

THE WELCH LLP OTTAWA BUSINESS

GROWTH SURVEY 2022

AN EXCLUSIVE REPORT ON THE OUTLOOK AND ATTITUDES OF OTTAWA'S BUSINESS LEADERS

OTTAWA AT A CROSSROADS

'NOW IS THE MOMENT AND IT
COULD BE A MOMENT LOST'

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Acclimatizing to a 'new normal'

We are delighted to present the 2022 *Welch LLP Ottawa Business Growth Survey*, which once again has valuable insight on the state of our economy and the outlook for the future.

The business community continues to adapt to a rapid pace of change, ongoing pandemic-related challenges and new opportunities. We are encouraged to see a positive overall sentiment from the survey, which may be attributable to becoming more acclimatized to the "new normal." Not surprisingly, the ability to recruit and retain talent continues to be a key issue across all sectors of the economy.

We thank our presenting partners: the *Ottawa Business Journal*, Ottawa Board of Trade and Abacus Data. Thank you to our major sponsor Commissionaires Ottawa. We also thank RBC, Perley-Robertson, Hill & McDougall, Le Regroupement des gens d'affaires de la Capitale nationale (RGA), and Sprott School of Business at Carleton University for their generous support.

We are proud to be part of a vibrant and resilient community, which continues to be a great business environment. We also take this opportunity to thank those in the health-care sector who provide invaluable support in challenging circumstances.



Jim McConnery
Managing Partner, Welch LLP

Time to reimagine Ottawa by building on our strengths, leveraging opportunities

Thank you to Welch LLP, the *Ottawa Business Journal*, Abacus Data and all our partners for continuing to invest in this important project. Thank you to our business leaders for sharing this data and enhancing our ability to gauge and address the business confidence and growth trends in our city.

One of the key lessons of the pandemic was the need for timely, relevant access to data for decision-making and identifying opportunities. The Ottawa Board of Trade has come to rely on the use of the *Welch LLP Ottawa Business Growth Survey* to validate its recommendations at all three levels of government. This allows us to cultivate a thriving world-class business community that drives community prosperity and an inclusive and sustainable city.

As we enter our third year of the pandemic, we all continue to face much uncertainty. However, we have become masters at navigating uncharted waters to find the opportunities for collaboration, innovation and planning. Despite the many challenges we continue to face, including the devastating situation in Ukraine, there is an excitement in our conversations, at our long-awaited in-person events and throughout our programs designed to grow and recognize businesses and their teams.

Armed with our newfound ability to prioritize progress over perfection, work together at a deeper level and design innovative solutions quickly, now is the time to reimagine the Ottawa of the future. Building on our strengths and leveraging new opportunities is the order of the day.

This year provides a special opportunity to influence our future with both a provincial and municipal election. It is critically important we share our views on Ottawa priorities and look for the calibre of leaders we need to build up Ottawa and reach our full potential as the best capital city in the world. I encourage you to find a way to make your views known, get involved and promote the power of the voice of business to grow our city in the right way.

Thank you, Ottawa, for your continued energy, optimism and resiliency. Together, we will thrive.



Sueling Ching
President and CEO,
Ottawa Board of Trade

Rebound in business confidence tinged by worries over inflation, talent

On behalf of the entire team at Abacus Data, it is a privilege to present the findings of the 2022 *Welch LLP Ottawa Business Growth Survey*, marking the 10th time we have been the research partner for this important study.

If we thought 2020 and 2021 were unprecedented years, then 2022 has so far started out with more of the same. The pandemic, which has entered the "learning to live with it" stage, continues, while the trucker occupation created new challenges for many businesses in the city.

This year, business leaders from across Ottawa shared their views and experiences with us and the response has been positive. I'm pleased to report that the mood of the business community is generally optimistic, but concerns about rising costs and labour shortages have made growth harder to achieve.

In 2020, our survey saw a massive decrease in business confidence, with the index dropping below 100 and into negative territory for the first time since we started this project. In 2021, business confidence rebounded but was still below the typical outlook we had measured in previous years.

I'm pleased to report that, this year,

confidence returned to pre-pandemic levels with a score of 125 – more positive than negative and reaching the highest level since 2017. More than half of business leaders say the market for their business sector will improve over the next year, a slight increase from last year but a 36-point increase from 2020.

Intent to hire has reached a new high, with 61 per cent of business leaders saying they plan to recruit new employees over the next 12 months, a 15-point increase from last year. And confidence in the local economy has improved, with 23 per cent saying their outlook on the Ottawa market has increased, reaching a high we haven't seen since 2017.

But this growing business confidence is happening while concerns about costs and wages rise. Eighty-seven per cent of business leaders report the prices they pay for key goods and services have increased. Fifty-four per cent say a shortage of skilled trade workers has negatively impacted their ability to operate, with 73 per cent saying it has become harder to recruit and retain employees because of the pandemic. As expected, cost pressures are forcing businesses to respond with increased prices.

All these concerns will be top of mind as Ottawa residents are asked to

decide who will lead the city during the upcoming municipal election. For the first time in three elections, Mayor Jim Watson won't be on the ballot and many incumbent city councillors won't be running again.

Abacus Data, a full-service Canadian market research firm based in Ottawa, carried out the survey from March 1 to April 11, 2021. A total of 550 business leaders responded to the survey.

Respondents were recruited by email and website intercept by the Ottawa Board of Trade, the *Ottawa Business Journal*, and the Welch LLP contact list. Members of BIAs from across Ottawa, the Better Business Bureau, BOMA, the Ottawa Construction Association and the National Capital Heavy Construction Association were also invited to participate.

Thank you to every business leader who took part in our survey. Your input makes this study possible. Wishing you all the very best as we navigate uncertain waters ahead.



David Coletto

*Chief Executive & Founder, Abacus Data
Board Member, Ottawa Board of Trade*

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FOREWORD

Turning negative optimism into concrete plans for the future

Someone recently told me that they were negatively optimistic, and it's a concept that stuck in my head. I was reminded of it again as I looked over the results of this year's *Welch LLP Ottawa Business Growth Survey*.

It's certainly heartening to see the hopes and fortunes of Ottawa's businesses bouncing back after the doldrums of the past couple of years. Many have seen revenues and net income rise and are looking ahead to rosier prospects for their business. On the other side of the coin, more than three-quarters of respondents say their confidence in the local economy has stayed the same or even deteriorated. It seems like a case of negative optimism to me.

Of course, there's reason for skepticism, with inflation at multi-year highs, unemployment at record lows and cyber fraud on the rise. Not to mention the complete and utter change in the ways so many of us go about our daily professional lives. Then there's the black swan of the pandemic that continues to float nearby in the choppy waters. It's certainly not easy to be in business, in a world that has been twisted and reshaped in so many ways by events of the past couple of years.

In Ottawa, our hopes for the future may also be tempered by the uncertainty we feel about our downtown core. We know that many businesses, including the region's largest employer, will be managing their employees in new ways going forward. What does this mean for the heart of our city? For the stability of the region as a whole?

Another unknown is our upcoming municipal election, which will give us a new mayor and council. What will their vision and priorities be and how will they affect the business community?

With all this in mind, it's natural that our optimism is tinged with a certain wariness. But there is reason to believe and ways that we can shape our own destiny. While we have limited control over macro forces such as inflation and employment, we do know our business community is fierce, creative and resilient. They've shown that in spades over the past two years. We've more than proven our ability to adapt. So bring it on.

When it comes to the municipal election, the power is in our hands to demand a mayor and council who will manage the city's financial affairs with an astute hand, handle major projects with efficiency and transparency, and advocate strongly for a downtown that is crafted from a vision for the future and not a hankering for the past.

We can do better than negative optimism. We can take positive action to bring our hopes to life.



Anne Howland

Editor In Chief, Ottawa Business Journal

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UNCERTAINTY AND OPPORTUNITY AHEAD

Adaptability and resilience will be key, leaders argue

By Anne Howland

A guarded optimism permeates this year's results from the *Welch LLP Ottawa Business Growth Survey*, as local businesses leave the darkest days of the pandemic behind and grapple with skyrocketing inflation, tight labour markets and uncertainty around the future of the downtown core and the outcome of a fall municipal election.

Jim McConnery, managing partner at Welch LLP, says that if anything is for certain, it's that the pre-pandemic status quo is no longer an acceptable operating model.

"The business community and organizations in general probably have the confidence that we've adapted and we're operating relatively effectively," he comments. "Maybe it's the case that ... adaptability and resilience have become almost a core feature of operating effectively in the current business environment."

Survey results show that just over half of respondents saw revenues and net income rise in the past year, while 57 per cent expect the market for their business to improve over the coming year, the most optimistic result since 2015. The

overall business confidence index rose from the doldrums of 2020 to surpass what it was in 2019, driven by gains in consulting and the hard-hit hospitality and retail sectors.

At the same time, 23 per cent of respondents who completed the survey say their confidence in the local economy has increased. While this is the strongest result since 2017, it perhaps reflects challenges around cost containment and hiring and retaining staff.

THE TALENT SHORTAGE HITS CLOSE TO HOME ...

A whopping 61 per cent of respondents plan to recruit new employees in the coming year, up from 25 per cent in the depths of the pandemic and the highest level since 2015. However, those plans are being stymied by a lack of qualified candidates.

"That's the main problem that our members are experiencing right now is the retention of personnel and to be able to hire new personnel - and qualified personnel," says Marc Chenier, general director at the Regroupement des Gens d'Affaires de la Capitale Nationale (RGA).

Survey results reflect this sentiment, with 57 per cent of respondents saying it's

much or somewhat harder to recruit and retain employees. To help address the problem, 65 per cent have hired immigrants, up 14 percentage points from last year. However, that also has its difficulties.

Dana Brown, dean of the Sprott School of Business at Carleton University, says requirements around experience and credentials often mean immigrants can't access jobs. "My Uber drivers in Ottawa are engineers and accountants and highly qualified people and they can't find jobs. And yet we have the talent deficit."

The labour shortage is perhaps particularly dire in the skilled trades, where 54 per cent of respondents say a shortage of workers has negatively impacted their ability to operate.

"Canada is facing an alarming shortage of skilled tradespeople," says Justin Schurman, RBC regional vice-president, business financial services. "Infrastructure projects, home renovations — they're all at risk. We won't be able to fix this without attracting more people to the trades. More young people, women, people from diverse backgrounds. They need to see trades as rewarding, where they can build their career for themselves."

Schurman points to the fact that about 700,000 tradespeople will retire by 2028. With not enough workers to replace them, Canada could be short 60,000 apprentices by 2025, he adds.

Retaining staff is another issue, with



about a lot. "These are really significant shifts and significant trends," she says of employees' changing views of what they want from the workplace. She points to the city's universities and colleges as a source of talent and as partners to the business community, especially since students today desire more experiential learning.

"To me, the skills gap, the need for talent, and the students' need to be in the world doing things, those things could come together really nicely," Brown argues. "I think every company should want to have the next generation's voice at the table right now because the future is very uncertain."

The rise in cyber-crime that has come along with increased online business is another worry. Half of respondents said they took measures over the past year to protect privacy, data and digital assets and feel those measures have added a layer of security. At the same time, 20 per cent said they had taken measures but felt there was still a risk.

That risk may be coming from unexpected quarters.

"It's interesting that so many of the additional measures taken are specific to upgrading tools and technologies and, yet, only 38 per cent of local companies conducted a basic criminal record check and only 18 per cent opted for fingerprinting to screen new employees," says Paul Guindon, CEO of Commissionaires Ottawa.

"You also need to be able to trust the people in your organization," Guindon explains, pointing to online portals, mobile services and bulk billing solutions for employers who want to verify the identity and integrity of new employees and contractors.

INFLATION TAKES A BITE ...

Another issue bewitching business is inflation, which, at multi-year highs, is increasing the cost of almost everything. A full 87 per cent of respondents say the prices they pay for key goods and services went up over the past year.

At RGA, Chenier says inflation is a big worry for his members. "The way that governments are reacting right now, in both budgets, federal and provincial, is they leave it to the Bank of Canada, basically."

Despite cost pressures, almost three-quarters of respondents say they have tried not to pass the increases on to customers, who are also feeling the pinch.

"(We're) trying to eat something of the costs in the hopes prices will drop," one respondent commented. Others are cutting hours and staff, seeking competitive prices on supplies, reducing their own compensation, or giving up office space.

HYBRID WORK MAY RESHAPE THE DOWNTOWN ...

A reduced need for office space may also be the result of employers switching to hybrid models of work; 46 per cent of respondents say they expect to have such an arrangement with staff. At the same time, 77 per cent expect their organization's commercial real estate footprint to either stay the same or grow.

"The return to work is interesting," says Tim Thomas, a partner at Perley-Robertson, Hill & McDougall, who specializes in real estate law. Most days, Thomas says, he finds himself alone at the gym in his firm's downtown high-rise. He anticipates that class A space will become more affordable for clients who might otherwise have viewed it as out of reach. By the same token, class B and C properties will see changes in use, possibly by being converted from commercial to residential.

This scenario is particularly true for the downtown, where the federal government's need for office space will likely decrease as more civil servants opt for hybrid work arrangements.

"I don't think the government is going to give up space altogether ... but I think it's definitely going to be reduced downtown and I think that there's going to be a lot of interesting changes of use of some of these buildings," comments Thomas.

"The thing about a lot of these older buildings is, they need updating anyway, so do you spend to upgrade for commercial tenants or do you bite the bullet and convert them to residential use?"

Another ramification of hybrid work for federal civil servants is that more of those employees, who traditionally have lived and worked in the region, could be

cash-strapped employers offering more flexibility and opportunities for learning, while also enhancing workplace culture. This at a time when one-third of respondents say the pandemic caused their company culture to deteriorate.

In her role as dean, Brown says the talent gap is something she hears

hired from outside Ottawa-Gatineau.

"If (the federal government is) going to have, let's say, a 30-per-cent remote workforce, then they can be in Moncton or Calgary or wherever, but I still think there'll be pressure for them to have a significant presence in Ottawa," observes Thomas. "But, even a five-per-cent or 10-per-cent reduction could have an impact."

Equally, Thomas adds, Ottawa residents could stay in the city and work for employers located outside of the region.

Sueling Ching, president and CEO of the Ottawa Board of Trade, is excited about reimagining the downtown. She says that the federal government as an employer has provided Ottawa with an "economic bubble" for many years, but now must be clear about its intentions for the downtown to preserve business confidence and show leadership in bringing employees back to the office.

