



**COVID-19**

*Recovery Starts Here*  
**BUSINESS SURVEY**

**AUGUST 2020**



## COVID-19 Recovery Starts Here – Business Survey

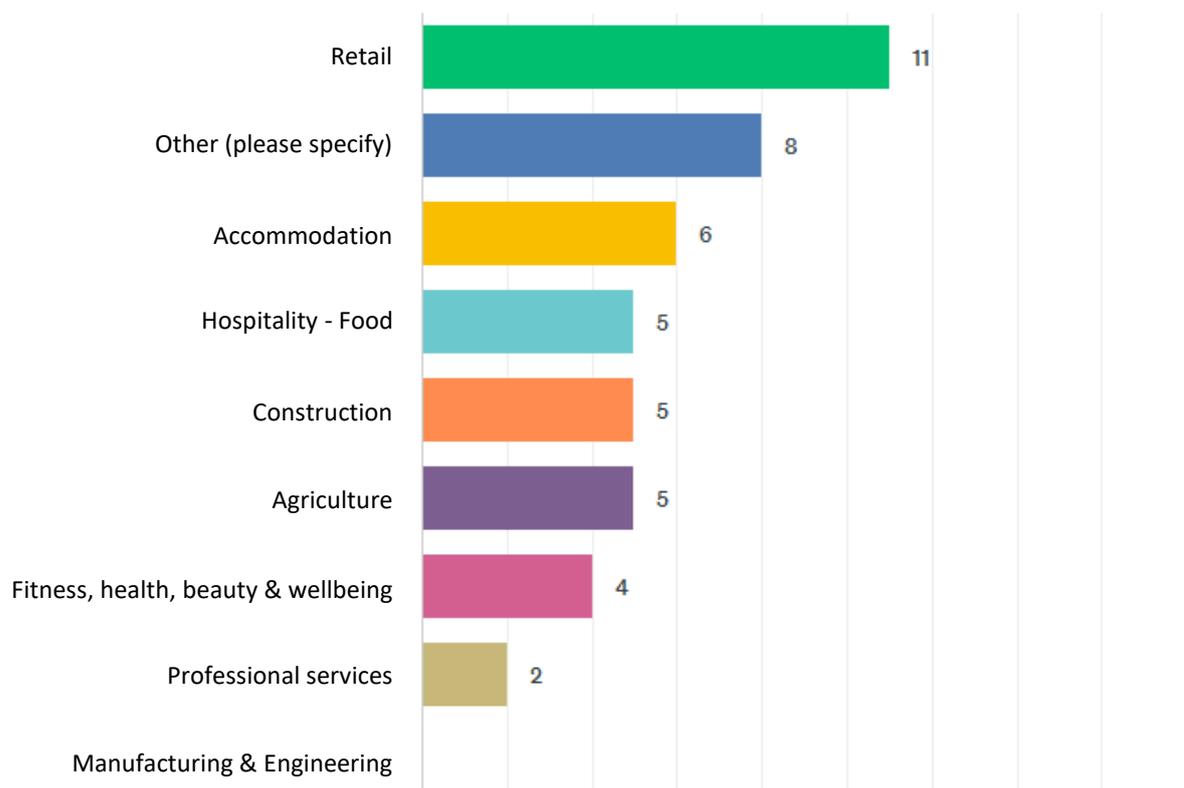
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The Kingston District Council is committed to working with its community to prepare for a strong recovery following COVID-19. Having provided support and guidance to local businesses during the pandemic, continued community services as well as a non-stop roll out of our capital works program, Council has recently surveyed its business community to understand the impacts of COVID-19 on this sector.

The survey was relatively short and simple and was designed to help understand the challenges currently facing our business community.

