



The Canadian Association for Supported Employment  
Association canadienne de soutien à l'emploi



## **Canada COVID-19 Impact on Disability Employment Outcomes and Services**

In partnership with The Association of People  
Supporting Employment First (APSE)

# Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Demographics of Responding Organizations	3
COVID-19's Impact on Staffing & Services	6
Predicting a Future Post Lockdown	14
Impact on Individuals Served - Job Losses	17
Impact on Individuals Served - Job Gains	23
Remote Supports	26
Community & Economy Impact	30
Open Discussion - Closures of SESPS	32
Acknowledgements	33

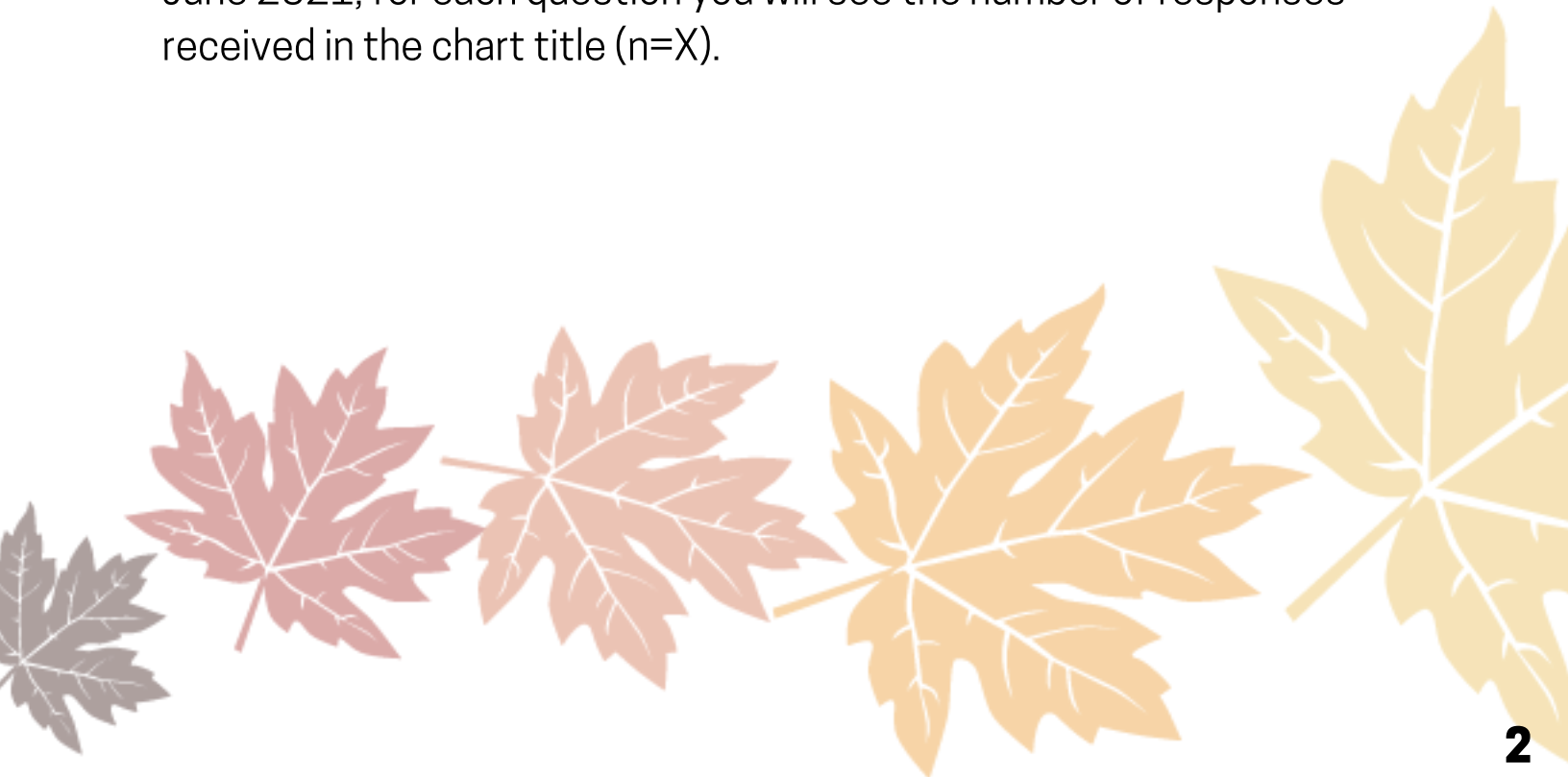


# Introduction

At the Canadian Association for Supported Employment (CASE), we are committed to improving the timeliness, reliability and accessibility of data on the Canadian supported employment sector.

CASE has partnered with APSE (The Association of People Supporting Employment First) in their mission to assess the direct impact that COVID-19 has had on disability employment outcomes and services; as well as identify any programming needs that may have resulted in the covid-19 pandemic.

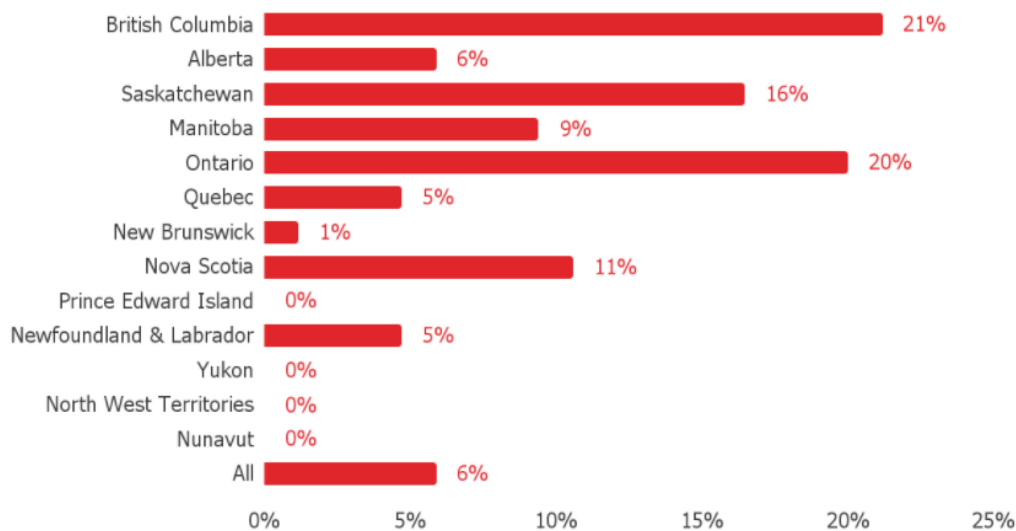
This report is a summary of the findings from the Canada COVID-19 Impact on Disability Employment Outcomes and Services survey. There were 91 responses received throughout the months of April to June 2021, for each question you will see the number of responses received in the chart title (n=X).



## Demographics of Responding Organizations

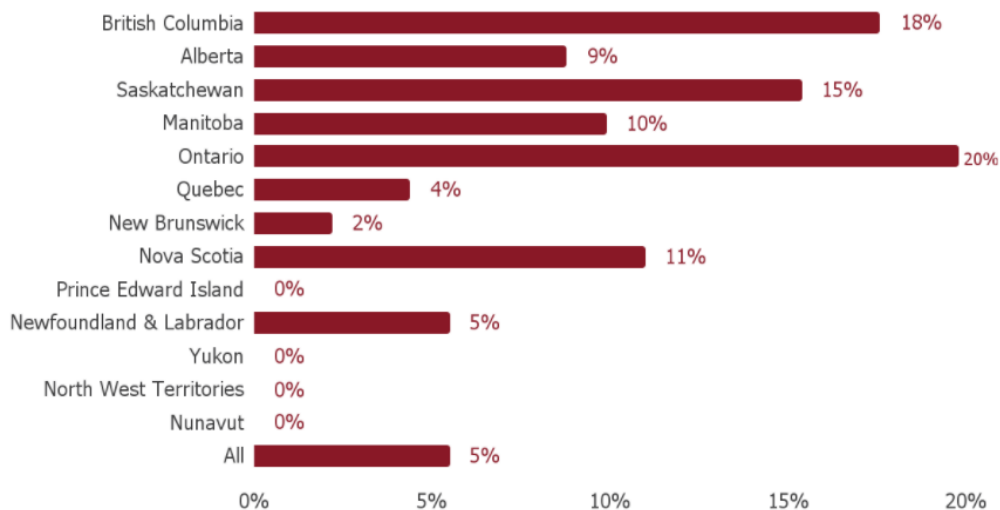
The most responses were from organizations in British Columbia (21%), Ontario (20%), and Saskatchewan (16%).

Province or Territory (n=85)

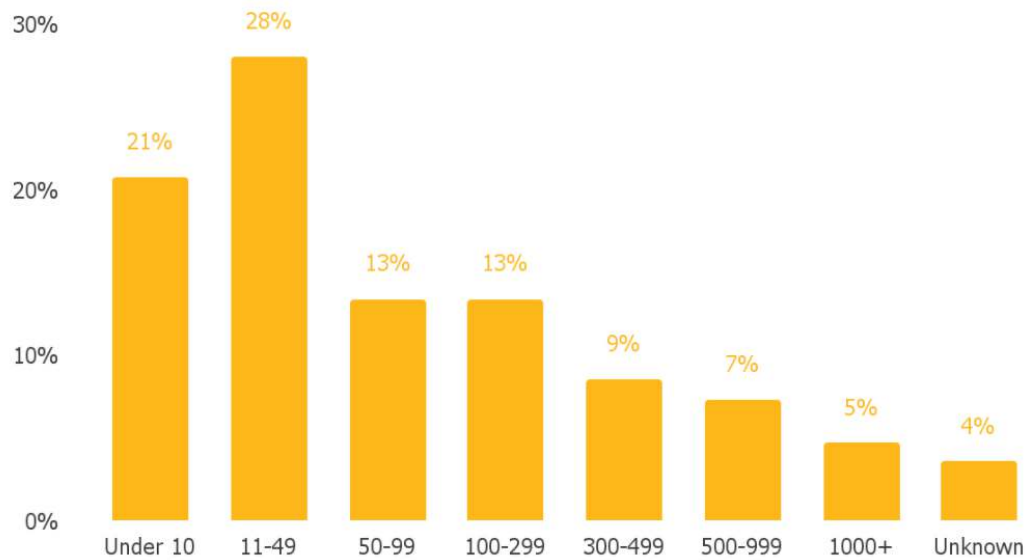


Of the responding organizations **20%** serviced people in Ontario, **18%** serviced those in British Columbia, and **15%** serviced those in Saskatchewan. **5%** serviced all provinces and territories in Canada.

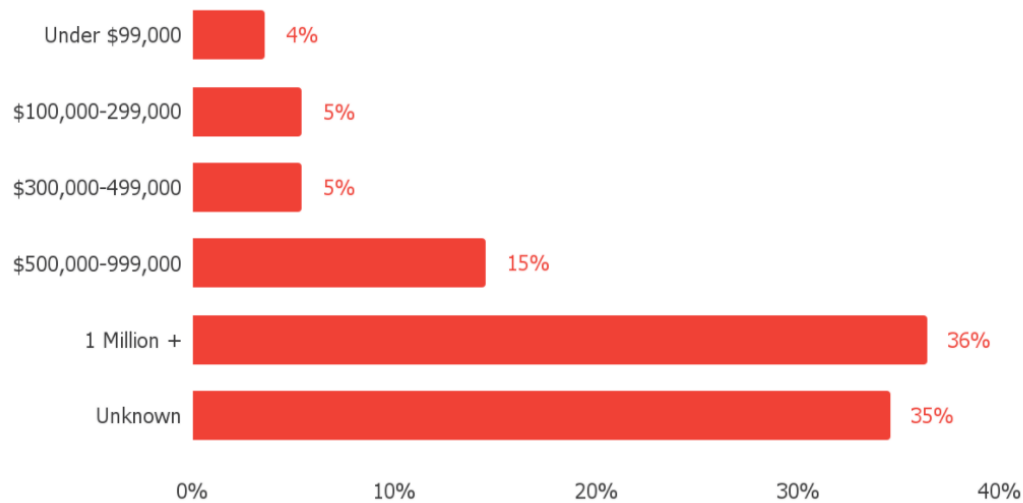
Provinces Serviced (n=91)



### Number of Employees at Organization (n=82)



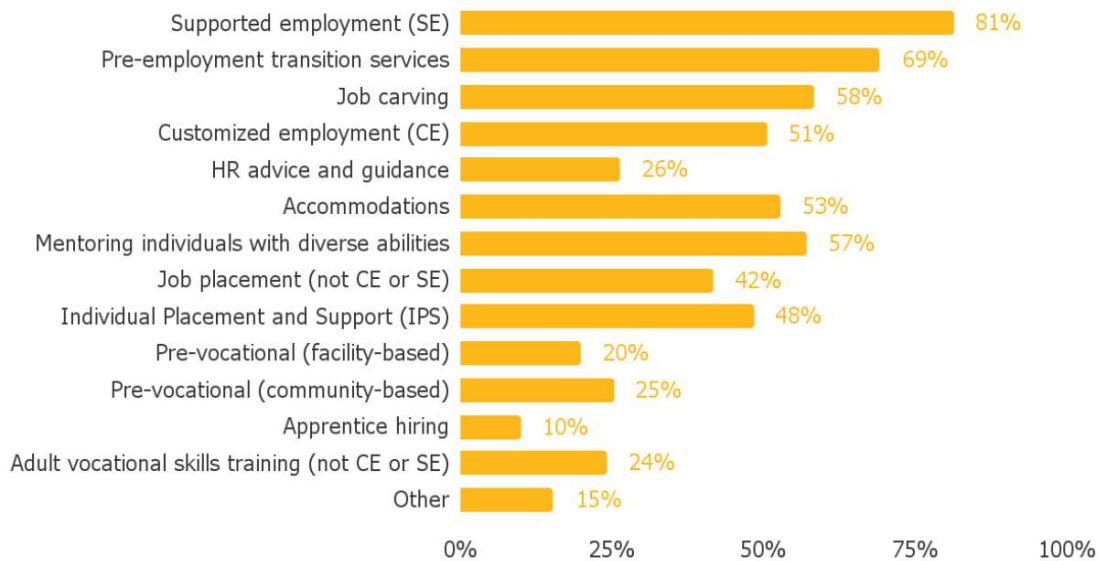
### Estimated Annual Budget (n=55)



