

EMPLOYER*One* survey

Your Workforce. Our Future.



2021

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The views expressed in this publication are the views of the Sarnia Lambton Workforce Development Board and do not necessarily reflect those of the Province. The Government of Ontario and its agencies are in no way bound by the recommendations contained in this document.

Executive summary

The EmployerOne Survey is a community-wide survey that gathers information directly from local employers, to help local employers with local workforce needs and identifying trends. This report provides job seekers and employers with data on local hiring trends and recruitment methods for future and career planning.

The survey was created to address:

- Challenges with recruitment, retention, and hard-to-fill positions.
- The challenges faced by small businesses and sole proprietors.
- The impact of COVID-19 on business operations.

This year we increased our participation rate and heard from 279 employers. A larger representation from those in Retail, followed by Construction, and Accommodation and Food Services. Similar to the trend last year, employers reported having hard to fill positions notably in Construction, Health care and Social Assistance. It is anticipated this hiring need will continue as a majority of employers plan to hire this year.

This year we created a section to learn more about sole proprietors. This allowed us to glean insights into the demographics of this population namely, office set-up and use of e-commerce.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has been especially difficult for our local employers. We added a section to the 2020 survey to attempt to measure the impact. To date, over half the business's surveyed are not back to pre-Pandemic levels of operation.

This report is designed to be informative and comprehensive and delivered in a manner that all can understand and enjoy. We welcome all feedback and questions by contacting:

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Business highlights

A total of 279 businesses in Sarnia Lambton took part in the 8th annual EmployerOne survey. Of the businesses that responded, 32% were established within the last 5 years, while the remaining had well established businesses throughout the community. Roughly 82% of respondents were small businesses (1 to 99 employees), 5% of respondents were medium-sized businesses (100-499 employees) and an additional 3% being large businesses (500 employees or more). A special section of the report captures insights from local sole proprietors. The responses of sole proprietors can be found on page 10.

In June of 2020, Sarnia Lambton had 3,367 small businesses (1-99 employees), 67 medium size businesses (100-499 employees), and 13 large businesses (500+ employees). ¹ Considering the proportion of small businesses in the community, this year's EmployerOne survey questions were framed to be more inclusive of small businesses, including sole proprietor enterprises. This remodeled survey resulted in a 29% increase in the response rate among businesses with 1-4 employees; conversely, there was an 47% decrease in the response rate from businesses with 500 or more employees compared to the previous year.

Figure 1: Business entity

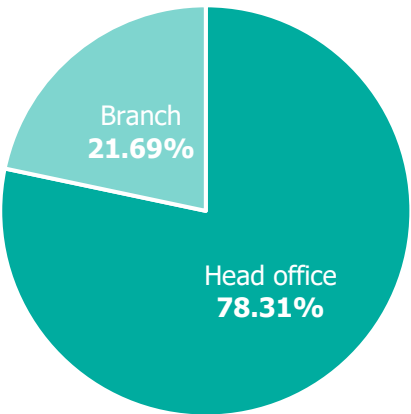
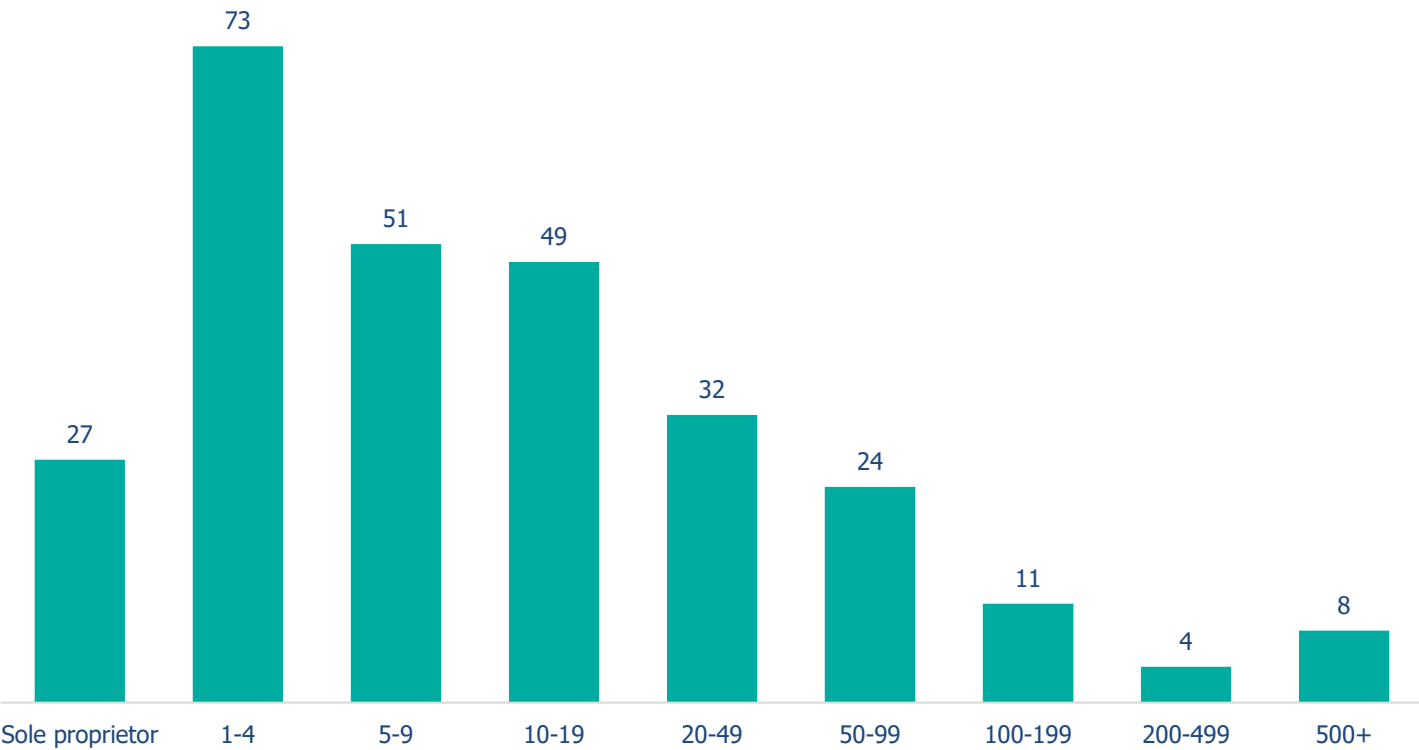


Figure 2: Breakdown of businesses by employee size range.



