



NARRATIVE
RESEARCH

Business Confidence and Economic Issues Report

November 2021

Prepared for:





NARRATIVE
RESEARCH

Summary of Findings



Brampton Board of Trade

Business Confidence and Economic Issues

Key Highlights

Methodology:



Online surveys

134 business people completed surveys from August 11 – October 11, 2021.



21.3 years
(vs. 23.1 in 2020)
Average length of time business has operated in Brampton

Business Profile



Industry

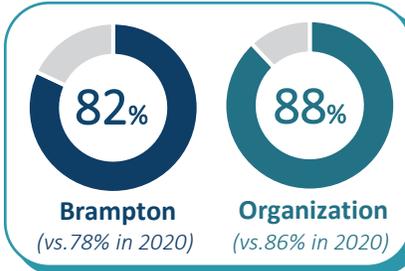
Mfg/B2B 55%
(vs. 58% in 2020)

Service 31%
(vs. 29% in 2020)

Retail 5%
(vs. 5% in 2020)

Other 7%
(vs. 8% in 2020)

Confidence in Economic Future



Top 3 Issues Facing Brampton Businesses Today (Key Unaided Mentions)

32% Access to talent/skilled labour (vs. 20% in 2020)

29% Transportation infrastructure (vs. 33% in 2020)

18% Pandemic/COVID-19 impact (vs. 23% in 2020)

Advice for City Hall to Increase Business Competitiveness (Key Unaided Mentions)

- #1 Improve transportation infrastructure (vs. #3 in 2020)
- #2 Focus on business growth/Attract new businesses (vs. #2 in 2020)
- #3 Lower taxes (vs. #5 in 2020)



Only 38%

Believe Brampton's business community is doing enough to foster a positive business environment

(vs. 40% in 2020)



Only 1 in 2 agree



that the municipal government displays a positive external brand image
(53% vs. 53% in 2020)

Civic Leadership

64%

Are satisfied with Brampton City Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic
(vs. 68% in 2020)



4 in 10



Agree that the municipal government... shares priorities that align with business needs
(43% vs. 49% in 2020)
... is trustworthy (42% vs. 50% in 2020)

Are confident in Brampton City Council's ability to make good decisions
(44% vs. 52% in 2020)

51%

feel well informed about which level of government is responsible for decisions that affect their business

Only 1 in 3

feel Brampton is well served by its two-tiered regional government structure

Economic Outlook Over The Next 12 Months



GROWTH
49% (vs. 32% in 2020) expect the # of staff within their organization to increase

Confidence in organization's...

- 83% Economic sustainability (vs. 73% in 2020)
- 81% Ability to balance expenditures (vs. 67% in 2020)
- 80% Ability to generate revenue (vs. 72% in 2020)
- 77% Environmental sustainability (vs. 76% in 2020)
- 75% Ability to invest in required technology (vs. 53% in 2020)



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Transportation

Brampton is **easily accessible** from other regions

59% agree
(vs. 64% in 2020)

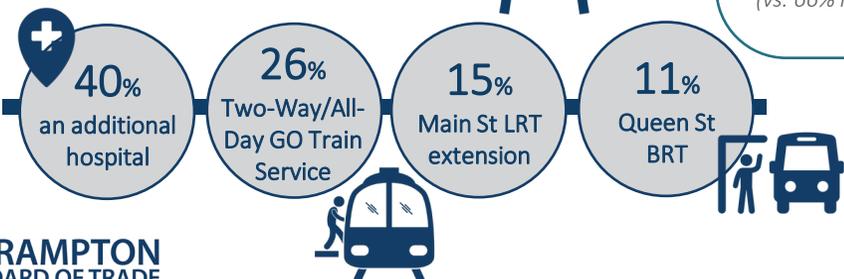
32% agree it's **easy to get around** within Brampton
(vs. 28% in 2020)



Ways to Improve Transportation and Accessibility Both Into and Within Brampton (Key Unaided Mentions)

- #1** LRT service (vs. #4 in 2020)
- #2 tied** Better public transit (vs. #1 in 2020)
Widen road/More traffic lanes (vs. #6 in 2020)
- #3** All day GO Train service (vs. #2 in 2020)

Highest Priority Project



Trade and Investment

Import goods for resale in Brampton **27%**
(vs. 21% in 2020)

Export goods **27%**
(vs. 28% in 2020)

Top 3 Issues Impacting Trade

Transportation costs **70%**
(vs. 56% in 2020)

Product availability **57%**
(vs. 32% in 2020)

Tariffs **47%**
(vs. 41% in 2020)



Talent

72% Prefer to advertise online for recruiting
(vs. 66% in 2020)

49% Find it difficult to find new talent for their organization
(vs. 45% in 2020)

72% Organization offers internships or co-op opportunities
(vs. 66% in 2020)

81% Pay those completing internships/co-ops
(vs. 79% in 2020)

Technology and Innovation



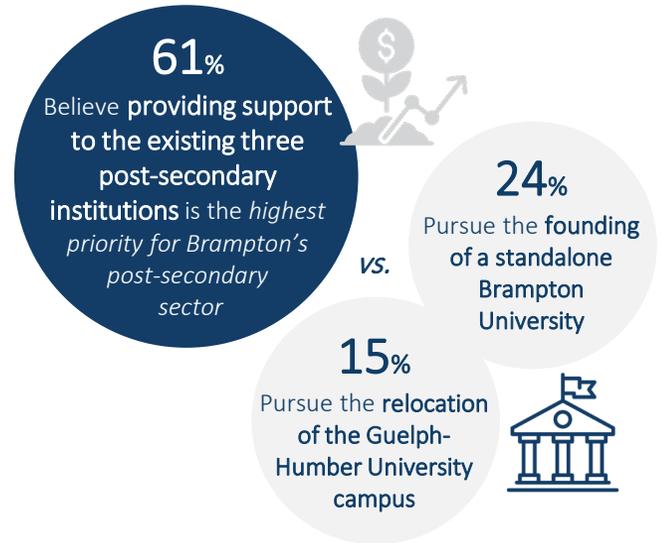
New Technologies for Business

75% Knowledgeable about what is available to optimize operations
(vs. 55% in 2020)

