



# Highgate Business Survey

November 2020

## **What is the purpose of this survey?**

The Highgate Society is aware of the very difficult conditions for all businesses in the area as a result of the COVID pandemic coming on top of many existing challenges. The Society's Infrastructure and Projects Group ran an online business survey between 14 and 29 October 2020 in order to make sure:

- Council policy makers are fully aware of the challenges and how they can work better with businesses
- Local residents understand the challenges businesses face and
- Good solutions to trading through the pandemic can be shared.

The business survey was available via our website and a card delivered to businesses in each of the following areas: Archway Road, Highgate High Street, Highgate Hill, Alymer Parade, Swains Lane and North Hill. Where business emails were available an email alert was also sent. Responses were requested by the end of October and 28 responses were received. This is a response rate of approximately 10% but we believe the detail and thought given by the businesses responding mean that the feedback gives clear messages and those businesses should be seen as vocal representatives speaking on behalf of the area.

This summary Report of the survey of local businesses' concerns and experience is now being sent to Haringey and Camden Councils.

We are making the Report available with the aim of sharing best practice and insights across Highgate businesses and (as explained in the survey) are posting it on our website [www.highgatesociety.com](http://www.highgatesociety.com).

## **Overview of the survey feedback**

We believe the feedback from local businesses shows clearly the challenges they face and how these have been exacerbated by the pandemic. The quotations included (where the survey allowed free text answers) speak clearly as to these challenges.

Importantly the feedback is given by businesses based in Camden and Haringey boroughs. We hope this will prompt both Councils to coordinate their work with each other as the Highgate Neighbourhood Plan requires.

Messages for the Councils come through clearly. Local businesses need thought-through support and are concerned about policy changes, for example in the area of parking restrictions. Given both Councils recognise the importance of supporting local businesses and their contribution to communities and also rely on business rates, it is important that the aim of supporting local businesses is kept in mind and advocated alongside other policy aims which can adversely affect local businesses.

The message for local residents is clear. The businesses have worked hard to carry on their work in a safe way during the pandemic really need increased footfall. It is not necessary for so much to be bought online. We all want to see healthy shops and services in each of the business areas across Highgate and the local businesses provide most if not all of the goods and services we need.

However support is needed now. As one response puts it very starkly: *It's survive or die this winter for all traders.*

Looking at longer term changes for local businesses, as often the issues are clear but the solutions sometimes less so. However, in considering any solutions, our hope is that Council teams as well as residents will review this feedback to ensure the views of local businesses are heard clearly. One message that is represented across a number of parts of the feedback is the danger of Council-led changes causing unintended consequences. Given the challenges businesses now face, the need for proper consultation is particularly acute during the pandemic, not less so.

Highgate Society is grateful to those businesses that participated in the survey and hope this report is valuable for everybody. We are continuing to review and consider the feedback in more detail. We are happy to meet with both Councils to discuss this and are trying to arrange a time to do so. In the meantime if there are any queries or views please get in touch with us at [Infrastructure@HighgateSociety.com](mailto:Infrastructure@HighgateSociety.com).

Thank you very much.

#### **Who we are:**

The Highgate Society is one of the most active civic organisations in the country. It exists to make Highgate and its neighbourhood a better place in which to live and work; to ensure changes enhance the area, to encourage sound planning and to improve public transport. As a social hub the Society is at the heart of Highgate, staging or facilitating a wide range of events for the whole community. It is run entirely by volunteers.

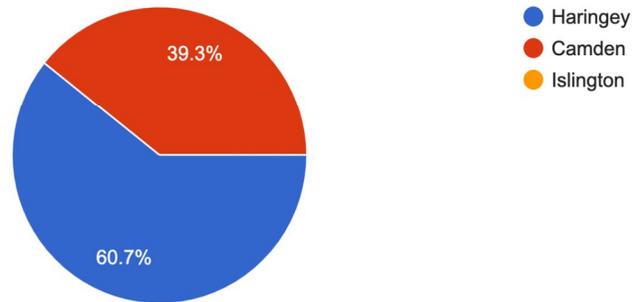
#### **Personal data**

No personal data is included in this report and the survey and report have been compiled in accordance with The Highgate Society's General Data Protection Regulation policy. In a small number of places some quotations have been redacted to ensure the business itself cannot be identified.