3 ¹ Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts for June 2020.

Industry highlights

The top large industries by workforce sizes in Sarnia Lambton are Health care and social assistance, Manufacturing, and Retail trade.² Industries with the highest level of participation and representation in the EmployerOne survey include those in Retail, Construction, Accommodation and food services, and Healthcare and social assistance.

The industries that had the greatest increase in response rate from previous year's survey were Real estate and rental leasing (83% increase), Accommodation and food services (44% increase), Professional scientific and technical services (39% increase), and Retail trade (38% increase). The industries that experienced a decrease in the response rate from last year's survey included Administration and support, waste management and remediation services (56% decrease), Transportation and warehousing (50% decrease), and Manufacturing (21% decrease).

Figure 3: Breakdown of survey responses by industry.



² Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Data, Custom Table.

Hiring Trends

Over the past 12 months, 72% of respondents indicated that they had hired at least one employee in 2020. There were 2,271 employees hired by 178 organizations in Sarnia Lambton. This represents a decrease compared to the previous year’s reporting where there were 3,003 hires by 206 organizations. The reported decrease in hires can most likely be attributed to the impact of the public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic on businesses.

Industries reporting the greatest number of hires in 2020 were in the Educational services (451 hires), Retail trade (445 hires), and Manufacturing (278 hires). Businesses with the highest volume of permanent-full time hires include those in Manufacturing and Educational services, while the highest volume of contract and seasonal hires were in Educational services and Retail trade sectors. Permanent-part time employment was most prevalent in the Retail trade and Public administration industry sectors.

A total of 40% of employers report having at least one a hard-to-fill position, a slight decrease compared to 2019 wherein 42% of employers experienced the same challenge. The industries that experienced the greatest number of hard-to-fill positions include those in the Construction and Healthcare and social assistance sectors. The primary reason for the struggle in filling these positions were a lack of qualifications in those applying for positions, combined with an overall low number of job applicants for these positions.

Figure 4: Employers who indicated that they had hired in 2020.

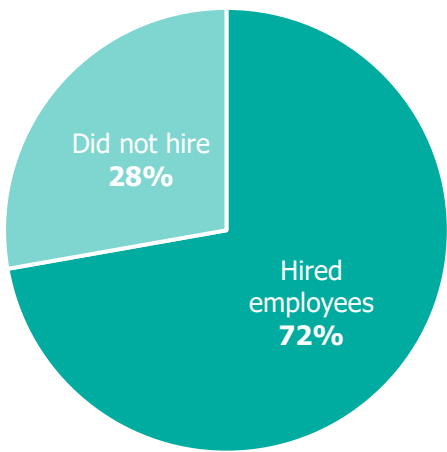


Figure 5: Breakdown of positions hired for in 2020.

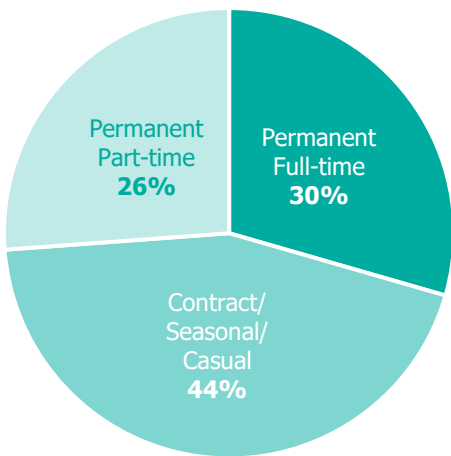


Figure 6: Employers who indicated they experienced a hard-to-fill position.

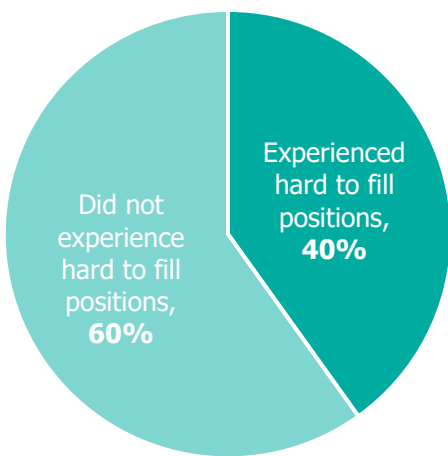
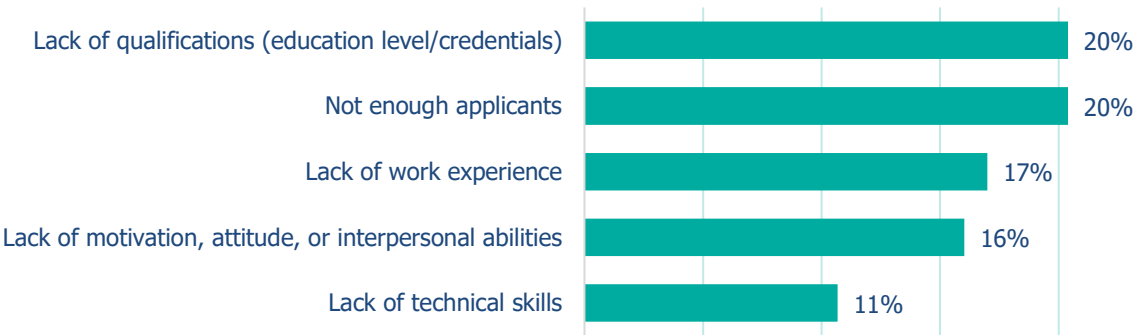


Figure 7: Reasons why employers indicated positions were hard-to-fill.



