



# **Encampments: Impacts on Businesses in Hamilton Survey Summary**

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## SURVEY SUMMARY

### Survey Methodology and Response

The Encampments: Impacts on Businesses in Hamilton Survey was developed to collect feedback from Hamilton business owners about impacts of encampments on their businesses. The survey was made available online through a survey link that was circulated by the City of Hamilton Economic Development Division to business community contacts such as the Chambers of Commerce, Hamilton Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), etc.

A copy of the survey tool is provided in Appendix A.

The survey collection period was between July 3, 2024 and July 26, 2024. During this time 342 surveys were submitted where respondents indicated owning or operating a business in Hamilton and provided a response to at least one (1) of the following three (3) questions.

- What impact has the presence of encampments in Hamilton had on your business(es)?
- Please describe the impacts that encampments have had on your business and/or customers.
- Do you have any suggestions for how the City of Hamilton could support businesses with the impacts of encampments?

As the survey was set up to be accessed via a generic online link, it was possible for individuals to access and submit a survey more than once. An analysis of the submitted survey responses and associated response metadata identified a few instances of consecutive survey submissions that potentially may have been from respondents completing the survey multiple times. Analysis of the survey results with and without these survey submissions showed that the overall trends of the survey results are not greatly impacted by these submissions. Therefore, all responses have been included in the survey response summary presented in this document.

## Key Results Summary

- Approximately 79% of respondents indicated operating a business in at least one (1) of the Hamilton BIAs.
- The BIAs where respondents own or operate a business were most often the Downtown Hamilton BIA (40%), the International Village BIA (16%), the Barton Village BIA (10%) and the Stoney Creek Village BIA (10%).
- The majority (82%) of respondents indicated that the presence of encampments has had an impact on business whether it be extreme (31%), major (23%), moderate (20%) or minor (9%).
- The top five (5) most common impacts encampments have had on businesses and/or customers include:
  - Garbage and waste, including drugs paraphernalia and human waste being left around businesses
  - Safety concerns from customers, business owners and employees
  - Thefts from the business/business property, vandalism or break-ins to business property and/or vehicles
  - Loss of business, revenues, customers and/or business opportunities, increased costs, and other impacts to businesses
  - Customers and employees not wanting to be in the area
- The top five (5) most common suggestions for how the City of Hamilton can support businesses with the impacts of encampments include:
  - Providing supports to the homeless individuals such as housing, washrooms, addictions support, mental health supports etc.
  - Removing encampments or moving them away from business areas, homes, parks, downtown and/or schools
  - Increasing police presence and patrol, enforcing laws and arresting offenders
  - Defining encampment policies, by-laws and/or having designated locations for encampments
  - Assist with “clean-up” of the city, garbage, waste, sidewalks, public spaces, etc.

## Detailed Survey Results

This section provides a detailed summary of the survey responses collected.

