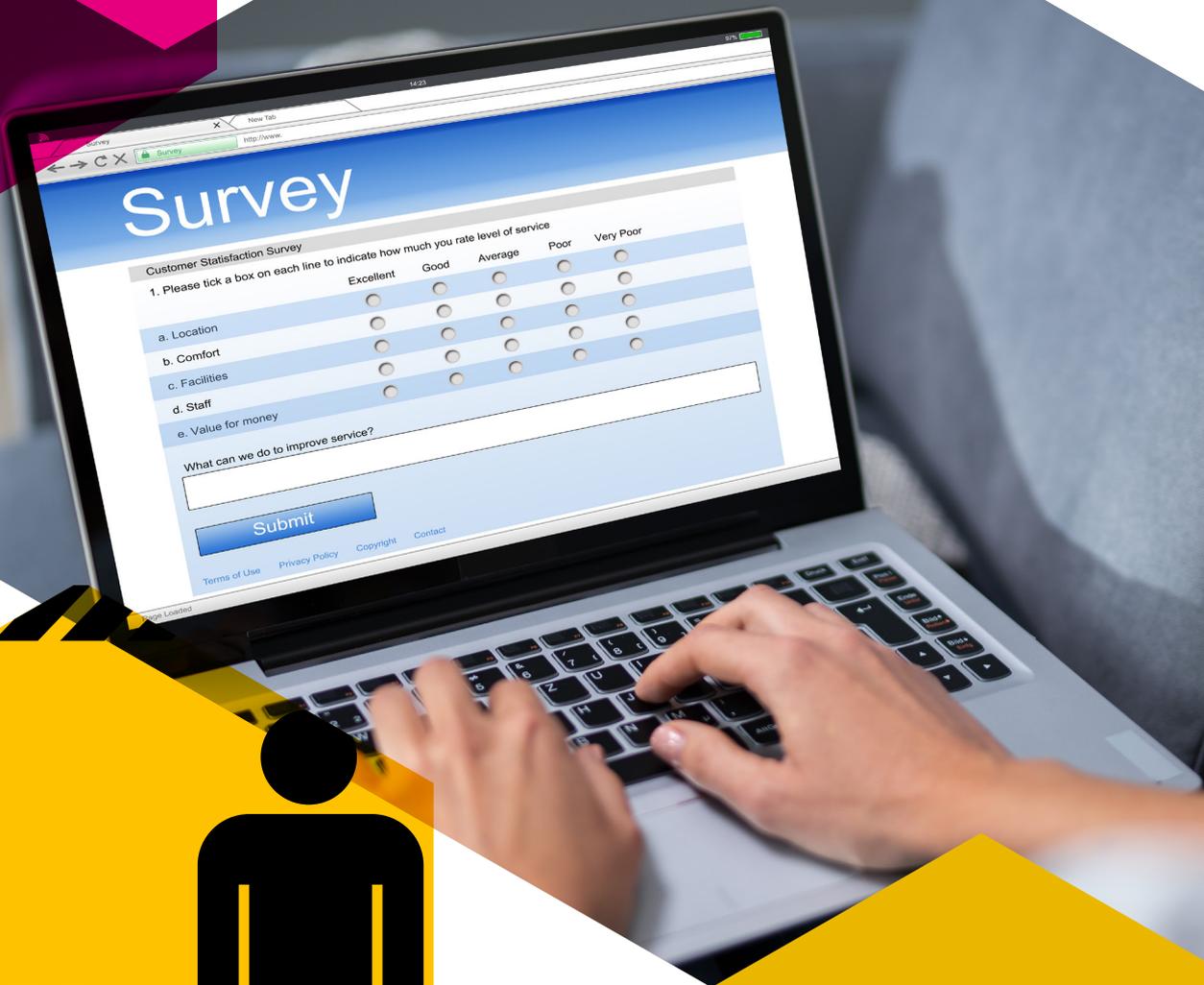




CITB
CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY
TRAINING BOARD NI



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**Results of Survey
into Impact of
COVID-19 on NI
Construction
Industry**

Results of Survey into Impact of Covid-19 on NI Construction Industry

Methodology

1. A short survey of 11 questions was developed and issued by CITB NI on 7th May 2020. The survey closed on 20th May 2020. The survey was endorsed by a number of the employer bodies represented on the Built Environment Sector Partnership. The survey was conducted using the online survey tool SurveyMonkey and a link to the survey was sent to all CITB NI registered employers with an e-mail address and promoted via CITB NI's website and social media channels. In addition, it was promoted to the members of a number of employer associations / federations.

