



Your Voice@CIHT – responding to Coronavirus

April 2020





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Introduction

In these uncertain times it is even more important that as a membership organisation we are connected, that we ensure knowledge is shared and our members continue to have a voice at the heart of CIHT.

At this early stage as we get to grips with new working conditions and realities this was the first in a series of surveys to help us understand our members needs and enhance our value to them.

As the UK government-imposed measures to tackle the spread of coronavirus, CIHT conducted an initial survey of its membership to capture insight and perception of the impact of the virus. The aim of the survey was to gain an understanding of the sector's immediate response to the outbreak and how CIHT can support its membership.

Key findings

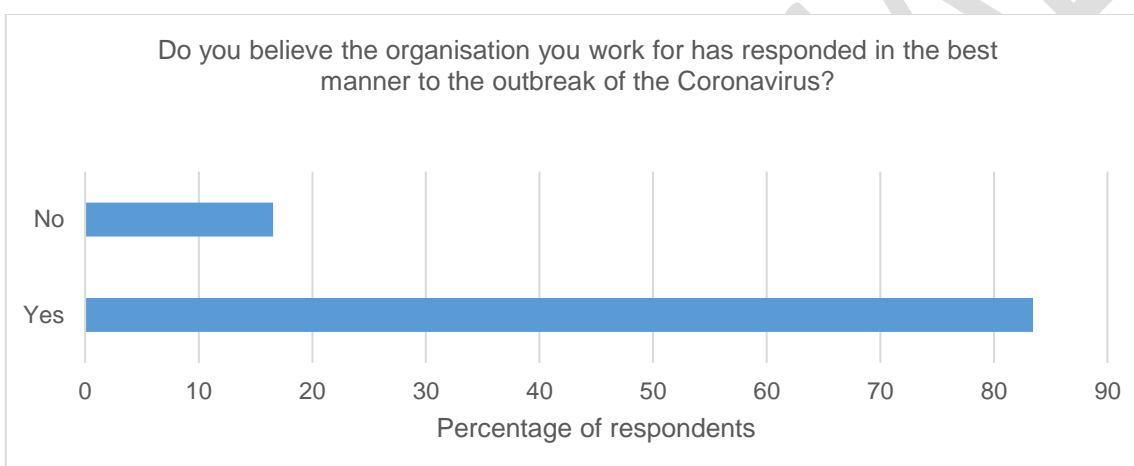
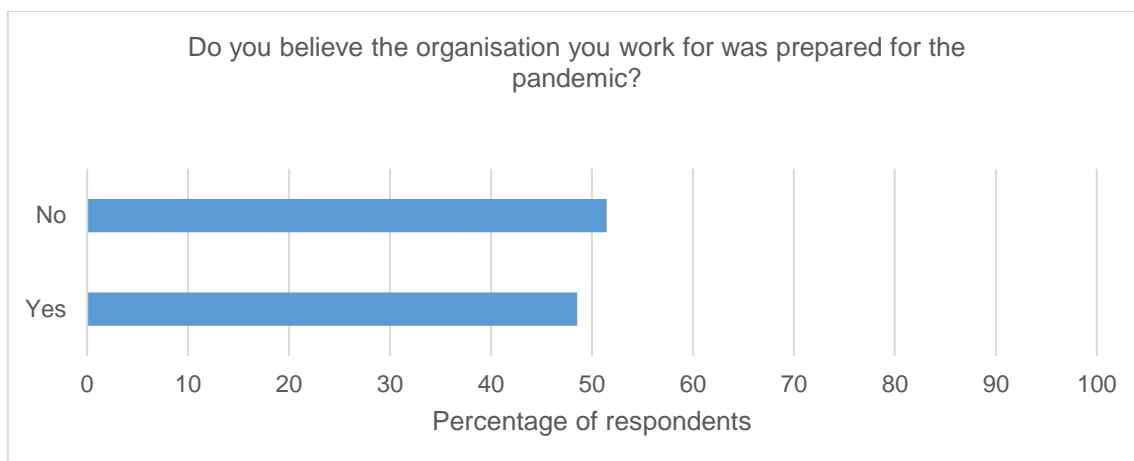
The survey results highlight concerns about the effects of the immediate response to the pandemic on job security and day-to-day operations of companies operating in the sector. It also highlights how the sector may change as a result and looks to the future recovering from the pandemic.

CIHT is using the information provided by our members to help shape the messages we take to government and the wider sector and our future work in this area. As a result of this survey we have been able to:

- **Establish our new ways of working and supporting members in the current environment**
- **Provide updates and examples of good practice / advice via a dedicated webpage**
- **Initiate a review of webinars and continuing services for members**
- **Feed into government regarding what the highways & transportation need and how we can support future economic growth**

Immediate impact of the coronavirus pandemic on job roles

In line with government requirements for everyone to stay at home, apart for a few very limited purposes, businesses around the UK have taken immediate action to follow the guidance and ensure the safety of their employees and customers.