"Our downtown core is an economic and cultural hub for our entire city in the nation's capital, which is a beacon for the entire world," she says, adding that the visitor economy is the "front door" for all other types of economic development.

"Is the downtown core important for every large city across Canada? One hundred per cent. Is it important to Ottawa? One thousand per cent."

A relative newcomer to Ottawa, Brown believes that, while the situation facing the downtown is serious, there are many reasons why people choose to live in the city. "There's an appetite among the constituency in Ottawa to have a vibrant downtown; I don't think it's the end of the end of the downtown by any means," she argues. "But how are we going to get there?"

BRINGING THE PLAYERS TO THE TABLE ...

Brown sees the need for an economic development table or forum, where government, business and academia could come together and talk about the future. "I would look for a mayoral candidate who says, 'I'm going to assemble this table, I'm going to listen. I'm not coming in with my own views and my own agenda. I'm actually

ready to collaborate and to work together on the future of the city."

It's a concept that Ching welcomes. "One of the biggest lessons that we've learned over the past two years is how we work together. The competitive advantage in Ottawa could be radical collaboration," she says, referencing a method of working together that embraces diverse perspectives. Ching believes governments learned how to move more quickly during their response to the pandemic and should not lose that speed now.

At RGA, Chenier agrees on the need for more interchange between government and business.

"Just imagine if we have to go back to lockdowns because of the new variants ... What should we do?" Chenier asks. "Those discussions should happen between members of various boards of trade and chambers of commerce. They should get involved more in the lobbying process with governments ... We should be more proactive in this case, there's not enough proactivity."

PAVING THE WAY FOR A THRIVING COMMUNITY ...

Of course, Chenier recognizes that governments can only do so much to manage macro forces such as inflation and unemployment. What they can do, he argues, is expedite processes for businesses, such as zoning and permitting, and not worry as much about subsidies or financial aid.

Thomas agrees that it's not about the money. "I can tell you the one big thing right now is that it takes forever to get stuff approved," he says, citing months-long delays in getting site approvals from city hall. Unless processes are streamlined, conversion projects in the downtown could be delayed or not even started, he adds.

"It speaks to modernizing government," adds Ching, citing digitization, smart city solutions and security as areas where the public sector must keep up.

"Having a great city isn't about spending public dollars," Brown concurs. "Try to think about getting governments to shift the conversation away from tax dollars and investments ... businesses have to thrive. So what are we going to do to allow businesses to thrive in our city?"

Ching believes an environment of

trust, predictability and confidence is necessary for businesses to excel and innovate. "What we know is that our economy growing and our community thriving will be driven by the success of our businesses," she says, adding that the municipal government has a huge opportunity to contribute to that success.

WHAT'S ON THE ELECTION WISHLIST ...

Looking ahead to the fall election, McConnery would advise a new municipal government to properly manage its financial affairs and contain tax increases, provide effective management for large projects, and play an active role in shaping the downtown. This mirrors the priorities of survey respondents, who cited LRT phase 3 and improving the transit system overall as their top concern.

"I think the election marks quite a transition, given that Mayor (Jim) Watson has been in place for so many years and, to a certain extent, he's provided an amount of ongoing stability," McConnery says.

Thomas is keen to see a new administration. "It's been the same vision for 15 years, I think it's time for a change. I think in any municipal or federal or provincial government, it's never healthy to have the same administration for too long a period."

At the Ottawa Board of Trade, Ching has three priorities on the election wishlist: strong leadership that chooses "progress over perfection"; ongoing collaboration between business and government; and a commitment to innovation and investment. "We have to ensure that the council moving forward understands what the levers are that we need to pull today to keep the economy growing and also looks at what the long-term objectives are," she says.

With so many unknowns, Brown says now is not the time for complacency. "If anyone thinks (the pandemic) is the last black swan, uh-uh," she says. "We're not going back, we're going forward. How are you going to remain an adaptable organization in the future?"

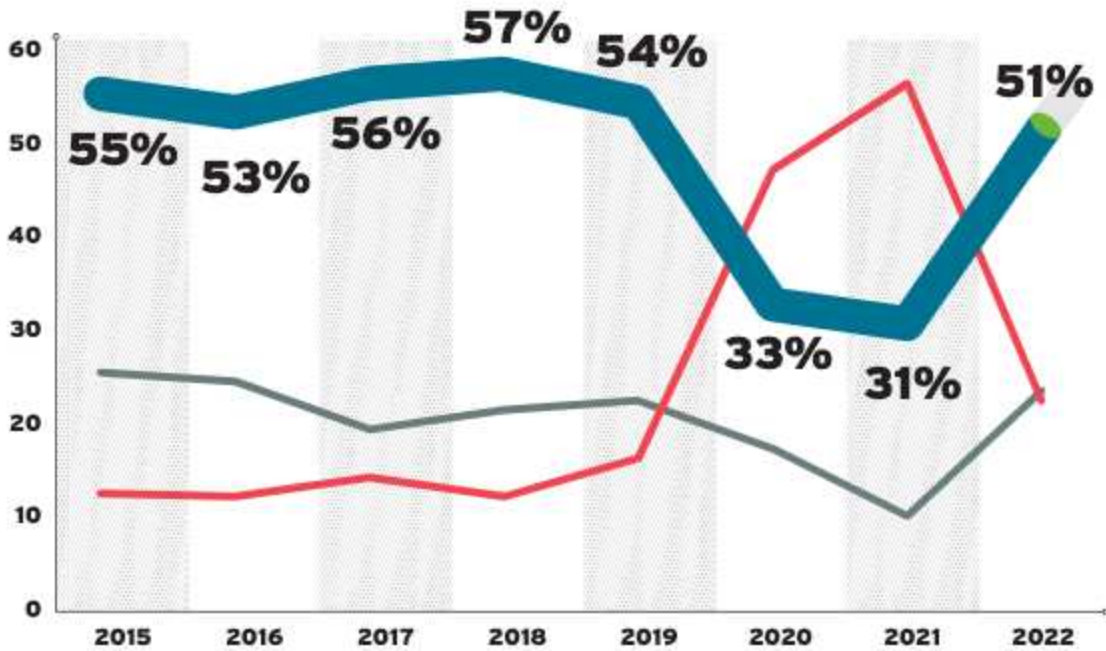
She warns, "Now is the moment and it could be a moment lost."



**OPTIMISM
IS BUILDING**

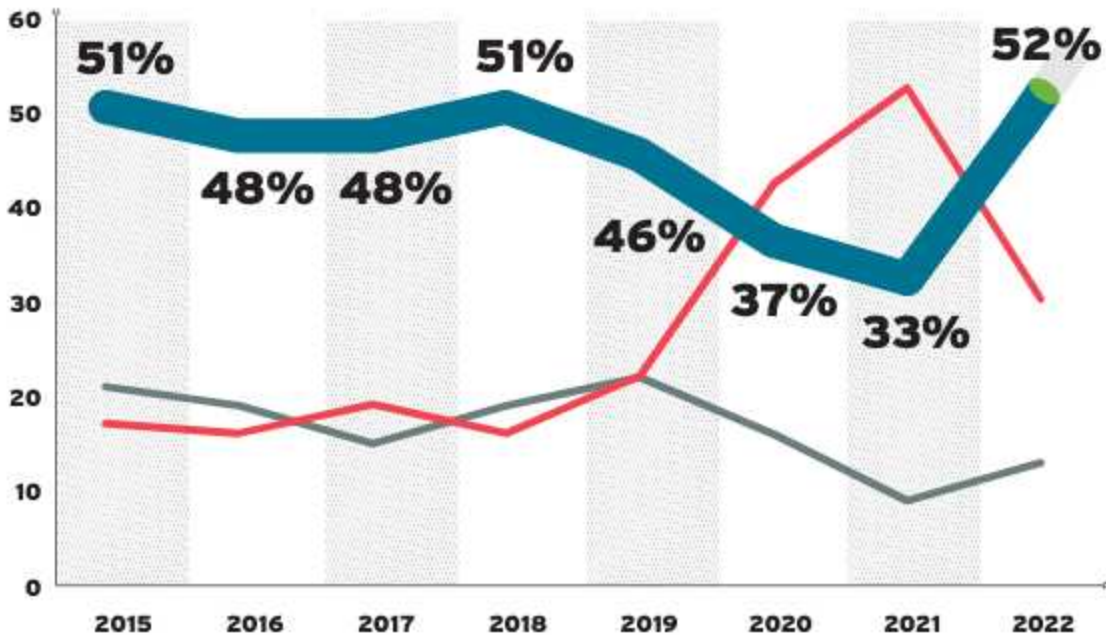
SALES AND REVENUES

In your last fiscal year, did your sales and/or revenue increase, decrease or stay about the same from the previous year? ■ INCREASED ■ STAYED THE SAME ■ DECREASED



NET INCOME

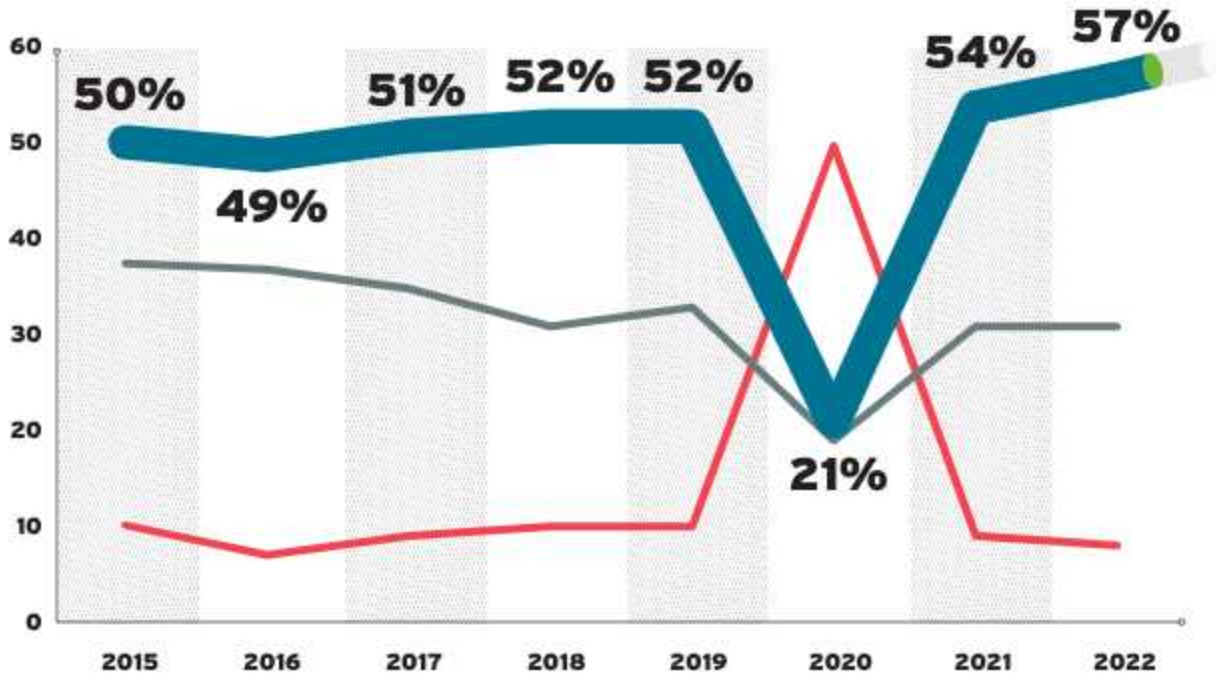
How does your net income in your most recently completed fiscal year compare to the previous year? ■ HIGHER ■ NO CHANGE ■ LOWER



FUTURE MARKET EXPECTATIONS

Over the next year, do you expect the market for your business sector to ...

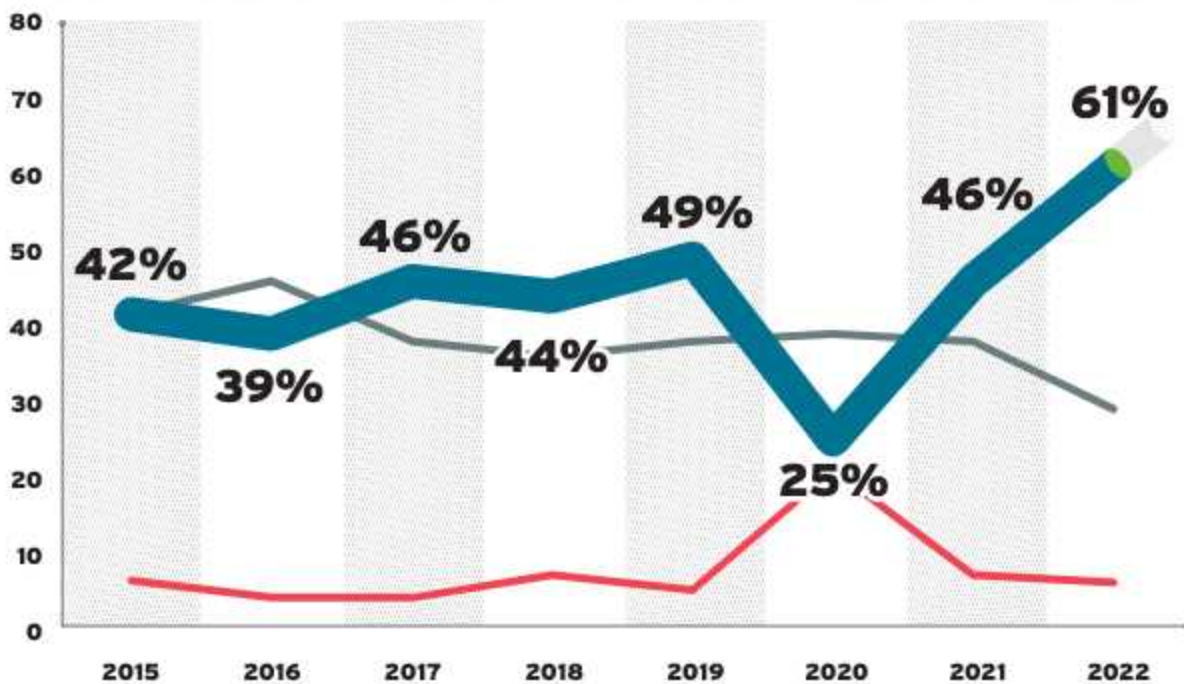
IMPROVE STAY THE SAME WORSEN



12-MONTH EMPLOYMENT PLANS

In the next year, do you plan to ...

