MERCER
UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

2019 Middle Georgia Economic Outlook Survey

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF ECONOMICS AND LIBERTY

2019 Middle Georgia Economic Outlook Survey

T he Center for the Study of Economics and Liberty at Mercer University presents the results of the 2019 Middle Georgia Economic Outlook Survey. The Middle Georgia Economic Outlook Survey is an electronic survey of economic sentiment answered by a wide range of businesses in Middle Georgia. The Middle Georgia Economic Outlook Survey was first implemented in December of 2014 as a semiannual survey and continued in that format until 2016. Starting in 2017 the survey switched to an annual cycle. The present 2019 edition will be followed by the 2020 edition to be distributed in February of 2021.

We would like to thank the Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce, the Robins Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Forsyth-Monroe County Chamber of Commerce, the Milledgeville-Baldwin Chamber of Commerce, the Jones County/Gray Chamber of Commerce, the Roberta-Crawford County Chamber of Commerce and the Wilkinson County Chamber of Commerce for their help identifying potential respondents and, in some cases, distributing the survey among their members.

Survey Distribution

Invitations to complete the survey were sent via e-mail to individuals associated with businesses identified by the different chambers of commerce mentioned above.

The survey was sent to a total of 1,905 individual e-mail addresses. We received 145 responses resulting in a response rate of approximately 7.6%. Importantly, not all 145 responses included answers for all questions in the survey. Thus, the analyses for individual questions typically reflect responses from a smaller sample. The survey was active from February 5 through March 1, 2020, and two reminders were sent in addition to the initial invitation.

Methodology

To assess the economic sentiment of respondents with respect to a particular question or subject, we utilized the **diffusion index,** which is calculated by subtracting the percentage of respondents who selected negative answers from the percentage of respondents who selected positive answers. For example, when a question offered the choices "much lower," "lower," "about the same," "higher" and "much higher," the diffusion Index was calculated by adding the percentage of respondents who selected "higher" and "much higher" and subtracting from that sum the sum of the percentages of respondents who selected "lower" and "much lower."

For questions involving rankings, we used the **intensity index,** which calculates a weighted average of the number of times a particular answer was ranked #1, #2 or #3 out of all possible answers received. The weight for answers ranked as #1 was 1, the weight for answers ranked as #2 was 0.75 and the weight for answers ranked as #3 was 0.5.

For questions for which the answers were descriptive (text) rather than numeric, we used **word clouds** to capture the relative importance of particular answers or concepts. Specifically, the size of the word or concept in a word cloud is based on the frequency with which the word or concept is mentioned in the responses.

Description of the Results

The survey consisted of 26 questions designed to extract information about businesses' performance during 2019 and businesses' expectations for 2020. This year the set of questions included four new questions designed to gather the respondent's opinions on the effect of tariffs to foreign products; new technology, automation and robots; immigrants; and free markets.

In general terms, businesses in Middle Georgia seemed to have experienced a very positive 2019 and expect an even better 2020. As in previous editions of the survey, however, businesses in Middle Georgia continue to identify the quality and cost of labor, taxes and government regulations and/or red tape as the top obstacles to their business activities.

BUSINESS INDICATORS

The diffusion index for **net earnings or income (after taxes)** was 34.69% for 2019 indicating that 50% of the businesses had higher or much higher net earnings, and 15.31% of the businesses had lower or much lower net earnings, than what those

businesses expected at the beginning of the year. The diffusion index for expectations of net earnings for 2020 was 40.96% indicating strong optimism for this variable for the next year.

The diffusion indices for **sales volume** were 42.27% for 2019 and 42.68% for 2020. The equivalent diffusion indices for **average selling prices** were 28.87% and 34.14%, respectively. As in the case of net earnings or income (after taxes), these indices suggest that the results of 2019 were better than what most businesses expected at the beginning of the year and that businesses expect even better results in 2020.

During 2019, businesses in Middle Georgia added more employees than they expected to add at the beginning of the year. Businesses were also very optimistic about adding employees during 2020. The diffusion index for **total number of employees** was 18.18% for 2019 and 34.94% for 2020. Interestingly, businesses show strong optimism about adding employees despite believing that **average employee compensation** was higher during 2019 than expected at the beginning of the year, and that this average will further increase in 2020. The diffusion indices for this variable were 50.51% for 2019 and 45.12% for 2020.

The diffusion indices for **inventories** were 6.25% for 2019 and 11.11% for 2020. The low values for this variable are taken as positive indicators suggesting strong sales.

The diffusion index for **ability to obtain financing** was 14.43% for 2019 and 3.7% for 2020. These results suggest that businesses in Middle Georgia felt that obtaining financing was slightly easier than expected at the beginning of the year and remain optimistic for 2020.

On the investment side, the diffusion index for **capital expenditures for plant and/or physical equipment** was 16.3% for 2019, indicating that local firms engaged in larger investment activity than they expected at the beginning of the year. They expect something similar for 2020 – the diffusion index for that period was 26.83%.