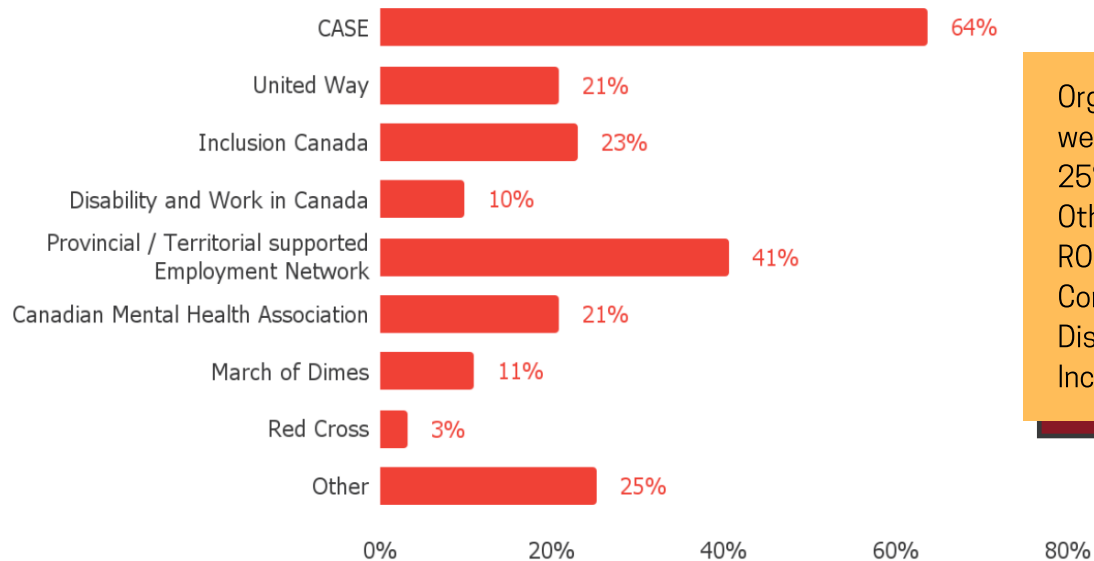


The services offered by the majority of participating organizations were Supported Employment (81%), Pre-employment Transition Services (69%), and Job Carving (58%). 6% responded with Employment Training.

### Services Offered (n=91)



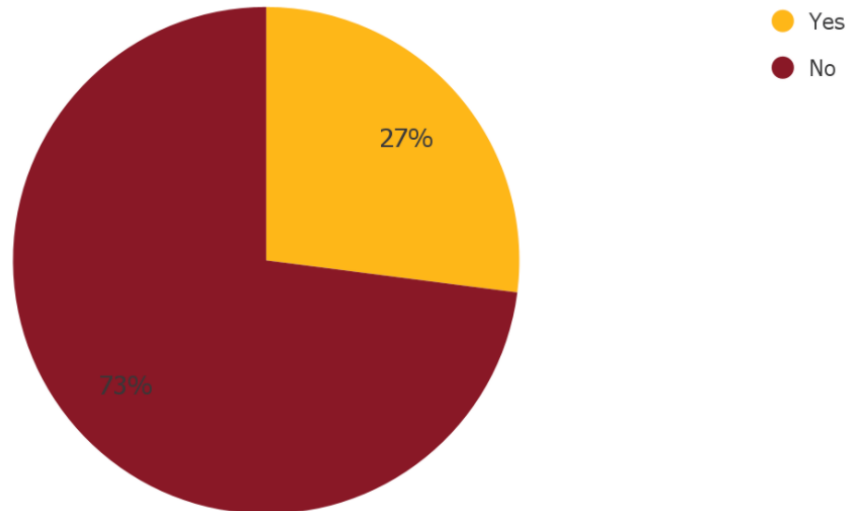
### Affiliated Organization(s) (n=91)



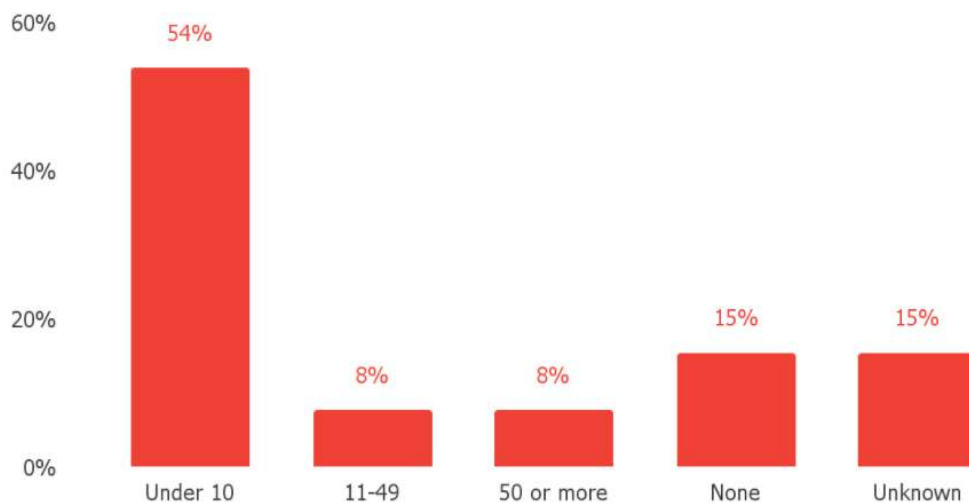
Organizations that were mentioned by the 25% that selected Other:  
ROSEPH, ODEN, Community Living Disability Services, and Inclusion BC.

## COVID-19's Impact on Staffing & Services

Has your agency had to layoff or furlough staff as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic? (n=74)

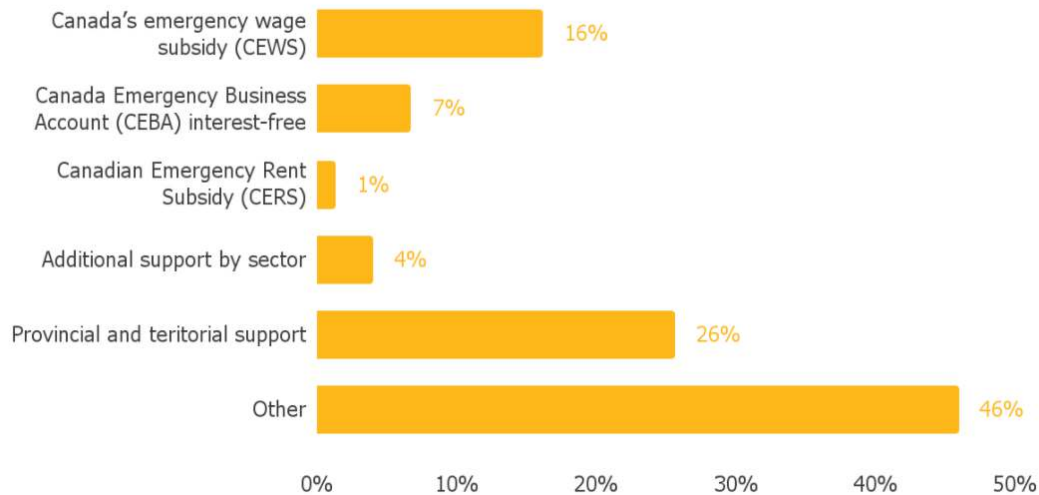


Number of Employment Services Staff Laid Off or Furloughed (n=13)



Of the responding organizations, **54%** laid off or furloughed **less than 10** employees.

### Federal Government Assistance Programs Applied to (n=74)



**10%** of participants were not sure which, if any, assistance programs were applied to at their organizations, while **32% did not apply to any.**

These programs include:

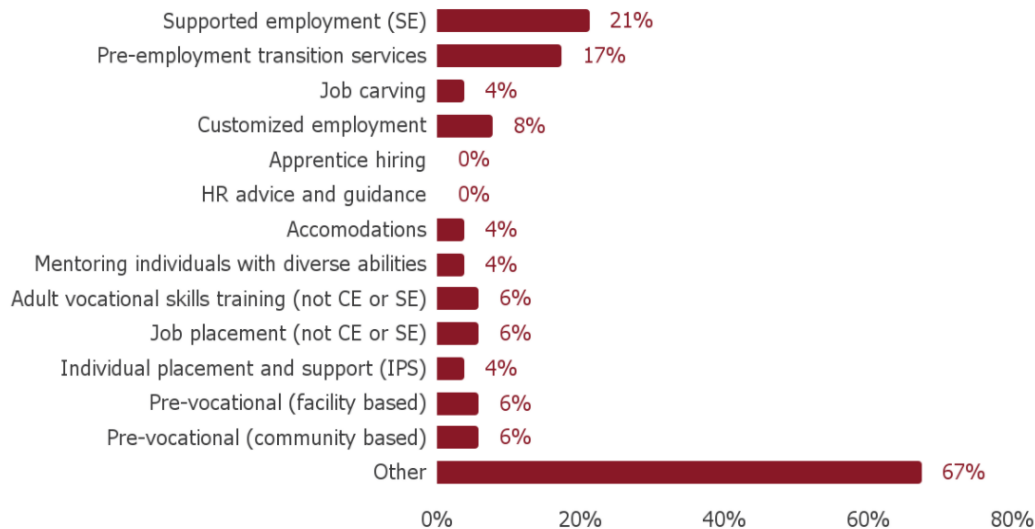
- Canada's emergency wage subsidy
- Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA)
- Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy

Other options for federal government assistance programs that were included in this survey but were not selected by any participants include:

- Highly Affected Sectors Credit Availability Program (HASCAP)
- Loan Guarantee for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
- Co-Lending Program for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
- Regional Relief and Recovery Fund (RRRF)
- Black Entrepreneurship Loan Fund
- Mid-Market Financing Program
- Mid-Market Guarantee and Financing Program
- Large Employer Emergency Financing Facility (LEEFF)

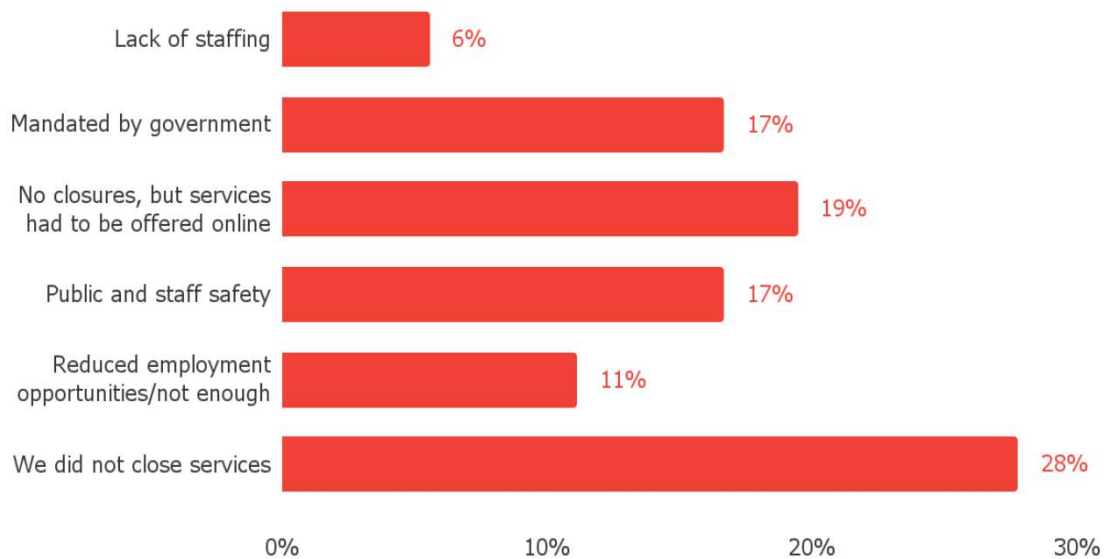


### Services Closed as a Result of COVID-19 (n=51)



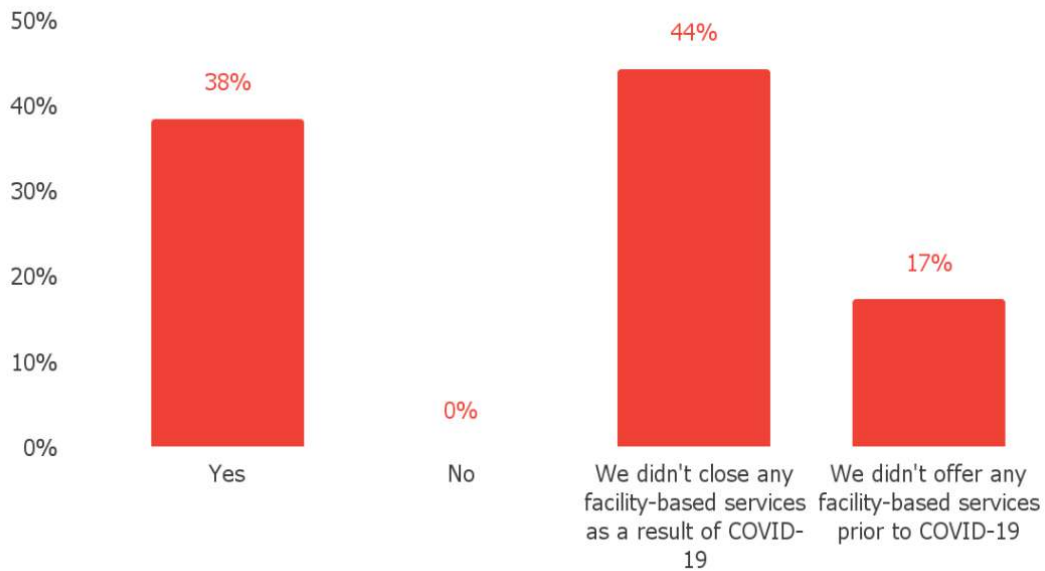
**21%** of participating organizations closed their Supported Employment services due to the pandemic. **48%** answered that none of their services were closed, **12%** mentioned that all of their in-person services were closed, and **6%** said that services were reduced but not closed.