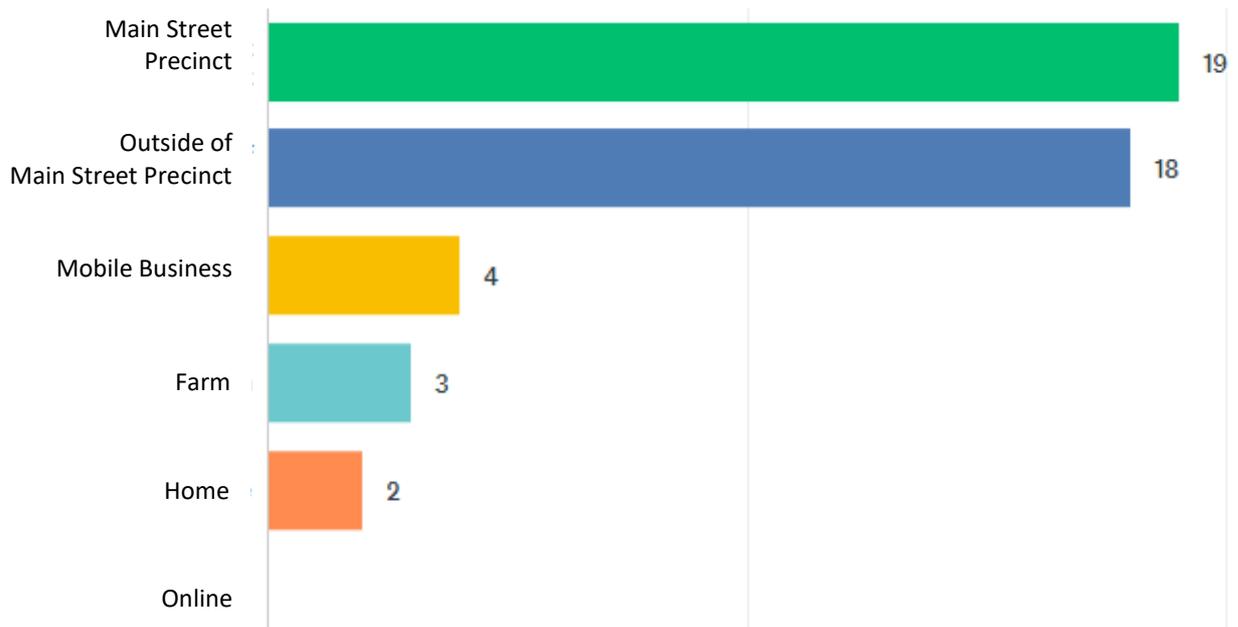
The survey was sent twice via email (3 June & 24 June) to 79 businesses; 46 responses were received. It should be considered that a 58% response rate is excellent for any survey, particularly a local government survey during a global pandemic.

### Q1 What industry best reflects your business operations?



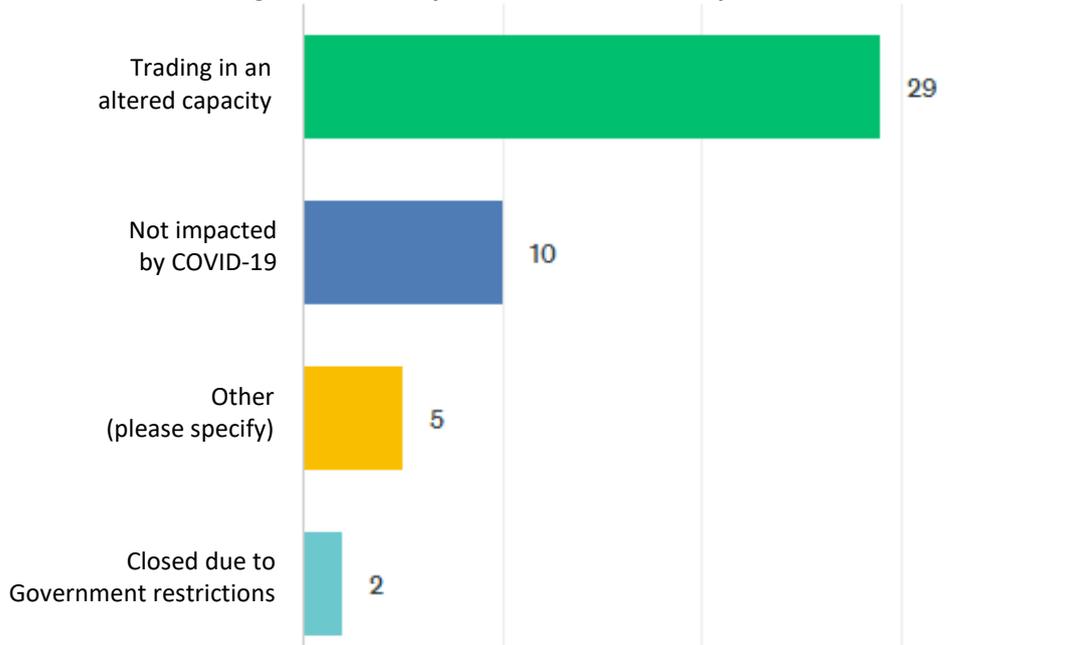
*Whilst nearly a quarter of the respondents represented the retail industry, the 'other' category was also relatively high. This is made up of specified industries such as media & communications, cellar door, real estate & plumbing. Overwhelmingly the respondents are customer focussed which have been the most significantly impacted due to restrictions to this form of business operation.*

