



Enterprise Barometer 2020


Enterprise
NORTHERN IRELAND



Who Responded?

The largest and widest spread survey of Northern Ireland Enterprises

ALMOST
600
RESPONDENTS

Covering largely micro, small and self-employed businesses – including sole traders, company directors and partnerships

- **1 in 3** have started in the last 5 years
- **53%** with employees
- **66%** of these businesses trade outside of N.I.
- **58%** of these businesses are exporting

A significant representation of new start-ups and early-stage business.



Manufacturing	10%
Construction	6%
Retail &/or Wholesale	12%
Transport, Storage &/or Distribution	2%
Tourism &/or Hospitality	11%
ICT &/or Emergent Technologies	5%
Professional Services	25%
Administration Services	1%
Agriculture	1%
Other	27%

How are Businesses doing?

85%

have been
negatively
affected by
COVID

Compared
to

12%

positively
impacted

Impact felt most among:

- Sole Traders/Partnerships
- Lower Turnover Businesses
- Business without employees

Businesses that are growing:



15%



51%

53%

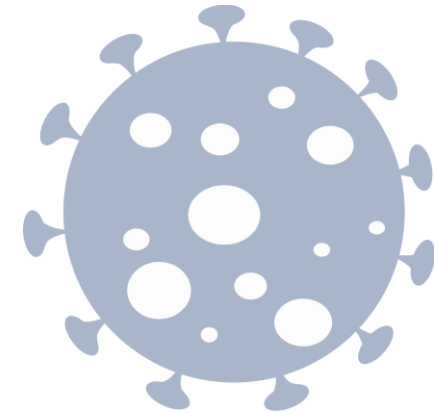
are contracting

26%

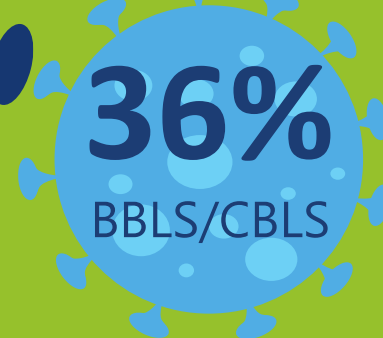
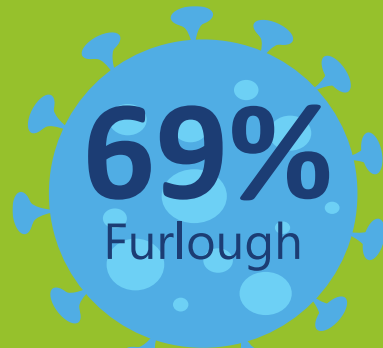
of businesses are in
difficulty or at risk of
closure

How are Businesses doing?

Change over the last year	Increased	Decreased
Turnover	15%	70%
Profits	12%	71%
Employees	12%	29%
Sales within NI	11%	67%
Sales to GB	17%	52%
Sales to Republic of Ireland	15%	60%
Sales to other export markets	13%	59%



COVID Impact and Support



Those least likely to access COVID-19 support:

- Sole Traders
- New Companies
- Lower Turnover Businesses

The COVID fallout:

85%

of businesses have
been negatively
impacted

45%

plan to reduce travel and attendance at
conferences/events



42%

plan on increasing flexible
(home) working



Cash Flow

Current and Future Cash Flow Position Very Challenging

9% of businesses report a strong / very strong cash flow position

41% report a stable cash flow position

50% report a weak/ very weak cash flow position



1 in 5

businesses are **extremely concerned** around their ability to pay back business debt.

Most concerned:
sole traders, lower turnover businesses, new starts within the last 2 years & businesses with no employees

"It is stable to a degree but only because of a personal cash injection into the company."

"Not in difficulty as yet, but struggling. Working on a week by week basis."

"I am frightened to borrow, how can I be confident I can repay?"

EU Exit

Huge issues around lack of Brexit preparedness

- Only **1 in 5** businesses are making preparations for Brexit.
- **29%** of businesses do not know how to prepare.
- **55%** say they do not know where to get help and guidance.
- Only **15%** have registered with Traders Support Service.
 - However, **73%** purchase from GB
- **21%** have sought external advice on how to prepare for Brexit.

"The requirement for a lot of "red tape" that is very difficult for a small business that employs just 1.5 people including the owners."

"It's only weeks away and I have zero idea how this will affect me, my business or our cost of living"

Those more likely to be preparing:

- Businesses with a larger turnover
- Businesses with a bigger number of employees

How will Brexit affect your business in 2021:

Positive Impact - **4%**

Negative Impact - **47%**

Not Sure - **23%**

Hopes & Plans for the coming year



1 in 4

Expect their
business
to grow



2 in 5

believe it will be 2022
or beyond before their
business recovers

Your business prospects

"I don't know the answer to this right now"

*"Until we've more stability, its hard to say
what 2021 will be like"*

*"The pandemic has been bad but Brexit is
going to be a nightmare for our business"*

- **55%** of businesses plan to change/ develop their products/services
- **42%** plan to access new markets

What markets are they hoping to expand in to?

Locally & NI	63%
Great Britain	33%
Republic of Ireland	38%
Rest of EU	16%
Other Markets	19%

Recovery and Growth

What support do businesses want in the coming year?

Looking for access to:

- Funding, where and how to access it – **61%**
- Real time business mentoring support to help through COVID, Brexit – **39%**
- Understanding and using new technologies – **35%**

Looking to develop expertise in:

- Digital Marketing and Social Trends – **49%**
- Sales, Business Development and Exporting – **36%**
- Managing Finance – **26%**

57%

of businesses want timely, transparent and effective communication from government on COVID-19 restrictions and BREXIT implications.

