

East Dunbartonshire Economic Recovery Plan Report of Consultation

Results of the East Dunbartonshire
Covid 19 Economics Impacts Survey

March 2021



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East Dunbartonshire Council

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Executive Summary

East Dunbartonshire COVID-19 Economic Impacts Survey



1. Introduction

East Dunbartonshire's Economic Recovery plan was finalised in August 2020 and approved at Council on 1st October 2020 (Council report PNCA/075/20/AL). The Plan coordinates and sets out support for businesses and residents to aid economic recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as refreshing and reprioritising the ongoing actions from East Dunbartonshire's 2017 Economic Development Strategy. It sits within the context set out by the Scottish and UK Governments, drawing together the range of actions being implemented, or that will be implemented, under each of the following priority areas:

1. Business: actions relating to financial support and recovery of business activity.
2. People: actions focused on employment and socio-economic equality.
3. Community: actions for regeneration and local investment.
4. Environment: actions promoting environmental sustainability alongside economic resilience.

Due to the uncertainty created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Economic Recovery Plan which was approved at Council was not published as a final Plan in the short term, and was designed to be reviewed and updated as more information on the unfolding economic crisis becomes available. As part of this information gathering process a public survey was undertaken in November 2020 to gain feedback on the Plan and find out how businesses and people who live and/or work in East Dunbartonshire have experienced the economic impacts of COVID-19.

The survey was available online from 2nd to 30th of November 2020. The purpose of this short consultation period was to attempt to capture a snapshot of the experiences of East Dunbartonshire's residents and businesses following the first UK lockdown and during ongoing restrictions related to the pandemic.

This Report of Consultation sets out the key findings of the survey and provides analysis to contribute to East Dunbartonshire Council's understanding of how the local economy has been affected to date by the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey responses will be considered in updating East Dunbartonshire's Economic Recovery Plan in the coming months. These findings will also inform future economic policy work, such as the next Economic Development Strategy, and will also contribute to the monitoring of progress towards delivery of Local Outcome 1: Economic Recovery and Growth.

The Report explains the survey methodology and methods of publicity, followed by the findings for each of the respondent groups (Businesses, Residents and Employees/Non-residents) and a summary of comments received by topic.

2. Methodology

Public consultation was carried out between 2nd November 2020 and 30th November 2020 via an online survey. The survey included three groups of questions, targeted at businesses, residents and employees. For the purposes of the survey, the three response groups were defined as follows:

Businesses – Owners/managers of businesses operating in East Dunbartonshire.

Residents – East Dunbartonshire residents.

Employees – People who work in East Dunbartonshire, but do not reside in the area.

To avoid being too long, the survey was designed so that each respondent group will only need to complete one page of (mainly multiple-choice) questions, followed by an open question giving them the opportunity to give feedback on the Economic Recovery Plan. The questions sought to provide a snapshot of changes in East Dunbartonshire by asking businesses and residents about topics such as:

- **Businesses** – The impact of the pandemic on businesses' trading, customer numbers, turnover, operational practices and overall outlook, and whether they have accessed financial support.
- **Residents** – The impact of the pandemic on residents' employment, financial decisions, patronage of local businesses, use of local facilities, and travel patterns.
- **Employees** – The impact of the pandemic on the employment of people who work in the area but do not live locally, including their use of local facilities and travel patterns.

The survey was preceded by some introductory text noting that the Council recognises that this is a very difficult and uncertain time for local businesses and individuals, and that changes to restrictions and guidance related to COVID-19 are ongoing.

All responses were anonymous reflecting the data required for meaningful analysis, sensitivities and GDPR. Those responding as an individual were not asked to provide their name or address, however demographics and location were requested to assist with analysis. Those responding on behalf of a business were asked for the name of their business, but this will not be made public.

3. Publicity

The survey was published on the Consultation section of the Council's website, along with the Draft COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan and a 'plan-on-a-page' style poster summary. It was publicised through local news articles and via the Council's social media on a weekly schedule throughout the consultation period. Links to the survey were also shared with Community Councils and local traders' groups (Milngavie BID, #Betterbriggs and Your Kirky) and members of East Dunbartonshire's Economic Partnership (EDVA, Dunbartonshire Chamber of Commerce, Scottish Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland, Visit Scotland) so that they could spread the word to the local business community. A press release was also provided to the local press, local newsletters and Elected Members for their use.

Article in the Kirkintilloch Herald:

Council asks: 'How has covid-19 affected you?'

Businesses, employees and residents are being invited to give their views on the economic impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and to help guide East Dunbartonshire's recovery.

By The Newsroom

Tuesday, 10th November 2020, 3:40 pm



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1  Work begins on new Li store at Robroyston

Screenshot from Council Twitter page:

 **East Dun Council** @EDCouncil · 20 Nov 2020

Businesses, employees & residents are being asked to give their views on the economic impact of the pandemic & to help guide East Dunbartonshire's recovery. The Council is running an online survey in November to inform the evolving Economic Recovery Plan - eastdunbarton.gov.uk/covid-19-econo...



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Screenshot from Council Facebook page (10/11/2020):

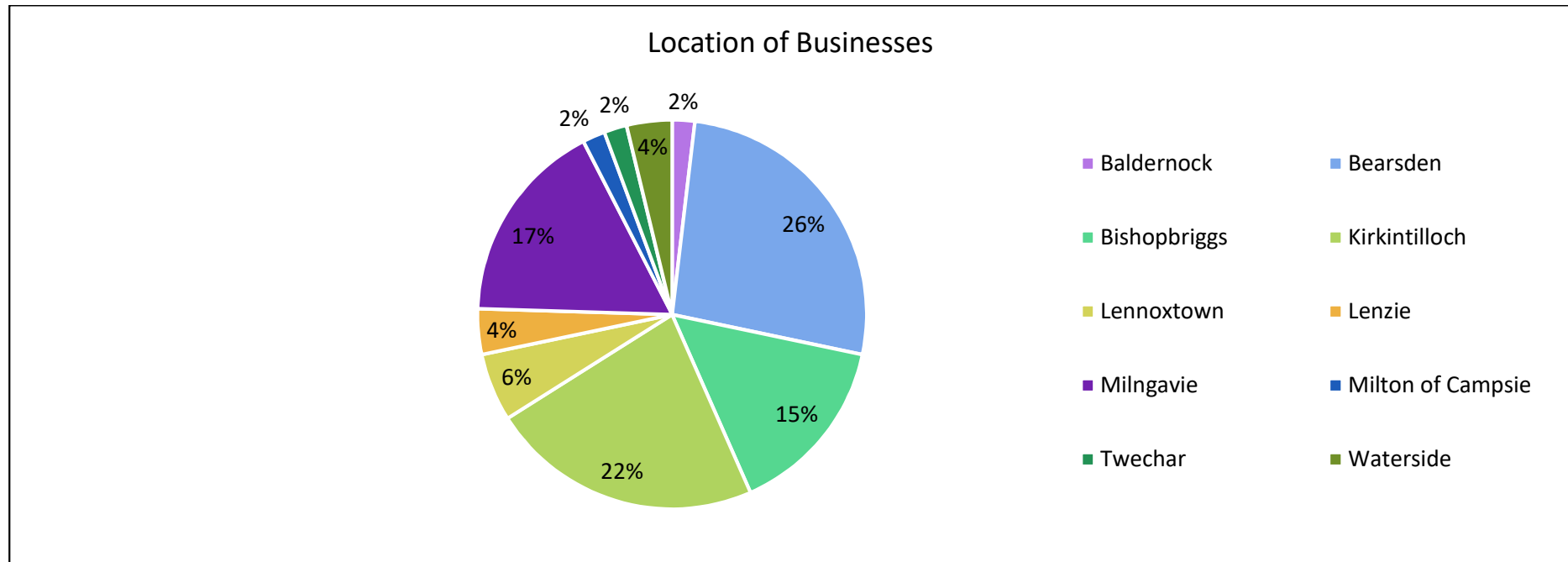


Poster Summary of Economic Recovery Plan:



4. Businesses

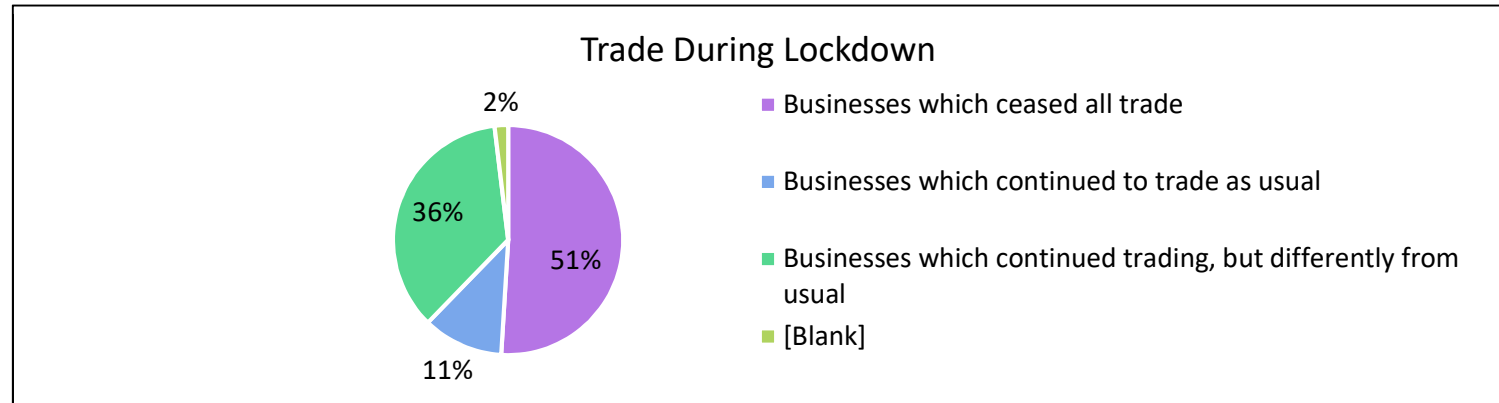
53 East Dunbartonshire businesses responded to the survey. Of these, the majority were located in the area's four largest towns: Bearsden (26%), Kirkintilloch (22%), Milngavie (17%) and Bishopbriggs (15%). Most of the people responding on behalf of businesses were also residents of East Dunbartonshire – only three of the responses were from people who did not live in the local authority area.



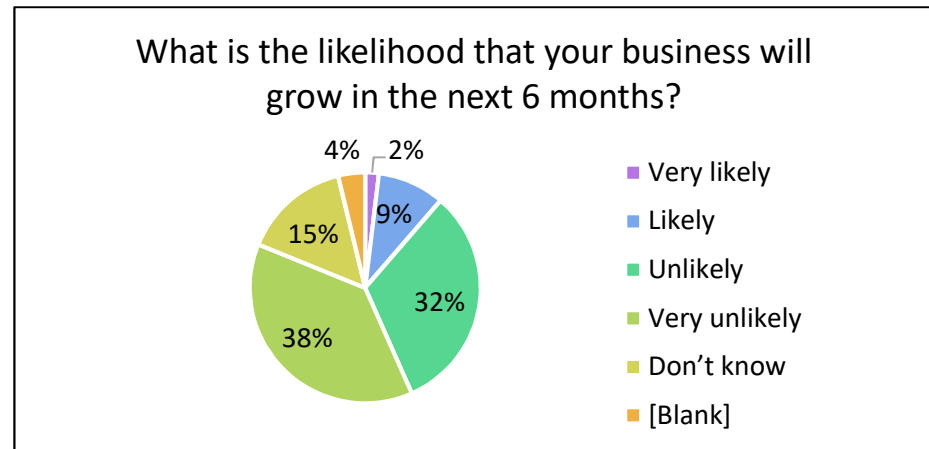
4.1 General Findings

Trade

51% of the respondents stopped trading during lockdown. Of the 25 businesses who continued to trade during lockdown, 76% did so with changes to their usual business practices, e.g. additional measures taken to reduce contact with customers.



85% of the businesses indicated that they were currently trading at the time of taking the survey. When asked what they felt to be the risk that they will cease trading within the next 6 months: 23% said there was a severe risk; 24% said there was a moderate risk; 30% said there was a low risk; and 6% said there was no risk. When asked about the likelihood that their business would grow in the next 6 months: 2% of respondents said it was very likely; 5% said likely; 32% said unlikely and 38% said very unlikely.



	Trading at time of survey	No risk of ceasing trade within next 6 months	Low risk of ceasing trade within next 6 months	Moderate risk of ceasing trade within next 6 months	Severe risk of ceasing trade within next 6 months	Very likely to grow within next 6 months	Likely to grow within next 6 months	Unlikely to grow within next 6 months	Very unlikely to grow within next 6 months
Businesses which traded as usual during lockdown	100%	17%	33%	17%	17%	0%	17%	17%	67%
Businesses which continued trading, but differently from usual	100%	5%	37%	37%	5%	0%	5%	47%	37%
Businesses which ceased all trade	74%	4%	26%	19%	37%	4%	11%	26%	33%
ALL	85%	6%	30%	25%	23%	2%	9%	32%	38%

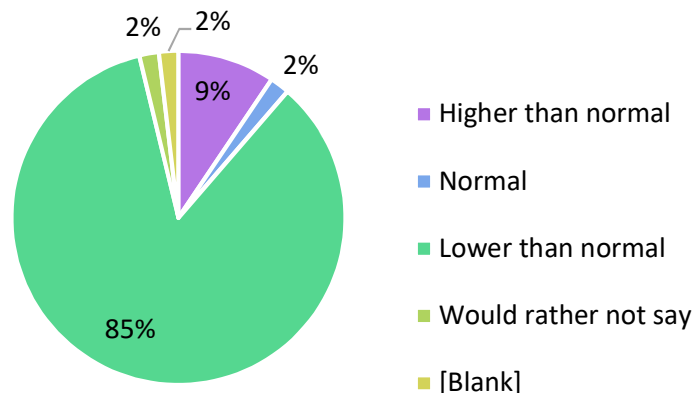
All of the businesses which had indicated that they were not currently trading at the time of the survey had also ceased all trade during the March 2020 lockdown. Respondents whose businesses did not trade during lockdown also appeared to be less confident in the future continuity of their businesses, with a higher percentage (37%) saying there was a severe risk of them ceasing to trade within the next six months compared to the businesses which traded as usual (17%), or differently from usual (5%) during lockdown.

Customer numbers and turnover

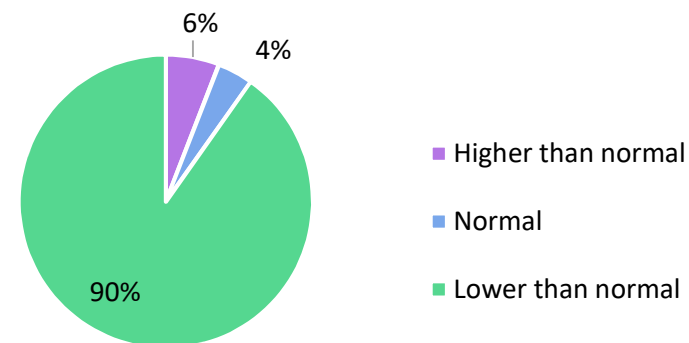
Most of the businesses which responded to the consultation reported lower business turnover than normal since the pandemic, as well as fewer customers.

9% of respondents said their business turnover has been higher than normal since the pandemic began; 2% said it had been the same and 85% said that it had been lower than normal. 6% of businesses reported higher numbers of customers than normal; 4% reported the same numbers as normal; and 90% reported lower than normal.

How would you say the pandemic has affected your turnover? (November 2020)



How would you describe your customer numbers over the last six months? (November 2020)



Uptake of Financial Support

64% of businesses in the survey had applied for at least one COVID-19 government support grant scheme, and 82% of these had had at least one successful application. When asked what type of grant they had applied for, most respondents said the government's COVID-19 business support grant scheme, although 7 respondents had applied for the self-employment hardship fund.

38% of businesses had applied for some other form of financial support, such as a loan.

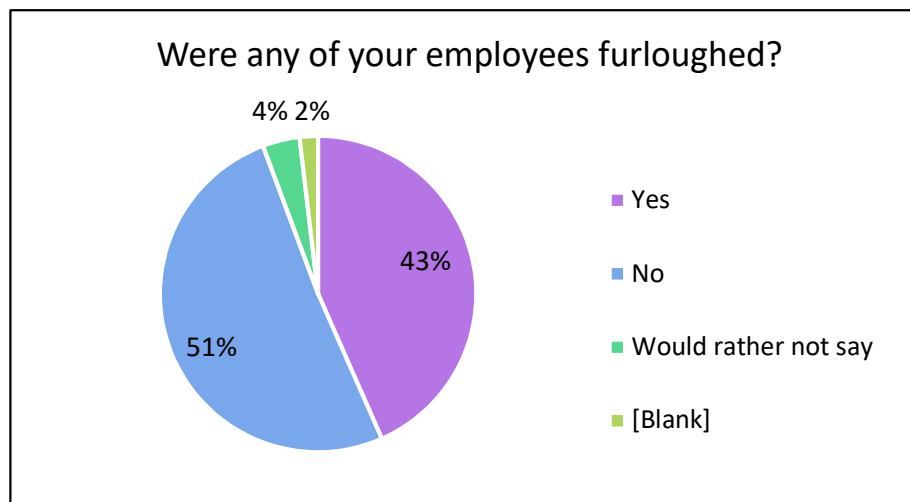
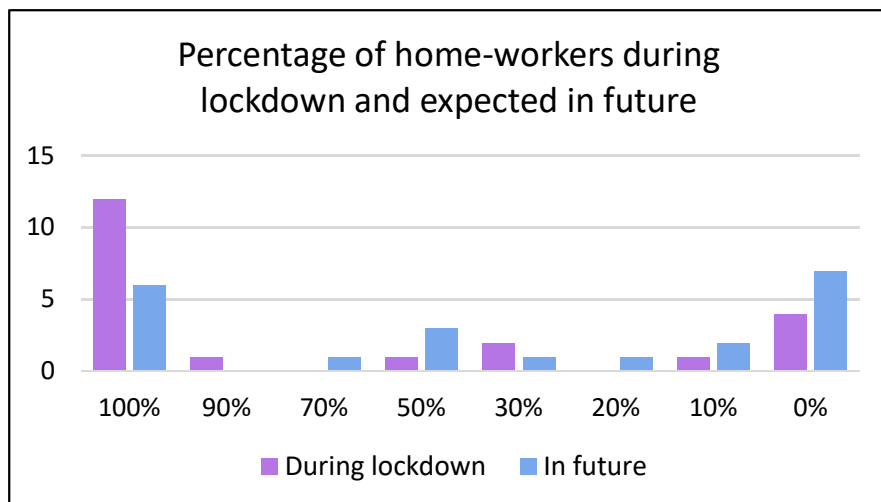
25% of respondents (13 businesses) had received no financial help.

Employees and Working Arrangements

43% of the businesses responding to the survey had furloughed employees under the government's Job Protection Scheme.

5% of respondents had made employees redundant as a result of the pandemic.