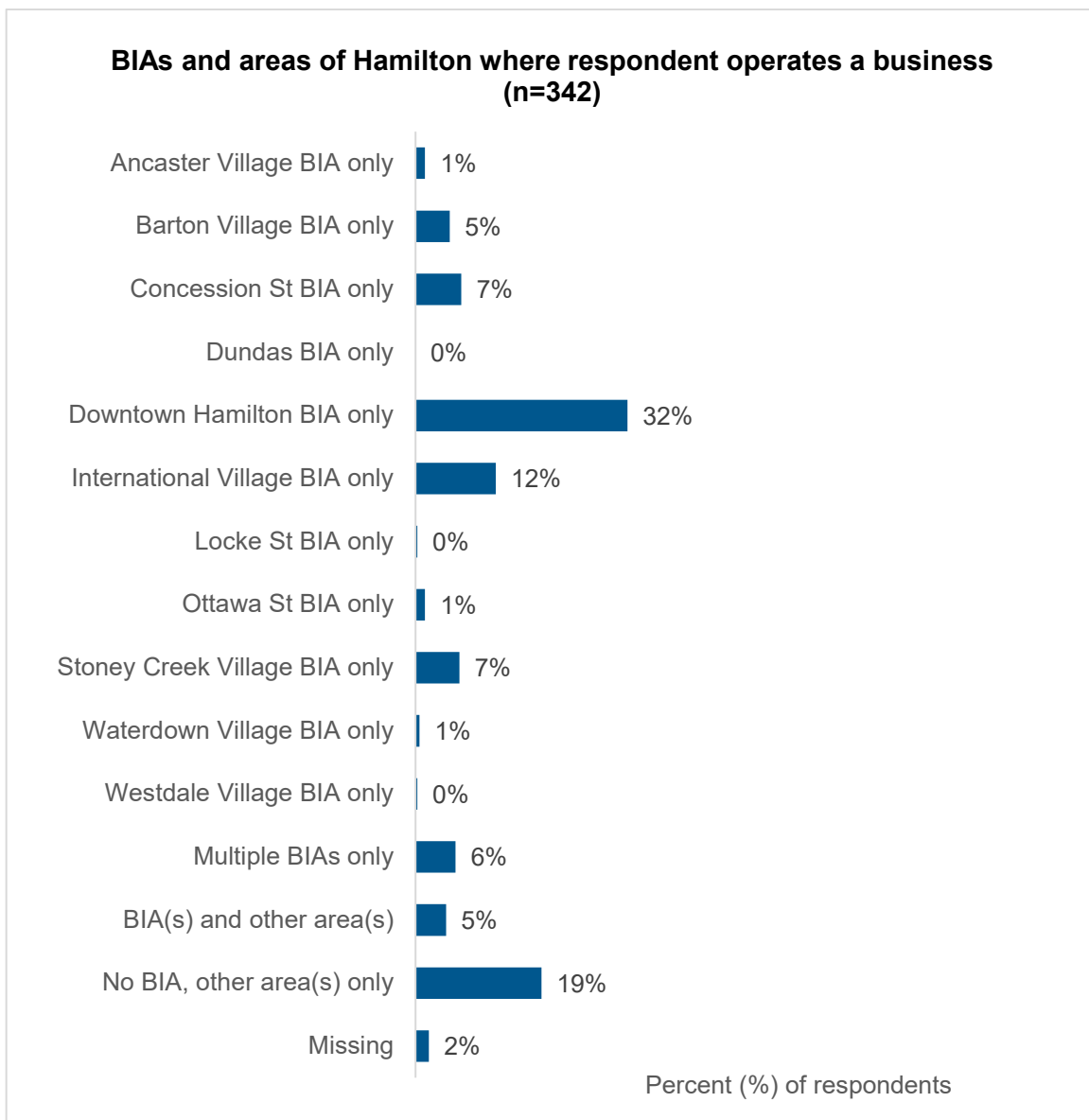
### Notes:

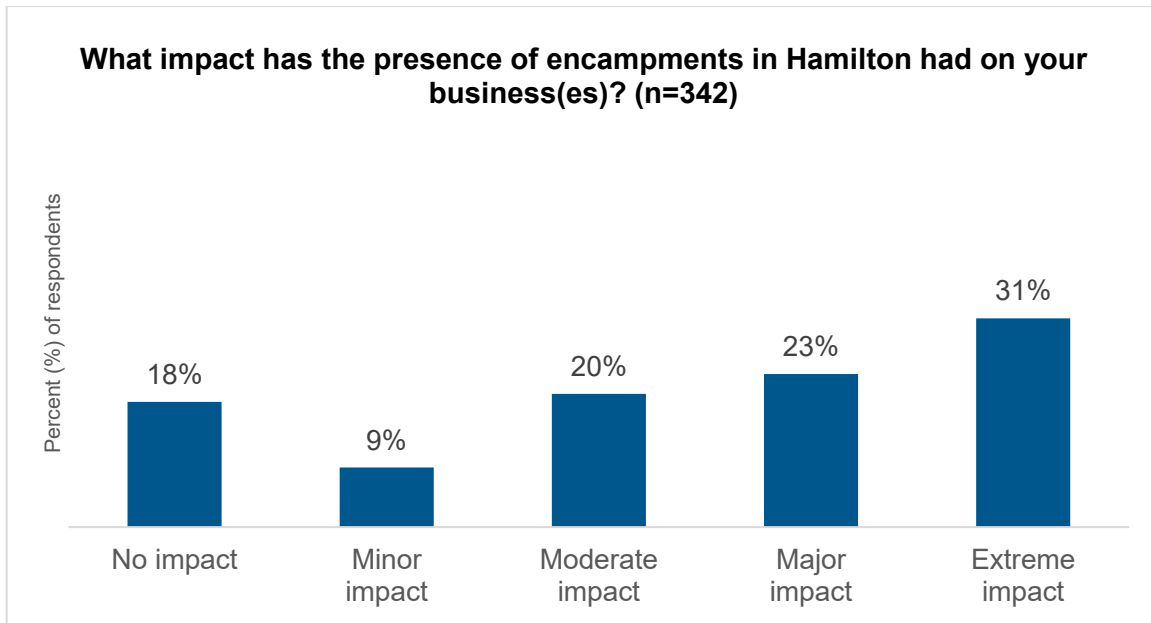
- The universe of respondents for questions may vary due to incomplete survey responses and/or survey skip logic. The universe of respondents denoted by n, is provided in brackets for each survey question summary.
- Some of the questions were multi-response questions in which respondents may select more than one response. The sum of response category totals may exceed 100% for these questions.
- Due to rounding, the sum of single select response categories may not total 100%.



