

Introduction

This edition of Kevin's Corner uses data from the 2021 Business Response Survey to understand how Vermont businesses changed their operations and employment in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sources

The Bureau of Labor Statistics' 2021 Business Response Survey collected information from a stratified sample of 322,560 business establishments nationwide. The survey asked a series of questions to understand changes businesses have made during the pandemic along with questions about expectations for the future of business. The survey was conducted between July 27th and September 30th, 2021.

Results include information about telework, workplace flexibilities, changes in pay, COVID-19 workplace requirements, office space footprint, relocation, supplementing workforce, automation, drug and alcohol testing, and COVID-19 loans or grants. Below, we review the Vermont-specific results for several topics and compare them to other New England states and national private-sector trends. For more information and the complete results of the survey please visit the [BLS Business Response Survey page](#).

Results

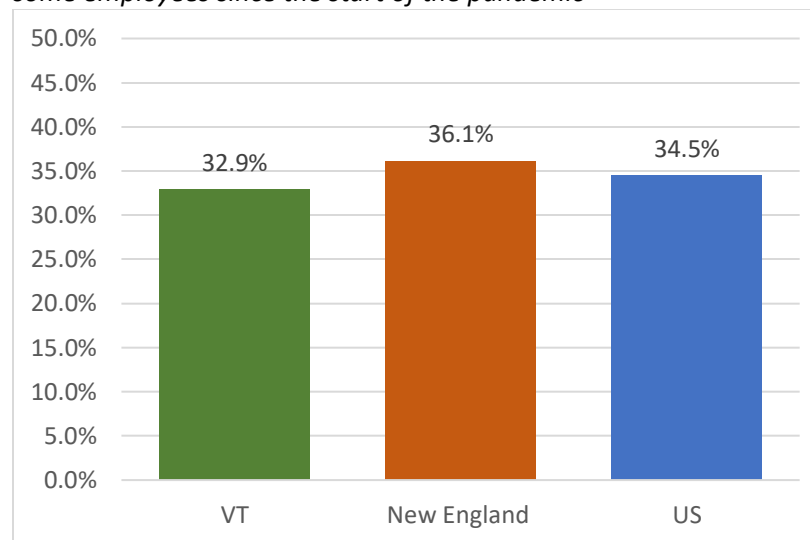
Telework

During the survey period (July 27th – September 30th 2021) 29.9% of Vermont establishments had at least some of their employees teleworking. This is in line with the national private-sector average of 29.8%. Nine percent of Vermont establishments had all of their employees teleworking at the time of the survey. This is below both the national rate of 10.3% and the New England states' average of

11.1%. The highest rate among New England states was Connecticut at 12.2%, followed closely by New Hampshire at 12.1%. Maine was the lowest at 7.8%. Nationally, the highest rate was in Washington at 14.7% (The rate in The District of Columbia was 29.1%).

Since the start of the pandemic 32.9% of Vermont establishments increased telework for some or all employees, slightly lower than the national average of 34.5%. The highest rate among all states was New York at 42.4% (In the District of Columbia the rate reached 68.3%). The Vermont rate is also lower than the 36.1% average among New England states. The highest rate among New England states was Massachusetts at 41.6%. See table 1.

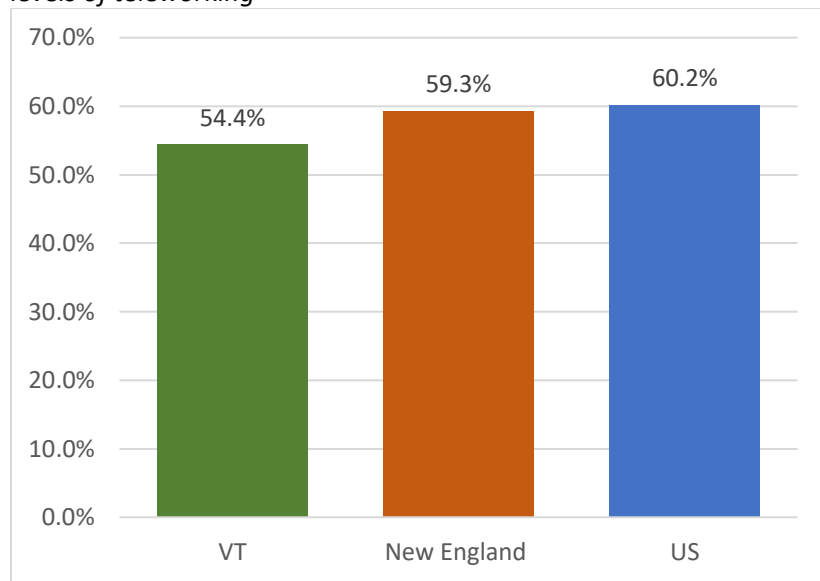
Table 1: Percent of establishments that increased telework for at least some employees since the start of the pandemic