Findings

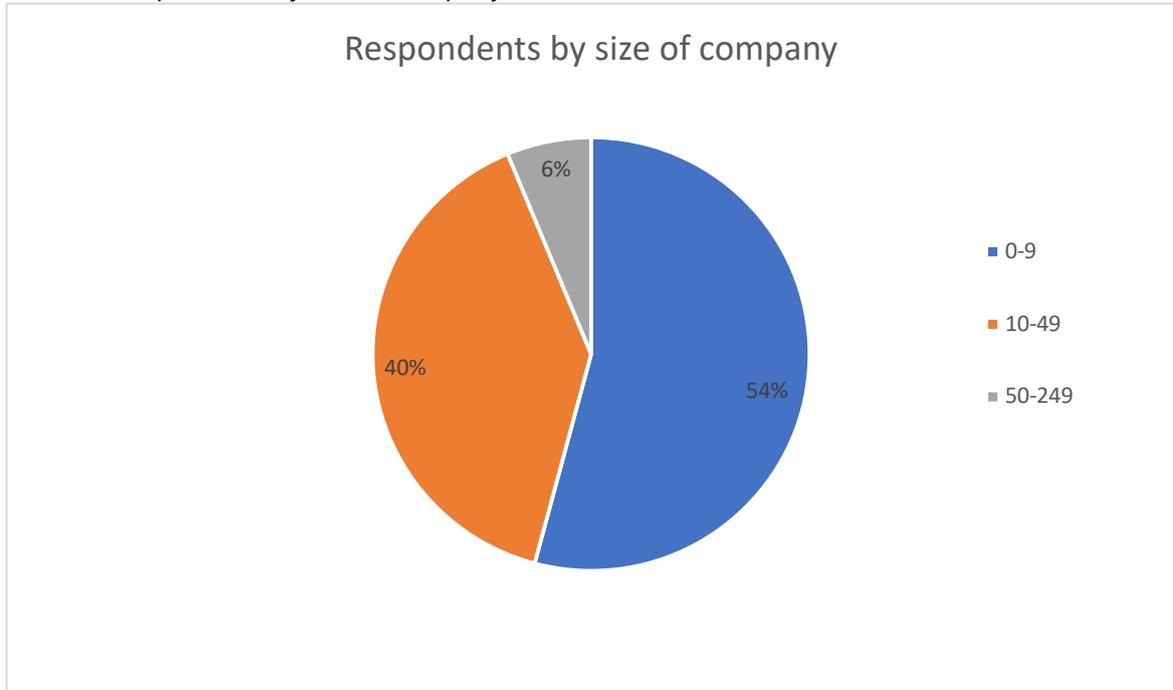
Summary of Findings

2. The key findings from the survey were:
 - Forty six of the 48 respondents (96%), either furloughed or made a percentage of their employees redundant, with one respondent choosing a mix of both options.
 - Only five respondents (10%) made redundancies.
 - Micro and SME companies were more likely to furlough a greater percentage (81-100%) of their staff in Northern Ireland.
 - Thirty five percent of respondents employ apprentices. A total of 59 apprentices were recorded amongst the 48 respondents.
 - The majority (59%) of companies with apprentices furloughed 81-100% of their apprentices, with a further 35% of companies furloughing 0-20% of apprentices.
 - The majority (71% of respondents) had between one and five sites operating in Northern Ireland before the Covid-19 lockdown.
 - The majority of respondents (28, or 58%) said that between 81% and 100% of their sites had closed. Open sites were generally for emergency work or were operating in a reduced format.
 - A third of respondents expect to open within 3-4 weeks of the survey while 13% each aimed to open within one and two weeks of the survey – depending on when they completed the survey this could mean that they would have already opened. A third said 'other' with the main feedback being that they were waiting on further guidance from Government.
 - Working remotely, health and safety and financial management were the top three skills / training needs identified by respondents (29%, 25% and 19% respectively).
 - Only 35% of respondents have tried online training and of these 54% rated it a 7 or higher on a scale where 0 = very ineffective and 10 = very effective.

Company Size

3. There were 48 responses to the survey. A breakdown of responses by employer size (specifically number of employees in Northern Ireland) shows that 54% of respondents came from small / micro businesses and 40% from businesses with between 10 and 49 employees. Only 6% of respondents had between 50 and 249 employees. No respondents had more than 250 employees.