## Question 1

What Council area are you in?

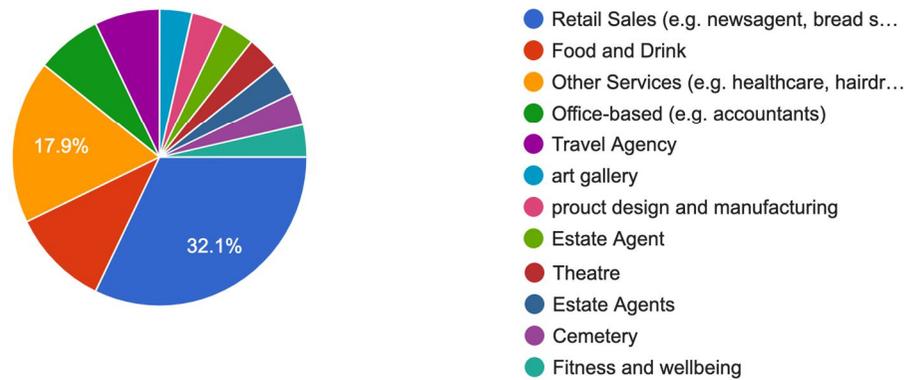
28 responses



## Question 2

What type of business are you?

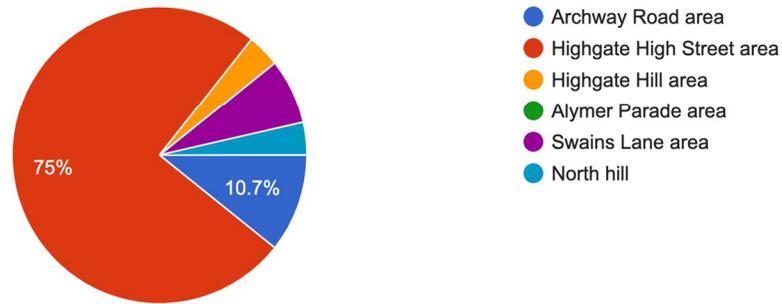
28 responses



### Question 3

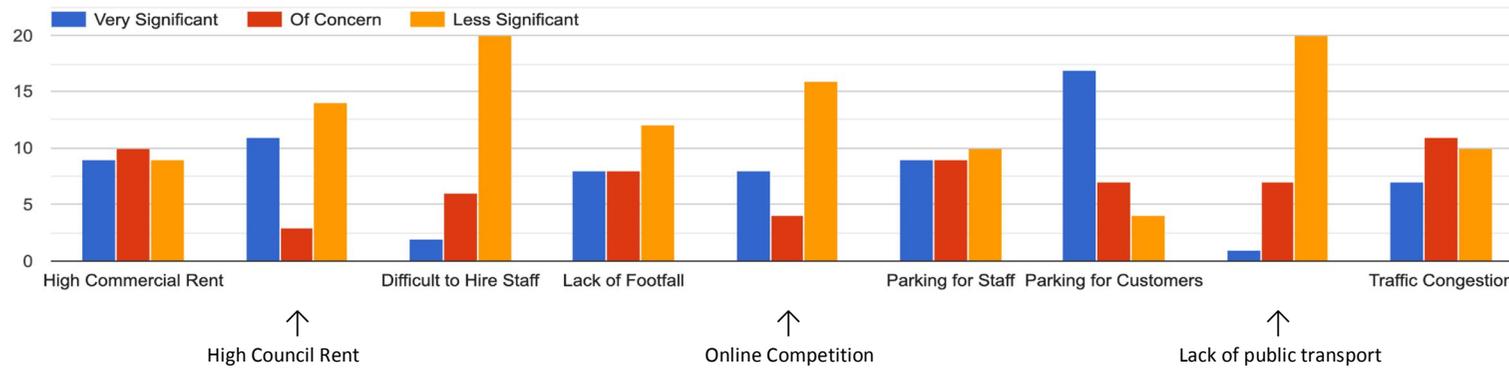
What area of Highgate are you based in?