Future outlook

Looking to the future, 171 employers plan to hire approximately 1,158 employees over the next 12 months. The industries that anticipate recruiting the most new employees in 2021 include those in Public administration (226), Construction (188), and Retail trade (148). Many of the planned hires will serve to fill a current or expected vacancy within the organization or as a result of anticipated business expansion.

Top occupations to be filled by the Public administration industry include:

- Maintenance
- Finance
- Public works employee
- Summer students
- Labourer

Top occupations to be filled by the Construction industry include:

- Labourer
- Pipefitters
- Heavy equipment operator
- HVAC service technician
- Concrete finisher
- Plumber
- Carpenter
- Truck driver
- Steamfitter
- Insulator

Top occupations to be filled by the Retail trade/ industry include:

- Cashier
- Customer service
- Sales
- Forklift driver
- Administrative assistant

Figure 8: Employers who indicated that they plan to hire in 2021.

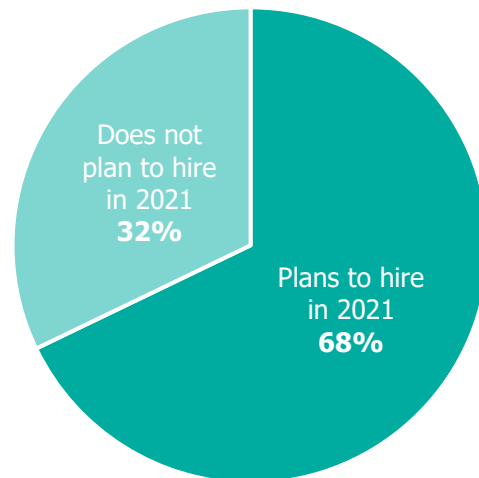
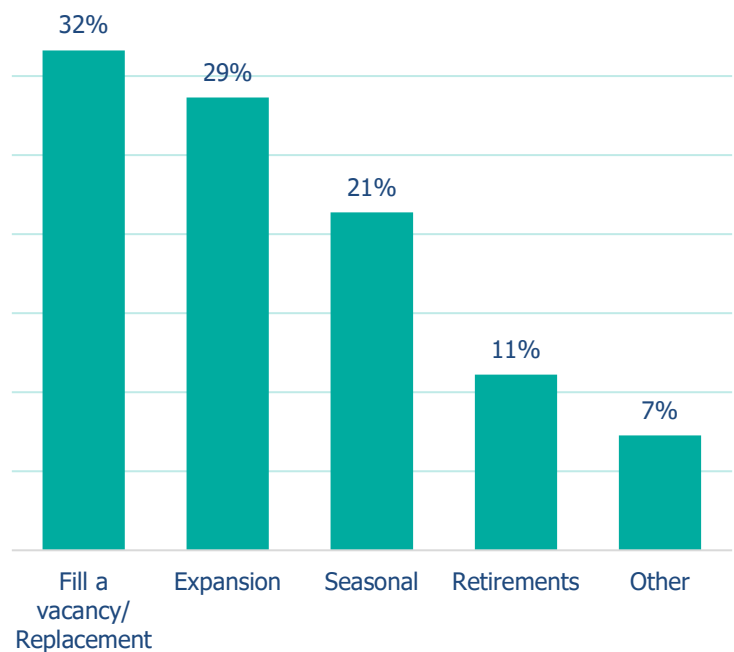


Figure 9: Reasons for business expansion in 2021.



Recruitment and retention

Word of mouth, personal contacts, referrals and informal networks continue to be the top recruitment method used by the Sarnia Lambton business community. The use of online job boards as a recruitment tool increased significantly from 17% in 2019 to 33% in 2020, while hiring via social media remained relatively unchanged (14% in 2019, compared to 13% in 2020). The increased use of online job boards indicates that employers are adopting technological resources to recruit potential candidates. However, employers still rely heavily on their personal contacts for recommendations and referrals.

Approximately 40% of organizations indicated a concern for retention. The top industries that indicated a concern were within the Healthcare and social assistance, Construction, Accommodation and food services, and Retail trade sectors. Along with a concern for retention, only 47% of businesses had a succession plan in place to deal with projected growth and/or retirements over the next 3 to 5 years. A succession plan addresses strategies for leadership and talent development, the transfer of operational skills and knowledge as well as best practices for the recruiting and retaining of a skilled workforce.

SLWDB created a succession planning toolkit for the purpose of providing advice, guidance, and helpful tools and information for succession planning, targeting the local automotive services in all stages of their businesses. You can access the toolkit [here](#).

Figure 10: Employers that indicated a concern for retention.