When the pandemic ends many establishments report that they expect to continue to have increased levels of teleworking. Among

establishments that increased teleworking during the pandemic, 60.2% nationwide expect the increase to continue. In Vermont that figure is 54.4%. The highest rate among all states is Illinois at 69.3% (The District of Columbia’s rate is 76.7%). Among New England states the average is 59.3% with the highest rate in Connecticut at 67.0% and the lowest in New Hampshire at 54.3%. See table 2

Table 2: Percent of establishments that expect to continue increased levels of teleworking



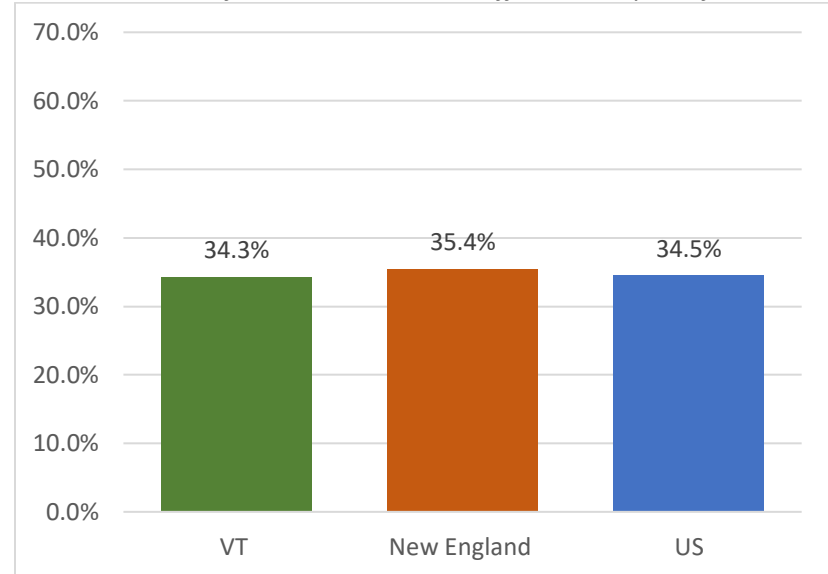
Workplace Flexibilities

The survey requested information about five types of workplace flexibility. These include flexible or staggered work hours, alternative work schedules, voluntary reductions in hours worked, job sharing, and paid leave for dependent care (which includes additional paid

leave of any kind for employees with dependent care responsibilities due to the coronavirus epidemic).

Since the start of the pandemic 34.3% of Vermont firms reported starting at least one of the aforementioned flexibilities, quite similar to the national average of 34.5%. Among all states the highest rate was Hawaii at 43.4% followed by New York at 42.9% and California at 41.9% (Puerto Rico’s rate stood at 55% and the District of Columbia at 45.8%). See table 3