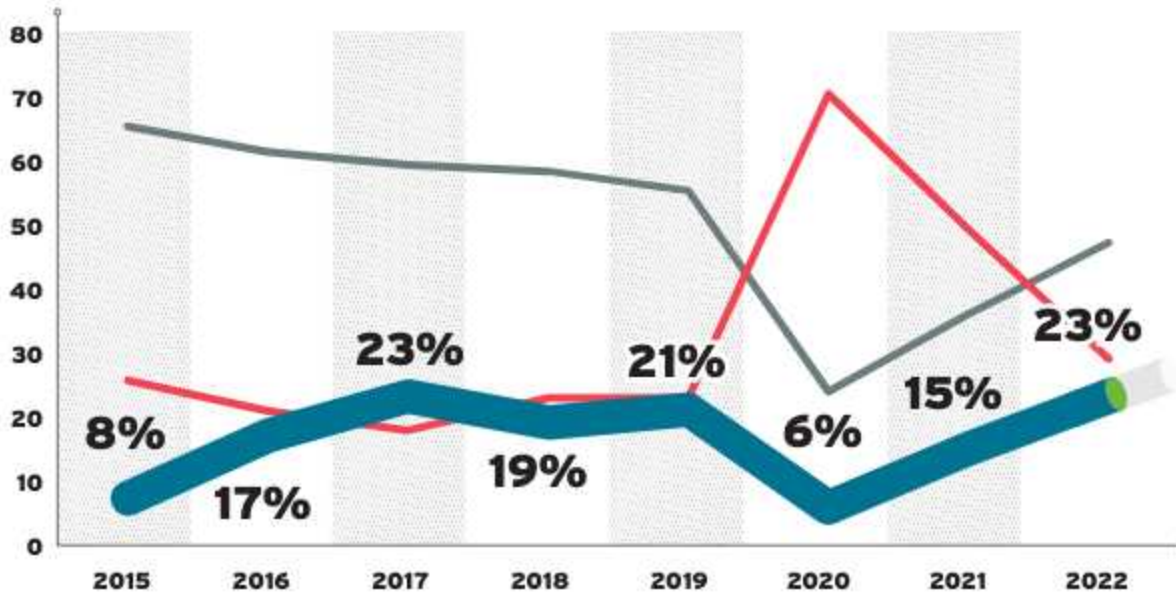
RECRUIT NEW EMPLOYEES KEEP EMPLOYEE LEVELS THE SAME REDUCE EMPLOYEE NUMBERS



CONFIDENCE IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY

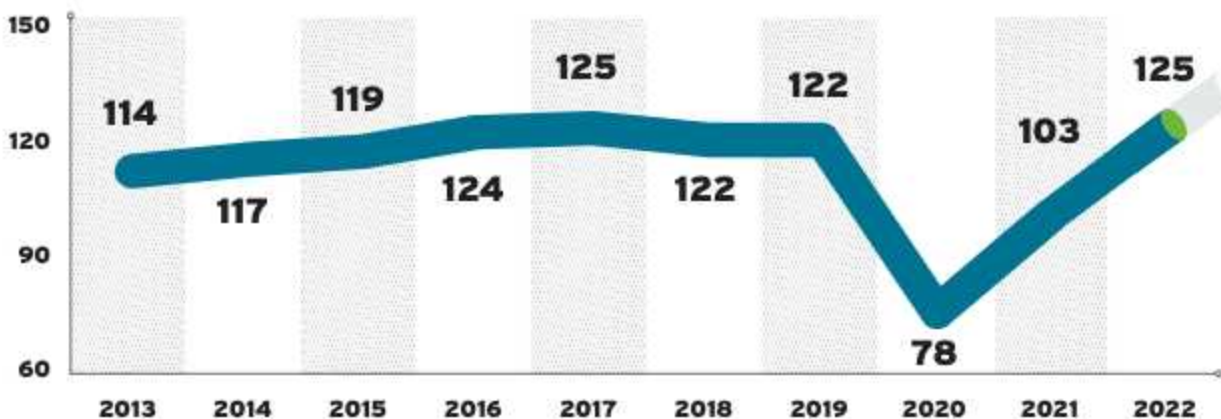
Compared to a year ago, would you say that your confidence in the local economy has ...

■ INCREASED ■ STAYED THE SAME ■ DECREASED



“What does return to ‘normal’ look like?”
 - SURVEY PARTICIPANT

THE BUSINESS CONFIDENCE INDEX



SECTOR SCORE: CONSULTING 136 (+23) / TECHNOLOGY 129 (+2) / HOSPITALITY 118 (+38)
 CONSTRUCTION 125 (+1) / RETAIL 110 (+20)

The background is a solid teal color. A large, soft white cloud is positioned in the upper middle section. Several thin, vertical white lines are spaced evenly across the entire width of the image, extending from the top to the bottom.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

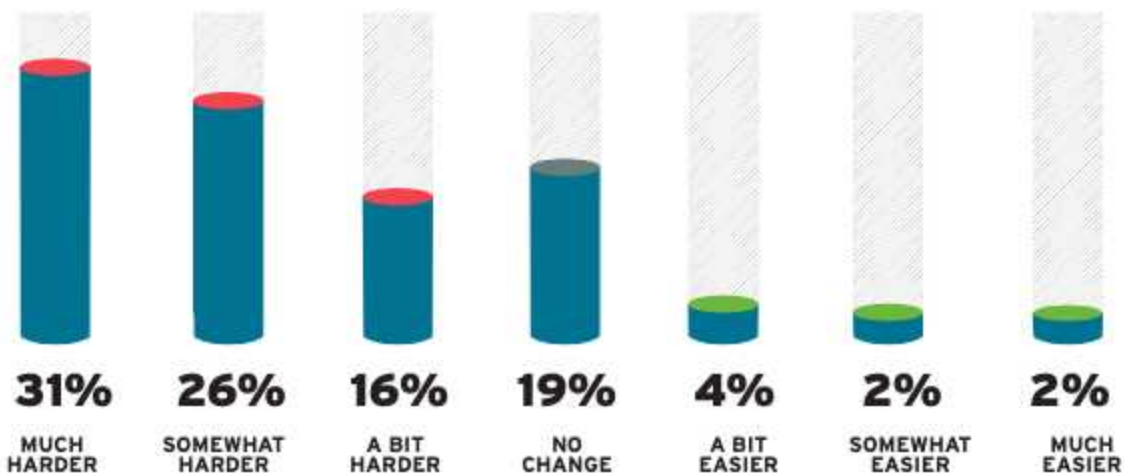
AVAILABILITY OF SKILLED LABOUR

Over the past year, how has the availability of skilled trade workers affected your business's ability to operate?



RECRUITING AND RETAINING EMPLOYEES

Thinking about your ability to recruit and retain employees, how has the pandemic impacted your organization?





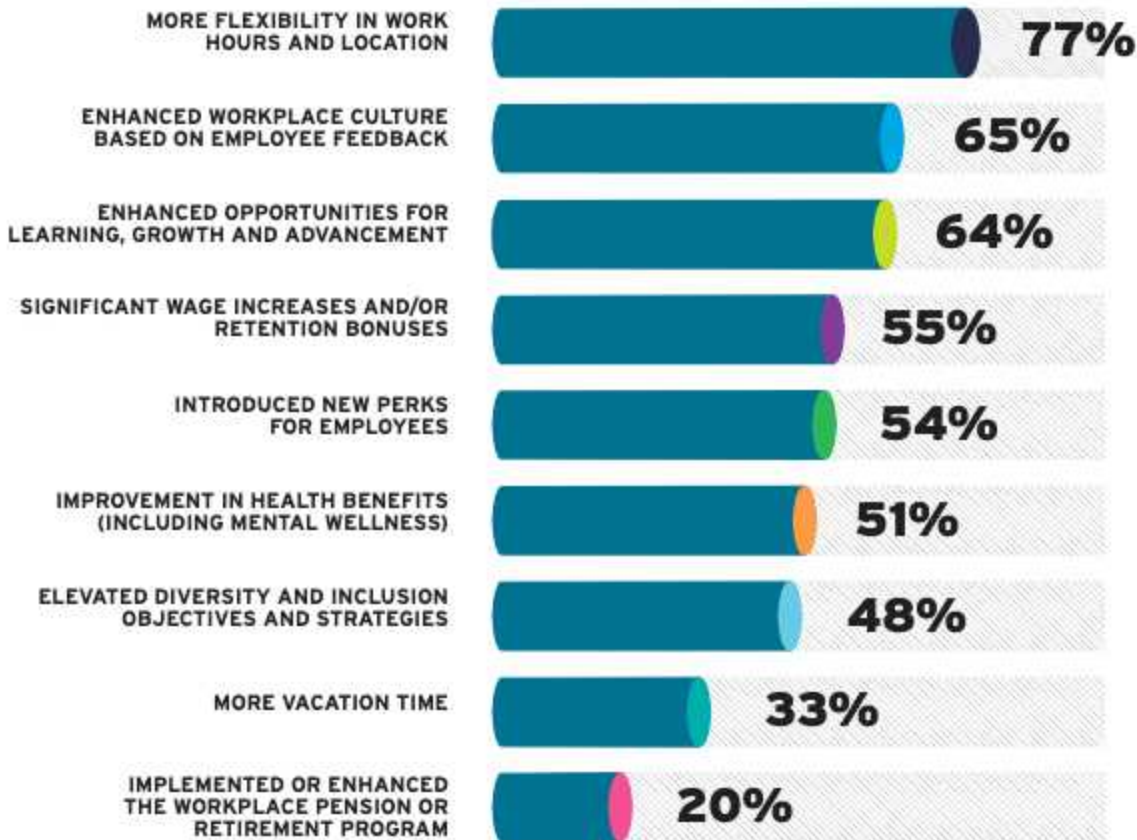
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ACTIONS TAKEN TO RETAIN EMPLOYEES

Thinking about your ability to retain existing employees, which of the following actions has your organization taken?



FLEXIBILITY AROUND RECRUITMENT

Remote work has created more flexibility around recruitment. Which of the following is true for your company?





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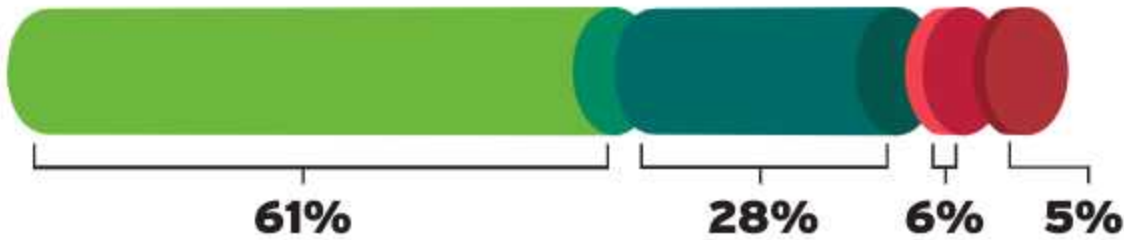


IMPORTANCE OF IMMIGRANTS TO THE COMMUNITY

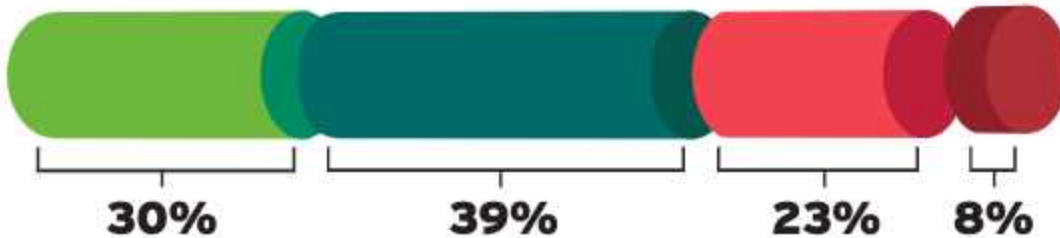
Thousands of immigrants settle in Ottawa-Gatineau each year. How important are immigrants as a source of labour/skills?

■ VERY IMPORTANT ■ SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT ■ NOT IMPORTANT ■ DON'T KNOW

FOR THE LOCAL ECONOMY OVERALL

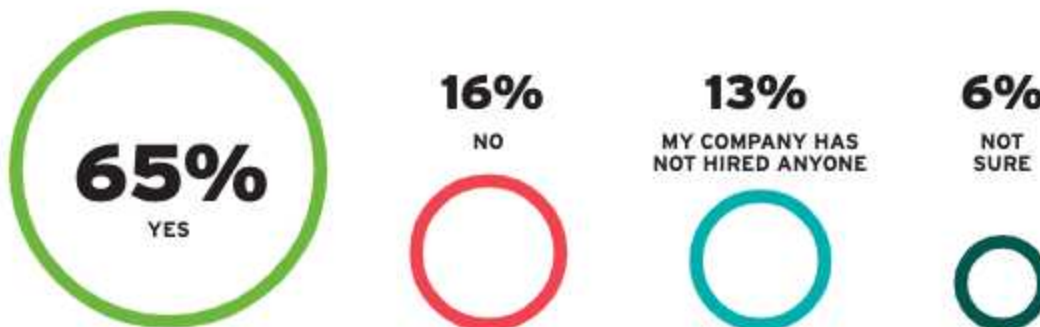


FOR YOUR COMPANY



HIRING IMMIGRANTS

To the best of your knowledge, over the past year, has your company hired an immigrant (someone born in a country other than Canada)?



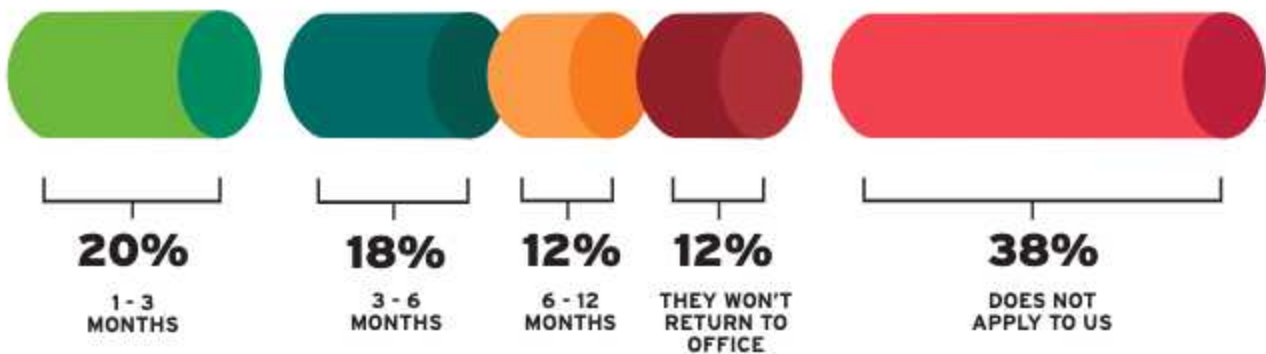
WHERE EMPLOYEES WILL WORK OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

Where do you see employees performing the majority of their work over the next 12 months?