Non-labor, non-capital costs were higher than expected for many firms in the region as indicated by a diffusion index of 15.31% for 2019. A similar trend is expected for next year as indicated by a diffusion index of 18.29%. This result, together with that of average employee compensation, indicates that overall costs of production were higher than expected at the beginning of the year and businesses expect this trend to continue into 2020. While this could be seen as negative for the businesses responding to our survey, it is an expected trend as the economy continues its expansion. Moreover, as we mentioned above, businesses also saw higher selling prices than expected during 2019 and expect the same for 2020.

Finally, the number of **accounts payable that are past due** were less than expected at the beginning of the year as reflected by a diffusion index of -9.39%. Firms are also optimistic about 2020 as indicated by a diffusion index of -7.32%.

Tables 1 and 2 and Figures 1a and 1b show the detailed breakdown of these results for Middle Georgia.

OBSTACLES TO BUSINESS

The most significant obstacles to business identified by the respondents for both 2019 and 2020, as evidenced by intensity indices, were **the quality of labor, the cost of labor, government regulations and/or red tape** and **taxes.** Tables 3 and 5 and Figures 2 and 4 present this information.

Trying to further understand the nature of the business obstacle related to government regulations and/or red tape, we asked only those who identified this obstacle as a major concern, to specify if they referred to government regulations and/or red tape at the **federal, state** or **local** level. The overwhelming majority (55%) responded that they referred to the federal level for 2019 and they expect that to be the case in 2019 as well (64.86%). Tables 4 and 6 and Figures 3 and 5 present these results.

OUTLOOK FOR 2020

Question 7 asks, **"How likely is it that 2020 will be a good time for your business to expand in Middle Georgia?"** The diffusion index was 21.95% suggesting that more businesses expect to expand their operations in 2020 than those that don't. This is the third time the responses of this survey have led to a positive diffusion index for this variable since we first started conducting this survey in 2014 (the first time was for 2017). Tables 7 and 8 and Figure 6 show these results for Middle Georgia as well as for individual counties.

Interestingly, respondents are even more optimistic about the Middle Georgia economy during 2020 than about expanding their own businesses. The diffusion index for the question **"In general, how do you think the overall economy of Middle Georgia will be doing in 2019?"** was 51.2%. Tables 9 and 10 and Figure 7 present this information.

EMPLOYMENT AND HUMAN CAPITAL

The average number of employees among the businesses that responded the survey was 75.09 and 89.02% of them have

less than 101 employees (see Tables 11 and 26).

In general, businesses in Middle Georgia indicated that it was not easy to fill vacancies during 2019. The diffusion index for the question "**During 2019, how easy was it for your company to fill vacancies in Middle Georgia?**" was -50.62% (see Tables 12 and 13 and Figure 8). When asked about the main **obstacles faced when attempting to fill vacancies in Middle Georgia** some of the most frequently mentioned factors were the difficulty of finding qualified workers, responsible workers, experienced workers, workers with the appropriate skills and commercial drivers (see Figure 9).

Question 12 asked **"What were the labor skills most difficult to find during 2019?"** The answers with the largest percentages were "sales and customer representatives," "laborers and freight/stock/material movers," "office and administration support," "maintenance and repair workers," and "construction workers and supervisors" (see Tables 14 and 15). If "other" was specified, the most frequently mentioned professions were software developers, truck drivers, kitchen help and electronic assemblers (see Figure 10).

Similar results were found for expectations for 2020. Question 13 asked **"What particular labor skill sets would you be looking for in potential employees during 2020?"** The answers with the largest percentages were "sales and customer representatives," "construction workers and supervisors," "laborers and freight/stock/material movers," and "maintenance and repair workers" (see Tables 16 and 17). If "other" was specified, respondents mentioned professions such as embroidery, ministry personnel, kitchen help, and truck drivers (see Figure 11).

As far as hiring plans for 2020, 80.5% of the respondents answered that they **plan to hire new employees in 2020** (19.5% plan to hire part-time employees and 61% plan to hire full-time employees). Table 18 presents these results. In question 15 we asked respondents **the county in which they plan to hire new employees during 2020.** Businesses plan to hire 29.84% of the new employees in Bibb County. Houston County comes in second place with 20.16% and Monroe county in third with 10.84% (see Table 19 and Figure 12).

Consistent with the previous results, only 8.64% of the respondents plan to reduce the number of employees during 2020. Most of the businesses that plan to reduce the number of employees were located in Bibb County (33%) and Houston County (33%) (see Tables 20 and 21).

VARIABLES THAT AFFECT THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

We added the following questions to this version of the MGEOS.

Question 18 asks **"Did the increase in tariffs to foreign products (particularly from China) affect your business?"** The vast majority of respondents (75.9%) indicated that they didn't. Approximately 20% of the respondents indicated that tariffs had a negative effect and only 3.61% indicated that tariffs had a positive effect on their business (see Table 22).

Question 19 asks **"Do you think that new technology, automation and robots will affect your business in the near future?"** The majority of the respondents (57.14%) indicated that they will have no effect on their business. Almost 37% indicated that they will have a positive effect and only 5.95% indicated that they will have a negative effect on their business (see Table 23).

Question 20 asks **"How important are immigrants for your business?"** The vast majority of respondents (77.11%) indicated that they are not important for their business. Approximately 20% indicated that they were important or very important and only 3.61% indicated that they had a negative effect on their business (see Table 24).