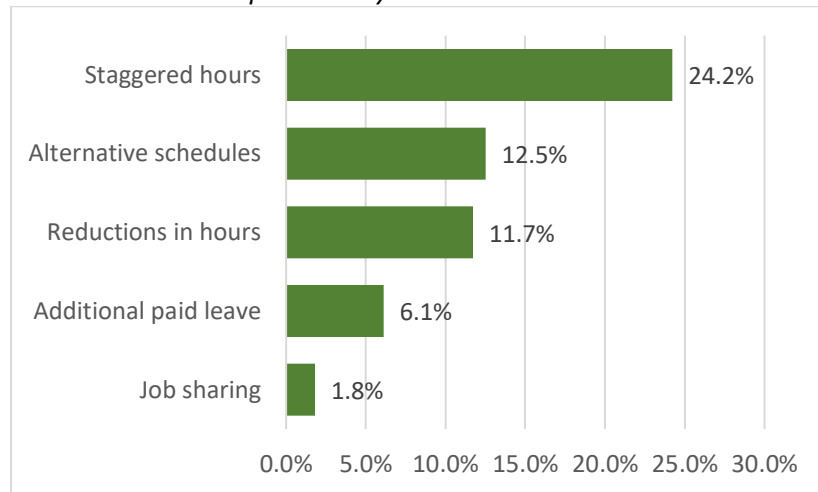
Table 3: Percent of establishments that offered workplace flexibilities



Within New England the average among states was 35.4%, slightly above the national average. The highest rates of flexibility were in Massachusetts (39.9%) and Rhode Island (36.3%). The lowest were in Maine (33.5%) and New Hampshire (33.9%).

In Vermont the most common flexibility was around employee hours. Staggered work hours were started by 24.2% of establishments and alternative work schedules were started at 12.5%. Voluntary reductions in hours worked were started at 11.7% of establishments. Additional paid leave (6.1%) and job sharing (1.8%) were less common. See table 4.

Table 4: Flexibilities provided by Vermont establishments



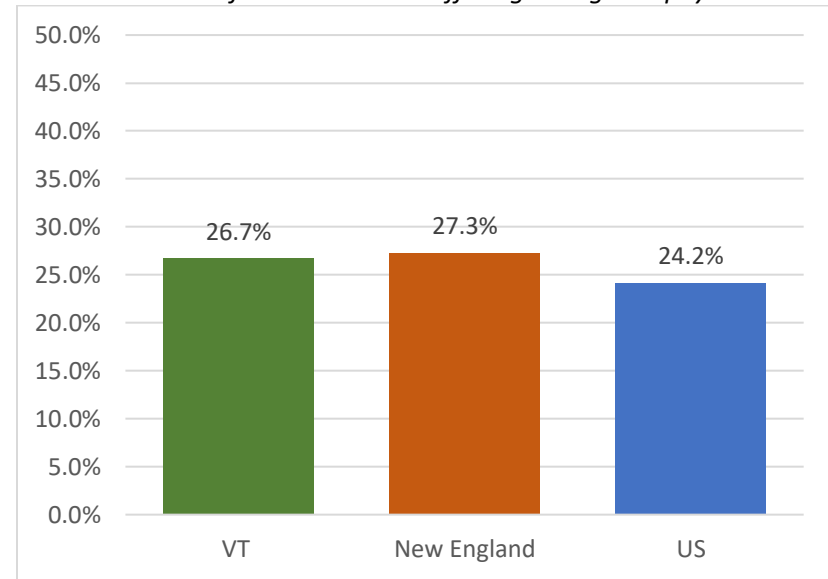
Changes in pay

Many firms increased wages during the pandemic. These wage increases came in various forms: increased base wages, temporary wage premiums, one-time monetary awards for working during the pandemic, and one-time bonuses to newly-hired workers.

During the survey reference period 26.7% of Vermont establishments increased wages by at least one of the aforementioned methods. This is above the national average of 24.2% and just below the New England states’ average of 27.3%. Nationally the highest rates were

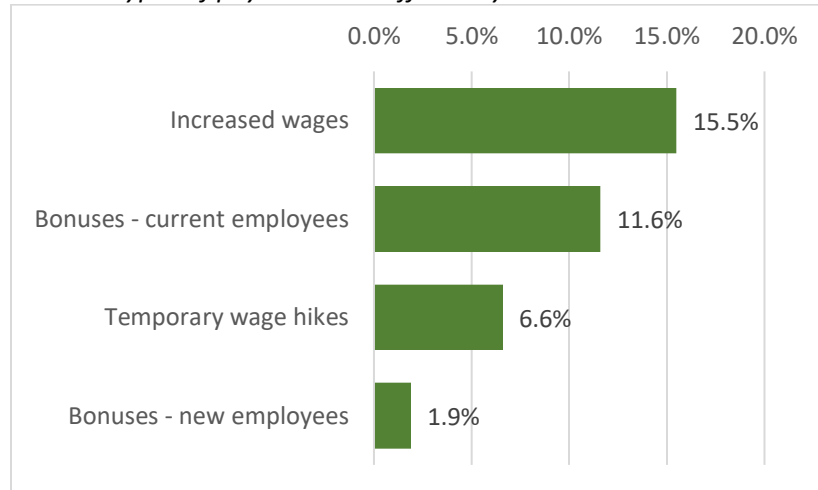
in Ohio (32.0%). The only states with rates below twenty percent were Colorado (19.5%) and Texas (19.7%). Within New England the highest rates were in Maine (30.4%) and Rhode Island (29.6%). The lowest rates were in Connecticut (23.8%) and Massachusetts (25.9%). See table 5