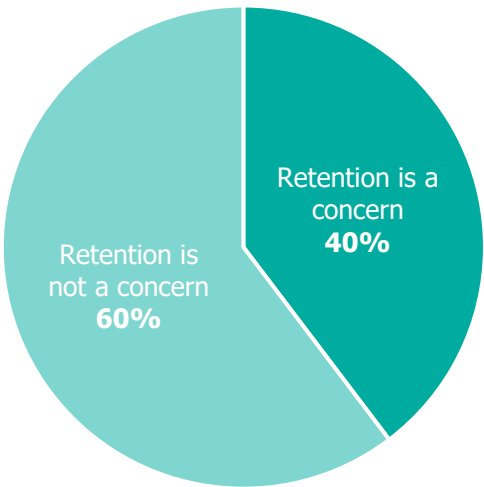


Figure 11: Top recruitment methods used by local employers.

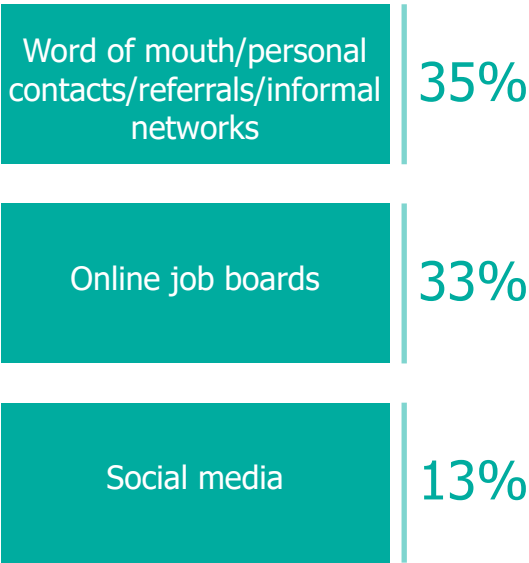
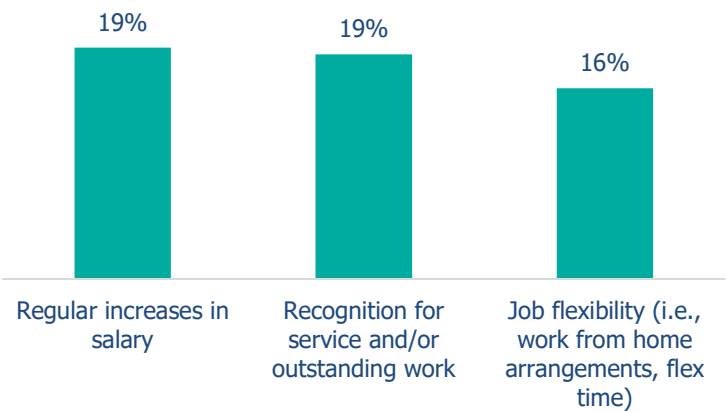


Figure 12: Methods used for to increase retention.



Skills and competencies

The quality of workers available in the Sarnia Lambton area, was rated as “good” by 41% of employers, while 35% stated the quality was “fair”. Industries that indicated the quality of workers in the area were excellent were among the Retail trade Educational services, and the Healthcare and social assistance sectors. Responses reported in the previous year were relatively similar. A notable difference was the increase in the number of businesses rating the quality of workers as excellent in 2020 (8%) compared to 5% of respondents in 2019.

Similar to 2019, the top competencies that employers look for when hiring include self-motivated candidates with an ability to work with little or no supervision, as well as candidates with good work ethics and who are dependable.

Employers ranked “on the job training and skills that can only be acquired through on the job training” as the top skill required by employers. The technical skills sought after in 2020 vary from the previous years responses, where the greatest in-demand technical skill was essential skills (36%), followed by academic/educational credentials (30%), and on the job training (22%).

Figure 13: Employers rating of the quality of candidates available locally.

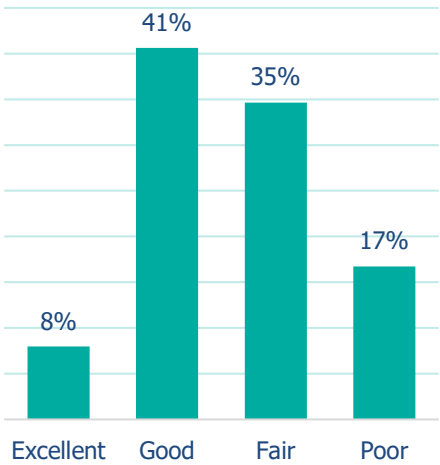
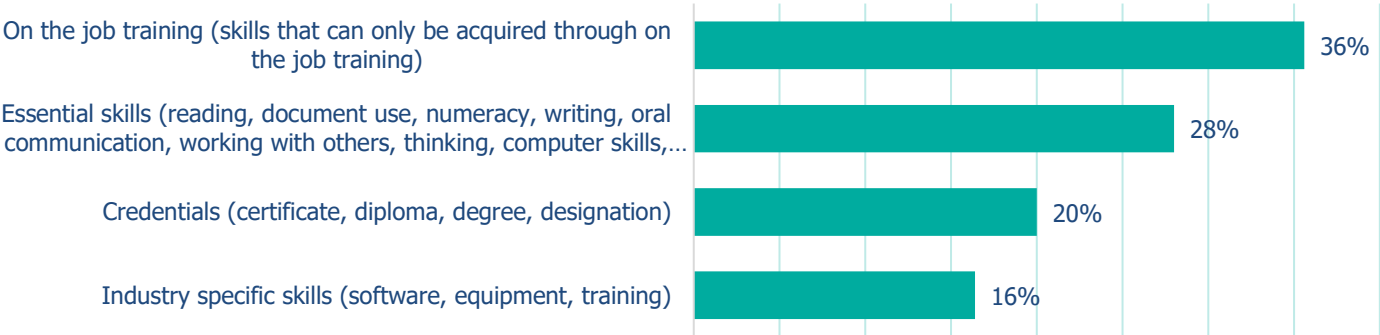


Figure 14: The top competencies employers look for when recruiting candidates.