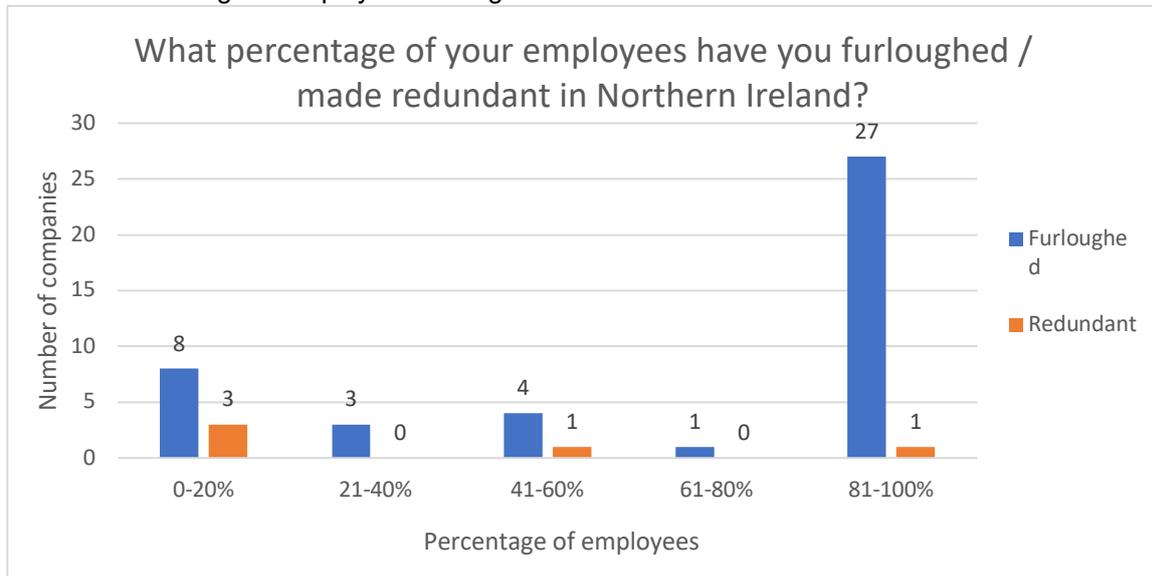
Chart 1: Respondents by size of company



Percentage of employees furloughed and made redundant

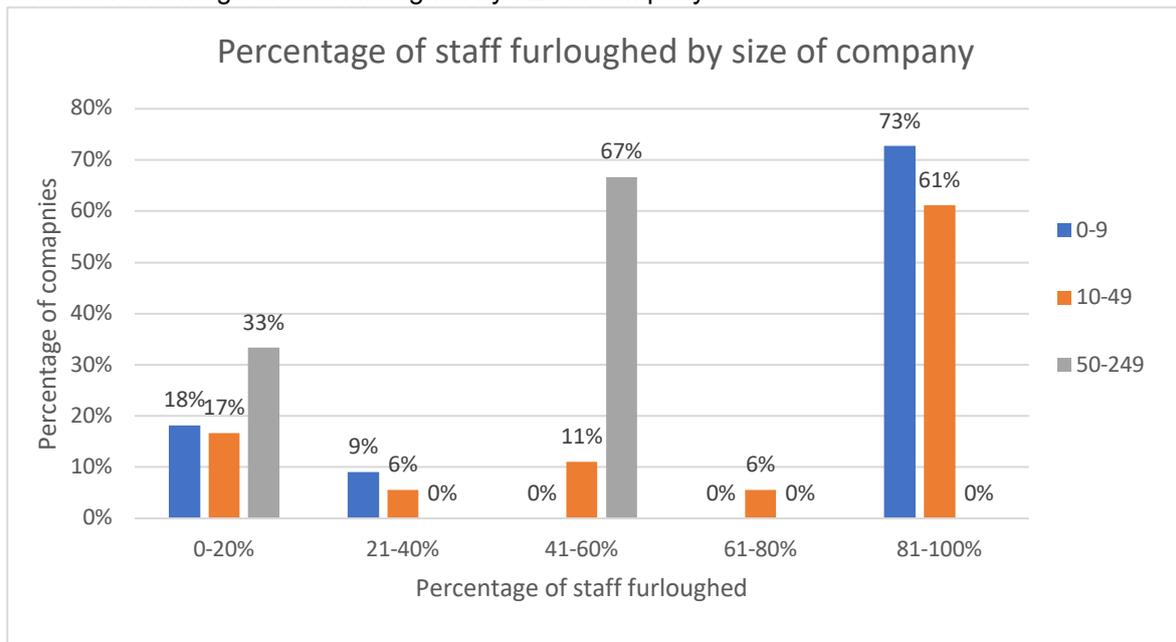
4. The chart below shows the number of respondents furloughing or making employees redundant. Forty six of the 48 respondents, either furloughed or made a percentage of their employees redundant, with one respondent choosing a mix of both options. The remaining two companies took neither option (*or potentially skipped this question as an option was not given to select state neither*). Most companies chose to furlough respondents, with only five making redundancies. The chart below shows the percentage of employees either furloughed or made redundant. As can be seen, 27 companies furloughed between 81% and 100% of employees. In terms of redundancies, three of the five companies who made redundancies, did so for up to 20% of their workforce.

