



# WORKFORCE RESET

*Surrey Labour Market Intelligence and Impact Reports*

March 2021 LMI Report #6 (until end of January 2021)

**\*\*THE ONLY SURREY-FOCUSED LABOUR MARKET REPORT\*\***

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# Surrey Board of Trade COVID-19 Surrey Labour Market Intelligence Report #6

## March 2021 (till end of January)

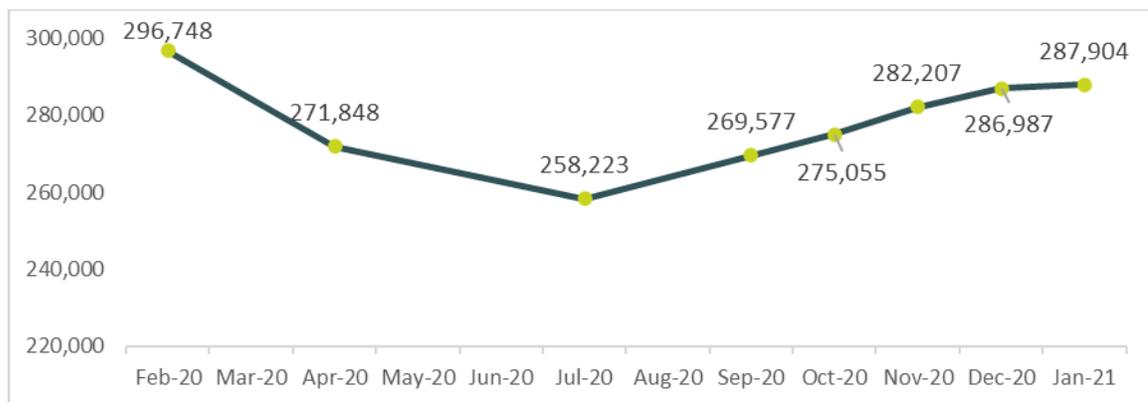
**\*\*THE ONLY SURREY-FOCUSED LABOUR MARKET REPORT\*\***

For the first time, there is up-to-date and regular Surrey-specific labour market data.

This is the sixth of a series of monthly SBOT Surrey Labour Market Intelligence Reports on COVID-related impacts on the Surrey labour market, including the best available quantitative, qualitative and anecdotal information on implications for Surrey employers, workers and service providers. This includes a brief baseline summary on how Surrey's labour market looked before 2020 and how it is evolving during the pandemic, particularly from a business and workforce perspective to inform decision-making and planning on recovery and resilience.

### HIGHLIGHTS

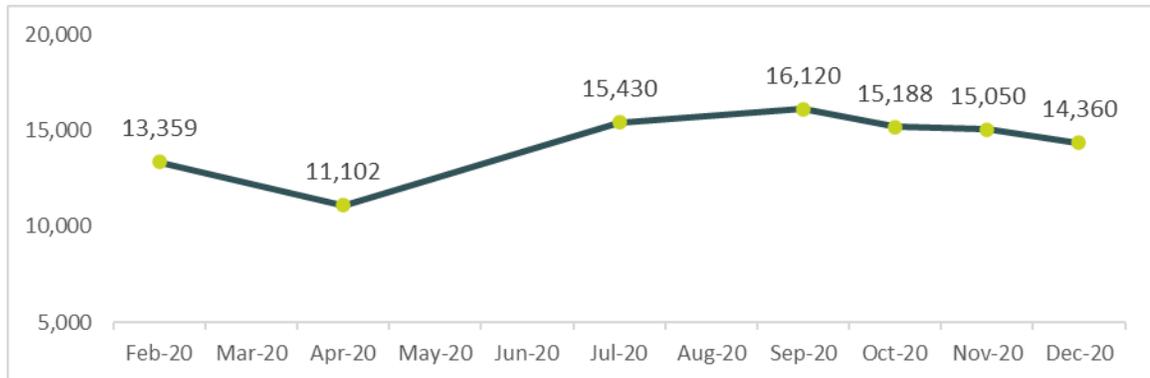
- **NOTE** - Labour Force Survey (LFS) data provided by Statistics Canada up until December 2020 was based on population counts from the 2011 Census of Population. As of January 2021, the estimates have been adjusted to reflect the population counts from the 2016 Census. As a result, you will see some minor changes in numbers from previously published SBOT Labour Market Intelligence Reports. All of the numbers for 2019 and 2020 provided in this report have been updated based on the revised labour force data from Statistics Canada.
- The total estimated net deficit of jobs in Surrey since February is just under 9,000 jobs, down from a peak of over 38,000 jobs lost.
- While January 2021 still showed an increase in the total number of new jobs, it was the slowest month of growth since July 2020 (over 6 months ago).
- Since the end of July 2020, Surrey has seen an upward trajectory in the number of jobs, recovering almost 30,000 of those jobs (over 75%) with almost half of these recovered jobs being attributed to the last quarter of 2020.



Employment in Surrey (Feb 2020 – Jan 2021)  
Adapted from Table 14-10-0379-01, Statistics Canada

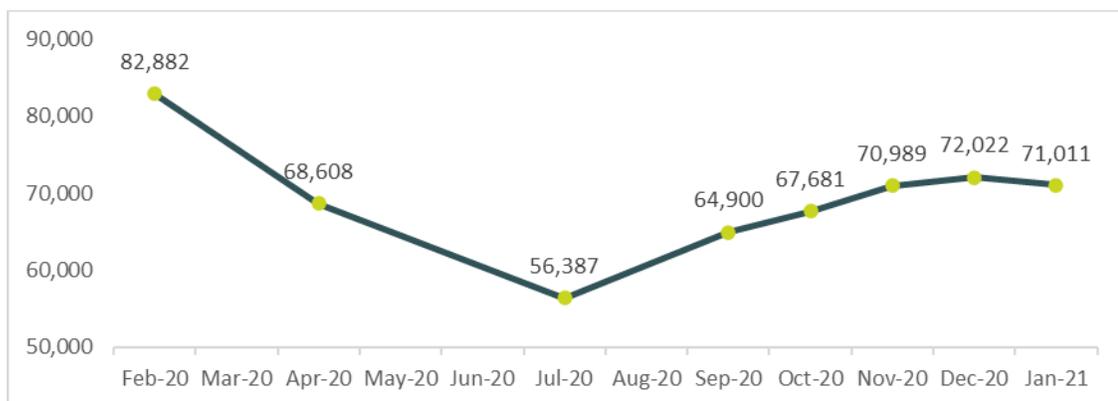
- Jobs in the Agriculture, Forestry, Finishing, Mining, Quarrying, Oil & Gas industry surged early in 2020. Jobs in the industry peaked in July and have seen fluctuations since, but the number of jobs remains well above the pre-pandemic levels of February 2020.