### Q2 Where is your business primarily based?



Nearly half of the respondents are in the main street precinct which is not surprising given that is where much of the retail industry is based.

### Q3 Which of the following best reflects your current business operations?



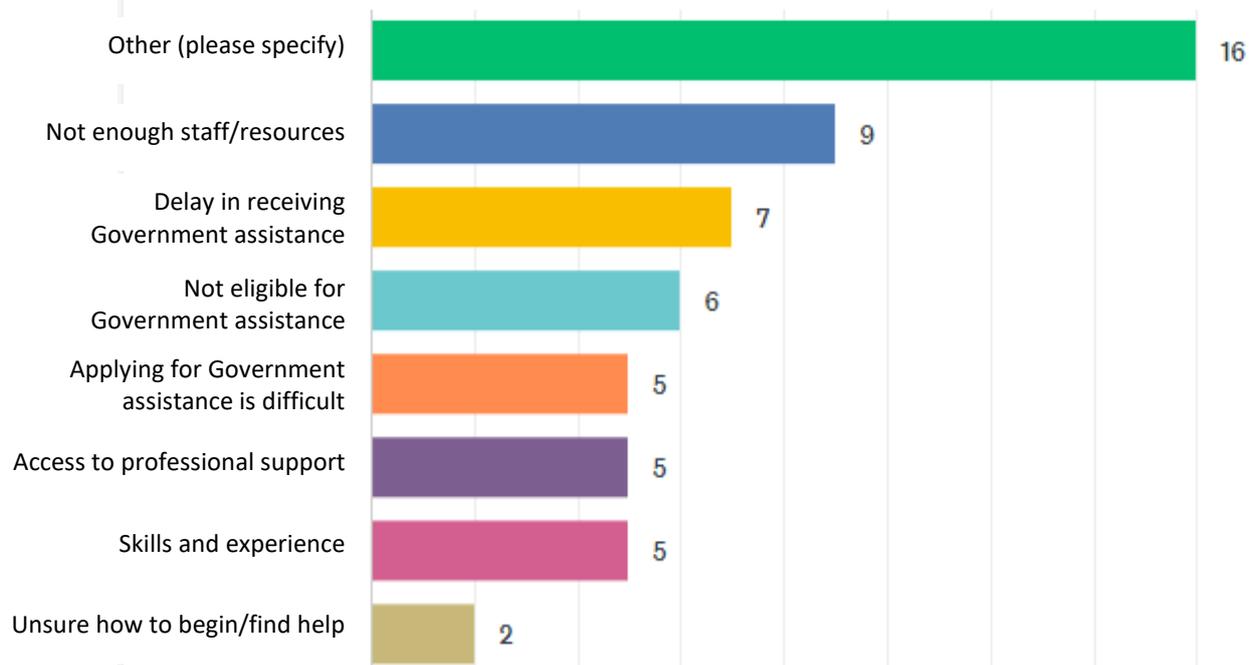
Most respondents identified that they had modified their existing activity to suit the climate presented by COVID-19, either through health and safety considerations for staff and customers or through reduced hours to align to the economic climate. Some temporarily closed (by choice) or reduced their operations and associated staffing levels in response and commenced activities aimed at reducing further losses. It is considered surprising that 22% of businesses were not impacted by COVID-19.