### Reason(s) for Closing Services (n=36)



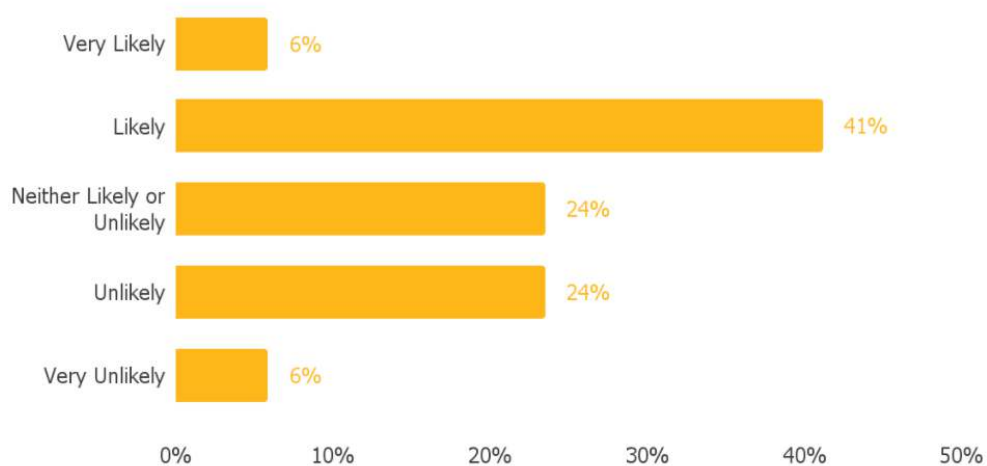
**28%** of responders did not close any of their services and **19%** offered all of their services online.

### Intentions to Re-open Facility-based Services (n=52)



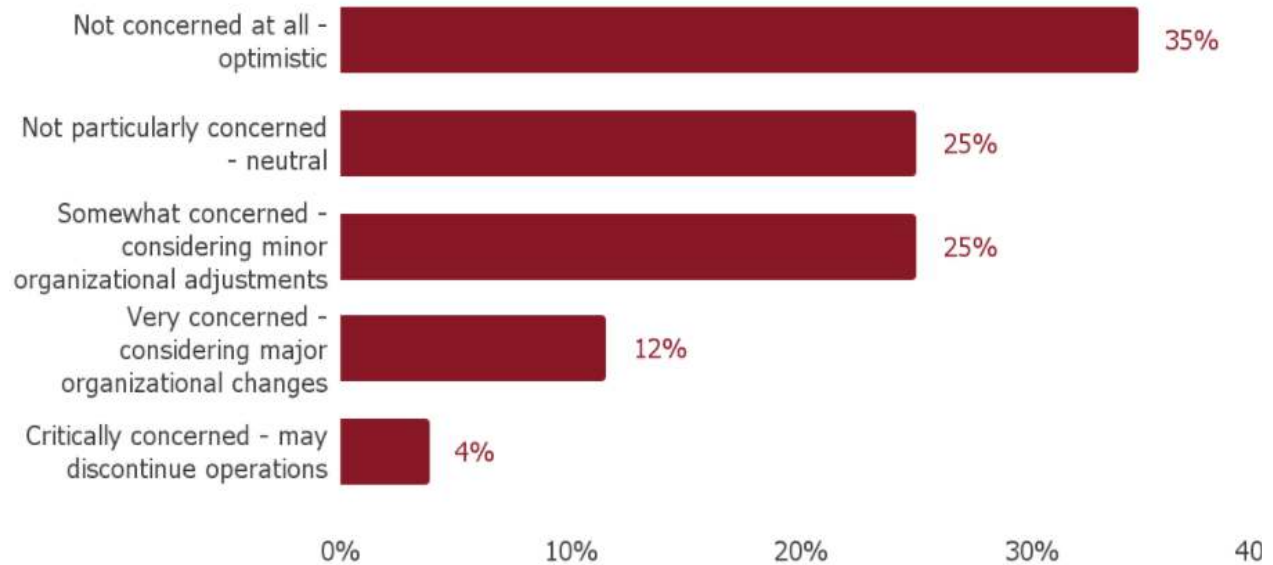
**44%** of organizations did not close any facility-based services as a result of COVID-19.

### Likelihood of Being Able to Rehire Furloughed Staff in 2020 (n=17)

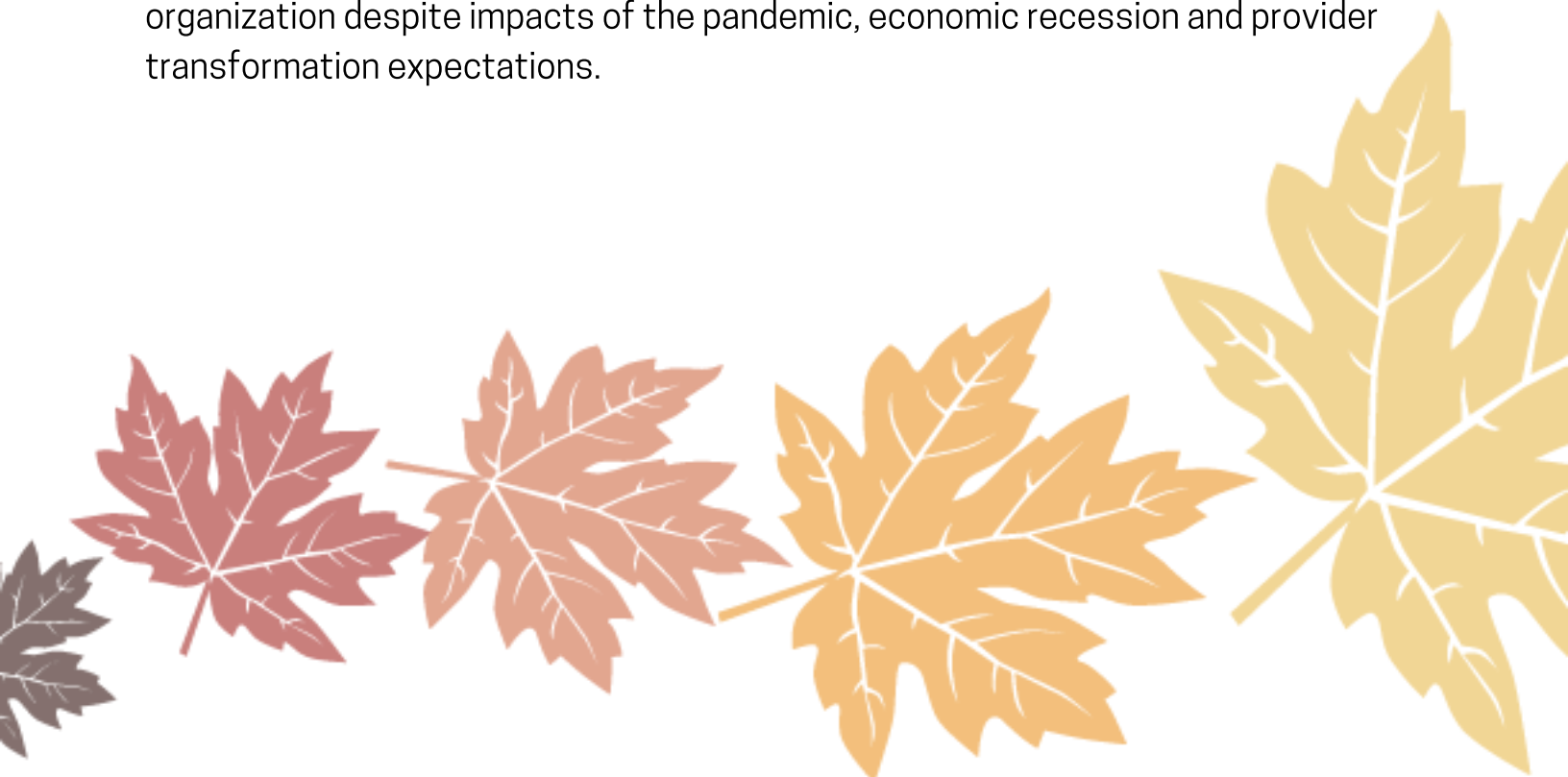


**41%** were optimistic that they would likely be able to rehire furloughed staff in 2020.

### Long-term Sustainability of Organization Due to Combined Impacts of the Pandemic, Economic Recession, and Provider Transformation Expectations Concern (n=52)



**35%** of participants were optimistic regarding the long-term sustainability of their organization despite impacts of the pandemic, economic recession and provider transformation expectations.



## Open Discussion

Participants were asked to describe their concerns regarding their particular organization.

“We are in a small, rural community with smaller numbers of clients and mostly small businesses as our employer base. As less businesses re-open we have less employment and supported employment opportunities. Also, as businesses re-open, they are looking for staff who are 100% job ready and can do the tasks of more than one person/position. We expect some delay in returning to where employers can take employees who need any additional support in the workplace. This has a significant impact on delivering contracts that are employment outcomes based and impact organizational viability.”

“Many staff are feeling burned out with high expectations. This will affect the team long-term. Many staff have left.”

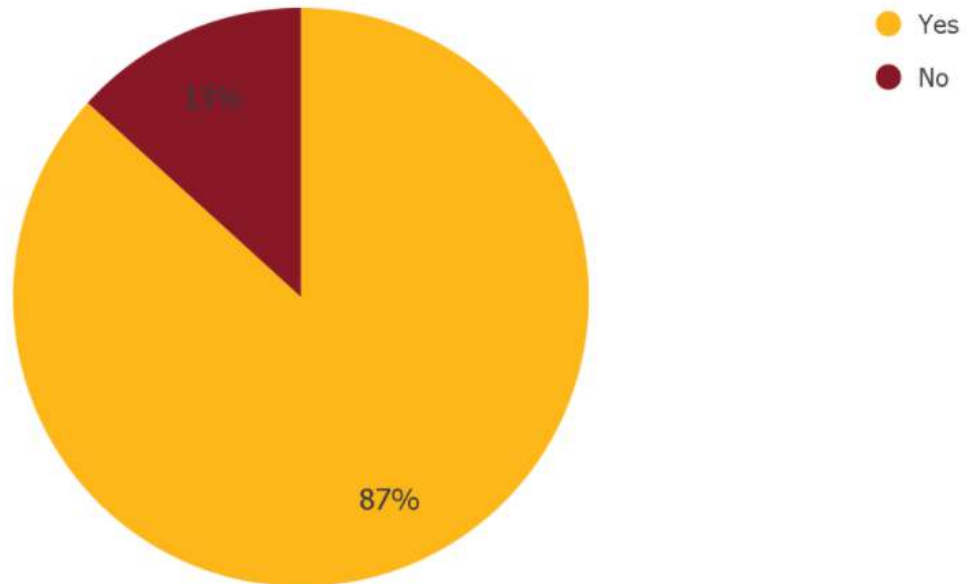
“As a nonprofit, we serve our community and as such all funding goes straight to our programs and administration. We rely solely on funding and charitable giving. With fundraising failing and funding low, we are concerned about sustainability. We are a small nonprofit and genuinely wish to be self-sufficient to better serve the cerebral palsy community.”

“The third wave has been difficult for our organization. It is our hope that recovery will start and we will see a return to our new normal.”