The results from the survey showed that despite the sector not being fully prepared for the outbreak, it has in the majority responded positively. This response is developing as government continue to update their measures and guidance.

Some examples of positive steps taken by the organisations survey respondents work for included:

- Strong business continuity plans and leadership
- Open communication and updates
- Safe social distancing measures, working from home & working from home protocols established with strong IT support
- Open Q&A sessions where employees could raise concerns
- Physical, mental health and wellbeing advice circulated with well-being sessions and flexibility provided.

CIHT worked quickly to take action to comply with the new measures and guidelines set out by the government. CIHT is committed to looking after the health, wellbeing and safety of its members, volunteers and staff. CIHT took the decision to hold business critical meetings only; staff to work from home; and postponed all events, seminars and training (where people are required to appear in person) for the foreseeable future.

A prevalent response from the survey was that workloads had been significantly impacted by the new measures put in place. Common impacts included works cancelled or paused;

delays in tendering opportunities; impact on supply chains and travel surveys cancelled. Respondents highlighted that client facing and community engagement activities have been deeply affected. The survey results indicate that roles relating construction were more likely to be impacted by the pandemic. Roles in the sector that are more office based and more IT reliant, generally, have been less initially impacted.

A key issue raised in the survey results was the challenges of adapting to working solely from home. This includes adapting new infrastructure, balancing work with childcare and anxiety.

Respondents reported on a variety of long-term effects of the pandemic on their job role. Some responses detailed high levels of job uncertainty caused by a reduction in demand and cancelled works. A few respondents outlined delays in promotion and job progression which will impact their ability to plan. The survey highlights that young professionals may be more affected by working from home if there is less communication between them and their managers.

CIHT are currently developing a comprehensive webinar programme that will cover a broad range of topics including topics planned for upcoming CIHT technical events and information on education and professional development. CIHT will continue to provide learning opportunities and knowledge sharing across the sector.

Concerns were raised by some respondents relating to the possible impact on capital for investment in infrastructure once restrictions are lifted. Some respondents were also concerned about coping with possible 'backlogs'.

Respondents frequently commented that they thought that current restrictions could change their role and how businesses operate permanently. With investment in IT systems and experience of working from home, job roles could become more agile with more dynamic job descriptions. Some respondents believed that this could lead to a better work life balance with less travel for work.

Impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the highways and transportation sector

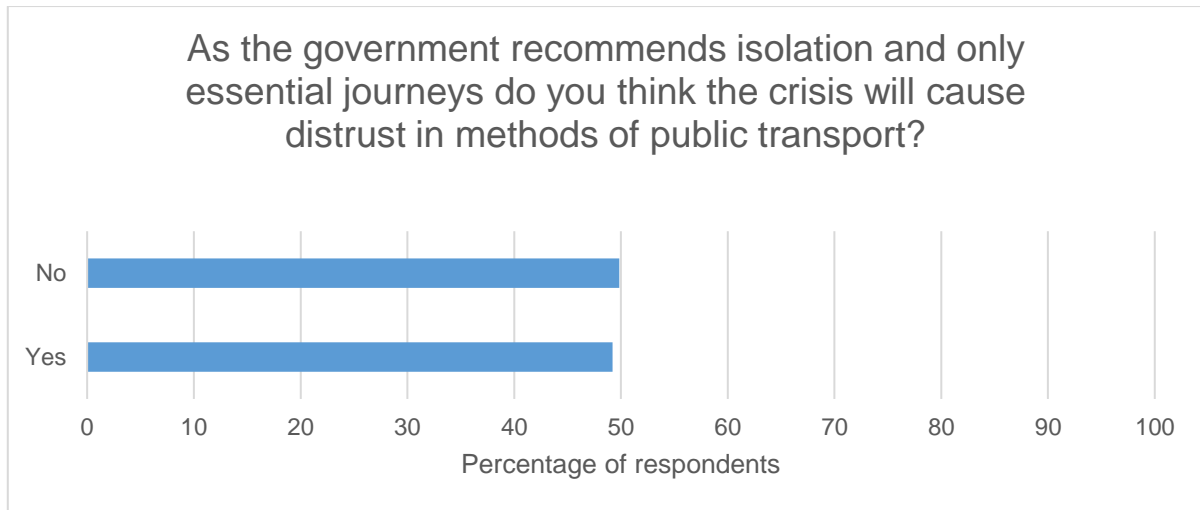
All business sectors in the UK have impacted by the coronavirus pandemic with restrictions on everyday life preventing business as usual. As businesses adjust to the immediate response to the outbreak, it is important to consider the long term impacts on the sector as a whole.