28 responses



### Question 4

What were the main challenges to your business before lock down in March?



**Under “Other” the following answers were given (arranged by topic):**

Rubbish:

*Cleaning of the rubbish bins and street.*

*Rubbish (both residential and commercial) in Highgate High Street.*

Level of business:

*The drop in footfall has been very significant even before lockdown, approximately for the past 5 years at least.*

*Making people outside our regulars aware of what's on (but it's been like that for 20 years!).*

*General concerns about economy.*

Parking changes (proposed by Camden Council):

*The proposed change to parking restrictions were a concern.*

*Lack of parking makes customers avoid using village shops.*

Other:

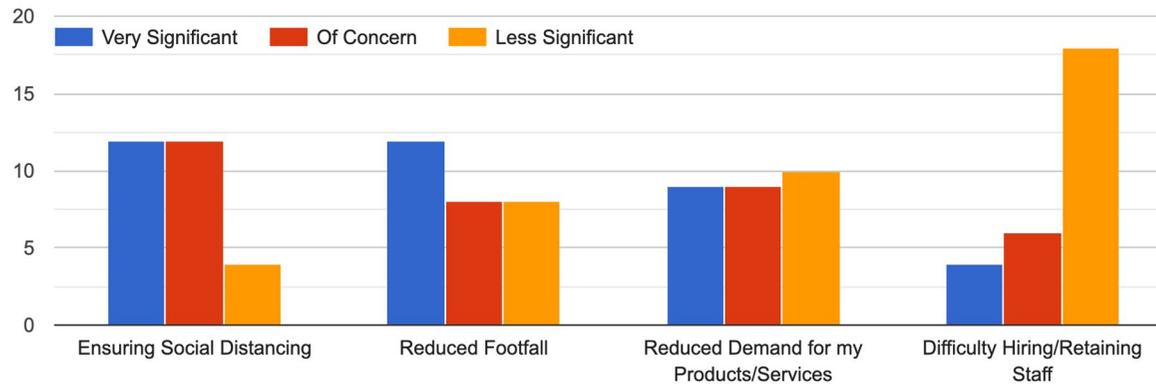
*Business rates a huge issue.*

*Lack of key shops: hence footfall low.*

*No post office, too many food & drink places and now bank due to close - that will be a MAJOR problem.*

## Question 5

What have been the main challenges to your business as a result of the COVID pandemic?



**Under “Other” the following answers were given (arranged by topic):**

### Effect of lockdown/government restrictions:

*We have been closed since 17th March due to central Government restrictions. We hope to open on 12th November after eight months of zero income.*

*Lack of business*

*Retaining volunteers. Lack of overseas visitors.*

*Being considered a non-essential service put us under risk. The damage further lockdown could do.*

### Customer behaviour

*Customers need to use local shops*

*We are safe -- stop online shopping*

Government support during COVID:

*Ending of self-employed support and furlough scheme is a concern*

PPE:

*Obtaining PPE for regular work*

Landlord issues:

*Communication issues with our landlord.*

## Question 6

Please share any good solutions you have found to these COVID challenges (arranged by topic)

### Pessimism

*None*

*Survive!*

### Focus on customers and business premises

*Reassuring customers*

*Effective communication with customers via telephone and email, rather than the usual interactions in-store.*

*Making the shop feel as safe and secure as possible. Communicating with customers what our policy is and ensuring they are taking the necessary precautions when coming in to the store.*

*Ensuring all safety measures are in place.*

### Business offering

*Varying our visitor offer to attract more local people.*

*Online Sales - Frequent Changes to offer*

### Financial support

*Business rates holiday*

*We have successfully applied for a further grant from Haringey. We have written to local councillors and the Mayor to engage in consultation about how essential [our business sector] is.*