- The industries that have seen the strongest recovery, in terms of number of jobs recovered from December 2020 to January 2021, include: Health Care & Social Assistance (approximately 773 jobs); followed by Professional, Scientific & Technical Services (approximately 746 jobs) and Business, Building & Other Support Services (approximately 570 jobs).
- Occupations in Education, Law & Social, Community & Government Services continued to see an upward trend, with jobs in these occupations matching their February 2020 levels in January 2021.
- Manufacturing & Utilities occupations show an overall net gain of jobs when compared to February 2020 (approximately 1,000 jobs), however these occupations have continually posted a job loss in every month of Q4 2020.



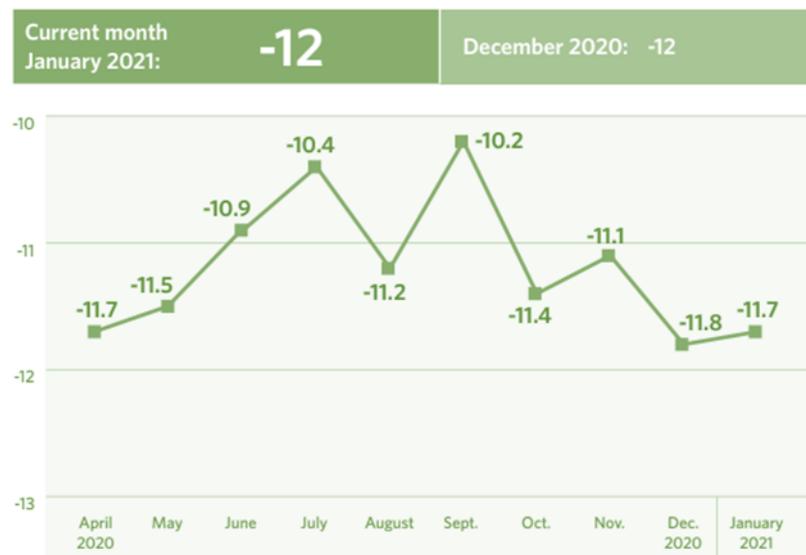
Gain/Loss of Jobs in Manufacturing & Utilities Occupations (Feb 2020 - Dec 2020)  
Adapted from Table: 14-10-0313-01, Statistics Canada

- Employment losses by occupation in January 2021 were seen in Sales & Services (approximately 1,000 jobs), Business, Finance & Administration (over 500 jobs) and Art, Culture, Recreation & Sport occupations (approximately 495 jobs) in Surrey.
- While Sales & Services occupations had seen a steady increase in jobs in the last half of 2020, these occupations posted a significant loss in January 2021 and have seen the greatest overall loss in Surrey (over 12,000 jobs lost since the beginning of the pandemic). This may be due to stronger restrictions in the last quarter of 2020.



Gain/Loss of Jobs in Sales & Services Occupations (Feb 2020 - Jan 2021)  
Adapted from Table: 14-10-0381-01, Statistics Canada

- Based on SBOT's Pulse Survey #2, 1.16% of respondents have closed their Surrey businesses permanently, while 6.4% have temporarily closed. These numbers have increased when compared to the responses from October 2020, up from 0% and 5.3%, respectively. The other respondents are on a continuum in terms of degree of opening;
  - 12.79% have partially re-opened;
  - 23.84% have mostly or fully re-opened;
  - 15.12% have seen their business increased; and,
  - 15.12% have experienced no impact.
- When asked when they expect business to return to pre-COVID staffing and revenue levels, 22% of Surrey businesses indicated that they were now back to pre-pandemic levels and another 14% expected this to be the case within the first half of 2021. 37% of respondents indicated that they do not expect to reach pre-pandemic levels of staffing and revenue until at least 2022, while another almost 2% indicated that they do not expect to ever reach the same levels.
- In January 2021, the overall Mental Health Index (MHI) score for Canadians was reported to be -11.7 (or 11.7 points lower than the pre-pandemic benchmark), up slightly from December's -11.8.
- Working Canadians are reporting mental health scores that are equivalent to those reported by the most distressed working Canadians prior to the pandemic.



Overall Mental Health Index April 2020 to January 2021  
 Morneau Shepell 'The Mental Health Index Report' – Canada January 2021

- The MHI sub-score for the Isolation category is at the lowest point since the inception of the MHI.
- Managers have a lower MHI score (-13.2) than those in non-managerial roles (-10.7) and employees working for companies with 51-100 employees have the lowest MHI (-15.7) followed by those working for companies with 101-500 employees (-13.3).

**Sources:**

*Statistics Canada.* [Table 14-10-0379-01 Employment by industry, three-month moving average, unadjusted for seasonality \(x 1,000\)](#)

*Statistics Canada.* [Table 14-10-0381-01 Employment by occupation, three-month moving average, unadjusted for seasonality \(x 1,000\)](#)

*SBOT Surrey Pulse Survey #2.* <https://businessinsurrey.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Final-January-2021-Pulse-Survey-2-Report-reviewed.pdf>

*Morneau Shepell 'The Mental Health Index Report' – Canada January 2021.* Retrieved from <https://www.morneaushepell.com/sites/default/files/assets/paragraphs/resource-list/canadaengmhidecember2020final.pdf>

# 1. COVID-19 Employer, Labour Force and Workforce Impacts in January 2021

## Surrey COVID-19 Employment Impacts: Estimates extrapolated from Statistics Canada's 2016 Census and 2020 Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey (January 2021)

For the first time, Surrey has Surrey-specific labour market data! This section compares employment changes in Surrey from 2019 and for each month from February 2020 through January 2021 to show the employment impacts of COVID-19.

This report is prepared by Human Capital Strategies in conjunction with SBOT.

Please note that until December 2020, the Labour Force Data provided by Statistics Canada was based on population counts from the 2011 Census of Population. As of January 2021, the estimates have been adjusted to reflect the population counts from the 2016 Census. As a result, you will see some minor changes in numbers from previously published Labour Market Intelligence Reports. All of the numbers for 2019 and 2020 provided in this report have been updated based on the revised labour force data from Statistics Canada.

### Surrey COVID-19 Employment Impacts BY INDUSTRY – 2019 to January 2021

Based on estimates from the *Labour Force Survey* (LFS), the table below shows the structure of the Surrey labour market in 2019 with almost 300,000 employed, and employment being led by service industries such as Wholesale & Retail Trade (almost 47,000), Health Care & Social Services (over 32,000) and Transportation & Warehousing (almost 28,000). Strong goods industries in Surrey are Construction (over 32,000) and Manufacturing (almost 27,000). The smallest employment sectors, but nevertheless important, are Utilities (over 1,100) and Agriculture & Natural Resources (over 5,000). While some of these industries grew or contracted from 2019 to February 2020, all of these industries were impacted (to varying degrees) by COVID-19 between March and January 2021.

Table 1 shows employment change between February 2020 (Pre-COVID) and January 2021 in Surrey, by industry.