What is important in terms of how you can access business supports?

- That it is easier to find and access – **54%**
- That it is easier to understand what is useful for your business – **51%**
- That one-to-one focused support is available – **46%**
- That support is real time – **45%**

Resilience and Well-being



51%

of businesses feel they have been disadvantaged by COVID-19 interventions



26%

of businesses anticipate trading with difficulty or at risk of closure

"The bounce back loan that I got is a MAJOR stressor"

"I don't know the answer to this right now"

"I cant even work from home as the Wi-Fi isn't good enough."

"Dependent on how soon a vaccine is delivered and when life can return to some form of normality"

"We have had to push and push for business ourselves, reducing our prices to near nothing to remain competitive. This has resulted in stress, sleepless nights, cutting back on spending from food, computer business equipment, changing of cars, holidays and of course Christmas for the kids."

"I was ineligible due to their rules"

"My business has been greatly affected and gaining access to any further grants has become stressful"

"I don't know enough about the potential impacts that I need to begin thinking about or need advice on how to prepare/ be aware of"

Health and wellbeing of small and micro business owner and leaders is of critical importance.

So we listened and developed a platform that will look after your business, your team and you!

*Eniplus is a powerful business platform providing essential **services, resources, advice, learning, benefits, substantial cost savings and a voice** for thousands of micro, small and self-employed businesses throughout Northern Ireland*



Other Findings of note

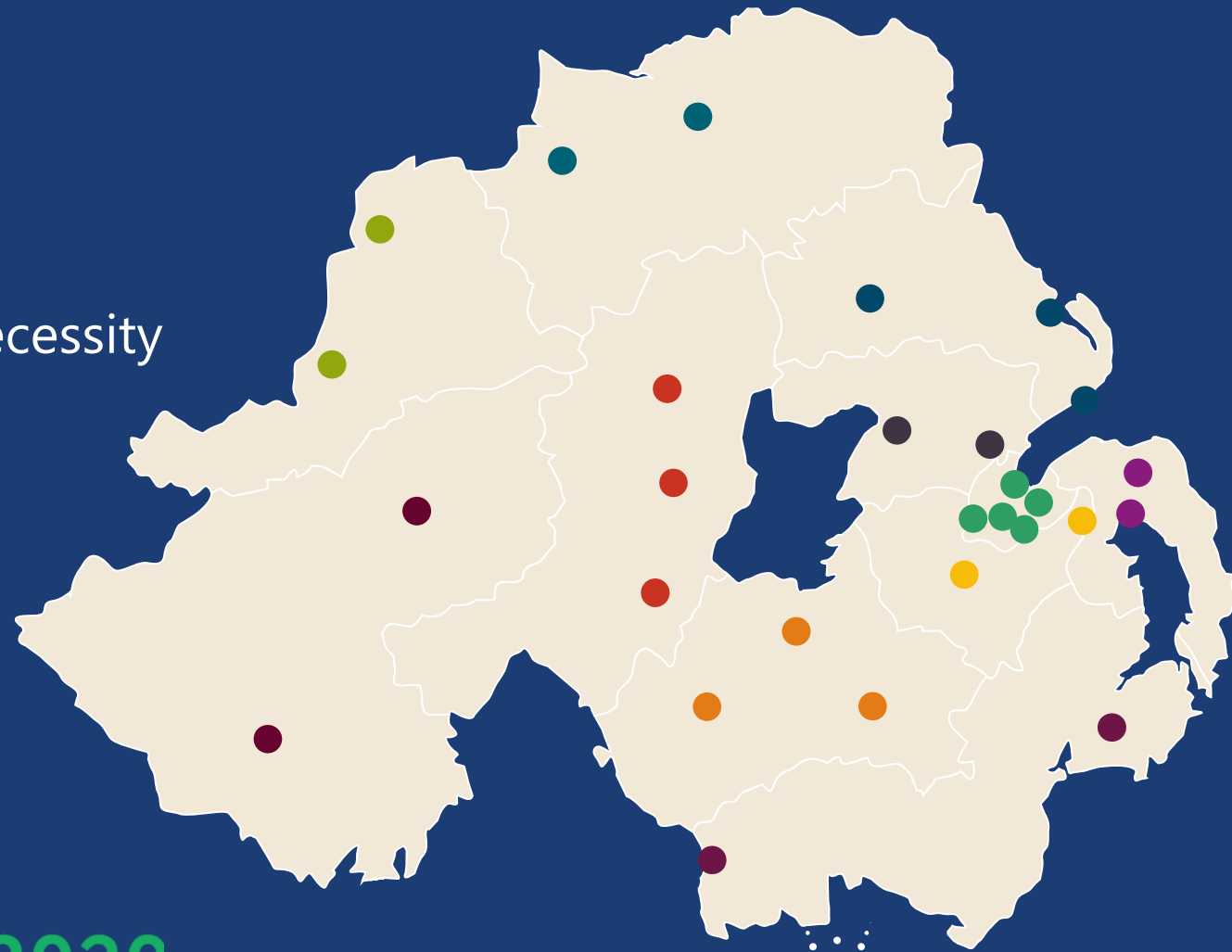
- **17%** agree that the wider infrastructure to support enterprise is strong.
- **1 in 5** businesses have to deal with poor broadband width which has implications for business productivity.
- **90%** agree that it is important that young people learn about enterprise and entrepreneurial skills at school.
- Around **half** would generally rate most of their business skills as adequate/weak with market/customer research skills lowest rated.
- Only **16%** agree that the voice of enterprise and small business is heard and is clear.



Next Steps

- Full report distributed next week
- True practical partnership working is a necessity

Businesses have raised their voice – we have a collective responsibility to react to and act on what they have said.



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