THE RETURN TO THE OFFICE

When do you see your employees returning to the office 50% or more of the time?



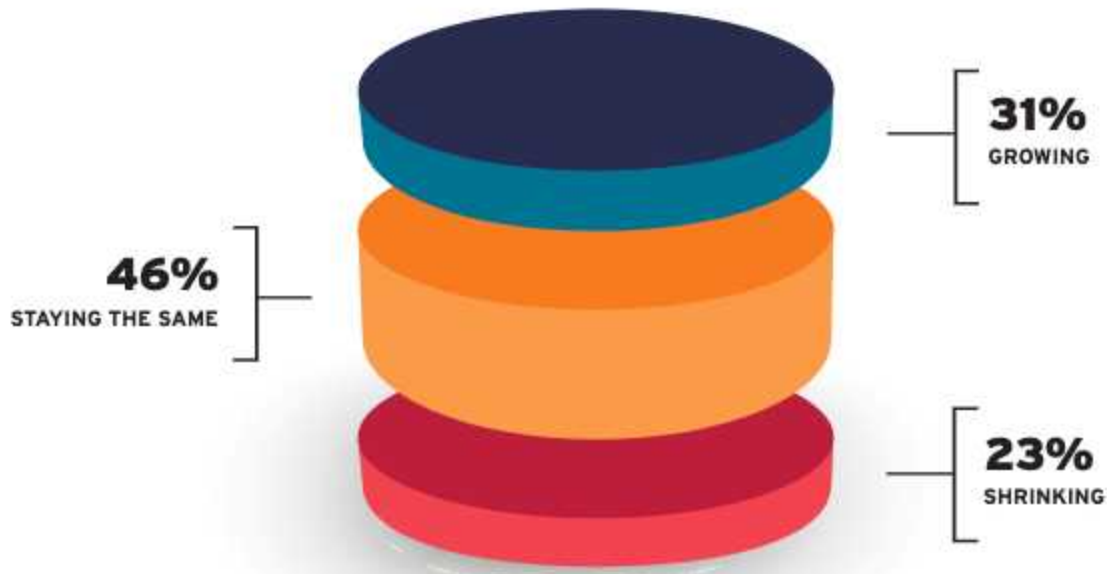
We're looking at ways to repurpose space to encourage people to come into the office more often to help support culture and the feeling of being part of a team.



- SURVEY PARTICIPANT

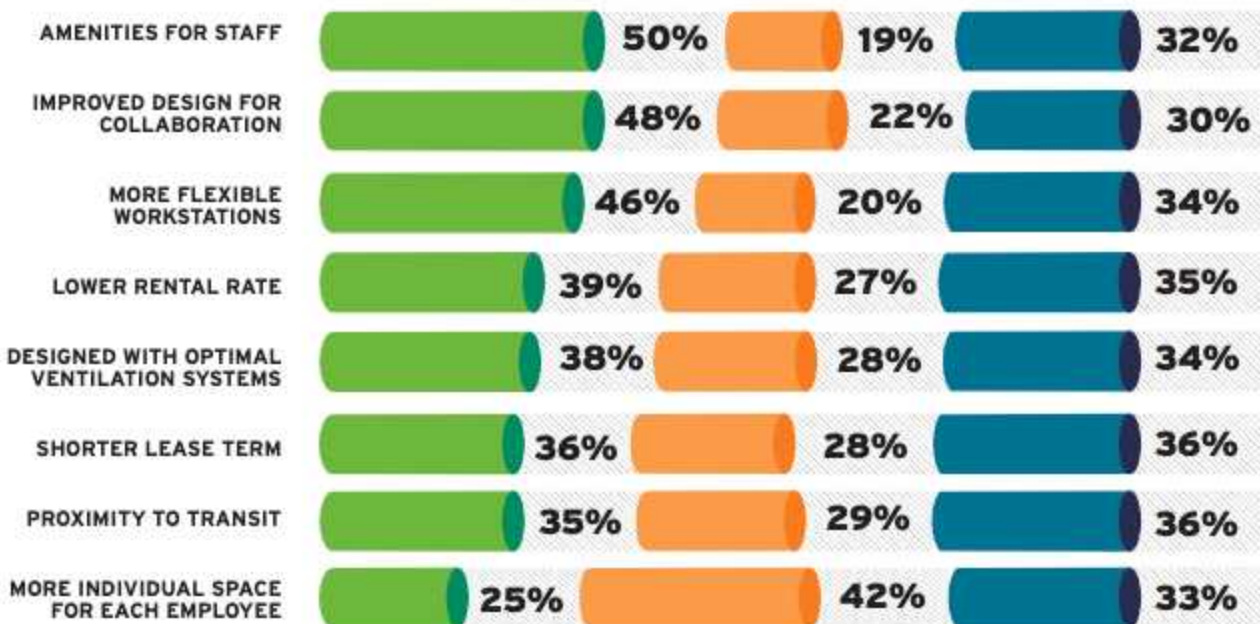
COMMERCIAL SPACE

Over the next few years, do you see your organization's office, retail or other commercial space footprint ...



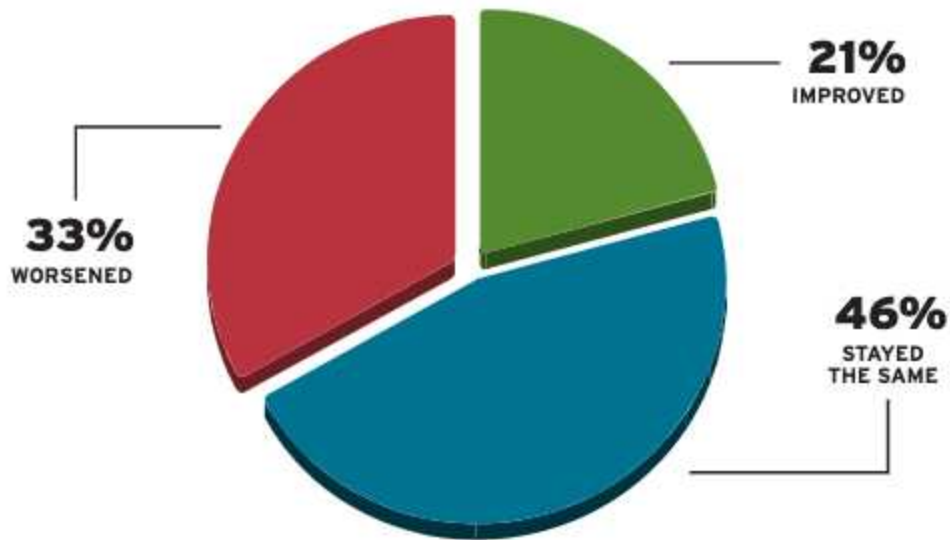
REAL ESTATE PRIORITIES

Thinking about your organization's commercial real estate space, what will be your priorities over the next five years? ■ YES ■ NO ■ NOT APPLICABLE



PANDEMIC WORK CULTURE

How do you feel the COVID-19 pandemic affected your company's culture?



MAINTAINING ENGAGEMENT AND CONNECTEDNESS

Are you doing any of the following to maintain engagement and a sense of connectedness within your team? ■ YES ■ NO





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Experiential Learning Benefits Students and Organizations

Business education today takes place in a variety of learning environments. Experiential learning provides students with the opportunity to work collaboratively with business and community organizations on strategic

projects and challenges. Students apply their knowledge and creativity to deliver innovative solutions that positively impact organizations and communities.

Experiential learning serves as a powerful talent development tool. Not only do students gain insights into career pathways, industries and organizations, but employers are also able to witness students' leadership, teamwork and other skills in action.

For example, the Sprott Student Consulting Group (SSCG) helps organizations address a wide array of challenges through no-cost consulting services provided by faculty-guided student teams. The composition of the student team is tailored to the organization's needs. Sprott student consultants have worked on a diverse

range of projects, including business continuity and recovery planning, event management, market expansion research, fund development strategy, mergers and acquisition research, among others.

Andrew Webb, assistant professor of international business and SSCG academic director at the Sprott School of Business, calls the model a "win-win-win" for the value it provides to students, organizations and the community.

Recently, the Sprott School of Business and EY Canada announced a collaboration to foster talent and leadership development within the SSCG. EY professionals provide mentorship and coaching to Sprott student consultants, who benefit from their insights to SSCG's client projects,



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as well as have the opportunity to test thinking and solutions.

Another mutually beneficial experiential learning opportunity is provided by Carleton University's Innovation Hub. Launch: Ideas is a program that allows students from across the university to earn academic credit or complete a co-op placement or internship. The program matches multidisciplinary, purpose-built teams of students with companies that require an innovative solution to a present challenge.

This winter, a team of Carleton students worked with Ottawa-based Blindside Networks on foundational research and design of how virtual classrooms could and should evolve over the coming years.

Blindside Networks was founded by the creators of BigBlueButton, the world's dominant open-source virtual classroom software that originated at Carleton University in 2007.

"Working with the Innovation Hub, we want to profoundly understand the physical teaching environment, and

teaching mindset, and then translate that into a virtual classroom in a way that overcomes the existing challenges of online learning," said Fred Dixon, CEO of Blindside Networks. "This is not an easy task. We wanted to get bright students to work on this, challenge them, and see what they can come up with."

Experiential learning takes many forms, including class projects. The Sprott School of Business works collaboratively with businesses and organizations to find the best fit opportunity that will deliver the most value to partners and students.

Work-Integrated Learning Helps Keep Talent in the Region

As more workplaces move to adopt virtual work as a permanent option for workers, job opportunities for students and graduates are no longer limited by distance.

"We are working to ensure that students know how to network as far and wide as possible, because

their next opportunity can come from anywhere around the world," said Lisa Lawrence, team lead of Sprott's Business Career Management Centre.

This trend is increasing pressure on organizations to recruit talent as workers are not bound by location. They can live near their families or opt to live in more affordable locations without sacrificing their careers.

Work-integrated learning opportunities – such as co-operative education and internships – enable companies in the Ottawa region to introduce students to all they have to offer and to start building relationships with prospective talent early on, while they are living and studying in the region.

Many students, including international students, wish to remain in Ottawa after they graduate. MBA and graduate students bring a variety of academic and technical backgrounds. This offers local companies access to a diverse pool of multidisciplinary and multilingual talent.

Carleton University offers a



CARLETON-UNIVERSITY

variety of convenient opportunities to recruit students and alumni for co-op placements, internships, part-time, full-time and new graduate positions.

In addition, Sprott-Mitacs Business Strategy Internships provide a shared cost opportunity for students to undertake a four-month internship on an innovation project for a company or non-profit organization. Innovation projects are expected to lead change or improvements for the partner and/or community.

Talent Retention and Succession Planning Through Lifelong Learning

Disruptions in recent years have seen the world of business become exponentially complex. Organizations and businesses require people with the knowledge, skills and vision to lead them through this period of transformative change and into the future.

Sprott's Professional MBA (PMBA) is designed intentionally for seasoned

professionals. To enable students to continue working and balance life's many demands, courses are delivered in an intensive, executive format with classes on Fridays and Saturdays of alternating weeks. Breaks are built in to accommodate key times for families.

Sprott's expert faculty delivers an integrated management curriculum with a focus on strategic management concepts and complex decision making. Courses reflect the current needs of organizations and market trends.

Students in the PMBA have access to a professional coach in Sprott's coaching community for personalized and focused professional development support.

One of the most valuable aspects of the PMBA that is mentioned often by students who have gone through the program is the diverse perspectives of class discussions.

"Whether it's engineering, science, healthcare, environmental and social governance – you're learning from people who are subject matter experts in their fields," said Mohammad Al

Jarrah, PMBA/21. "The points raised are very different from what you'd get in a room of likeminded individuals. The discussions are richer and more robust."

In the Fall, Carleton launched CU Future EDge Talent Ecosystem – an innovative, interdisciplinary initiative that takes a holistic approach to lifelong professional and executive education.

CU Future EDge delivers flexible programs that share expertise, experience and perspectives from across the university to create deeper understanding, develop resilient and agile skillsets, and drive innovation.

Their offerings include a Certificate in Intellectual Property Strategy, a Mini MBA for Science, Technology and Engineering Professionals, as well as the Practical Toolkit for Intercultural Management: Strategies for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

CU Future EDge also works with organizations as partners to co-create industry-informed, custom programs to support holistic talent and leadership development needs.

New Research Examines Post-Pandemic Work Preferences

By: Dan Rubinstein

At the beginning of 2021, 32 per cent of Canadian employees worked most of their hours from home, compared with only 4 per cent in 2016. As we start to see light at the end of the pandemic tunnel, millions of Canadians could resume working in their offices on a regular basis in the very near future, leaving employers across the country with a significant challenge and opportunity.

As companies and organizations attempt to figure out whether staff should continue working at home full-time or part-time, or if everybody should be back onsite, they need data and direction to make the right decisions.

"We're at a demarcation point," says work-life balance and change management expert Linda Duxbury, Chancellor's Professor at Carleton University's Sprott School of Business. "The whole system has been destabilized and everything is possible now."

What employers and employees needed was a guide for how to manage talent amid this new reality. Duxbury recognized this need and, in partnership with the Conference Board of Canada, she and her former PhD student Michael Halinski co-authored a report that examined employee preferences around remote, hybrid and in-office work arrangements.

While the pandemic showed that remote work is possible, it does not mean that working at home can replace office work. Moreover, the transition that's underway is extremely complex because there are so many different employment sectors and types of jobs, not to mention the wide spectrum of individual circumstances.

Duxbury's examination of more than 26,000 survey responses from Canadians revealed a rich diversity of experiences and a significant difference of opinion around work preferences going forward.

