills Development
- Educational Institutions
- Community and Social Service Organizations
- Employment Ontario network
- Chamber of Commerce groups
- Businesses and Business Associations
- Media

Through research and discussion, the group identified a broad range of factors that would impact the region's businesses. A set of 4 priorities were then established:

1. Changes in Consumer Demand/Preferences
2. Workplace Safety and Confidence
3. Shifts in Skills-in-Demand
4. Remote Working

Following this, a survey was developed with questions about each of these four priorities. Surveys were distributed using direct emails, newsletters, and social media to reach a broad cross-section of employers and HR representatives within the Grand Erie community. Members of the Recovery Task Force assisted in the distribution and promotion of the survey.

The survey was conducted from July 6, 2020 to Aug. 14, 2020.



SAMPLE

The survey engaged 195 Grand Erie businesses across various sectors and business sizes. While this falls short of the response target set prior to the survey release, the detailed data collected offers us much deeper insight into the Grand Erie business community than has been developed to date.

RESPONSES BY SECTOR

The following chart provides a breakdown of participating businesses by industry (Fig. 1).

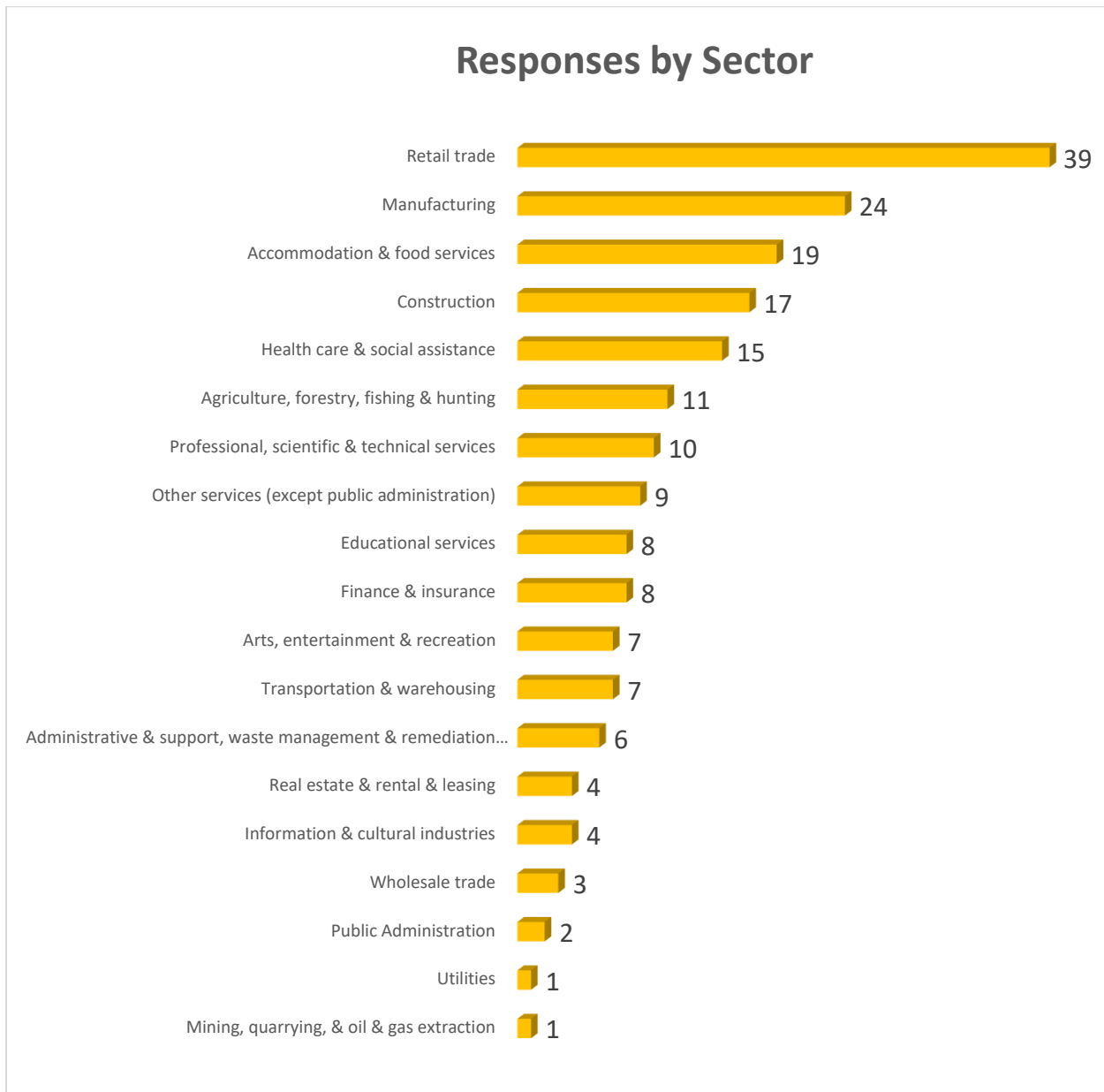


Figure 1: Response by Sector



Businesses in retail trade, manufacturing and accommodation and food services are over-represented in the sample. However, this offers us deeper insight into the specific challenges within these sectors, all of which were significantly affected by COVID-19.

RESPONSES BY BUSINESS SIZE

Small businesses – defined as those with under 99 employees - made up 86% of all respondents and are marginally underrepresented within the survey sample². Medium sized businesses, with between 100 to 499 employees, made up 11% of all responses, and large businesses, with 500+ employees, made up the remaining 3%. Medium and large businesses were overrepresented in the survey sample (Fig. 2).

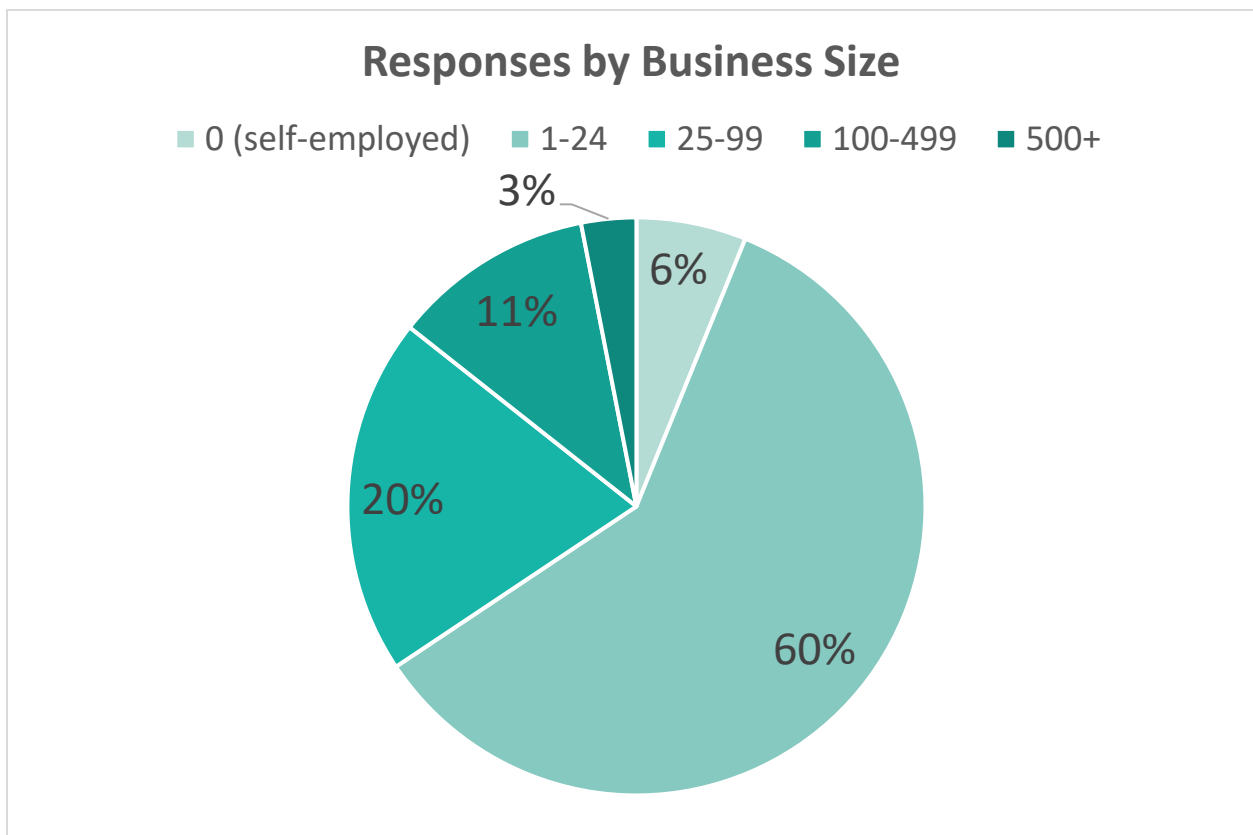


Figure 2: Responses by Business Size

², June 2020 Canada Business Counts Data



RESPONSES BY COMMUNITY

30% of businesses that responded were in Brantford, 24% in the County of Brant, 16% in Haldimand County, 26% in Norfolk County and the remaining 4% in Six Nations (Fig. 3). This breakdown is representative of the distribution of businesses in the Grand Erie region.

