Responses collected from September 1 to September 4, 2020

Note: We received input from a total of 149 firms. Of those 149 respondents, 144 answered question 1.

1. For the week ending August 30, considering what you had expected before the COVID-19 outbreak, what would you say has been the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated effects on the past week’s new orders or sales?

More than 46 percent of all responding firms reported decreases of more than 5 percent in new orders or sales (down slightly from 49 percent last month), while 26 percent reported increases of more than 5 percent (up from 16 percent). More than 24 percent reported changes between -5 percent and 5 percent (down from 30 percent). Larger shares of manufacturers reported overall increases as well as decreases relative to nonmanufacturers, while a larger share of nonmanufacturers reported little to no change. Roughly 3 percent of the firms reported a temporary shutdown (little changed from last month); no firms reported a permanent shutdown.

The chart below shows an estimated average percent change in new orders or sales by firm type based on responses to question 1, which is calculated using the midpoints of the ranges of each answer option and likely includes measurement error. The estimated average percent change in new orders or sales from the week ending August 2 to the week ending August 30 remained negative but rose from -19.3 percent to -14.5 percent for all firms, from -14.2 percent to -8.7 percent for manufacturers, and from -21.0 percent to -16.7 percent for nonmanufacturers.

Note: Dashed lines leading up to April 5, 2020, indicate sample size changes over the first two weeks. Beginning on July 5, the survey frequency changed from weekly to monthly; dotted lines indicate the average weekly trend between monthly surveys.
Note: All 149 respondents answered question 2. Respondents were able to choose as many options as applied.

2. What labor force decisions did your firm make in August?

Nearly 46 percent of the firms reported no changes to their labor force in August. Roughly 31 percent of the firms reported hiring new full- or part-time employees, and 7 percent reported recalling furloughed workers. Although larger shares of manufacturers indicated hiring new employees and increasing the number of temporary workers, a larger share also noted furloughing employees. A larger share of nonmanufacturers indicated making no changes.

Note: Of the 149 total respondents, 56 answered question 3. Respondents were able to choose as many options as applied.

3. Were there any impediments to hiring or recalling workers in August?

Of the 56 firms above that indicated having hired new employees, recalled workers, or increased the number of temporary workers or contractors in August, 39 percent indicated no impediments to hiring or recalling workers. Slightly smaller but similar shares of firms indicated expanded unemployment benefits (34 percent), lack of childcare (32 percent), and fear of infection (30 percent) as impediments. Larger shares of manufacturers noted expanded unemployment benefits and a lack of childcare as impediments relative to nonmanufacturers, while a larger share of nonmanufacturers noted no impediments.
Note: Of the 149 total respondents, 146 responded to question 4.

4. How concerned are you about your ability to deal with each of the following over the next month?

Overall, the share of firms indicating being somewhat or very concerned about various credit issues over the next month declined relative to when the same question was last asked (in the report for the week ending May 31). However, most of the firms indicated being somewhat or very concerned about collecting payables from customers (65 percent vs. 76 percent last time) and maintaining adequate cash flow (58 percent vs. 66 percent). More than 38 percent of the firms noted concern about incurring excessive debt (down from 47 percent), and 31 percent noted concern about maintaining solvency (down from 39 percent). Larger shares of nonmanufacturers noted concerns about maintaining solvency and getting adequate credit from suppliers.