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)	Feb	Feb	April	Change Feb to April		July	Change April to July		Sept	Change July to September		October	Change Sept to October		Nov	Change Oct to November		Dec	Change Nov to December		Jan	Change Dec to January		Change Feb to January	
	2019	2020	2020	Jobs	%	2020	Jobs	%	2020	Jobs	%	2020	Jobs	%	2020	Jobs	%	2020	Jobs	%	2021	Jobs	%	Jobs	%
	<b>Total Employed (all industries)</b>	295,254	296,748	271,848	-24,900	-8.4%	258,223	-13,625	-5.0%	269,577	11,354	4.4%	275,055	5,478	2.0%	282,207	7,151	2.6%	286,987	4,781	1.7%	287,904	916	0.3%	-8,844
<b>Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Mining, Quarrying, Oil &amp; Gas</b>	5,397	3,008	4,483	1,475	49.0%	5,102	619	13.8%	3,421	-1,681	-32.9%	3,215	-206	-6.0%	3,657	442	13.8%	4,394	737	20.2%	4,276	-118	-2.7%	1,268	42.2%
<b>Utilities</b>	1,106	1,687	2,230	543	32.2%	2,586	356	16.0%	2,642	56	2.2%	2,586	-56	-2.1%	2,267	-319	-12.3%	1,893	-375	-16.5%	1,930	37	2.0%	244	14.4%
<b>Construction</b>	33,338	32,644	29,793	-2,851	-8.7%	29,973	180	0.6%	29,639	-334	-1.1%	27,584	-2055	-6.9%	26,300	-1284	-4.7%	27,019	719	2.7%	27,328	308	1.1%	-5,317	-16.3%
<b>Manufacturing</b>	25,335	26,833	25,580	-1,253	-4.7%	24,191	-1,389	-5.4%	24,981	790	3.3%	25,826	845	3.4%	25,853	27	0.1%	26,207	354	1.4%	25,662	-545	-2.1%	-1,171	-4.4%
<b>Wholesale &amp; Retail Trade</b>	47,113	51,604	46,077	-5,527	-10.7%	43,572	-2,505	-5.4%	45,019	1,447	3.3%	44,544	-475	-1.1%	44,997	453	1.0%	46,033	1,036	2.3%	45,235	-799	-1.7%	-6,370	-12.3%
<b>Transportation &amp; Warehousing</b>	27,826	27,229	23,931	-3,298	-12.1%	22,204	-1,727	-7.2%	23,366	1,162	5.2%	23,774	408	1.7%	24,497	722	3.0%	25,439	942	3.8%	25,753	314	1.2%	-1,476	-5.4%
<b>Finance, Insurance, Real Estate</b>	16,873	18,511	16,766	-1,745	-9.4%	16,000	-766	-4.6%	16,521	521	3.3%	17,118	597	3.6%	17,807	689	4.0%	17,623	-184	-1.0%	17,225	-398	-2.3%	-1,286	-6.9%
<b>Professional, Scientific &amp; Technical</b>	18,989	19,536	19,337	-199	-1.0%	19,822	485	2.5%	19,685	-137	-0.7%	19,573	-112	-0.6%	19,723	149	0.8%	20,021	298	1.5%	20,766	746	3.7%	1,230	6.3%
<b>Business, Building &amp; Other Support</b>	17,486	14,609	14,212	-397	-2.7%	9,946	-4,266	-30.0%	12,352	2,406	24.2%	13,865	1513	12.2%	14,435	570	4.1%	14,435	0	0.0%	15,006	570	4.0%	397	2.7%
<b>Educational Services</b>	15,593	16,380	15,489	-891	-5.4%	13,915	-1,574	-10.2%	12,935	-980	-7.0%	13,989	1054	8.2%	15,801	1812	13.0%	16,529	728	4.6%	16,440	-89	-0.5%	59	0.4%
<b>Health Care &amp; Social Assistance</b>	32,648	34,132	32,973	-1,159	-3.4%	32,078	-895	-2.7%	31,692	-386	-1.2%	32,281	590	1.9%	32,790	509	1.6%	33,990	1,200	3.7%	34,763	773	2.3%	631	1.8%
<b>Info, Culture &amp; Recreation</b>	11,063	9,496	8,164	-1,331	-14.0%	7,811	-353	-4.3%	8,270	459	5.9%	8,966	695	8.4%	9,908	943	10.5%	9,932	24	0.2%	10,038	106	1.1%	542	5.7%
<b>Accommodation &amp; Food Services</b>	19,896	19,052	13,845	-5,207	-27.3%	14,214	369	2.7%	19,192	4,978	35.0%	19,931	739	3.8%	20,266	334	1.7%	20,160	-106	-0.5%	19,579	-581	-2.9%	528	2.8%
<b>Other Services (except public administration)</b>	14,540	13,420	11,700	-1,720	-12.8%	8,120	-3,580	-30.6%	10,320	2,200	27.1%	10,700	380	3.7%	11,000	300	2.8%	10,920	-80	-0.7%	11,260	340	3.1%	-2,160	-16.1%
<b>Public Administration</b>	9,749	9,416	8,376	-1,040	-11.0%	8,631	255	3.0%	9,376	745	8.6%	9,965	588	6.3%	10,436	471	4.7%	10,534	98	0.9%	10,573	39	0.4%	1,157	12.3%

Table 1: Estimated Employment by Industry<sup>1</sup> – February 2019, February 2020 through January 2021

Adapted from Table 14-10-0379-01, Statistics Canada<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Estimates based on Surrey share of Metro Vancouver (Census Metropolitan Area) by Industry in 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Employment by Industry, three month moving average, unadjusted for seasonality.

The key information to note from this table is as follows:

- In the first five months of the COVID-19 pandemic, Surrey lost more than 38,000 jobs. Since the end of July 2020, Surrey has seen an upward trajectory in the number of jobs, recovering almost 30,000 of those jobs (over 75%) with almost half of these recovered jobs being attributed to the last quarter of 2020.
- While January 2021 still showed an increase in the total number of jobs, it was the slowest month of growth since July 2020.
- The total net deficit since February 2020 is just under 9,000 jobs.