Table 5: Percent of establishments offering changes in pay



In Vermont 15.5% of establishments increased base wages, the most common change in pay. One-time monetary awards (bonuses) were paid by 11.6% of establishments. Temporary wage premiums were paid by 6.6% of Vermont establishments. 1.9% of Vermont establishments paid one-time bonuses to new employees. See table 6 on the next page.

Table 6: Types of pay increases offered by Vermont establishments



Government-Sponsored COVID-19 loans or grants

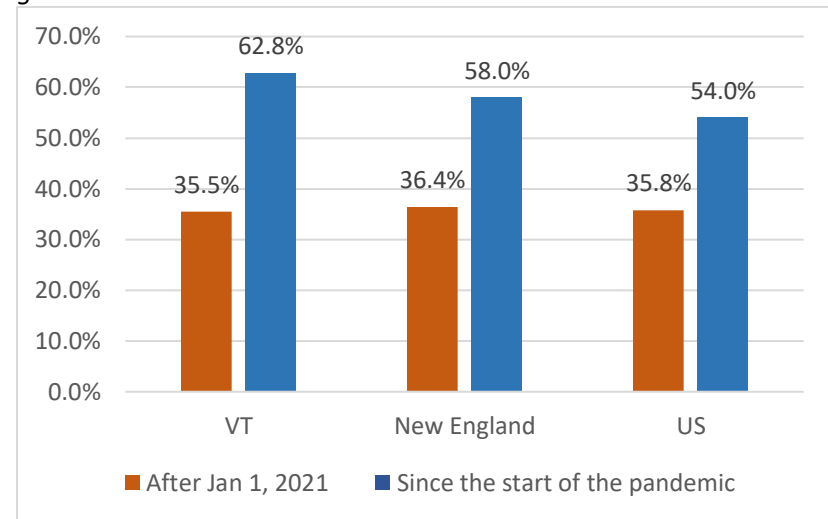
In Vermont, 35.5% of establishments received a federal or state government coronavirus-related loan or grant tied to rehiring or maintaining employees on the payroll *after January 1st, 2021*. Nationally, that figure was 35.8% while the average among New England States was 36.4%. The states with the highest shares of establishments receiving assistance were New York (42.9%), New Jersey (42.7%) and Hawaii (41.6%). Fifty four percent of establishments in Puerto Rico received assistance. The states with the lowest percentage of establishments receiving assistance were Utah (24.9%), Idaho (27.3%) , Wyoming (29.4%) and Montana (29.5%)

Within New England the highest rates of receiving loans or grants were in Massachusetts (41.2%) and Connecticut (40.4%). The lowest rates were in Maine (32.3%) and New Hampshire (34.2%).

Finally, 62.8% of Vermont establishments received some type of coronavirus-related loan since the onset of the pandemic and the loan has been converted to a grant. This is higher than both the national rate of 54.0% and the New England States’ average rate of 58.0%. The only state with a rate higher than Vermont was North Dakota (66.0%). Puerto Rico’s rate (64.7%) was also higher. The lowest rates were found in Nevada (47.0%), South Carolina (47.2%) and Idaho (48.1%).

Within New England Vermont had the highest rate. This was followed by New Hampshire (61.0%) and Maine (58.4%). The lowest rates were in Rhode Island (53.1%) and Connecticut (55.0%). See table 7.

Table 7: Percent of establishments receiving state or federal loans or grants



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