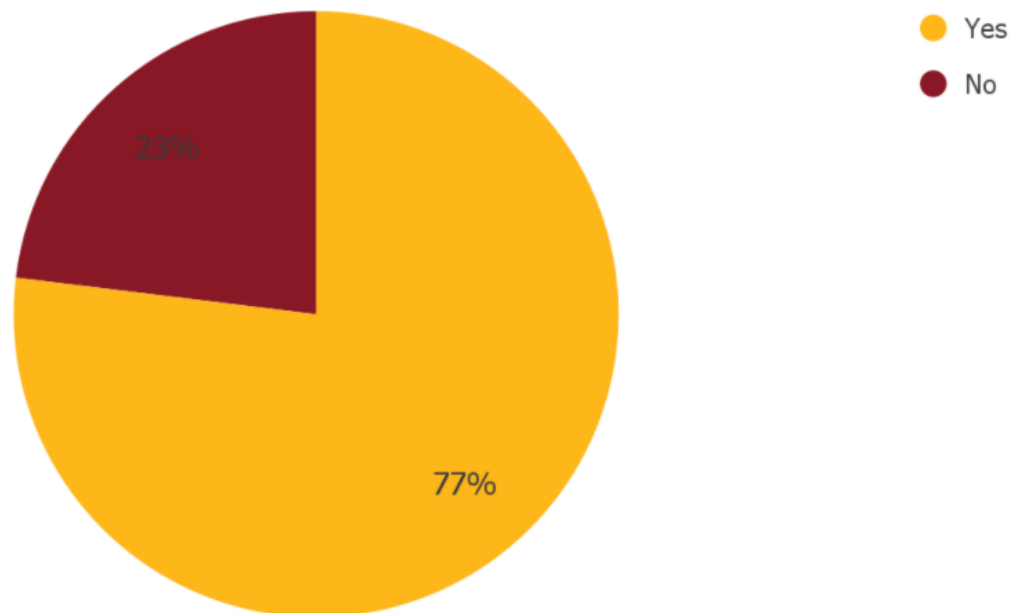
“Terms and conditions for employment services for persons with Disabilities need to be revisited. Our agency receives funding from the Federal Government. The terms and conditions for our youth YESS projects are much broader (i.e. eligibility requirements - youth cannot be currently receiving EI or CRB, for clients with disabilities they cannot have collected for 5 years - the reachback is ridiculous).”

“Given some of our employers are small businesses they may not be in a position to hire. Also we are in a government city, and many departments are now looking at permanently working from home again limiting our employment resources.”

Does your organization currently operate under provincial and/or federal operating grants and contributions? (n=52)

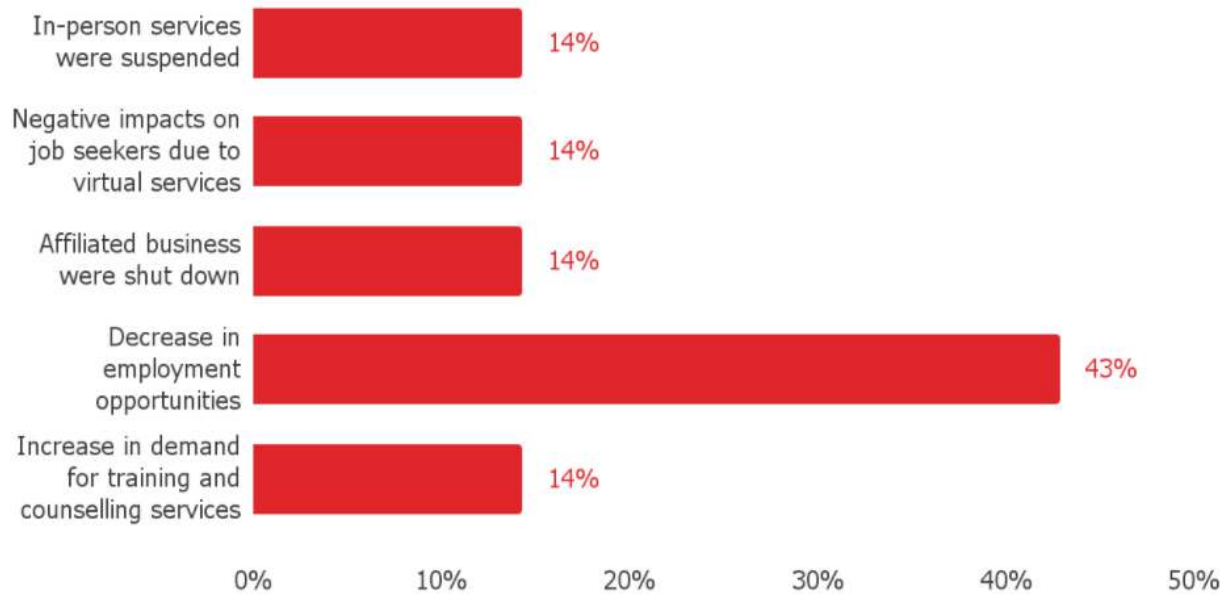


Have you been able to deliver as planned on your existing contract(s) during the pandemic? (n=52)





## Ways Contract Work Was Impacted by COVID-19 (n=7)

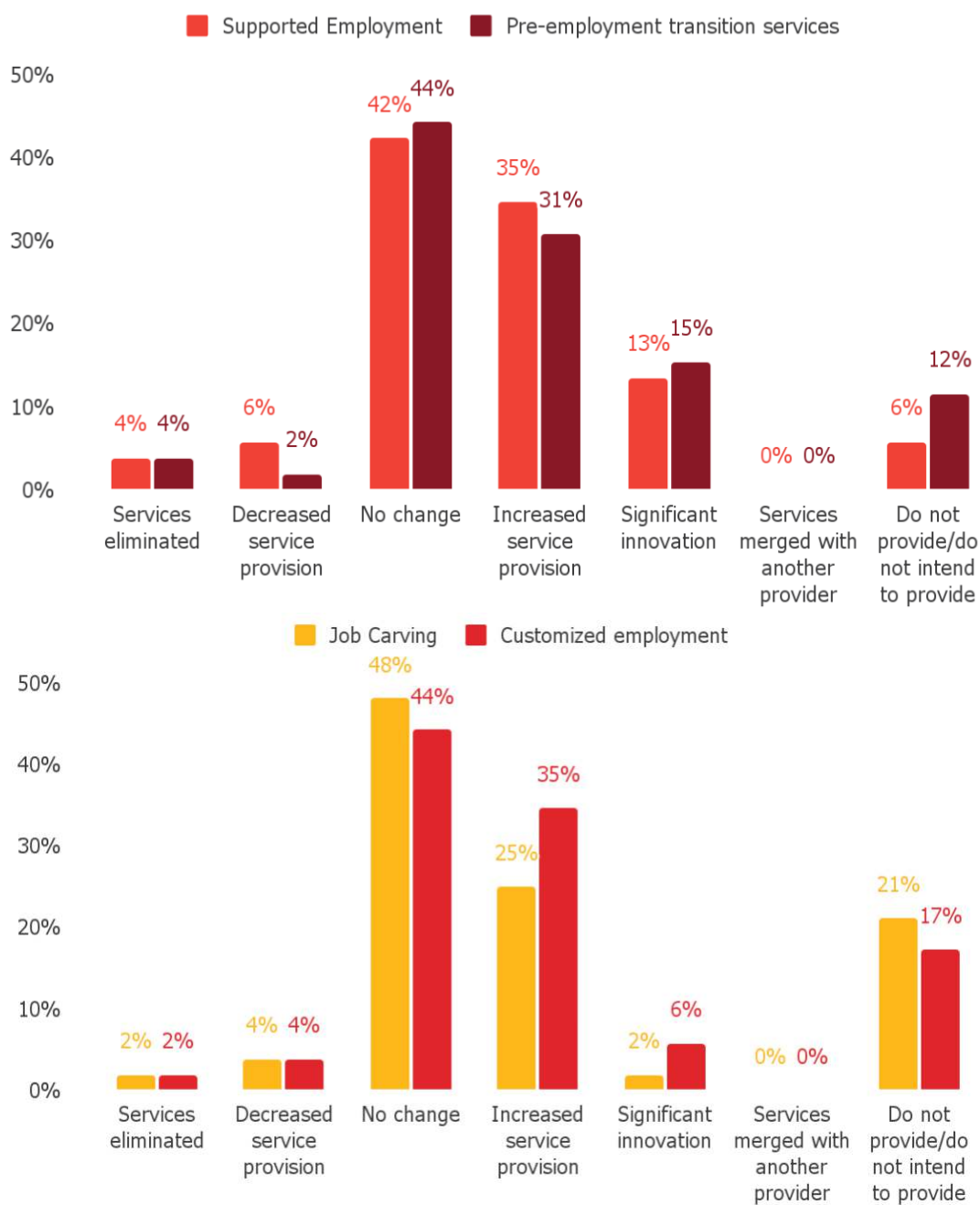


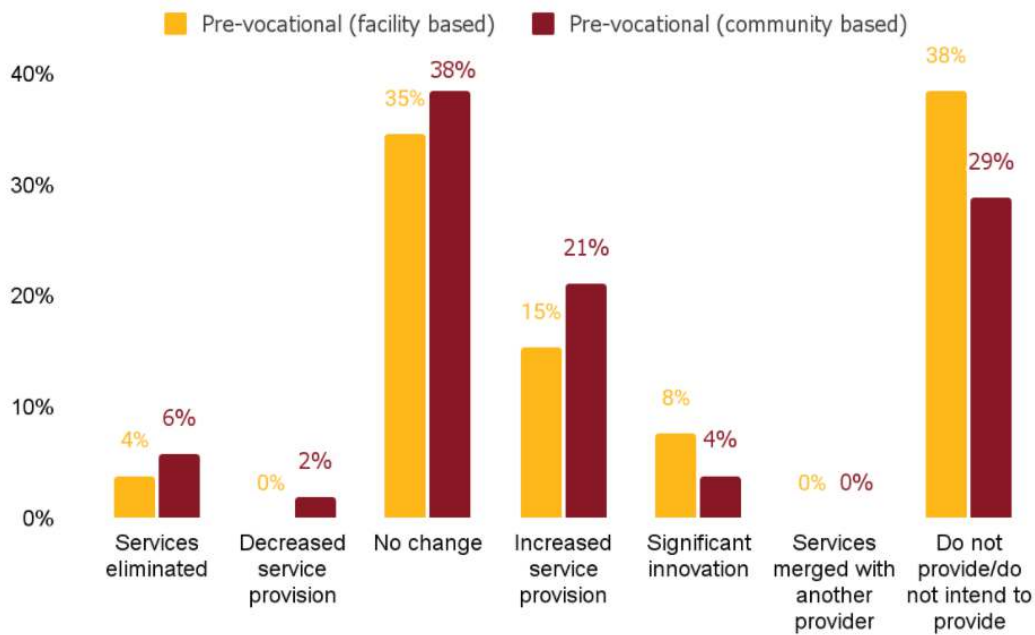
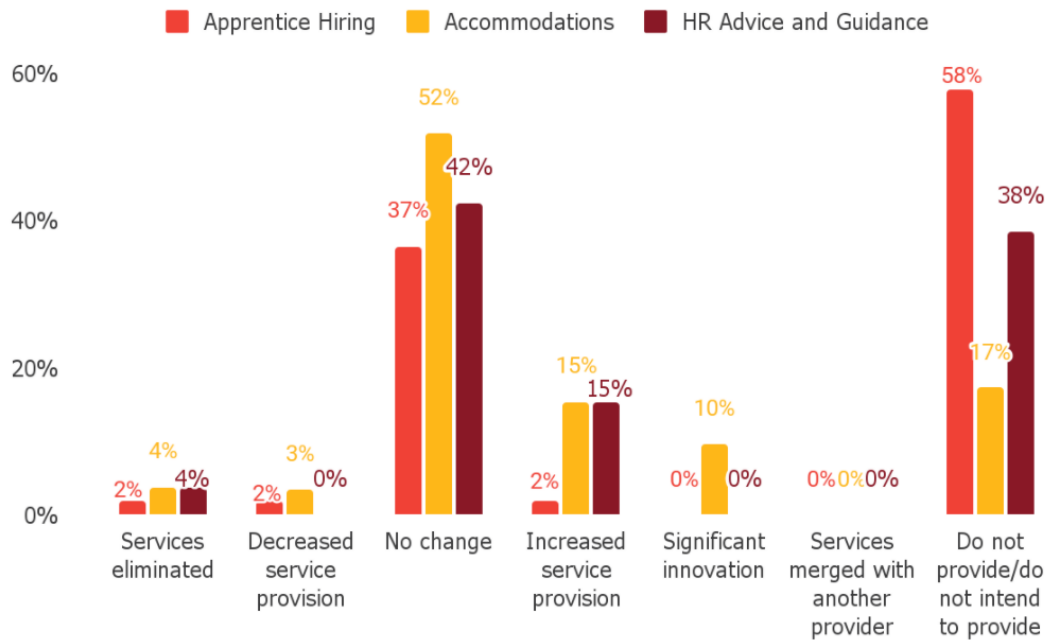
**43%** saw a decrease in employment opportunities.