Figure 15: The top technical skills most in-demand in Sarnia Lambton.



Separations

There were approximately 2,657 separations among 176 employers in 2020. This represents a slight increase compared to the previous year, where there were 2,336 separations among 190 employers. Roughly 64% of the separations were layoffs, likely a result of the COVID-19 health crisis. In the previous year, 35% of separations were quits, while only 28% were the result of a layoff. The reported number of retirements decreased in 2020, compared to 2019 wherein retirements accounted for 14% of total separations.

Employers with the largest number of quits were in Retail trade, Accommodation and food services, and Healthcare and social assistance industries. The largest number of retirements were in the Manufacturing industry, while the largest industries that experienced layoffs were Retail trade, Accommodation and food services, Arts, entertainment and recreation, and Construction.

Figure 16: Employers indicating they experienced a separation in 2020.

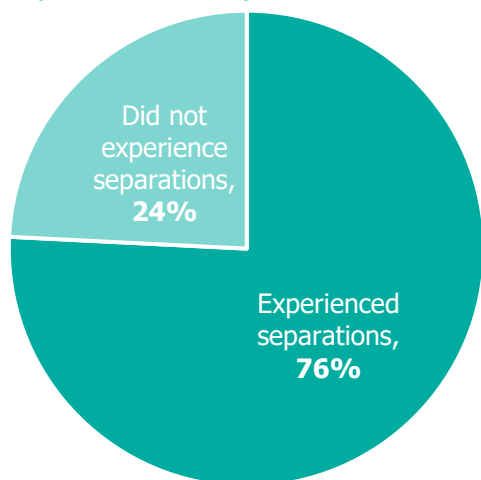


Figure 17: Breakdown of separations by separation type.

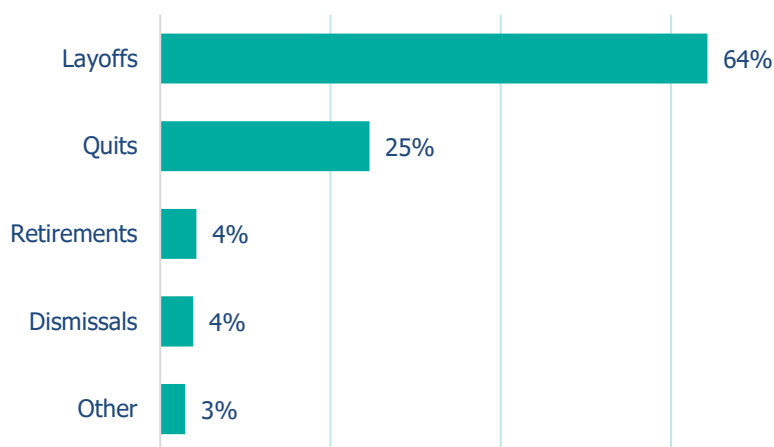
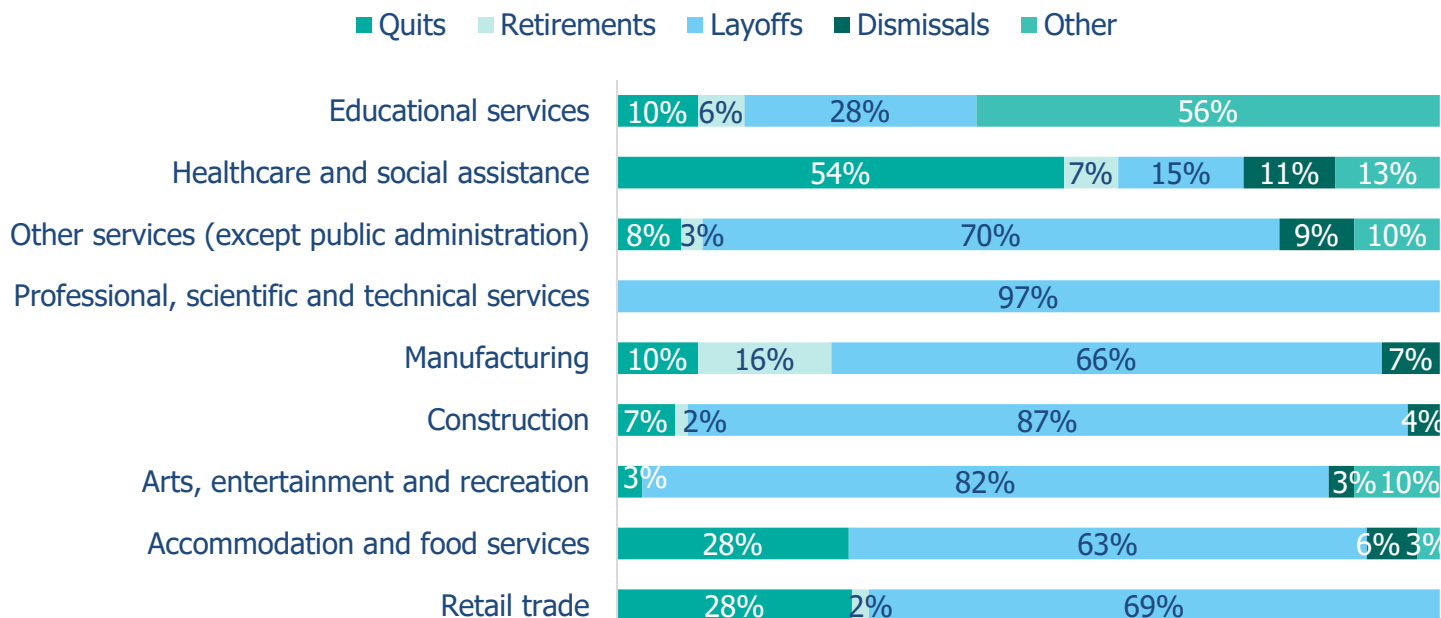


Figure 18: Separation type by industry.