For many, working from home eroded work-life balance and dramatically increased stress, anxiety and insomnia. Some are looking forward to a full-time return to the office, while others would prefer to remain fully remote. Which explains why even within a single organization or company, a one-size-fits-all solution may not be realistic.

"There's no playbook for what's happening," says Duxbury.

"Managers are going to have to have some honest discussions with employees, who have developed a new set of working habits over the past two years. Organizations and employees need to be willing to compromise on how work will be structured post-pandemic."

Even if management and staff agree on a hybrid arrangement, however, determining how many days each week are for remote work, as well as which days and whether all employees have to stick to the same schedule, presents a new set of challenges.

"How do you manage a hybrid team?" asks Duxbury, noting that while there are advantages to in-person work, such as brainstorming and relationship building, some tasks can be done well from home.

"It's much easier to manage a workforce when everybody is remote or everybody is in the office."

Her suggestion is to gain an in-depth understanding of who is on a workplace team and what the team does, and then come up with a "sweet spot"—the number of days each week that people should be onsite together.

This approach requires

communication and flexibility from both employers and employees, which is one of the keys to making the transition to the new work world as smooth as possible.

Duxbury calls for employers and employees to adopt a test-and-learn mindset—experimenting with and piloting new approaches to work as individuals, business units and organizations. In other words, the report states, they must be "willing to start from scratch, question everything and make intentional decisions with a clear, evidence-based rationale."

"Leaders need to admit that this is all new for them as well," says Duxbury.

In addition to managing this shift, employers are going to have to find new ways to measure productivity. Remote workers tended to put in longer hours during the pandemic, letting tasks creep into their evenings and weekends, but that didn't necessarily translate into an increase in output.

As life normalizes—with children back at school and the stress of a global virus diminishing—employees are going to have to find a healthy work-life balance and employers are going to have to figure out how to assess their contributions.

Underlying this transformation is a nationwide talent shortage. In many sectors, employers are competing to recruit and retain staff, which means they may need to take a step back, review their overarching goals as an organization, familiarize themselves with the pros and cons of various work arrangements, and map out a new path.

As Duxbury's report declares, "The rise in remote work will have society-wide impacts and provides us with a rare real-time opportunity to learn something new about work and introduce changes that benefit us all."



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Background Screening Is Just a Fingerprint Away

If at one time there was a stigma attached to getting a criminal record check, attitudes are more likely to shift when we begin to ask: Who am I hiring? Who has access to my confidential information? Are my privacy, data and digital assets protected?

As revenues and sales begin to recover, and recruiting is on the rise, the 2022 Ottawa Business Growth Survey reveals employers are choosing “flexibility around recruitment” to help navigate a massive labour shortage—from hiring employees and contractors who live and work remotely, to offering modified work hours and introducing new perks.

The survey results also reveal a desire to protect privacy, data and digital assets, compelling many businesses to take additional measures to invest in new tools and to upgrade their technologies. But how are they protecting their people? Or vetting the influx of new hires?

Specific to background screening, the most common background

screening methods used by survey participants are reference checks (72 per cent), employment verifications (59 per cent) and social media scans (57 per cent).

“I was surprised by the survey results related to background screening,” says Paul Guindon, CEO of Commissionaires Ottawa. “Only 38 per cent of local companies conducted a basic criminal record check and 18 per cent opted for certified criminal record checks with fingerprinting.”

Guindon explains, “The people we hire engage directly with some of our most valuable assets. More applicants than ever before are being hired virtually. Checking references and employment history, which is information applicants provide to us, and scanning their social media

presence, are a good start but can only offer certain details about their identity, honesty and integrity. For greater reassurance, criminal record checks can alert employers about individuals who are not who they claim to be, and who might put the company’s brand, people, property, and information at risk.”

“When you need a basic criminal record check where no fingerprints are required, the most convenient, discrete and fastest way is to apply online,” says Guindon. “Criminal record checks using name and date of birth are processed within 15 minutes. For in-person applications or fingerprinting requests, Commissionaires has three offices in the National Capital Region. For group or VIP processing, Commissionaires has mobile units that can be easily deployed to an employer’s location. We’ll come to you.”

Beyond these services, Commissionaires is accredited to scan ink and roll fingerprints and submit them to the RCMP as an electronic package. Guindon suggests this service is ideal for out-of-town requests in regions where digital fingerprinting is not

available, or for Canadians living and working in other countries.

Guindon says, "What sets us apart is that we offer a one-stop-shop for related services such as criminal record suspension (pardon) and U.S. entry waiver applications, or assistance with other applications requiring fingerprints such as foreign adoptions, citizenship and immigration, and security clearances."

Guindon adds, "We are also one of the very few private companies to offer a full suite of pre-employment screening services—all the methods listed in the Ottawa Business Growth Survey, plus public safety checks, credit checks, driver abstracts, international background checks, exit interviews, and more."

Commissionaires Ottawa is a leading employer of former members of the Canadian Armed Forces and RCMP and their families, with a proud history of raising awareness and funds for veterans and military community causes. It is one of 15 independent Canadian Corps of Commissionaires companies and currently manages the largest digital fingerprinting infrastructure in Canada.

In recent years, Commissionaires Ottawa expanded its services to include converged voice, data, video and cybersecurity solutions, mission-critical software solutions,

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|------------------------------------|---|--|

simulation solutions, and operational fulfillment through the acquisition of companies such as ComNet Networks and Security Inc. and ADGA Group Consulting Inc.

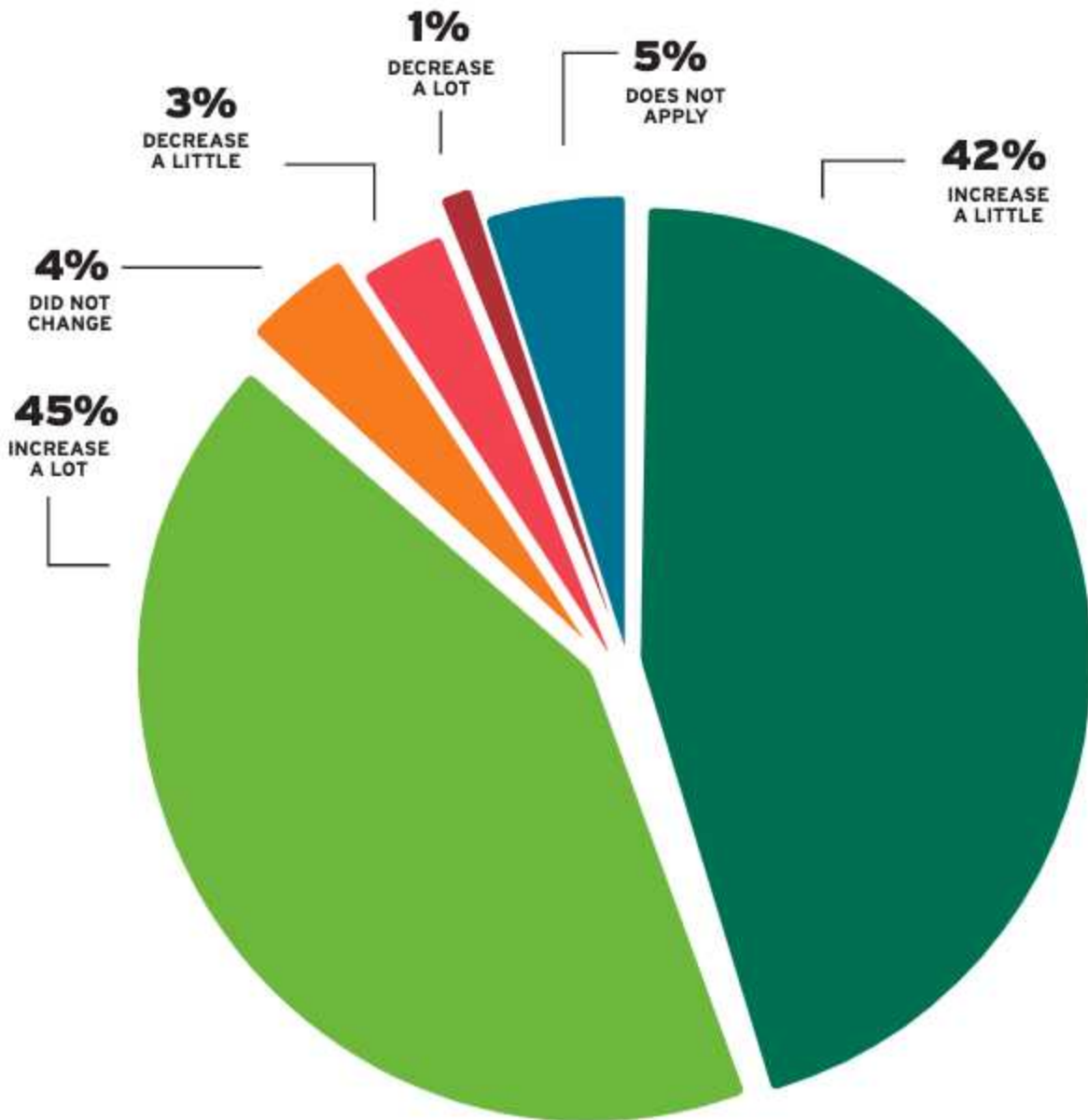
Please visit NeedFingerprints.com or call 613-231-6462 to learn more about fingerprinting, background screening and pre-employment screening offered by Commissionaires.



COMMISSIONAIRES
OTTAWA

PRICES PAID FOR KEY GOODS AND SERVICES

Over the past year, did the prices you pay for key goods and services ...



We're seeing 20-per-cent to 40-per-cent cost increases for machined parts, as well as 10-per-cent to 20-per-cent increases for electronics. So it's very challenging.



- SURVEY PARTICIPANT



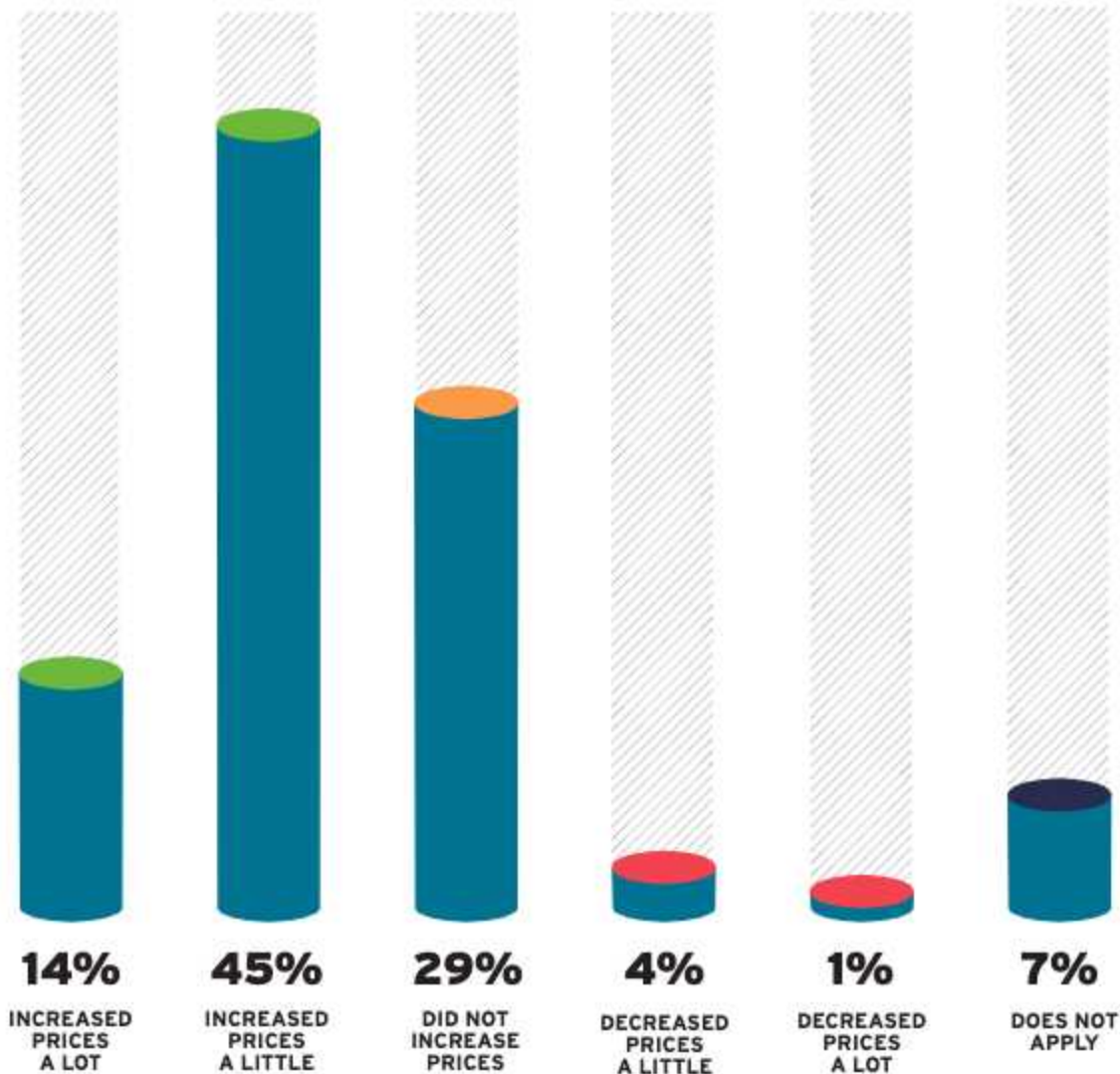
It is inevitable to pass the cost on to our clients. Our margins and cash flow have been depleted for the past two years. The products are more expensive and to retain staff we had to increase wages. The reality is it just costs more to do business.