*Getting a grant from the CRF on 12th October*

## **Question 7**

### **What could your Council do more of to help your business?**

#### **Responses (arranged by topic):**

##### Pessimism

*Where are they?*

##### Council rates/grants

*Reduce rates*

*Flexibility on payment of rates*

*Significantly reduce rate.*

*Rate relief/grants*

*Grants for home based office workers*

*Camden have been very helpful. £10K grant in May, no rates to pay until April. Advice on the CRF grant application*

*Lower business rates when they start to charge again*

*Business Rates Freezing*

*Lower business rates*

##### Rubbish and cleaning

*Keep this beautiful part of London clean*

*Collect the rubbish every day, especially on the weekend. We do not seem to get collected on Saturday night [comment from Highgate High Street – Haringey side]*

Parking, congestion charging and business access

*More loading bays during trading hours*

*Improve parking for All.*

*More Parking for visitors*

*Desperate need for business parking bays*

*Oppose congestion charge coming to the area as our staff can't afford to live locally.*

Support for businesses

*Find ways to encourage people to shop local and support small businesses.*

*Help promote local businesses*

*Promote us.*

PPE

*Designated PPE for non-clinical work.*

## Question 8

**What would you like to see your Council do less of?**

**Responses (arranged by topic):**

### Parking and traffic

*Traffic tickets*

*New parking restrictions.*

*Endlessly discussing the parking restrictions/times. Leave everything as it has been for several years - it works!*

*Unnecessary road/traffic changes*

### Road works

*The time it takes to do road works is laughable*

### Withdrawal of current financial support

*Taking away or diminishing grants/loans*

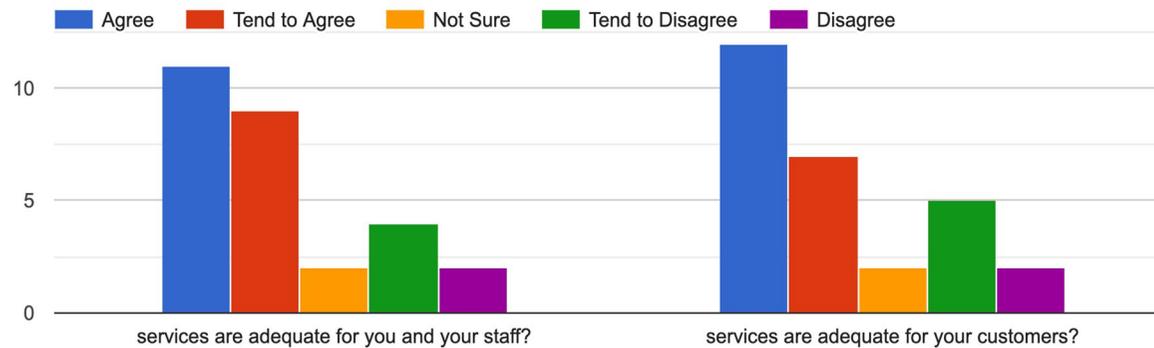
### Pessimism

*None*

*Hard to see how they could do any less of anything*

## Question 9

Thinking about roads and transport provision (buses, trains, cars, cycles), would you say:



**What feedback would you give to your Council on this?**

**Responses (arranged by topic):**

Traffic enforcement

*Less traffic tickets*

*Allow time for customers to collect without getting a parking ticket*

Parking

*Transport is okay; parking is a problem.*

Cycle provisions

*Cycle lanes where possible*

*We need more secure bike racks.*

Road works

*The amount of road works and the time it takes is just crazy*

Some feeling that less intervention is needed

*All ok*

*it's fine.*

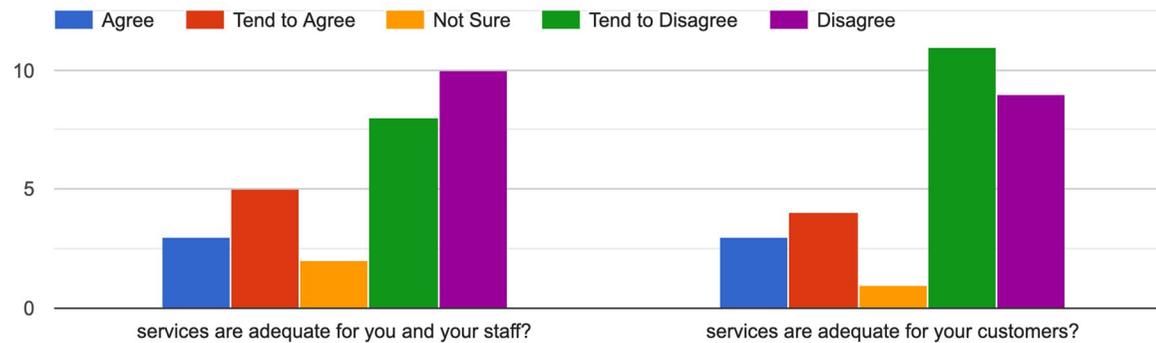
*Fine*

Call for co-ordination with other authorities

*Liaise with The Mayor and TFL.*

### **Question 10**

Thinking about parking, would you say:



What feedback would you give to your Council on this?

**Responses (arranged by topic):**

More parking needed

*Need more free parking bays.*

*Provide more short term parking.*

*In Highgate without adequate parking for visitors in and around the high street the village will die.*

*We need more.*

*More free parking. More regular buses.*

*As mentioned above - provide more visitor parking*

*We need more free parking*

*Need business parking bays near /on the high street*

*Improvements in business parking. We can't park outside our business for more than an hour, and local business permit spaces are taken up well before we start work, so it isn't worth our buying a permit.*

Charges for parking

*Stop regarding it as a profit-centre and start viewing it as essential for shoppers to access the village*

*Need to improve it. There should be a permit for Highgate Village, not defined by Council borders.*

*Reduce the cost of parking permits*

*Make it easier for businesses to get parking permits*

Concern that more restrictions will be adverse

*More parking restrictions would be devastating to the High Street.*

Parking enforcement

*Less traffic tickets*

Tesco [Highgate High Street]

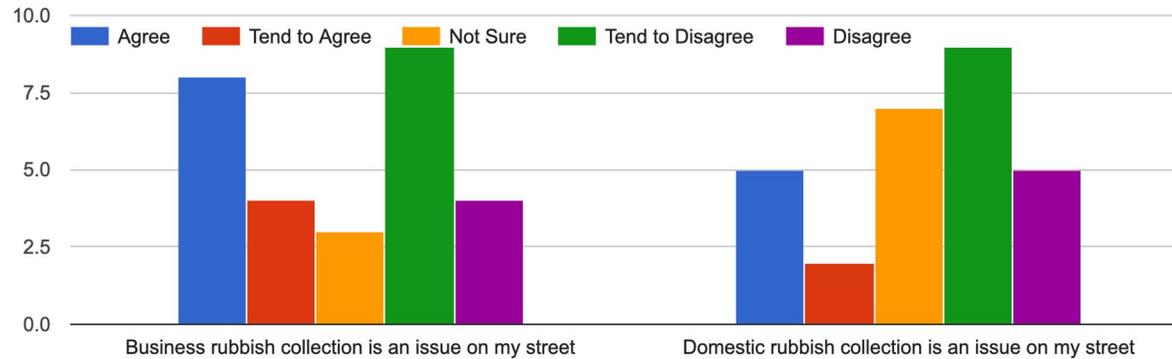
Tesco take up far too much available parking for too much of the day.

Other

*Fine.*

### Question 11

Thinking about rubbish collection



What feedback would you give to your Council on litter collection on your street?

