MERRICKVILLE-WOLFORD
Jewel of the Rideau

Business Retention and Expansion Report

October 15, 2019

STRONG BUSINESS STRONG COMMUNITIES

Prepared by:

Leeds Grenville
where lifestyle grows good business

Funding provided by:

Government of Ontario
United Counties of Leeds and Grenville
The Village of Merrickville-Wolford

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Background

The Business Retention + Expansion (BR+E) program is a structured Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) action-oriented approach to business and economic development. It promotes job growth by helping the Village of Merrickville-Wolford and the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville learn about issues and opportunities for local businesses. It helps municipalities prioritize efforts to address the needs of the community and promote job retention and growth.

The BR+E program consisted of trained staff and volunteers from Merrickville-Wolford and the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville visiting businesses and conducting confidential interviews with senior management or owner(s).

Why undertake a BR+E?

- Existing businesses create more jobs
  - 76-90% of new jobs come from existing businesses
- Existing businesses are already invested in the community
  - Easier and less expensive to retain business than attract new business
- Existing businesses can be ambassadors for the community
  - They can assist in identifying potential targets for attraction efforts
- Provides an early warning system
  - Allows proactive support of businesses that are thinking of expanding; closures could be averted if businesses were connected with existing resources
- Improves the community's self-awareness
  - Allows improvements to local business climate through strategic planning, policy review and business communications of existing resources and support programs.

Leadership

The United Counties of Leeds and Grenville Economic Development Office agreed to take a leadership role using the OMAFRA BR+E program to deliver the following:

- ✓ BR+E Program Action Report
- ✓ BR+E Aggregate Business Survey Report
- ✓ BR+E Aggregate Downtown/Retail Survey Report

The data collected from businesses in Merrickville-Wolford would also be part of the Counties regional BR+E program that will include all 10 of its member municipalities.

Four Stage BR+E Process

The BR+E program is a systematic process with four stages. Stages one to three are completed and the municipality will be entering stage four.

Stage 1 – Project Planning and Survey Development

This stage involved staff and volunteer training, formulating a work plan, updating business data, selecting businesses to be interviewed and fine-tuning the survey.

Stage 2 – Collect and Analyze

This stage involved completing business surveys, entering data, responding to specific business issues and opportunities, and conducting a data analysis from aggregate results.

Stage 3 – Develop Goals and Action Plans

Goals and action plans are developed through the BR+E Task Force session that brings together business leaders, municipal council members and senior staff to review survey findings. Staff from the Counties Economic Development Office, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the Queen's Executive Decision Centre facilitated the session. The action plan and final report were completed by the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville Economic Development Office.

Stage 4 – Implementation and Monitoring

The BR+E report is presented to Merrickville-Wolford Council. The program recommends hosting a public meeting to communicate the results of the project to the broader community. This stage also includes ongoing monitoring and tracking of results.

Business Profile

There were 61 surveys completed including a Base Survey with Merrickville-Wolford Community Questions, and a Downtown Retail Sector Survey (completed by 20 of the 61 businesses) between May 24, 2018 and August 9, 2019.

NAICS Code	Percent
44 - Retail Trade, (motor vehicle, furniture, etc.)	22%
45 - Retail Trade, (sporting goods, book, music, etc.)	17%
72 - Accommodation and Food Services	12%
71 - Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	9%
11 - Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	8%
81 - Other Services (except Public Administration)	8%
33 - Manufacturing, (primary and fabricated metal, etc.)	4%
31 - Manufacturing, (food, beverage, etc.)	3%
53 - Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	3%
32 - Manufacturing, (wood, paper, etc.)	2%
54 - Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2%
61 - Educational Services	2%
62 - Health Care and Social Assistance	2%
23 - Construction	1%
41 - (CAN) Wholesale trade	1%
48 - Transportation and Warehousing, (air, rail, truck, etc.)	1%
51 - Information	1%
52 - Finance and Insurance	1%
56 - Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediat	1%

In Merrickville-Wolford, the majority of businesses are locally owned and operated with one location (85%), followed by locally owned and operated with more than one location (11%). Total local ownership is 96% **(BI1)**.

55% of businesses in Merrickville-Wolford have been in operation for 11 or more years and 15% over 35 years **(BI5)**. 50% of current owners have been operating their businesses for 11 years or more **(BI6)**.

76% of those surveyed feel that the Village of Merrickville-Wolford is a good to excellent place to do business **(BC1)**.

Key Areas of Focus

Businesses were asked over 100 questions that resulted in streams of qualitative and quantitative data. Staff from Leeds Grenville and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs reviewed all qualitative and quantitative data and found 4 emerging trends, which were the focus at the Task Force Session on March 26, 2019.