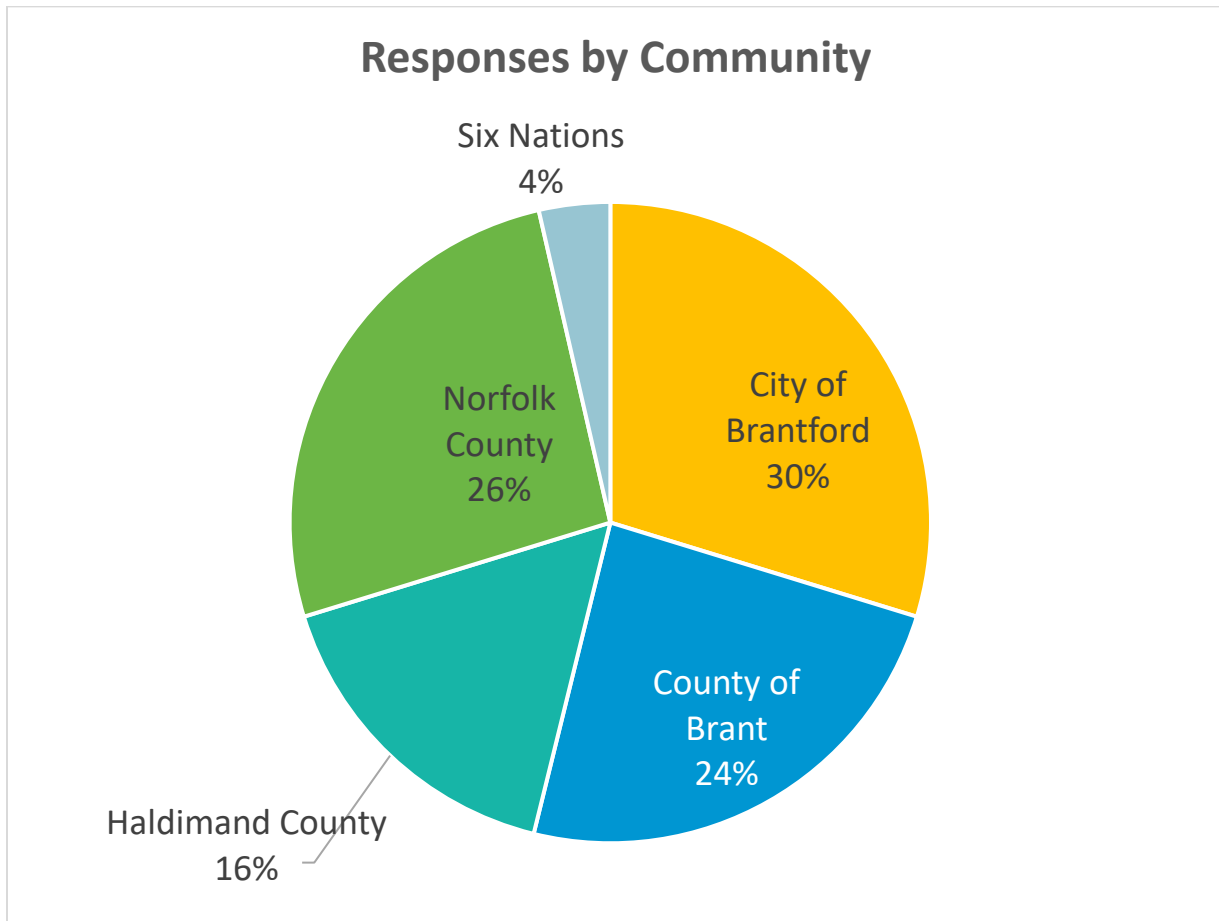


Figure 3: Responses by Region



RESULTS

BUSINESS IMPACT

85% of all businesses indicated that COVID-19 had a negative overall impact – from a revenue, supply chain, HR perspective etc. - on their business, and 36% of these noted that the impact was significantly negative (Fig. 4).

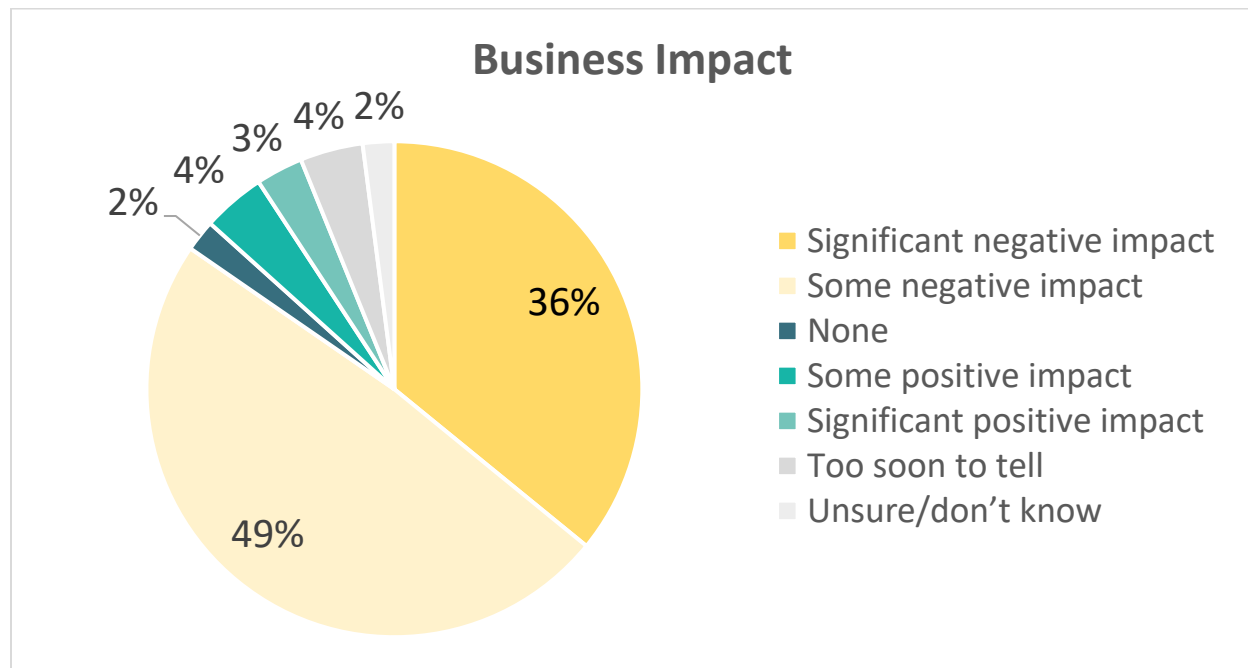


Figure 4: Business Impact

Accommodation and food services, retail trade and construction sectors were most severely impacted, with around 90% of businesses in these sectors noting significant or some negative impact. Meanwhile, around 18% of businesses in the agriculture sector, and around 9% of businesses in the manufacturing sector reported some positive impact resulting from COVID-19 lockdowns.

The impact was inversely related to business size; while 41% of small businesses experienced significant negative impact, none of the large businesses surveyed indicated the same severity of impact.

Based on these survey results (Fig. 5), approximately 10% of businesses in the Grand Erie region were closed during the month of July and into early August. It is worth noting that these results may be skewed as businesses that were not in operation while the survey was being conducted were less likely to have participated (nonresponse bias). It is possible that the proportion of businesses that are closed, both temporarily and permanently, is higher than reflected in the graphs below.