## **Responses (arranged by topic):**

### Rubbish collection

*Clean rubbish on time*

*Insist residential and commercial rubbish is put out just before collection so it doesn't sit on the street for hours or end creating an eyesore, gets spread around by foxes, or ends up blowing down the street.*

*Collect on the weekend, especially Saturday night. [Highgate High Street – Haringey side]*

*Businesses need one single collection bin, so as to avoid cluttering street with bags of litter*

*Regular collection is a necessity to the health and safety of the neighbourhood*

*Trade waste collection often takes place before we are allowed to put rubbish outside, which means we have rubbish sitting outside until 7.00pm. [Archway Road]*

*The village looks like a rubbish tip*

### Concern about costs for businesses

*Commercial waste bags should be supplied free. We are charged over £1per bag and unless we use Camden's bags, the rubbish will not be taken. It's a liberty!*

### Positive feedback

*None - it's fine as it is*

*Stop trying to find problems*

### Feedback on other providers

*We switched to First Mile who seem to be a better service provider than Veolia*

*None - we use a private contractor*

## **Question 12**

**Are other types of business missing which could improve the trading environment for your own business?**

### Specific businesses/Views on importance of business mix

*Highgate has lost and will further lose many shops due to high rents, high rates and now Covid. Small businesses need some protection and support if a vibrant village life is considered desirable.*

*Normal retail shops - clothing, hardware etc*

*Fishmonger - general variety of useful shops.*

*Post Office*

*Post Office*

*Maybe a fishmonger, maybe a jeweller, maybe a key cutter/shoe repair??*

*Clothes and home furnishing*

### Concern about Closing of Barclays Bank in Highgate High Street in October

*Highgate needs a bank but I don't think any amount of signature will get Barclays to change their mind.*

*Huge concern that Barclays are closing. Not even a cash point in the village.*

*Bank as Barclays is going*

*Bank*

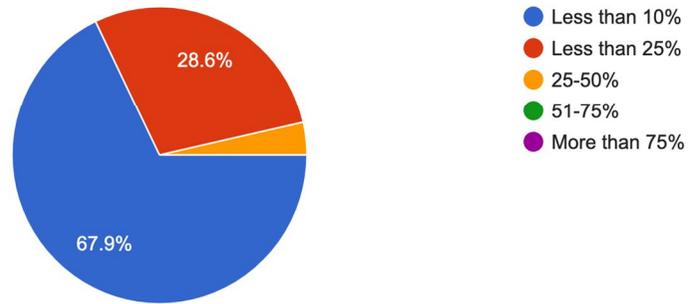
### Visitor centre

*What we really need is a Visitor Information Centre but that's a totally different ongoing discussion!*

### Question 13

Approximately what proportion of your transactions involve cash?

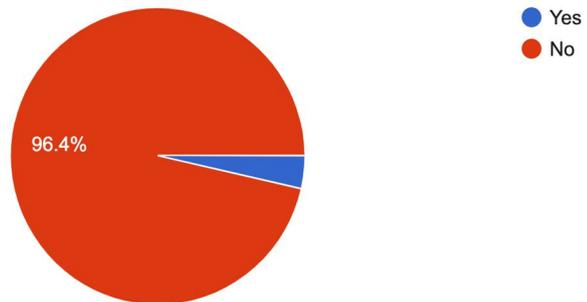
28 responses



### Question 14

Thinking about the closure of Barclays Bank on the High Street and the lack of banks and cashpoints, do you use a commercial cash collection service where cash is collected directly from your premises?

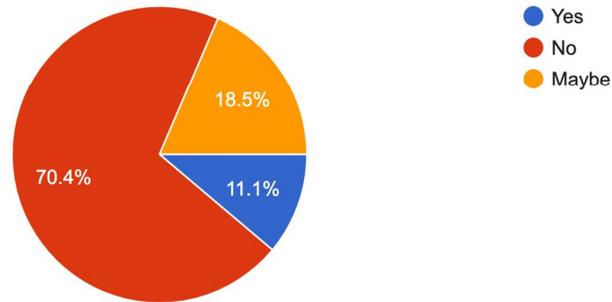
28 responses



### Question 15

If you do not use a commercial cash collection service, is this something you would be interested in?

