



NARRATIVE
RESEARCH

Business Confidence and Economic Issues Report

November 2022

Prepared for:





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Study Purpose and Methodology

Historically, Brampton businesses have taken part in the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's Business Confidence Index (BCI) survey. As Brampton (the City) continues to grow into its role of major institutional hub, the Brampton Board of Trade (BBOT) was interested in actively engaging with the business community by launching its own BCI survey to be administered to key local businesses, in order to capture opinions related specifically to the business climate and issues facing Brampton. The following report presents the findings of the third annual Business Confidence Index survey, with comparisons drawn to previous 2021 and 2020 surveys.

The primary purpose of this third iteration of the research was to again measure the City's economic climate, and, different from the larger Ontario-wide initiative, concentrate on key areas of importance to the City. Further objectives included to gauge perceptions on topical issues impacting the City and across key topics, including: **civic leadership; economy and inflation; tax and regulation; transit and transportation; investment attractiveness; post-secondary institutions; trade (both interprovincial and international); and innovation.** Results from this study will be used to assist in advocating on behalf of the City's business community and in forming the strategic plan update.

Unlike past years where three online surveys were administered, a single online survey was utilized this year in an effort to boost participant response rate, and to reduce the amount of time needed for a respondent to complete.

To meet study objectives, over 800 members of Brampton's business community, as identified by the Brampton Board of Trade, were invited via email from Narrative Research to complete an online survey. A generic survey link was distributed to additional Brampton business community members by the Brampton Board of Trade. In total, 130 completed surveys were received.

All surveys were completed between September 8 and October 26, 2022. Upon completion of each of the survey, participants had the option of being entered into a draw to receive one of five 407 ETR cards, each valued at \$50.



**One online
survey sent to
Brampton's
business leaders**

**130 business people
completed surveys
from September 8 –
October 26, 2022**



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Summary of Findings



Brampton Board of Trade

Business Confidence and Economic Issues Key Highlights

Methodology:



Online surveys

130 businesspeople completed surveys from September 8 – October 26, 2022.



(vs. 21.3 in 2021)

Average length of time business has operated in Brampton

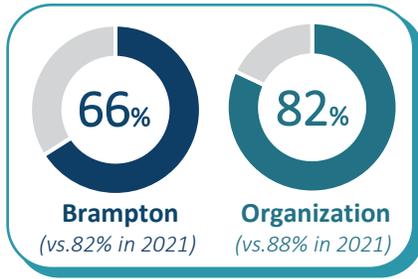
Business Profile

37% Located in **Brampton only**
(vs. 39% in 2021)

37% Also elsewhere in Canada
(vs. 37% in 2021)

Industry
Mfg/B2B **55%**
(vs. 55% in 2021)
Service **37%**
(vs. 31% in 2021)
Retail **4%**
(vs. 5% in 2021)
Other **6%**
(vs. 7% in 2021)

Confidence in Economic Future



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

- 37%** Access to talent/skilled labour (vs. 32% in 2021)
- 25%** Transportation infrastructure (vs. 29% in 2021)
- 16%** Cost of living/labour/inflation (vs. 9% in 2021)

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

- #1** Improve the image of the City (new in 2022)
- #2** Stop infighting/Work together (new in 2022)
- #3** Lower taxes (vs. #3 in 2021)



Talent

65%

Believe providing support to the existing three post-secondary institutions is the highest priority for Brampton's business community

vs.

(vs. 61% in 2021)

Civic Leadership

Only 1 in 4 agree that the municipal government... displays a **positive external brand image**
(26% vs. 53% in 2021)

Only 1 in 5 agree that the municipal government... shares priorities that align with business needs (22% vs. 43% in 2021)
... is trustworthy (21% vs. 42% in 2021)

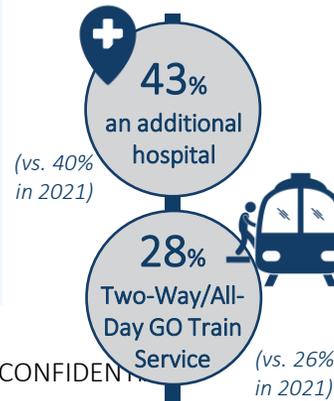
Only 15% are confident in Brampton City Council's ability to make good decisions
(vs. 44% in 2021)