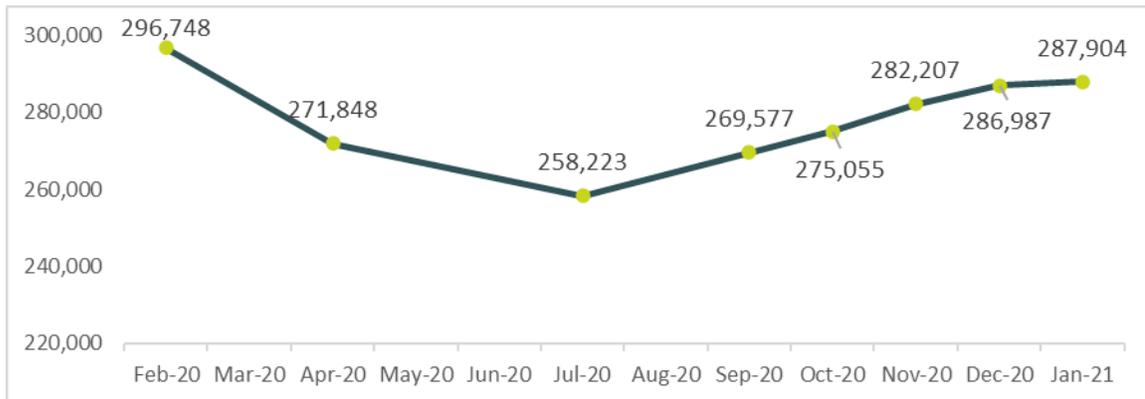


Figure 1: Employment in Surrey (Feb 2020 – Jan 2021)  
Adapted from Table 14-10-0379-01, Statistics Canada<sup>2</sup>

- Jobs in the Agriculture, Forestry, Finishing, Mining, Quarrying, Oil & Gas industry industry surged early in 2020. Jobs in the industry peaked in July and have seen fluctuations since, but the number of jobs remains well above the pre-pandemic levels of February 2020.

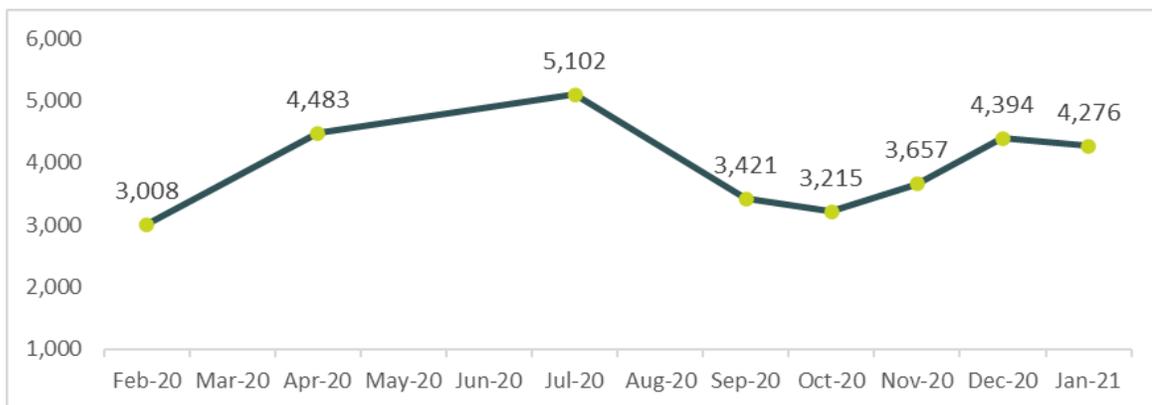


Figure 2: Gain/Loss of Jobs in Utilities in Agriculture, Forestry, Finishing, Mining, Quarrying, Oil & Gas (Feb 2020 - Jan 2021)

Adapted from Table 14-10-0379-01, Statistics Canada<sup>2</sup>

- The greatest gains in the number of jobs recovered in January 2021 were seen in Health Care & Social Assistance (approximately 773 jobs); followed by Professional, Scientific & Technical Services (approximately 746 jobs) and Business, Building & Other Support Services (approximately 570 jobs).

and though there was significant recovery from July 2020 to November 2020, the number of jobs in the industry have shown a downward trend in December 2020 and January 2021.

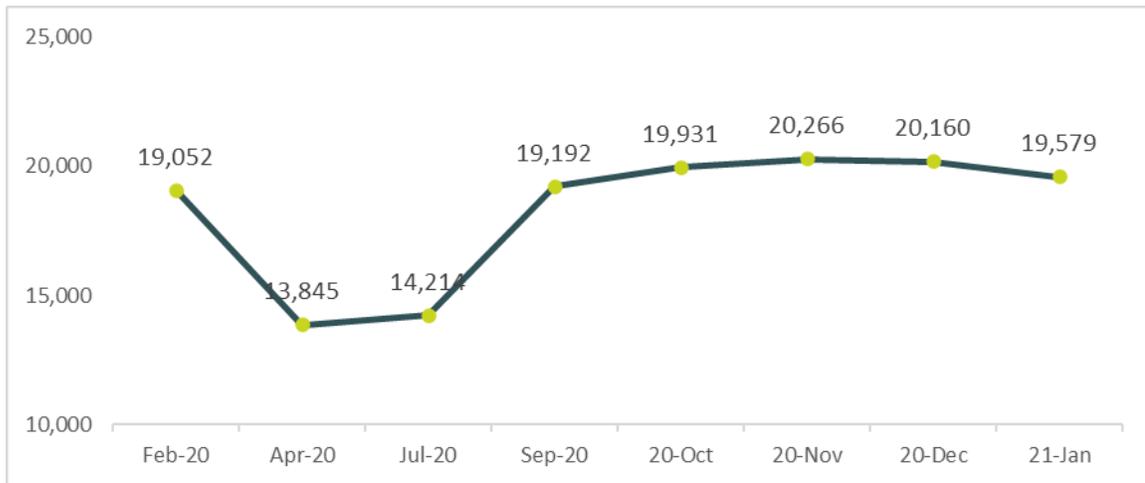


Figure 3: Gain/Loss of Jobs in Accommodation & Food Services in Surrey (Feb 2020 - Jan 2021)  
Adapted from Table 14-10-0379-01, Statistics Canada<sup>2</sup>

- Wholesale & Retail Trade, Construction, Transportation & Warehousing, and Other Services industries continue to show the greatest net loss of jobs since the beginning of COVID-19.