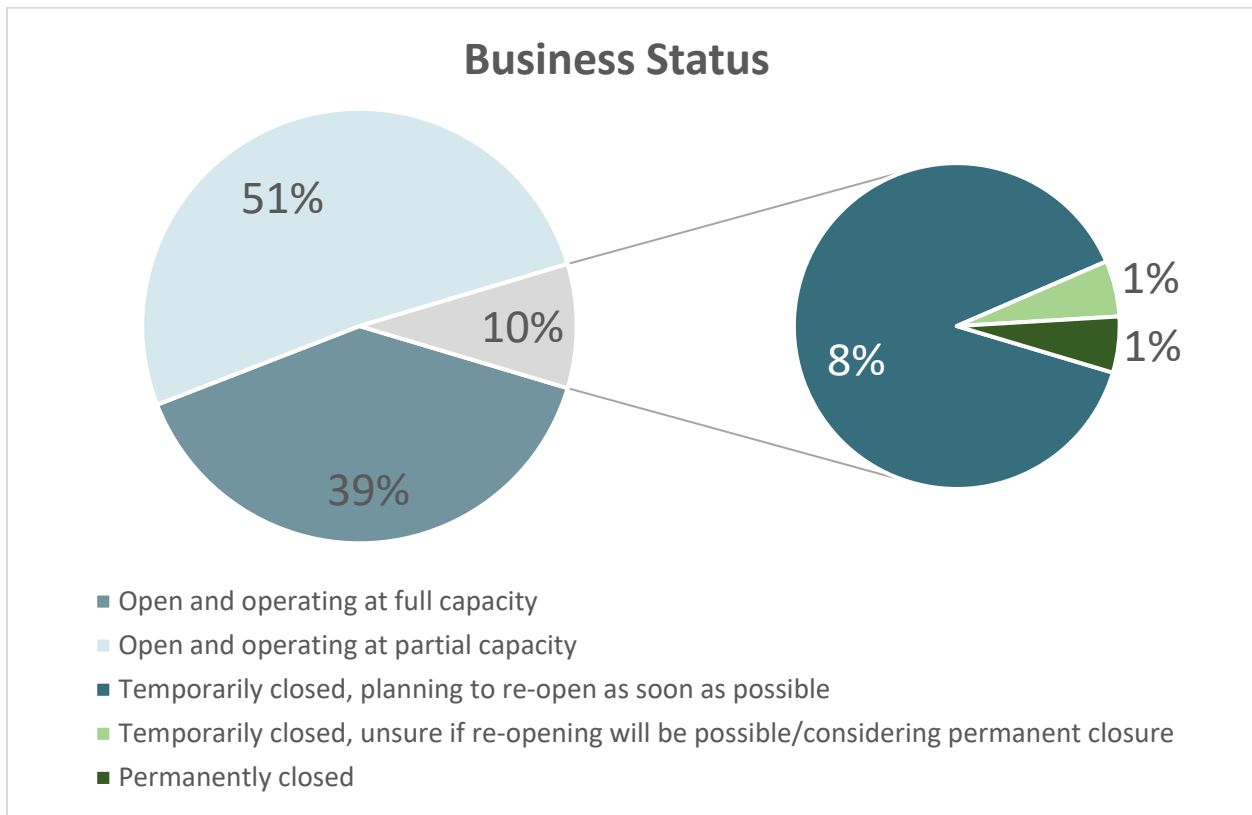


Figure 5: Business Status

Most of the businesses that temporarily closed were small businesses in retail and manufacturing.

Businesses were asked to estimate their layoffs – temporary and permanent.

Approximately 45% of businesses indicated that a portion of their staff was temporarily laid off (Fig. 6).

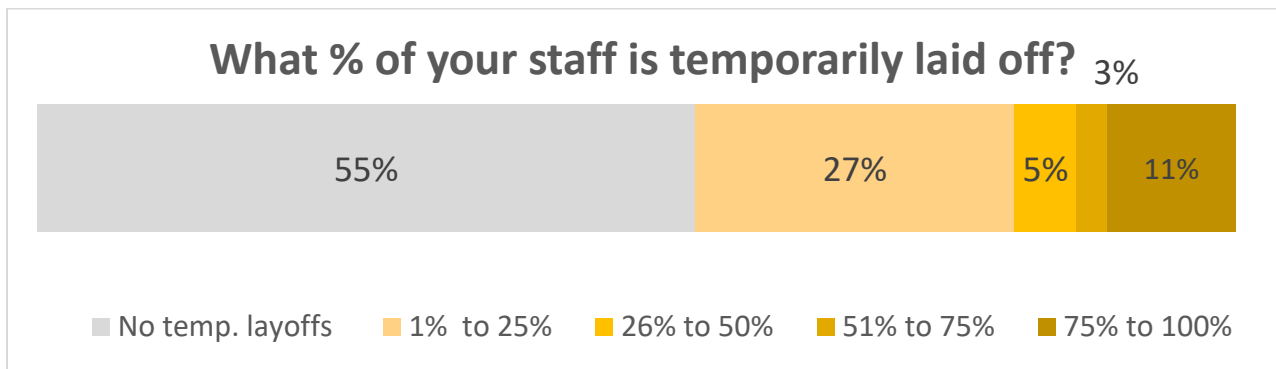


Figure 6: Temporary Layoffs



Small and medium sized businesses in the retail trade and accommodation and food service sectors made up the bulk of businesses that temporarily laid off staff. Among businesses that made temporary layoffs, 27% indicated that they laid off under 25% of their workforce, while 11% laid off over 75% of their workforce.

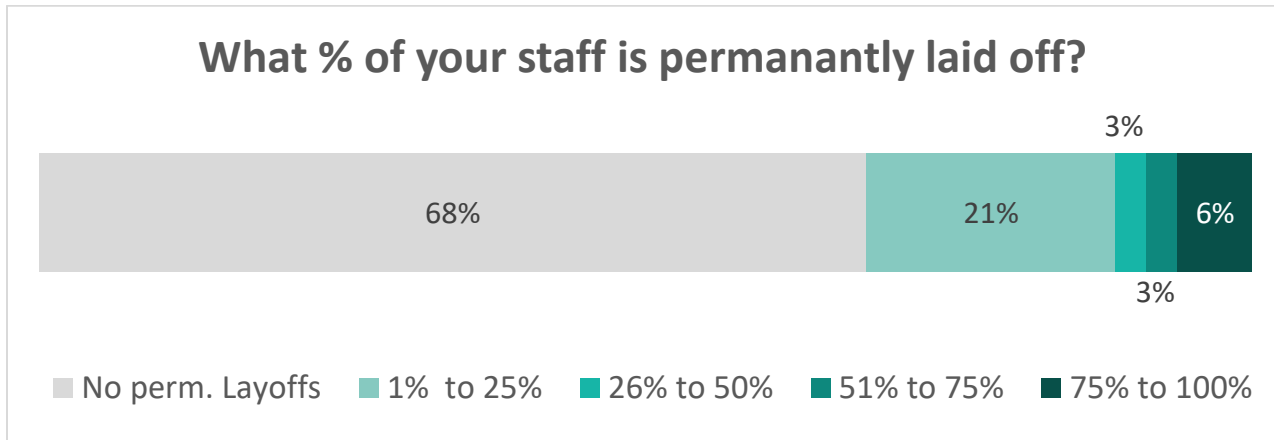


Figure 7: Permanent Lay-Offs

Meanwhile, about 33% of businesses noted that they had permanently laid off some staff. For the majority of these (21%), the layoffs accounted for under 25% of their workforce. About 6% of businesses, on the other hand, had to permanently lay off over 75% of their workforce (Fig. 7).

A large portion of the permanent layoffs were within the accommodation and food services, construction, and retail trade sectors, wherein an average of 40% of businesses had to make some permanent layoffs.

Additionally, 34% of businesses – primarily small and medium - believe that some of their temporary layoffs may become permanent.



CHANGES IN CONSUMER DEMAND/PREFERENCES

61% of businesses in Grand Erie experienced a decrease in the demand for good/services they offer (Fig. 8). However, the impact varied significantly between sectors, with several agriculture businesses noting an increase in the demand for their goods/services. Similarly, some small retail trade businesses also reported an increase in demand for their products.

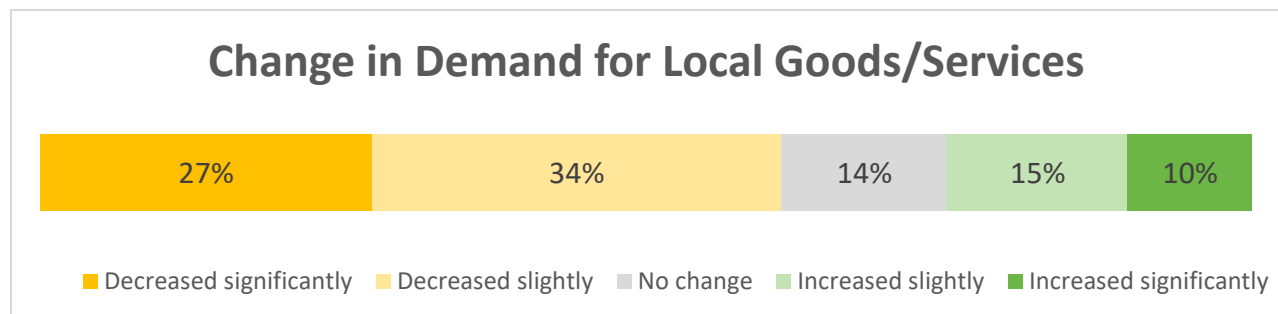


Figure 8: Changes in Demand for Local Goods/Services

Some manufacturing businesses mentioned that while demand for their products was growing, they were unable to meet this as their suppliers were at a standstill. Many other businesses specified that their new – virtual – business models were not impactful and could not be sustained in the long run. For some service-delivery organizations, the lockdowns meant they could no longer reach certain clientele who did not have access to internet, computer equipment or the tech skills to use telecommunication methods effectively.

On the other hand, of the 25% of employers experiencing growth, many noted significant difficulties in hiring during this time.

In response to the emerging demands created by COVID-19, 63% of businesses modified their goods production/service delivery.

Many adopted new practices that allowed for clients/customers to continue using their services. The most common changes businesses made – used by over 50% - were:

- Offering free sanitizer
- Limiting the number of patrons within business premises
- Social distancing signs and floor markers
- Mandating the use of masks within business premises

Other common changes included the establishment of e-commerce websites, installing plexi-glass barriers, switching to online meetings, and curbside pickup and delivery.

Approximately 6% of all businesses did not adopt any such practices.



Figure 9: New Business Strategies

Businesses were then asked if they had developed any new strategies to guide their business operations for the next 1-5 years. At the time of data collection, 22% of businesses had already developed new business strategies, and 51% were in the process of doing so (Fig. 9).