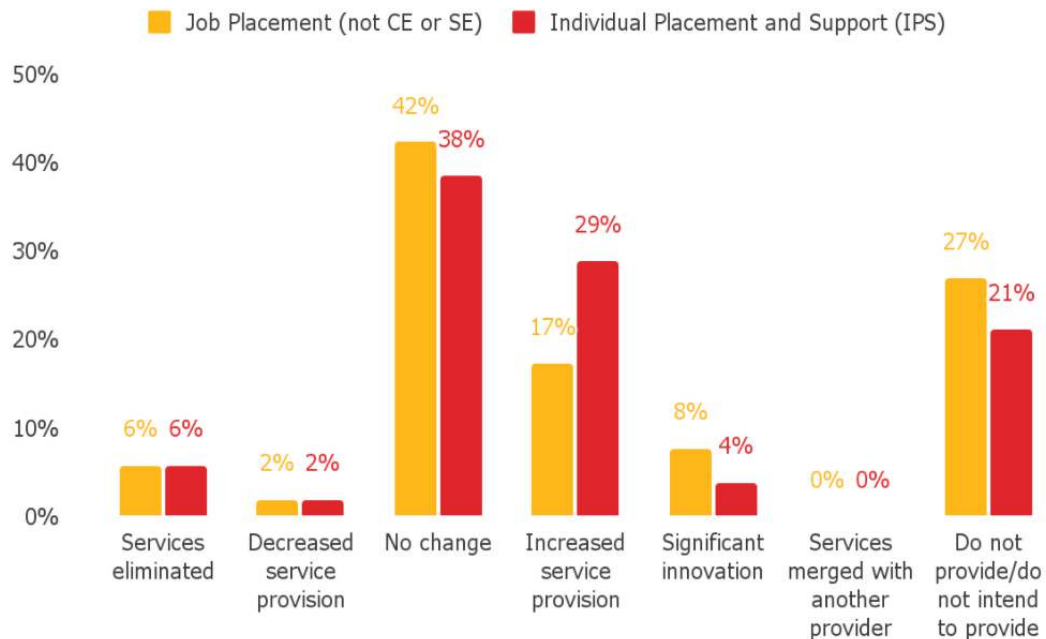
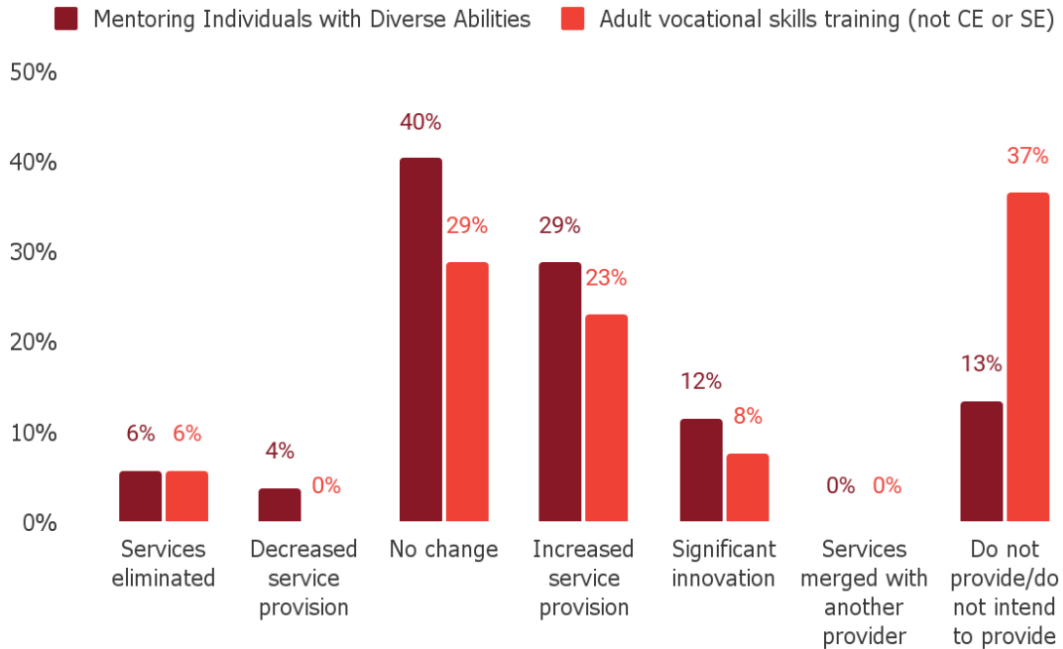


## Predicting a Future Post Lockdown

Participating organizations were asked to anticipate changes to specific services that are commonly offered (n=52). The majority perceived no changes to the following services:

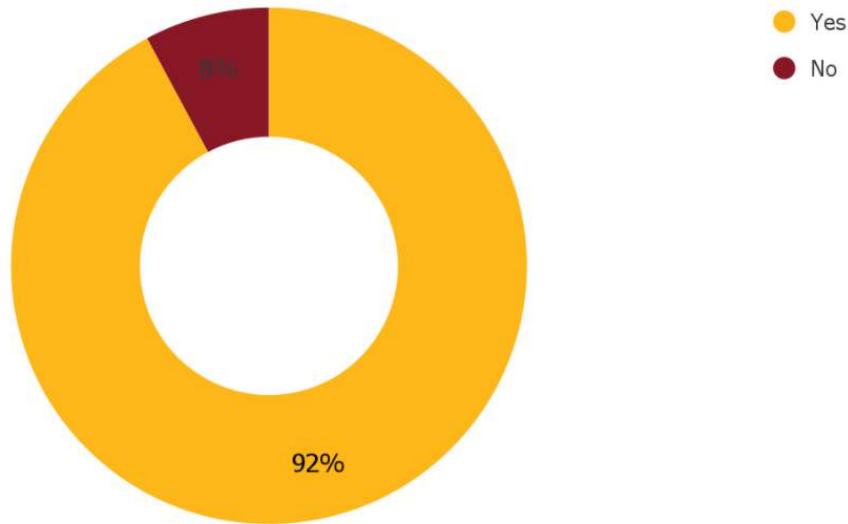




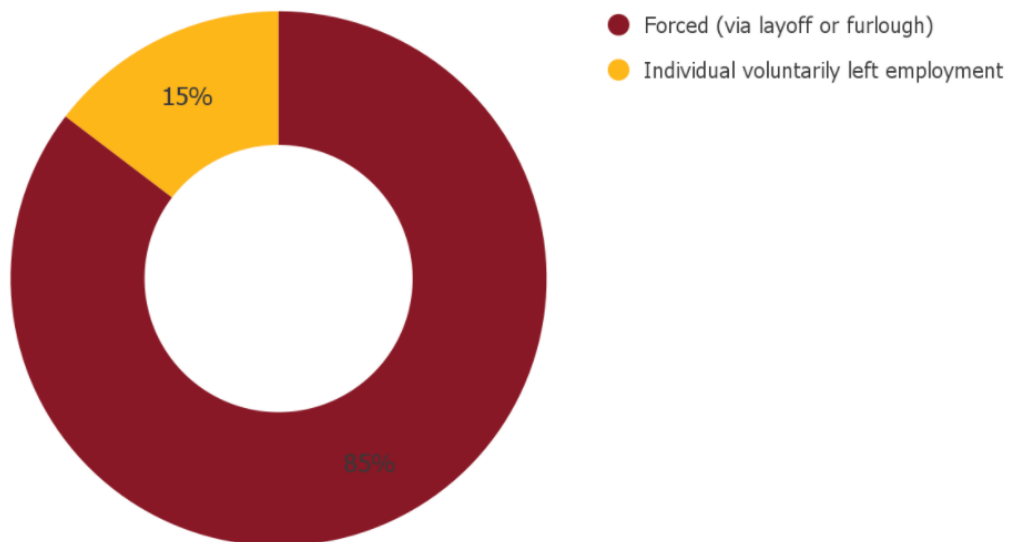


## Impact on Individuals Served - Job Losses

Have you witnessed a loss of jobs of people with disabilities you support in community jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic? (n=51)



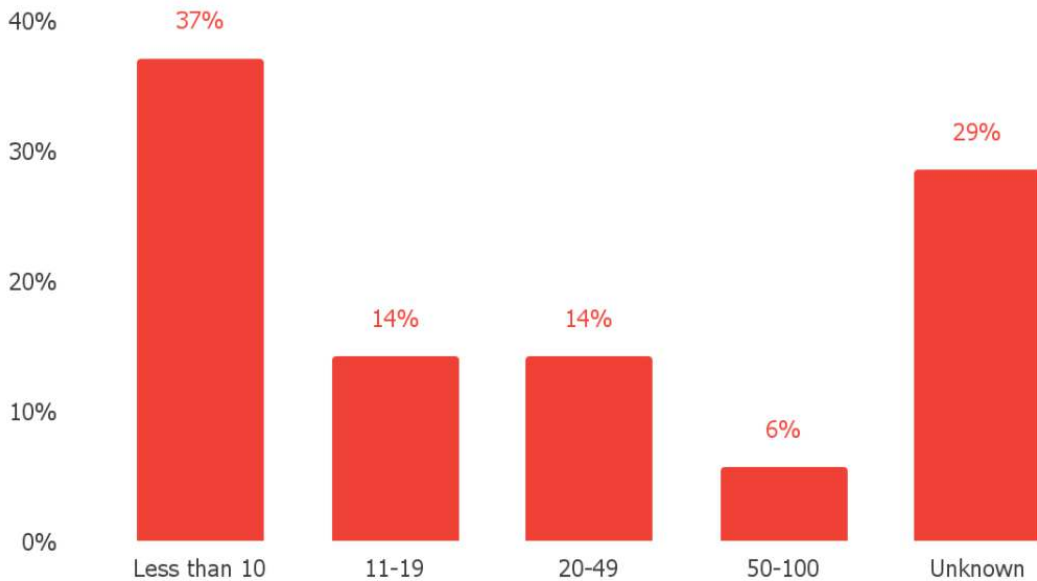
Primary Reason for Job Losses (n=41)



The majority (92%) saw a loss of jobs for people with disabilities during the pandemic, with **85%** being due to forced layoffs or furloughed.



Number of Individuals Served That Lost Jobs (n=35)

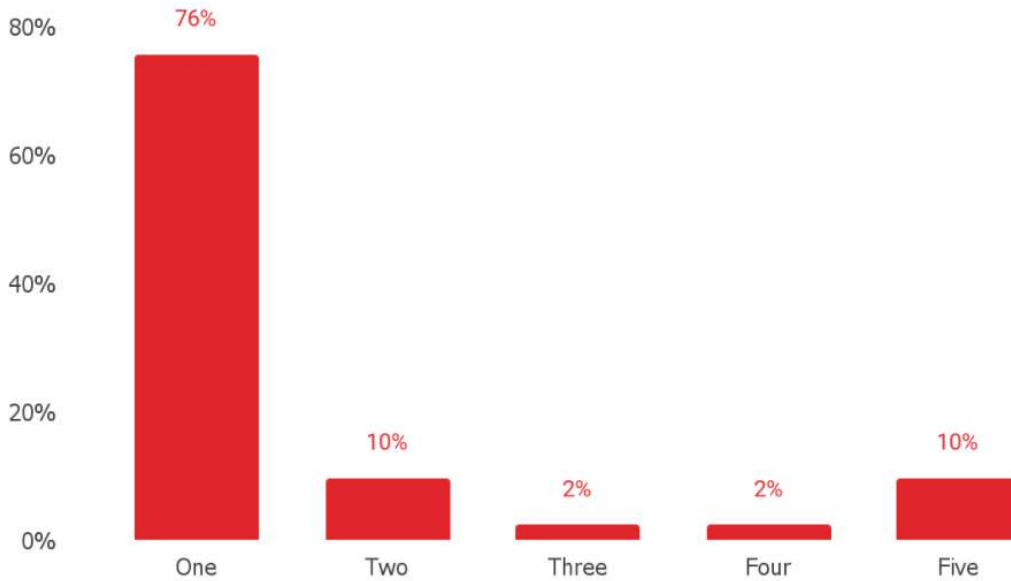


For those who witnessed job loss, **37%** claimed that **less than 10 individuals** of those they serve lost their jobs.

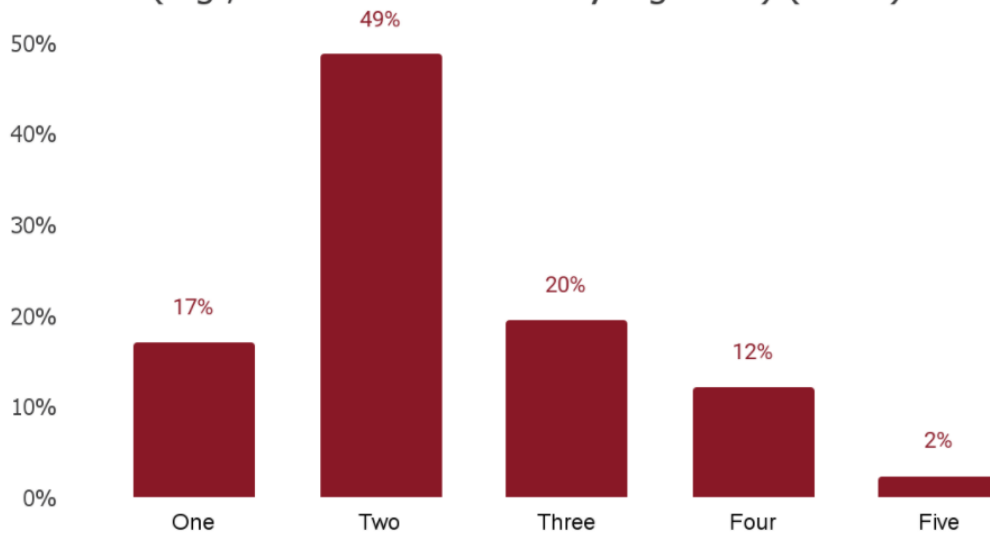


Participants were asked to rank a series of issues in order of impact on job loss for people with disabilities, with 5 being the biggest impact and 1 being the least impact.