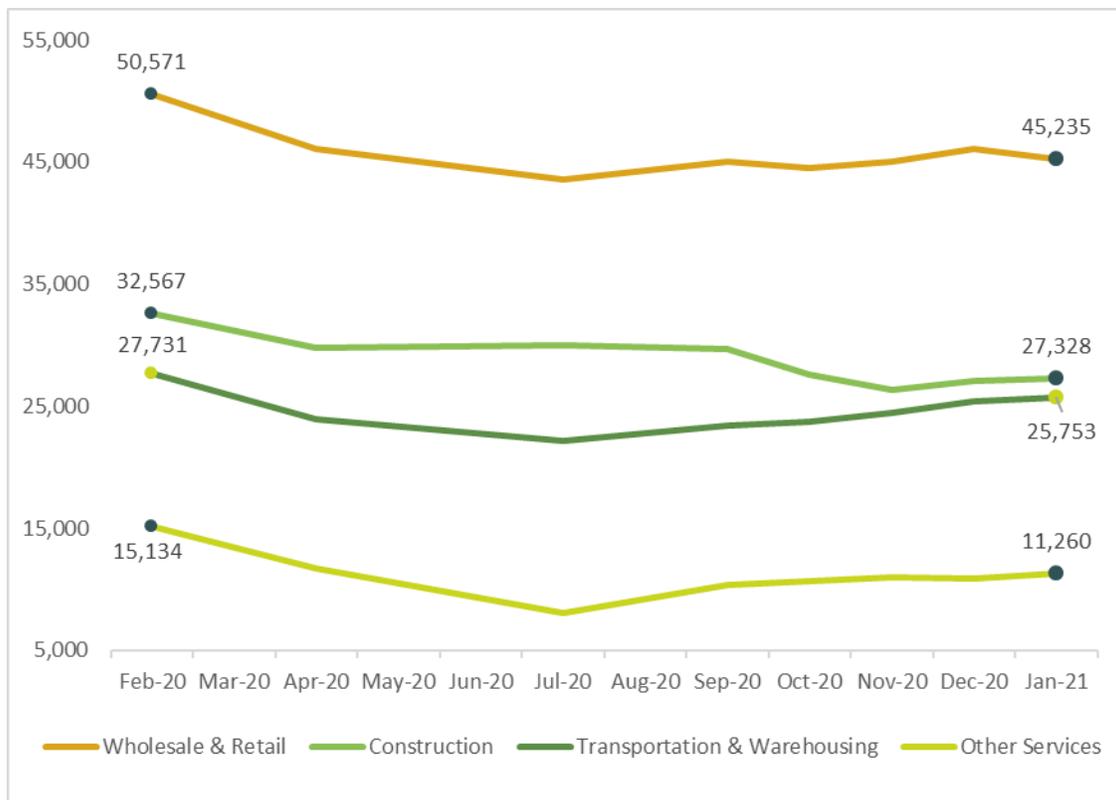


Figure 4: Industries with the Greatest Overall Job Loss Since February 2020  
Adapted from Table 14-10-0379-01, Statistics Canada<sup>2</sup>

- Though in December 2020 and January 2021, the Construction industry posted gains, it remains the industry showing the greatest loss in jobs in Surrey, since February 2020.

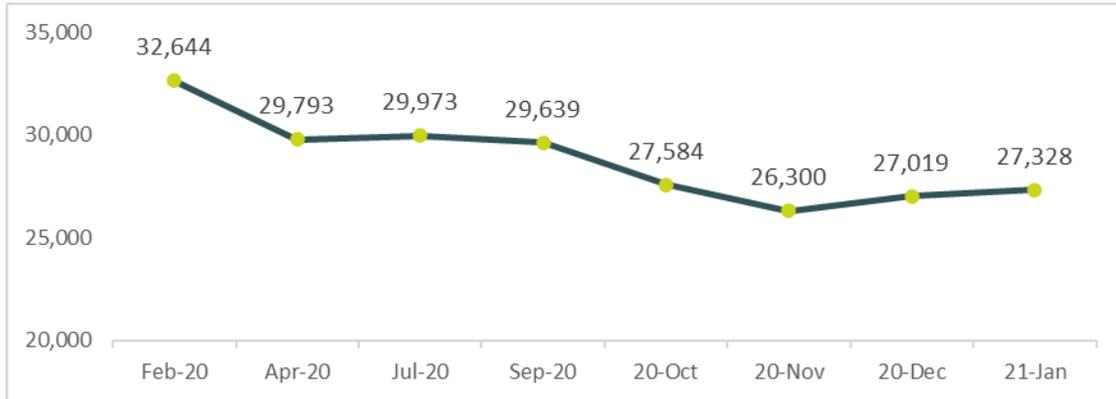


Figure 5: Gain/Loss of Jobs in Construction in Surrey (Feb 2020 - Jan 2021)  
Adapted from Table 14-10-0379-01, Statistics Canada<sup>2</sup>

### Surrey COVID-19 Employment Impacts BY OCCUPATION – 2019 to January 2021

When we consider employment by occupation in Surrey and impacts by occupation, the greatest number of positions were in Sales & Services (over 86,000); Trades, Transport & Equipment Operators (over 57,000); Business, Finance & Administration (over 42,500); Education, Law, Social, Community & Government Services (almost 26,000); and Management Occupations (over 22,000) as of 2019.

Table 2 above shows employment change between February 2020 and January 2021 in Surrey, by occupation.

National Occupational Classification One-Digit Categories	Feb	Feb	April	Change February to April		July	Change April to July		Sept	Change July to September		October	Change Sept to October		Nov	Change October to November		Dec	Change November to December		January	Change December to January		Change Feb to January	
	2019	2020	2020	Jobs	%	2020	Jobs	%	2020	Jobs	%	2020	Jobs	%	2020	Jobs	%	2020	Jobs	%	2021	Jobs	%	Jobs	%
	<b>Total Employed (all occupations)</b>	295,254	296,748	271,848	-24,900	-8.4%	258,223	-13,625	-5.0%	269,577	11,354	4.4%	275,055	5,478	2.0%	282,207	7,151	2.6%	286,987	4,781	1.7%	287,904	916	0.3%	-8,844
<b>Management</b>	22,078	22,822	23,119	297	1.3%	22,855	-264	-1.1%	21,450	-1,405	-6.1%	21,566	116	0.5%	22,078	512	2.4%	23,450	1,372	6.2%	23,780	331	1.4%	958	4.2%
<b>Business, Finance &amp; Administration</b>	42,037	41,703	40,490	-1,213	-2.9%	40,947	457	1.1%	43,022	2,075	5.1%	42,617	-404	-0.9%	43,110	492	1.2%	43,162	53	0.1%	42,582	-580	-1.3%	879	2.1%
<b>Natural &amp; Applied Sciences</b>	18,723	19,658	17,678	-1,980	-10.1%	17,898	220	1.2%	20,345	2,447	13.7%	21,747	1,402	6.9%	23,204	1,457	6.7%	23,658	454	2.0%	24,922	1,265	5.3%	5,265	26.8%
<b>Health</b>	19,166	21,380	20,822	-559	-2.6%	23,388	2,566	12.3%	21,774	-1,614	-6.9%	20,884	-890	-4.1%	19,559	-1,325	-6.3%	19,373	-186	-1.0%	19,911	538	2.8%	-1,470	-6.9%
<b>Education, Law &amp; Social, Community and Gov Services</b>	25,774	26,370	24,680	-1,691	-6.4%	21,945	-2,735	-11.1%	21,133	-812	-3.7%	22,857	1,724	8.2%	25,210	2,354	10.3%	26,138	928	3.7%	26,370	232	0.9%	0	0.0%
<b>Art, Culture, Rec &amp; Sport</b>	6,721	6,636	5,436	-1,200	-18.1%	4,960	-476	-8.8%	5,922	962	19.4%	6,017	95	1.6%	5,722	-295	-4.9%	5,522	-200	-3.5%	5,027	-495	-9.0%	-1,609	-24.2%
<b>Sales &amp; Services</b>	86,203	83,042	68,608	-14,434	-17.4%	56,387	-12,221	-17.8%	64,900	8,513	15.1%	67,681	2,781	4.3%	70,989	3,308	4.9%	72,022	1,032	1.5%	71,011	-1,011	-1.4%	-12,032	-14.5%
<b>Trades, Transport &amp; Equipment Operators</b>	57,008	58,356	55,001	-3,355	-5.7%	49,609	-5,392	-9.8%	49,759	150	0.3%	50,807	1,048	2.1%	50,657	-150	-0.3%	52,185	1,528	3.0%	52,545	359	0.7%	-5,812	-10.0%
<b>Natural Resources Agriculture &amp; related production</b>	4,503	3,414	5,209	1,795	52.6%	5,533	324	6.2%	4,444	-1,089	-19.7%	3,855	-589	-13.2%	3,797	-59	-1.5%	4,209	412	10.9%	4,444	235	5.6%	1,030	30.2%
<b>Manufacturing &amp; Utilities</b>	13,531	13,226	11,021	-2,204	-16.7%	15,430	4,409	40.0%	15,837	407	2.6%	14,820	-1,017	-6.4%	14,752	-68	-0.5%	14,107	-644	-4.4%	14,277	170	1.2%	1,051	7.9%