18% of businesses – predominantly small businesses in construction and retail trade - indicated that they wanted to do so, but did not know how or have the resources to do so.

About 9% of businesses said they would not be developing any new strategies.

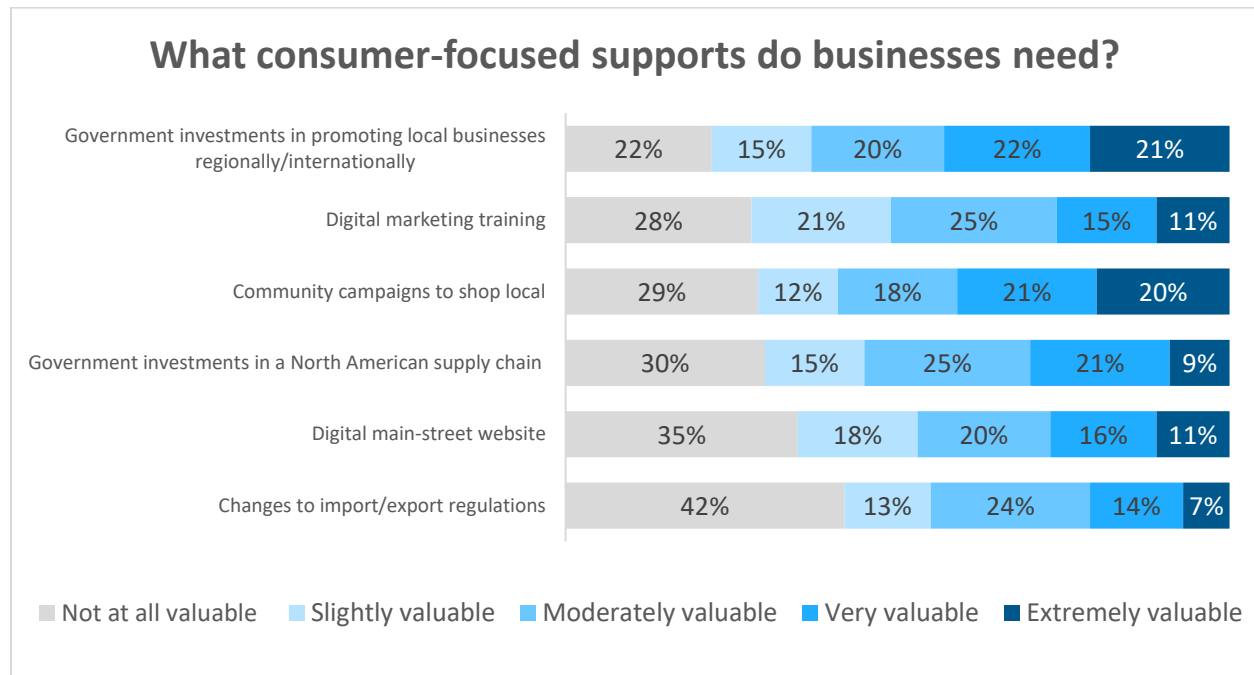


Figure 10: Consumer-focused supports

When asked about how the community can support businesses with these new changes, 61% of businesses considered government investments in promoting local businesses regionally/internationally (i.e. develop policy requiring labelling for products/goods “Made in Canada”) to be moderately to significantly valuable. 58% believed that community campaigns to shop local would be equally helpful (Fig. 10). These were prioritized by small and medium businesses across various sectors, including several retail trade and accommodation and food service businesses. Food service providers also specified that they were looking for a local delivery service, citing that the existing ones were expensive and invasive. Other self-employed businesspeople called for one-on-one support to help them navigate through the various supports provided by the government.

“Encourage buying local and help us build our digital storefronts and social media presence”

~ Grand Erie Business Owner

Other popular suggestions included digital marketing training which was largely prioritized by small business owners/HR reps, and government investments in North American supply chains – popular among large businesses.



WORKPLACE SAFETY AND CONFIDENCE

At the time of the survey development, Brant and Haldimand-Norfolk had just moved into Stage 2 of reopening. Many more businesses were beginning to open and figuring out how to do so safely. This section of the survey addresses businesses' concerns with reopening the workplace, from the safety and confidence of returning workers to access required protective equipment.

Businesses were asked if their staff had returned to the workplace. At the time of the survey, 57% had all employees back at the workplace, and another 32% had some employees coming in regularly (Fig. 11).

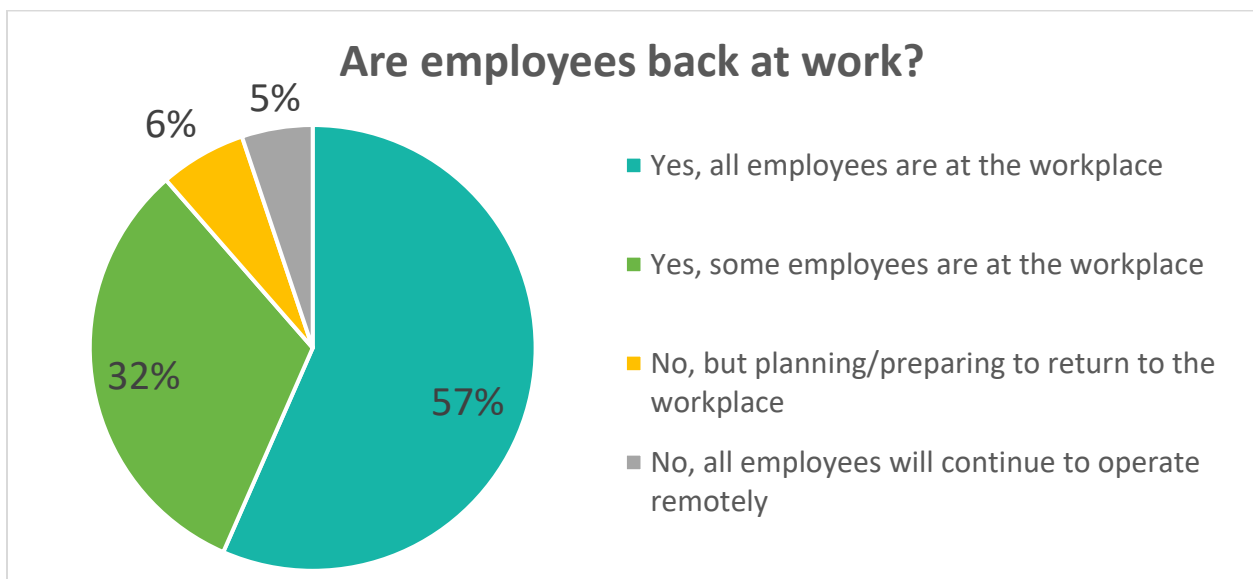


Figure 11: Return to the Workplace

About 6%, namely small accommodation and food services, health care and social assistance, and retail trade businesses were in preparations to return to the workplace, while about 5% intended to continue operating remotely (Fig. 11).

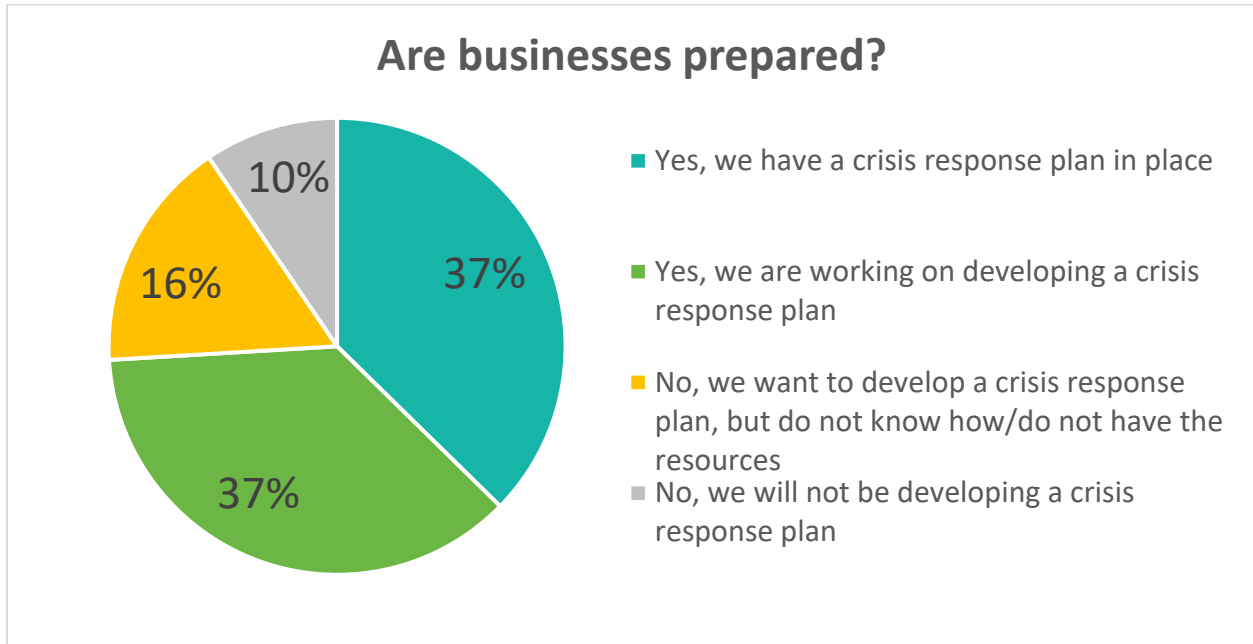


Figure 12: Business Preparedness

While 74% of businesses indicated that they were prepared in the event of an outbreak, around 16% noted that they would like to develop a crisis response plan, but did not know how or have the resources to do so (Fig. 12)

The survey also found that 68% of businesses – mostly small and medium sized- have adequate PPE for all staff currently working on site. On the inverse, 9% said they do not, and the remaining were unsure.