Respondents that indicated operating a business in “other area(s) in Hamilton” were asked to provide the postal codes of their business. There were 77 text responses provided to this question which included postal codes or references to areas across the City of Hamilton with more common responses referencing areas that can be mapped to Ward 2, Ward 3 and/or Ward 10.

The following chart provides a further breakdown of the combinations of respondents’ selected response options for the question about where they own or operate a business.





**Please describe the impacts that encampments have had on your business and/or customers. (n=279)**

Respondents that indicated being impacted by encampments were asked to describe the impacts of encampments on their business and/or customers. Approximately 79% (218) of impacted respondents provided a text response to describe the impacts.

The following table contains a summary of the most common theme areas identified by respondents, listed with the more common ones first. The approximate number of mentions of each theme area is provided in brackets.

Themes from comments about encampment impacts	Includes comments and concerns primarily related to ...
Garbage and waste (~121 mentions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- generic references to garbage and/or waste</li> <li>- drug paraphernalia and/or needles</li> <li>- human waste such as urine, feces and vomit</li> </ul>
Safety (~110 mentions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- customers not feeling safe</li> <li>- owner and/or employees not feeling safe</li> <li>- generic references to safety, feeling unsafe</li> <li>- adding or increasing security measures such as hiring security, installing security cameras and/or having safety plans</li> </ul>

Themes from comments about encampment impacts	Includes comments and concerns primarily related to ...
<p>Theft, vandalism and crime (~91 mentions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- thefts from businesses, property being stolen</li> <li>- property damage and/or vandalism</li> <li>- property break-ins, vehicle break-ins</li> <li>- generic references to crime, mischief etc.</li> </ul>
<p>Business operations and financials (~78 mentions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- generic references to business being impacted, disrupted and/or affected</li> <li>- reduced business/sales, loss in revenues</li> <li>- losing customers and/or business opportunities</li> <li>- increased costs for security, cleanup, staffing etc.</li> <li>- having to lock doors, limiting/changing customer access to business</li> <li>- changing business hours</li> <li>- employees quitting, difficulty retaining and/or hiring employees</li> <li>- being unable to use outdoor spaces or hold outdoor events</li> <li>- businesses moving out or considering moving</li> </ul>
<p>People avoiding area (~68 mentions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- customers hesitant/reluctant to visit, deterred</li> <li>- customers avoiding downtown, core, lower city and/or area</li> <li>- employees reluctant to work in the office and/or downtown</li> <li>- reduced foot traffic/pedestrians</li> </ul>
<p>Drugs and alcohol (~67 mentions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- drug use and/or drug transactions</li> <li>- individuals under the influence of drugs</li> <li>- alcohol use</li> <li>- alcohol intoxicated individuals</li> </ul>
<p>Harassment, violence, etc. (~59 mentions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- owner, employees and/or customers being harassed, threatened and/or verbally abused</li> <li>- owner, employees and/or customers being attacked or subjected to violence</li> </ul>