Table 2: Estimated Employment by Occupation<sup>3</sup> – 2019, February 2020 and January 2021 Surrey, BC  
Adapted from Table: 14-10-0381-01, Statistics Canada<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Estimates based on Surrey share of Metro Vancouver (Census Metropolitan Area) by Industry in 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Employment by occupation, three-month moving average, unadjusted for seasonality.

The key information to note from this table is as follows:

- Employment losses by occupation in January 2021 were seen in Sales & Services (approximately 1,000 jobs), Business, Finance & Administration (over 500 jobs) and Art, Culture, Recreation & Sport occupations (approximately 495 jobs) in Surrey.
- Though Sales & Services occupations had seen a steady increase in jobs in the last half of 2020, these occupations posted a significant loss in January 2021 and have seen the greatest overall loss in Surrey (over 12,000 jobs lost since the beginning of the pandemic).

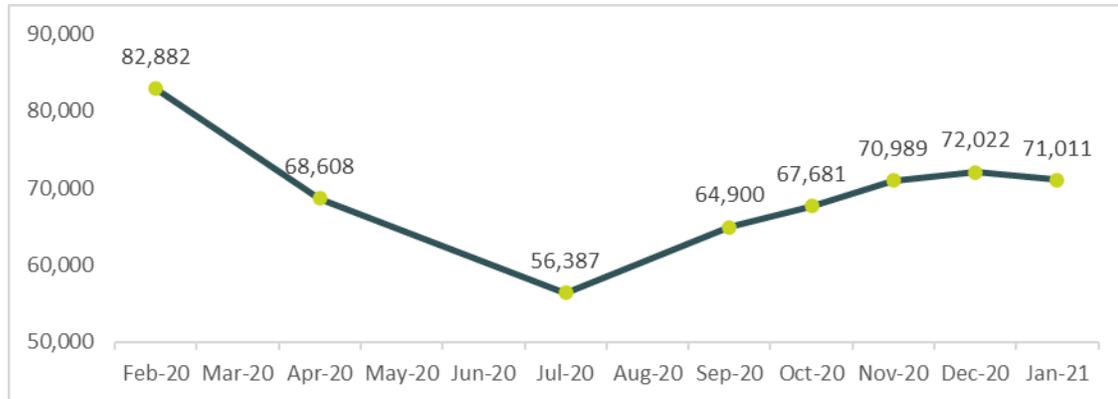


Figure 6: Gain/Loss of Jobs in Sales & Services Occupations (Feb 2020 - Jan 2021)

Adapted from Table: 14-10-0381-01, Statistics Canada<sup>4</sup>

- Jobs in Health occupations peaked in July 2020 and show a downward trend for the second half of the year. In January 2021, the sector saw a slight uptick and remain above 2019 levels.



Figure 7: Gain/Loss of Jobs in Health Occupations (Feb 2020 - Jan 2021)

Adapted from Table: 14-10-0381-01, Statistics Canada<sup>4</sup>

- Occupations in Education, Law & Social, and Community & Government Services continued to see an upward trend, with jobs in these occupations matching their February 2020 levels in January 2021.

- The

December 2020 to January 2021: Natural & Applied Sciences occupations (over 1,200 jobs); Management occupations (over 300 jobs); and Natural Resources & Agricultural Production occupations (over 200 jobs).

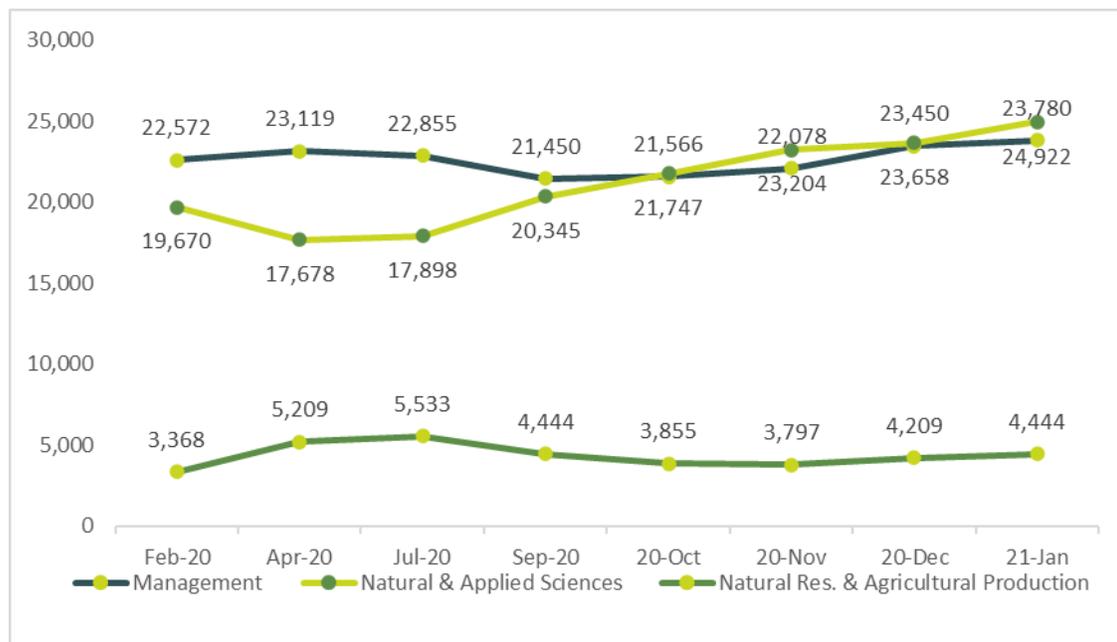


Figure 8: Gain/Loss of Jobs in Management, Natural & Applied Sciences and Natural Resources & Agricultural Production Occupations (Feb 2020 - Jan 2021)  
Adapted from Table: 14-10-0381-01, Statistics Canada<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Insights into the Surrey Workforce

In order to best serve businesses in this context, SBOT is conducting a series of bi-monthly short and focused pulse surveys to find out business impacts, business needs and how their economic situation evolves over the course of the pandemic. The goal is to offer solutions and connections.