- SURVEY PARTICIPANT

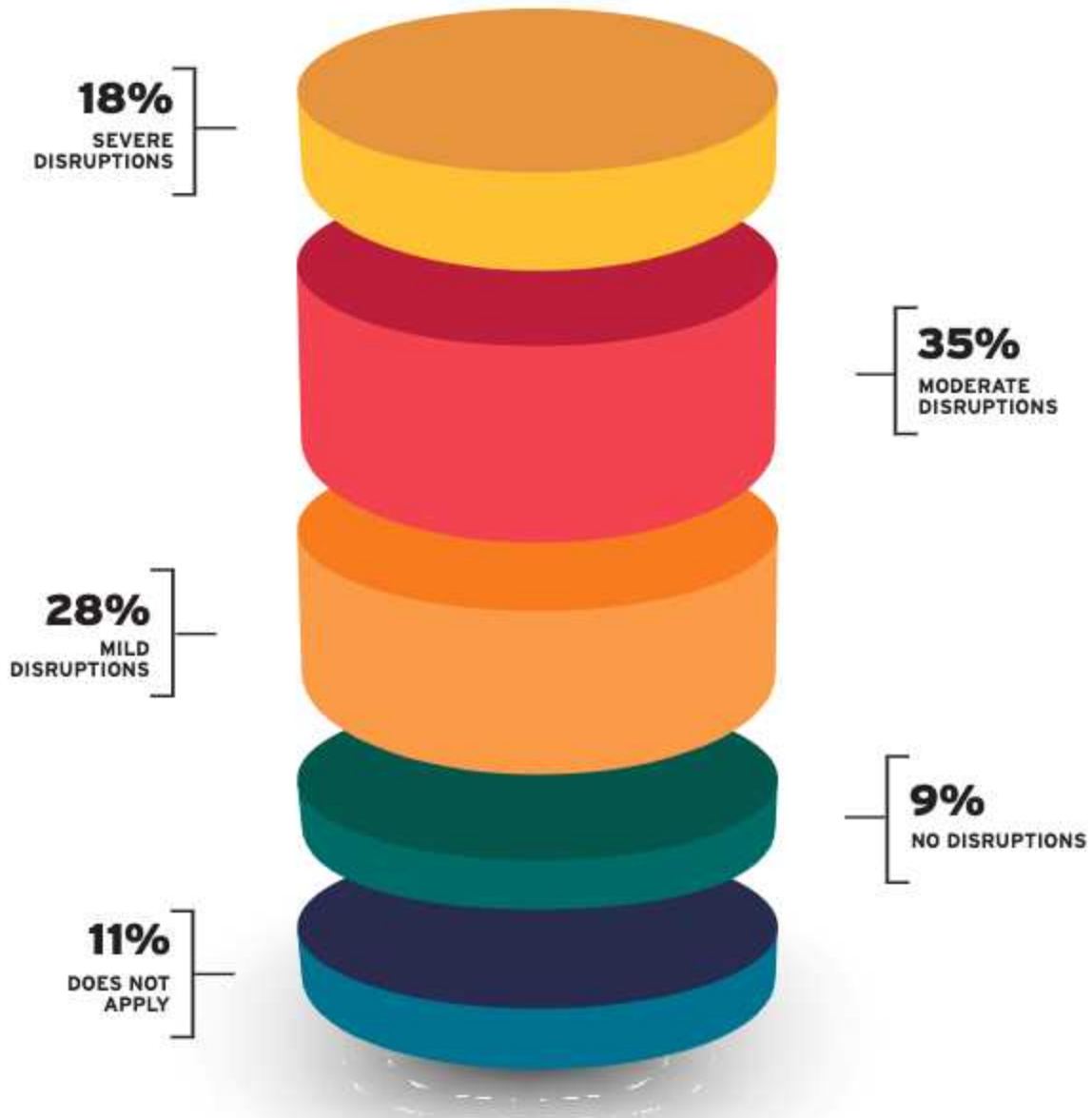
PRICES CHARGED OVER THE PAST YEAR

Over the past year, did you change, if at all, your prices?



SUPPLY CHAIN AND PROCUREMENT ISSUES

How has the pandemic impacted your organization's ability to secure important goods and services?



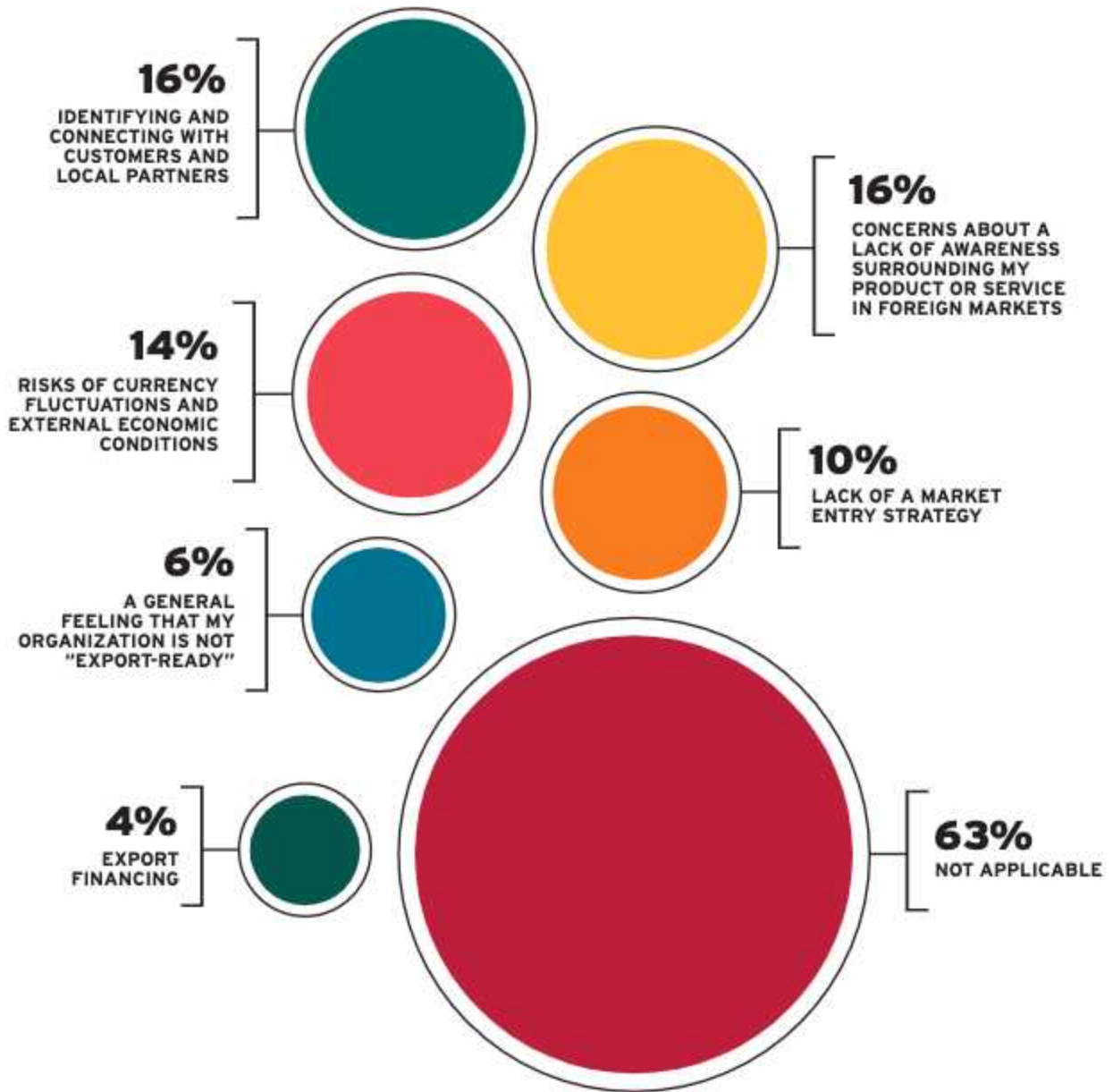
We're revisiting our supply chain looking for alternates for when supply or costs become a challenge.



- SURVEY PARTICIPANT

BARRIERS TO EXPANSION INTO GLOBAL MARKETS

When it comes to exporting, what are the biggest barriers to your business or organization expanding into foreign markets? *(Please check all that apply)*

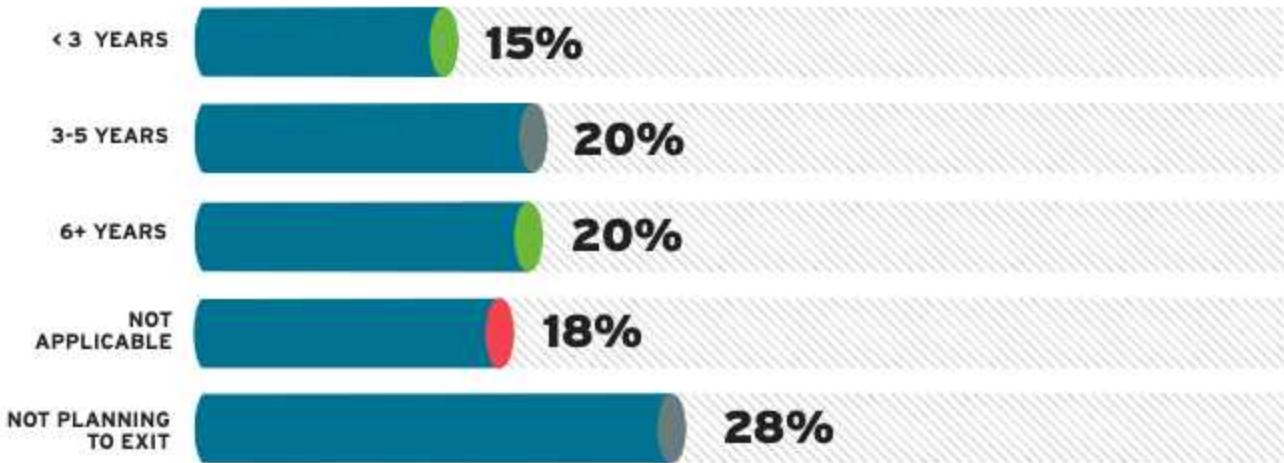


“ (Global markets) could be a place to market our services, management, technical and design know-how. ”

- SURVEY PARTICIPANT

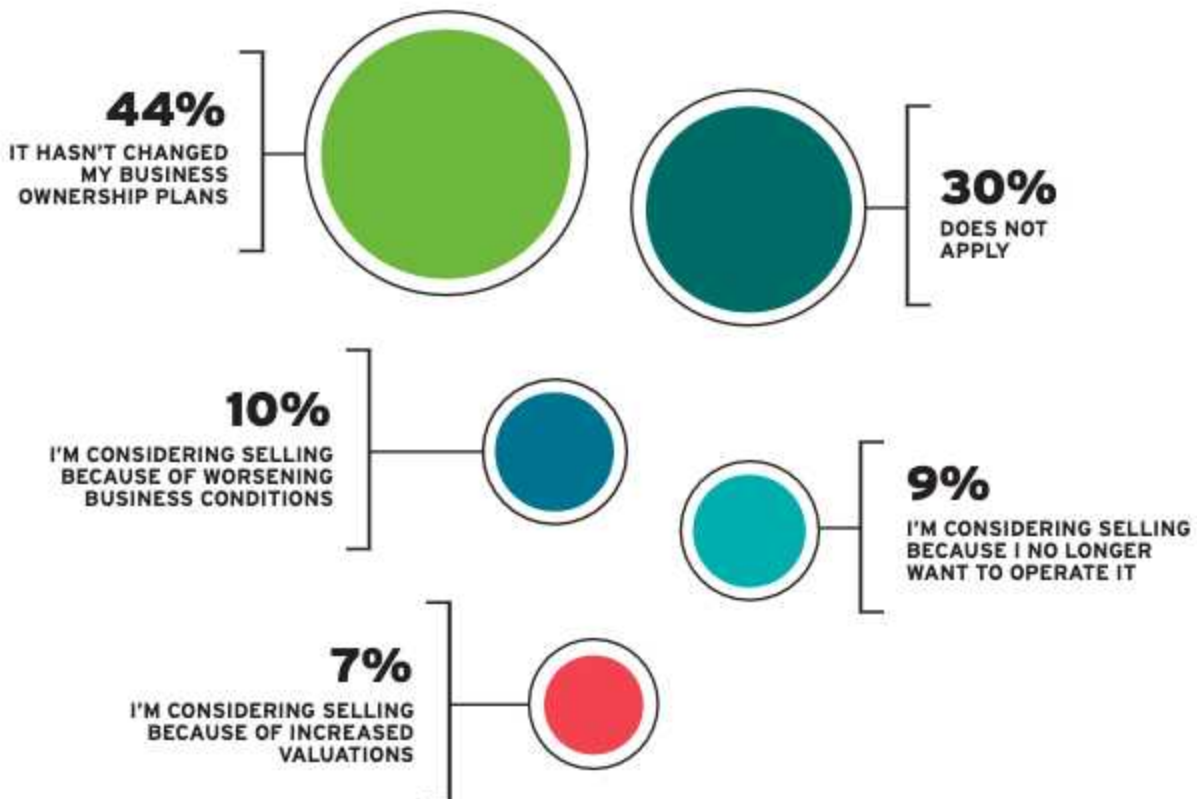
PLANS TO EXIT THE BUSINESS

When do you plan on exiting your business?



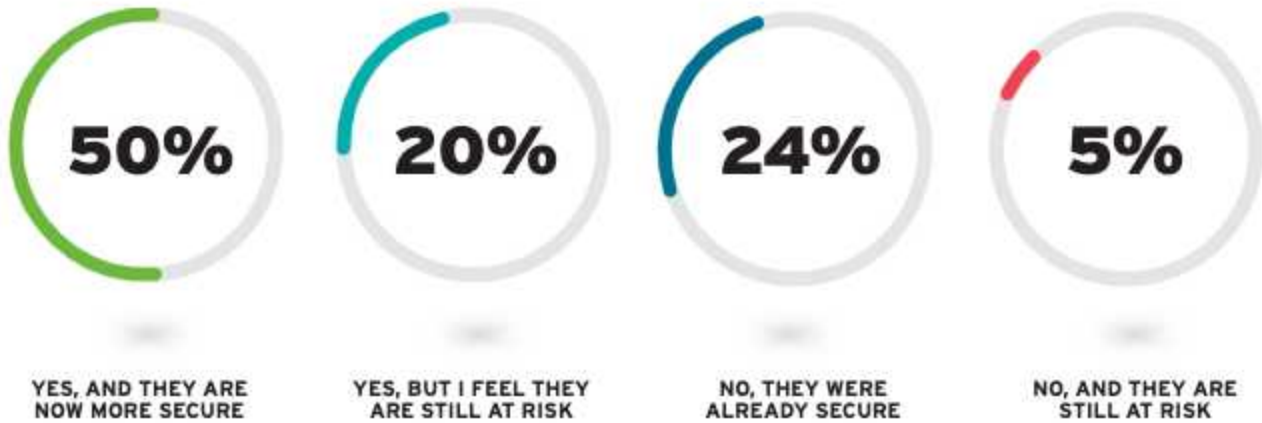
IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EXIT PLANS

How has COVID-19 affected your plans to sell your business?