Question 21 asks "Do you think that free markets are important for economic growth?" Almost all of the respondents (98.81%) indicated that they are important or very important for economic growth. Only 1.19% indicated that they were not important for economic growth (see Table 25).

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

The following information can be found in Tables 26 to 30.

- Approximately 89% of the businesses surveyed in Middle Georgia have less than 101 employees.
- Approximately 76% of our respondents indicated that they were the owners of the business.
- Approximately 87% of the businesses indicated that they are headquartered in Middle Georgia.
- Most of the companies surveyed indicated that they are located in Bibb County (44.29%), Houston County (27.14%) and Baldwin County (12.86%). The rest (15.71%) are located in the Monroe, Jones, Peach and Wilkinson counties.
- The businesses surveyed operate in a wide range of industries. The top percentages were "professional and technical service" with 16.05%; "retail trade" with 12.35%; and "real estate, rental and leasing" with 9.88%.

Tables and Figures

BUSINESS INDICATORS

1. Compared to the expectations you had for 2019 at the beginning of the year, your company's...

Table 1: Business Indicators for 2019							
Question	Much lower	Lower	About the same	Higher	Much higher	Not applicable	Total Responses	Diffusion Index
Net earnings or income (after taxes) are....	1.02%	14.29%	33.67%	41.84%	8.16%	1.02%	98	34.69%
Unit sales volume is...	1.03%	9.28%	27.84%	46.39%	6.19%	9.28%	97	42.27%
Average selling prices are...	0.00%	2.06%	54.64%	30.93%	0.00%	12.37%	97	28.87%
Total number of employees is...	1.01%	7.07%	64.65%	24.24%	2.02%	1.01%	99	18.18%
Average employee compensation is...	1.01%	3.03%	39.39%	50.51%	4.04%	2.02%	99	50.51%
Inventories are...	1.04%	10.42%	46.88%	15.63%	2.08%	23.96%	96	6.25%
Ability to obtain financing is...	0.00%	3.09%	46.39%	16.49%	1.03%	32.99%	97	14.43%
Capital expenditures for plant and/or physical equipment are...	0.00%	10.20%	51.02%	21.43%	5.10%	12.24%	98	16.3%
Non-labor, non-capital costs are...	0.00%	6.12%	64.29%	20.41%	1.02%	8.16%	98	15.31%
Accounts payable that are past due are...	3.13%	15.63%	52.08%	8.33%	1.04%	19.79%	96	-9.39%

2. Looking ahead to 2020, exclusively for your company, you expect...

| Table 2: Business Indicators for 2020							
Question	Much lower	Lower	About the same	Higher	Much higher	Not applicable	Total Responses	Diffusion Index
Net earnings or income (after taxes) are....	0.00%	10.84%	36.14%	45.78%	6.02%	1.20%	83	40.96%
Unit sales volume is...	0.00%	8.54%	35.37%	47.56%	3.66%	4.88%	82	42.68%
Average selling prices are...	0.00%	4.88%	47.56%	37.80%	1.22%	8.54%	82	34.14%
Total number of employees is...	0.00%	2.41%	59.04%	37.35%	0.00%	1.20%	83	34.94%
Average employee compensation is...	0.00%	0.00%	53.66%	45.12%	0.00%	1.22%	82	45.12%
Inventories are...	0.00%	3.70%	58.02%	14.81%	0.00%	23.46%	81	11.11%
Ability to obtain financing is...	0.00%	11.11%	53.09%	14.81%	0.00%	20.99%	81	3.70%
Capital expenditures for plant and/or physical equipment are...	0.00%	6.10%	52.44%	30.49%	2.44%	8.54%	82	26.83%
Non-labor, non-capital costs are...	0.00%	2.44%	68.29%	20.73%	0.00%	8.54%	82	18.29%
Accounts payable that are past due are...	3.66%	9.76%	60.98%	6.10%	0.00%	19.51%	82	-7.32%

Figure 1a Business Indicators
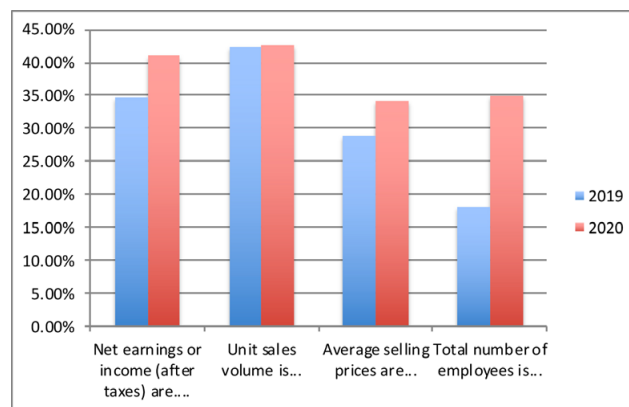
Figure 1b Business Indicators
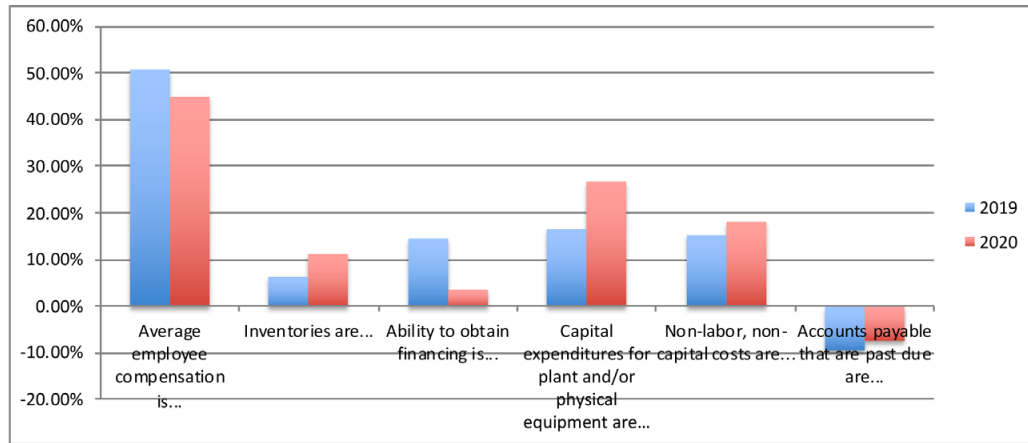
OBSTACLES TO BUSINESS