69% Aware of the best financing options
(vs. 55% in 2020)

67% Know how to find the personnel to implement them
(vs. 64% in 2020)

33% Say their top innovation barrier is their **lack of human resources**
(vs. 9% in 2020)
followed by their **budget 31%**
(vs. 53% in 2020)



Notes: Unless otherwise noted, percentages represent top 4 box scores on 10-pt. scales.



Findings from the **2021 Business Confidence and Economic Issues Surveys** suggest a *much more optimistic climate and view of the future*, compared with results from a year ago, though there are some key insights and opportunities identified as well, chief among them *a need for talent in order to grow*, and *big challenges with transportation*.

- **Confidence and Economy:**

- A growing majority of business leaders in Brampton are confident in Brampton's economic future (82%; up 4 points), and remain highly confident in their own organization's future (88%; up 2 points).
- A third believe that Brampton's economy is now better than a year ago (35%; up 20 points), suggesting real improvements have been made since fall 2020.
- Half believe that Brampton's economy will be better over the next 12 months (52%; up 2 points), and only a handful believe it will get worse (6%; down 16 points).
- Business leaders remain highly confident in the economic future of their own organization with nearly all indicating the future is bright (88%; up 2 points), and three quarters believe their organization's economic well-being will be better in the year to come (72%; up 12 points).
- Positively, business leaders increasingly identify Brampton as a business-friendly city (67%; up 21 points) and as having an innovative economy (57%; up 13 points).

- **Outlook:**

- Positively, half of business leaders expect to grow their staff in the next year (49%; up 17 points), however, one of the key issues identified is access to talent and skilled labour (32%; up 12 points), pointing to a potential gap. Further, half of business leaders said they find it difficult to find new talent for their organization (49%; up 4 points). In addition, a third say that the top innovation barrier is their lack of human resources (33%; up 24 points).
- The small number of businesses that export expect to grow their exports in the coming year.

- **Post-Secondary:**

- When asked about Brampton's future in terms of post-secondary offerings, most business leaders believe that providing support to the existing three post-secondary institutions is best (61%), distantly followed by founding a standalone Brampton University (24%) or pursuing the relocation of the Guelph-Humber University campus (15%). These results point to a need to better define the unique value and offerings that could be provided by all post-secondary options.



- **Issues:**

- Transportation infrastructure continues to be identified as a key issue (29%; down 4 points), and improving transportation infrastructure is now the top piece of advice for City Hall to increase business competitiveness (comparatively, it was the third highest mention in 2020). Transportation costs are also increasingly identified as having an impact on trade (70%; up 14 points). While most agree that Brampton is easily accessible from other regions (59%; down 5 points), only a third agree it's easy to get around *within* Brampton (32%; up 4 points). Transportation is clearly a complex issue, and while there is a desire for LRT service (voted number one as the way to improve transportation and accessibility, versus number 4 a year ago), followed by better public transit, widening roads, or having all day GO Train service, there also appears to be recognition that other projects may be easier to implement. Indeed, compared with other proposed investments in transportation infrastructure, LRT (either extending at surface level or including a tunnel) is seen as a much lower priority compared to all-day Go train or improved access to the airport.
- Businesses are clearly having difficult with sourcing, as there has been a significant rise this year in businesses identifying product availability as an issue affecting trade (57%; up 25 points).
- Satisfaction has declined with a number of key services in Brampton, including storm water fees, user fees and commercial property tax rates.

- **Government:**

- Although a majority of leaders are satisfied with Brampton City Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic (64%; down 4 points), results this year identify some lack of confidence in other key areas. Only four in ten agree that the municipal government shares priorities that align with business needs (43%; down 6 points). Further, only four in ten are confident in Brampton City Council's ability to make good decisions (44%; down 8 points) or senior levels of government (39%; down 11 points). In addition, only a third of business leaders feel that Brampton is currently well served by its two-tiered regional government structure.
- Overall, perceptions of the performance of the municipal government have declined in a number of key metrics, pointing to a need for better collaboration with this important arm of government. It is notable that only four-in-ten feel that the municipal government is trustworthy (42%; down 8 points).
- When asked for their level of satisfaction with eight different municipal departments, Brampton Fire and Emergency Services is rated most highly (71%; no change), while the Chief Administrative Officer's office receives the lowest scores for satisfaction (32%; down 9 points).



- **Opportunities:**

- The results this year identified that only half of businesses feel well informed about which level of government is responsible for decisions that affect their business, pointing to a key area of opportunity for further information and education.
- Business leaders praise the BBOT for its advocacy and promotion of small and local businesses, as well as its work with governments. There is a stated desire among members to continue this work, along with support for improved transportation infrastructure.
- While transportation was clearly noted as one of the key areas where attention is needed, the top mention in terms of high priority projects in Brampton is to add an additional hospital (40%), followed by clearly-needed investments in transportation including two-way all day GO train service (26%), Main Street LRT extension (15% and the Queen Street BRT (11%).