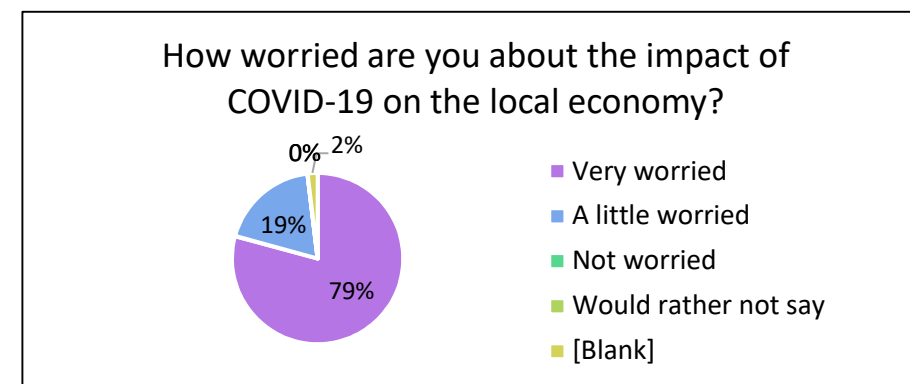
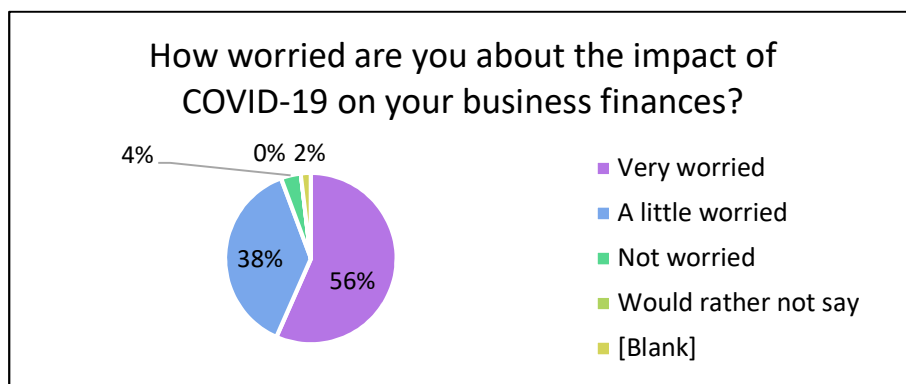
40% of businesses said that they had implemented different or more flexible working arrangements for employees due to the pandemic. 12 businesses had 100% of their employees working from home during lockdown and 6 said this would continue to be the case in future.



Other reported changes to working arrangements included: changes to working hours (compressed, extended or reduced); moving services online; working from home; introducing new software and ideas; moving operations outdoors; and implementing COVID-10 safety measures (time slots, social distancing, hygiene, masks, no sharing equipment, quarantine of mail).

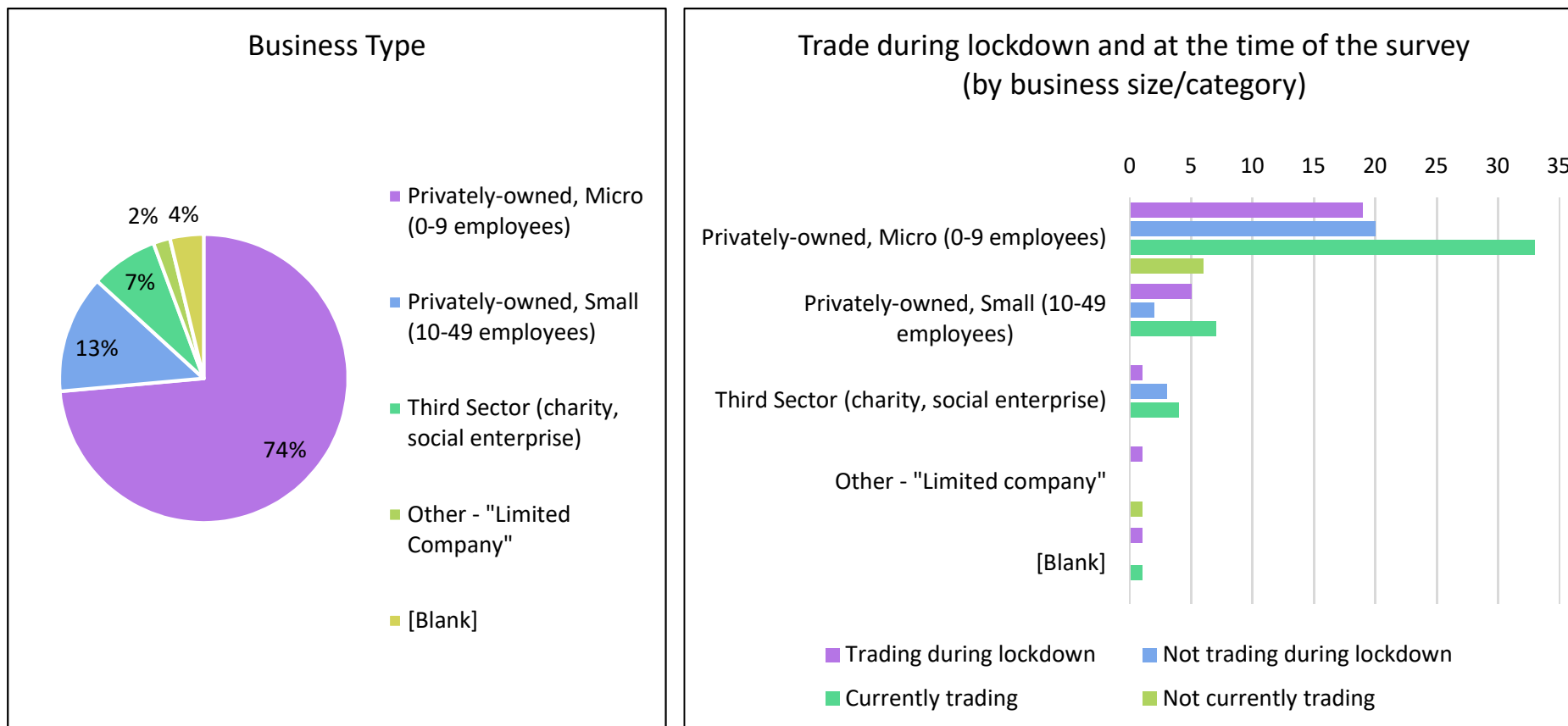
Concerns about the economy

The majority of respondents (56%) said they were 'Very worried' about the continued impact of COVID-19 on their business finances, and an even larger majority (79%) said they were 'Very worried' about the impact on the local economy.



4.2 Impact on Small Businesses

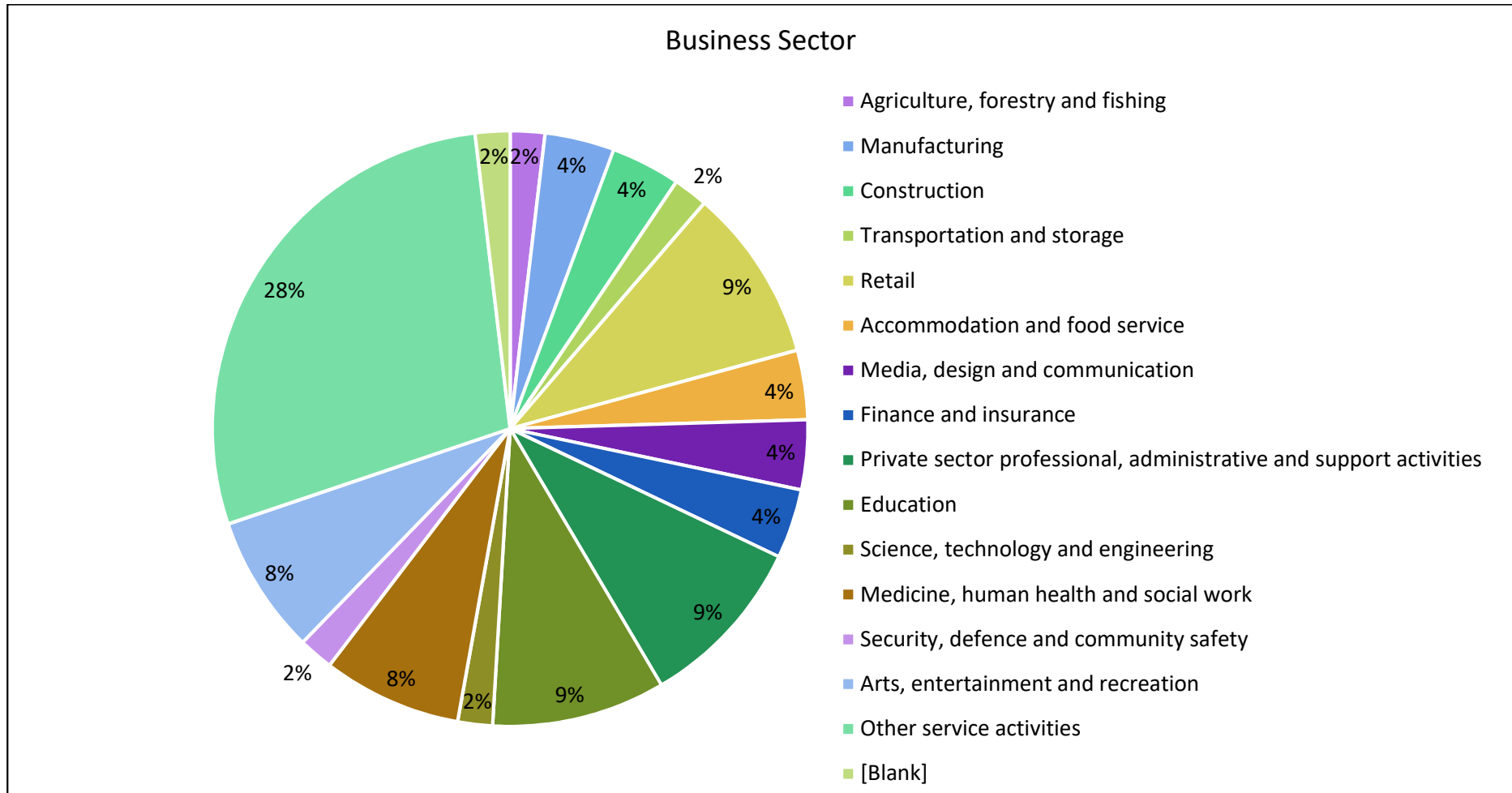
87% of the responses were from small or medium-sized enterprises (74% were micro enterprises of 0-9 employees).

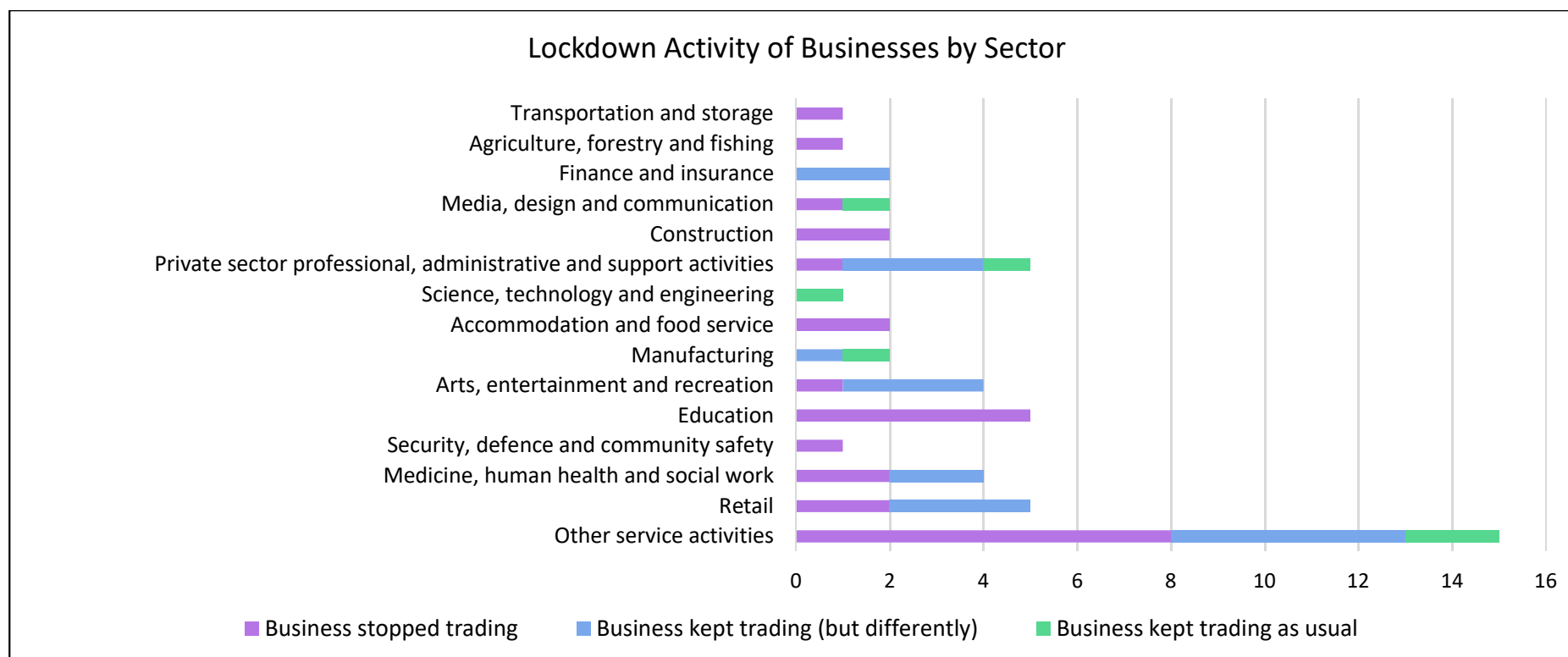


All but one of the 7 businesses which said they were not trading at the time of the survey were in the privately-owned, micro-sized (0-9 employees) business category. This was, however, the largest category overall, and the vast majority of businesses (33 out of 39) were still trading. The businesses which were not trading at the time of the survey were all from different sectors.

4.3 Sectoral Impact

Responses were received from businesses from across 16 different industrial sectors, the most common category being 'Other service activities' (28%), followed by 'Retail' (9%), 'Education' (9%) and 'Private sector professional, administrative and support activities' (9%).

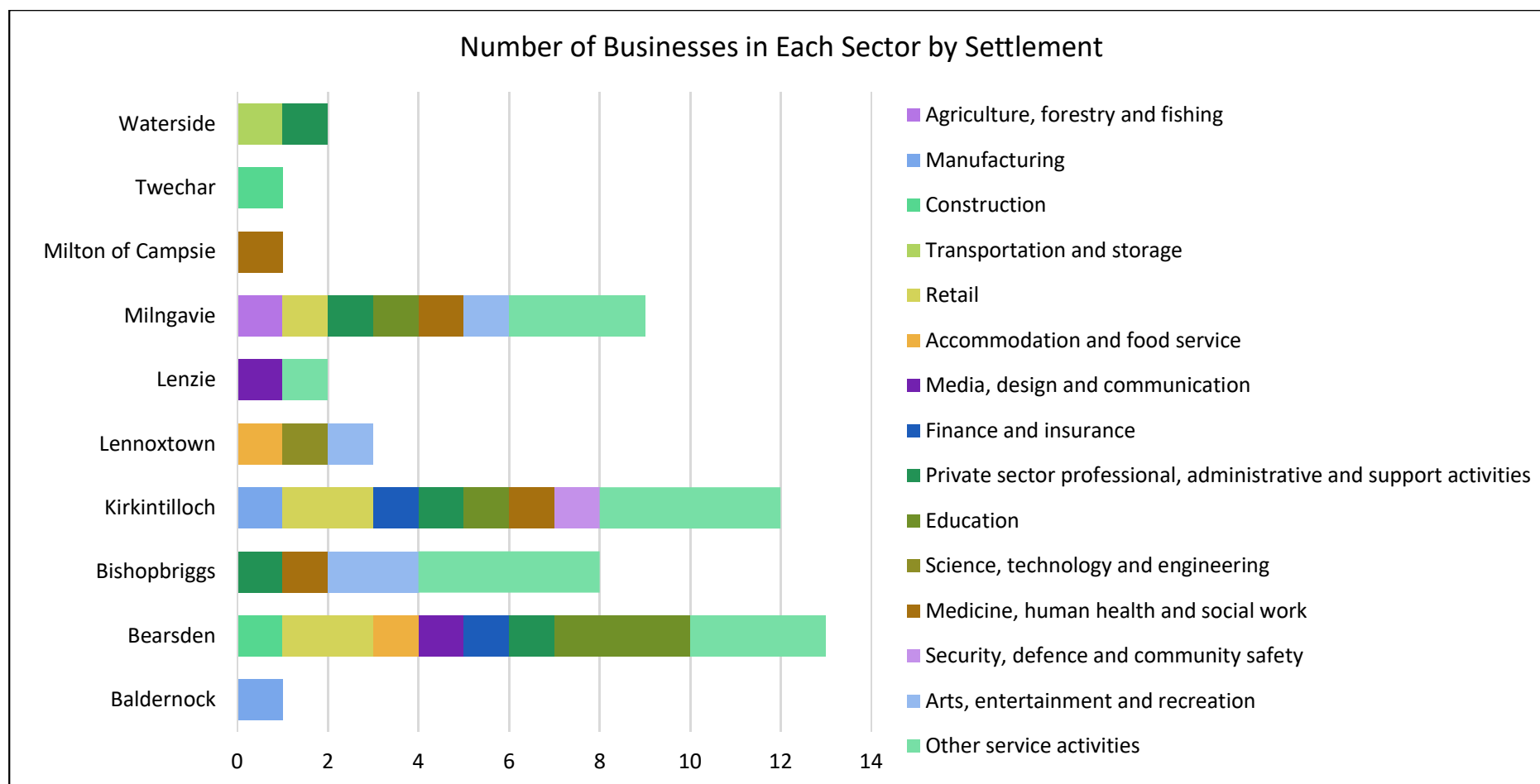




All of the businesses in the following sectors indicated that they had ceased all trade during lockdown: Transportation and storage; Agriculture forestry and fishing; Construction; Accommodation and food service; Education; Security, defence and community safety. There were three business sectors in which all businesses continued to trade (either as usual, or with modifications to business practices for safety) during lockdown: Finance and insurance; Science, technology and engineering, and Manufacturing. It should, however, be noted that the sample sizes across individual sectors in terms of businesses which responded to the survey, were quite low.

4.4 Geographical Impact

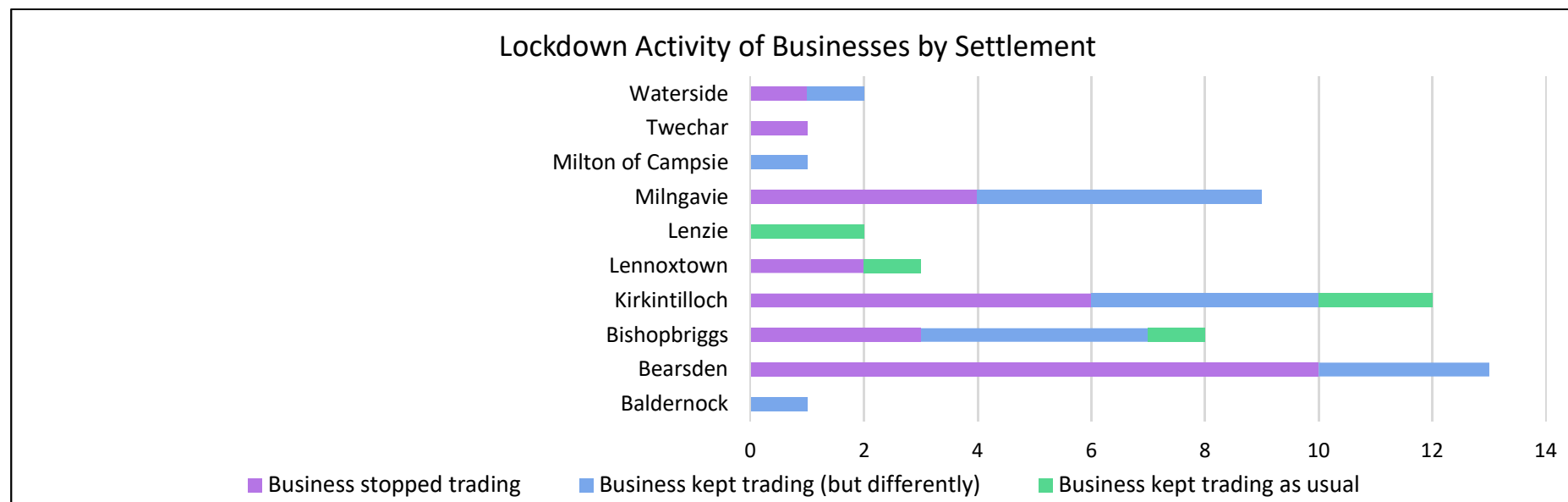
Of the 53 businesses which responded to the survey 13 were located in Bearsden, 12 in Kirkintilloch, 9 in Milngavie, and 8 in Bishopbriggs. The most represented sector in these towns (as well as overall) was 'Other service activities'.