The aggregate data is located in the accompanying Appendices.

1. **Business Engagement & Collaboration**
    - Business to Business
    - Organizations to Business
    - Municipality to Business
2. **Workforce Recruitment**
3. **Downtown Business Retention & Development**
4. **Amenities & Infrastructure**

Business Engagement & Collaboration

There is significant opportunity for the business community to benefit from additional engagement and collaboration at different levels

Business to Business

35% of respondents purchase 50% or more of their supply chain locally **(BD6a)** and 50% of respondents would like to purchase more goods locally **(BD6b)**. 88% are interested in working cooperatively with other businesses in the community to pursue joint endeavors such as joint marketing, joint training, joint purchasing and networking/information sharing **(BD9)**.

Organizations to Business

In terms of external assistance to support business, low knowledge of and contact with local business organizations in the community was reported **(BC4a).** High interest in attending e-marketing, social media and online content workshops, doing joint advertising and marketing, business networking, also seminars on marketing and updating business plan **(BD8b)**.

Municipality to Business

The support of the municipality was rated Important by 82% of respondents **(BC3)**. Businesses were also asked to rate their level of satisfaction with their local government services. Businesses generally rated the community and business services provided by the municipality as good to excellent **(BC4d)**.

Workforce Recruitment

Recruitment and training

67% of the businesses surveyed indicated that workforce is important and workforce was #6 of the "top most important factors" to business (BC3).

Of the businesses surveyed 30% indicated that they have difficulty hiring (WF3a). The reasons stated were too few applicants (36%), lack of appropriate skills or training (33%) and lack of relevant experience (28%) (WF3b).

50% of the businesses felt present hiring challenges are industry related, rather than community related **(WF3b)**. 61% of businesses have no difficulty retaining employees **(WF2)**.

Businesses indicated difficulties hiring for the following positions **(WF3d)**:

- Sales Associate
- Servers
- Kitchen Staff/Cook
- IT

Additional responses included:

- Support Staff
- Education
- Administration
- Vet Technicians
- Finishing Technician
- Reception
- Personal Support Worker
- Nutritional Care
- Housekeepers
- Horse Groomer
- CAP software/building code
- Truss Assemblers
- Truss Designers
- Vet Technicians
- Apprentices – Computer Skills
- Esthetician
- Graphic Designer
- Horse Groomer
- Licensed Veterinarians
- Support Staff

Upskilling

Of the businesses surveyed, 28% indicated that there are barriers to receiving necessary training **(WF8).** Barriers included cost, awareness of programmes and availability of training locally.

48% of businesses indicated there are training topics that would be useful to their business. Recurring responses for training needs were computer skills and training, health and safety, sales management, and human resources **(WF9)**.

Downtown Business Retention and Development

The Downtown / Retail Survey was completed by 20 businesses. 85% of the businesses indicated that they feel that downtown is an excellent place to have a business and 90% agree that the look and feel of downtown helps their business. While 60% of the businesses agree there is plenty of convenient parking downtown, 25% of the businesses disagreed with that statement **(DR18**).

85% of the businesses surveyed rated the condition of accessibility for people with disabilities as in need of improvement or fair and 55% indicated that public amenities (parks, fountains, washrooms) are in need of improvement (washrooms are addressed under the Amenities and Infrastructure Area of Focus) **(DR2).**

Amenities & Infrastructure

Survey results indicate that a number of servicing issues are impacting businesses in the Village of Merrickville-Wolford. Internet speed and connectivity along with electricity supply and costs are barriers for many businesses. The desire for needed improvements to existing amenities or new amenities such as public washrooms, signage and a tourist information centre are also evident from the survey.

Public Washrooms, Tourist Information Centre, Signage

When asked what the Village of Merrickville-Wolford should be focusing on over the next 5 years, the top answer was tourism development **(CQ3)**. The need for a tourism centre was mentioned by several businesses.

Data related to public washrooms and parking has already been mentioned. Highway signage was indicated to be in need of improvement or fair by 30% of the downtown businesses surveyed and wayfinding / tourism directional signage was indicated to be in need of improvement or fair by 45% of the downtown businesses surveyed **(DR2)**.

Electricity

Cost of electricity was the **#4** pick of the "Top 5 most important factors to business" **(BC3)** with 93% of respondents indicating Cost of electricity as important**.**

Internet Service

Internet service was the **#2** pick of the "Top 5 most important factors to business" **(BC3)** with 95% of respondents indicating it as important**.**

Internet speed was indicated as a barrier to their Information Technology requirements by 26% of respondents. Internet access (15%) and internet cost (6%) were also reported as barriers. 28% of businesses reported no barriers to their IT requirements **(BD5)**.