3. Please rank the three most significant obstacles that applied to your business during 2019. Enter 1 next to the most important, 2 next to second most important and 3 next to third most important.

Table 3: Most Significant Obstacles to Business 2019						
Answer	1	2	3	Other rankings	Total Responses	Intensity Index
Taxes	17	12	13	1	43	12.85%
Inflation	2	3	13	1	19	4.25%
Poor sales	7	5	6	2	20	5.43%
Access to financing	0	5	2	2	9	1.88%
Interest rates	2	2	0	2	6	1.38%
Cost of labor	14	18	14	1	47	13.64%
Quality of labor	21	23	9	0	53	16.90%
Government regulations and/or red tape	13	14	13	2	42	11.86%
Other (please specify)	9	3	2	0	14	4.84%

Figure 2
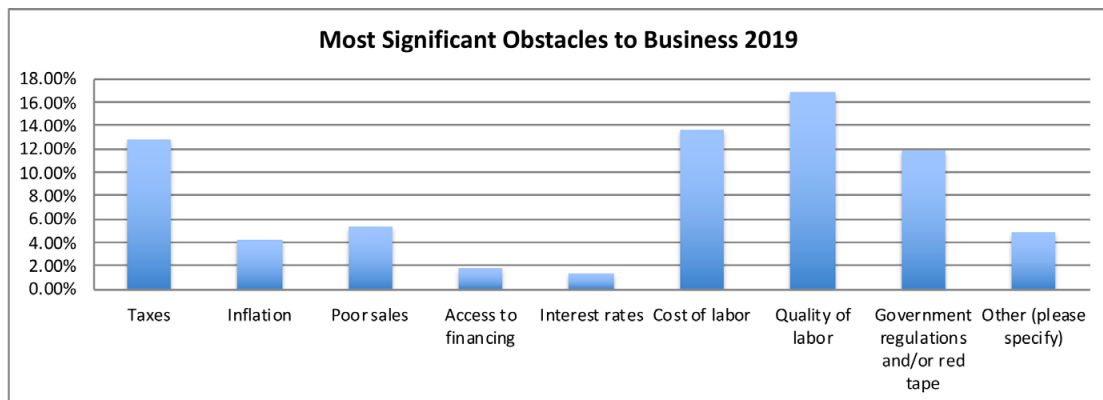
4. You indicated that one of the three most significant obstacles that applied to your business during 2019 was "government regulations and/or red tape." Could you identify if such regulations and/or red tape were at…

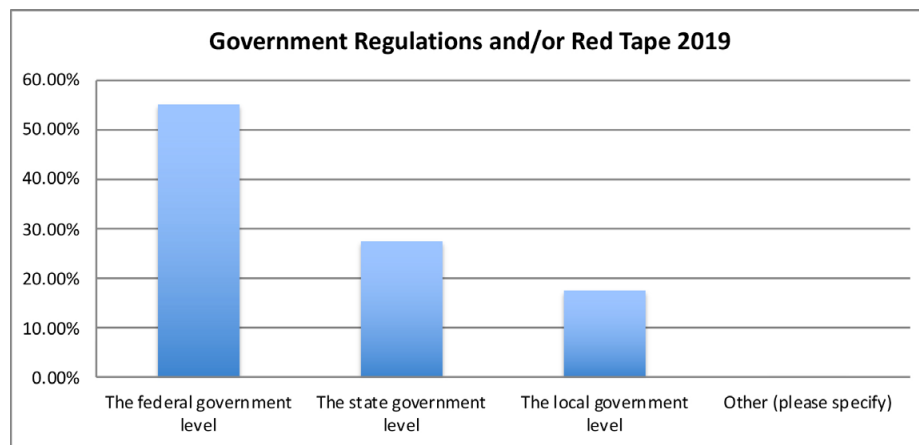| Table 4: Regulations and or Red Tape 2019		
Answer	Response	Percentage
The federal government level	22	55.00%
The state government level	11	27.50%
The local government level	7	17.50%
Other (please specify)	0	0.00%
Total	40	100.00%

Figure 3

5. Please rank the three most significant obstacles that you expect will apply to your business in 2020. Enter 1 next to the most important, 2, next to the second most important, and 3, next to the third most important.