The nature of lockdown restrictions (with some businesses being required to close, while others could still trade) means that it is likely that business type/sector will be more closely related to whether a business has been able to continue trading than its geographical location. However, there does not seem to be any clear evidence in the survey results of any particular sectors in East Dunbartonshire which were more impacted than others.

Looking at location, a larger share of the businesses in the survey which were located in Bearsden indicated that they stopped all trade during lockdown, compared to East Dunbartonshire's other towns. This could be due to more responses to the survey in general being from Bearsden. As with 4.3, the wide

spread of different sectors and locations across a comparatively small sample size of businesses involved in the survey, means that there is no statistically significant evidence of certain locations or sectors being more affected by the pandemic than others at a local level.



Of the businesses which said they were not currently trading at the time of the survey, 4 were located in Bearsden, 2 were in Kirkintilloch, and 1 was in Lennoxton. There was not a common factor between the businesses in terms of the industries in which they operated, although they were all privately-owned, micro-sized businesses, with 9 or fewer employees (see 4.2).

4.5 Businesses – Summary

53 East Dunbartonshire businesses responded to the survey and most of these were located in the area's four largest towns: Bearsden (26%), Kirkintilloch (22%), Milngavie (17%) and Bishopbriggs (17%).

Responses were received from businesses from across 16 different industrial sectors, the most common category being 'Other service activities' (28%), followed by 'Retail' (9%), 'Education' (9%) and 'Private sector professional, administrative and support activities' (9%). The majority (87%) of the responses were from small or medium-sized enterprises (74% were micro enterprises of 0-9 employees).

The pandemic had a clear impact on trade and turnover, with 90% reporting lower customer numbers than normal and around half of them (51%) ceasing all trade during lockdown, although most businesses (85%) indicated that they were trading at the time of the survey. Businesses which ceased all trade during lockdown seemed to be more uncertain about the future of their business than those who continued to trade in some capacity – 37% said that there was a severe risk of them ceasing to trade within the next six months. All but one of the 7 businesses which said they were not trading at the time of the survey were in the privately-owned, micro-sized (0-9 employees) business category. This was, however, the largest category overall, and the vast majority of businesses (33 out of 39) were still trading.

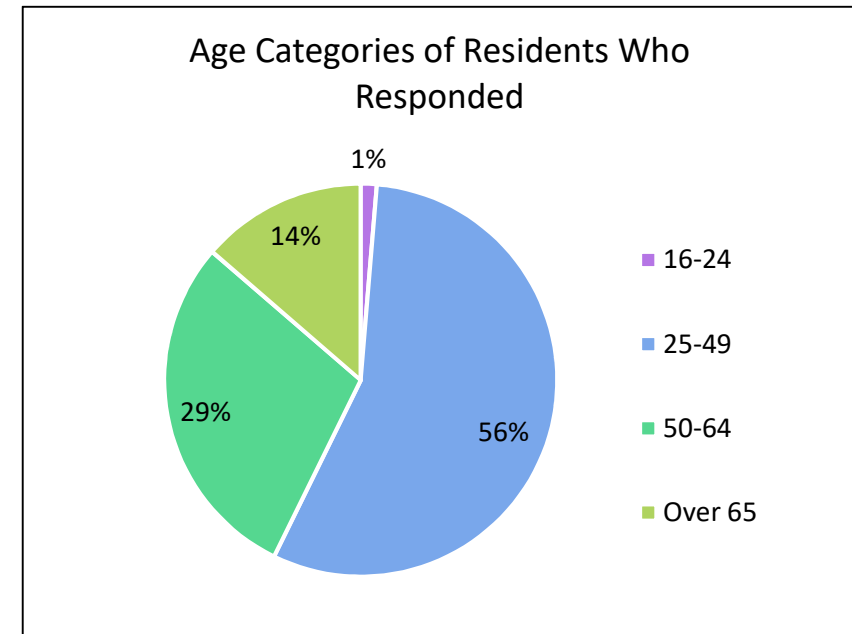
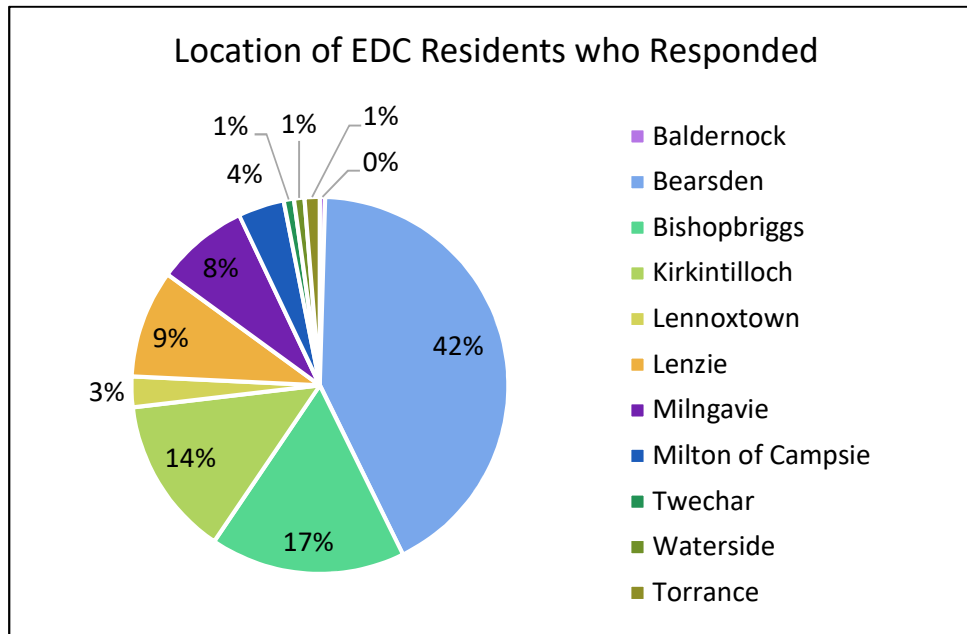
There seemed to be a reasonably high uptake of financial support – most (64%) of the businesses surveyed had applied for at least one COVID-19 government support grant scheme, and 82% of these had had at least one successful application. 38% of businesses had applied for some other form of financial support, such as a loan. 25% of respondents (13 businesses) had received no financial help.

A lot of businesses reported impacts on their employees. 43% of the businesses responding to the survey had furloughed employees under the government's Job Protection Scheme. 5% of respondents had made employees redundant as a result of the pandemic. 40% of businesses said that they had implemented different or more flexible working arrangements for employees due to the pandemic. 12 businesses had 100% of their employees working from home during lockdown and 6 said this would continue to be the case in future.

More concern was expressed about the ongoing impacts of the pandemic on the local economy than on respondents' own businesses – 56% said they were 'Very worried' about the continued impact of COVID-19 on their business finances, and 79% said they were 'Very worried' about the impact on the local economy.

5. Residents

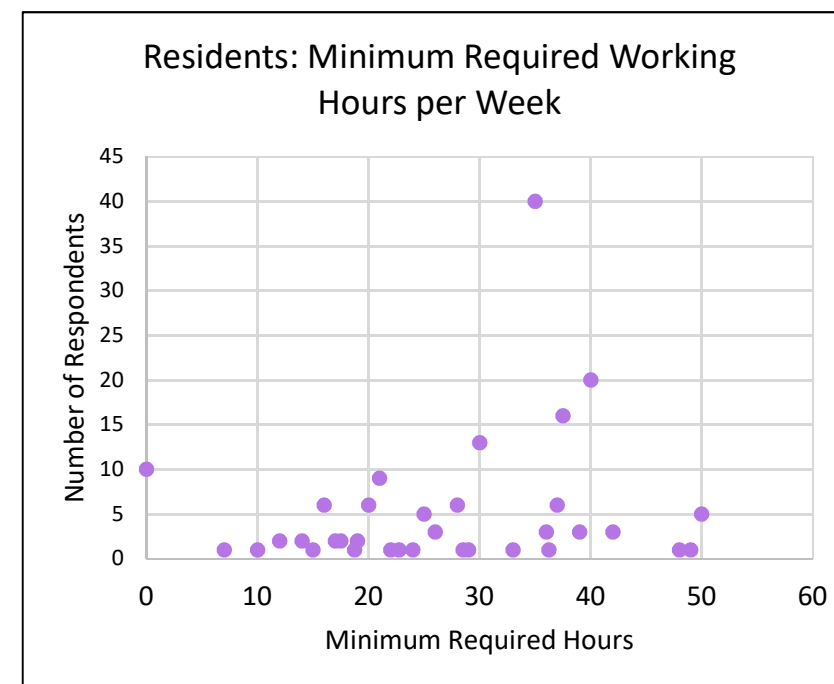
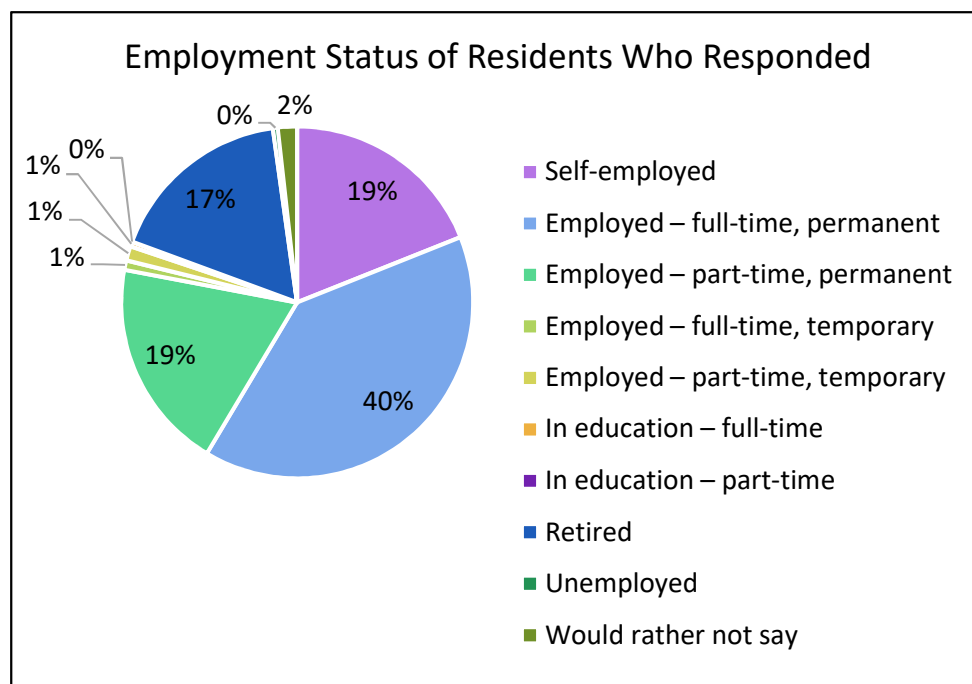
227 East Dunbartonshire residents responded to the survey. Of these, the majority (42%) gave their location as Bearsden. Most of the responses (56%) were from people in the 25-49 age category.



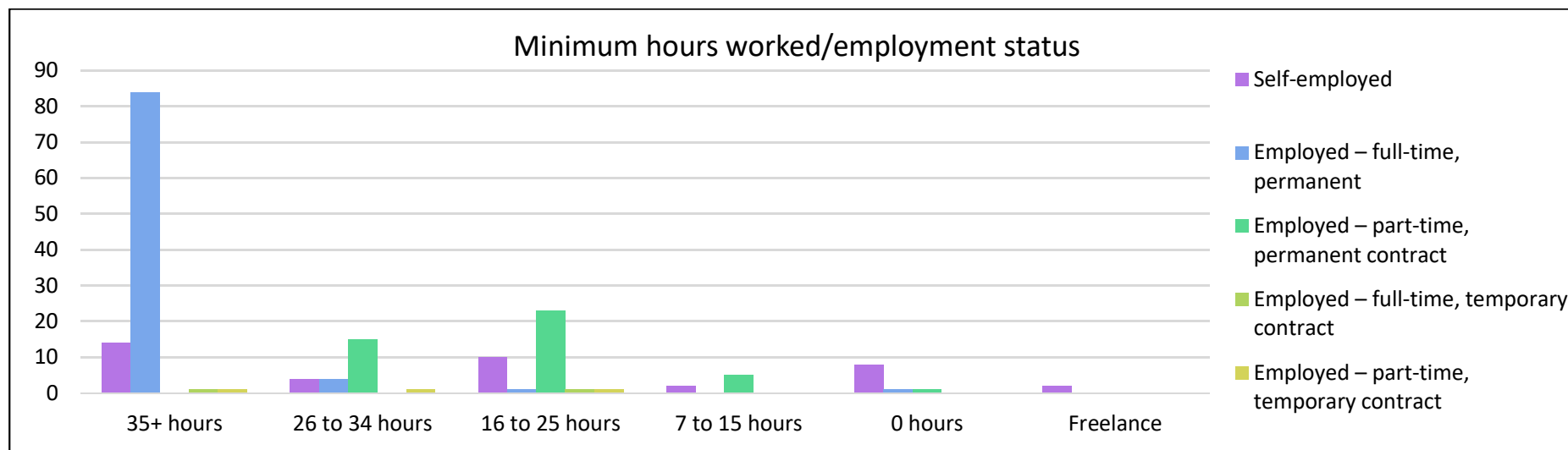
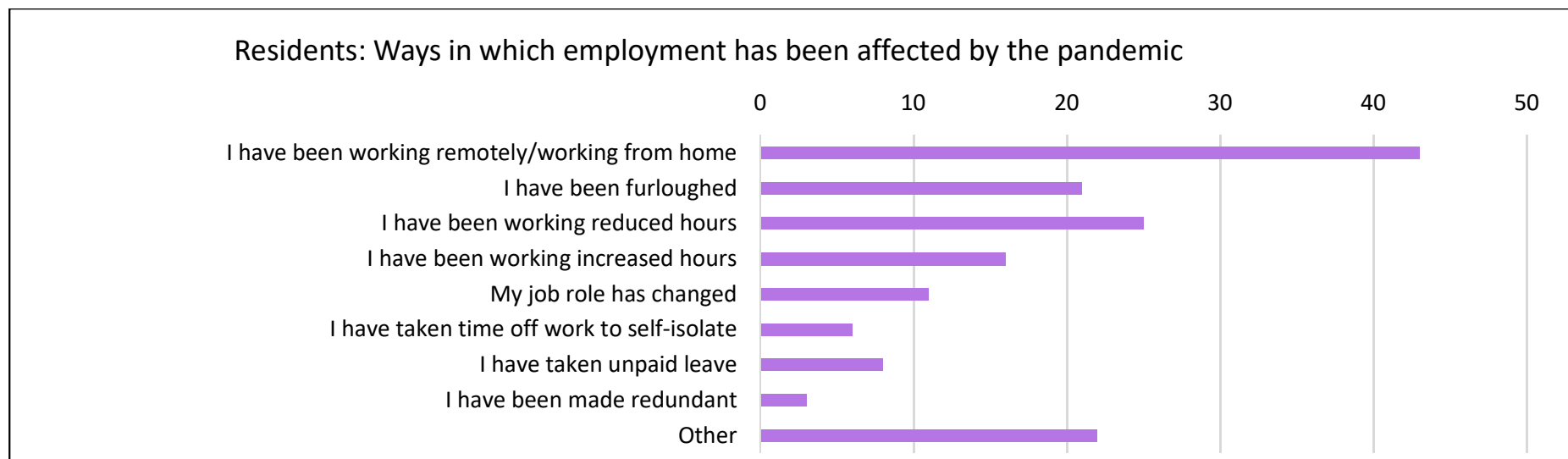
5.1 General Findings

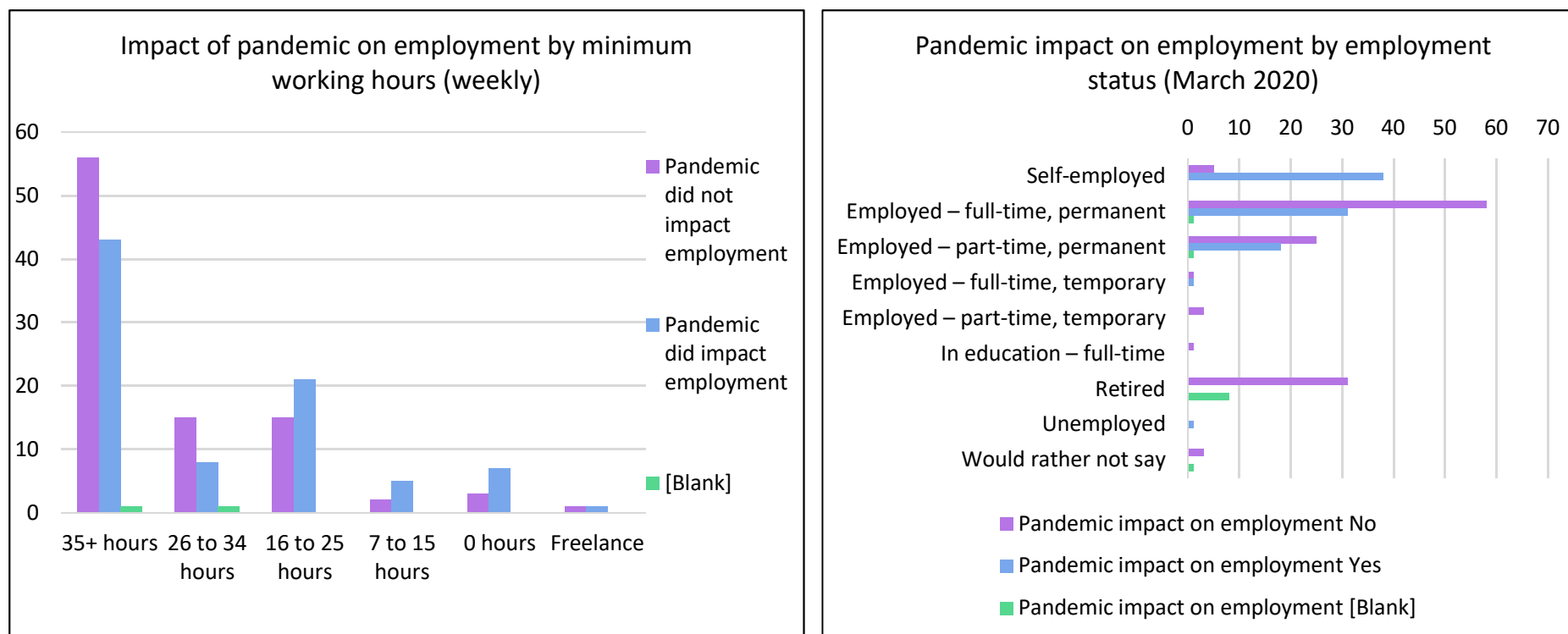
Employment

When lockdown was announced, 182 out of the 227 respondents (80%) were in employment. 179 people provided their minimum required working hours. The majority (56%) were contracted to work 35 or more hours per week; 13% were on 26 to 34 hour contracts; 20% were on 16 to 25 hour contracts; 4% were required to work 7 to 15 hours per week and 6% were on zero hours contracts.