Chart 2: Percentage of employees furloughed / made redundant



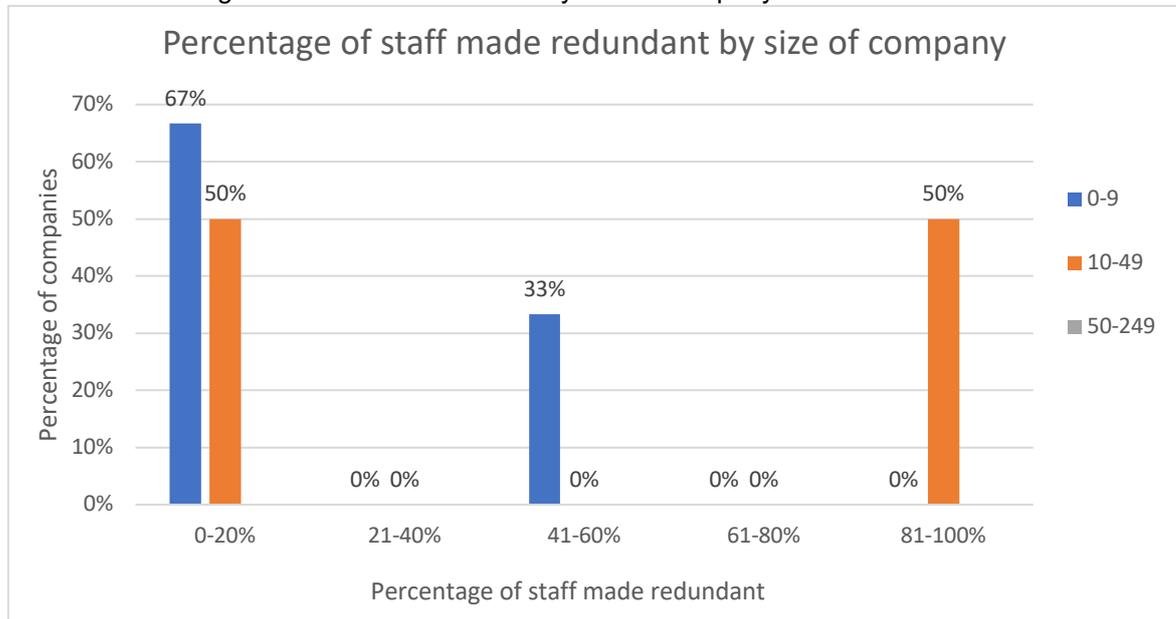
- Breaking the results down further, we can see that micro and SME companies were more likely to furlough a greater percentage (81-100%) of their staff in Northern Ireland (73% and 61% respectively). Medium sized companies were more likely to furlough around half their staff (67% of companies furloughed between 41-60% of staff in Northern Ireland).

Chart 3: Percentage of staff furloughed by size of company



- Looking at redundancies, none of the medium-sized companies (50-249 employees) who responded to the survey made staff redundant. Two thirds of micro businesses made up to 20% of their staff redundant with the remaining third making between 41-60% of staff redundant. Amongst slightly larger SMEs (10-49 employees) the split was 50% made 0-20% of staff redundant and 50% made 81-100% of staff redundant.

Chart 4: Percentage of staff made redundant by size of company



Apprentices

7. Sixty-five percent of respondents to the survey do not employ any apprentices in Northern Ireland. Twenty-one percent directly employ one apprentice and a further 13% employ between 2 and 10 apprentices (respondents were asked to only report apprentices they employ directly, i.e. not through the supply chain). One respondent employs 27 apprentices. A total of 59 apprentices were recorded amongst the 48 respondents.