Respondents felt that that the demand for travel in the short term would reduce, in line with government restrictions. This could lead to remodelling and consolidation of rail, bus and air companies.

CIHT is part of several groups including the Construction Industry Council and the Highway Sector Council. Through working with these industry wide groups, CIHT will push to highlight the important role that ongoing investment in highways and transportation will have in supporting the UK economy to recover.

The survey raised a variety of long-term impacts on the sector as a result of the pandemic. These included a potential change in why, how and when we move people, goods and services, potentially resulting in a changing sector. Changes in appetite and attitudes towards working from home could reduce the demand for travel. This could be an opportunity to take forward decarbonisation and modal shift agendas, engaging the update of sustainable modes.

Concerns were raised in the survey about the potential loss of contactor and consultant companies if they are unable to operate during this time. This could lead to a skills and knowledge gap in the sector. This may lead to a deterioration of the road network as planned and programmed works are unable to take place.

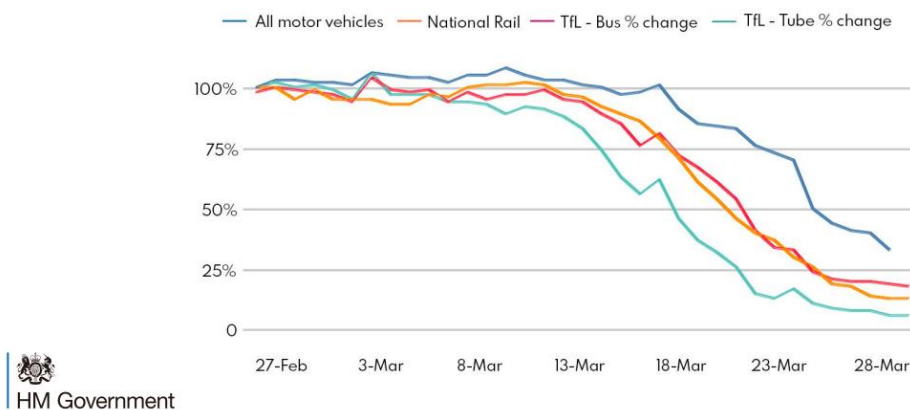


The above chart shows that the surveyed respondents were evenly split on whether the pandemic will cause a distrust in methods of public transport. The thought that communication from government to the public was key in restoring trust in transport. Some responses suggested changes to the design of public transport to reduce overcrowding and contact with surfaces to minimise the spread of future outbreaks.

Transport use change

Transport use in Great Britain has decreased since the imposition of social distancing rules.

The percentage change in the use of all motor vehicles, National Rail, the London Underground (TfL), and bus travel (TfL).



Source: Department for Transport

Source: [Cabinet office briefing room](#)

The graph above shows the decline in transport usage in the UK since the introduction of social distancing rules.

The survey respondents called for the government to support the sector by maintaining, or increasing, current levels of investment in infrastructure and infrastructure maintenance.

CIHT has just published its review of local highways 'Improving Local Highways' in which CIHT is calls for the government to commit to deliver a four-point strategy for



the Local Highway Network that will create a vision, funding and focus over the next ten years.

It was also suggested that government should provide clear guidance whether construction should be paused or not, reassurance around future support when cash reserves have been depleted. This would provide much greater clarity on the work that should proceed and show greater recognition for the safety of frontline staff carrying out essential works.

CIHT has been active, representing our members and collaborating with other bodies including the Highways Sector Council, WISE and the Construction Industry Council. We have been looking at how, as a sector, we can work safely under the current restrictions, providing input into what a post COVID 19 sector recovery might look like and other campaigns.

CIHT will be instrumental in a campaign to highlight how essential highways & transportation works can and should be carried out.

Beyond the pandemic

The effects of the pandemic will be long lasting and the recovery is likely to take some time. The impacts of the pandemic will shape a 'new normal'. The survey highlighted this as an opportunity to take forward agendas to shape the sector. It provides a chance to accelerate the decarbonisation of the sector to reduce the impacts of climate change. For example, it was suggested through responses that the recovery from the pandemic could be an opportunity for government to review franchising models and look and at better integrations of modes.

CIHT, as a learned society, continues to build on our FUTURES project (exploring the implications of different future scenarios for transport policy and practice) and work on decarbonisation and climate change policy. Currently CIHT are continuing to build on the messages from the 'Better Planning, Better Transport, Better Places' advice (creating a more sustainable approach into transport, planning and creating better places). CIHT, in collaboration with TPS and RTPI, is working to increase the capability of professions to encourage the use of sustainable transport modes through spatial planning.

As a follow on from the recent CIHT climate change survey, CIHT are currently developing a body of work that shares the knowledge collected as part of the survey.

Please contact us at technical@ciht.org.uk with any comments