Sole proprietors

To better assist and support sole proprietors in the Sarnia Lambton area, this year’s survey included a section designed specifically to assess the challenges and successes unique to their business operations. There were 27 sole proprietors that participated in the survey, most of which were from industries in Professional, scientific and technical services (17%), Accommodation and food (14%), Retail trade (14%), and Other services except public administration (14%) sectors. Roughly 17% of sole proprietors foresee themselves expanding their business in 2021, across industry sectors including Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, Manufacturing, Professional scientific and technical services, and Other services except public administration.

Sole proprietors reported conducting their business operate primarily out of a home office (67%), while 30% operating out of a commercial space or storefront. Approximately 37% of businesses indicated they offered products and services via ecommerce, and 22% of those who did not offer ecommerce indicated they anticipate implementing an ecommerce component into their business operations in the upcoming year.

Similar to other employers, sole proprietors rely on word of mouth as the most used method for marketing and promotion, although 29% of respondents indicated they also use social media. Radio and mail order marketing were only used by 5% and 2% of respondents respectively. A large percentage of respondents indicated they outsourced their accounting needs (71%). However, other business needs such as marketing and advertising, product manufacturing, and sales were primarily conducted in-house.

Throughout the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, 41% of businesses owned by sole proprietors indicated they were able to continue operating at full capacity, while 24% reduced their capacity. As a result of the pandemic, 28% of sole proprietors reduced their hours of operation, while 10% closed their business temporarily.

Figure 19: Primary place of business operations.

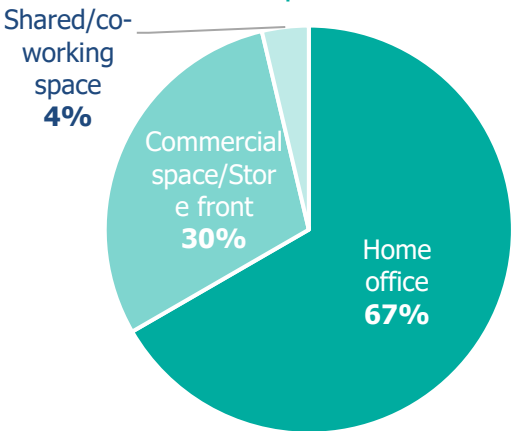
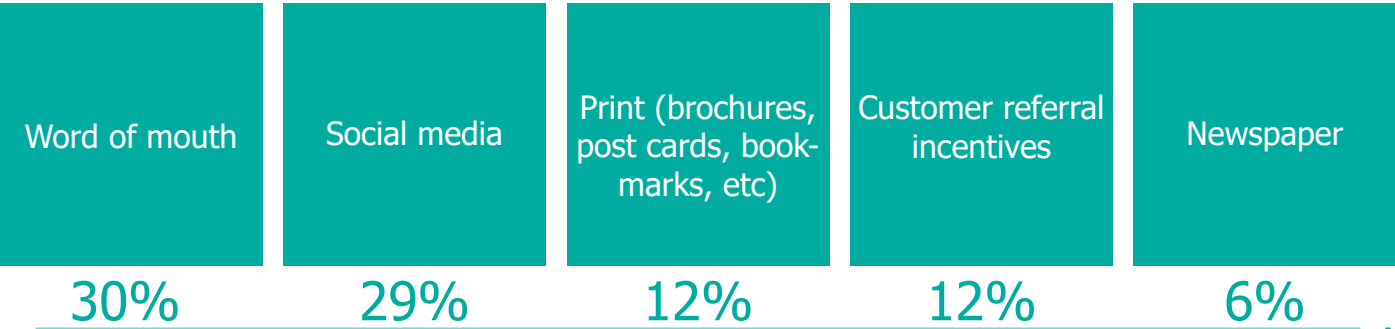


Figure 20: Businesses that indicated they offer products or services via ecommerce.



Figure 21: Primary methods of marketing and promotion amongst sole proprietors.



Impact of COVID-19

Of the 278 respondents that elected to participate in the COVID-19 business impact section of the survey, 53% reported not having returned to pre-pandemic levels of operations as of December 1 2020. Of the sixteen industry sectors represented by the respondents, two thirds of businesses in 11 of these sectors reported continued disruptions up to December 1 with the greatest numbers observed in Administration and support, waste management and remediation services (83.3%), Real estate and rental and leasing (83.3%), and Accommodation and food services (79.2%). In contrast, over half of industries in Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (76.9%), Finance and insurance (66.7%), Construction (56%), Public administration (55.6%) and Professional, scientific and technical services (54.6%) report having returned to pre-COVID-19 levels of operations.

The main barriers faced by employers and their workforce during the pandemic were the overall decrease in workload (55% of businesses) as well as disruptions caused by lack / inadequate access to childcare (53%). Other barriers included a lack of digital literacy required for the increased reliance on technology throughout the pandemic and a lack of access to adequate proper personal protective equipment (PPE) required/recommended by public health and safety mandates (14% each).