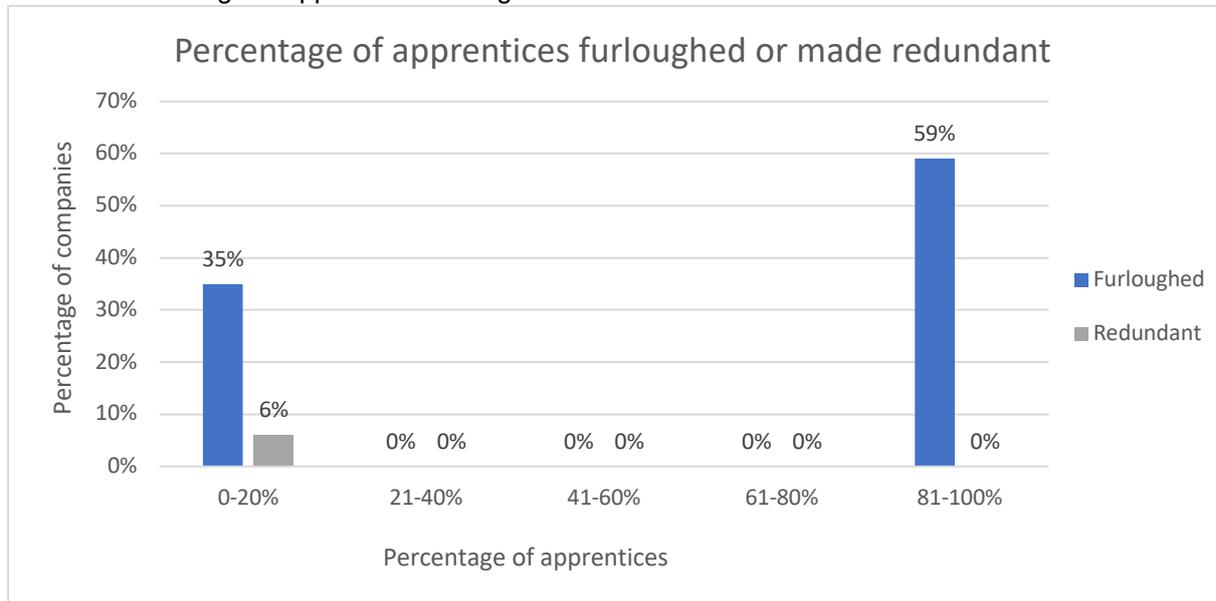
Table 1: Number of apprentices employed

Size of company	Total number of apprentices in sample
0-9	6 (10%)
10-49	13 (22%)
50-249	40 (68%)

Percentage of employees furloughed and made redundant

8. The majority (59%) of companies with apprentices furloughed 81-100% of their apprentices, with a further 35% of companies furloughing 0-20% of apprentices. Only 6% of companies with apprentices made any apprentices redundant and then only 0-20% of apprentices. This is a fairly positive outcome hopefully meaning that the majority of apprentices can resume their apprenticeship training at a later date.

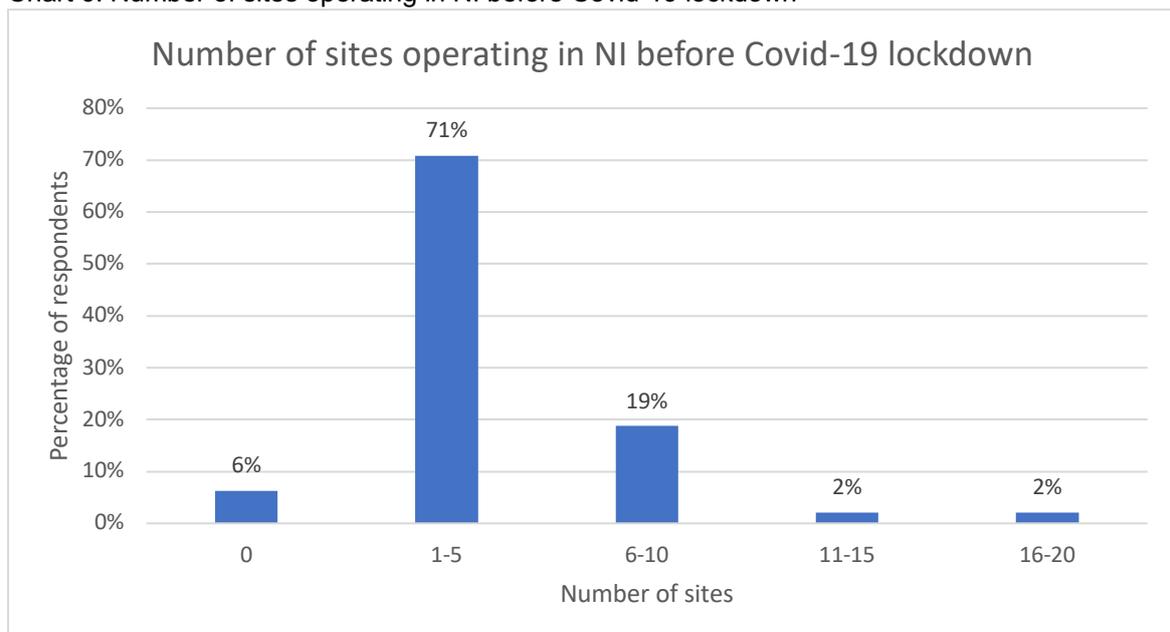
Chart 5: Percentage of apprentices furloughed or made redundant