Looking at the longer term, there is less certainty in the availability of PPE for all staff. Slightly more than half (51%) of businesses believe they have adequate PPE for all staff for the next 12-24 months, while over 20% say the opposite is true. The remaining were unsure about the availability of PPE in the near future.

Businesses were then asked to pinpoint specific concerns they had with returning employees to the workplace. A top concern noted by businesses was that workers feel unsafe. 28% of businesses considered this a significant or serious issue, and another 42% said it was a minor issue within their organization (Fig. 13).

Following close behind is access to PPE, which was a significant or serious issue for 23% of businesses, and a minor issue for 50% of businesses (Fig. 13).

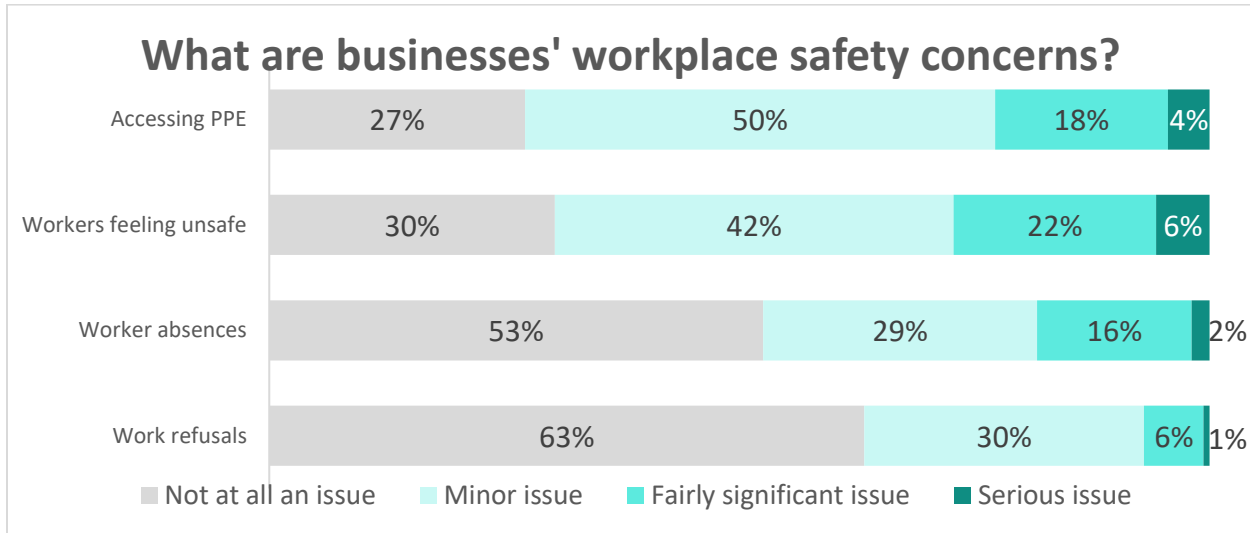


Figure 13: Workplace Safety Concerns

Worker absences and work refusals were deemed to be an issue by a smaller portion of businesses, with the former being particularly prevalent in large manufacturing and health care industries, and the latter in smaller accommodations and food services, manufacturing, and retail environments.

To assess how the community could support businesses with workplace safety concerns, Grand Erie businesses were asked to evaluate the importance of various strategies.

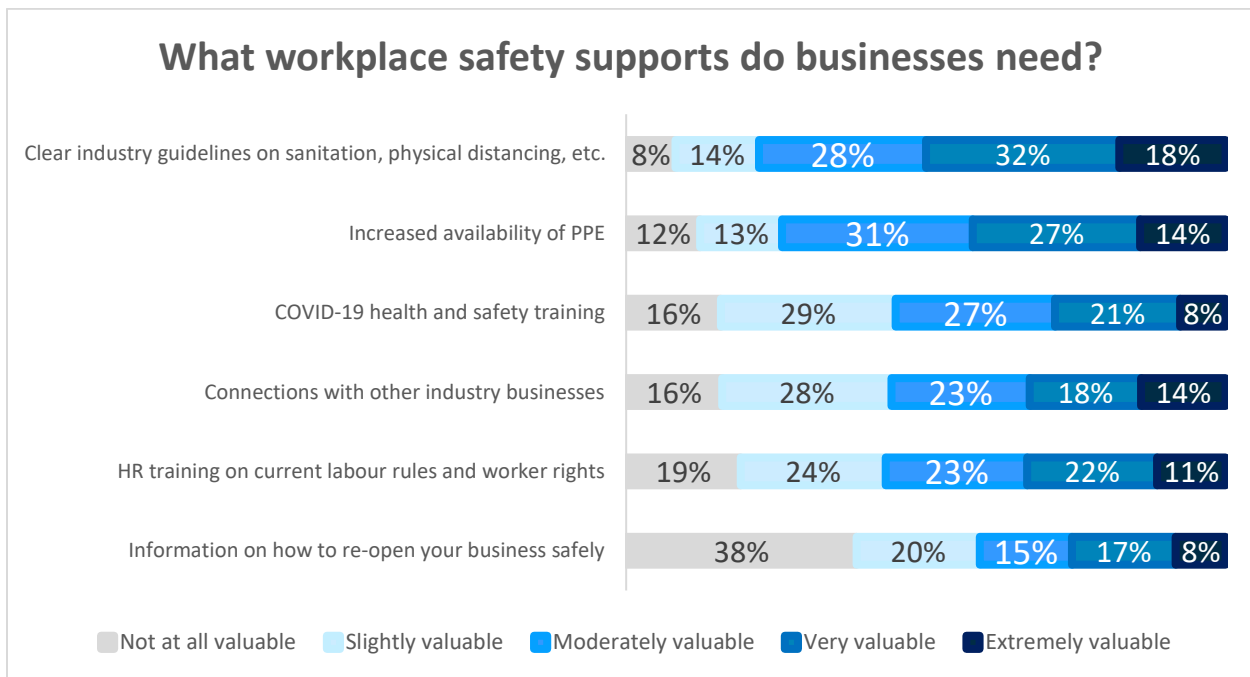


Figure 14: Workplace Safety Supports



Clear industry guidelines on sanitation, physical distancing and other important business practices were deemed most valuable, by over 90% of businesses (Fig. 14). This was particularly important to accommodation and food service, health care and social assistance and retail trade businesses. In addition to raising business confidence, this may also help mitigate concerns among workers about their safety on the job. Many of these businesses also stressed the importance of training consumers on social distancing policies and practices, noting that they have had to deal with ignorant and unpleasant attitudes towards their employees.

“We need clearer regulations regarding procedures we are to have in place.”

~ Grand Erie Business Owner

A slightly smaller portion of businesses from a wide range of industries also highlighted the value of increased availability and access to PPE for their staff, as well as downloadable signage for businesses. One employer called for a government agency regulating all PPE products for all industries, noting that available resources are unaffordable.

Slightly over 80% of businesses indicated that they would find COVID-19 health and safety training as well as HR training on current labour rules/worker rights to be valuable to their business. Some believe the current regulations to be unclear and confusing. A similar portion said they would be interested in making connections with other businesses within their industry to share best practices.

Information on how to re-open safely was less popular, albeit still valuable to almost 60% of businesses. One business owner shared their sentiment that communication from all levels of government was lacking, and that it was forcing them to act without proper direction.



SHIFTS IN SKILLS IN-DEMAND

About 66% of businesses in Grand Erie did not see their top skills-in-demand changing based on their current path and vision for the future. Among those that did, many of which were businesses in retail trade, manufacturing, accommodation & food services, and construction, about 25% estimated that these skills-in-demand would change marginally. Another 6% said they anticipated the shift to be significant.

Employers were also asked to identify skills that have increased significantly in demand within their organization. The top 5 are listed below:

- Adaptability/Flexibility – noted by 54% of businesses
- Communication Skills - noted by 35% of businesses
- Resilience - noted by 32% of businesses
- Teamwork/Interpersonal Skills - noted by 30% of businesses
- Customer Relations - noted by 27% of businesses

Meanwhile, some businesses noted a decrease in demand for certain skillsets, namely:

- Sales – noted by 23% of businesses
- Advanced Computer Skills – noted by 20% of businesses
- Coding/Web Development Skills - noted by 20% of businesses

“Our skills-in-demand are parallel to technology advances, and thus constantly changing”

~ Grand Erie Business Owner

When asked about changes in demand for specific certifications, many businesses in manufacturing and construction noted a growth in demand for various skilled trades positions, including electricians, plumbers, HVAC, and mechanics.