### Q5 What are your three current priorities?



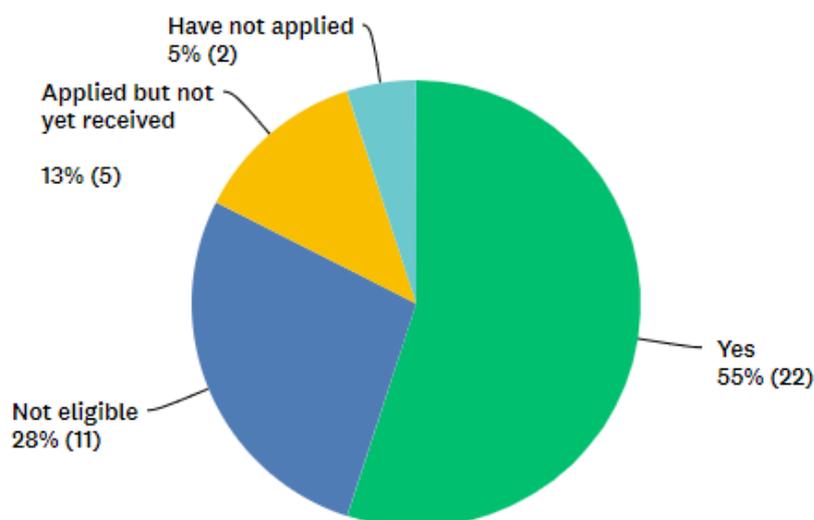
*This question asked respondents to select from a range of pre-defined responses. Most respondents identified cash flow as their key priority followed by retaining staff and physical and mental wellbeing of those attached to the business. The fact that nearly half of the respondents have prioritised wellbeing is of concern and should be further discussed with respondents to determine any support that Council could either directly provide or advocate for.*

**Q6 What are the barriers to achieving your priorities?**



*This question asked respondents to select from a range of pre-defined responses. It is apparent by the high level of 'other' responses, that the question didn't quite hit the mark with a range of varying responses.*

**Q7 Are, or did you, receive any government financial assistance as a result of COVID-19?**



*It is reassuring that over half of those who responded to this question were able to receive government financial assistance to assist with the impacts of COVID-19. In specifically looking at the main street location respondents, 67% received government financial assistance.*

**Q8 Over the next 12 months, do you expect to see a change in revenue compared to the last twelve months?**

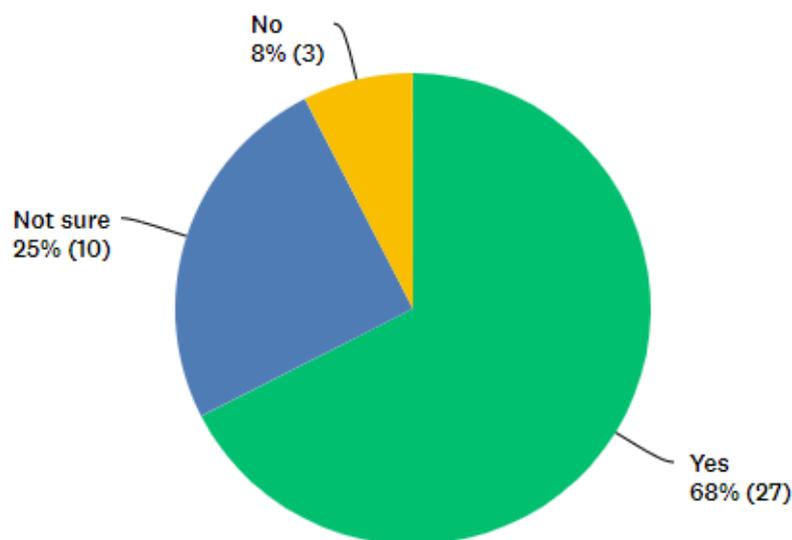
*The responses to this question were difficult to interpret because a sliding bar was used, with say (1) being a significant increase (50) being no change and (100) being significant decrease in revenue. The lowest number entered was (7), indicating significant revenue increase and (100) was used on five occasions, indicating a number of respondents facing significant decrease. Further, 80% of respondents were over (50) and 10% below, the final average number was (71).*