Number of sites and if operational

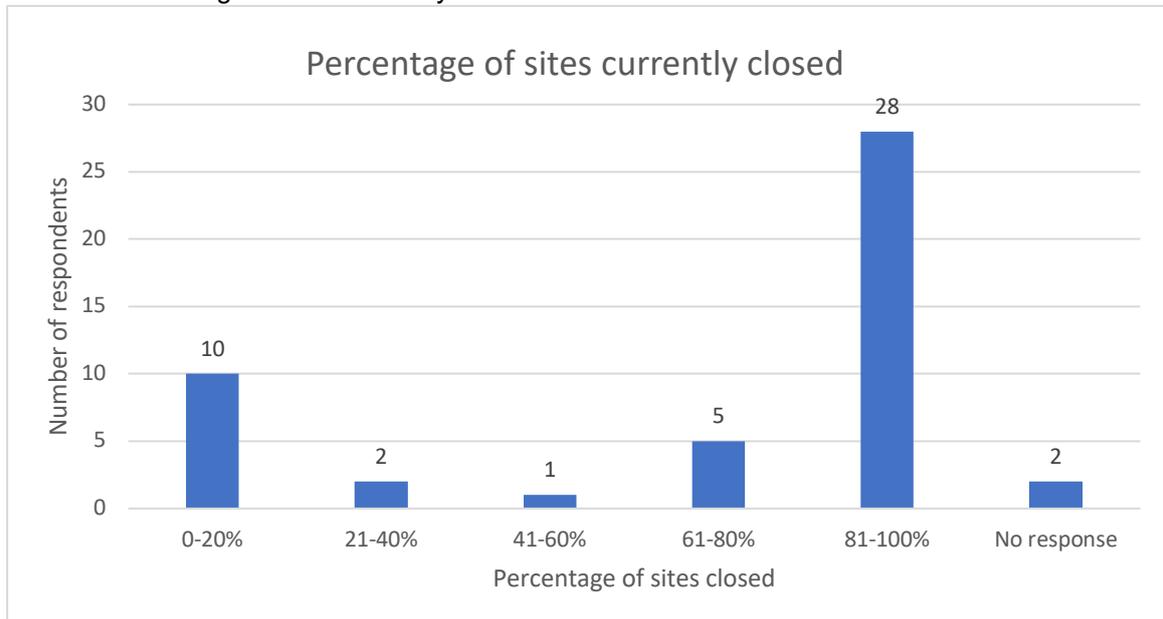
9. Respondents were asked how many sites they had operating in Northern Ireland and how many were currently open. The results are shown in the charts below. Unsurprisingly, given the size profile of respondents, the majority (71% of respondents) had between one and five sites operating in Northern Ireland before the Covid-19 lockdown.

Chart 6: Number of sites operating in NI before Covid-19 lockdown



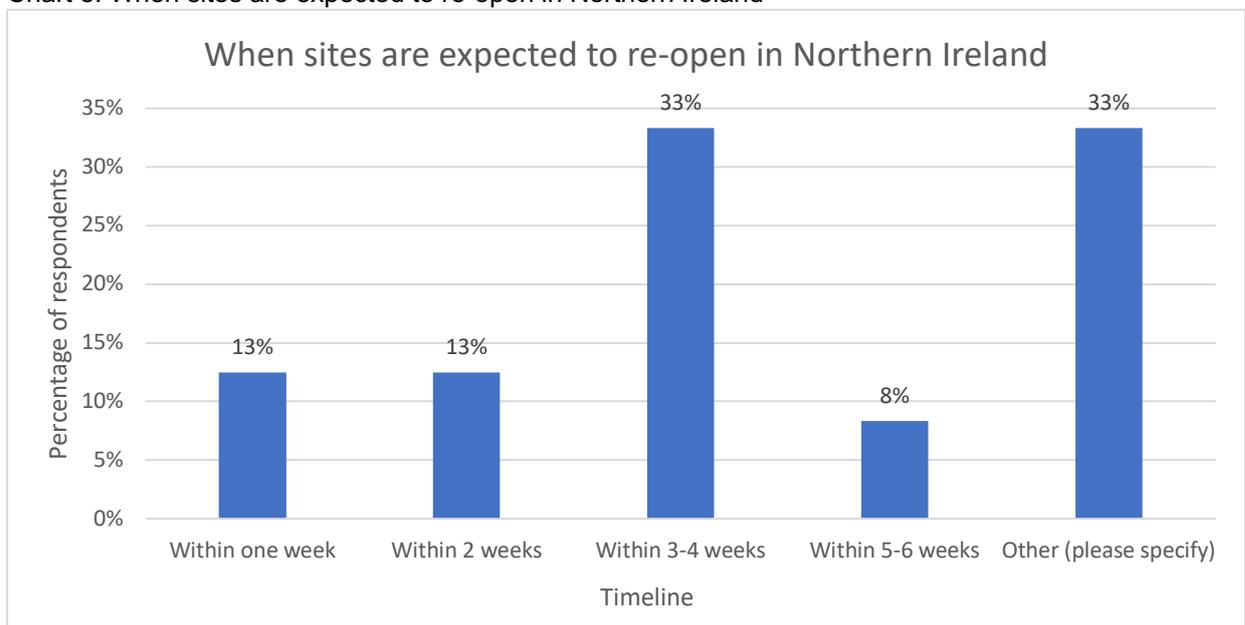
10. Again, perhaps unsurprisingly, the majority of respondents (28, or 58%) said that between 81% and 100% of their sites had closed. However, there are still respondents with open sites and the open responses indicated that this might be on a reduced basis or for emergency work.