On behalf of SBOT, Human Capital Strategies (HCS) is collecting and analyzing real-time labour market information to identify those employers, sectors and workers most impacted and most in need of support in Surrey. The following is a summary of the Pulse Survey Results:

### COVID-19 IMPACTS ON BUSINESS

Of the survey respondents, 1.16% have closed their Surrey businesses permanently, while 6.4% have temporarily closed. These numbers have increased when compared to the responses from October 2020, up from 0% and 5.3%, respectively. The other respondents are on a continuum in terms of degree of opening;

- 12.79% have partially re-opened;
- 23.84% have mostly or fully re-opened;
- 15.12% have seen their business increased; and,
- 15.12% have experienced no impact.

While many respondents stated that their business is either maintaining or thriving currently, a quarter of the survey respondents selected the 'other' option and provided comments to clarify. In reviewing the comments, many Surrey businesses have experienced a significant reduction in volume and/or revenues, shifted their business models and/or moved to remote working, or reduced staff or staff salaries.

While over 12% of respondents have experienced an increase in revenue over the same period last year, almost 45% have experienced a decline in revenue of 20% or more since last year. This number is down by almost 10% since the October 2020 Survey. Over 14% percent of respondents have seen a decrease in revenue of at least 60%, compared to 21% of respondents in October.

### SHIFT TO E-COMMERCE OR DIGITAL WORK

The number of respondents that have shifted to 100% digital has doubled since fall 2020, while the proportion of business reporting at least some degree of a digital shift are similar in both periods. When asked specifically about remote work, respondents indicated an expectation that the proportion of staff working remotely will decline over the next year. However, 15% of respondents indicated that at least 80% of their staff will be working remotely a year from now.

### STAFFING CHANGES

40% of respondents indicated that they are at/or exceeding pre-pandemic levels of full-time staff, down from 44% in the fall. There was also a decrease in the number of Surrey businesses that reported that 40% or more of their full-time staff had been reduced.

### KEY BARRIERS TO GETTING EMPLOYEES BACK TO WORK (AND RETAINING)

The key barriers to bringing back and/or retaining workers most cited by respondents were employees' concerns about safety concerns at work and the rising number of virus cases in the community. After this, Surrey businesses cited staffing costs and social distancing requirements as the next greatest barriers in retaining staff. When it comes to getting staff to return to work during the pandemic, Surrey businesses shared that Provincial Health Orders/closures and employee preference to continue working remotely were their next greatest barriers.

### EXTENT OF CERTAIN CHALLENGES

The most significant impacts reflected by the proportion of respondents were:

- Disruptions in services or supplies needed to run one's business (44%, down from 48% in October)
- Staff absences due to voluntary/mandatory self-quarantine (38%, down from 46% in October)
- Heightened public fear causing customers to avoid their location or services (42%, down from 44% in October)
- Decreased demand for Surrey businesses' products or services (47%, up from 41% in October)
- Staff absences related to childcare or family care (37%, up from 32% in October)
- Staff absences because the business cannot offer a work from home option (37%, up from 21% in October).

The number of Surrey businesses experiencing an increase in demand for their products or services also increased slightly, from 37% in the fall to 41% in January 2021.

### USE OF EXISTING GOVERNMENT RELIEF PROGRAMS

The most used government programs continue to be Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) and Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS). All others are either not needed or Surrey businesses do not qualify.

### USEFULNESS OF TYPES OF ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

The most popular types of assistance among Surrey businesses are:

1. General tax credits/cuts (85% believe very or somewhat useful)
2. Better/more payroll tax breaks (81%)
3. Zero interest loans (81%)
4. Greater economic stimulus funding like business improvement grants (80%)

1. Business counselling (40% not useful at all)
2. Better/more rent or lease assistance (39%)
3. Assistance with better/more technology implementation (37%)
4. Suspension on loan repayments (32%)

### EMPLOYEE TRAINING PROGRAMS

Almost 60% of Surrey businesses in January 2021 have offered employee training in mental health/wellness and about 55% have offered training in skills for new products/services. Just over 50% provided soft skills training for manager and just over 15% offered workplace health & safety training. 40% of Surrey businesses indicated they need help with health & safety training and 30% indicated need help for employee training in technology related to remote work.

### QUESTIONS ABOUT VACCINES

Over 25% of respondents indicated that they were unclear on what their responsibilities are in ensuring their employees get vaccinated and 21% would like to know about their rights when it comes to employees refusing vaccines. 20% of respondents also wanted to know how they could ensure their employees are vaccinated.

### EXPECTATIONS ON RETURNING TO PRE-COVID STAFF AND REVENUE LEVELS

When asked when they expect business to return to pre-COVID staffing and revenue levels, 22% of Surrey businesses indicated that they were now back to pre-pandemic levels and another 14% expected this to be the case within the first half of 2021. 37% of respondents indicated that they do not expect to reach pre-pandemic levels of staffing and revenue until at least 2022, while another almost 2% indicated that they do not expect to ever reach the same levels.

Of those who had responded to both the January 2021 survey and the October 2020 survey, 39% are feeling more optimistic than they were in October 2020, while 45% are feeling more pessimistic. Sixteen percent of respondents to both surveys are feeling similarly to that in the fall.

For the full detailed report, visit <https://businessinsurrey.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Final-January-2021-Pulse-Survey-2-Report-reviewed.pdf>

### 3. A Focus on Mental Health and the Labour Force

As the seasons have turned and the dark, dreary days of early winter take over, mental health is normally expected to decline for Canadians. Over the past year, with a pandemic and continued restrictions to battle the second wave, this decline is intensified.

According to the Mental Health Index<sup>5</sup> published by Morneau Shepell each month, following continued lockdowns throughout the country, Canadians are indicating the same low level of mental health as they were in April 2020. In January, the overall Mental Health Index for Canadians was reported to be -11.7 (or 11.7 points lower than the pre-pandemic benchmark), just slightly higher than the lowest point of the pandemic (-11.8 in December 2020). Morneau Shepell says, “the working population is currently as distressed as the **most distressed one per cent** of working Canadians, prior to 2020.”



Figure 9: Overall Mental Health Index April 2020 to January 2021  
Morneau Shepell ‘The Mental Health Index Report’ – Canada January 2021

While the Mental Health sub-scores for all areas remains low, in general, there was a slight uptick for almost all key risk areas from December 2020 to January 2021. Optimism and Work Productivity improved the most, from -14.1 to -12.5 and -12.4 to -11.6, respectively. Financial risk is showing a positive score of 3.2, meaning it is better than the pre-pandemic benchmark. However, the score for the Isolation category is at the lowest point since the inception of the MHI.

