



## 06-2024 Unsheltered and Safety Slice of Employer One

### Foreword and Cautions on this Data

The Cyber Incident of 2024 had a profoundly negative impact on the ability of the Employer One Survey, jointly delivered by the Economic Development Division's Business Investment and Sector Development Section and Workforce Planning Hamilton, to reach its engagement target.

The incident began during the second week of a six-week data collection period for the survey. Therein, the proven method for securing business participation in this survey is through weekly e-mail blasts to Hamilton's businesses. In the early days of the Cyber Incident, Economic Development staff received direction that e-mail based marketing should not be leveraged. Despite efforts to compensate through Workforce Planning Hamilton and other partners, the survey fell well short of its typical target.

Consequently, the data produced during the 2024 delivery of the survey **do not meet a test of statistical significance**. The 264 partial and complete responses used in this analysis should be seen as **only representative of the businesses who completed the survey, and not extrapolated to reflect general business sentiment**.

Moreover, the Employer One survey is focused on collecting information relating to labour demand and general business conditions. The participation of Hamilton's Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) as marketing partners on the 2024 survey afforded slight changes to the survey methodology that allowed it to be valuable to this exercise.

Given the BIA's increased role in marketing the survey, approximately 50% of the 264 partial and complete responses used in this analysis came from businesses that self-reported as operating in at least one Hamilton BIA. As this analysis is not based on a statistically significant sample, it can not be claimed that this is technically an over-sample from BIA members. **However, the plurality of the data being informed by self-identified BIA members remains a caution on this data.**

Given the urgency of Council's direction to staff, these data should be seen as a snapshot of business sentiments in Q1 2024 that only reliably reflect those businesses who completed the survey.

## Summary Findings

One question in the survey asked respondents were asked to identify the topics that were having the most negative impact on their businesses from a list of choices. There was also an option to produce an open-ended response under the “other” heading.

From 264 total respondents, 238 identified at least one force having a negative impact on their business. Approximately 18.1% of those 238 respondents identified “Criminal activity and/or the perceived safety in the immediate area my business operates” as having a negative impact on their business. The full summary of this question’s findings are presented as Table 1.

**Table 1: Negative Impacts on Employer One Respondents, n=238**

Impacts	Responses	Percentage
Increased labour costs	135	56.7%
Recruitment difficulties of new employees	106	44.5%
Retention difficulties with existing employees	61	25.6%
A lack of employee productivity	61	25.6%
Other (please specify)	46	19.3%
<b>Criminal activity and/or the perceived safety in the immediate area my business operates</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>18.1%</b>
Loss of institutional knowledge through retirements	35	14.7%
Minimal public transportation availability to your work locations	33	13.9%
Foundational skill gaps (reading, writing, math, and digital technology) of employees and candidates	33	13.9%
The evolving/changing rules, protocols and status of post-secondary, trade or other adult education institutions and programs	20	8.4%

Survey respondents were also asked to identify if their business operated within one of Hamilton’s BIAs. Among 264 respondents, 132, or 50% of respondents, reported that they operated within one or more of Hamilton’s BIAs. A total of 12 respondents reported they operated in two or more BIAs.

The 43 respondents who reported “Criminal activity and/or the perceived safety in the immediate area my business operates” as a major barrier represented 46 establishments operating in Hamilton BIAs. This figure is possible because individual respondents could report operating in multiple BIAs. Among the 43 respondents who cited “Criminal activity/perceived safety” as a challenge, only 7 reported not operating within one of Hamilton’s BIAs.

In absolute terms, respondents from International Village BIA, Downtown Hamilton BIA, and Stoney Creek BIA reflected the largest number of respondents whose establishments were operating within a BIA and experiencing “Criminal activity/perceived safety” as a negative impact. Table 2 breaks these data down by individual BIA.

**Table 2: BIA Respondents reporting Criminal activity/perceived safety as negative impact, n=132.**

Business Improvement Area	Establishments where "criminal activity/perceived safety" is a negative impact	Establishments represented by respondents	Percentage
Ancaster	2	10	20.0%
Barton Village	3	13	23.1%
Concession Street	1	2	50.0%
Downtown Dundas	2	7	28.6%
Downtown Hamilton	16	52	30.8%
International Village	7	12	58.3%
Locke Street	1	2	50.0%
Ottawa Street	2	10	20.0%
Stoney Creek	6	37	16.2%
Waterdown	2	15	13.3%
Westdale Village	4	4	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>28.0%</b>

Among the 46 respondents who selected “other” as a negative impact, only one respondent noted unsheltered people/encampments/safety in their response. The majority of responses focused on economic issues, labour issues, and government issues.

## Open Ended Comments

Among the 34 survey respondents who provided suggestions, feedback, other opinions on the Employer One survey, approximately 56% reflected a negative sentiment, 35% reflected a neutral sentiment and 6% reflected a positive sentiment.

Statements that mentioned unsheltered people, encampments, or perceptions of safety, regardless of sentiment accounted for approximately 26.6% of open-ended responses and 3.4% of the total responses in the data set used for this report. The full and unedited text of those responses are captured below.

### Open Ended Comments

- 1) I enjoy working in here, The only issue that we have and makes our work harder are some of the homeless guys With most of them we have no issue.
- 2) Crime, drugs, and homelessness are ruining our business environment. Every day I worry about my staff and what crime will occur at my business. Start with the simple things first! Secondly, spending more money than you have (e.g. The Hamilton LRT) will only burden society with debt and destroy businesses in the future. Printing money to pay for our debt is a regressive tax that undermines the strength of our purchasing power. I am sure that the City of Hamilton will want to raise taxes even more when this happens because there will be no provincial or federal funds left to feed the City's reckless spending.
- 3) Improve safety downtown. Our employees are being approached, chased and harrassed on a regular basis. This is making it hard to encourage people into the office. Also, our organization has offices in Waterloo and Toronto. Because of the situation downtown, people don't want to come to Hamilton and prefer to be based out of other office locations.
- 4) Safety and security in the downtown is a priority. Our downtown store manages many external factors that impact it's productivity and resources compared to our stores outside of the downtown.
- 5) Safety of our staff is number one. We have been dealing with this since the return to office. We are considering leaving the downtown core and most likely Hamilton when our lease is up.
- 6) Theft is on the raise and police do not investigate or come when called. People bothering customers for money and being aggressive in the parking lot and the police dont deal with the situation
- 7) There is an attitude out there of pay me more but I want to work less and not too hard. It used to be our hardest workers got raises but now everyone makes the same so why work hard if the weakest link gets paid the same. rising min wage will only result in less people hired. I had double the employees in 2010. Higher wages means higher prices in the shop(inflation). The consumer is not willing to pay, leading to lower sales, less employees and business closures. You can already see Barton, King and Main street business closing. This city is eroding and turning into a tent city ghetto. I have had my business in Hamilton for 25 years and have never seen it this bad. How can you attract people to your business if they are harassed by pan handlers and people urinating on the street and don't feel safe. Called the police and they say their hands are tied by politicians. Hopefully there is change before its too late.

- 8) To attract educated, quality individuals to Hamilton you first need to clean up the city. Crime is a huge problem. Decaying infrastructure is an issue. High property taxes with little perceived value. This city has been mismanaged for decades. Investment compared to other cities is low.
- 9) Would love to see a thriving, inviting downtown to open up a business, as of now, rents/real estate are prohibitive, outside of a very few prime blocks, downtown is scary, even including those prime block after dark. Crime is open and apparent, drug use is rampant, homeless issues impact customer counts in the extreme.