Table 5: Most Significant Obstacles to Business 2020						
Answer	1	2	3	Other rankings	Total Responses	Intensity Index
Taxes	14	13	13	1	41	12.4%
Inflation	1	6	7	1	15	3.7%
Poor sales	7	6	6	2	21	5.9%
Access to financing	2	2	3	2	9	2.0%
Interest rates	3	2	2	2	9	2.3%
Cost of labor	12	22	15	0	49	14.8%
Quality of labor	23	17	10	0	50	16.7%
Government regulations and/or red tape	10	11	14	2	37	10.3%
Other (please specify)	7	4	2	0	13	4.5%

Figure 4

Most Significant Obstacles to Business 2020
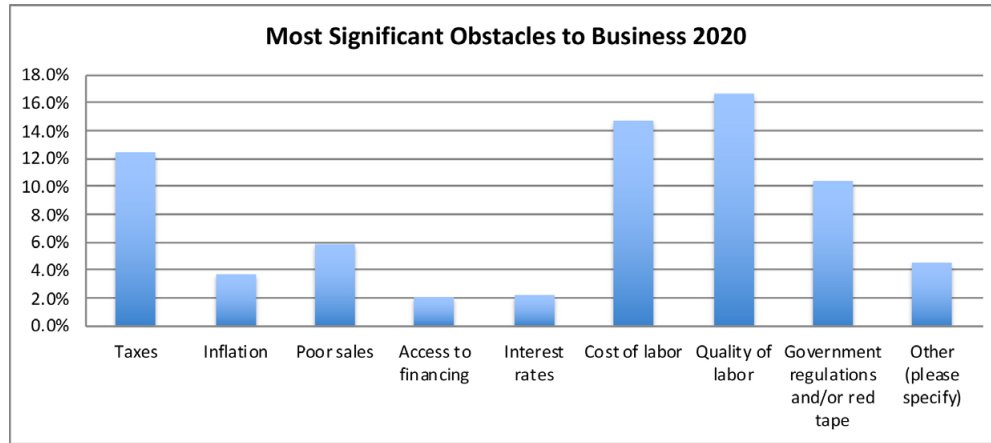
6. You indicated that one of the three most significant obstacles that you expect will apply to your business in 2020 will be "government regulations and/or red tape." Do you expect such regulations and/or red tape to be at…

Table 6: Regulations and or Red Tape 2020		
Answer	Response	Percentage
The federal government level	24	64.86%
The state government level	5	13.51%
The local government level	7	18.92%
Other (please specify)	1	2.70%
Total	37	100.00%

Figure 5

Government Regulations and/or Red Tape 2020
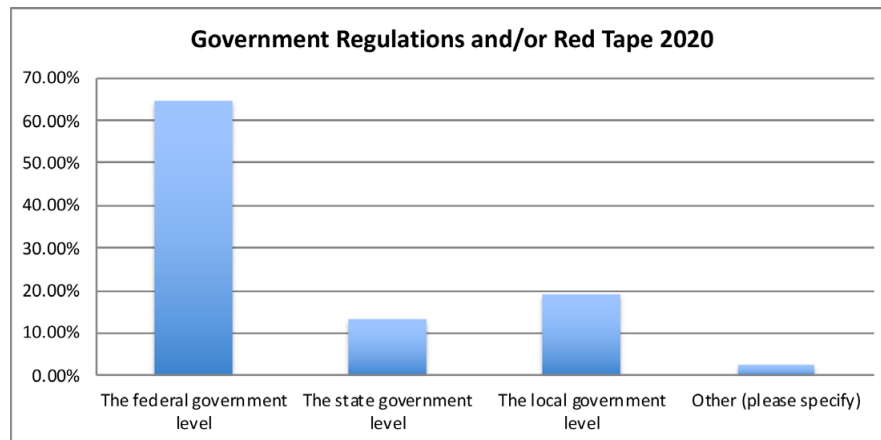
7. How likely is it that 2020 will be a good time for your business to expand in Middle Georgia?

Table 7: Likelihood of Business Expansion 2020		
Answer	Response	Percentage
Very Unlikely	5	6.10%
Unlikely	17	20.73%
Undecided	20	24.39%
Likely	32	39.02%
Very Likely	8	9.76%
Total	82	100.00%
Diffusion Index		21.95%

Figure 6
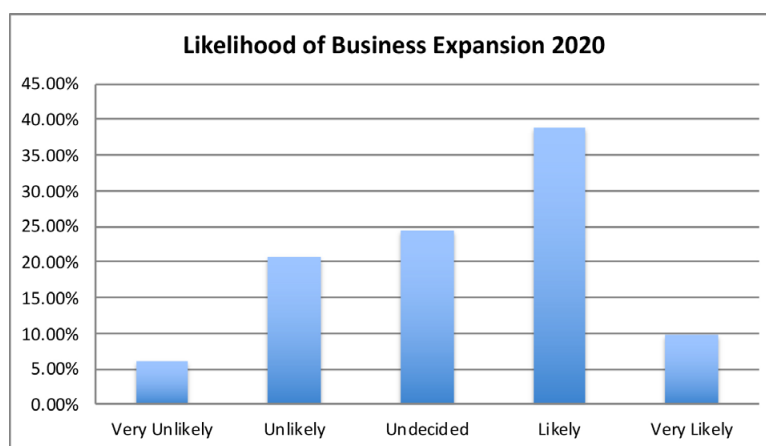
Table 8: Likelihood of Business Expansion in 2020 at the County Level					
Answer	Total	Baldwin	Bibb	Monroe	Houston
Very Unlikely	7.14%	11%	10%	0%	5%
Unlikely	20.00%	11%	16%	25.00%	21.05%
Undecided	27.14%	22%	32.3%	0.00%	31.58%
Likely	35.71%	44%	32.26%	75.00%	31.58%
Very Likely	10.00%	11%	9.68%	0.00%	10.53%
Responses	70	9	31	4	19
Diffusion Index	18.57%	33%	16.13%	50%	15.79%