Chart 7: Percentage of sites currently closed



11. A third of respondents expect to open within 3-4 weeks of the survey while 13% each aimed to open within one and two weeks of the survey – depending on when they completed the survey this could mean that they would have already opened. A further third responded by saying ‘other’ – open responses can be generally categorised into – already open / never closed (some with reduced operations) - 9 responses; when the Government guidelines allow – 4 response; in two months – 2 responses; and not sure – 1 response. Those respondents who have sites open with reduced operations indicated that some employees were still furloughed either due to lack of work (including office staff) or because they were shielding or had childcare issues. While the majority of sites were closed during the lockdown there is a lack of clarity in the industry as to when sites might re-open with some employers making their own assessment of when it is safe to do so and others waiting on Government guidance.

Chart 8: When sites are expected to re-open in Northern Ireland



Skills or training needs arising as a result of the current Covid-19 situation

12. Survey respondents were asked what skills or training needs have arisen as a result of the Covid-19 situation. The chart below identifies working remotely, health and safety and financial management as the top three skills / training needs (29%, 25% and 19% respectively).

Chart 9: Training needs identified as a result of Covid-19



13. Many respondents provided more detail on the specifics of the training they required, and the responses are listed below:

IT

- Having all our office staff work from home highlighted a few employees possibly needing additional general IT training to strengthen their skills, working from home they don't have the benefit of asking for assistance as you would in office
- Learning how to use our server and google drive more efficiently and organising all the photos in our database
- Buying a new, bigger monitor for our showroom and making the photo gallery better for showcasing our works
- Up grading of system needed to allow smooth remote working; reliance on our IT provider to help staff with new set ups (high cost)
- IT due to remote working and other ways of producing reports, strategic planning due to return to work.

Health and Safety

- Social distancing
- Dealing with COVID going further
- Working in close proximity, controlling visitors to site
- New risk assessment and method statements to attend site and office when reopening, mental and health impact
- Health and safety due to the need for extra PPE
- 2m distancing is a problem
- Planning for a return to work that shall take into account the Health, Safety and Welfare of our employees and their families.

Strategic planning

- Setting up new job schedules (creating a new template) to better organise what jobs are ongoing, how many men we need to do those jobs and how long will those jobs take
- Setting up new job material and cutting lists - creating a template which can be used throughout the year for all job types
- Business contingency / continuity planning to cope with unexpected events. Health and Safety re coronavirus.

Marketing

- How to keep customers in the midst of the crisis
- Being able to plan how to navigate through the shutdown and launch again once it's over

Financial Management

- Managing cashflow (x3) - costs in setting up remote working & strategic planning for the future accounting for reduced economy and mounting recession
- How finances should be managed to allow for flexibility when the unexpected has happened
- Applying for state aid