Only 1 in 5 feel Brampton is well served by its two-tiered regional government structure
(22% vs. 32% in 2021)

22% feel well informed about which level of government is responsible for decisions that affect their business
(vs. 51% in 2021)

58% See amalgamating into a single-tier City of Peel as the best way forward

Highest Priority Project



Transportation



22% Satisfied with Brampton Transit
(vs. 31% in 2021)



24% agree it's easy to get around within Brampton
(vs. 32% in 2021)

Brampton is easily accessible from other regions

46% agree
(vs. 59% in 2021)

22% Pursue the founding of a standalone Brampton University
(vs. 24% in 2021)

85% Find recruiting employees a challenge

73% Find retaining employees a challenge

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



Findings from the **2022 Business Confidence and Economic Issues Surveys** suggest a *more pessimistic business climate and view of the future*, compared with results from a year ago, primarily a *lack of confidence in municipal government and big challenges with transportation*. That said, some key insights and opportunities also emerge from the survey results.

- **Confidence and Economy:**

- Fewer business leaders express confidence in Brampton's economic future (66%; down 16 points) compared with 2021. However, many business leaders remain confident in their own business' economic future (82%; down 6 points).
- Three in ten believe that Brampton's economy is now better than a year ago (31%; down 4 points), however, an equal number believe it has gotten worse (31%; up 10 points) over the past 12 months.
- One-third believe that Brampton's economy will be better over the next 12 months (32%; down 20 points) and another one-third believe that it will continue to worsen (32%; up 26 points), suggesting heightened pessimism towards next year's economy.
- A growing proportion of businesses, at nearly four in ten, are struggling with access to talent or skilled labour (37%; up 5 points), while larger proportions this year also cite issues with the cost of living (16%; up 7 points), poor government, (14%; up 11 points), and affordable housing (13%; up 7 points).

- **Business Challenges:**

- Most business leaders report challenges with recruiting employees (85%) and retaining employees (73%). Four in ten attribute this difficulty to a lack of qualified candidates and the overall competitive labour market, while one-quarter indicate that offering competitive wages is a key challenges when it comes to recruitment and retention.
- Two-thirds of respondents indicate experiencing reduced profit as a result of inflation on their business, moreover, one-quarter have had to slow their growth plans.

- **Post-Secondary:**

- Two-thirds of business leaders believe that providing support to the existing three post-secondary institutions (65%) in Brampton is a higher priority than the creation of a standalone Brampton University (22%) or pursuing the relocation of the Guelph-Humber University campus (13%).



Executive Summary (continued)

- **Issues:**
 - Transportation is clearly an issue, especially with regards to Toronto Pearson Airport (38%; down 45 points). All transportation assets have experienced a decline in satisfaction. Business leaders are less inclined this year to agree that the City of Brampton is accessible from other regions (46%; down 13 points) as transportation infrastructure continues to be identified as a main issue.
 - Despite the identification of transportation as a key issue, over four in ten business leaders believe that an additional hospital takes higher priority for the City of Brampton than key transportation related changes like a Two-Way/All-Day GO Train Service, Main St LRT extension, or Queen Street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).
- **Government:**
 - Levels of satisfaction and confidence with the municipal government is low and there are suggestions for improvements to the quality of public service, reducing bureaucracy, and for governments and City Council to work together and improve the image of the city.
 - Only two in ten agree that the municipal government shares priorities that align with business needs (22%; down 21 points). In addition, only one in six are confident in Brampton City Council's ability to make good decisions (15%; down 29 points) and overall, business leaders do not think that the municipal government is efficient at problem solving (13%; down 23 points). In addition, just one-quarter (24%) of respondents are confident in the regional government, while a larger four in ten (41%) are confident in the provincial government and nearly (37%) four in ten are confident in the federal government.
 - Business leaders were asked about their levels of satisfaction with eight different municipal departments. While satisfaction with four departments remain consistent with previous findings, Brampton Public Works, Brampton Legislative Services Operating Department, Brampton Planning & Economic Development, and The Chief Administrative Officer's office have all experienced declines in satisfaction.
 - Fewer business leaders are reporting that they are well informed about which level of government is responsible for decisions that affect their business (22%; down 29 points). This is a clear opportunity to offer more information and better support Brampton's business leaders.