8. In general, how do you think the overall economy of Middle Georgia will be doing in 2020?

Table 9: Outlook for the Middle Georgia Economy for 2020		
Answer	Response	Percentage
Much Worse	0	0%
Worse	2	2%
About the Same	36	44%
Better	41	50%
Much Better	3	4%
Total	82	100%
Diffusion Index		51.2%

Figure 7

Table 10: Outlook for the Middle Georgia Economy for 2020 at the County Level

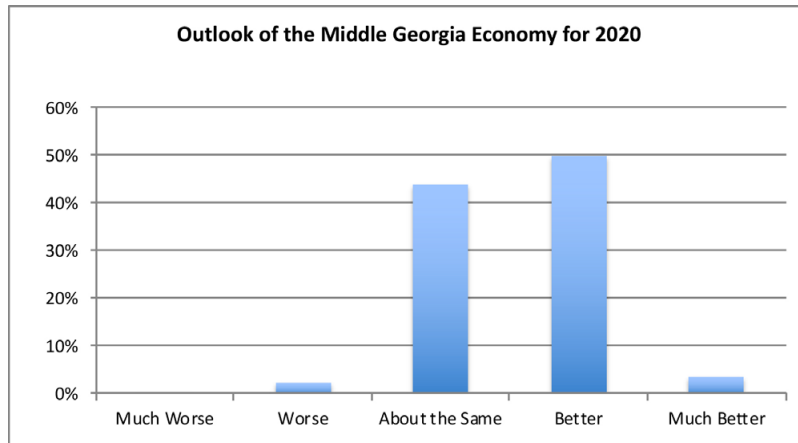| Answer	Middle Georgia	Baldwin	Bibb	Monroe	Houston
Much Worse	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Worse	2.86%	0%	6.45%	0%	0%
About the Same	45.71%	56%	48.39%	25.00%	36.84%
Better	48.57%	44%	41.94%	75.00%	57.89%
Much Better	2.86%	0%	3%	0.00%	5.26%
Responses	70	9	31	4	19
Diffusion Index	49%	44%	38.7%	75.0%	63.2%

EMPLOYMENT AND HUMAN CAPITAL

9. Approximately, how many employees do you currently have, full- and part-time, in the Middle Georgia area?

Table 11: Number of Employees	
	Middle Georgia
Highest	1,320
Lowest	0
Average	75.09
Standard Deviation	213.74
Total Responses	82

10. During 2019, how easy was it for your company to fill vacancies in Middle Georgia?

Table 12: Easiness of Filling Vacancies		
Answer	Response	Percentage
Very Difficult	9	11.11%
Difficult	40	49.38%
Neutral	24	29.63%
Easy	7	8.64%
Very Easy	1	1.23%
Total	81	100.00%
Diffusion Index		-50.62%

Figure 8

Easiness to Filling Vacancies 2019
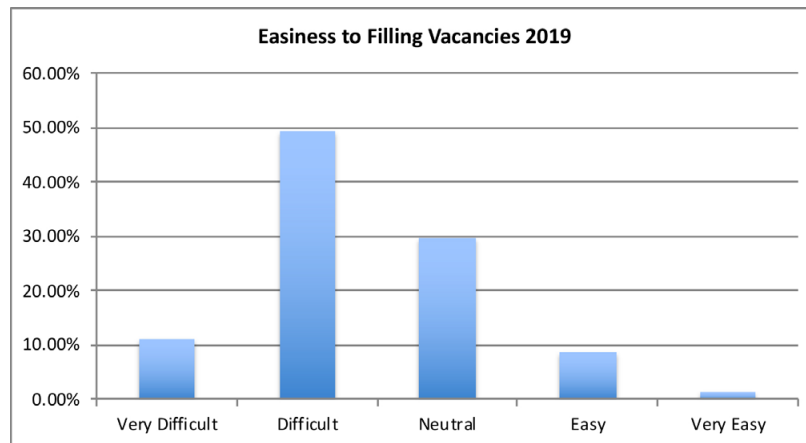
Table 13: Easiness of Filling Vacancies at the County Level 2019					
Answer	Middle Georgia	Baldwin	Bibb	Monroe	Houston
Very Difficult	11.59%	0.00%	20.00%	25.00%	5.26%
Difficult	53.62%	33.33%	60.00%	0.00%	63.16%
Neutral	27.54%	55.56%	20.00%	25.00%	21.05%
Easy	5.80%	11.11%	0.00%	50.00%	5.26%
Very Easy	1.45%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.26%
Responses	69	9	30	4	19
Diffusion Index	-57.97%	-22%	-80%	25%	-57.89%

11. What was the main obstacle that you faced during 2019 when attempting to fill vacancies in Middle Georgia?

Figure 9: Main Obstacles Faced When Filling Vacancies 2019

12. Did you have any difficulty finding employees with particular labor skill sets during 2019? If so, what labor skill sets were the most difficult to find? Please mark all that apply.

