

## Governor Phil Murphy

# Survey Finds Business Owners Eager to Reopen, but Concerned about Consumer Confidence

06/11/2020

**TRENTON** – The Administration of Governor Phil Murphy today released results of an online survey conducted in conjunction with Rutgers University's Heldrich Center for Workforce Development earlier this month that drew responses from nearly 4,000 businesses and non-profits across the state.

Results of the survey demonstrate overwhelmingly that while the business and non-profit community is eager to get back to work, owners understand and take seriously the public health risks posed by COVID-19 and the responsibility to provide a safe experience for employees and customers. Many worry about the effect of a possible second wave of the virus.

“This survey verified much of what we anticipated as we began the process of restarting the economy,” **said Governor Phil Murphy**. “While business owners are eager to get back to work and get their operations back up and running, they remain concerned about consumer and employee confidence and are eager to avoid a second wave of this insidious virus.”

A majority of owners (51%) cited consumer confidence as the most pressing issue, while 13% cited access to personal protective equipment as their biggest concern. Approximately one in 10 said employee confidence would present the biggest challenge to reopening while four in 10 listed employee confidence as one obstacle but not the most pressing one.

Respondents want state government help to reopen safely, particularly guidance on reopening restrictions (60%), guidance on safety measures to keep employees and customers safe (49%), and help in acquiring disinfecting and cleaning products (42%). The majority of respondents (54%) will rely on state/local government and Department of Health guidelines—greater than those who will rely on Centers for Disease Control (23%) and industry and association guidelines (14%).

Customer-facing businesses report that limiting occupancy or reducing capacity of their facilities will be the most difficult challenge.

Other findings from the survey include:

- A large majority of business and non-profit owners plan to change their business operations to achieve social distancing, including seven in 10 (70%) who indicate they will re-configure their workplace footprint.
- Some businesses (35%) have expanded remote work options in response to the pandemic or are considering it in order to reduce the number of employees at work.

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- Eight in 10 (79%) businesses in customer-facing industries will require employees to wear facemasks, whether or not the government requires them, and will also provide employees with facemasks to wear while in the workplace (79%).
- Seven in 10 (72%) customer-facing businesses will require customers/visitors to wear facemasks, whether or not the government requires them, and four in 10 (40%) of businesses plan to provide them.
- Seven in 10 (68%) are concerned with their ability to pay their rent, mortgage, or utilities. Another five in 10 say paying their employees (48%) and paying taxes (47%) are major challenges that their organizations are facing.

“As we make our way through the recovery of our economy, we continue to be mindful of the businesses we know are hurting,” **Governor Murphy said**. “As our numbers continue to move in the right direction, we will continue to restart our economy in phases while offering financial aid to as many businesses as possible. Together we will emerge from this unprecedented moment in history stronger and more resilient.”

The roughly 4,000 responses from business and non-profit owners or decision makers, collected between May 21st and June 3rd, mirror the New Jersey business community in size and industry composition. Most respondents have less than 10 employees, and most have been in operation for at least 10 years. Half of respondents are from woman- or minority-owned businesses. The survey was conducted in both English and Spanish.

Respondents are evenly distributed across North, Central, and South Jersey and businesses vary across New Jersey sectors. The survey included a non-probability, opt-in sample of respondents and was distributed via dozens of New Jersey industry groups, chambers of commerce, and non-profit organizations.

For the full survey results, please click here ([https://static.business.nj.gov/public/covid19/covid\\_business\\_survey\\_topline.pdf](https://static.business.nj.gov/public/covid19/covid_business_survey_topline.pdf)).

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