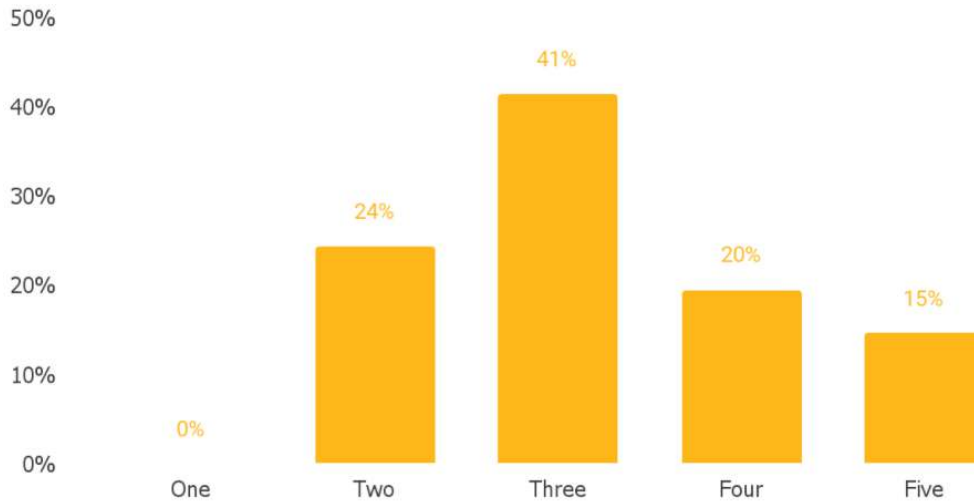
**Mandatory business/industry closure (n=41)**



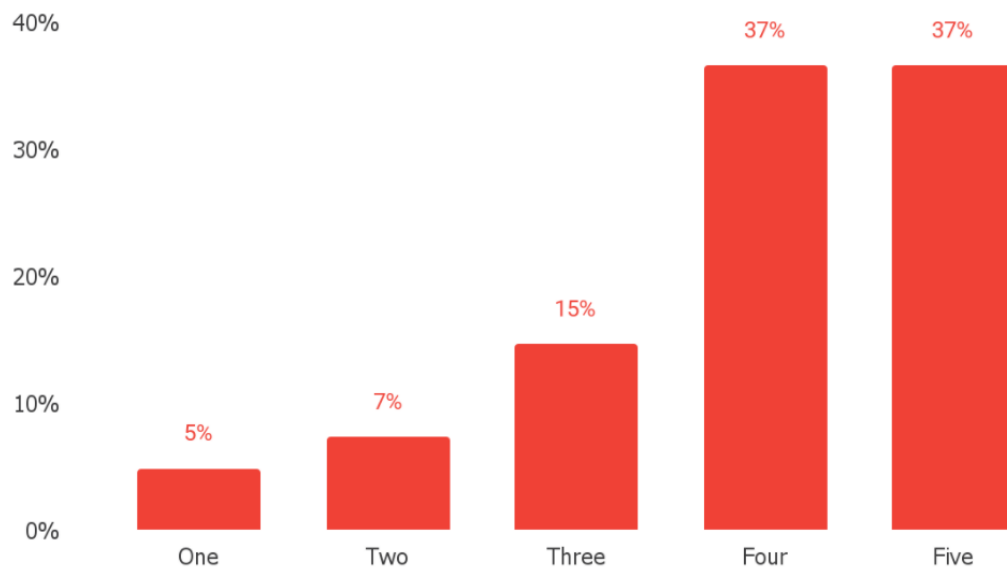
**Individual voluntarily exited employment due to health-related reasons (e.g., individual is medically high-risk) (n=41)**



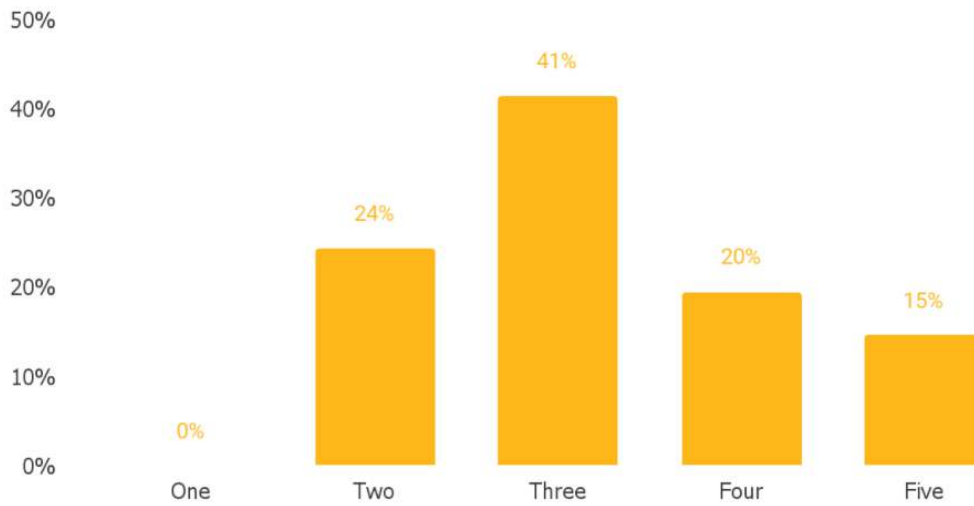
Changes in job responsibilities and/or work processes were too difficult (n=41)



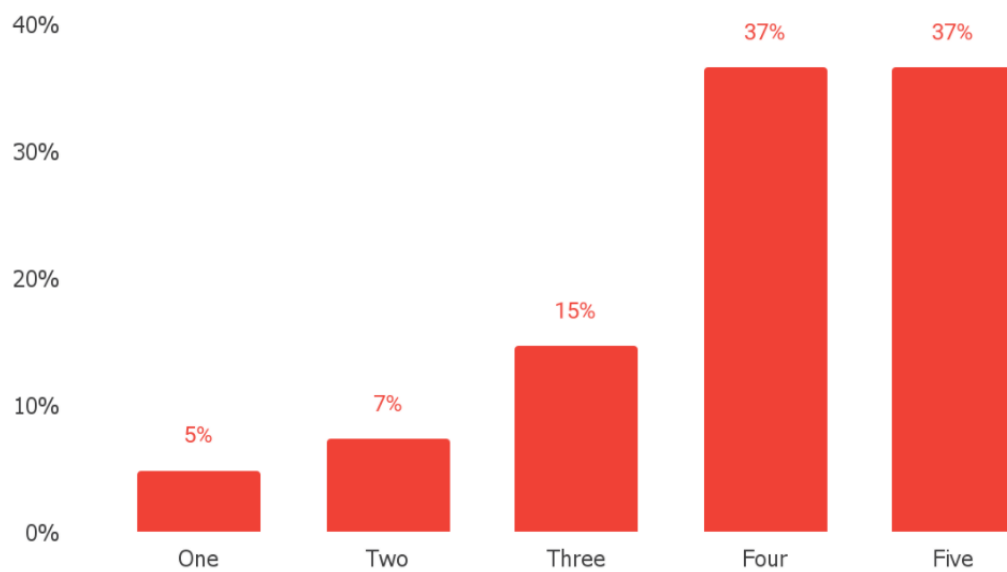
Lack of Access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (n=41)



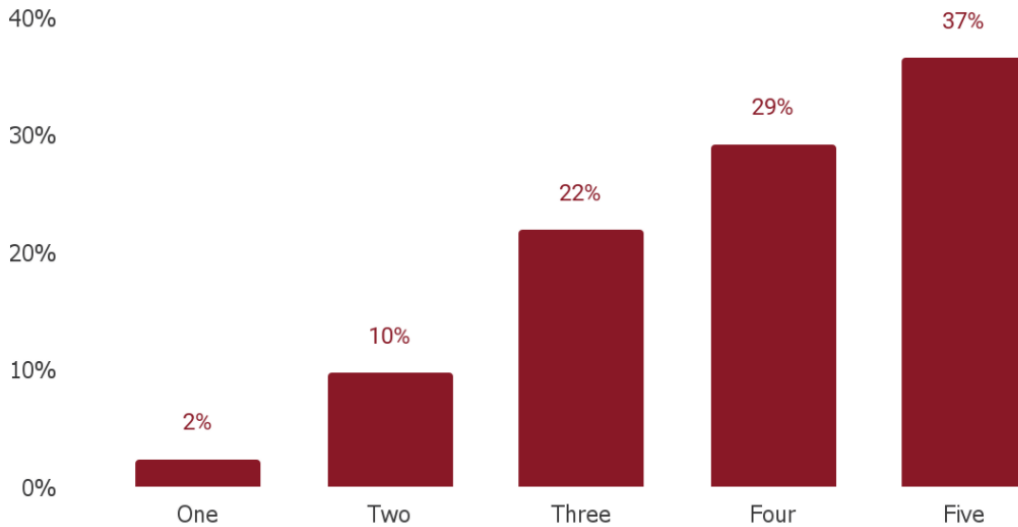
Changes in job responsibilities and/or work processes were too difficult (n=41)



Lack of Access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (n=41)

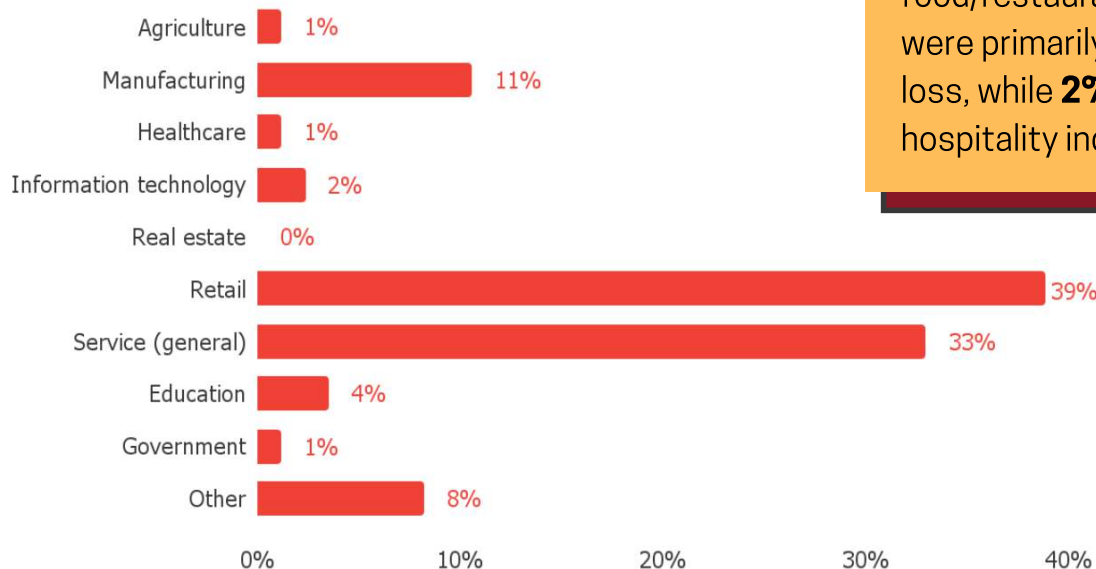


### Lack of access to a job coach or virtual employment supports (n=41)



Lack of access to PPE, job coaching and/or virtual employment supports were all considered to be issues that had the biggest impact (37%).

### Primary Industries Experiencing Job Loss (n=85)

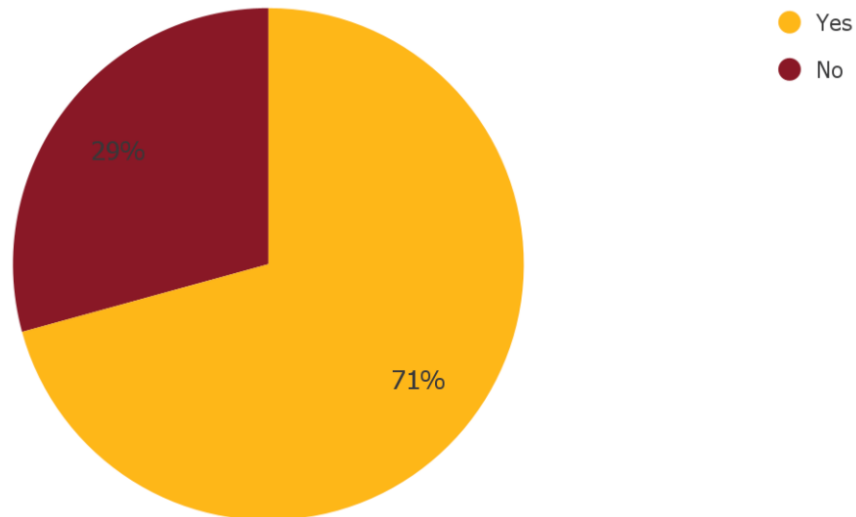


**5%** claimed that the food/restaurant industries were primarily experiencing job loss, while **2%** mentioned hospitality industries.