Following this, businesses were asked about potential supports that they would find helpful in enhancing the skills within their workforce.

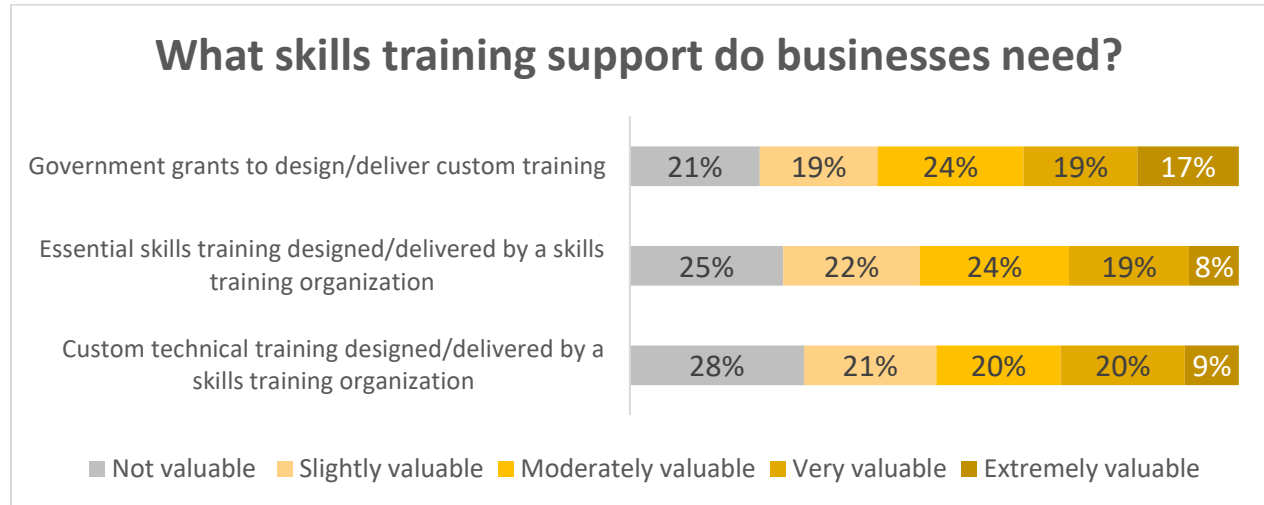


Figure 15: Skills Training Support

Approximately 79% of businesses across all sectors and business sizes said they would be interested in receiving government grants to help with designing and delivering custom training for their staff (Fig. 15). Considering the diversity of skills-in-demand, this is an effective way to ensure that employees across the region get the training that their company would most benefit from.

That said, not all businesses have the time or resources to train their staff. About 75% specified that they would want support with the development and delivery of essential skills training, and a slightly smaller portion said they would be interested in custom technical training developed by a skills training organization (Fig. 15). Some tech companies also highlighted the need to promote the area as an attractive home for IT/technology workers.



REMOTE WORKING

The final section of the survey pertained to businesses' remote work arrangements. Around 38% indicated that they had some portion of staff working remotely (Fig. 16). These businesses were asked a series of questions on alternate work arrangements, productivity levels and more.

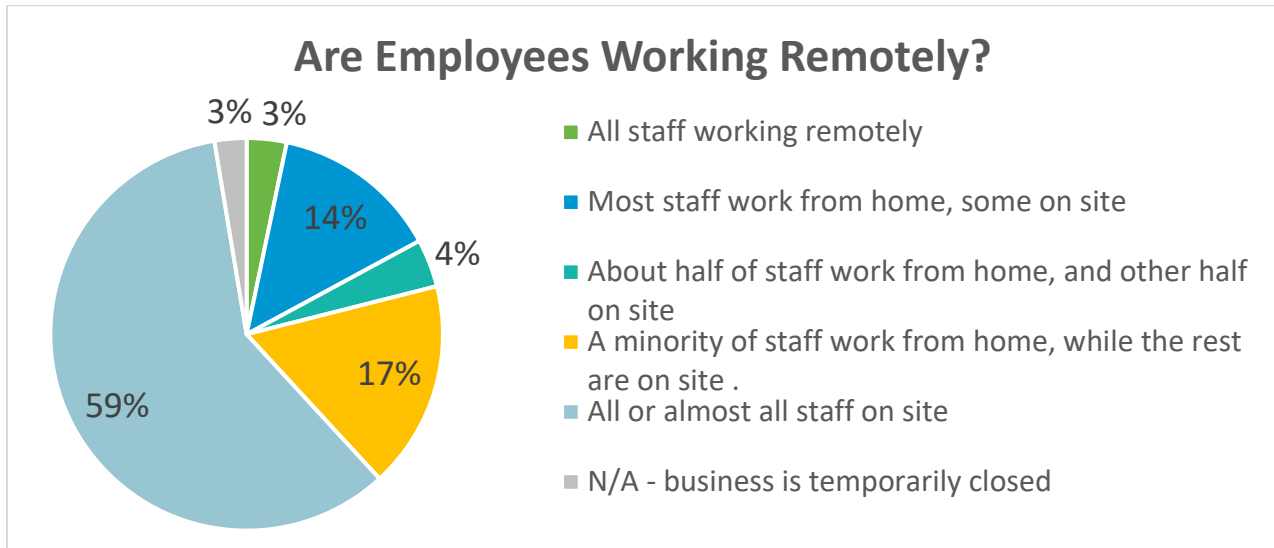


Figure 16: Remote Working

Approximately 80% of businesses were more likely to consider implementing a hybrid model wherein workers could work partially from home and partially in the office. A similar portion – 73% - were considering allowing employees to continue remote working in the long run (Fig. 17).

Some other considerations included more investments in automation – popular in the manufacturing sector - and downsizing their businesses' physical footprint - popular among construction and accommodation and food service organizations.

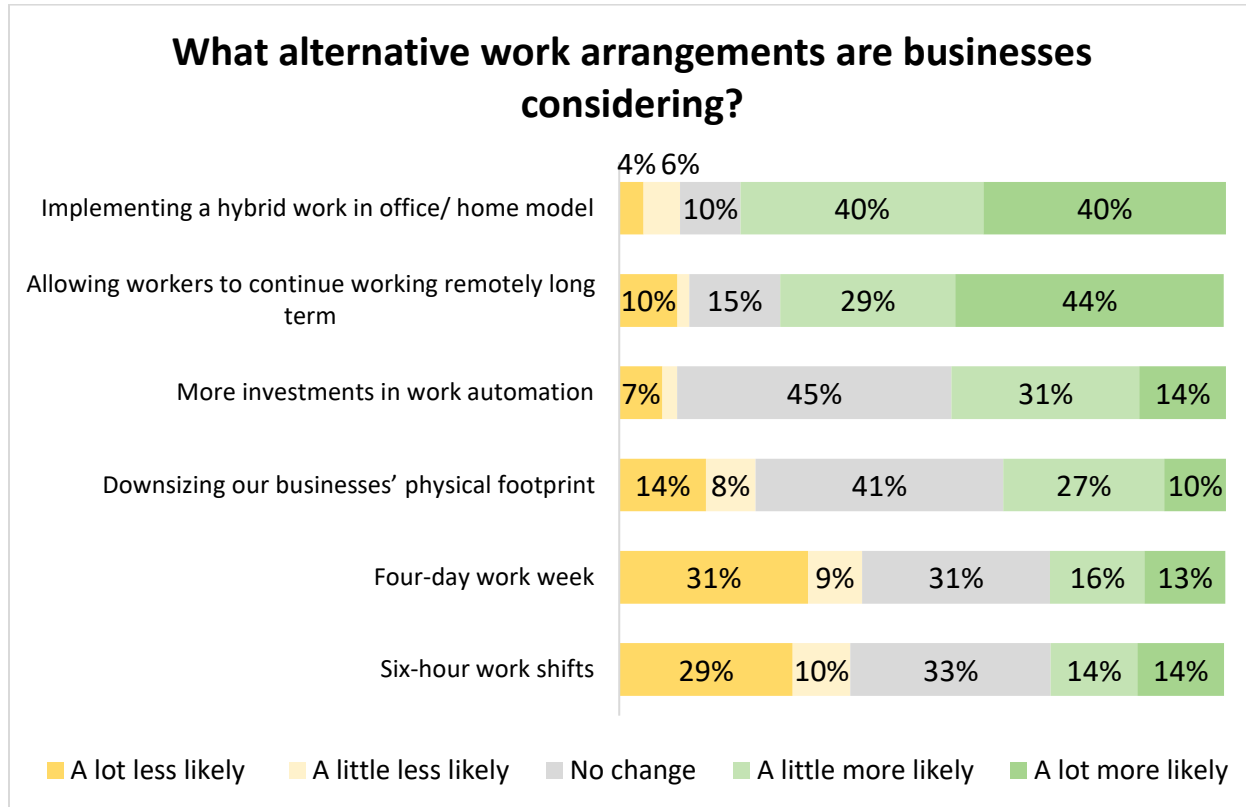


Figure 17: Potential Work Arrangements

There was less interest in newer work models, such as the four-day work week or six-hour work shifts, although some manufacturing, retail trade and accommodation and food service businesses did note that they were considering these options.