27 responses



### Question 16

**Do you feel there are useful local business groups you belong to?**

**If yes, which are most useful?**

#### Responses

Positive mention of specific groups

*Part of the Facebook business group , only recently joined*

*Highgate Festive Events - I am one of three committee members that tries to organise the Highgate Village Christmas lights*

*Highgate Society, HLSI*

Views a group is needed

*Yes definitely*

*Yes*

Views a group is not needed

*I think that this is OK*

*No*

Lack of knowledge of groups

*I don't know of any*

Views that it is challenging

*No. Possibly - attempts at forming a local business group have been a disaster in the past and fractured the community.*

*The last local business group i attended in Highgate descended into unpleasant squabbling. The business group was later disbanded. A group needs a strong chairperson and initially a council representative to keep order.*

*The past and existing business groups have never worked for reasons that would take up a lot more space than available in this email!*

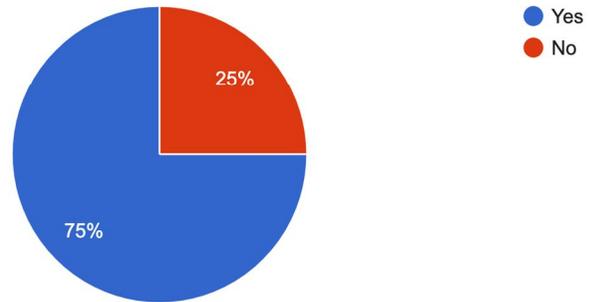
*No current group. Yes needs to be one but needs to be run by local business owners to resolve business issues and not overtaken by residents.*

### Question 17

Are you aware of the Highgate Hit List which lists events in N6, every week?

<https://hitlistn6.wixsite.com/hitlistn6>

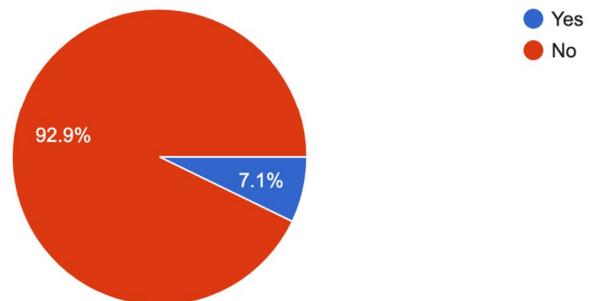
28 responses



### Question 18

Does your business own a working defibrillator?

28 responses



## Question 19

**If you would like to give any other feedback, please do so here (optional)**

### Responses

#### New ideas

*Perhaps local shops could provide a unified delivery system, Highgate society needs to promote local businesses by post or online*

#### Positive comments

*Not so much doom and gloom please. The High Street is quite healthy compared with many others in London. There's only a couple of empty units and many businesses are finding ways to cope with the pandemic. The general support from the local residents has been very positive.*

*Good survey!*

#### Overall Concerns

*Highgate village has already seen an increase in large corporate chain shops, a loss of a village identity, increased rents, increased rates, a loss of small village shops providing basic provisions. Recently, before COVID, there has been a high turnover of shops and restaurants unable to trade due to high rents and rates. There has been the threat of increased parking restrictions which would further diminish trade. And now COVID. Small traders need support with grants/loans/rent freezes/rate freezes and reductions/no further parking restrictions/publicity extolling the virtues of the village/council flexibility allowing and encouraging spaces for creative activities and spaces within the village.*

*Simply Rent and Rates are far too high and what Camden are doing with the traffic routes is causing chaos*

*Bank closures are ridiculous as they are the bank and if they cannot afford to stay on a high street or if it's not viable then who can..?*

*We are all exhausted working under a pandemic ... as for profits most are hardly able to conduct business, we have been closed for nearly 4 months this year so far, only food suppliers have been allowed to trade, this is the simple impact of forced closure... zero income but full overheads, you are intelligent enough to do the maths...Opening our doors shows how much heart independent traders put in, to share their dream with their community.*

*It has been obvious to me how the residents can support us and there is only one answer- Use the shops! That is all we ask of our community and Highgate Society members.*

*It's survive or die this winter for all traders*

Security

*Better lighting in the street and perhaps a police presence [Archway Road area]*

*Security and crime has been an issue in our shop with fraudulent notes and a robber who tried to steal our iPad and till. [Highgate High Street]*