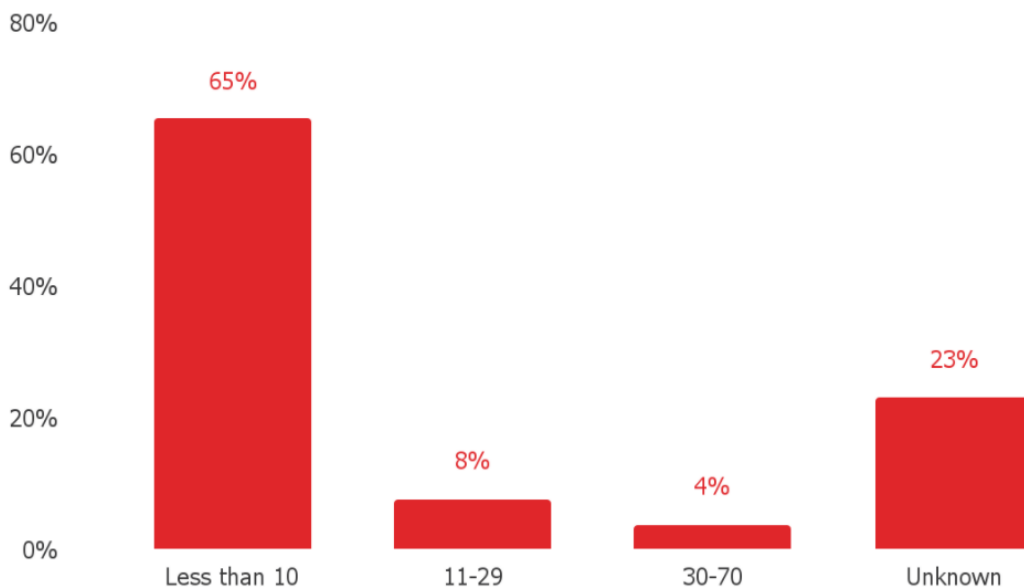


## Impact on Individuals Served - Job Gains

Are you aware of any individuals who have returned to work after a job loss as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic? (n=41)

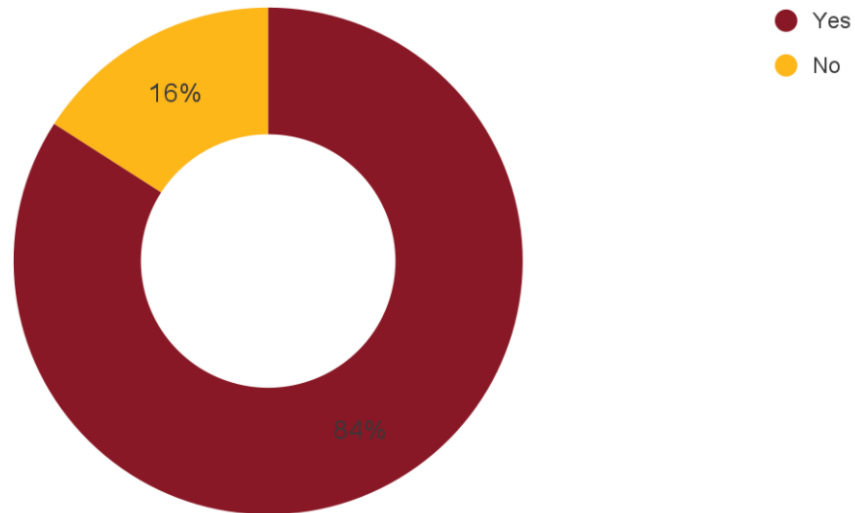


Number of People That Have Returned to Work (n=26)

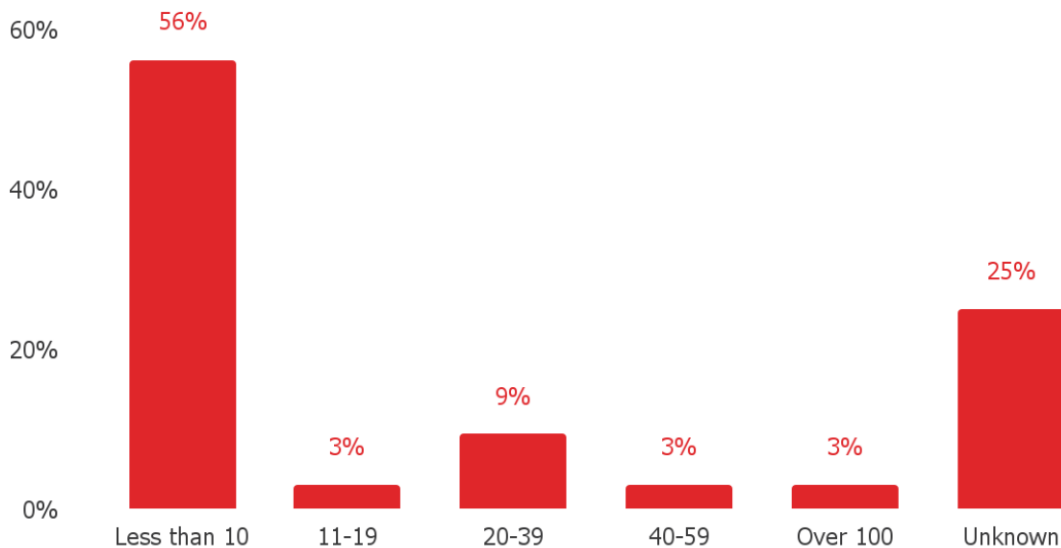


**71%** were aware of individuals returning to work after a job loss, with **65%** seeing **less than 10 individuals** served return to work.

Have you been successful in helping people with disabilities fill jobs in the community during the COVID-19 pandemic? (n=44)

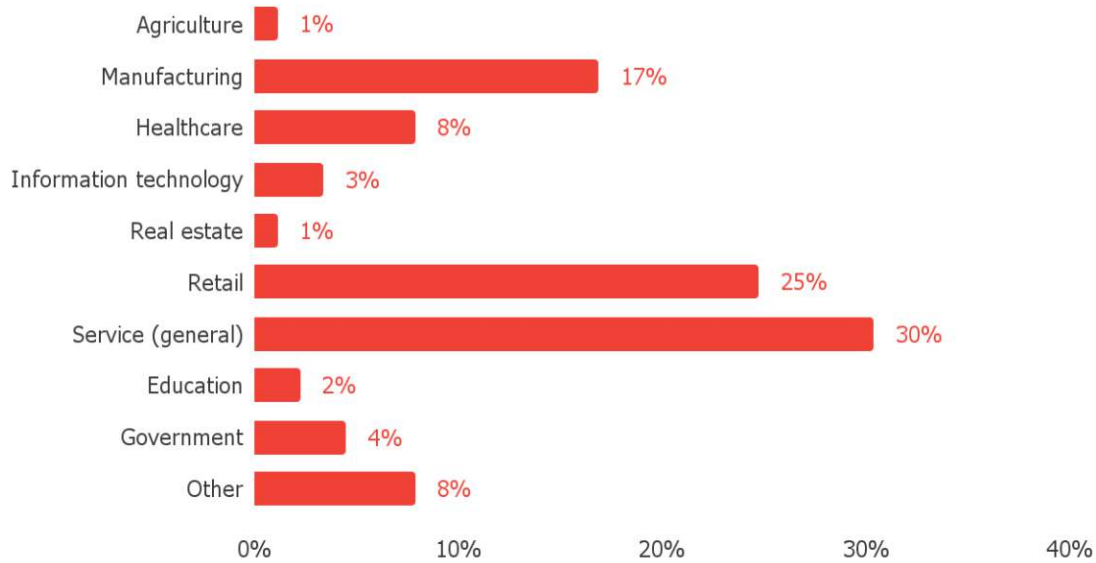


Number of Individuals Served That Obtained Jobs During the Pandemic (n=32)



**84%** were successful in helping those with disabilities obtain work.

### Primary Industries Experiencing Job Gains (n=89)

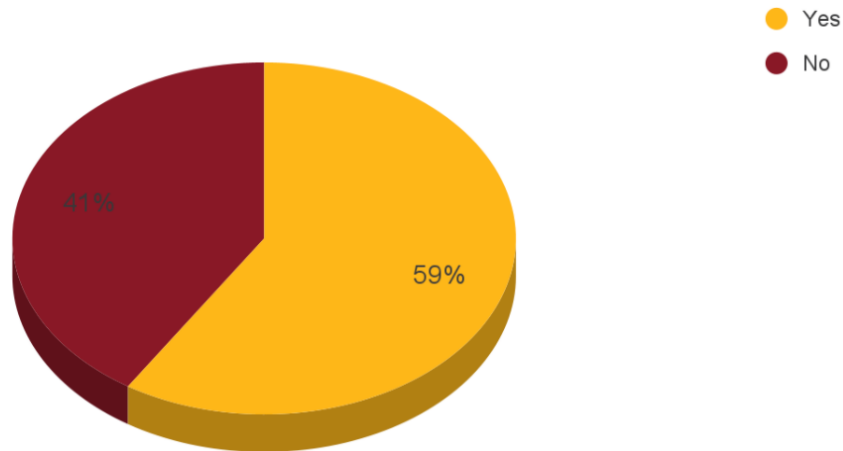


**3%** claimed that food/restaurant industries were experiencing job gains, and **2%** mentioned cleaning industries.

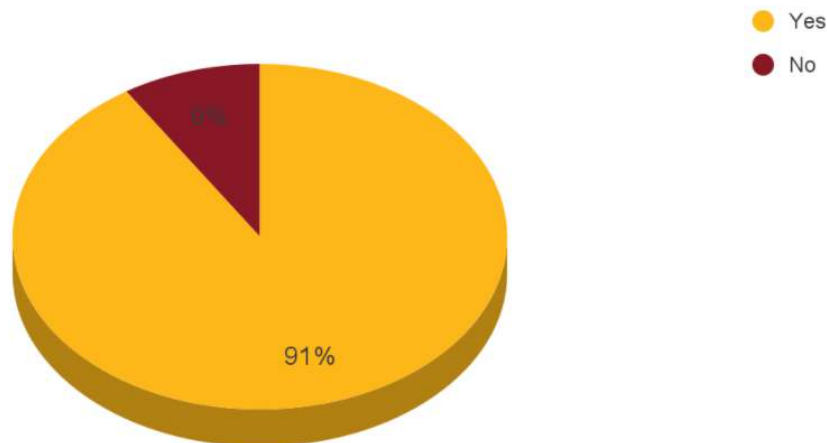


## Remote Supports

Were you utilizing remote/virtual supports to provide employment supports prior to COVID-19? (n=44)

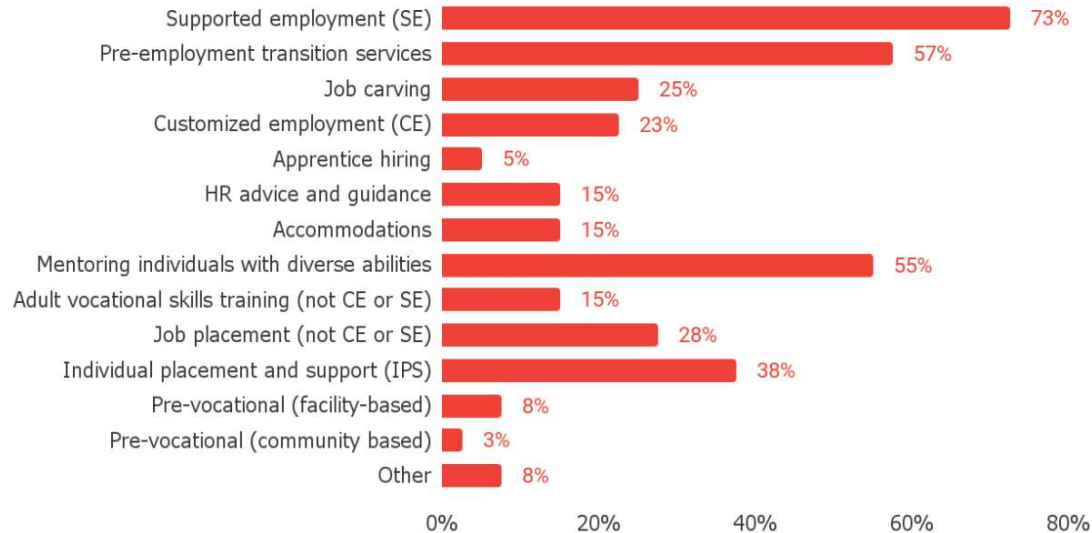


Are you currently utilizing remote/virtual supports to provide employment supports during the COVID-19 crisis? (n=44)



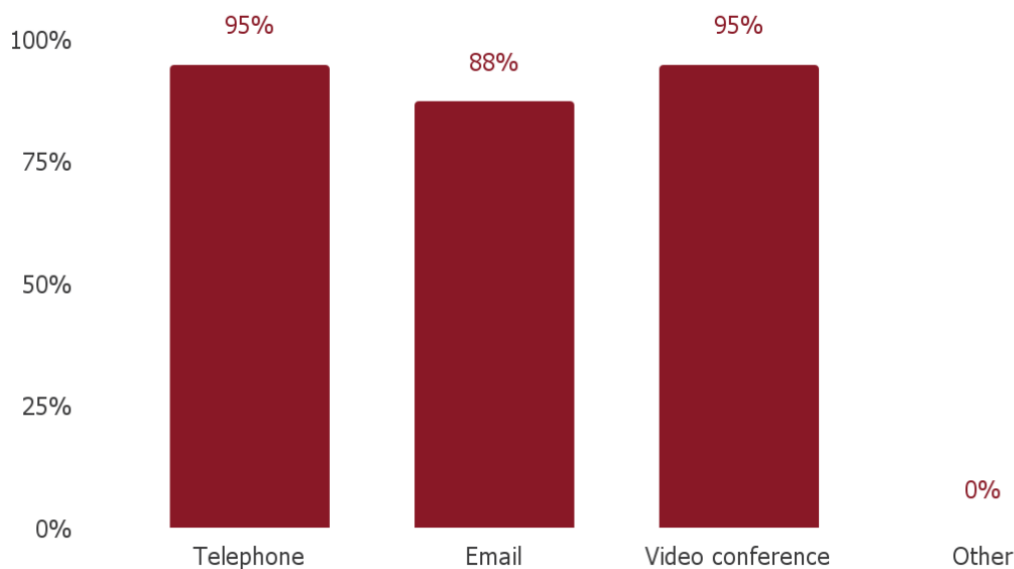
**59%** utilized virtual supports prior to COVID-19, and **91%** are currently utilizing those supports.