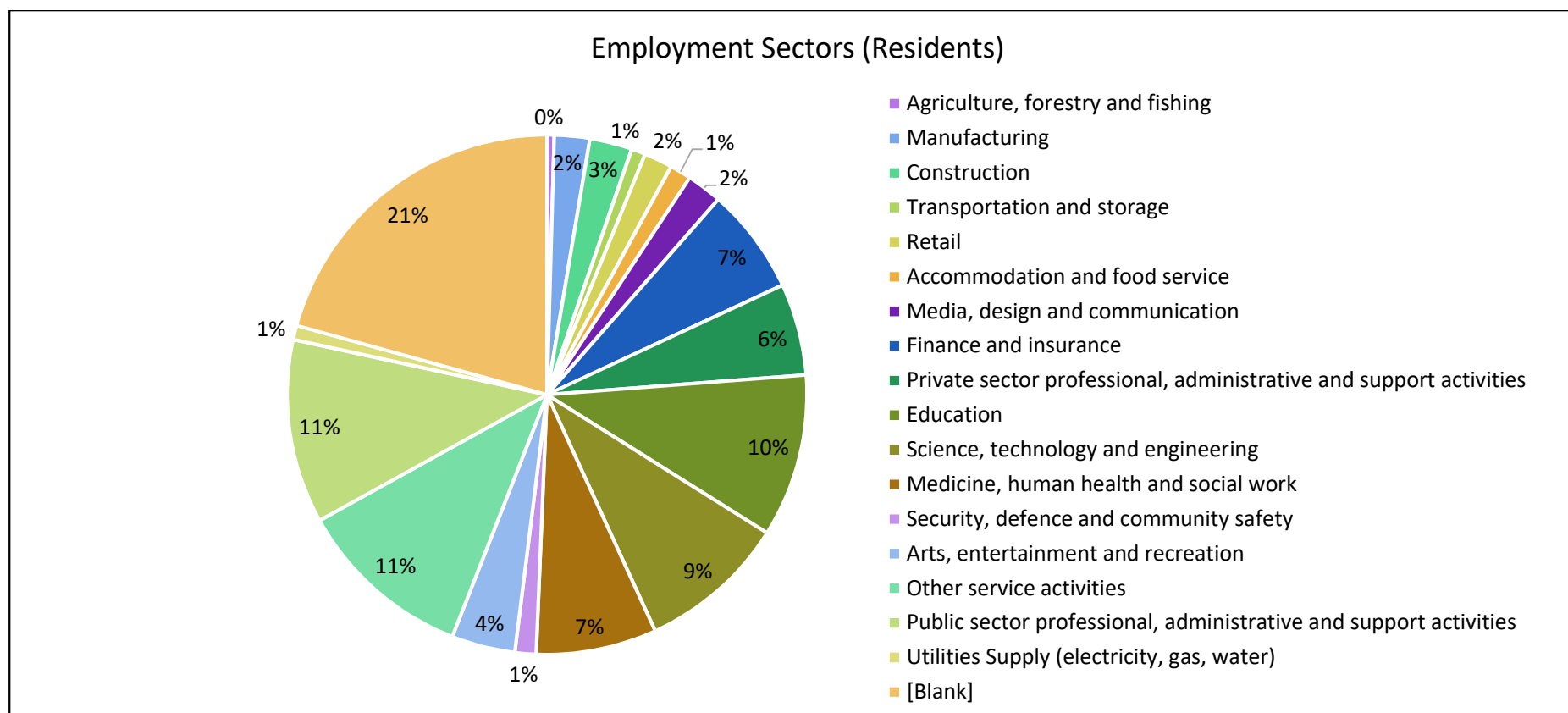
89% of residents surveyed said that the pandemic had affected their employment. The most commonly-reported way in which respondents' employment had been affected was that they had been working from home (43 people). 21 had been furloughed; 25 had been working reduced hours; 16 had been working increased hours; 11 had changed job roles; 6 had taken time off work to self-isolate; 8 had taken unpaid leave; 3 had been made redundant.



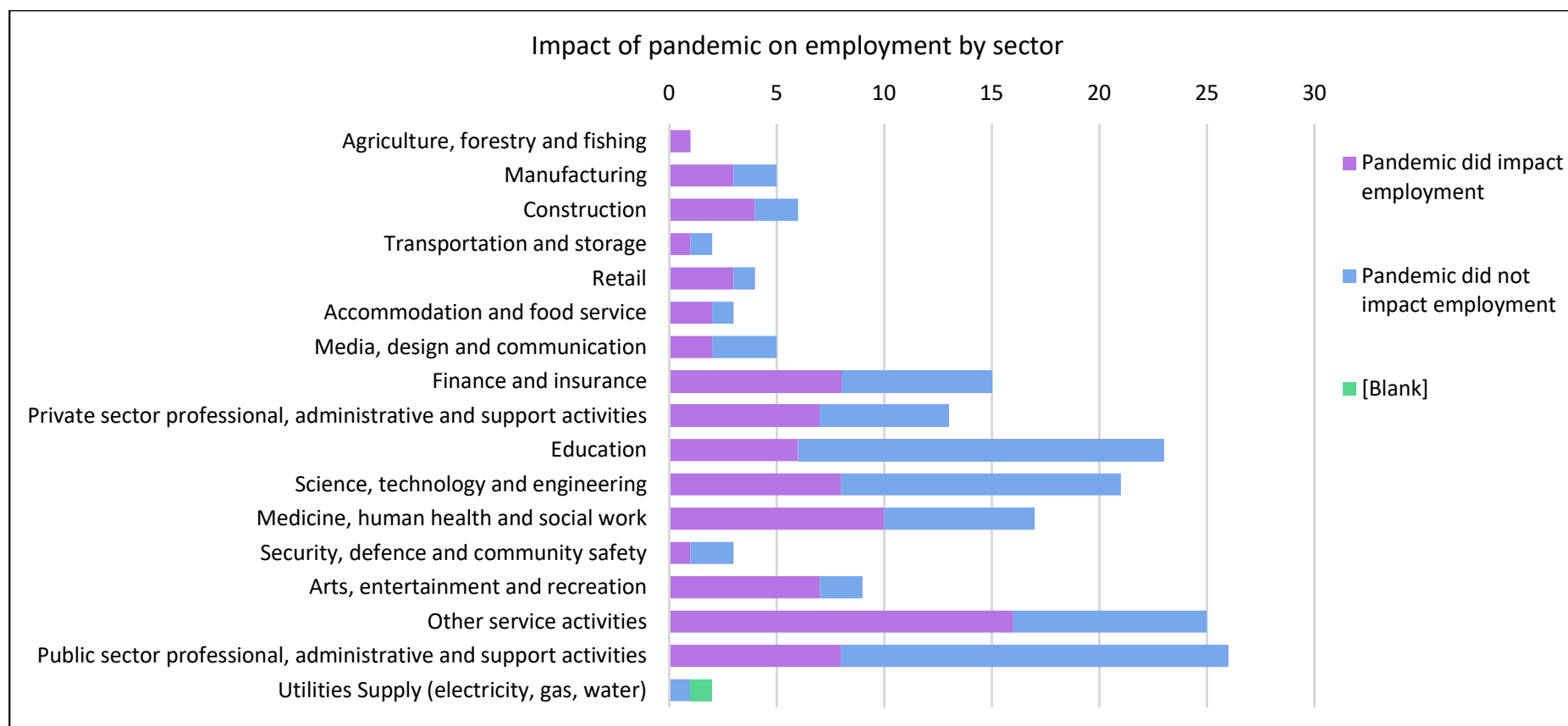


It seems that there is some correlation between respondents' minimum number of required working hours per week and whether their employment was affected by the pandemic. 56% of those who were contracted to work more than 35 hours per week and 63% of the people who worked a minimum of 26 to 34 hours per week said that their employment had not been affected by the pandemic. On the other hand the majority of respondents who were contracted to work a minimum of 25 or less hours per week said that the pandemic had affected their employment: 58% of those on 16 to 25 hour contracts; 71% of those on 7 to 15 hour contracts; and 70% of those on 0 hour contracts. This could mean that people contracted to work less hours are more likely to have been employed in the industries which were most affected by lockdown restrictions.

Similarly a pattern can be seen when employment status at the time of the March 2020 lockdown is plotted alongside reported impacts of the pandemic on employment. The 'self-employment' category is the only one for which more people reported impact on their employment due to the pandemic than said that there was no impact – 88% of the 43 self-employed East Dunbartonshire residents who participated in the survey said that their employment was affected by COVID-19.



The residents who responded to the survey were asked to identify the sector in which they were employed: the sectors with the most responses were 'Public sector professional, administrative and support activities' (11%) and 'Other service activities' (11%), with a further 10% employed in 'Education' and 9% in 'Science, technology and engineering'. It should be noted that 21% of the 227 respondents left the job sector question blank, therefore the number of responses which can be analysed based on employment sector is 180.



There was some variation in reported impacts of the pandemic across different employment sectors. Sectors in which more of the respondents said that the pandemic *did* impact their employment were: ‘Manufacturing’; ‘Construction’; ‘Retail’; ‘Accommodation and food service’; ‘Finance and insurance’; ‘Private sector professional, administrative and support activities’; ‘Medicine, human health and social work’; ‘Arts, entertainment and recreation’; ‘Other service activities’.

Lifestyle and local spending

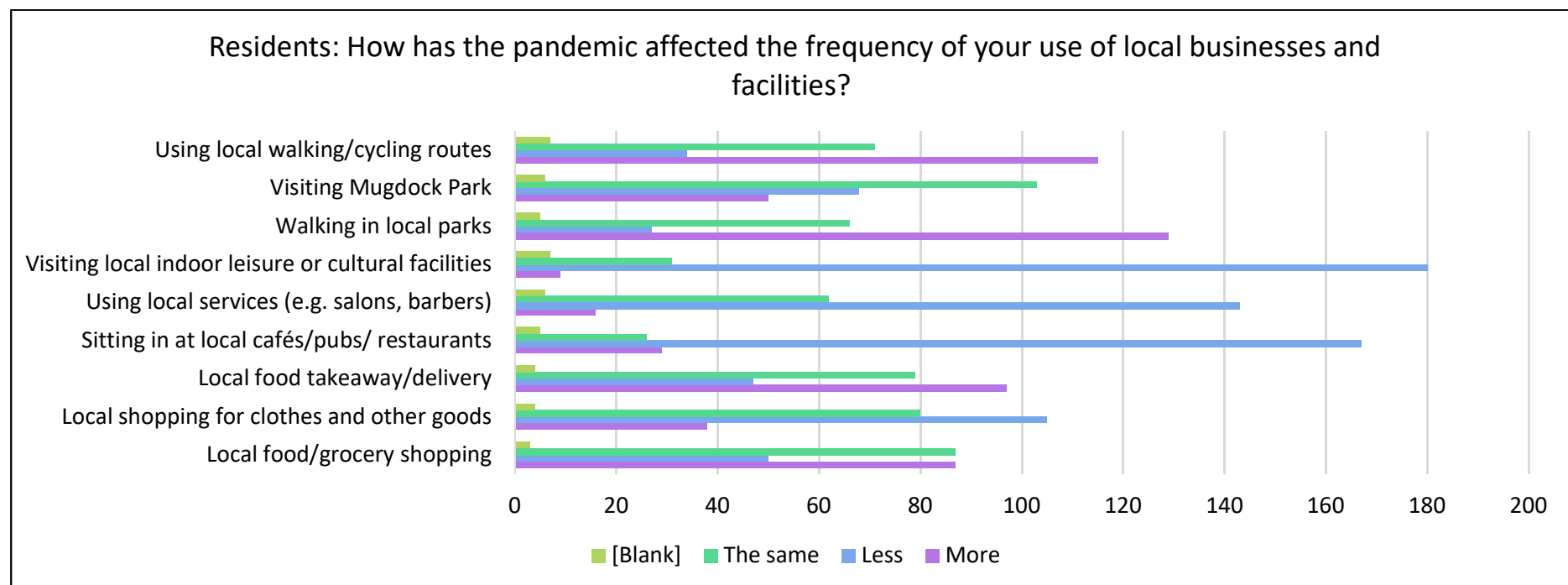
7% of residents said that their financial situation has improved since the pandemic; 36% said it has worsened, and 45% said there has been no change.

The majority of respondents (60%) said they were less likely to make large purchases or investments, such as cars or houses, since the pandemic. This suggests that most people are feeling a little more cautious about their spending decisions, although 30% of respondents did say that their spending habits in this regard had not been affected by the pandemic (and 2% said they were more likely than before to make large purchases or investments).

93% of residents responding to the survey said that their holiday plans had changed due to the pandemic, of which: 28% chose not to book holidays; 20% holidayed in Scotland/UK instead of travelling further; 32% cancelled pre-booked holidays; 10% rescheduled pre-booked holidays. Of the small group who said their holiday plans had not been changed by the pandemic, 71% were not planning to go on holiday anyway, 29% still went on holiday as planned.

75% of respondents said their use of the internet for shopping and other purchases had increase due to the pandemic, compared to their usual habits; 2% said it had decreased and 15% said it had not changed.

All of the residents surveyed said that the frequency of their use of local businesses and facilities has changed since the pandemic. The responses largely reflect the effects of lockdown/closures (i.e. indoor leisure facilities, services such as barber shops and salons, and sit-in hospitality businesses were used less frequently, while grocery stores and active travel routes were used more).

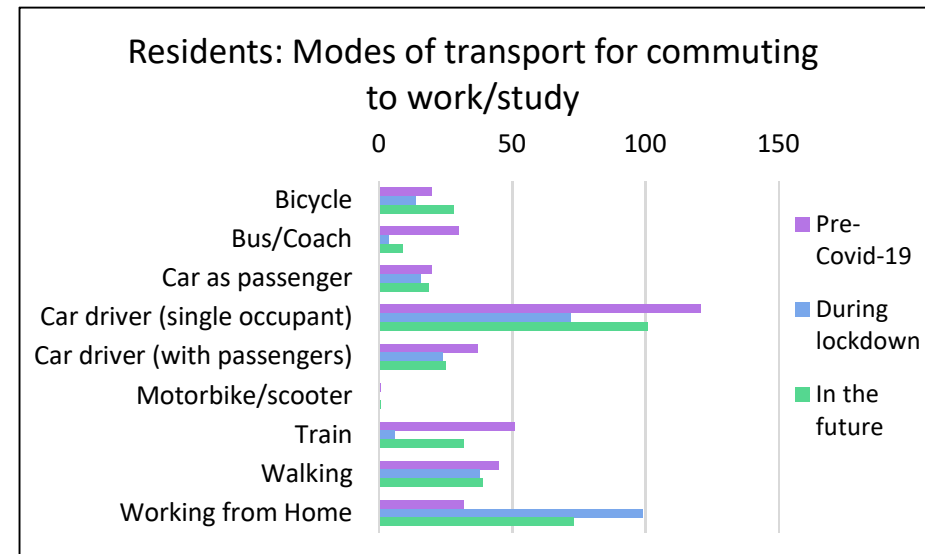


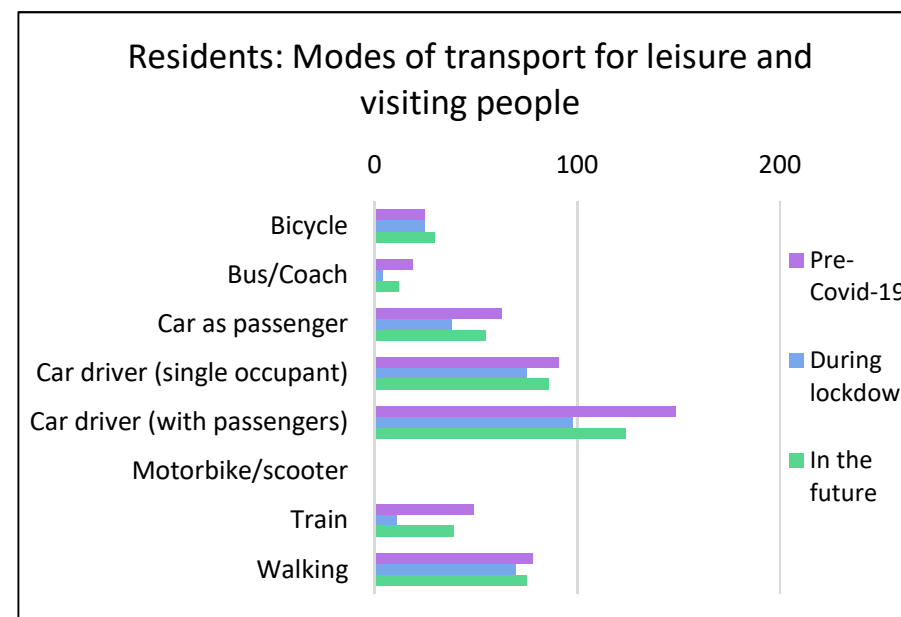
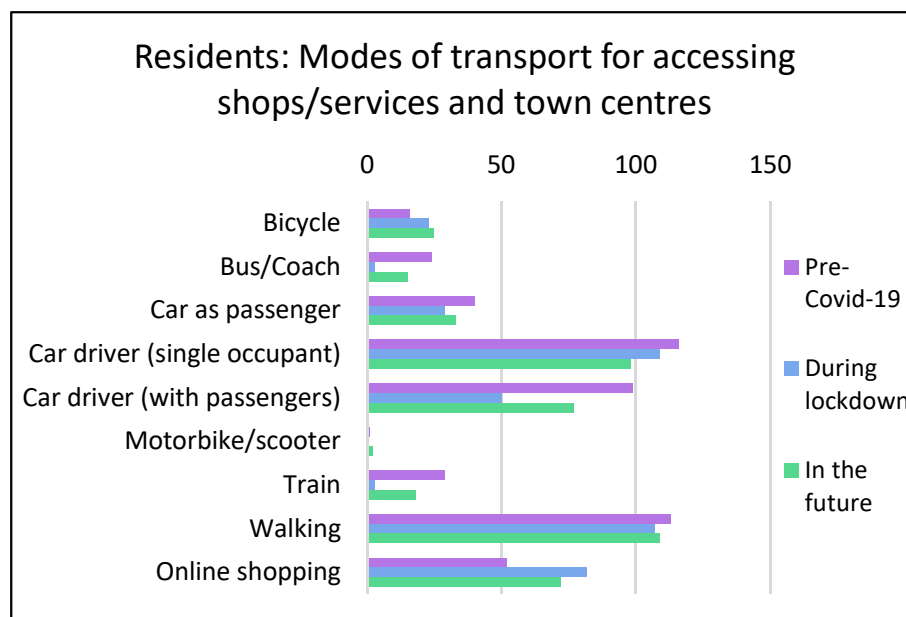
When asked for the reasons for this change in frequency, the majority of respondents identified with the statement that ‘It was more convenient to use local businesses due to lockdown and travel restrictions’. 106 residents indicated that they plan to shop local in future to support local businesses; 22 agreed that their use of local businesses might decrease when restrictions are eased and there are other options, and 42 said they are likely to use local businesses more when the risk of contracting COVID-19 reduces and they judge it to be safe.