NEXT STEPS

The Business Retention and Expansion report with its suggested action plan is one of the documents that should be considered when finalizing a municipal economic development strategy and annual action / work plans. When developing a strategy, consideration should be given to future trends and opportunities, available resources, and partnerships.

Draft Action Plan for consideration

***Items indicated with an asterisk were identified as a priority at the Task Force session.**

Business Engagement and Collaboration

Actions	Authorities
*Host regular business networking events and / or industry specific round tables: • Monthly networking meetings organized by the Chamber of Commerce and the municipality. • Bring in speakers from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to provide outreach to municipalities.	• Chamber of Commerce • Village of Merrickville-Wolford
*Develop more food-based experiences or tours (culinary tours, cycling tours, etc.) featuring local producers: • Encourage local restaurants to use local produce and products. • Organize an Exchange Fair to allow restaurant owners and local producers to exchange information and ideas.	• Regional Tourism Organization 9 (RTO9) • Chamber of Commerce • Local food establishments • Local food producers
*Establish a new Business Outreach Program: • Create a Welcome Package to provide to new businesses opening in the community.	• Village of Merrickville-Wolford • Chamber of Commerce
Increase access to information on local walking and hiking trails.	• Village of Merrickville-Wolford • Chamber of Commerce
Training for website development, social media.	• Valley Heartland Community Futures Development Corporation • Chamber of Commerce

Workforce Recruitment

Actions	Authorities
*Develop opportunities to engage high school, university and college students from surrounding area to consider employment and careers in the area. • Develop a database for rooms to rent in Merrickville for co-op students or interns. • Reach out to local high schools and Merrick Preparatory School for co-op placements (September to December, April and June).	• **Federal / Provincial Employment Agencies** • **School Boards** • **Merrick Preparatory School**
*Create a central database to allow businesses to advertise vacancies and to allow job / career seekers to know what is available locally. • Utilize Village website, Chamber website, social media, the Phoenix. • Create a retail job pool – sharing of staff resources by more than one business	• Chamber of Commerce • Federal / Provincial employment agencies • Village of Merrickville-Wolford
Develop a program to attract retirees to the Merrickville-Wolford area.	• Village of Merrickville-Wolford
Provide certification / training workshops in Merrickville-Wolford. • Needed training determined by local businesses. • Supported by high schools.	• Federal / Provincial Employment Agencies • Chamber of Commerce • School Boards • Merrick Preparatory School

Downtown Business Retention & Development

Actions	Authorities
*Enhance accommodation capacity: • Identify key properties for hotel / accommodation attraction (vacant property for hotel development in the Village core is limited and servicing on nearby vacant lands is very expensive). • Promote more Bed and Breakfast type uses and small inns. • Establish database for all accommodations, including Airbnb.	• Village of Merrickville-Wolford • Real estate companies
*Develop an economic development community profile that can be distributed to potential investors / businesses: • Include business support organizations, recreation facilities, schools, cultural facilities, walking and hiking trails and other amenities. • List advantages of doing business in community. • List existing businesses by NAICS code • Identify businesses needed and/or business opportunities.	• Village of Merrickville-Wolford • United Counties of Leeds and Grenville • Chamber of Commerce
Review the zoning by-law in terms of a possible expansion of the current commercial zoning in the Village core.	• Village of Merrickville-Wolford
Promote home based businesses and review the zoning by-law provisions related to home based businesses.	• Village of Merrickville-Wolford

Amenities & Infrastructure

Actions	Authorities
*Improve broadband and fibre internet access: • Through the Counties, engage the Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) to ensure that the residents and businesses are receiving the best internet services available at this time. Work with EORN to ensure that Merrickville-Wolford receives maximum benefit on the announced funds for mobile broadband services. • Investigate a public / private partnership for improved broadband services. • Investigate a public / private partnership for downtown Wi-Fi services.	• United Counties of Leeds and Grenville • Village of Merrickville-Wolford • Businesses • Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) • Telecoms
*Explore options for a centrally located tourist information centre / public washroom facility. (location beside Christmas Tree was suggested)	• Village of Merrickville-Wolford • Chamber of Commerce • Local clubs • Parks Canada
*Improved signage for public amenities.	• Village of Merrickville-Wolford • United Counties of Leeds and Grenville Public Works
Identify vacant property owned by the municipality, the private sector or public institutions and promote for development.	• Village of Merrickville-Wolford
Develop out-of-season activities such as cross-country ski trails and curling on the Rideau Canal.	• Village of Merrickville-Wolford • Chamber of Commerce

Summary of Top Actions

Business Engagement & Collaboration

- Host regular business networking events and / or industry specific round tables.
- Develop more food-based experiences or tours (culinary tours, cycling tours, etc.) featuring local producers.
- Establish a new Business Outreach Program and Welcome Package.