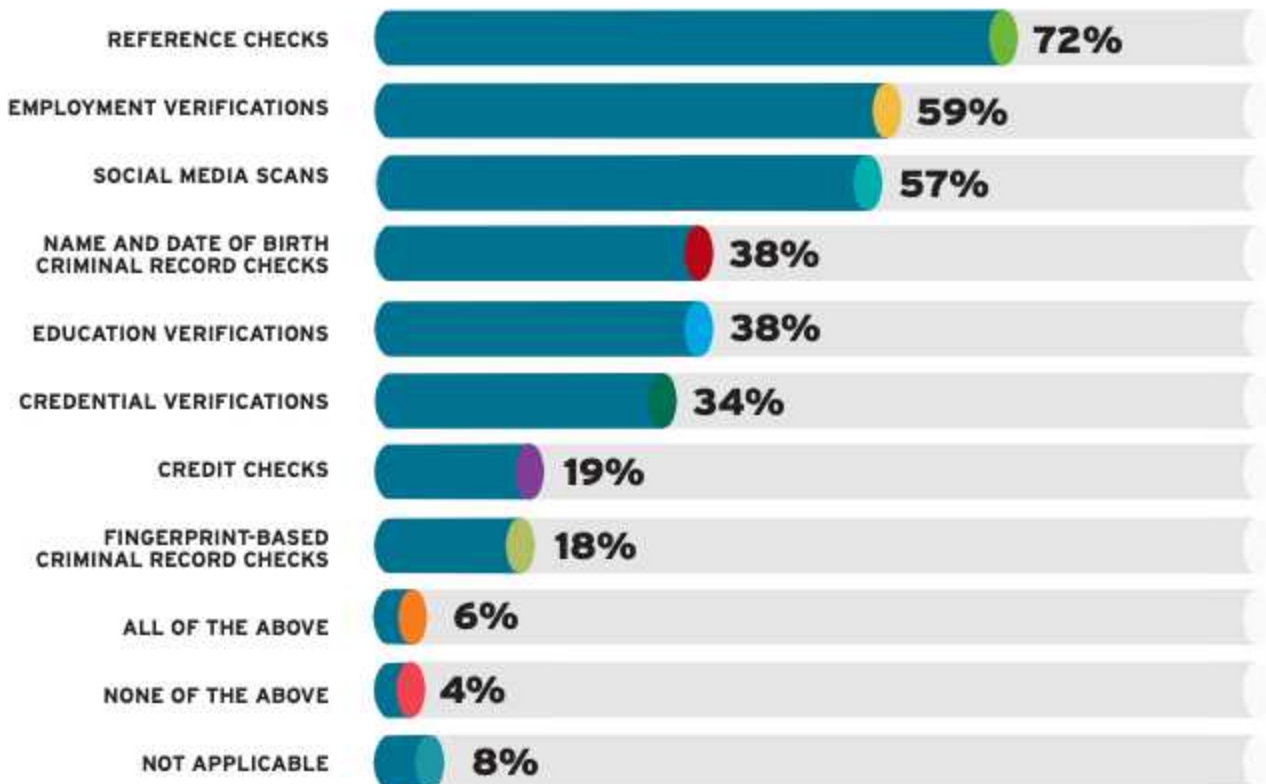
MEASURES TO PROTECT PRIVACY, DATA AND ASSETS

During the past one to two years, have you or has your employer taken additional measures to protect the organization’s privacy, data and digital assets, such as by investing in upgrades, new tools and technologies?



BACKGROUND SCREENING FOR EMPLOYEES

When recruiting and onboarding new employees, what types of background screening do you or does your employer conduct? *(Please check all that apply)*





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A teal-tinted photograph of a city skyline viewed from a park. The foreground is filled with dense green trees, and a body of water is visible in the middle ground. In the background, a city skyline with various buildings, including a prominent tall skyscraper, is visible under a clear sky.

VIEWS ON GOVERNMENT

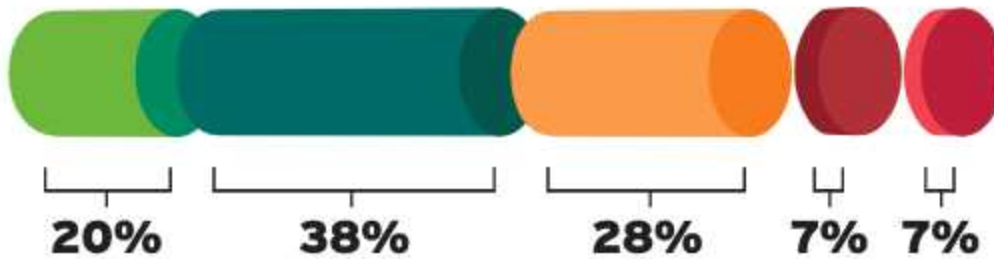


CONTROLLING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

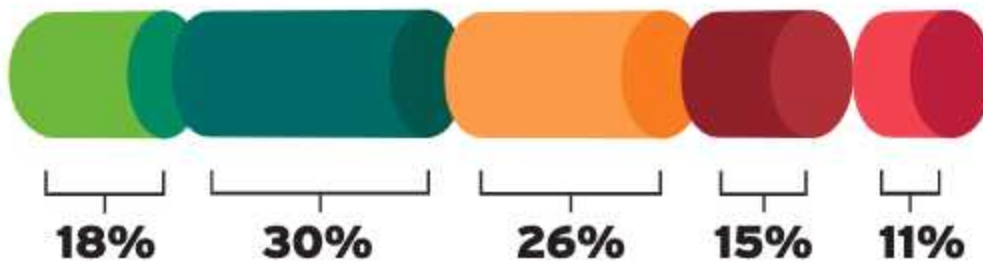
How would you rate the performance of each level of government in managing the COVID-19 pandemic?

■ VERY GOOD ■ GOOD ■ ADEQUATE ■ BAD ■ VERY BAD

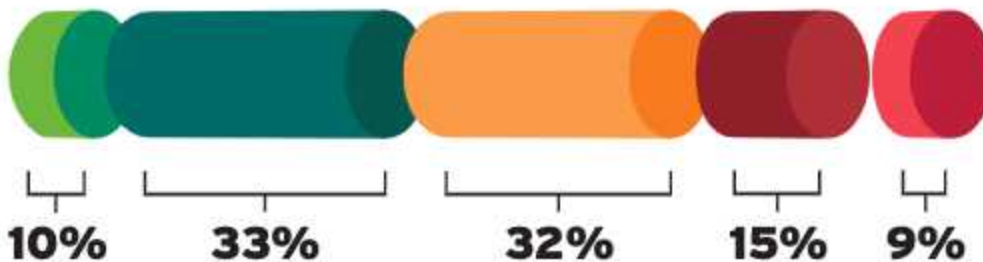
THE CITY OF OTTAWA AND OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH



THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT



THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT



“ Will people go back to their pre-pandemic activities around the city, such as shopping local? ”

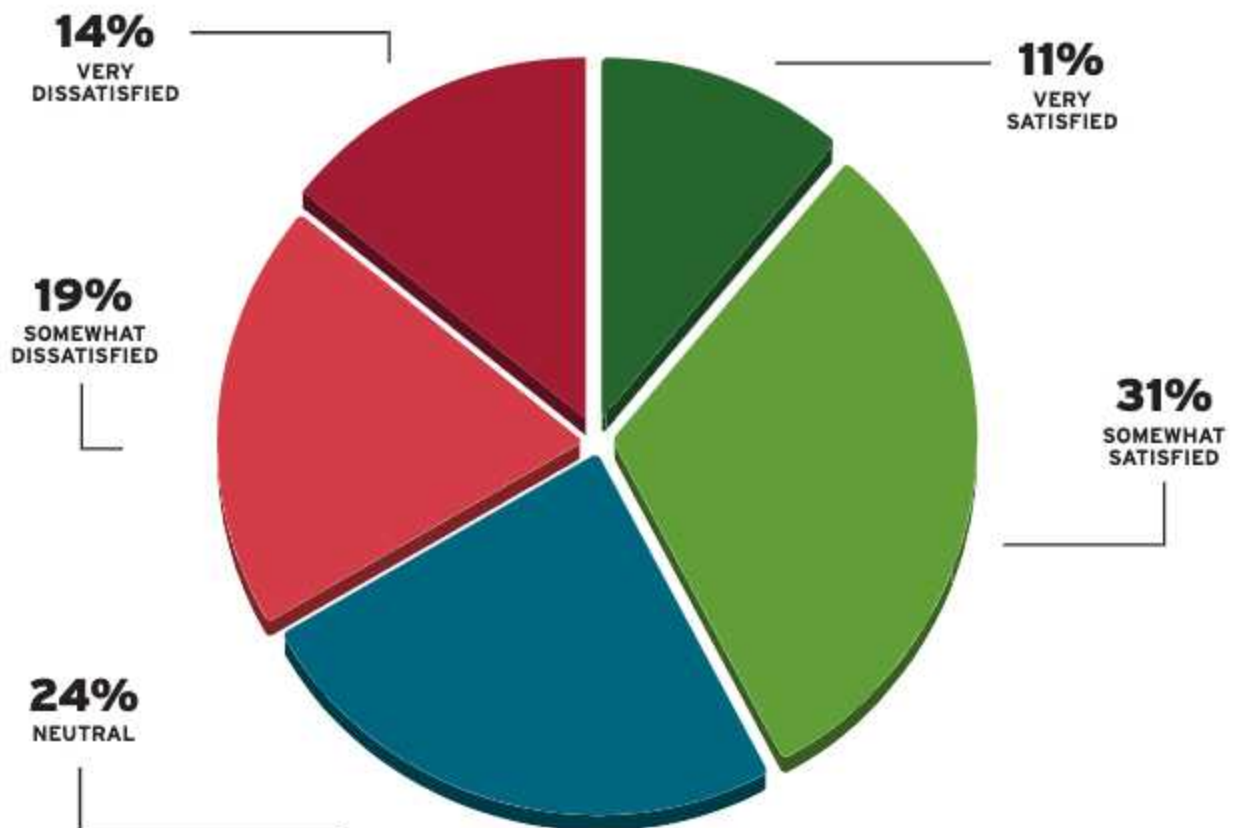
- SURVEY PARTICIPANT

“ I worry about what the next government will be as it will affect funding of public projects. ”

- SURVEY PARTICIPANT

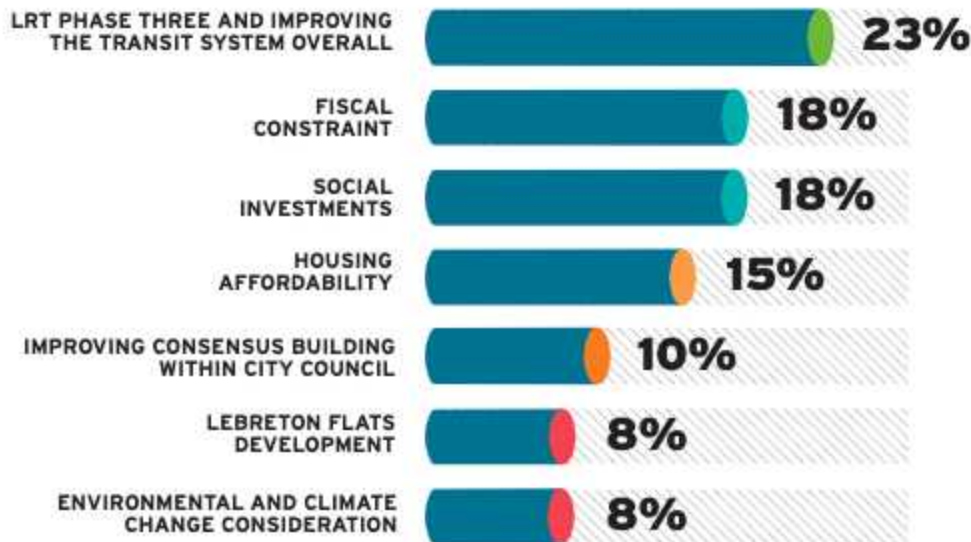
SATISFACTION WITH THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

Ontario will have a provincial election in June. Thinking of the provincial government’s performance from an economic and business perspective, how satisfied are you?



TOP MUNICIPAL PRIORITIES

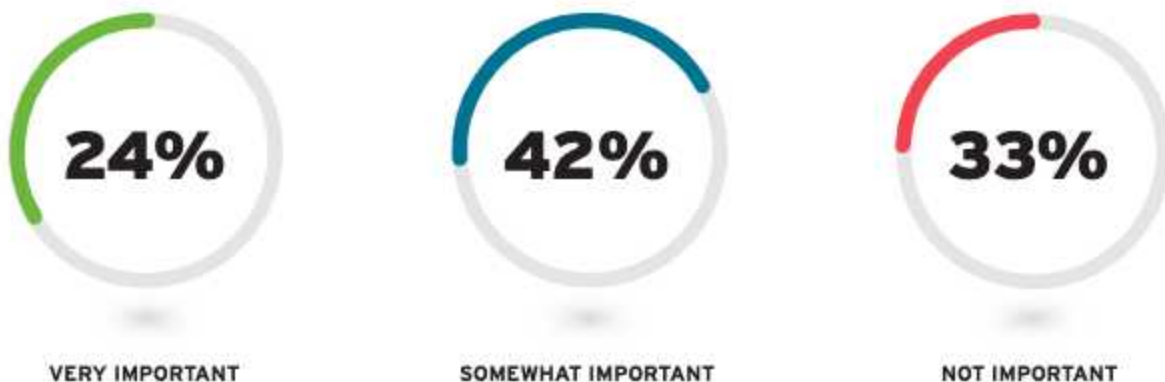
Ottawans will elect a new mayor and city council this fall.
Which of the following should be the highest priority?



“ The delay in the recovery of the downtown core is still having a profound negative impact on businesses that depend on government and corporate workers. ” - SURVEY PARTICIPANT

IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYEE BILINGUALISM

How important is employee bilingualism (English/French) to your business operations?