Figure 22: Barriers to work that employees experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

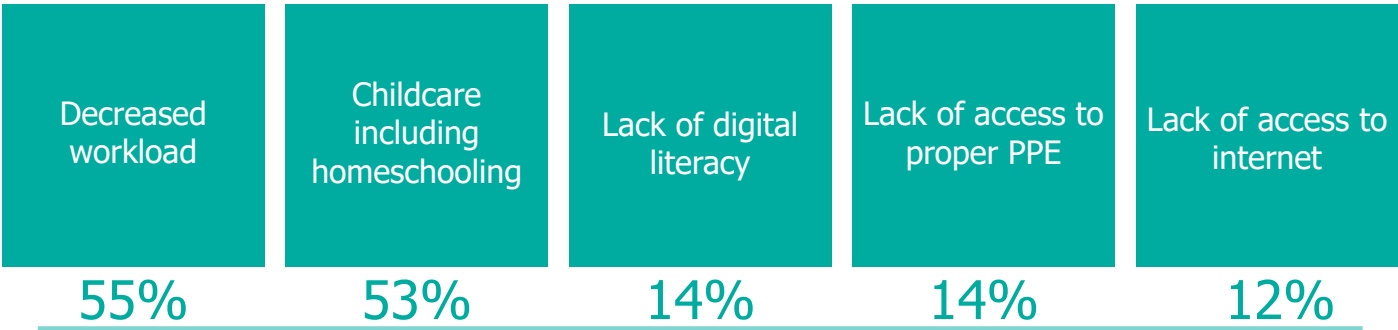


Figure 23: Levels of business operation as of December 1, 2020

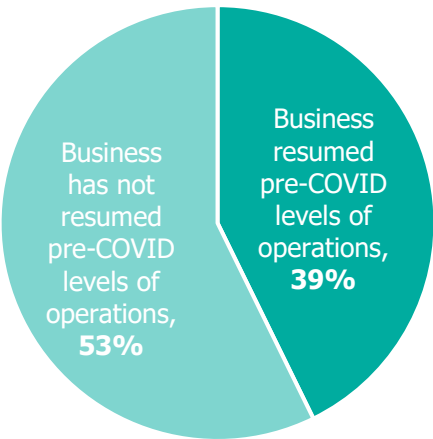


Figure 24: Employers indicating that they experienced a product or supply shortage.

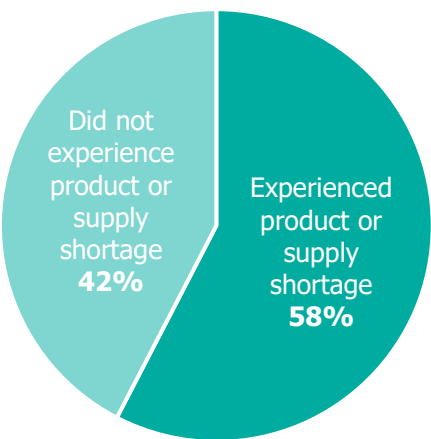
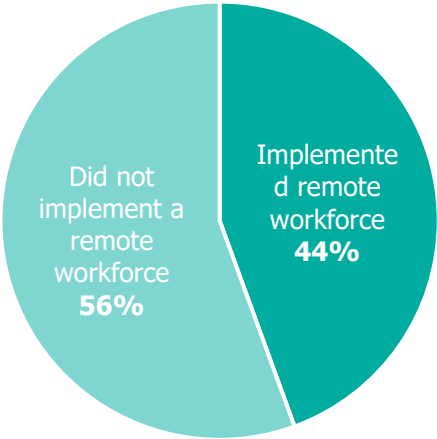


Figure 25: Employers who indicated that they implemented a remote workforce.



Respondents from across industries reported varied reactions to the impacts of the public health crisis on business operations. Overall, 43% indicated that they reduced their operational capacity while 38% indicated they were able to maintain 'normal' operations. Of the 40 respondents that reported having to temporarily close their doors over the course of the pandemic, 23% were businesses in Retail Trade and 18% in the Arts, entertainment and recreation industries.

Implementing a remote workforce was an effective method businesses could use to adapt operations to the public health recommendations during the COVID-19 outbreak. The industries reporting the greatest proportion of businesses that used a remote workforce to maintain operations during the pandemic were Finance and insurance (100%), Healthcare and social assistance (91.3%), Educational services (85.7%), Professional, scientific and technical services, and Public administration (83% each). Moving forward, 62% businesses transitioning to a remote workforce indicated a need for greater resources supporting workers' home workspaces including workplace safety policies, cyber security and technology supports. Over half of these respondents indicated a need for more government investment in broadband infrastructure in our community, especially within the rural regions of Lambton County.

Conversely, a remote workforce was unworkable for businesses in industries that required the workforce to perform physical labour, including interaction with products and/or the public. These represent the majority of businesses reporting not having implemented a remote workforce, including businesses in Accommodation and food services (80%), Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (75%) and Retail trade (72.7%) industries.

Figure 26: Impact of COVID-19 on business operations.

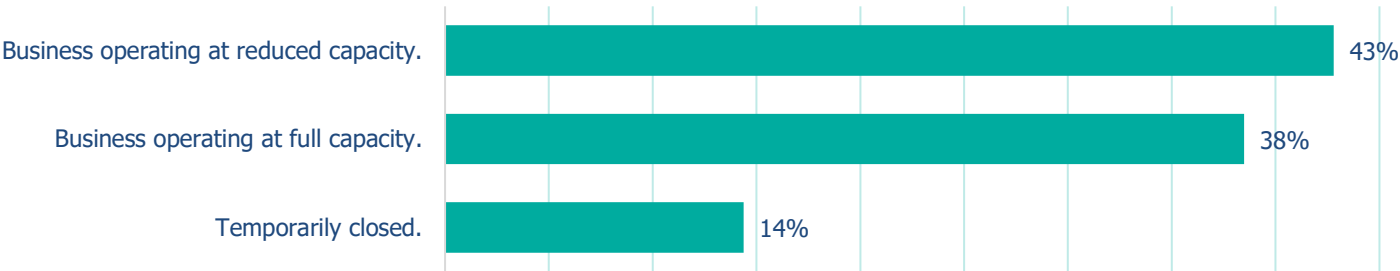


Figure 27: Top industries that transitioned to remote work.



