CORONAVIRUS
CONTRACTOR SURVEY: IMPACTS AND ACTIONS
MAY 5, 2020

Ontario Construction Secretariat
RESEARCH DRIVEN. INDUSTRY FOCUSED.
Impact of Coronavirus on Construction Activity

- 98% of contractors have been impacted by the coronavirus to some extent, with more than half (52%) reporting that most or all of their work has stopped.
- When it comes to how much of their work has been impacted, contractors report on average that 64% of their existing work has stopped, and 65% of their upcoming work has been delayed.
- Supply chains have also been affected by the coronavirus, with 63% of contractors reporting medium to high impact.

Impact of April 3rd Provincial Shutdown Order

- Contractors report on average that Ontario’s April 3rd shutdown order impacted 62% of their construction activity.
- 63% of contractors agreed with the Province’s decision to shut down parts of the construction industry, 22% disagreed.

Financial Impact of Coronavirus

- Under current restrictions and with current government supports, 16% of construction firms expect they would go out of business within 3 months, another 28% would go out of business within 3 to 6 months.
- So far this year, 83% of contractors report that their revenue is down compared to the same point last year.
- On average, revenue has declined by 42%.
- The majority of construction firms (56%) expect that to stay in business they will need government support.

Top Contractor Concerns

- Contractors’ biggest concern right now is ensuring the health and safety of their workers and staff, followed by global recession and workforce productivity.
- Other prominent concerns include supply chain disruptions, keeping their firms in business, and their ability to meet contractual deadlines.

Actions Taken by Contractors

- The most common actions taken to lower risk of coronavirus spread on construction sites include: encouraging more-frequent hand washing (88%), increasing availability of hand sanitizer and hand-washing stations (85%) and establishing a procedure that allows workers to call attention to unsanitary conditions (84%).
- About three-quarters (74%) of contractors have laid off construction site workers, while 42% have laid off office staff.
- 55% of contractors have applied for government assistance, and 30% have taken out loans as a result of the coronavirus economic disruption.

Methodology

This survey was conducted via telephone with a sample of 200 ICI (Industrial, Commercial and Institutional) contractors from across Ontario between April 22-April 29, 2020. The margin of error for a sample of 200 is +/-6.9 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Seventy-two percent (72%) of the contractors surveyed were trade contractors and 28% were general contractors.

Note: On May 1st the Ontario government announced a partial reopening of certain categories of construction under strict safety guidelines to take effect May 4th. As this survey data was collected between April 22-29 any reference to work restrictions is based on the April 3rd shutdown conditions.
Impact of Coronavirus on Construction Activity

How individual construction firms report being impacted by the coronavirus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL IMPACT</td>
<td>All of their firm's work has stopped, All of their construction sites are closed</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAJOR IMPACT</td>
<td>Most of their firm's work has stopped</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MODERATE IMPACT</td>
<td>About half of their firm's work has stopped, about half continuing</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINIMAL IMPACT</td>
<td>Most of their firm's work is continuing</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO IMPACT</td>
<td>All of their firm's work is continuing, All of their construction sites are open</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Q “Which of the following best describes the impact of the coronavirus on your firm’s construction activities?”

On average, how much of individual firms’ work has been impacted by the coronavirus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Their firm’s construction activity has been stopped</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their firm’s scheduled work has been delayed</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q “What percentage of your firm’s construction activity has stopped because of the coronavirus?”

Q “Thinking of work that you were scheduled to start between now and the end of the year, what percentage of this work has now been delayed because of the coronavirus?”

Impact of coronavirus on supply chains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Impact</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q “How much of an impact has the coronavirus economic disruption had on your firm’s supply chains?”

How long to get back to business-as-usual if restrictions are lifted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than a month</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 months</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6 months</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-12 months</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 12 months</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q “If physical distancing measures and construction work restrictions were to be lifted today, how long would it take your firm to get back to business as usual?”
Impact of April 3rd Provincial Shutdown Order

How much of individual firms’ work was impacted by shutdown order

**62%**

On average, Ontario’s shutdown order impacted 62% of firms’ construction activity

“On April 3rd, the Ontario government ordered the shutdown of many categories of construction, but allowed some activities to continue. What percentage of the construction work your firm would normally be doing at this time was impacted by the order?”

Awareness and understanding of Ontario’s April 3rd shutdown order

- **41%** Very clear about whether your firm’s work is affected
- **30%** Somewhat clear about whether your firm’s work is affected
- **23%** Somewhat confused about whether your firm’s work is affected
- **6%** Very confused about whether your firm’s work is affected
- **1%** Not aware of the order

“Which of the following best describes your firm’s understanding of the April 3rd order to shut down parts of the construction industry?”