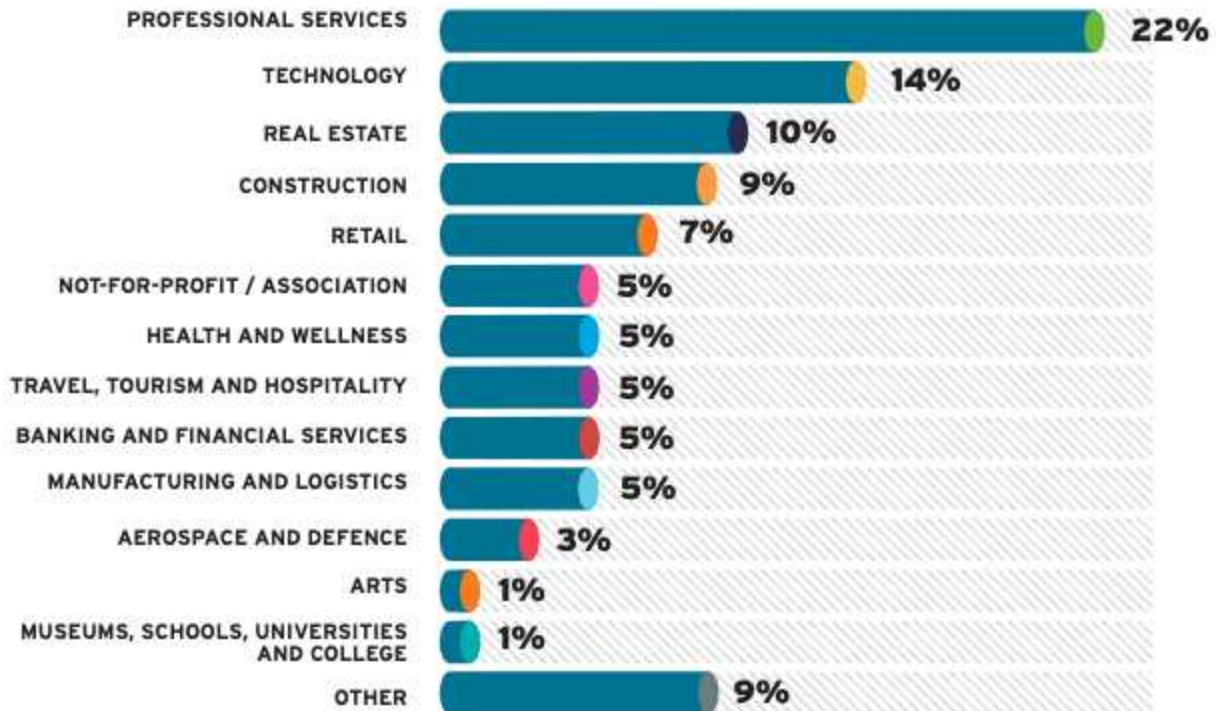


An aerial photograph of a residential neighborhood, showing streets, houses, and trees. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent teal color. The text "RESPONDENT PROFILES" is centered in the middle of the image in a bold, orange font.

RESPONDENT PROFILES

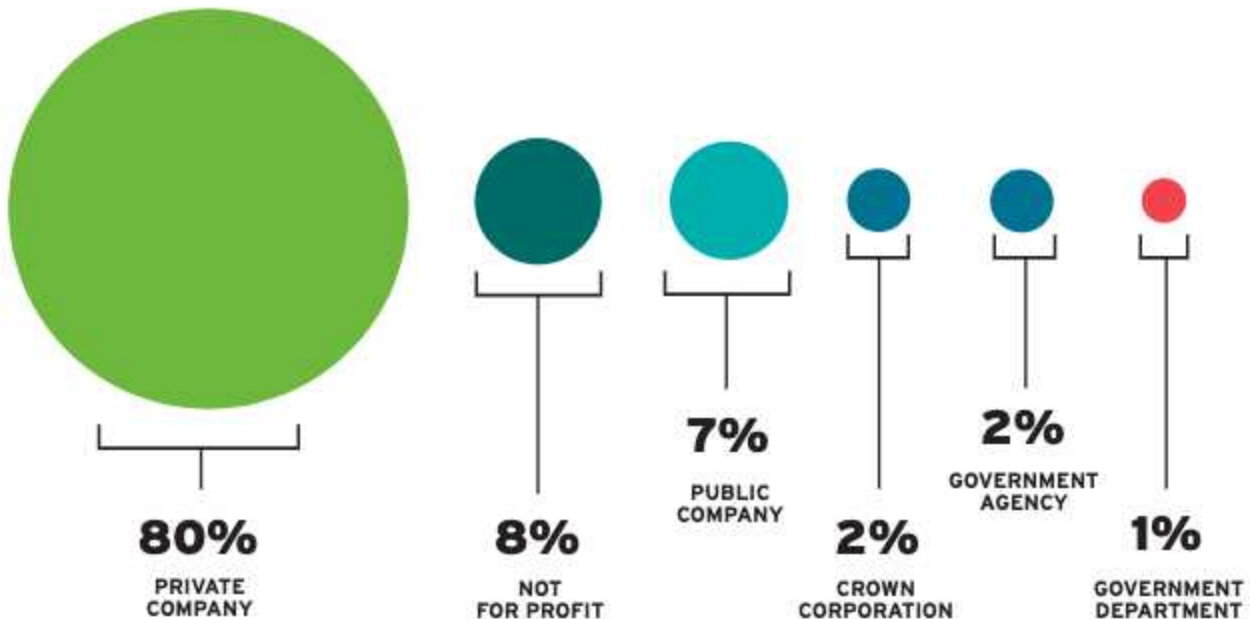
INDUSTRY

Which industry does your organization operate in?



TYPE OF ORGANIZATION

Is your organization a ...



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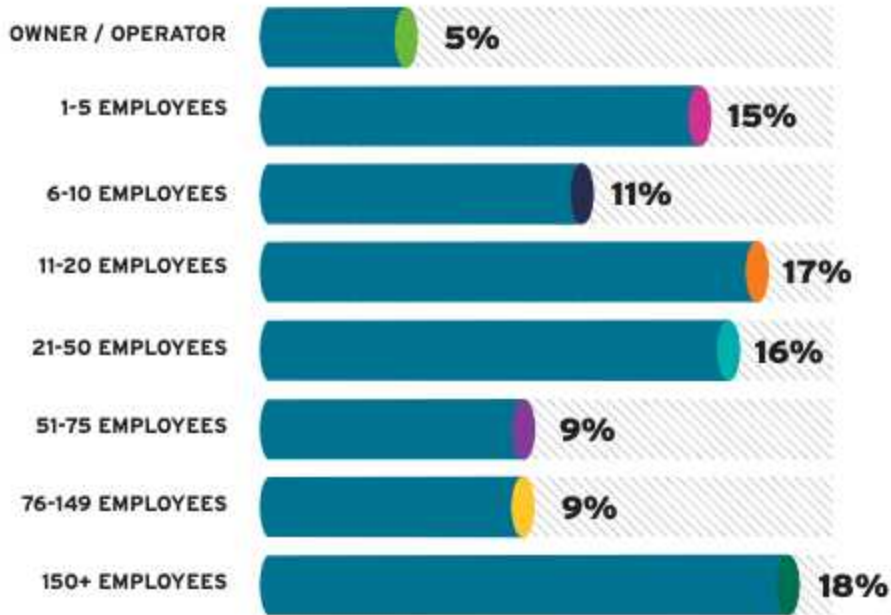
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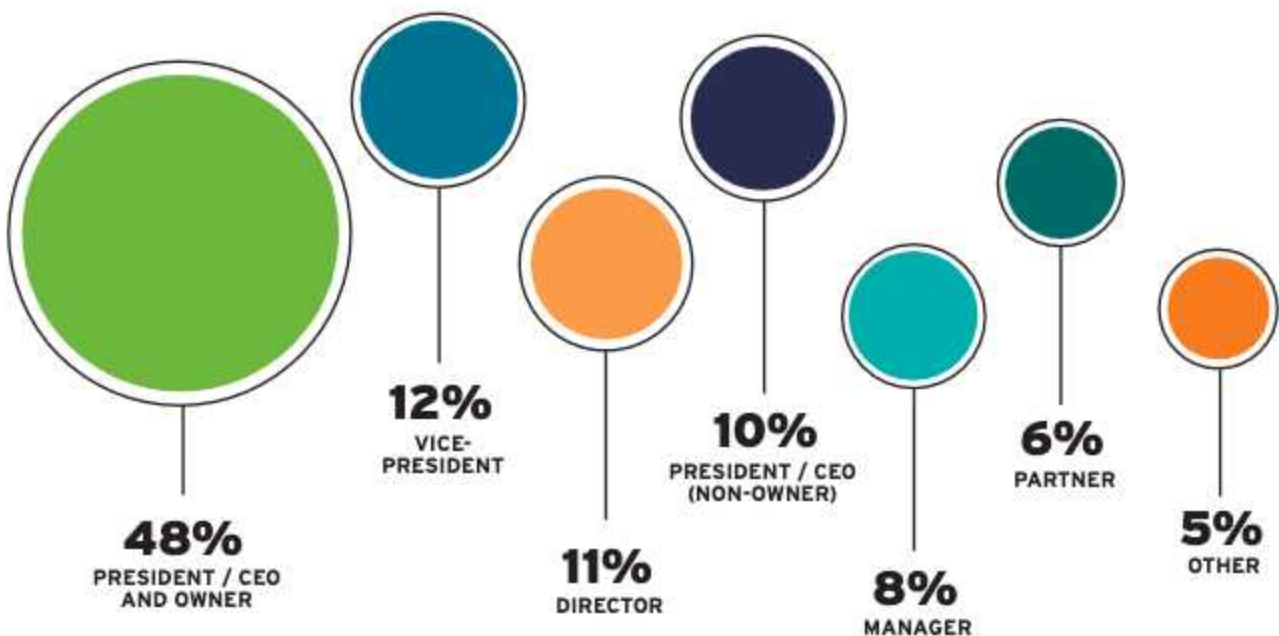
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

How many employees does your organization have?



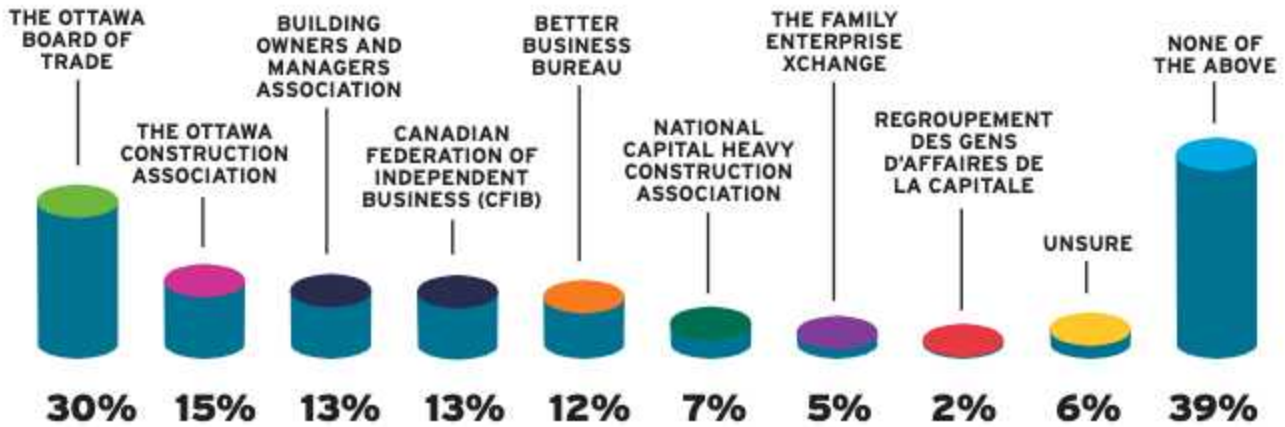
POSITION IN BUSINESS

What is your position in the business?



MEMBERSHIPS

Does your organization belong to ... (Please check all that apply)



Is your organization a member of a BIA?



NO

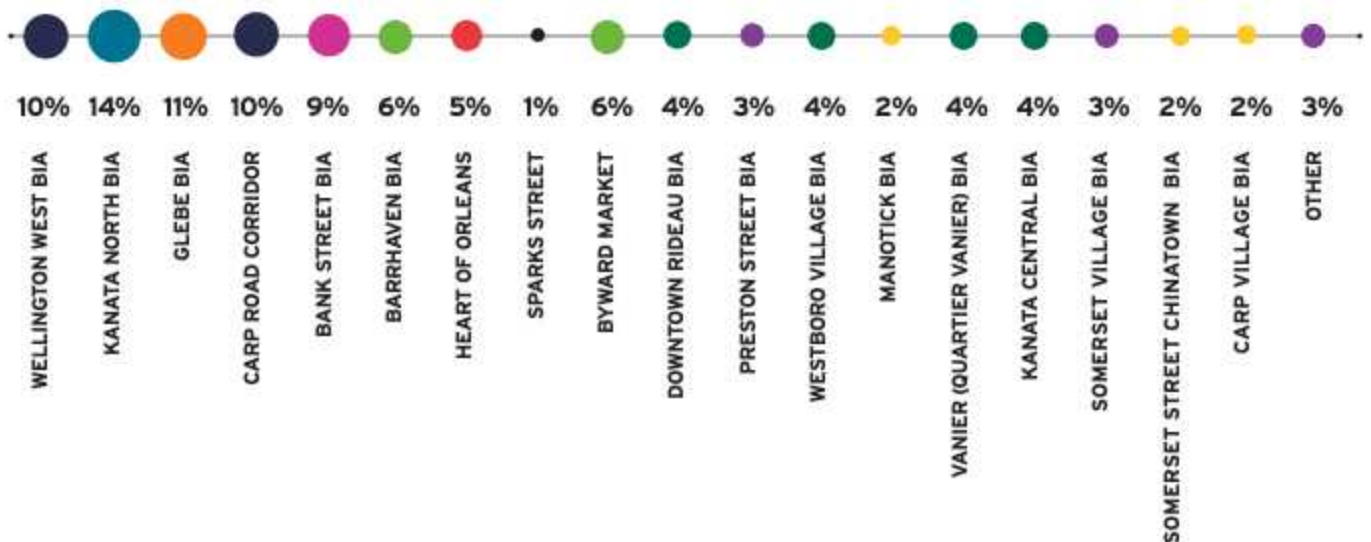


YES



I DON'T KNOW

Which BIA does your organization belong to?



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OTTAWA BUSINESS JOURNAL

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