**Q9 & 10 How many staff do you usually employ before COVID-19 restrictions? And now?**

Pre COVID-19 Staff			Current Staff		
Full time	Part time	Casual	Full time	Part time	Casual
28	16	27	29	16	26

*In reflecting on the significant number of businesses indicating loss of revenue, the fact that employee numbers have marginally improved is a surprising result. In reflecting on this result during post survey meetings with business owners, it was indicated that these numbers can be skewed given that some staff are kept 'on-the-books' as seasonal or work extra hours during the busy summer period. Also, consideration for whether the numbers might include job keeper and job seeker is an undetermined factor.*

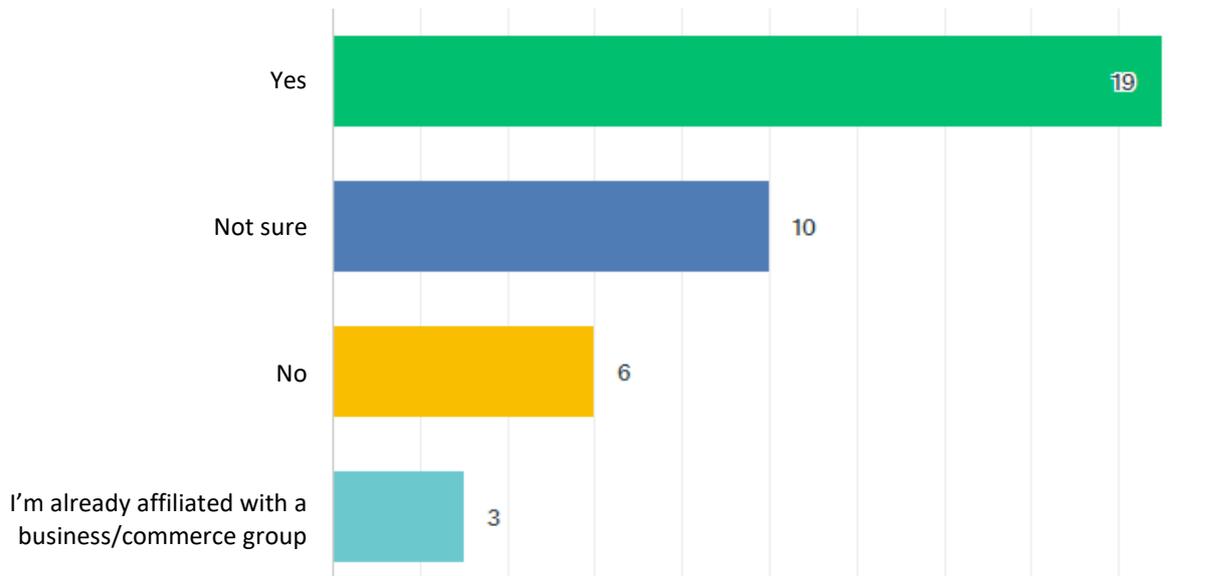
**Q12 & 13 Have you been satisfied with the level of support, advice and communication Council has provided during the COVID-19 health and economic crisis?**



