

Newry BID commissioned a survey last week to get consumer views on Newry City Centre's safe reopening plans, post lockdown. These findings should help members with their reopening plans. The survey is open until 7th June so we will continue to gather data. More detailed analysis for different sectors will follow in the coming days.

It has been taken by 535 people to date with 352 completing the entire survey. This is a strong samples size to gauge the views of local consumers.

Overview:

- **89.8% respondents are female**
- **92.7% are aged between 25-64**
- **81.2% live in the NMD Council area**
- **66.5% of people completed to survey on their mobile**

It is important to note the demographics of the survey respondents. If your customers/clients primarily fall into these categories, please ensure you take these findings into consideration in your reopening plans.

93.9% of respondents have access to a smart phone

This tells us that there are opportunities with apps or queuing systems, appointments or table service in restaurants and bars. Have a think about how you can utilise better digital communications to reach your customers.

Prior to lockdown 83.4% of respondents visited Newry city centre to shop, do business or spend leisure time at least once per week.

This does not decrease dramatically when people think ahead to post lockdown with **77.1%** saying they will continue to visit Newry City Centre to shop, do business or leisure time.

Where we do see a difference is in the frequency.

Prior to lockdown **24.2%** of people said they visited every day; while post lockdown this reduces to only **9.3%** who said they would visit every day.

25.1% visited at least once per week prior to lockdown. After lockdown this increases to **40.4%** who said they will visit at least once per week.

Analysing this data, it is important to factor in that your customers may be willing to return but not at the same frequency levels.

64.7% said they increased their online shopping during lockdown.

This may have been due to necessity and it will be interesting to follow up on this trend. It does however, show increased opportunity to utilise online channels as many businesses have already done.

Taking into account that people may visit the city centre less frequently and have already been using online more- 'Click and Collect' is another option for you to take into consideration.

54.3% of respondents said they would go back to shopping in physical shops in Newry city centre with the appropriate measures in place.

There has also been a move towards more local shops and essential shopping. **19.7%** said they would use very local shops and avoid the city centre while **18%** they will only go out for essential items and services.

This tells us that even when the lockdown is lifted, it may be sometime before we see footfall in the city centre returning to post COVID-19 numbers. It also gives the first indication of the importance of having social distancing measures in place for consumers.

We asked respondents what was important to them in terms of shopping or doing business when the lockdown eases.

The overwhelming response was that **72.6%** expect hand sanitizer to be available for customers/clients and staff.

Social distancing measures are also important to people.

- **54.7%** would like to see limits on the number of people allowed into premises
- **49.6%** would like to see clear social distancing enforcement- for example queue management
- **39.9%** would like to see clear social distancing signage

Consumers would like to see cashless payment options such as chip and pin with **30.8%** of respondents saying this was important to them.

Slightly less important was staff wearing masks and/or gloves with only **21.7%** of respondents saying this was important to them.

This tells us that consumers expect to see social distancing measures in place, they expect to be able to avail of hand sanitiser and they want to know that a business has taken all appropriate steps to keep customers and staff as safe as possible when reopening.

We also asked consumers about their holiday plans for this year.

37% said they would not be going anywhere this year while more than one quarter (**26.4%**) said they would be taking a staycation in the UK or Ireland. **18%** of people are cancelling their holiday plans they had already made while **19%** either have plans made or will be booking something later in the year.

This tells us that while the summer is traditionally quieter for trading there may be an opportunity to capitalise on more than **65%** of people saying they will stay at home or take a staycation this year.