Support for Ontario’s April 3rd shutdown order

- **38%** Strongly agree
- **25%** Somewhat agree
- **16%** Neutral
- **15%** Somewhat disagree
- **7%** Strongly disagree

“How much did you agree or disagree with the government’s decision to shut down parts of the construction industry?”
Financial Impact of Coronavirus

83% of firms have less revenue than last year
56% of firms will need government support to stay in business
-42% revenue down on average

How long until firms go out of business under current restrictions

- Less than a month: 1%
- 1-3 months: 15%
- 3-6 months: 28%
- 6-12 months: 24%
- More than 12 months: 25%
- Don’t Know: 9%

Top 3 Contractor Concerns

Ensuring health and safety of workers and staff
Global Recession
Workforce Productivity

Intensity of Concern (Mean score on 7-point scale)

5.5  Ensuring health and safety of workers and staff
5.4  Global recession
5.1  Workforce productivity
5.0  Supply chain disruptions
4.9  Keeping your firm from going out of business
4.9  Ability to meet contractual deadlines
4.8  Ability to get skilled labour
4.7  Having enough information to make good decisions
4.6  Access to capital or debt / financial liquidity / cash flow
4.6  Getting government assistance

"Thinking of the revenue generated by your business from January 1st up to today’s date, is your firm’s revenue higher, lower, or the same compared to the same time period in 2019?" (Lower: 83%, Same: 11%, Higher: 7%)

"Do you expect your firm will need government support to stay in business?"

"Assuming current physical distancing measures, construction work restrictions and government business assistance stays in place, for how long could your firm sustain itself before going out of business?"

"How much of a concern are the following on a 7-point scale where 7 means a major concern, and 1 means not a concern at all?"
**Actions Taken by Contractors**

Actions taken by firms as a result of the coronavirus

- **42%** Laid off office staff
- **61%** Have office staff working from home
- **74%** Laid off construction site workers
- **43%** Financial support when workers can’t work
- **55%** Applied for government assistance
- **30%** Taken out business loans

**Level of difficulty in meeting sanitation requirements on construction sites**

- **Provide PPE**
  - Not at all: 23%
  - Low: 19%
  - Medium: 26%
  - High: 18%
  - Impossible: 6%
  - N/A: 9%

- **Provide hand sanitizer**
  - Not at all: 28%
  - Low: 18%
  - Medium: 21%
  - High: 23%
  - Impossible: 5%
  - N/A: 7%

- **Ensure work sites are adequately sanitized**
  - Not at all: 20%
  - Low: 24%
  - Medium: 29%
  - High: 9%
  - Impossible: 11%
  - N/A: 8%

- **Ensure washroom facilities are adequately sanitized**
  - Not at all: 23%
  - Low: 24%
  - Medium: 24%
  - High: 9%
  - Impossible: 7%
  - N/A: 13%

**Q** “Which of the following actions has your firm taken as a result of the coronavirus economic disruption?” (% who said “yes” displayed)

**Q** “How difficult has it been for your firm to fulfill following safety and sanitation requirements on work sites?”
Actions taken to lower risk of coronavirus spread on construction sites

- **81%** Provided instruction or training to workers on how to reduce risk of infection
- **70%** Provide additional PPE for tasks that require workers to be close together or work with a partner
- **65%** Send workers who exhibit or declare coronavirus symptoms home to self-isolate for 14 days
- **84%** Establish procedure for workers to call attention to conditions they believe are unsanitary
- **85%** Increase availability of hand sanitizer and/or hand-washing stations
- **79%** Change work practices to ensure workers are always 6 feet apart
- **77%** Delay tasks that require workers to be in close proximity
- **71%** Reduce the number of workers on-site at a given time
- **67%** Require workers to wear PPE like masks, face shields, and gloves
- **88%** Encourage more-frequent hand washing
- **73%** Ask workers who had returned from travel to self-isolate for 14 days
- **28%** Increase number of washroom facilities
- **16%** Check temperatures of workers
- **46%** Voluntarily shut down work sites

"For any work that your firm has done since the coronavirus pandemic began, which of the following actions have you taken on your work sites to lower the risk of virus spread?" (% who said “yes” displayed)
Contractor Comments on Coronavirus Impact and the Future of Construction

“Every major project has been pushed back and delayed. So it’s left a big gap in work available and project planning.”

“I’m expecting that there will be supply chain issues for the next 12 months.”

“It’s going to change the construction industry dramatically. It’s going to be a new world after this is done.”

“We are expecting a lot of changes to the construction industry and are looking forward to the new guidelines that will help keep our staff happy and healthy.”

“I’m worried that my clients will no longer be in business. The economy as a whole will take a big hit. It is going to be a lot worse than they are forecasting.”

“It’s made us more aware about keeping sites clean and social distancing. Even with the flu it will be mandatory for our firm that if you are sick, don’t come to work.”

“It’s going to change the construction industry dramatically. It’s going to be a new world after this is done.”

“I’m sure that in the future social distancing and washing and PPE equipment will be pretty active in the construction industry”

“In our discussions with subcontractors, we are coming up with a plan to work on sites that stay isolated and not mixing different companies. Just one trade on site at a time, which is going to be hard but has to be done.”

“Moving forward, there will be additional costs associated with ensuring the health and well-being of workers onsite but whose burden will it be, the contractors or the owners? It’s not a fair situation but it shouldn’t be the contractor who pays the entire cost. The level of productivity is a concern. Less productivity means more cost moving forward and that is a great concern.”

“Blue collar workers will realize they can have sanitary bathroom facilities if they choose. Gone are the days of those outhouse-like stalls without running water. They should be having proper sanitary bathroom facilities with running water.”

“I’m sure that in the future social distancing and washing and PPE equipment will be pretty active in the construction industry”

“Biggest concern is the health and well-being of workers onsite.”

“Do you have any comments you’d like to add about how the coronavirus has affected your business, or how you expect it to change the construction industry in the future?”

“It has changed everything.”