Themes from comments about encampment impacts	Includes comments and concerns primarily related to ...
<p>Trespassing and loitering (~53 mentions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- people loitering near/around/outside businesses, buildings, entrances/exits etc.</li> <li>- people trespassing and/or entering business establishments</li> </ul>
<p>Feedback, reputation and image (~44 mentions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- customer feedback and complaints about the area, feeling unsafe and/or negative experiences</li> <li>- the negative image/impressions about the city and/or area, reputation damage</li> </ul>
<p>Panhandling and demands (~23 mentions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- owners, employees and/or customers being approached by panhandlers</li> <li>- demands to use business' phone or washrooms</li> </ul>
<p>Health and well-being of individuals (~20 mentions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- individuals with mental health related issues</li> <li>- individuals with health issues, unconscious or passed out near businesses</li> </ul>

Other less commonly mentioned impacts of encampments include and is not limited to: need for police assistance, access to parks, use of propane tanks, open fires, indecent exposure, sex acts, property value, etc. The complete set of verbatim responses is provided in Appendix B.

**Do you have any suggestions for how the City of Hamilton could support businesses with the impacts of encampments? (n=342)**

Approximately 74% (253) of respondents provided a response to this question. The following table contains a summary of the most common themes of suggestions identified by respondents, listed with the more common ones first. The approximate number of mentions of each theme area is provided in brackets.

Themes from suggestions for how City could support businesses	Includes comments and concerns primarily related to ...
Providing supports to homeless (~138 mentions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- providing people with housing/shelter</li> <li>- generic references to providing supports, help and/or assistance to people</li> <li>- providing washrooms, addictions support, mental health support, social services, food etc.</li> </ul>
Remove or move encampments (~100 mentions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- generic references to removing encampments</li> <li>- removing or moving encampments away from businesses, BIAs, homes, parks, downtown and/or schools</li> </ul>
Police services and functions (~85 mentions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- more policing, patrolling, police presence</li> <li>- enforcing laws, arresting offenders</li> <li>- quicker response times</li> </ul>
Encampment protocols (~61 mentions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- having encampment policies, laws, by-laws and/or bans</li> <li>- designated locations for encampments</li> </ul>
Garbage, waste and cleanliness (~15 mentions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- cleanup of garbage and/or trash</li> <li>- cleanup of sidewalks, alleys, public spaces etc.</li> <li>- generic references to “clean-up” of area</li> </ul>

Other less commonly mentioned suggestions for how the City of Hamilton could support businesses with the impacts of encampments include and is not limited to: quicker response times from Police/City/by-law etc., reducing taxes, providing funding or incentives, consulting and working with businesses, getting support from other levels of government etc. The complete set of verbatim responses is provided in Appendix B.

## APPENDIX A: SURVEY TOOL

### Encampments: Impacts Felt by Businesses in Hamilton

Hamilton Economic Development, on behalf of City Council, are conducting a survey of Hamilton's business community to better understand what impacts the presence of encampments in the City have had on their businesses and customers.

The information collected through this survey will be used to identify any recurring issues facing the city's business community as well as identify any recurring suggestions for how the City could better support businesses.

The information will be transmitted to City Council for their information via a staff report tentatively scheduled for the August 12, 2024 meeting of the General Issues Committee.

Important information about the survey:

- Participation in the survey is completely voluntary, you can choose to answer or skip any question.
- Responses are anonymous; collected information will only be reported in a summary format that will not identify individuals/businesses.

Thank you for your participation and feedback.

Q01. Do you own or operate a business in Hamilton?

- Yes  
 No

→ If [No] - skip out of survey

### Encampments: Impacts Felt by Businesses in Hamilton

Q02. Which of the following areas of Hamilton do you own or operate a business in?  
Select all that apply.

- Ancaster Village BIA
- Barton Village BIA
- Concession St BIA
- Dundas BIA
- Downtown Hamilton BIA
- International Village BIA
- Locke St BIA
- Ottawa St BIA
- Stoney Creek Village BIA
- Waterdown Village BIA
- Westdale Village BIA
- Other area(s) in Hamilton, please provide the postal code(s): {OPEN TEXT}

Q03. What impact has the presence of encampments in Hamilton had on your business?

- No impact
- Minor impact
- Moderate impact
- Major impact
- Extreme impact

→ If [No impact] - skip to Q05

Q04. Please describe the impacts that encampments have had on your business and/or customers. {OPEN TEXT}

Q05. Do you have any suggestions for how the City of Hamilton could support businesses with the impacts of encampments? {OPEN TEXT}