MHI sub-scores <sup>2</sup>	January 2021	December 2020
Depression	-13.4	-13.9
Anxiety	-13.1	-13.0
Isolation	-12.8	-12.0
Optimism	-12.5	-14.1
Work productivity	-11.6	-12.4
Psychological health	-4.0	-3.6
Financial risk	3.2	3.2

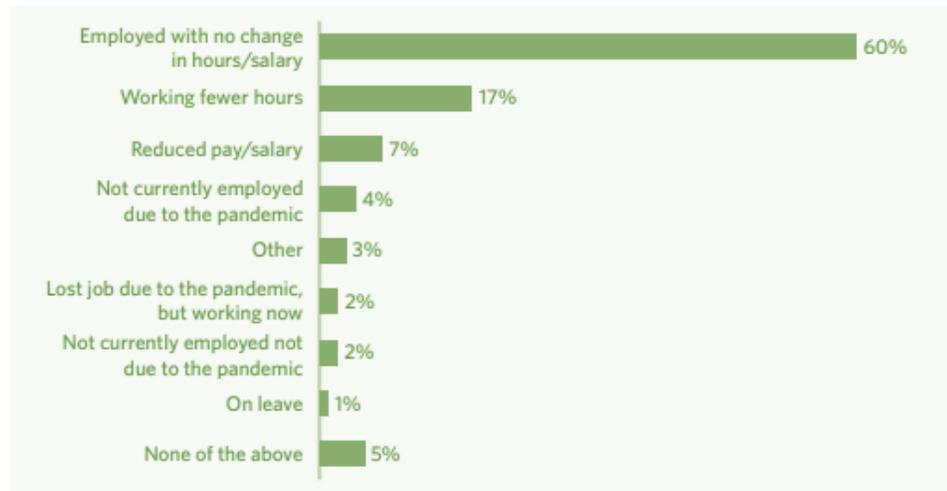
<sup>5</sup> <https://www.morneaushepell.com/sites/default/files/assets/paragraphs/resource-list/mhicanadaenglishjan2021final.pdf>

Table 3: Mental Health Index Sub-Indicators December 2020 vs January 2021  
 Morneau Shepell 'The Mental Health Index Report' – Canada January 2021

**Employment and Mental Health**

Figure 10 below, shows the employment situation of those surveyed and compares it to their reported Mental Health Index (MHI) score. Those who are on leave or not currently employed due to the pandemic show the lowest MHI score (at least two times lower than the average). Those who have been employed with no changes in their hours or salary or indicate their employment situations as “other”, had the highest MHI score at -7.7 and -6.1, respectively (still much lower than the pre-pandemic benchmark).

**Employment situation during the pandemic**



**MHI score by employment situation during the pandemic**

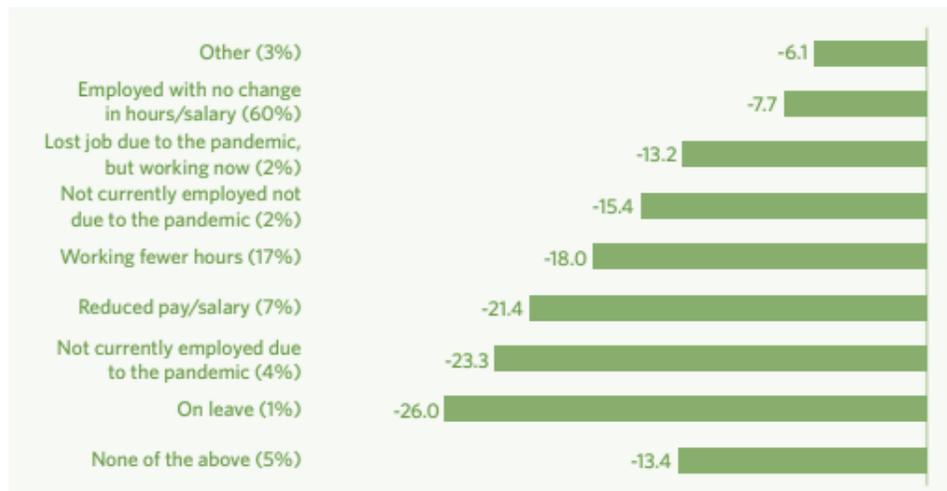


Figure 10: Mental Health Index score by Employment Situation during the Pandemic  
 Morneau Shepell 'The Mental Health Index Report' – Canada January 2021

The Morneau Shepell Mental Health Index breaks down changes in mental health score by industry in the following table:

Industry	January 2021	December 2020	Improvement
Management of Companies and Enterprises	-8.1	-17.5	9.4
Automotive Industry	-7.5	-13.1	5.5
Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction	-10.0	-12.0	2.0
Accommodation and Food Services	-14.1	-15.5	1.4
Finance and Insurance	-13.6	-14.9	1.3
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	-12.0	-13.2	1.2
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	-8.2	-9.3	1.1
Health Care and Social Assistance	-11.9	-12.8	0.9
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	-8.5	-9.3	0.8
Public Administration	-9.5	-10	0.5
Educational Services	-13.1	-13.0	-0.1
Manufacturing	-11.1	-10.9	-0.2
Retail Trade	-13.9	-13.6	-0.3
Transportation and Warehousing	-10.6	-10.2	-0.3
Wholesale Trade	-11.9	-11.5	-0.5
Other services (except Public Administration)	-11.4	-10.4	-1.0
Utilities	-15.3	-14.0	-1.3
Construction	-10.7	-9.1	-1.6
Full-time student	-26.7	-24.9	-1.8
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	-8.8	-6.9	-1.9
Information and Cultural Industries	-18.9	-16.8	-2.1
Other	-10.3	-7.6	-2.7

Table 4: Change in Mental Health Index Score by Industry December 2020 to January 2021  
Morneau Shepell 'The Mental Health Index Report' – Canada January 2021

Full-time students continue to post the lowest score at -26.7, more than two times lower than the average, followed by Information and Cultural Industries (-18.9), Utilities (-15.3) and Accommodation and Food Services (-14.1).

Though none of the industries are showing a positive MHI score, the Automotive Industry (-7.5) and the Management of Companies and Enterprises (-8.1) showed the greatest improvement since December 2020, for the best MHI scores based on industry.

Morneau Shepell also found that managers have a lower MHI score (-13.2) than those in non-managerial roles (-10.7) and employees working for companies with 51-100 employees have the lowest MHI (-15.7) followed by those working for companies with 101-500 employees (-13.3).

### What Does this Mean?

Expanding mental health support and shifting your business to offer greater flexibility can help navigate the many challenges associated with mental health in the labour force. More resources on mental health in the workplace can be found in the [Workforce Reset Playbook](#). As part of the [Workforce Reset](#) Labour Market Partnership project funded by the BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, the Surrey Board of Trade released the first COVID-19 Playbook for Workforce and Employer Resilience. The Playbook is a digital document produced through a collaboration of Surrey service providers, the Surrey Board of Trade, employers, and industry groups, working together in a coordinated and collaborative approach on workforce priorities in a real-time, rapid-response structure to help with economic recovery.