



# KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL NEWS & NOTICES

## SURVEY RESULTS - LET'S GET BACK TO BUSINESS SAFELY

Across County Kilkenny, people have stepped up to the plate in an effort to mitigate against the impact of Coronavirus on our health, our society and our local economy. Many have played essential roles at great personal risk whilst others have made significant sacrifices by staying at home and limiting close contact with extended family and friends.

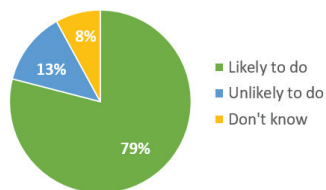
Now as restrictions ease, the burning question for our business community, is how to reopen Kilkenny safely and manage the fine balancing act of safeguarding public health whilst returning to economic activity. With this in mind, Kilkenny County Council recently carried out an online survey with a view to gathering general insights into local opinion, ideas and concerns.

### Retailers, Cafés and Restaurants

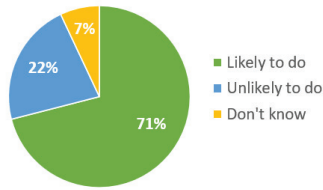
Months after the shutters came down, high street stores, shopping centres and many businesses have now reopened. This includes many local retailers who will welcome the news that 4 out of 5 of those recently surveyed indicated that they intend to resume shopping in high street stores, whilst only 1 in 5 intend to abstain or are undecided. However, as shoppers begin to embrace some long awaited socially distanced retail therapy, for most there are prerequisites attached. For example, 97% of survey respondents feel that it is either very important (81%) or important (16%) that hand sanitiser be provided for customers. Additionally, 94% want to see revised retail and business premises layouts as required to allow more space to move around with 69% ranking this as very important and 25% as important. 93% also feel that it is very important (67%) or important (26%) to limit numbers in retail and business spaces at any one time, whilst 95% consider protective screens at counters to be very important (63%) or important (32%).

**Survey Question: As restrictions are lifted during this pandemic, please indicate which of the following you are likely or unlikely to do?**

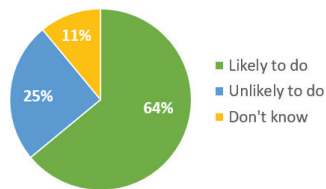
**Shop in High Street Stores**



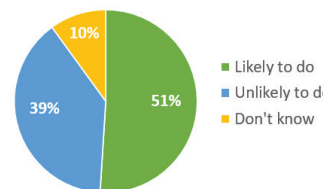
**Go to Cafés**



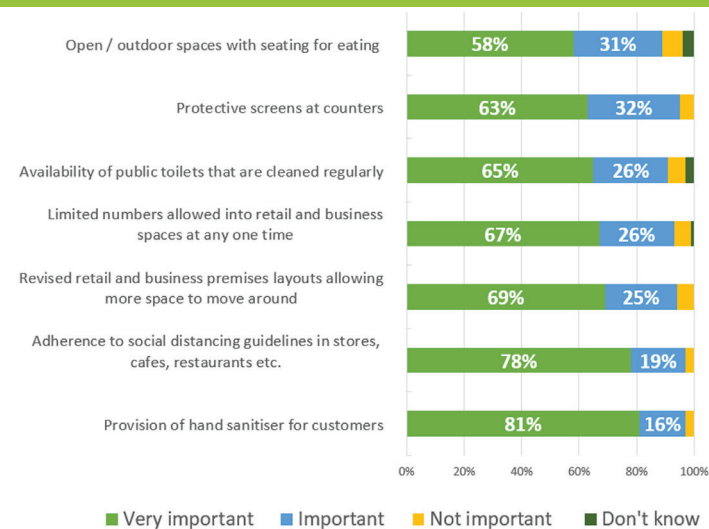
**Go to Restaurants**



**Go to Farmers' Markets**



**Survey Question: With regard to shopping and doing business generally during this pandemic, please indicate the importance of the following to you?**



The survey also revealed that as restrictions lift, 71% intend to resume going to cafés and 64% to restaurants. However, 97% also highlighted the need for adherence to social distancing guidelines in cafés, restaurants and stores, rating this as either very important (78%) or important (19%). Furthermore, the idea of introducing more open outdoor spaces with seating for eating, weather permitting, seems to be gaining traction with 89% of those

surveyed indicating that the provision of this option is either very important (58%) or important (31%) to them.

### Farmers' Markets

To the delight of regular customers and the relief of stall-holders, farmers' markets were amongst the earliest groups to reopen as part of the first phase of the easing of Covid-19 restrictions. This was conditional upon social

distancing measures being put in place to protect both vendors and customers. Farmers' Markets have demonstrated their flexibility and agility in this regard and it seems to be paying off. In this recent survey, 51% of respondents affirmed their intention to visit Farmers' Markets, perhaps signalling an enhanced desire to support local farmers and food producers and to access fresh in-season produce.

### Public Toilets

As restrictions ease and movement increases, the need for access to public toilet facilities also comes into focus. Indeed, 91% of survey respondents expressed a view that access to public toilets which are cleaned regularly is either very important (65%) or important (26%) in their opinion.

### Pedestrianisation

Many cities across Europe have announced plans to pedestrianise selected streets as part of their strategy to facilitate social distancing measures. Likewise, interest was also expressed by a sizeable number of survey respondents in pedestrianising certain Kilkenny city streets with 68% in favour of pedestrianising High Street for the duration of the pandemic.

### Operating Hours

Coronavirus has changed the way we live, behave and shop. However, with regard to retail stores and other city centre businesses potentially extending their opening hours during the pandemic, 31% of survey respondents suggested that pre-lockdown opening hours should be maintained with 16% seeking late opening on Fridays and 15% seeking late opening on Thursdays.

When it comes to preferred daily shopping times, 25% of survey respondents indicated a preference to do their in-store

shopping between the hours of 9-11am, 16% between 11am-2pm whilst 18% would prefer to do it after 6pm.

For appointment-based services, 42% feel that it is important to offer appointments outside of usual operating hours during the pandemic whilst 36% think it unnecessary and 22% have no opinion on the matter. Of those that were in favour of offering out of hours appointments, many felt it important in order to facilitate health and safety measures, have less cross-over of clients, minimise queuing and waiting times and there were also suggestions to reserve this option for high risk groups.

### Local Retail Offering

With regard to Kilkenny's retail offering, 53% of survey respondents feel that there is no significant gap in products and services available locally, whilst 25% highlighted the absence of some of their favourite retail stores and 22% were undecided. Indeed, whilst there has been a dramatic increase in online sales during the pandemic, 54% indicated a preference to shop online with county Kilkenny based stores where possible.

"As has been demonstrated time and time again during this pandemic, the best outcomes are achieved when people work together, and this undoubtedly applies to safely reopening Kilkenny for business. We are all adapting to new norms and behaviours and businesses are navigating new terrain with inherent risks, challenges and opportunities. However, Kilkenny is home to innovators, entrepreneurs, leaders and doers and as such, it's no surprise to see so many local retailers and service providers rising to the challenge and showing remarkable flexibility in adapting novel and creative ways of doing business" concluded Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Andrew McGuinness.