Travel behaviours

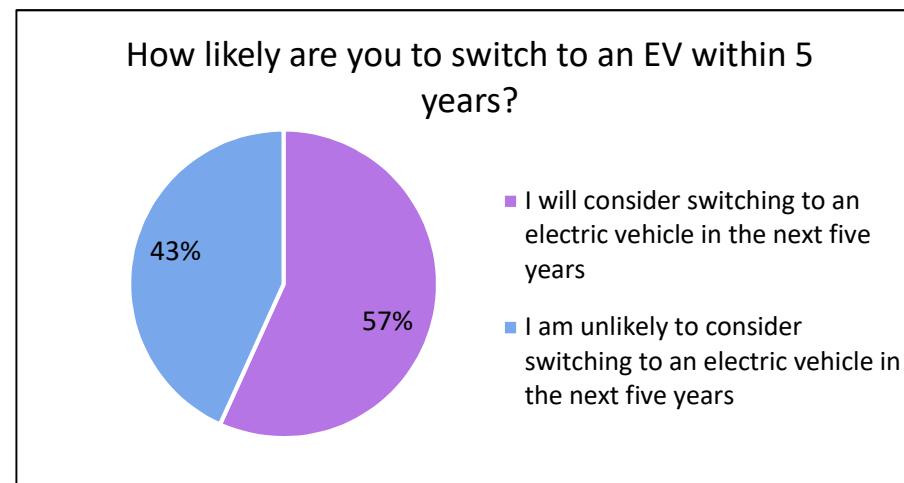
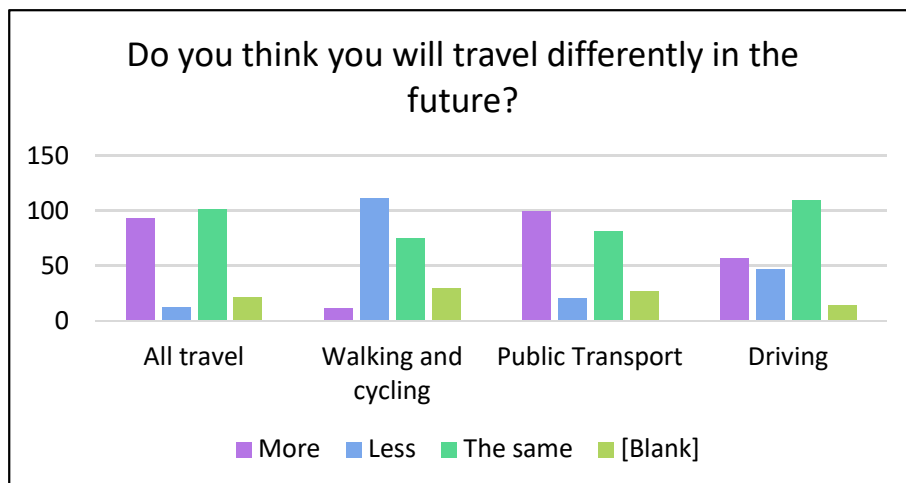
Residents were asked about which modes of transport they were likely to use for 3 different types of journey (commuting to their place of work or study; accessing shops, services and town centres; travelling for leisure and visiting people). They were asked to identify all modes of transport they would use for these journeys before COVID-19, during lockdown, and which modes they would be likely to use in future.

For all types of journey, the respondents predicted that they will choose to use the car less (whether as passenger or driver) in the future than they did before lockdown. This could be as a result of a corresponding predicted increase in the use of bicycles for all three journey types, and an increase in working from home and shopping online. For all types of journey and modes of transport, the predicted frequency of use in future reflects the changes of use which occurred during lockdown, implying that not all respondents expect their habits to return to being exactly the same as they were pre-lockdown.



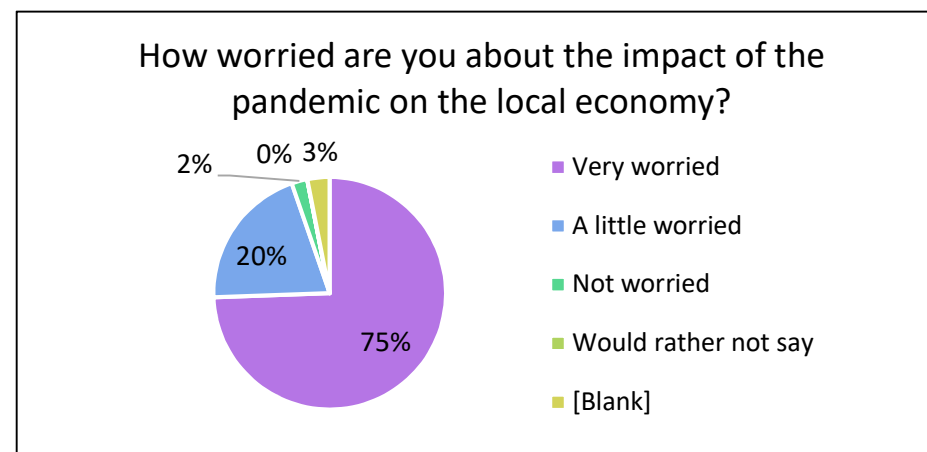
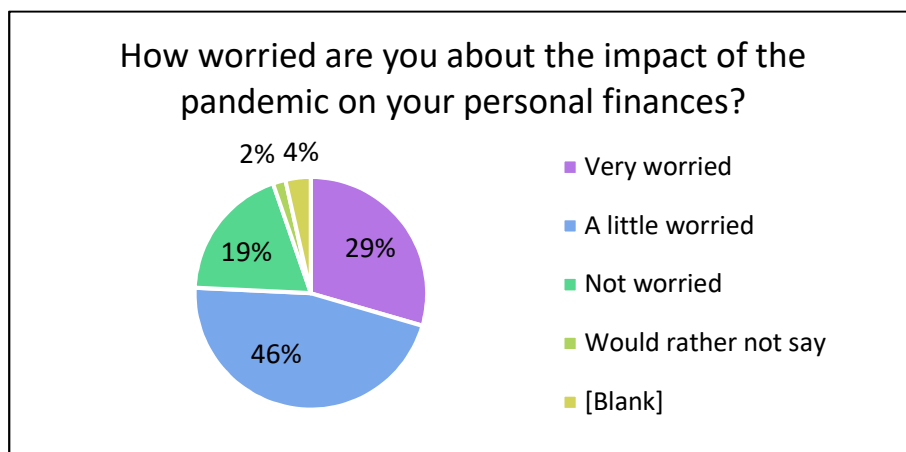


The survey also asked how they expect to travel in the future in general, considering the potential long term effects of the pandemic on society and the climate emergency, however the results suggest that some people have answered in terms of how they will travel differently compared to their pre-COVID 'normal' and others have replied based on during COVID. The majority of respondents said they will travel more (41%), or the same (44%) as they did before the pandemic. Nearly half of the respondents (49%) said they expect to walk or cycle less in the future, which may be because active travel during lockdown was much higher than usual for a lot of people. 44% of respondents said they aim to use public transport more in future, which again may be as a result of comparison with the lower use of public transport during lockdown. Most people (48%) said they would drive just as much in the future as they do now; 25% said they would drive more, and 21% said they would drive less. The majority of respondents (57%) said they would consider switching to an electric vehicle in the next five years.

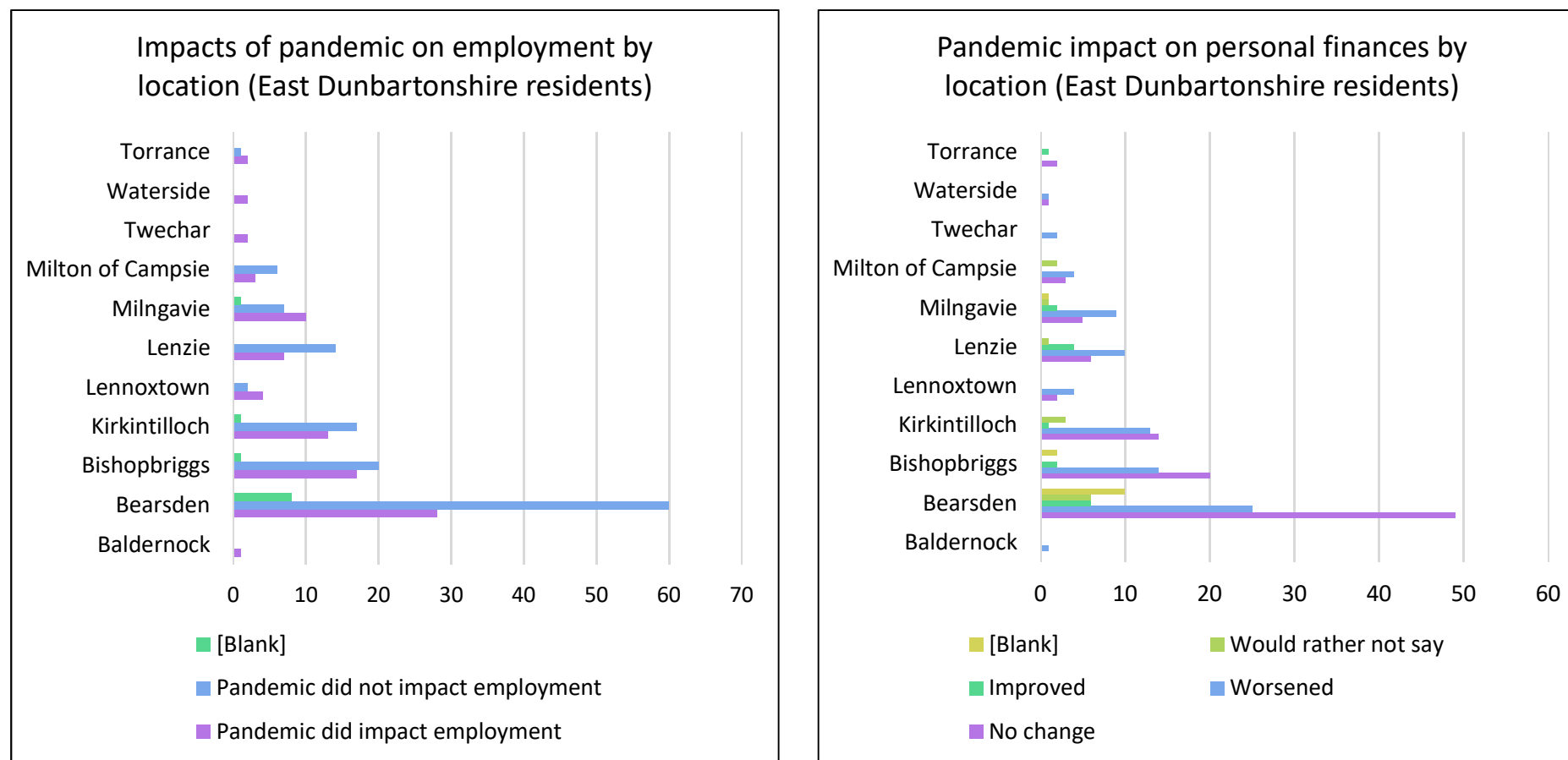


Concerns about the economy

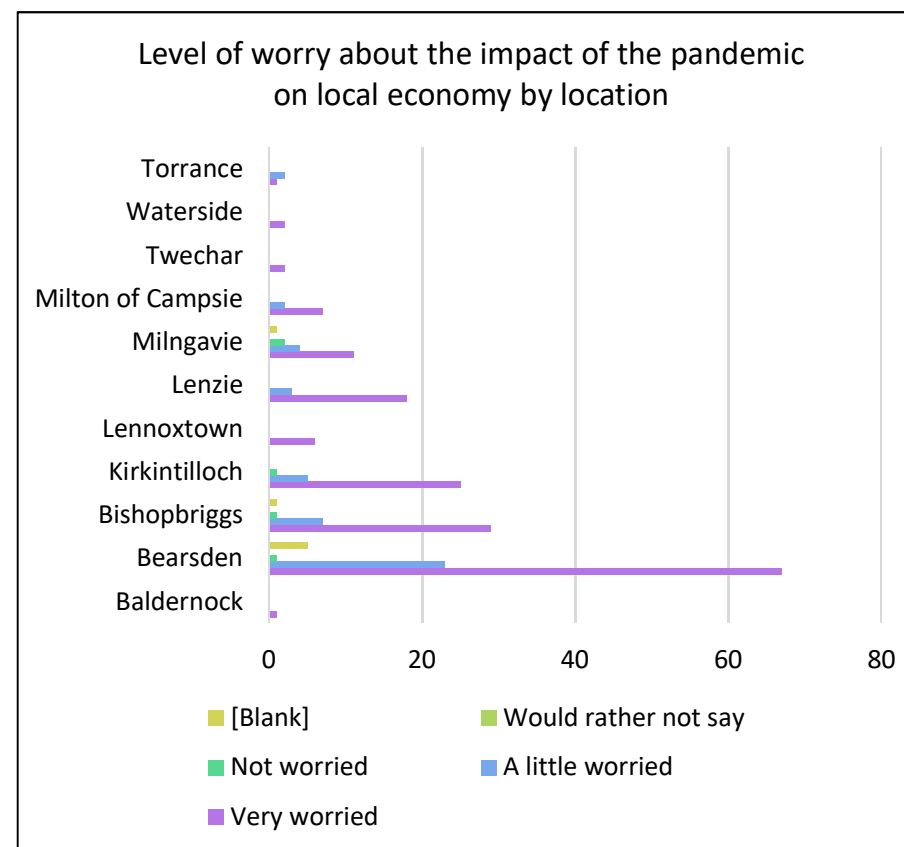
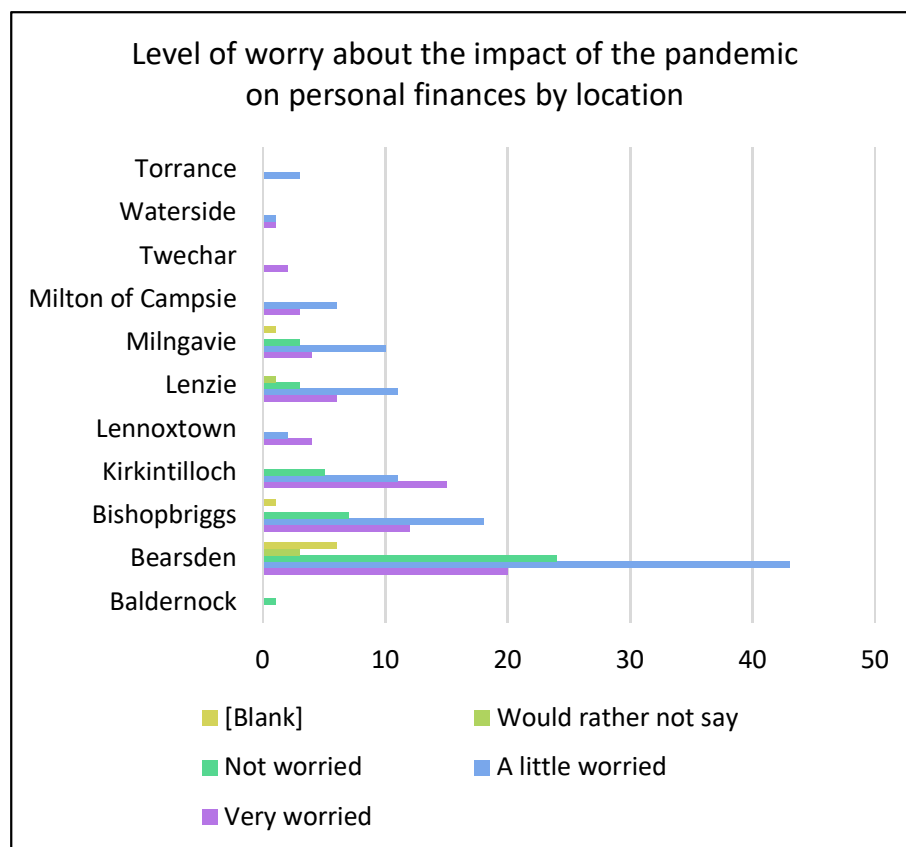
More of the residents involved in the survey said they were 'Very worried' about the continued impact of the pandemic on the local economy (75%) than on their personal finances (29%). 46% of respondents said they were 'A little worried' about how the pandemic may impact their personal finances.



5.2 Geographical impact within East Dunbartonshire

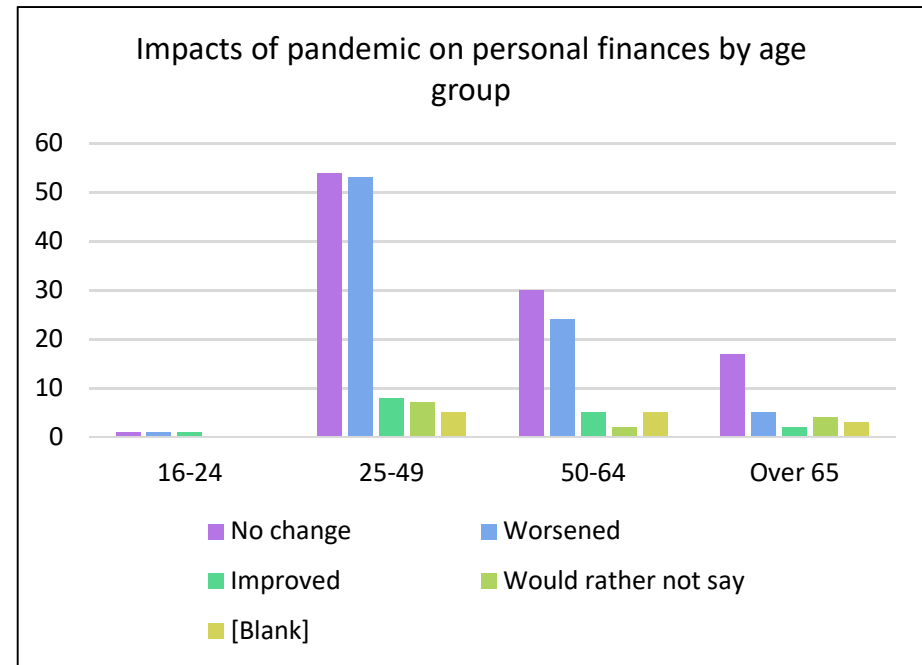
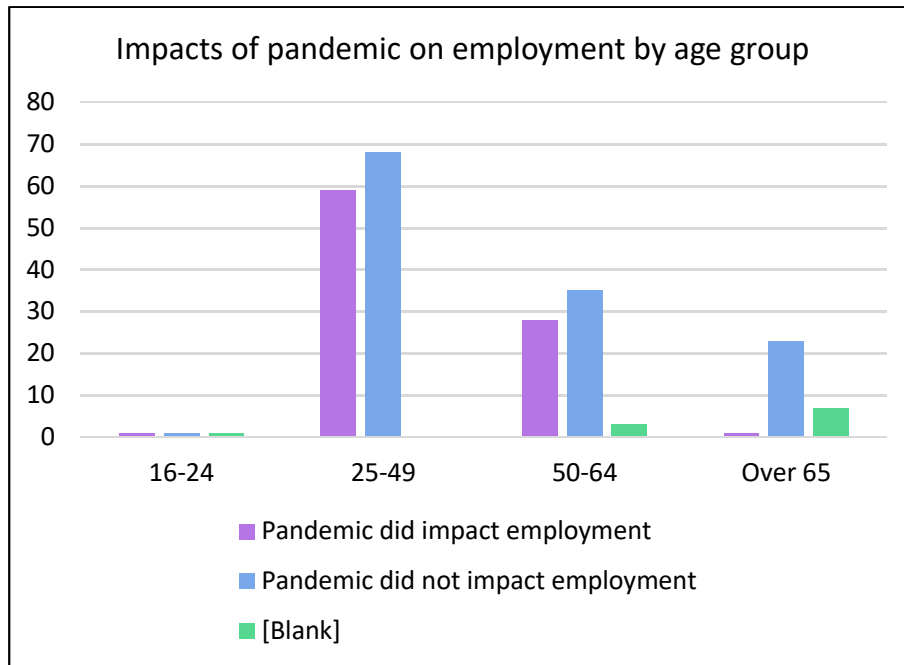


In addition to the majority of respondents living in Bearsden, there was also a larger percentage of responses from Bearsden who stated that the pandemic had not impacted their employment (63%) and that there had been no change in their personal finances (51%) as a result of the pandemic (compared to the responses from the other towns and villages in East Dunbartonshire).