Table 14: Skills Most Difficult to Find 2019		
Answer	Responses	Percentage
Sales and customer representatives	21	16.94%
Cashiers and clerks	6	4.84%
Office and administration support	15	12.10%
Laborers and freight/stock/material movers	15	12.10%
Construction workers and supervisors	12	9.68%
Agricultural workers	0	0.00%
Machinists, welders, cutters, solderers and brazers	4	3.23%
Maintenance and repair workers	13	10.48%
Industrial production managers	4	3.23%
Marketing professionals	8	6.45%
Finance and accounting professionals	5	4.03%
Lawyers and legal representatives	3	2.42%
Healthcare practitioners	7	5.65%
Other (please specify)	11	8.87%
Total	124	100.00%

Figure 10 : Skills Most Difficult to Find 2019 – Other, please specify.

Table 15: Skills Most Difficult to Find 2019 at the Country Level					
	Middle Georgia	Baldwin	Bibb	Monroe	Houston
Sales and customer representatives	15.89%	14%	16.07%	40%	16.67%
Cashiers and clerks	5.61%	7%	1.79%	0%	12.50%
Office and administration support	13.08%	21%	14.3%	0%	8.33%
Laborers and freight/stock/material movers	12.15%	7%	17.86%	0%	4.17%
Machinists, welders, cutters, solderers and brazers	3.74%	0%	5.36%	0%	4%
Maintenance and repair workers	9.35%	7%	13%	0%	0.00%
Industrial production managers	2.80%	0%	1.79%	0%	8%
Marketing professionals	5.61%	7%	5%	20%	4.17%
Finance and accounting professionals	3.74%	21%	1.79%	0%	0%
Lawyers and legal representatives	2.80%	0%	3.57%	0%	4.17%
Healthcare practitioners	4.67%	0%	2%	0%	12.50%
Agricultural workers	0.00%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Construction workers and supervisors	10.28%	7%	13%	20%	4.17%
Other (please specify)	10.28%	7%	5.36%	20%	20.83%

13. What particular labor skill sets would you be looking for in potential employees during 2020?

Table 16: Labor Skills Needed 2020		
Answer	Responses	Percentage
Sales and customer representatives	11	16.92%
Cashiers and clerks	4	6.15%
Office and administration support	5	7.69%
Laborers and freight/stock/material movers	8	12.31%
Construction workers and supervisors	9	13.85%
Agricultural workers	1	1.54%
Machinists, welders, cutters, solderers and brazers	0	0.00%
Maintenance and repair workers	6	9.23%
Industrial production managers	2	3.08%
Marketing professionals	3	4.62%
Finance and accounting professionals	2	3.08%
Lawyers and legal representatives	1	1.54%
Healthcare practitioners	4	6.15%
Other (please specify)	9	13.85%
Total	65	100.00%

Figure 11: Labor Skills Needed 2020 – Other, please specify.

Table 17: Labor Skills Needed 2020 at the County Level					
	Middle Georgia	Baldwin County	Bibb County	Monroe County	Houston County
Sales and customer representatives	14.81%	50%	8%	25%	15.38%
Cashiers and clerks	7.41%	0%	0%	25%	7.69%
Office and administration support	7.41%	17%	13%	0%	0.00%
Laborers and freight/stock/material movers	12.96%	0%	21%	0%	15%
Construction workers and supervisors	16.67%	17%	21%	0%	0%
Agricultural workers	2%	0%	4%	0%	0%
Machinists, welders, cutters, solderers and brazers	0.00%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Maintenance and repair workers	9.26%	0%	17%	25%	0%
Industrial production managers	2%	0%	0%	0%	8%
Marketing professionals	1.85%	0%	0%	0%	8%
Finance and accounting professionals	3.70%	17%	0%	0%	0%
Lawyers and legal representatives	1.85%	0%	4%	0%	0%
Healthcare practitioners	5.56%	0%	4%	0%	7.69%
Other (please specify)	14.81%	0%	8%	25%	38.46%

14. If you plan to hire new employees in Middle Georgia during 2020, will they mostly be…

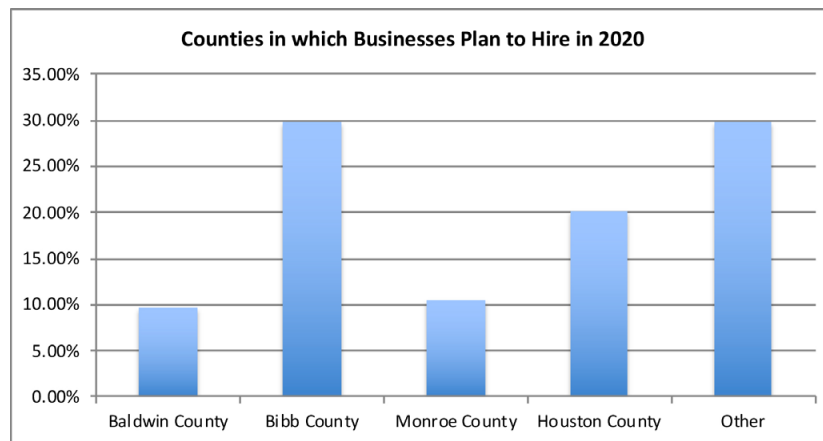| Table 18: Type of Employees that Businesses Plan to Hire 2020		
Answer	Response	Percentage
Part Time	16	19.5%
Full Time	50	61.0%
We do not plan to hire new employees	16	19.5%
Total	82	100.0%