Workforce Recruitment

- Develop opportunities to engage high school, university and college students from surrounding area to consider employment and careers in the area.
- Create a central database to allow businesses to advertise vacancies and to allow job / career seekers to know what is available locally.

Downtown Business Retention & Development

- Enhance accommodation capacity and establish a database established properties for promotion purposes.
- Develop an economic development community profile that can be distributed to potential investors / businesses.

Amenities & Infrastructure

- Improve broadband and fibre internet access.
- Explore options for a centrally located tourist information centre / public washroom facility.
- Improved signage for public amenities.

Project Team:

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Thank You

We would like to thank the volunteers and the 61 businesses who participated in this survey for their time and contribution to this report.

STRONG BUSINESS STRONG COMMUNITIES

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MERRICKVILLE-WOLFORD
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Appendices

October 15, 2019

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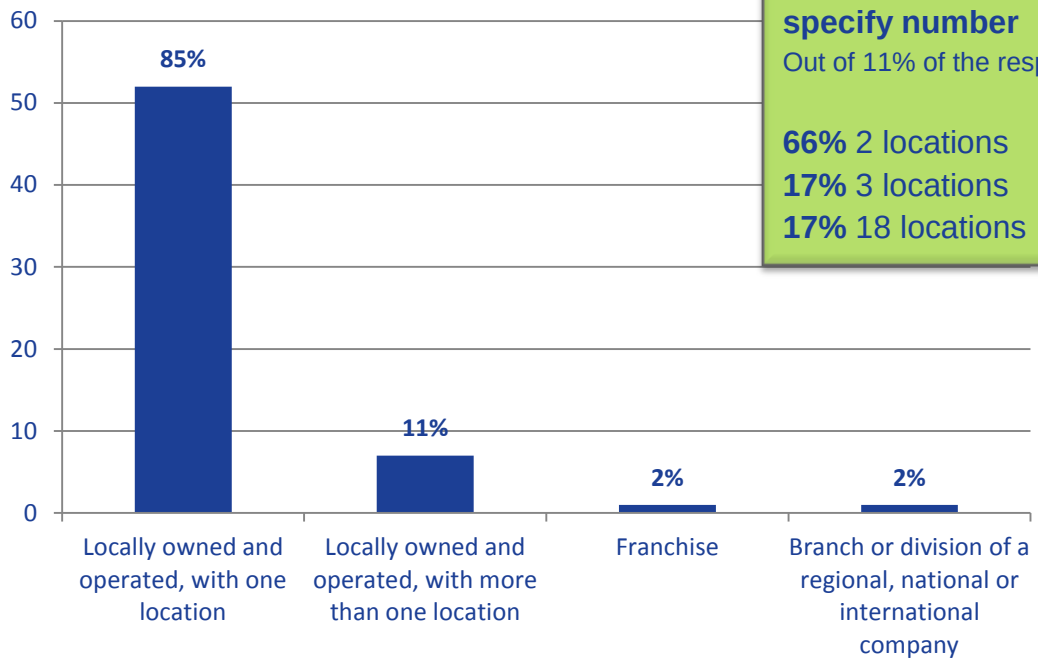
Appendix A: Business Information

BI1. Which of the following best describes your business?

Out of 61 Responses:



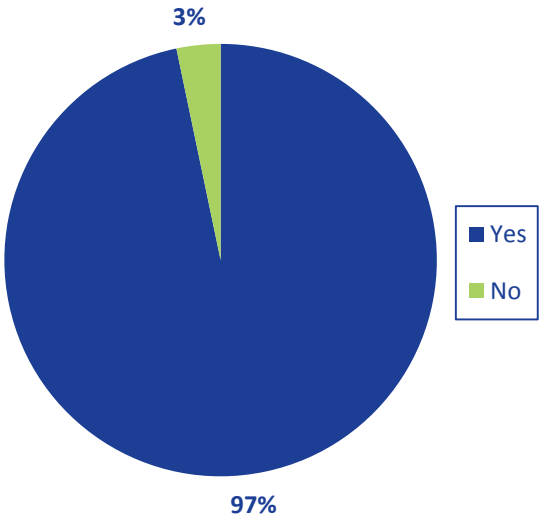
If more than one location, specify number

Out of 11% of the responses:

66% 2 locations
17% 3 locations
17% 18 locations

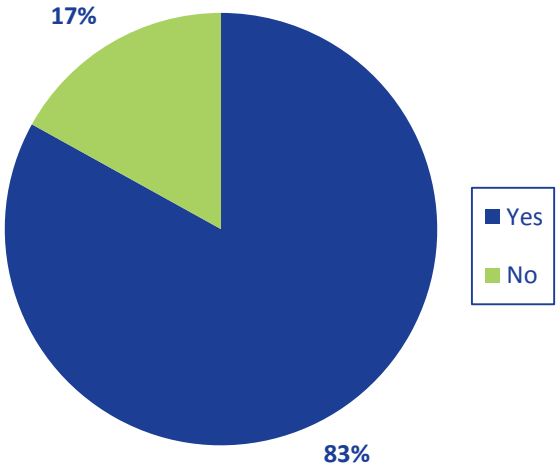
BI2. Is at least one of the owners involved in the day-to-day operation of the business?

Out of 61 Responses:

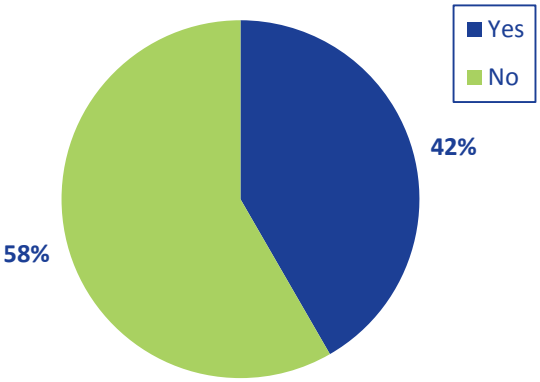


BI3. Is at least one of the owners a resident of the community?

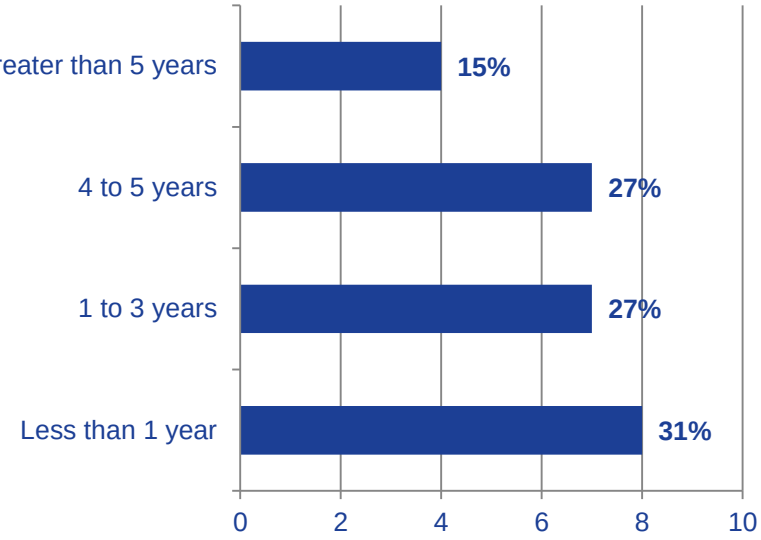
Out of 59 Responses:



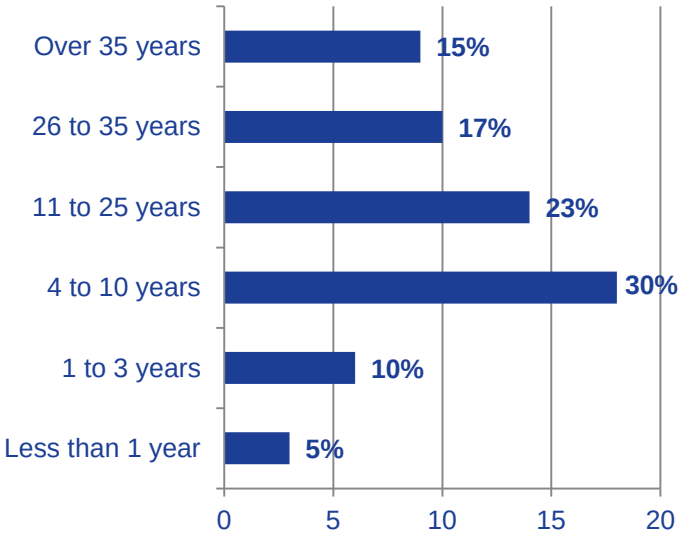
BI4a. Does your business have a business plan?
Out of 60 responses:



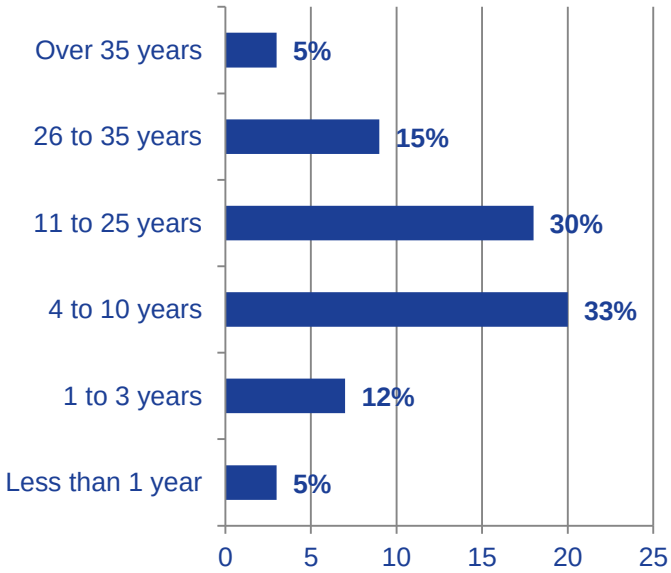
BI4b. When was it last updated?
Out of 26 responses:



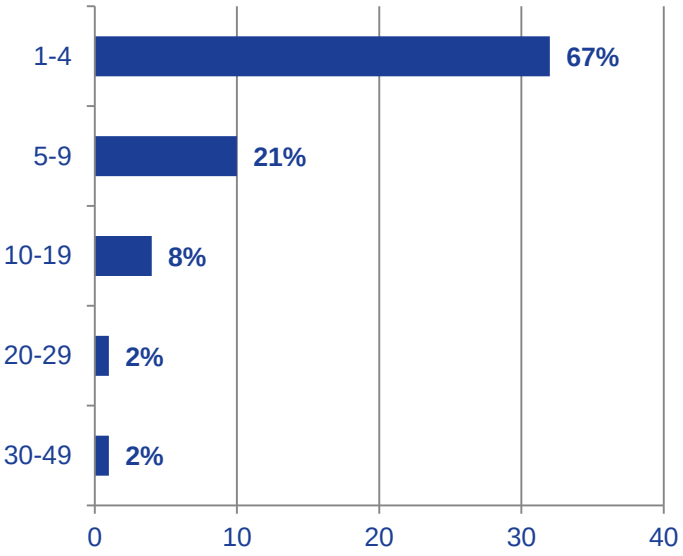
BI5. How many years has your business been in operation in this community?
Out of 60 responses:



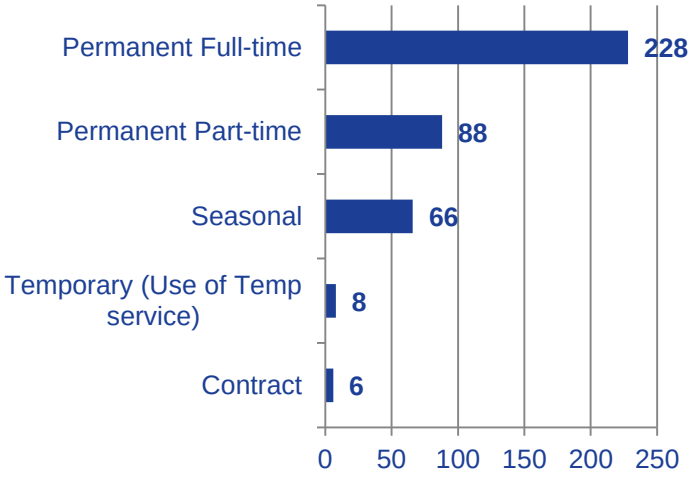
BI6. How many years have the current owner/owners been operating this business?
Out of 60 responses:



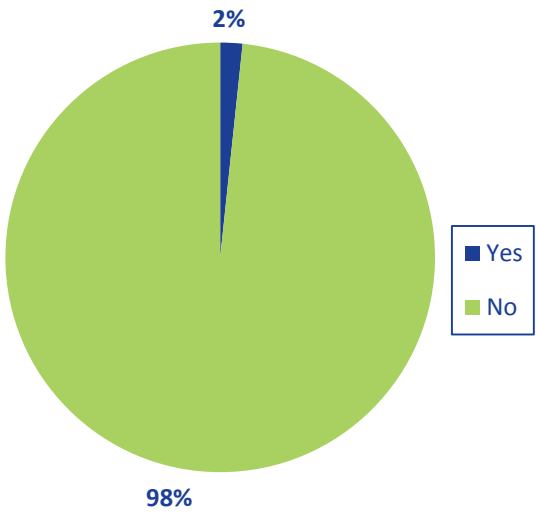
BI7. Including owner/owners, how many employees work at this location?
Out of 48 responses:



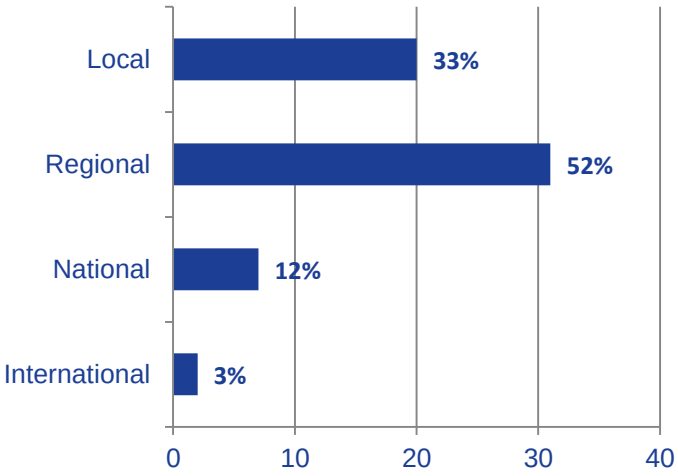
BI7a. Including owner/owners, please confirm your total number of employees operating at this location?
Out of 53 responses:



BI7b. Is your business unionized?
Out of 60 responses:



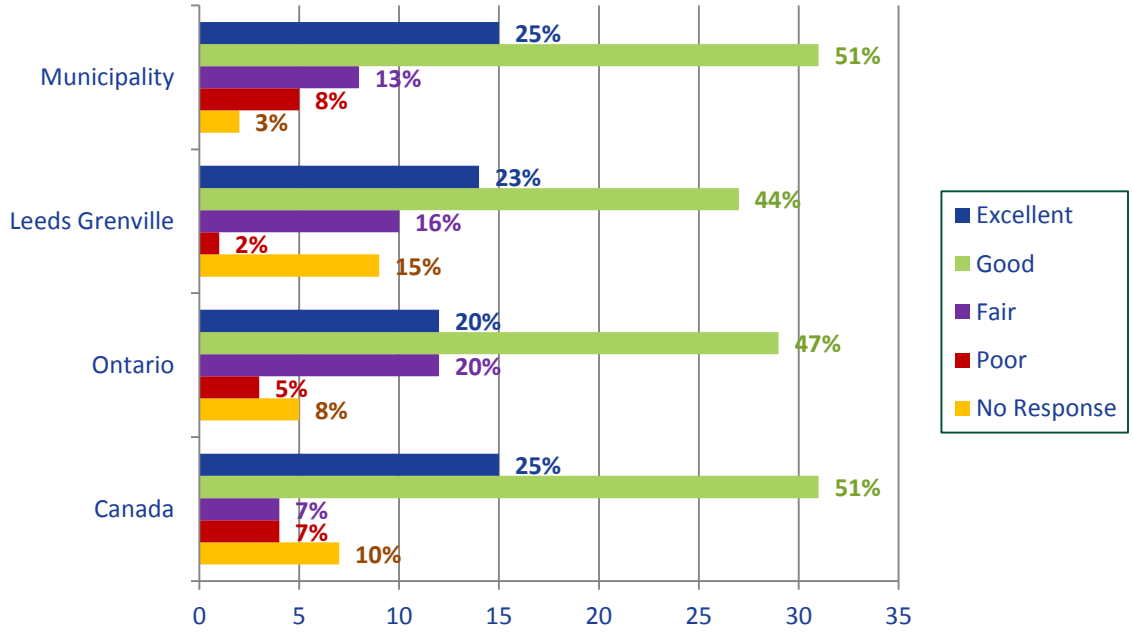
BI8. The primary market of your business is:
Out of 60 responses:



Appendix B: Business Climate

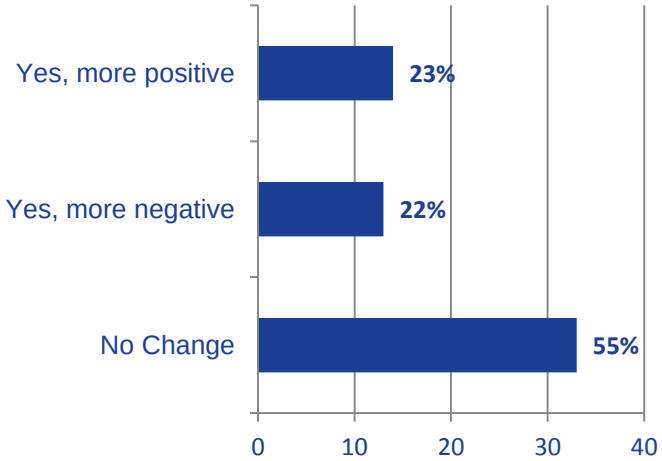
BC1. What is your general impression, as a place to do business with respect to:

Out of 61 Responses:



BC2a. In the past 3 years has your attitude about doing business in this community changed?