Over half of businesses surveyed reported a decrease in the demand for the goods and/or services offered (56%) while 26% reported an increase in demand and 18% reported no change throughout 2020. The greatest proportion of businesses within each sector reporting a decrease in demand were in those in Transportation and warehousing (100%), Educational services (84.6%) and Accommodation and food services (76%). In contrast, businesses in Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (53.3%), Real estate and rental and leasing (50%) industries were the most likely to report increases in demand in 2020. While a number of respondents across sectors reported no change in demand, this represented the experience of a minority of businesses in the industries surveyed.

In addition to reporting decreases in demand, 58% of businesses report having experienced a supply shortage due to COVID-19 disruptions. All of the respondents with businesses in Retail trade (37 total) and over two thirds of businesses in Construction (92.3%), Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (88.9%), Manufacturing (81.2%) and Accommodation and food services (79.2%) reported supply shortages as a consequence of the pandemic.

Figure 28: Impact of COVID-19 on demand for products and services.

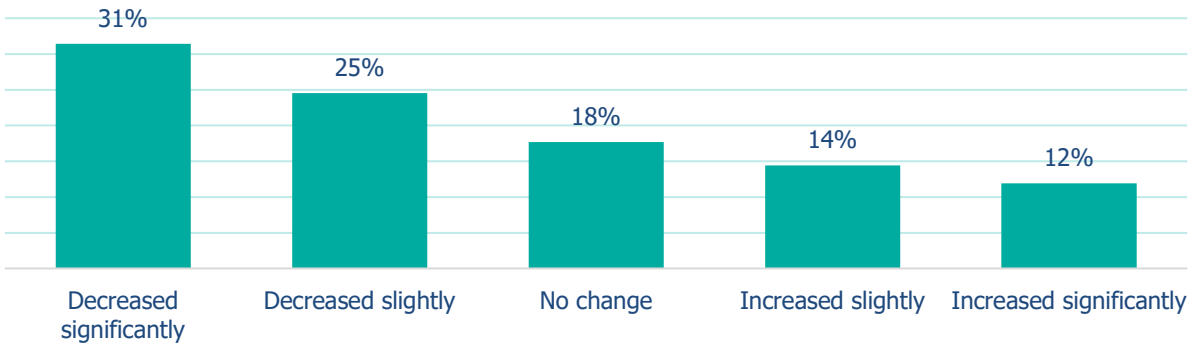


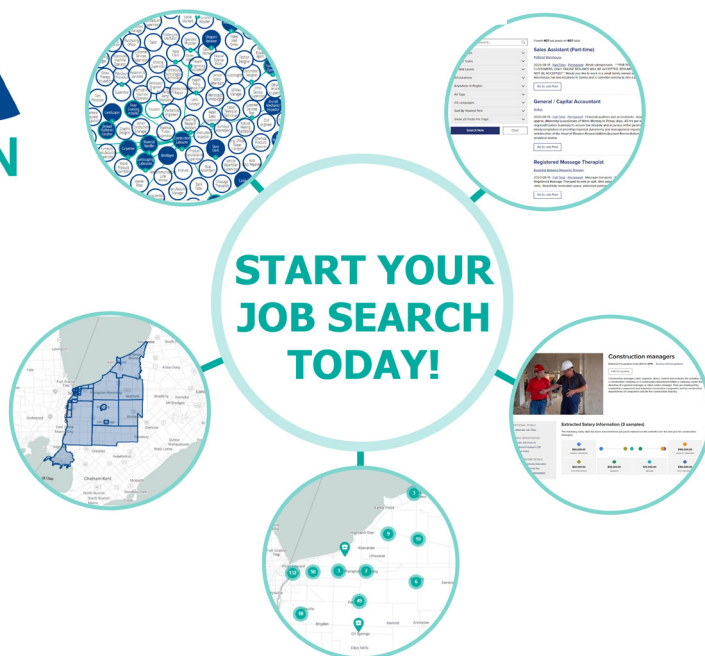
Figure 29: Supports identified as beneficial to support businesses transitioning to a remote workforce.



WISL

WORK IN SARNIA LAMBTON

WISL: Work In Sarnia Lambton is an online platform operated by the SLWDB. The interactive toolkit was launched in June of 2020 and is equipped with resources to help support employers searching to connect with local job seekers within our labour force. The WISL tools also help job seekers find the job training, skills development resources, entrepreneur supports and employment service providers in Sarnia Lambton.



Regional Jobs Board

Searchable list of job opportunities found exclusively within the Sarnia Lambton region. These postings are collected by WISL from the top 23 job posting websites for the area, reducing the need to 'hop' between job site search engines.

Regional Jobs Map

Geolocates the job opportunities listed on the Regional Jobs Board onto a map of the Sarnia Lambton region. In addition, built in filters make it easy to view locations for childcare, schools, apprenticeship training, employment service providers and Ontario Disability Support Program centers to help job seekers find job opportunities and resources that best fit their needs, lifestyle and career path.

Regional Career Explorer & Career Library

The Career Explorer and Career Library are visual tools that makes finding information about career paths between jobs easier. It also links job seekers to the active occupation job listings on the WISL Job Board and allows users to trace and explore the occupations that lead into a given occupation, as well as the paths that are available as next steps following that career trajectory.

Regional Census Map

Easy to navigate georeferenced census population data for the various areas of Sarnia Lambton. The Census tool is a great resource for employers, entrepreneurs and economic advisors who are interested in having key demographic information from municipalities across Lambton County on a user friendly, easily accessible platform.

Visit:
www.slwdb.org/wisl/



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