Trade Specific

- Additional design training

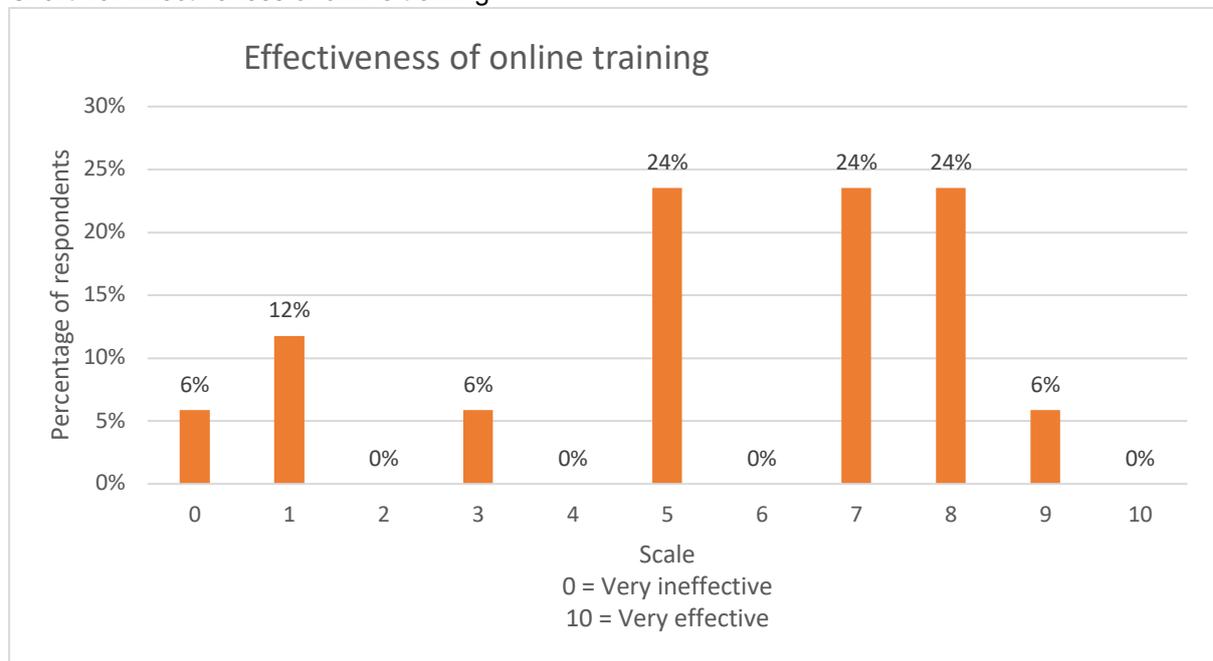
Working remotely

- Increase in time required to do any task; communication with staff; wellbeing of lone worker.

Online Training

14. Respondents were asked if they had tried online training. Only 35% have tried online training, whilst the remaining two thirds had not.
15. Of those who had tried online training, the effectiveness on a scale of 0 (very ineffective) to 10 (very effective) was measured and the results are shown below. Without further information on the type of training and its method of delivery e.g. video recording vs interactive training, it is difficult to make further analysis but on the whole online training seems to have been more effective than not, with 54% rating it a 7 or higher.

Chart 10: Effectiveness of online training



Other Comments

16. Respondents were given an opportunity to add any further responses and these are listed below:

- We will make this decision [*re opening sites*] when we feel it is safe and the Health, Safety and Welfare of their sub-contractors is guaranteed under clear instruction from government legislation as the advice is no good as then the cowboy firms who fire on and work away shall succeed and the companies who try hardest to look after their employees shall go out of business. Large companies just want the work done with no interest in the sub-contractor's staff as this is the sub-contractor's responsibility in their opinion.
- The initial 10k grant was a massive help. But 10 weeks into lock-down the Govt would need to apply it again, as it was only supposed to cover 3-4 weeks
- Does not seem fair that can't do training while on furlough without having to top up pay when no revenue being generated
- I only have / had one apprentice. My work was drying up on the run up to lock down. I fear that consumer confidence is very low, certainly the worst I have seen. I am worried!
- Webinars only [*referring to only training*].
- We have furloughed all of our staff bar one plumber who we have retained for emergency works. We are lucky enough that the wages are being covered by the furlough programme which should mean we have enough cash reserves for 12+ months. Thankfully. Without the furlough we would have cash reserves for less than 3 months. In this scenario we would have had to make staff redundant. I do believe that the industry as a whole should focus on financial planning more as this crisis how crucial it is
- Costs of work are going to increase, finding a way to deal with priced work taken before Covid-19

- The government needs to lay out clear and transparent legislation for all companies to follow and introduce large fines for companies who do not follow these rules. This will cut out cowboy firms who put profit before the Health, Safety and Welfare of their employees. Extra costs associated with travel, extra man hours to complete the works also needs to be addressed by the CITB and CEF through discussion with the principal contractors and a percentage increase across the board as this will not happen by negotiating this between both parties. The response from the principal contractor will be do the job for the price agreed or we shall get another contractor, simple as that as they are under huge financial pressure during this pandemic just like everyone else will be their reply
- We are a small business that do extension & renovation. I had 1 project to start after Easter but this has now being cancelled. We are finishing off a very small project with about week's work left. Nothing else to start
- CSR card one day training not available online as trainers saying CEF would not sign off on this training for online and it would have been good opportunity for some guys to complete this!

Recommendation

17. CITB NI and other employer bodies should consider the findings of this survey and look at ways to assist the industry, potentially working in collaboration to maximise resources and effectiveness.