Grand Erie businesses with a remote staff base were asked to identify the top obstacles that their workforce is facing.

Around 62% cited internet issues as a top concern, and interestingly, this was cited by businesses in both urban and rural areas (Fig. 18).

Other significant obstacles included child minding/elder care, lack of a suitable workplace at home and a decrease in the level of collaboration between team members (Fig. 18).

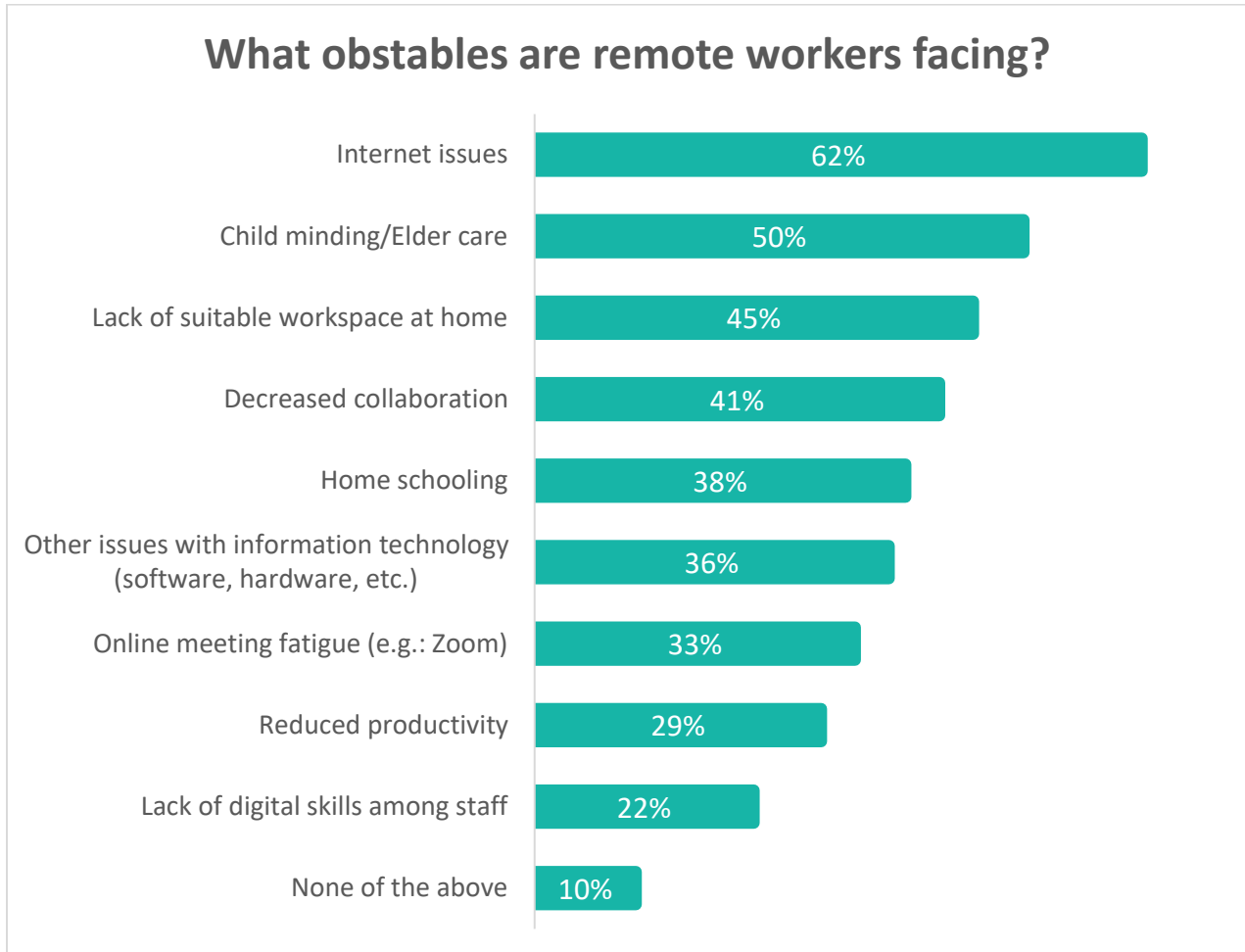


Figure 18: Remote Working Obstacles

29% of businesses reported reduced productivity because of remote working arrangements. A slightly larger portion – 33% - of businesses believe that overall, the well-being of their employees had improved since transitioning to remote work. One employer mentioned that the drop in production levels had created a better work/life balance for their employees.

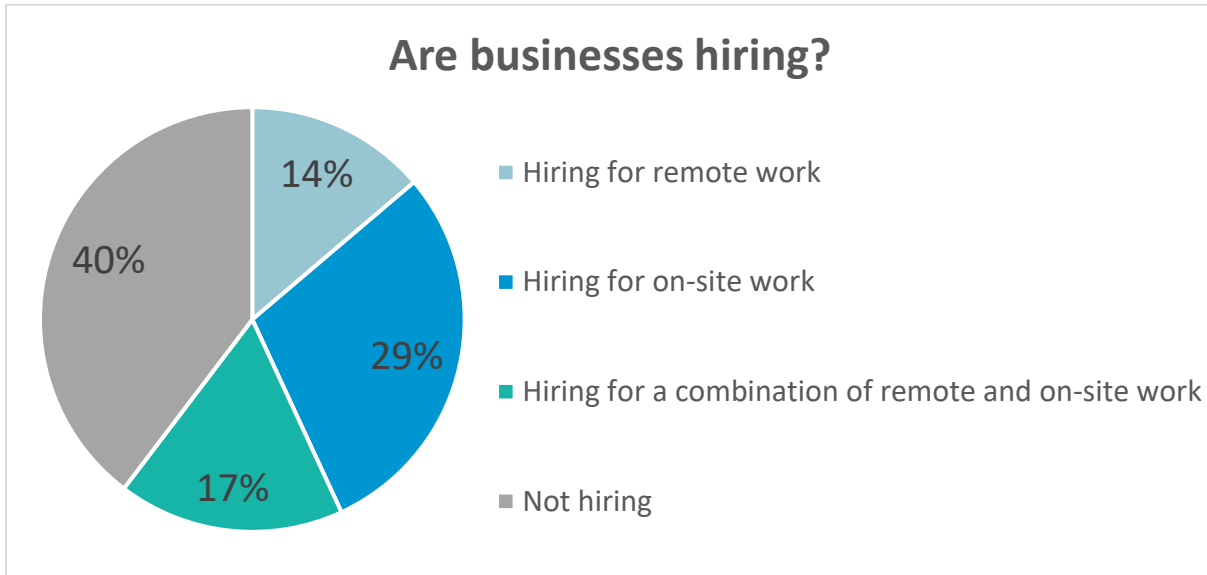


Figure 19: Hiring

When asked about upcoming hiring, 60% of businesses said they planned on hiring in the next 6 months, an exciting signal that business confidence is rising (Fig. 19). A majority of these new hires would be for onsite work, while a smaller portion would be for remote work or a combination of the two.

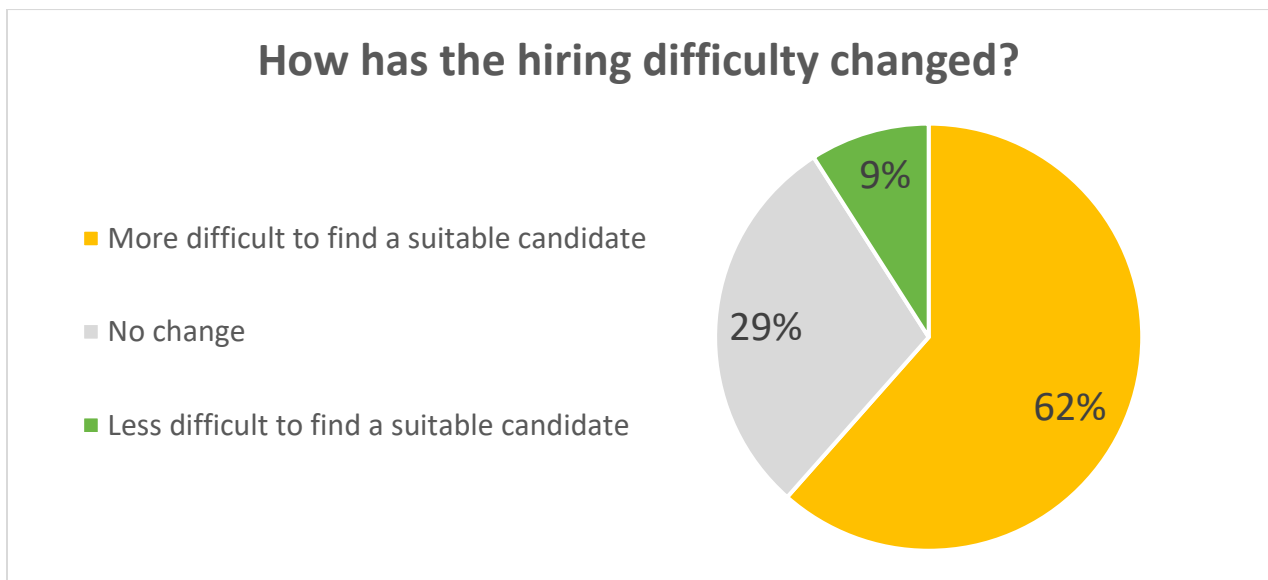


Figure 20: Difficulty in Hiring



While businesses are certainly eager to pick up momentum and make up for lost revenue, finding the workforce to help execute this has proved challenging. Of those hiring, around 62% said it had become more difficult to find a suitable candidate for the job, while 9% said it was less difficult to do so (Fig. 20).