*Respondents who answered 'no' to this question were given an opportunity to explain this response. Of the (3) respondents who answered 'no', only one was directly and genuinely responding to the question. The other two related to boat launching facilities and the opening of the RV Park too early.*

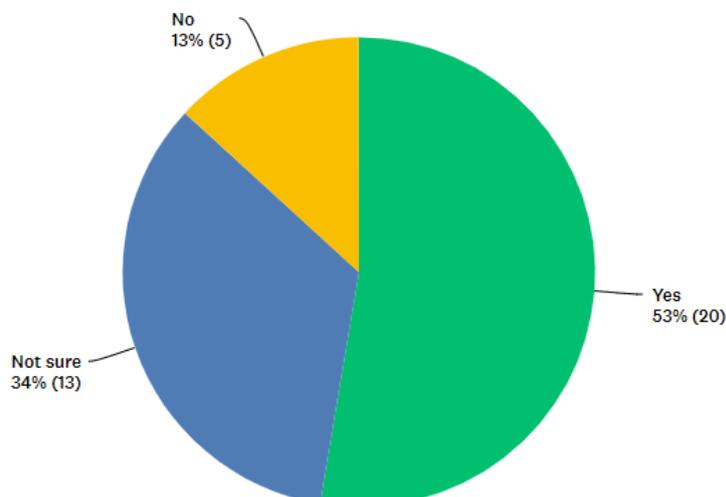
Council is pleased with the results of this targeted question. For a sparsely resourced team, already managing a local led bushfire recovery campaign, with no business/economic resources, or an environmental health officer who was not able to work on the ground during the peak of the pandemic, the fact that only three respondents were not happy with our support is an exceptional result.

**Q14 Council has a target in its 2019-2029 Community Plan to “establish a strategically focused and empowered Community and Economic Development Committee to support community groups, traders, industry and event organisers”. Do you identify with a need to establish such a committee?**

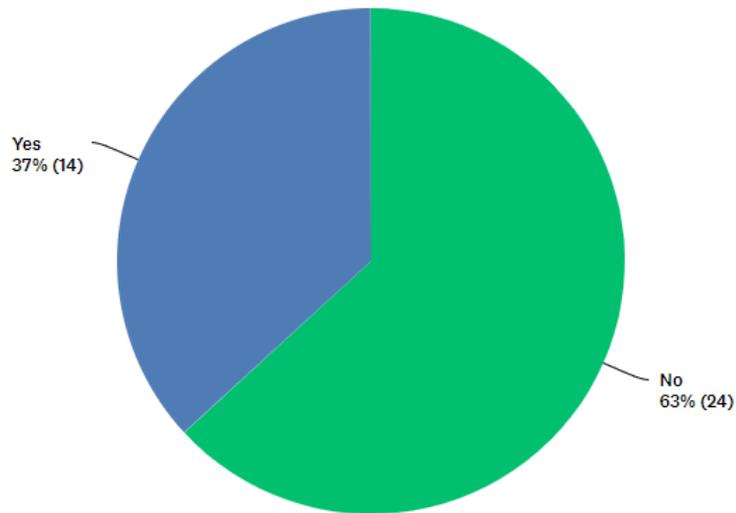


This question was specifically and strategically included in the survey, to stimulate discussion around this Community Plan target. Further, in noting that the future of KSET was looking uncertain, it was timely to measure the interest level in some form of business group. Ideally, this should be led by the business community and council should exercise caution in locking itself into this form of committee which will add a significant burden on an already strained administration team.

**Q15 If Council was to facilitate a ‘round-table’ discussion with our business community to discuss the feedback and results of this survey, would you participate?**



**Q16 Would you like Council to contact you to discuss this survey further?**



*The Chief Executive Officer has contacted all respondents who answered yes to this question, offering one-on-one meetings. At the time of preparing this report, only three business owners had availed themselves to this opportunity.*

Nat Traeger  
Chief Executive Officer

24 August 2020