### Remote/Virtual Support Services Offered (n=40)



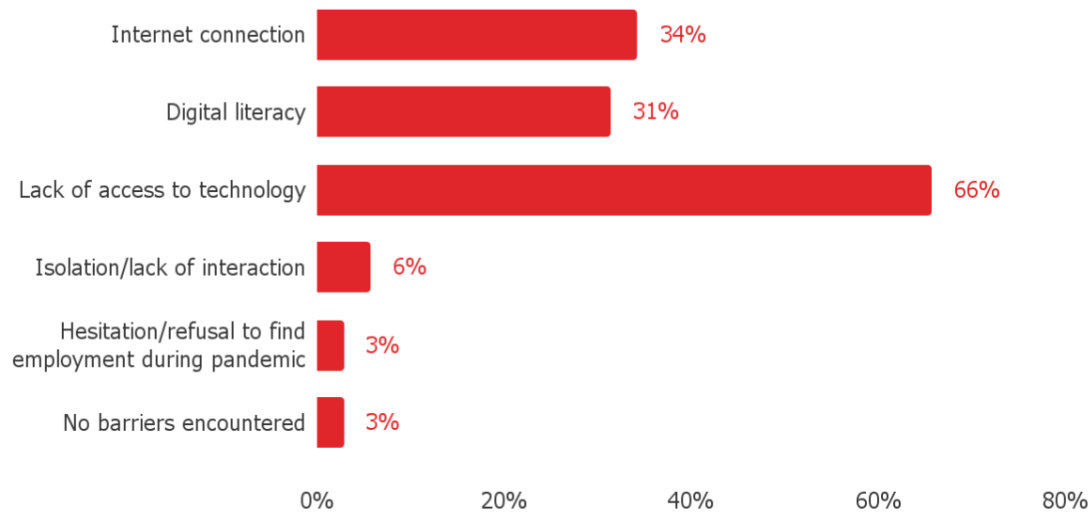
Supported employment was the service that the majority (73%) of organizations offered online.

### Modes of Providing Remote/Virtual Employment Supports (n=40)



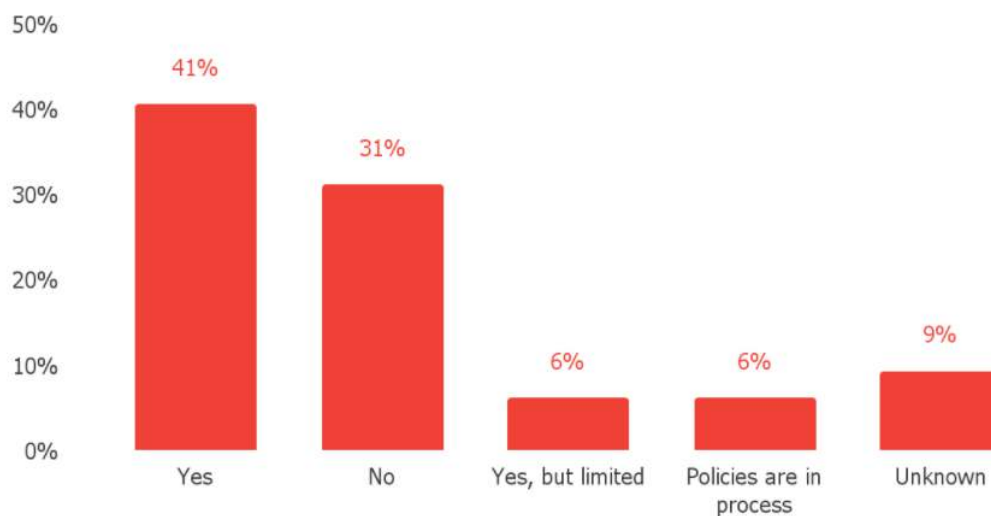


### Barriers to Success in Implementing Remote/Virtual Employment Supports (n=35)

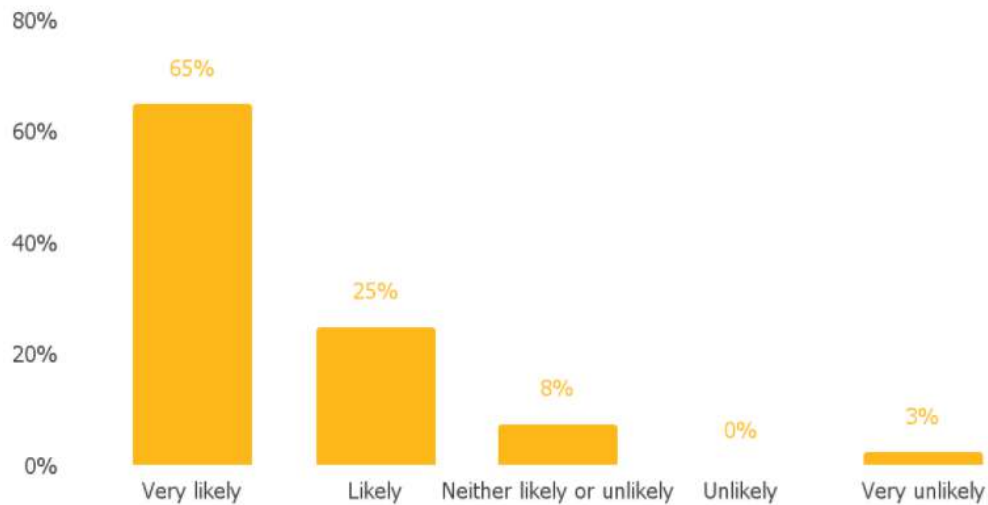


**66%** shared that the lack of access to technology was a barrier to the success of using and integrating virtual employment supports.

### Does your organization have policies to provide and fund virtual employment supports? (n=32)



### Likelihood of Continuing to Use Remote/Virtual Supports to Provide Employment Supports Post COVID-19 (n=40)

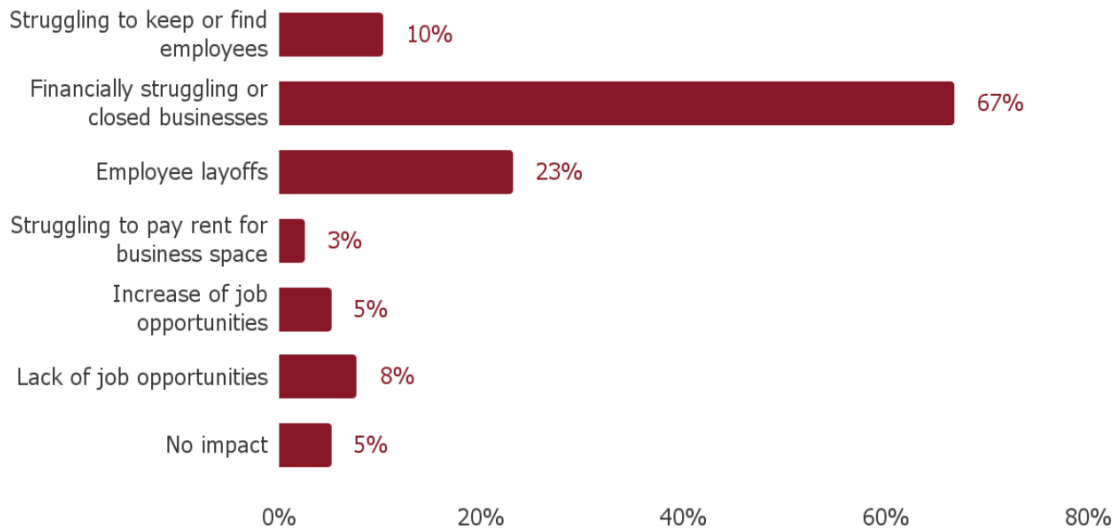


**65%** are very likely to continue using virtual supports in a future post COVID-19.



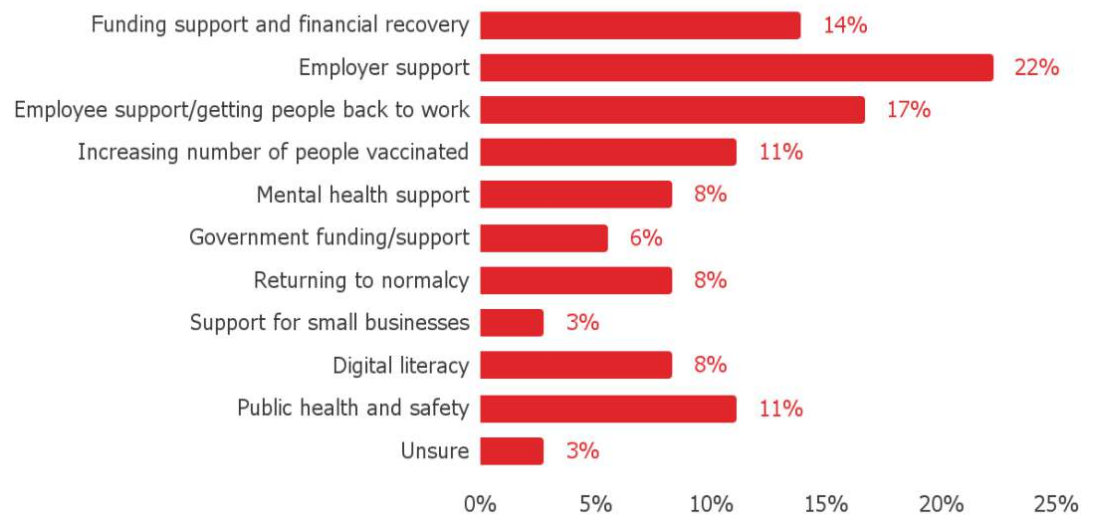
## Community & Economy Impact

Impacts on Local Economy and Business Community Due to COVID-19 (n=39)



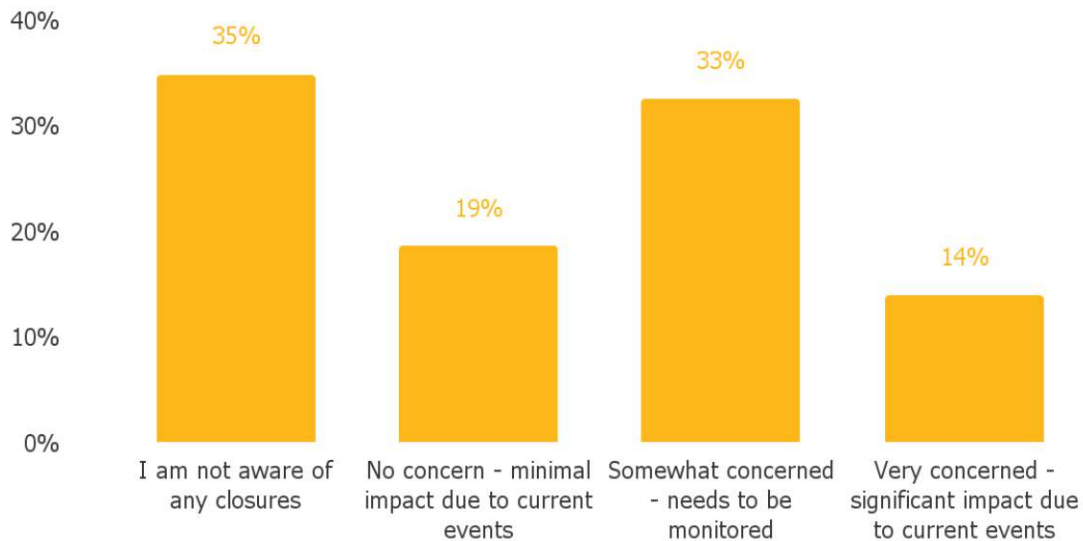
**67%** witnessed local businesses struggle financially or close.

Perceived Priority Issues to be Addressed During the Upcoming Months to Ensure Healthy Recovery for Disability Employment



**22%** believe that the main issue to be addressed in order to recover disability employment is employer support.

### Level of Concern Regarding How Current Events will Result in Widespread Closures of Supported Employment Service



**35%** of participants were not aware of any upcoming closures. **33%** were somewhat concerned and believed the situation would need to be monitored closely.



## Open Discussion

Participants were welcomed to describe or explain their concerns about the potential widespread closures of SESPS.

"My concern is that individuals will be out of a job for so long that it will be difficult for them to get back in the rhythm of things. It may be challenging for employers to bring them back. Some individuals are not allowed to go to their jobs because they have harsher restrictions set by the government for residential and group homes."

"We are working hard with our funders to ensure we are meeting if not exceeding our goals of getting Nova Scotians back to work. I'm not anticipating any closures of the Nova Scotia Works centres across the province."

"Persons living with disabilities require access, connection, and support to services to enable them to thrive and be contributing members of the community."

"There have been temporary closures, however; I think long-term, the employment opportunities will still be there. The caveat to that is whether agencies running small retail outlets as part of their employment support programs are able to sustain the programs due to changes in the retail dynamic and the move to more on-line shopping."

"How will organizations hang on while waiting for the economy to return to normal?"

"I just worry that people's inability to bring a lot of people into a smaller area will have people potentially choosing not to fill those spots with people who may require support or require more assistance."

"Getting employer support has been a struggle in the past, I fear with business in crisis employers will be unable to hire our clients."

"I am concerned that if we don't shift the narrative to continual education the movement could be set behind. Funders need to accept that though they want the providers to get the jobs- that there is a cultural narrative that needs education and collaboration vs the push to the employee. That there is the opportunity to get in the ground floor of the opportunity to be part of the rebuild that is occurring in the community."



# Thank You!



Thank you to all of the organizations who participated in this survey. We appreciate your time and dedication to making our sector healthier and more collaborative.

To learn more about Canadian Association for Supported Employment, as well as our other initiatives, please visit [supportedemployment.ca](https://supportedemployment.ca)

The Association of People Supporting Employment First can be visited and supported through [apse.org](https://apse.org)