This is likely because many workers fear the resurgence of the virus. Additionally, almost 47% of job seekers are looking for part-time work that allows them to handle their other responsibilities³.

Finally, businesses were asked to identify remote working supports that they would find useful during this time. Given the high degree of concerns around access to internet, it is no surprise that government investments in broadband infrastructure for rural communities was deemed to be of value by an astounding 93% of businesses (Fig. 21).

“We need high-speed internet in rural locations to be able to work remotely”
 ~ Grand Erie Business Owner

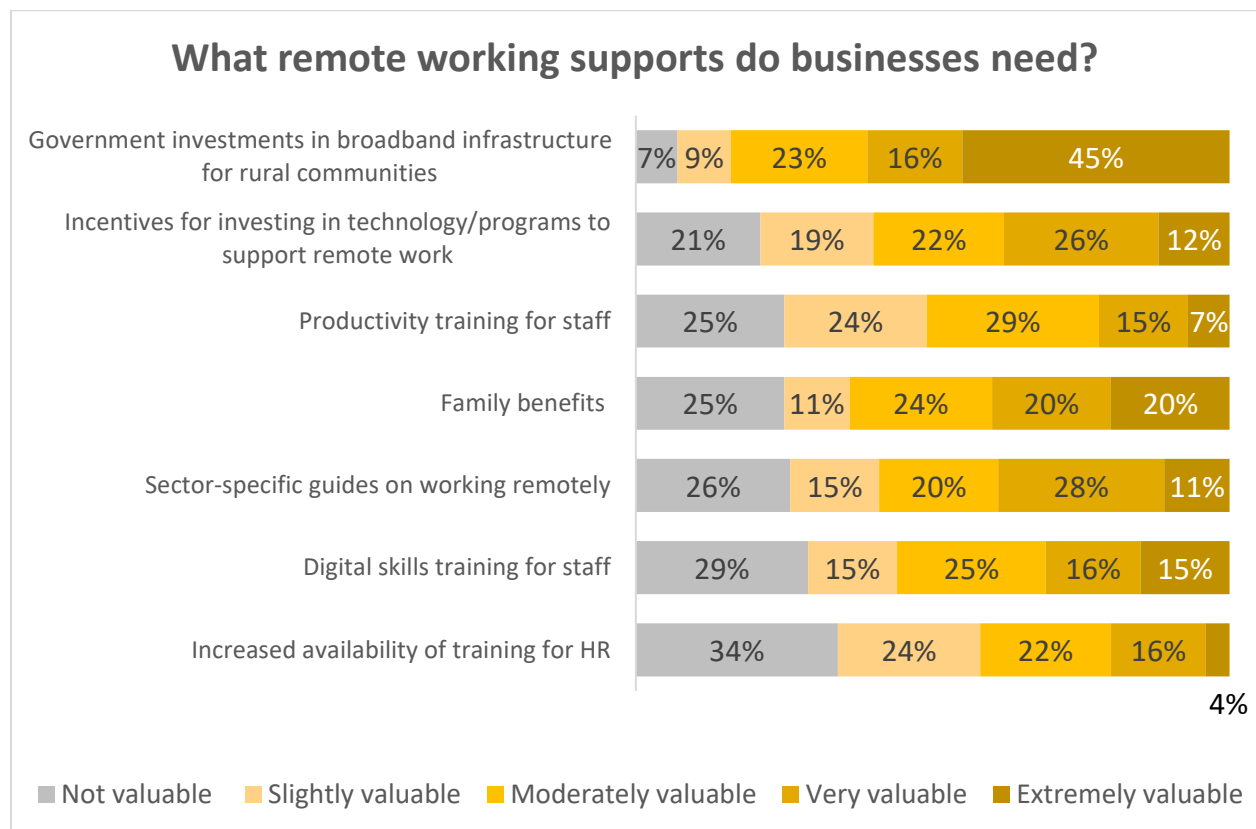


Figure 21: Remote Working Supports

³ July 2020 Job Search Report, Grand Erie Jobs



About 75% of businesses also noted that they would be interested in productivity training for staff and a similar portion vouched for family benefits, such as technology, supplies etc. to support parents with home schooling and child minding. Given that over 50% of businesses identified child minding/elder care as a top concern for their remote workforce, these supports would be instrumental to helping Grand Erie's remote workforce develop a healthy work-life balance. This, in turn, will likely help boost productivity levels among employees working from home.

Other popular supports included incentives for investing in technology/programs that support remote work, sector specific guidelines on working remotely and digital skills training for staff.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The results highlighted within this report reveal a desire among companies to return to business-as-usual as quickly as possible. The obstacles presented by COVID-19 hinder this and can only be overcome through unifying the business community and working collaboratively and strategically.

For governments, next steps should involve investing in local businesses. This can take the form of financial support to market community-owned businesses, as well as policy changes that build up regional and international supply chains. Further, governments can play a key role in mitigating safety concerns by establishing and communicating clearer guidelines for various industries, connecting businesses to local PPE suppliers, and subsidizing this equipment for companies struggling financially. Governments should also focus on incentivizing training and investing in broadband infrastructure to support the changing workforce dynamics.

For employment service organizations, workforce training should be the priority. Programs should be developed to educate businesses on how to market themselves digitally, boost productivity, and respond to changing skills-in-demand. Additionally, these organizations must take leadership in identifying new opportunities within the workforce and upskilling/reskilling job seekers accordingly. These organizations can also assist the government in promoting health and safety through delivering training for staff, communicating industry-specific guidelines, and informing HR about current labour rules and worker rights. They may also consider using their networks to support business connections.

Strengthening connectivity between businesses and industries is now more important than ever before, and it is critical that the business community assumes responsibility for this. Business associations and union groups must act towards creating opportunities for business owners to communicate, share ideas, brainstorm solutions to common challenges, make joint investments in technical trainings for their staff and support each other's growths. Over time, these networks have the potential to spur innovation within the region, and subsequently, to promote Grand Erie as a place where talent thrives.

Lastly, the workforce must take ownership of the development of their skills. For employees, this means taking advantage of training programs (within and outside their company) to build new skills, and for job seekers, this involves learning about emerging workforce needs and seeking opportunities to contribute towards this growth.

Together, these actions can reduce the negative impacts felt by the workforce and foster long-term changes within the Grand Erie community.



CONCLUSION

In light of the depth and breadth of the costs of the pandemic lockdowns, all three levels of government and our community organizations recognize the need to develop sizable economic recovery initiatives. We must also remember that although there have been many costs associated with the pandemic, we have also gained in many ways. We are learning to do things differently, and more efficiently with greater emphasis in some cases on overall health and well-being, greater work/life balance, greater value placed on essential work, and less reliance on natural resources, to name a few. To assist with recovery efforts, it is integral that this Grand Erie Recovery Task Force more fully understand the range of needs of area employers - and implicitly of the local workforce.

It is recognized that Canada's economic recovery is not progressing with the speed and ease that many had hoped for in early spring. Our data indicates that the adverse effects are wide-spread, and that business closures and layoffs may continue to persist despite the modest reopening and employment growth. At the same time, new avenues have opened for the advancement of technologies across industries – from agriculture to advanced manufacturing – to support new models of work. There is a clear need to properly address this range of impacts, from assisting laid off workers with re-skilling to supporting new economic opportunities and from restoring consumer confidence to re-building supply chains. Building talent, expanding organizational capacity, and promoting innovation will all be vital in the months to come.

The knowledge gained through this survey is invaluable to recovery efforts. The WPBGE would like to extend its gratitude to business owners and HR representatives who responded for sharing their perspectives within the Grand Erie COVID-19 Recovery Survey. Their feedback offers unique insight into both the obstacles and the opportunities that businesses are faced with at this time.

By promoting local businesses, strengthening workers' confidence in their workplaces, supporting skills development, and building connections within industries, members of the Grand Erie Recovery Task Force can make powerful strides in addressing many of the issues highlighted within this report. That said, continued monitoring and analysis of local workforce trends will be critical. As we learn more about how businesses are progressing, we must continuously and patiently adapt our action plan and apply all newfound learnings and best practices towards building our businesses.

Through considering interests and opinions of local employers, the Grand Erie community can play a significant role in supporting the growth and development of local businesses. The choices we make now will have a strong and lasting impact on our workforce, our economy, and the prosperity of our region.