15. In which Middle Georgia county do you plan to hire new employees during 2020? Please check all that apply.

Table 19: County in which Businesses Plan to Hire 2020		
Answer	Response	Percentage
Baldwin County	12	9.68%
Bibb County	37	29.84%
Monroe County	13	10.48%
Houston County	25	20.16%
Other	37	29.84%

Figure 12

16. If you plan to REDUCE the number of employees in Middle Georgia during 2020, will those affected mostly be…

Table 20: Type of Employees that Businesses Plan to Reduce 2020		
Answer	Response	Percentage
Part Time	3	3.70%
Full Time	4	4.94%
We do not plan to reduce the number of employees	74	91.36%
Total	81	100.00%

17. In which Middle Georgia county do you plan to REDUCE the number of employees during 2020? Please check all that apply.

Table 21: County in which Businesses Plan to Reduce Employees 2020		
Answer	Response	Percentage
Baldwin County	0	0%
Bibb County	2	33%
Monroe County	0	0%
Houston County	2	33%
Other	2	33%

18. Did the increase in tariffs to foreign products (particularly from China) under the so-called "trade war" affect your business in 2019?

Table 22: Did Tariffs Affect Your Business in 2019?		
Answer	Response	Percentage
It affected my business positively	3	3.61%
It affected my business negatively	17	20.48%
It did not affect my business	63	75.90%
Total	83	100.00%

19. Do you think that new technology, automation and robots will affect your business in the near future?

Table 23: Will New Technology, Automation and Robots Affect Your Business in the Near Future?		
Answer	Response	Percentage
They will have a positive effect	31	36.90%
They will have a negative effect	5	5.95%
They will have no effect	48	57.14%
Total	84	100.00%

20. How important are immigrants for your business?

Table 24: How Important are Immigrants for Your Business?		
Answer	Response	Percentage
They are very important	5	6.02%
They are important	11	13.25%
They are not important	64	77.11%
They have a negative effect	3	3.61%
Total	83	100.00%

21. Do you think that free markets (low taxation and less regulations) are important for economic growth?

Table 25: Do You Think that Free Markets are Important for Economic Growth?		
Answer	Response	Percentage
They are very important	56	66.67%
They are important	27	32.14%
They are not important	1	1.19%
They have a negative effect	0	0.00%
Total	84	100.00%

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

22. Approximately, how many employees do you currently have, full- and part-time, in the Middle Georgia area?

Table 26: Number of Employees by Ranges		
Number of employees	Businesess	Percentage
Under 10	36	43.90%
10 to 20	16	19.51%
21 to 50	12	14.63%
51 to 100	9	10.98%
101 to 500	6	7.32%
501+	3	3.66%

19. Do you own your business?

Table 27: Business Ownership		
Answer	Response	Percentage
Yes	62	76.54%
No	19	23.46%
Total	81	100.00%

20. Is your company headquartered in Middle Georgia?

Table 28: Company Headquartered in Middle Georgia		
Answer	Response	Percentage
Yes	71	87.65%
No	10	12.35%
Total	81	100.00%

21. In which Middle Georgia county is your principal office located?

Table 29: Principal Office Location		
Answer	Response	Percentage
Baldwin County	9	12.86%
Bibb County	31	44.29%
Jones County	1	1.43%
Monroe County	4	5.71%
Crawford County	0	0.00%
Peach County	3	4.29%
Wilkinson County	3	4.29%
Houston County	19	27.14%
Total	70	100.00%

22. Please classify your major business activity using one of the categories below

Table 30: Business Classification		
Answer	Response	Percentage
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	1	1.23%
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	2	2.47%
Construction	7	8.64%
Manufacturing	5	6.17%
Utilities	0	0.00%
Wholesale Trade	4	4.94%
Retail Trade	10	12.35%
Transporation and warehousing	2	2.47%
Information	1	1.23%
Finance and Insurance	5	6.17%
Real estate, rental and leasing	8	9.88%
Professional and technical service	13	16.05%
Management of companies and enterprises	1	1.23%
Administrative and waste services	0	0.00%
Educational services	2	2.47%
Health care and social services	7	8.64%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	2	2.47%
Accomodation and food services	4	4.94%
Other services except public administration	4	4.94%
Public administration	1	1.23%
Unclassified	2	2.47%
Total	81	100.00%

This report was prepared by:

Dr. Antonio Saravia

Director, Center for the Study of Economics and Liberty

Stetson-Hatcher School of Business

Mercer University

csel@mercer.edu

(478) 301-5541