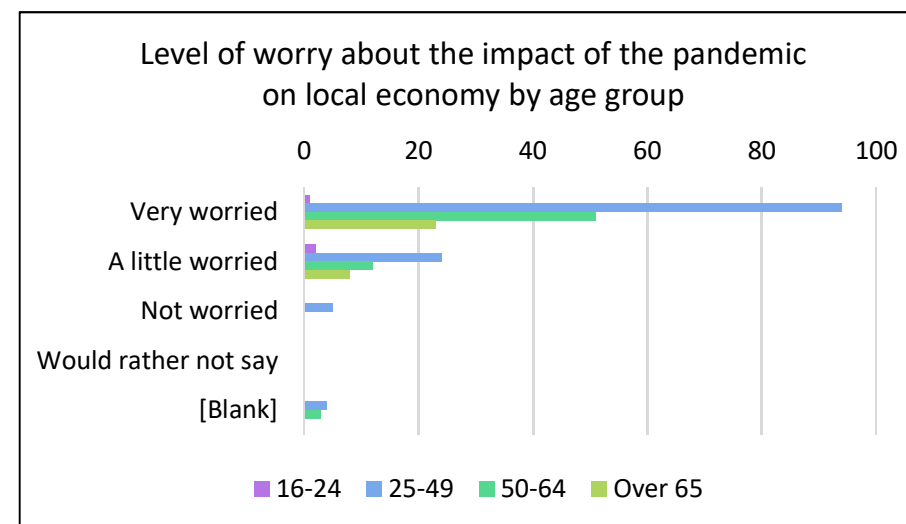
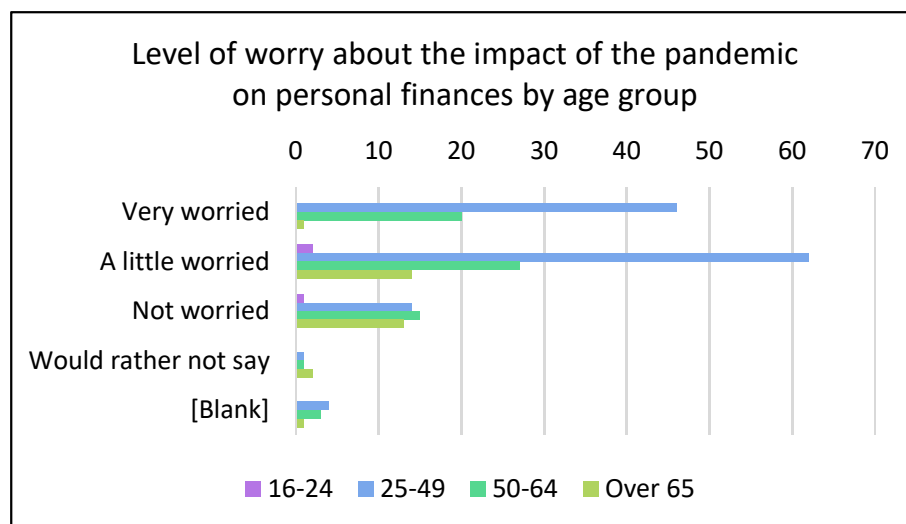


Kirkintilloch residents were the only location group where the majority of respondents said that they were 'very worried' about both the continued impact of the pandemic on their personal finances (48%) and on the local economy (81%).

5.3 Impact by age group



Other than people of retirement age having been less likely to be impacted, there does not seem to be a correlation between the age group of respondents and whether or not they had experienced an impact on their employment or personal finances as a result of the pandemic. 75% of over 65s said that their employment had not been impacted by the pandemic and 55% of people in this age group said that the pandemic had no impact on their personal finances.



People in the over 65 age group were less likely to say that they were ‘very worried’ (3%) about the continued impact of the pandemic on their personal finances than the other age groups, although the majority (74%) still said that they were ‘very worried’ about the impact on the local economy. Again, this may be due to people in this age group being more likely to be retired and therefore less likely to be concerned about their employment or seeking work.

5.4 Residents – Summary

227 East Dunbartonshire residents responded to the survey. Of these, the majority (42%) gave their location as Bearsden. Most of the responses (56%) were from people in the 25-49 age category.

When lockdown was announced, 182 out of the 227 respondents (80%) were in employment and 89% of residents surveyed said that the pandemic had affected their employment. The most commonly-reported way in which respondents’ employment had been affected was that they had been working from home (43 people). 21 had been furloughed; 25 had been working reduced hours; 16 had been working increased hours; 11 had changed job roles; 6 had taken time off work to self-isolate; 8 had taken unpaid leave; 3 had been made redundant.

Most people said they worked in ‘Public sector professional, administrative and support activities’ (11%) and ‘Other service activities’ (11%), with a further 10% employed in ‘Education’ and 9% in ‘Science, technology and engineering’.

Of the 179 people who provided their minimum required working hours, the majority (56%) were contracted to work 35 or more hours per week. The pandemic seemed to have a greater impact on employment for people who worked a minimum of 25 hours or less per week. The majority of respondents who were contracted to work a minimum of 25 or less hours per week said that the pandemic had affected their employment, while over half of the people who were contracted to work more than 25 hours per week said that their employment had not been affected by the pandemic.

Self-employed people appear to have experienced a greater impact on their employment than other employment groups – 88% of the 43 self-employed East Dunbartonshire residents who participated in the survey said that their employment was affected by COVID-19.

Most of the residents surveyed said that their financial situation had either stayed the same (45%) or worsened (36%) as a result of the pandemic. The majority of respondents (60%) also said they were less likely to make large purchases or investments, such as cars or houses and 93% said that their holiday plans had changed due to the pandemic, of which: 28% chose not to book holidays; 20% holidayed in Scotland/UK instead of travelling further; 32% cancelled pre-booked holidays; 10% rescheduled pre-booked holidays.

All of the residents surveyed said that the frequency of their use of local businesses and facilities has changed since the pandemic and 75% said their use of the internet for shopping and other purchases had increased. The use of local businesses largely reflect the effects of lockdown/closures (i.e. indoor leisure facilities, services such as barber shops and salons, and sit-in hospitality businesses were used less frequently, while grocery stores and active travel routes were used more). When asked for the reasons for this change in frequency, the majority of respondents identified with the statement that 'It was more convenient to use local businesses due to lockdown and travel restrictions'. 106 people indicated that they plan to shop local in future to support local businesses.

Residents were asked about which modes of transport they were likely to use for 3 different types of journey (commuting to their place of work or study; accessing shops, services and town centres; travelling for leisure and visiting people). They were asked to identify all modes of transport they would use for these journeys before COVID-19, during lockdown, and which modes they would be likely to use in future. For all types of journey, the respondents predicted that they will choose to use the car less (whether as passenger or driver) in the future than they did before lockdown. This could be as a result of a corresponding predicted increase in the use of bicycles for all three journey types, and an increase in working from home and shopping online. For all types of journey and modes of transport, the predicted frequency of use in future reflects the changes of use which occurred during lockdown, implying that not all respondents expect their habits to return to being exactly the same as they were pre-lockdown.

The survey also asked East Dunbartonshire residents about how they expect to travel in the future in general, considering the potential long term effects of the pandemic on society and the climate emergency, and which modes of transport they think they will use. The majority of respondents said they will travel more (41%), or the same (44%) as they did before the pandemic. Nearly half of the respondents (49%) said they expect to walk or cycle less in the future, which may be because active travel during lockdown was much higher than usual for a lot of people. 44% of respondents said they aim to use public transport more in future, which again may be as a result of comparison with the lower use of public transport during lockdown. Most people (48%) said

they would drive just as much in the future as they do now; 25% said they would drive more, and 21% said they would drive less. The majority of respondents (57%) said they would consider switching to an electric vehicle in the next five years.

More of the residents involved in the survey said they were 'Very worried' about the continued impact of the pandemic on the local economy (75%) than on their personal finances (29%). 46% of respondents said they were 'A little worried' about how the pandemic may impact their personal finances.

There was some variation in respondents' experiences of the pandemic depending on where in East Dunbartonshire they live. In addition to the majority of respondents living in Bearsden, there was also a larger percentage of responses from Bearsden who stated that the pandemic had not impacted their employment (63%) and that there had been no change in their personal finances (51%) as a result of the pandemic (compared to the responses from the other towns and villages in East Dunbartonshire). Kirkintilloch residents were the only location group where the majority of respondents said that they were 'very worried' about both the continued impact of the pandemic on their personal finances (48%) and on the local economy (81%).

Other than people of retirement age having been less likely to be impacted, there does not seem to be a correlation between the age group of respondents and whether or not they had experienced an impact on their employment or personal finances as a result of the pandemic. 75% of over 65s said that their employment had not been impacted by the pandemic and 55% of people in this age group said that the pandemic had no impact on their personal finances. People in the over 65 age group were also less likely to say that they were 'very worried' (3%) about the continued impact of the pandemic on their personal finances than the other age groups, although the majority (74%) still said that they were 'very worried' about the impact on the local economy.

6. Non-residents/Employees

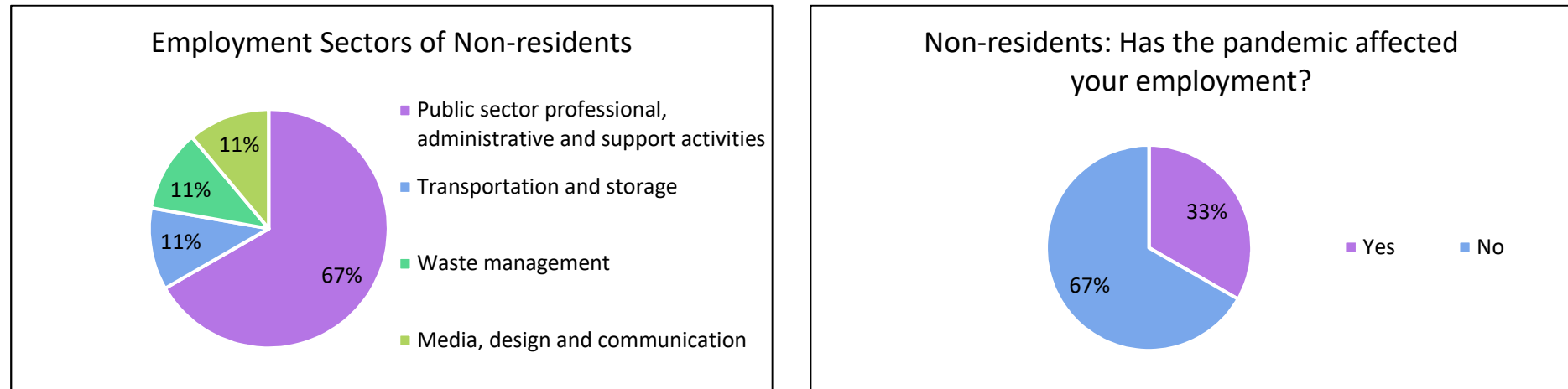
9 people who work (but do not live) in East Dunbartonshire responded to the survey. The respondents indicated that they were residents of Glasgow City Council area (4); North Lanarkshire (4); and Renfrewshire (1). 3 responses were also received from non-residents who do not work or own/manage businesses in East Dunbartonshire – 2 of these people left written comments in response to the final survey question, which will be analysed in section 7 of this report.

In the 'employee' respondent group, 7 were in the 25-49 age category and 2 were in the 50-64 age category.

6.1 General Findings

Employment

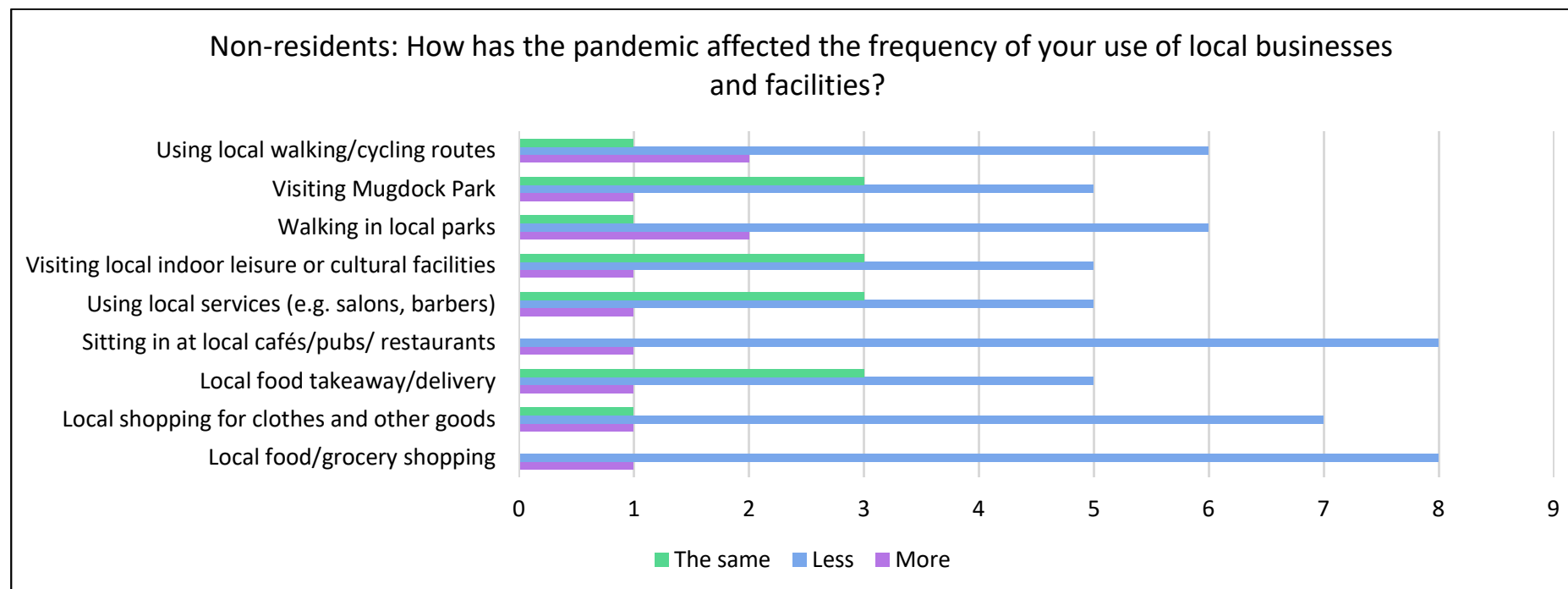
All of the responses in the employee group were from people in full-time employment – 8 out of the 9 respondents said that they were required to work a minimum of 35 hours per week, while 1 said they were required to work 37 hours. 8 were on permanent contracts and 1 was on a temporary contract.



The majority of respondents (67%) identified their employment as 'Public sector professional, administrative and support activities'. A third of the respondents said that their employment had been affected by the pandemic, with 2 people saying that they have been working remotely or working from home, and 1 saying that they have been working reduced hours.

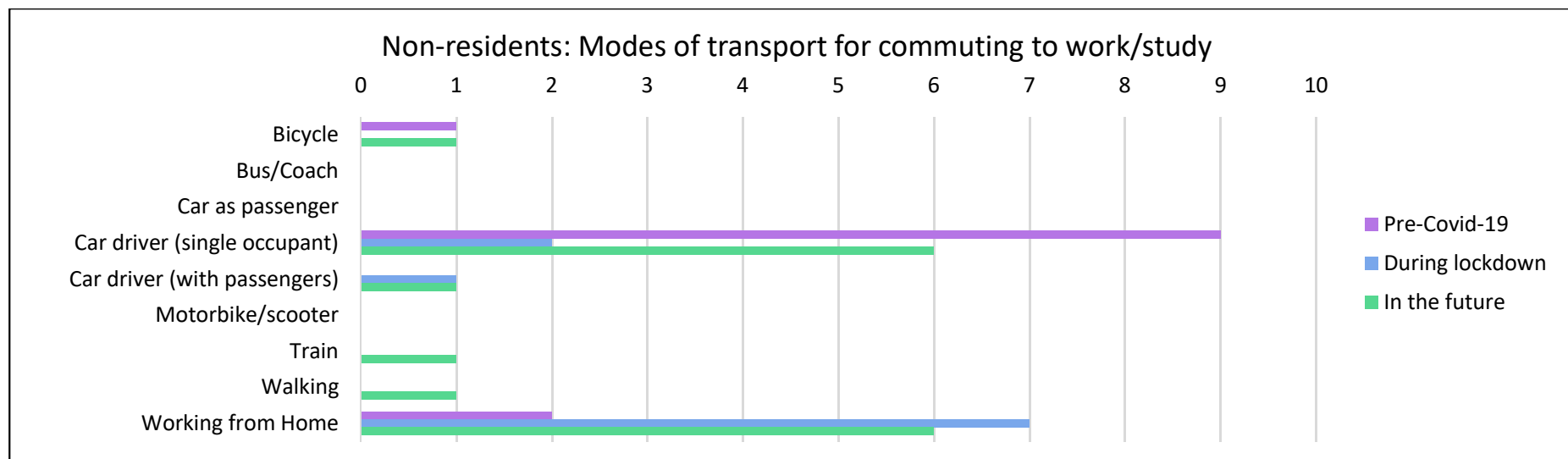
Local spending

Most of the non-residents who work in East Dunbartonshire stated that the frequency of their use of local businesses and facilities has reduced as a result of the pandemic. This result is as expected, due to travel restrictions which prohibited movement between local authority areas during lockdown, and the impact of homeworking on commuter spending and use of local services.



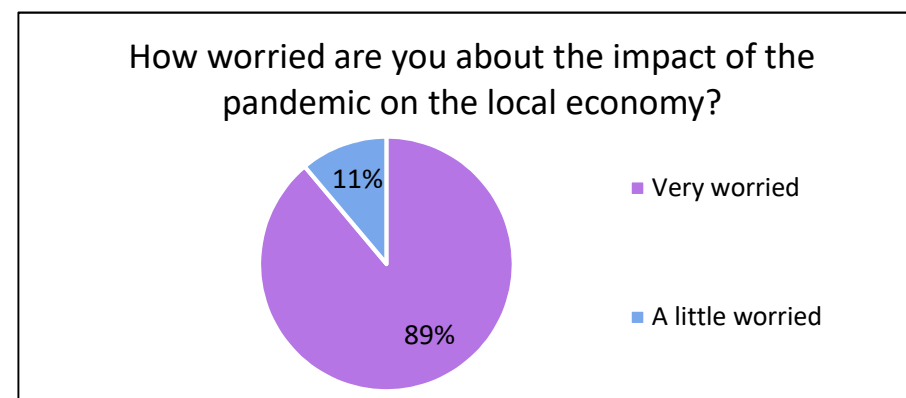
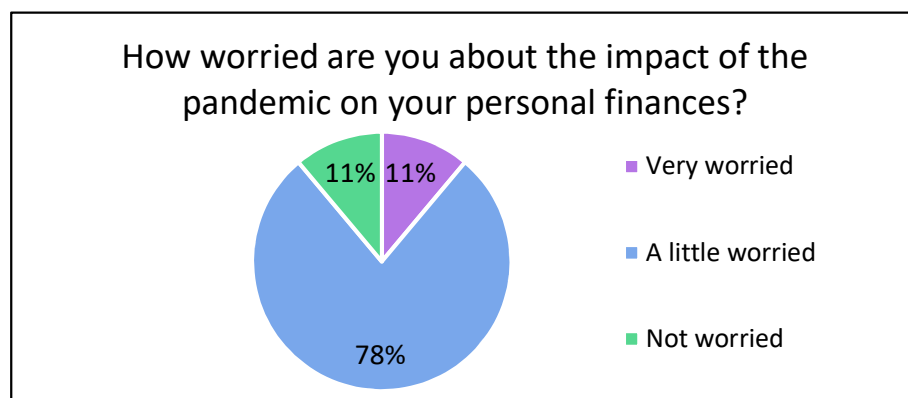
Travel behaviours

The chosen modes of transport for commuting were very different for non-residents during lockdown compared to the travel modes used prior to the COVID-19 crisis. The main change is in the number of people working from home, which the majority of respondents also expected to do more frequently in future than they did before lockdown.



Concerns about the economy

Most of the respondents from the non-resident/employee group said they were 'A little worried' (78%) about the continued impact of the pandemic on their personal finances and 'Very worried' (89%) about the impact on the local economy.



6.2 Non-residents/Employees – Summary

9 people who work (but do not live) in East Dunbartonshire responded to the survey and 3 responses were also received from non-residents who do not work or own/manage businesses in East Dunbartonshire. In the 'employee' respondent group, 7 were in the 25-49 age category and 2 were in the 50-64 age category.

All of the responses in the employee group were from people in full-time employment and the majority of respondents (67%) identified their employment as 'Public sector professional, administrative and support activities'. A third of the respondents said that their employment had been affected by the pandemic, with 2 people saying that they have been working remotely or working from home, and 1 saying that they have been working reduced hours.

Most of the non-residents who work in East Dunbartonshire stated that the frequency of their use of local businesses and facilities has reduced as a result of the pandemic. This result is as expected, due to travel restrictions which prohibited movement between local authority areas during lockdown, and the impact of homeworking on commuter spending and use of local services.

The chosen modes of transport for commuting were very different for non-residents during lockdown compared to the travel modes used prior to the COVID-19 crisis. The main change is in the number of people working from home, which the majority of respondents also expected to do more frequently in future than they did before lockdown.

Most of the respondents from the non-resident/employee group said they were 'A little worried' (78%) about the continued impact of the pandemic on their personal finances and 'Very worried' (89%) about the impact on the local economy.

7. Summary of Comments Received

In addition to the survey questions, 124 out of the 242 respondents included written comments with their submissions in answer to the final question:

Do you have any comments on the Economic Recovery Plan, other suggestions for how the Council and its partners can support economic recovery going forward, or anything else you would like to add? (If commenting on specific Economic Recovery Plan actions please note the action number).

24 of the comments received were from people who own or manage a business in East Dunbartonshire (all but one of which were also local residents), 96 were from local residents, and 4 were from people who do not live in the council area.

These responses were analysed and the key topics of discussion were identified. A summary of the comments made under each topic is included below, along with details of how the Council will address the issues raised.

7.1 Employment

Number of comments: 6 comments mention employment (3 from residents, 2 from residents who also own or manage a business in East Dunbartonshire, and 1 from a non-resident).

Summary: One of the responses was from a business who had a member of staff leave as a result of not feeling safe travelling to work during the pandemic. There was also a comment from someone whose partner being made redundant has had an impact on their family finances and childcare arrangements, which has in turn made it more difficult to find new work.

Three of the comments mentioned remote working arrangements: saying that homeworking should be encouraged by all businesses where possible; and that work spaces or hubs could be provided, perhaps in town centres as a means of reusing vacant units.

There was also a response from a recent graduate who would like to see more professional job opportunities in the local area that do not require a commute into Glasgow.

Response: Section 2 of the Economic Recovery Plan ('People') includes actions around supporting local residents to find job opportunities, helping people facing barriers to employment to develop skills, and directing businesses to funding which can help them to recruit employees. There is also a wide range of support available from Skills Development Scotland. The Economic Recovery Plan will be updated to include any additional funding and support which has become available and the Council, Business Gateway and other community partners will continue to work on directing local people to employment resources.

7.2 Business Support

Number of comments: 4 comments included feedback related to business support (all of these were both residents of East Dunbartonshire and owners/managers of businesses in the area).

Summary: One of the comments suggested that it would be good from businesses to have access to support (perhaps through a Business Gateway webinar, which could advise of potential funding) aimed at helping them to employ and train new staff (potentially local people who have been made redundant), as the combined impacts of the EU exit and the pandemic has made businesses more cautious about increasing their staff numbers. There was also a comment from someone who had relied upon self-employment through lockdown and had benefited from the support and advice available to small businesses through Business Gateway.

There were two comments from people who felt that they had been excluded from business support throughout the pandemic, due to not meeting criteria for the grants offered. One of these was a company which had relied on contract work, and had been unable to operate during lockdown.

Response: Section 1 of the Economic Recovery Plan ('Business') includes actions relating to financial support and recovery of business activity. In particular, actions 1.1, 1.2, 1.4 and 1.5 set out details of the activities of the Council with regards to delivering the Scottish Government's COVID-19 support funding, directing businesses to other sources of funding they may be eligible for, and investigating options for the creation of the Councils own short-term business support grants programme. Businesses are encouraged to contact Business Gateway to discuss their specific circumstances in order to understand if there is any further support available.

7.3 Business Rates/Rents

Number of comments: 11 of the comments mention business rates and/or commercial rents (7 from the resident group, 3 from the business group and 1 from the non-resident group)

Summary: Several comments suggested that business rates should be lowered to help local businesses which may be struggling, particularly small businesses. One of the businesses which responded (based in Bearsden) stated that the rates relief introduced during the lockdown has been a big help and recommended that this continues – they also said that they were aware of a number of local shops and cafes that were closed or considering closure.

It was suggested by residents in Bearsden, Bishopbriggs and Kirkintilloch that the commercial rents in local town centres are too high, and that intervention is required to prevent businesses from closing and to encourage new businesses to move into empty premises when the COVID restrictions have ended.

Response: The issue of operating costs for town centre businesses, particularly when compared to out-of-town locations and other business models such as online distribution, has been under discussion at the national level for a number of years. A National Review of Town Centres was carried out in 2013 and the Scottish Government produced a Town Centre Action Plan. The progress made towards delivery of this 2013 Town Centre Action plan underwent an independent review in June 2020, the review group having been asked to build on the town centre first approach and develop a refreshed vision for Scotland's towns and the means to achieve it. The report produced by this review group (A New Future for Scotland's Town Centres) was published in February 2021 and includes recommendations for tackling the 'unfair playing field' for town centres, including rates and taxation making them less viable locations for businesses. These recommendations are mainly aimed at the Scottish government and ask for a review the current tax, funding and development systems to ensure that wellbeing, economy and climate outcomes, fairness and equality are at their heart. The Council will continue to keep track of the work being done in this area in order to be involved in any relevant consultations and proposals which may be put forward by the Scottish Government in response to the report.

7.4 Town Centres

Number of comments: 18 comments discuss issues related to town centres (17 of these were from East Dunbartonshire residents – 3 of whom also own/manage a business in the area; 1 was from a business owner/manager who does not live in the area; and 1 was from a non-resident)

Summary: Suggestions for how the recovery of town centres could be boosted included: engaging with landlords with empty units to find new uses quickly, and considering alternative uses such as small business hubs, home-working spaces or the use of vacant spaces by community groups; encouraging street entertainment and community events in town centres, which could include regular markets for local businesses to sell food and crafts; benchmarking with best practice in other council areas such as Renfrewshire to relaunch town centres and attract more investors and visitors, and examining what has made some town centres (e.g. Milngavie) more resilient than others within East Dunbartonshire.

Some of the respondents (6) observed that they have personally being using their town centres less as the types of businesses and services offered do not meet their daily needs or are lacking in variety and uniqueness. There was a desire to see a larger number of small, independent businesses being encouraged to the high-street, rather than multinationals. One such comment also noted that the pandemic and associated travel restrictions have made people more attentive to changes happening in their local area, which could present the opportunity for the right kinds of new businesses to build a local customer base.

There were some comments which mentioned the upkeep and maintenance of town centre spaces, saying that more needs to be done to keep them clean and free of litter, and that more coverings over shopfronts, increased public seating, and space for outdoor seating at pubs and cafes would be welcome. Improvements to active travel links into town centres were also suggested, with consideration of the safety of younger residents and those with disabilities.

Two of the comments mentioned community leisure facilities, wishing to see the existing services reopened and a more diverse offering in the local area in future (e.g. swimming).

Response: Section 3 of the Economic Recovery Plan ('Community') includes actions for regeneration and local investment, including several actions which focus on town centres. Bearsden, Bishopbriggs and Milngavie have Town Centre Strategies, and Kirkintilloch has a town centre Masterplan. These policy documents were created with the local communities and provide long-term visions for the respective town centres, which continue to be relevant as they focus on ways to improve the public realm, maintenance of public spaces, and accessibility via active travel. Additionally, the Council and its community partners are working to monitor the ongoing impacts of the pandemic on the town centres and gain an understanding of what the main challenges will be going forward. This includes investigating creating plans with town centre groups and looking into the toolkits and other support available from organisations like Scotland's Towns Partnership to help town centres to recover. With regards to the reopening of services and resumption of usual town centre events and activities, we are still responding to the COVID-19 route map and easing of restrictions.

7.5 Active Travel

Number of comments: 17 of the comments mention active travel (15 from the resident group, 1 from the business group, and 2 from non-residents).

Summary: The majority of the responses in this category suggested that there should be greater investment in active travel infrastructure across East Dunbartonshire. Several respondents mentioned not feeling safe enough to cycle on local roads, and wished to see the development of separate cycle lanes or improvement of off-road paths. It was noted by some that extension and connection of existing path and cycle lane networks would encourage more people to use active travel modes to access local shops and services or as part of their commute to work or study. Two of the comments provided detailed ideas on how the Bear's Way and other infrastructure around Bearsden could be enhanced in order to promote cycling and walking as alternatives to car use.

In addition to the comments encouraging active travel investment, two of the responses cautioned against assuming that the recent increases in walking and cycling, especially during lockdown, will be an enduring trend. These respondents were concerned that too much specific focus on active travel could negatively impact people who rely on cars for mobility by reducing parking spaces and worsening congestion. One of the comments also noted that the pandemic has led to a shift away from public transport use, with more people choosing to use private vehicles to lower the risk of transition – if this is to become a trend, then short-term action will be required to deal with an increase in car numbers in town centres.

Response: In March 2020, the Council approved the Local Transport Strategy 2020-2025 which includes objectives for more journeys to be made by sustainable modes, reducing inequalities, reducing the level of emissions, facilitating sustainable economic growth, improving health by increasing the levels of walking and cycling and improving safety for all modes. To help achieve these objectives, several actions were carried forward from the Active

Travel Strategy 2015-2020 for delivery. In addition, the Council committed to producing a new Active Travel Strategy that will require the Council to deliver an ambitious approach, committing to delivering safe and accessible walking and cycling connections to town centres, areas of employment and public transport links, as well as projects to facilitate behaviour change. This work will involve collaboration with local communities and stakeholders to build on the increase in walking and cycling levels recorded across East Dunbartonshire in 2020.

Further information on the Local Transport Strategy 2020-2025 can be found on the Council's website: [Visit the Local Transport Strategy page](#).

7.6 Public Transport

Number of comments: 9 of the comments received mention public transport (all of these were from East Dunbartonshire residents, one of whom also owns/manages a local business)

Summary: The majority (8) of the comments which mention public transport state that there should be more investment in maintaining and improving public transport provision. Suggestions include: more frequent bus services to and from Glasgow City centre at peak commute times; either increased parking at train stations or shuttle bus services linking them to residential areas, town centres and commercial centres (such as Strathkelvin Retail Park); opening a new railway station at Woodilee to compensate for the lack of parking at Lenzie; taking better advantage of rail links to Glasgow and Edinburgh to attract visitors to local town centres (e.g. Bishopbriggs).

One of the respondents noted (in relation to Action 4.4 in the Economic Recovery Plan) that while investment in making town centres more accessible via public transport is a positive step, action is also needed to ensure that the shift away from public transport use as a result of the pandemic does not mean increased congestion from private car use in town centres in the meantime. This is an issue which will need to be considered in relation to new developments (e.g. Westerhill), which are specifically designed to be connected to local sectors via bus routes.

Response: Throughout the pandemic, the Council has been working in collaboration with other local authorities and transport providers across the Glasgow City Region as part of Transport Scotland's Transport Transition Planning. Public transport has been a key area of focus and the Council was successful in receiving funds from Transport Scotland's Bus Priority Rapid Deployment Fund for projects in Bishopbriggs designed to improve the reliability of bus services on the A803. The Council will continue to work with key partners including SPT, ScotRail and bus operators to monitor use and demand on the public transport network while restrictions remain in place and to consider how best to respond and encourage people back onto public transport once it is considered practical and reasonable to do so by the Scottish Government. This work is in addition to actions already approved and committed to within the Local Transport Strategy 2020-2025.

Further information on the Local Transport Strategy 2020-2025 can be found on the Council's website: [Visit the Local Transport Strategy Page](#).

7.7 Parking Charges

Number of comments: 58 of the comments mentioned parking charges, particularly in town centres. All but 1 of the respondents who mentioned this were East Dunbartonshire residents, and 5 of them were residents who also owned/managed local businesses.

Summary: The majority of comments on this subject suggested that some variation of a free-parking window should be reintroduced in town centre car parks where pay and display is currently in operation. Some of the responses proposed that this could be a temporary measure until all restrictions are eased (such as was implemented during the lockdown in March 2020), and one person suggested that town centres should have regular markets, with free parking on market days. Respondents felt that removing parking charges would encourage more people to shop locally, and might therefore help businesses to recover from the effects of the pandemic.

Several people noted that the parking restrictions deter them from using the town centre at present, encouraging them to shop online or travel to shopping centres or supermarkets instead. It was also noted in some responses that the prospect of paying for parking made them less likely to use the town centre for quicker errands, such as visiting the bank or post office, as they did not feel it was worth extra payment or inconvenience. Two of the comments also raised the issue of being unable to pay for parking by card at present, especially since most people stopped carrying cash during the pandemic.

There were three comments which stated that the parking charges have encouraged more people to park in supermarket car parks, limiting the number of available spaces for customers.

Response: Responses received through this consultation were similar to comments received through past consultations held as part of developing the Local Transport Strategy 2020-2025. The Local Transport Strategy committed to undertake further work on parking as a result of significant consultation responses across a number of issues related to parking. This work has been considered as part of developing a Parking Management Plan for East Dunbartonshire. Based on the comments regarding parking charges and their potential implications for town centre footfall, analysis was undertaken for Bearsden, Kirkintilloch and Milngavie town centres. Bishopbriggs did not have any car parks in the Pay & Display scheme during the period of time the data was analysed.

Parking charges were introduced in seven town centre car parks across East Dunbartonshire in July 2016. The seven car parks were located in Bearsden (Roman Road), Kirkintilloch (Barleybank and William Patrick Library) and Milngavie (Douglas Street, Mugdock Road, Stewart Street (North), and Woodburn Way). The first iteration of the scheme, referred to as Phase 1, was in place from July 2016 to May 2018 and permitted two free hours of parking Monday to Friday (9am-5.30pm) with charges in place for longer stays. Phase 2 is the current iteration of the scheme, which came into operation from June 2018. Phase 2 introduced a charge of £1 for the first two hours of parking Monday to Saturday (9am-5.30pm) with increased charges for longer stays.

The recorded use of all town centre car parks involved in the scheme reduced in Phase 2, compared to Phase 1. The Council has automatic footfall counters in each town centre, which were used to determine how footfall changed as the Pay & Display Phases were implemented. However, a counting error was

observed in the counter located in Bearsden from July 2018 onwards, therefore this analysis focuses on Kirkintilloch and Milngavie town centres. It can be observed that other than a small reduction in Milngavie following the implementation of Phase 1, footfall has remained steady and increased in both town centres following the implementation of Phase 2. This analysis does not suggest that Phase 2 was the sole reason for this increase in footfall but illustrates that footfall has sustained. Correlation analysis was undertaken using monthly figures of car park use and footfall in both town centres. There was no statistically significant correlation between the use of the Pay & Display car parks and town centre footfall in either Kirkintilloch or Milngavie.

This analysis therefore provides clarity that the parking charges are not contributing to a reduction in town centre footfall in Kirkintilloch and Milngavie. Overall, despite a reduction in recorded use across all seven town centre Pay & Display car parks from Phase 2 compared to Phase 1, the generated income of the tickets purchased at these car parks increased significantly which helped improve the annual balance and operation of the Council's Decriminalised Parking Enforcement while improving the availability of parking spaces in these car parks. This increased availability can help provide access to local businesses for car users.

7.8 Electric Vehicles

Number of comments: Electric vehicle infrastructure/charging was mentioned in 5 of the comments received (all were from residents, one of whom also owns/manages a business). The respondents were from Bearsden, Kirkintilloch, Lenzie and Waterside.

Summary: The need for infrastructure to support electric vehicle use, particularly charging points was raised. Further to the survey question about whether respondents would be likely to switch to an electric vehicle in the next 5 years, commenters also noted that both initial and running costs may be a barrier to electric vehicle ownership, and that road safety may be a concern for people wishing to use electric bikes or scooters.

Response: The Local Transport Strategy 2020-2025 includes an action for the Council to increase the availability of electric vehicle charging infrastructure. To assist with delivering this action, the Council produced a booklet titled "Electric Vehicles in East Dunbartonshire" and published this online in 2020 to inform local residents about plans to grow the public charging network across the authority. The booklet also includes information about the benefits of electric vehicles and helpful information on support available to people and businesses who are looking to make the switch. The booklet can be accessed at the following webpage: [Visit the Electric Vehicles page on the Council website](#).

7.9 Environment

Number of comments: 4 of the comments received were directly related to environmental issues. Three of these were from East Dunbartonshire residents, one of whom was also a local business owner/manager. One comment was from someone who currently lives outwith East Dunbartonshire but is planning to move to the area.

Summary: One comment was from a local businesses owner, who expressed interest in collaborating with other businesses and local partners through the economic recovery process, including working to make their business more circular and sustainable.

The remaining three comments in this category related to the specific environmental and health benefits of improving active travel infrastructure, such as reducing air pollution, providing sustainable tourism, and increasing footfall and spend in local shops and businesses. Two of the comments, from residents in Bearsden, included detailed ideas for improving local cycle routes.

Response: Section 4 of the Economic Recovery Plan ('Environment') includes actions focused on achieving a green recovery, including enhancing sustainable transport infrastructure, encouraging economic development within sustainable sectors and helping local businesses to build resilience through use of new technology and ways of working. Comments will be taken forward through work on a Circular Economy Strategy and Active Travel Strategy.

7.10 Council Services and Priorities

Number of comments: 20 of the comments discussed issues relating to council services and priorities. All of these were from local residents, 6 of whom also owned or managed businesses in East Dunbartonshire.

Summary: Some of the responses voiced concerns over the continuity and provision of Council services during lockdown, with particular complaints about: bin collections; street lighting; maintenance of pavements, roads and public spaces. Three of these comments gave the view that other Councils had been more successful at continuing to provide services during the pandemic.

There were some comments about the closure of community facilities during lockdown, with one respondent saying that they had felt isolated as a result of no longer being able to take part in indoor leisure pursuits, and another suggesting that school football pitches should be available for children to use at weekends. There was also a comment requesting the library in Bearsden to be reopened.

Three comments questioned the working hours of Council staff during lockdown, with one suggesting staff should have been furloughed. Another response suggested that the Council should review whether savings have been generated from staff working from home, and look into implementing more home-working in future in order to reinvest these savings into economic recovery. There was also a comment suggesting raising local revenues either through higher Council taxes for larger residential properties or more traffic wardens in town centres to prevent parking on pavements.

With regards to the Council's priorities going forward, two respondents suggested that the Council should stop focusing on 'grand ideas' such as regeneration projects and focus on service delivery, another respondent said that there should be fewer barriers to and more encouragement of local art, culture and sport, and a third said that economic recovery should be on the agenda at every council meeting to ensure that progress is made towards the actions in the Economic Recovery Plan.

Response: The Council's response to COVID-19 and the range activities the Council is carrying out, as well as general service delivery updates, is set out here: [Visit the COVID-19 page on the Council website](#). The comments above have been passed on to relevant Services. The Economic Recovery Plan will be reported to Councillors when updated and will include a range of measures to support the local economy. Regeneration projects form an important part of this Plan and ensure local investment and improvements for communities.

7.11 Engagement

Number of comments: 7 comments included discussion of engagement: between the Council and the local community, and with wider organisations. All of the comments which mentioned these topics were from East Dunbartonshire residents, the majority (5) of whom also owned or managed local businesses.

Summary: 3 of the comments highlighted the need for the Council to seek input from and build relationships with local businesses and communities in order to learn more about what support is needed. One comment also mentioned the need for data sharing and openness between the Council and other public organisations, such as DWP, the NHS, SDS, training providers and the voluntary sector.

One of the comments was from a business owner, who noted that they would be keen to work in partnership within a local group focused on economic recovery.

There were also 2 comments from people who felt that they had been excluded from government support throughout the pandemic.

Response: The Council will continue to engage with local businesses, communities and partner organisations throughout the delivery of the actions in the Economic Recovery Plan and the production of policy work and new strategies (such as the Circular Economy Strategy, the Active Travel Strategy and the Climate Action Plan). The Economic Recovery Plan also contains an action (1.4) to investigate how the Council can extend financial and other support to more local businesses who may not have qualified for the government's COVID-19 grant programmes.

7.12 COVID-19 Safety and Regulations

Number of comments: 12 comments included discussion of COVID-19 safety measures and the regulations imposed, including lockdown. 11 of these comments were from East Dunbartonshire residents, 3 of whom also owned or managed a local business. 1 comment was from someone who works in the area but does not reside in East Dunbartonshire.

Summary: 1 of the comments from a local business noted that the pandemic has increased the costs of running a business due to the additional cleaning and hygiene required, and that a member of staff had left the business as they did not feel safe travelling to work.

4 of the comments expressed frustration with the lockdown restrictions and concern about the long-term impact on businesses, the economy and social interaction. It was stated or otherwise implied in these comments that the respondents felt that 'living with the virus' would be preferable to living under continued restrictions.

6 comments included suggestions about what measures respondents would like to see put in place, or strengthened, in order to increase COVID-19 safety: including queuing space for shops, reporting of local outbreaks, stricter social distancing in supermarkets, signage and reduced school hours. One respondent also expressed concern that travel and household visiting rules are not being adhered to.

Response: The regulations in place for COVID-19 safety have been determined by the Scottish Government, and can be found online: [Visit the COVID-19 page on the Council website](#). The Council acknowledges that the past year, and particularly lockdown, has been a difficult time for local communities and that people have found different aspects of the lifestyle changes caused by the pandemic to be challenging: for example, some people may be more anxious about reducing the risk of infection, while others have become frustrated about the limitations placed on their daily lives. A range of support for people who may be struggling to cope during the pandemic is available on the coronavirus page of the East Dunbartonshire Council website: [Visit the COVID-19 page on the Council website](#).

7.13 Internet Provision

Number of comments: 2 of the comments received mentioned internet provision (1 from a resident, and 1 from a business owner/manager who was also a resident).

Summary: A resident of Lenzie said that local internet speeds need to improve, and a comment from a business owner in Bearsden also stated that broadband is limited, particularly in Milngavie town centre, which is important for businesses (it was also noted that this is an issue which has been discussed with Milngavie BID previously).

Response: The Scottish Government is committed to the delivery of 100% superfast (over 30 Megabits per second) broadband coverage across Scotland through the Reaching 100% (R100) Broadband programme. Engineers are working to deliver half of the target premises in both the central and south contracts by the end of 2021, with the majority of the build completed by the end of 2023. Anyone who will not be able to access superfast broadband through the R100 programme by the end of 2021 – regardless of whether or not R100 will ultimately reach them – will be eligible for a national demand-led voucher scheme. Digital Scotland have provided an online checker ([visit the Scotland Superfast website](#)) that will allow any property owner and/or tenant to enter their details and confirm:

- a) Whether or not they already have the ability to order a superfast service;
- b) Whether or not they will receive a connection through the R100 contracts and, if so, when;
- c) Whether or not they will receive a connection from a commercial supplier and, if so, when (where possible); or
- d) Whether or not they are eligible for a voucher through the SBVS and, if so, which voucher they will be eligible for.

7.14 General

Number of comments: 5 of the comments received made general points related to the design of the survey, the information provided about East Dunbartonshire's Economic Recovery Plan, and the design of the Plan itself. All of these were from East Dunbartonshire residents, one of whom was also a local business owner.

Summary: 3 respondents indicated that they had not seen or been made aware of the Economic Recovery Plan.

One respondent gave feedback on the wording of the travel questions included in the survey itself, which they felt could have been clearer.

There was also a comment that the timescales used within the Economic Recovery Plan (ongoing, short-term and long-term) may be too vague. The respondent wished to see more specific timescales against each project in the plan to notify residents of when they are likely to see them progressed.

Response: The comments of the design of the survey and visibility of the Economic Recovery plan, which was published on the consultation webpage, have been taken note of as points for improvement in future consultations.

The purpose of the classification of the actions in the Economic Recovery Plan as either 'ongoing' 'short-term' or 'long-term' is to indicate the difference between actions which are already happening, those which are immediate priorities but which will be time-limited, and those which will be more complicated and wider-ranging projects planned for the future. Action plan timescales would normally include more specific delivery dates, but COVID-19 has complicated things – the actions in the Economic Recovery Plan need to be flexible enough to allow different actions to be prioritised based on the wider context of the restrictions in place at any given time, which can change in a matter of weeks as transmission rates go up or down. Additionally, some of the actions are dependent on external resources and funding (such as the furlough scheme) which may come to an end or be extended based on the national response to the pandemic.

8. Conclusions

Key Findings of the Survey

Business Continuity

The pandemic had a clear impact on trade and turnover for East Dunbartonshire businesses, with 90% reporting lower customer numbers than normal and around half (51%) ceasing all trade during lockdown, although most businesses (85%) indicated that they were trading at the time of the survey. All but one of the 7 businesses which said they were not trading at the time of the survey were in the privately-owned, micro-sized (0-9 employees) business category. This was, however, the largest category overall (74%), and the vast majority of businesses of this size (33 out of 39) were still trading.

The responses from businesses gave an impression of uncertainty about the future. When asked what they felt to be the risk that they will cease trading within the next 6 months: 23% said there was a severe risk; 24% said there was a moderate risk; 30% said there was a low risk; and 6% said there was no risk. When asked about the likelihood that their business would grow in the next 6 months: 2% of respondents said it was very likely; 5% said likely; 32% said unlikely and 38% said very unlikely. Businesses which ceased all trade during lockdown seemed to be less confident about the future of their business than those who continued to trade in some capacity – 37% said that there was a severe risk of them ceasing to trade within the next six months.

There seemed to be a reasonably high uptake of financial support – most (64%) of the businesses surveyed had applied for at least one COVID-19 government support grant scheme, and 82% of these had had at least one successful application. 38% of businesses had applied for some other form of financial support, such as a loan. 25% of respondents (13 businesses) had received no financial help.

One of the written comments received in response to the final survey question suggested that it would be good from businesses to have access to support aimed at helping them to employ and train new staff – perhaps local people who have been made redundant. There was also a comment from someone who had relied upon self-employment through lockdown and had benefited from the support and advice available to small businesses through Business Gateway. There were two comments from people who felt that they had been excluded from business support throughout the pandemic, due to not meeting criteria for the grants offered. One of these was a company which had relied on contract work, and had been unable to operate during lockdown.

Employment

A lot of businesses reported impacts on their employees. 43% of the businesses responding to the survey had furloughed employees under the government's Job Protection Scheme. 5% of respondents had made employees redundant as a result of the pandemic. 40% of businesses said that they had implemented different or more flexible working arrangements for employees due to the pandemic. 12 businesses had 100% of their employees working from home during lockdown and 6 said this would continue to be the case in future.

When lockdown was announced, 182 out of the 227 East Dunbartonshire residents surveyed (80%) were in employment and 89% said that the pandemic had affected their employment. The most commonly-reported way in which respondents' employment had been affected was that they had been working from home (43 people). 21 had been furloughed; 25 had been working reduced hours; 16 had been working increased hours; 11 had changed job roles; 6 had taken time off work to self-isolate; 8 had taken unpaid leave; 3 had been made redundant.

Of the 179 East Dunbartonshire residents who provided their minimum required working hours, the majority (56%) were contracted to work 35 or more hours per week. The pandemic seemed to have a greater impact on employment for people who worked a minimum of 25 hours or less per week. The majority of respondents who were contracted to work a minimum of 25 or less hours per week said that the pandemic had affected their employment while over half of the people who were contracted to work more than 25 hours per week said that their employment had not been affected by the pandemic.

Self-employed people appear to have experienced a greater impact on their employment than other employment groups – 88% of the 43 self-employed East Dunbartonshire residents who participated in the survey said that their employment was affected by COVID-19.

Employment issues were raised in some of the written comments received, in particular: the availability of local job opportunities, support for people who have been made redundant, guidance for businesses looking to hire, and work spaces for homeworkers.

Lifestyle and Local Spending

Most of the residents surveyed said that their financial situation had either stayed the same (45%) or worsened (36%) as a result of the pandemic. The majority of respondents (60%) also said they were less likely to make large purchases or investments, such as cars or houses and 93% of residents responding to the survey said that their holiday plans had changed due to the pandemic.

All of the residents surveyed said that the frequency of their use of local businesses and facilities has changed since the pandemic and 75% of respondents said their use of the internet for shopping and other purchases had increased. The use of local businesses largely reflect the effects of lockdown/closures (i.e. indoor leisure facilities, services such as barber shops and salons, and sit-in hospitality businesses were used less frequently, while grocery stores and active travel routes were used more). When asked for the reasons for this change in frequency, the majority of respondents identified with the statement that 'It was more convenient to use local businesses due to lockdown and travel restrictions'. 106 residents indicated that they plan to shop local in future to support local businesses.

Most of the non-residents who work in East Dunbartonshire stated that the frequency of their use of local businesses and facilities has reduced as a result of the pandemic. This result is as expected, due to travel restrictions which prohibited movement between local authority areas during lockdown, and the impact of homeworking on commuter spending and use of local services.

Some of the written responses to the final survey question noted that people have been using their town centres less as the types of businesses and services offered do not meet their daily needs or are lacking in variety and uniqueness. There was a desire to see a larger number of small, independent businesses being encouraged to the high-street, rather than multinationals. One such comment also noted that the pandemic and associated travel restrictions have made people more attentive to changes happening in their local area, which could present the opportunity for the right kinds of new businesses to build a local customer base.

Suggestions for how the recovery of town centres could be boosted included: engaging with landlords with empty units to find new uses quickly, and considering alternative uses such as small business hubs, home-working spaces or the use of vacant spaces by community groups; encouraging street entertainment and community events in town centres, which could include regular markets for local businesses to sell food and crafts; benchmarking with best practice in other council areas such as Renfrewshire to relaunch town centres and attract more investors and visitors, and examining what has made some town centres (e.g. Milngavie) more resilient than others within East Dunbartonshire.

Travel Behaviours

For the specific types of journey listed (commuting to their place of work or study; accessing shops, services and town centres; travelling for leisure and visiting people), the respondents predicted that they will choose to use the car less (whether as passenger or driver) in the future than they did before lockdown. This could be as a result of a corresponding predicted increase in the use of bicycles for all three journey types, and an increase in working from home and shopping online. The survey also asked how they expect to travel in the future in general, considering the potential long term effects of the pandemic on society and the climate emergency, however the results suggest that some people have answered in terms of how they will travel differently compared to their pre-COVID 'normal' and others have replied based on during COVID. The majority of respondents said they will travel more (41%), or the same (44%) as they did before the pandemic. Nearly half of the respondents (49%) said they expect to walk or cycle less in the future, which may be because active travel during lockdown was much higher than usual for a lot of people. 44% of respondents said they aim to use public transport more in future, which again may be as a result of comparison with the lower use of public transport during lockdown. Most people (48%) said they would drive just as much in the future as they do now; 25% said they would drive more, and 21% said they would drive less. The majority of respondents (57%) said they would consider switching to an electric vehicle in the next five years.

The chosen modes of transport for commuting were very different for non-residents during lockdown compared to the travel modes used prior to the COVID-19 crisis. The main change is in the number of people working from home, which the majority of respondents also expected to do more frequently in future than they did before lockdown.

Several of the written comments received from respondents to the survey suggested that there should be more investment in public transport and active travel infrastructure across East Dunbartonshire, such as cycle lanes or improvement and extension of off-road path networks. However, a few respondents were concerned that the recent increases in walking and cycling may not be an enduring trend, and that the shift away from the use of public

transport as a result of the pandemic may increase private vehicle use and congestion in town centres. The need for infrastructure to support electric vehicle use, particularly charging points, was raised and commenters also noted that both initial and running costs may be a barrier to electric vehicle ownership, and that road safety may be a concern for people wishing to use electric bikes or scooters.

Concerns about the Pandemic's Impact on Finances and the Local Economy

The majority of responses on behalf of businesses showed a high level of concern about the effects of the pandemic both upon their own enterprises and the wider economy – 56% said they were 'Very worried' about the continued impact of COVID-19 on their business finances, and 79% said they were 'Very worried' about the impact on the local economy.

More of the residents involved in the survey said they were 'Very worried' about the continued impact of the pandemic on the local economy (75%) than on their personal finances (29%). 46% of respondents said they were 'A little worried' about how the pandemic may impact their personal finances.

There was some variation in respondents' experiences of the pandemic depending on where in East Dunbartonshire they live. A larger percentage of the respondents from Bearsden who stated that the pandemic had not impacted their employment (63%) and that there had been no change in their personal finances (51%) as a result of the pandemic (compared to the responses from the other towns and villages in East Dunbartonshire). Kirkintilloch residents were the only location group where the majority of respondents said that they were 'very worried' about both the continued impact of the pandemic on their personal finances (48%) and on the local economy (81%).

Fewer East Dunbartonshire residents in the over 65 age group seem to have experienced an impact on their employment or personal finances as a result of the pandemic. 75% of over 65s said that their employment had not been impacted by the pandemic and 55% of people in this age group said that the pandemic had no impact on their personal finances. Over 65s were also less likely to say that they were 'very worried' (3%) about the continued impact of the pandemic on their personal finances than the other age groups, although the majority (74%) still said that they were 'very worried' about the impact on the local economy. This may be due to people in this age group being more likely to be retired and therefore less likely to be concerned about their employment or seeking work.

Most of the respondents from the non-resident/employee group said they were 'A little worried' (78%) about the continued impact of the pandemic on their personal finances and 'Very worried' (89%) about the impact on the local economy.

Overall, there seemed to be a trend across all respondent groups (businesses, local residents and non-residents) of higher levels of concern about the economy at large than for individuals' current financial situation. This does not imply that those who responded to the survey are not concerned for their own livelihoods – rather, it shows that even those who had not experienced personal financial hardship at the time of the survey still generally felt worried about how the pandemic will continue to affect the economy over the longer term.

Evaluation of Methodology and Limitations

Given the short consultation period of one month, and the limitations to means of publicising and conducting the survey due to COVID-19 safety regulations, the number of responses was encouraging. As has been noted earlier in this Report of Consultation, the survey was only available for a limited time so as to ensure that all responses were received during the same conditions with regards to the COVID-19 regulations in place.

Some feedback was received in the first few days of the survey going live that respondents were having technical difficulties in moving through the questions. Upon investigation, the survey was working correctly, but the design did make it difficult to ensure that all questions had been answered when completing it on a smaller device (such as a smart phone). General comments about the design of the survey and the visibility of the Economic Recovery Plan on the consultation webpage were also received (see 7.14) and this feedback will be used to consider how to make future consultations clearer and more user-friendly.

It should be noted that there were very few (9) responses to the survey from people who work, but do not live, in East Dunbartonshire. This is significant as previous research has shown that a large number of the people who are employed in the area are not local residents – therefore, job losses as a result of the pandemic's impacts on local businesses may not accurately be reflected in local employment figures or the experiences of local residents, who may be employed in other local authorities within the wider Glasgow City Region.

On the whole, despite the limitations of the survey described above, the responses received on behalf of businesses appear to be fairly representative of the local business base – mainly composed of small and micro enterprises, across a wide variety of industrial sectors. Responses were received from residents across eleven of East Dunbartonshire's towns and villages, although Bearsden was slightly overrepresented, with 42% of all responses. 56% of responses came from residents in the 25-49 age group, i.e. those most likely to be in employment, and there may therefore be some underrepresentation in the other age groups, particularly ages 16-24 which accounted for only 1% of responses. Responses were received from residents across a wide range of employment sectors, although 21% of respondents left the job sector question blank. It could be the case that the industrial sector categories used were not easily applied to respondents' jobs – more straightforward ways of gathering this information will be investigated for future consultation work.

Next Steps

The results of the survey will be used to update the East Dunbartonshire Economic Recovery Plan (ERP), which sets out actions to support the recovery of the local economy under 4 priority areas: Business; People; Community and Environment.

The actions included in the August 2020 version of the ERP seem to align with the data collected in the survey and the issues highlighted in the written responses. Some central themes which should be taken forward as priorities are:

Business Support

The survey demonstrated that there are still local businesses which have not received support, and that not all businesses have been able to diversify in ways which allow them to continue trading – how can we widen the support available to businesses?

Employment

Unemployment is rising as a result of the pandemic, and most of those who are still in employment have experienced changes to their working lives - how can we support jobseekers and those whose work patterns have changed?

Town Centres

The pandemic has been challenging for our town centres, not only for businesses located there, but for the people in our local communities who rely on them – how can we rebuild our town centres into vibrant spaces for our local communities?

Transport

The pandemic saw an increase in the use of active travel, but also a steep decline in the use of public transport – how do we address the modal shift in a way which is safe and inclusive, while also encouraging people to travel sustainably?

East Dunbartonshire Economic Recovery Plan Report of Consultation

March 2021

Other formats

This document can be provided in large print, Braille or in audio format and can be translated into other community languages. Please contact the Council's Communications & Engagement Team at:

East Dunbartonshire Council, 12 Strathkelvin Place, Southbank,
Kirkintilloch G66 1TJ Tel: 0300 123 4510

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