Out of 55 responses:



BC2b. Please explain the positive change in attitude:

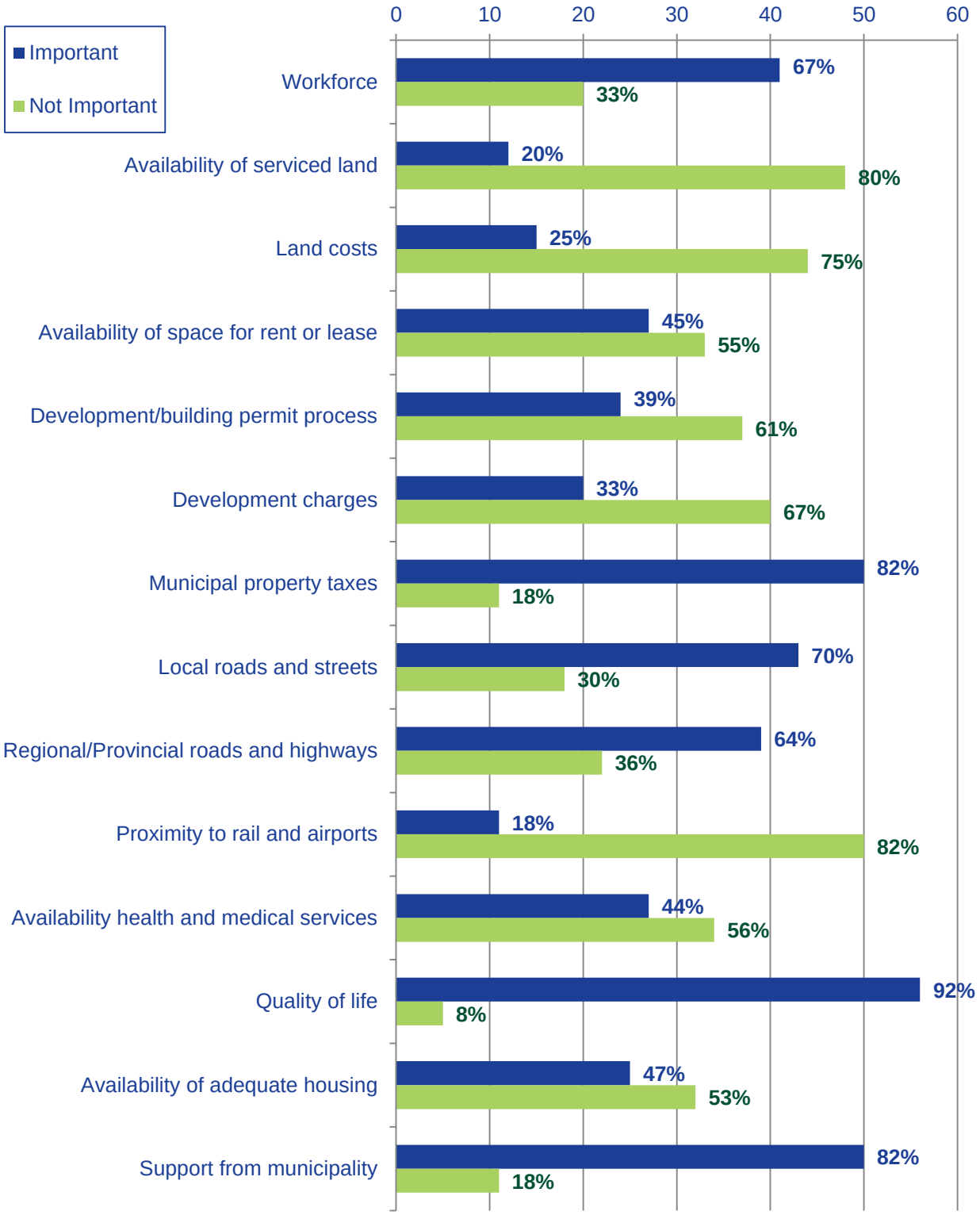
- The improvements in development. For example, Canopy, LeBoat.
- Property values have increased.
- The market has picked up. Good time to be an owner. Positivity.
- Appears to be positive growth and rejuvenation happening. Good place for business.
- Increase in sales.
- Found our stride, feeling more positive.
- Strong small business community.
- More activity, increased tourism and general energy.
- Increased social media presence across village is resulting in increased traffic.
- Influx of new stores.
- Exclusive product line, word is spreading.

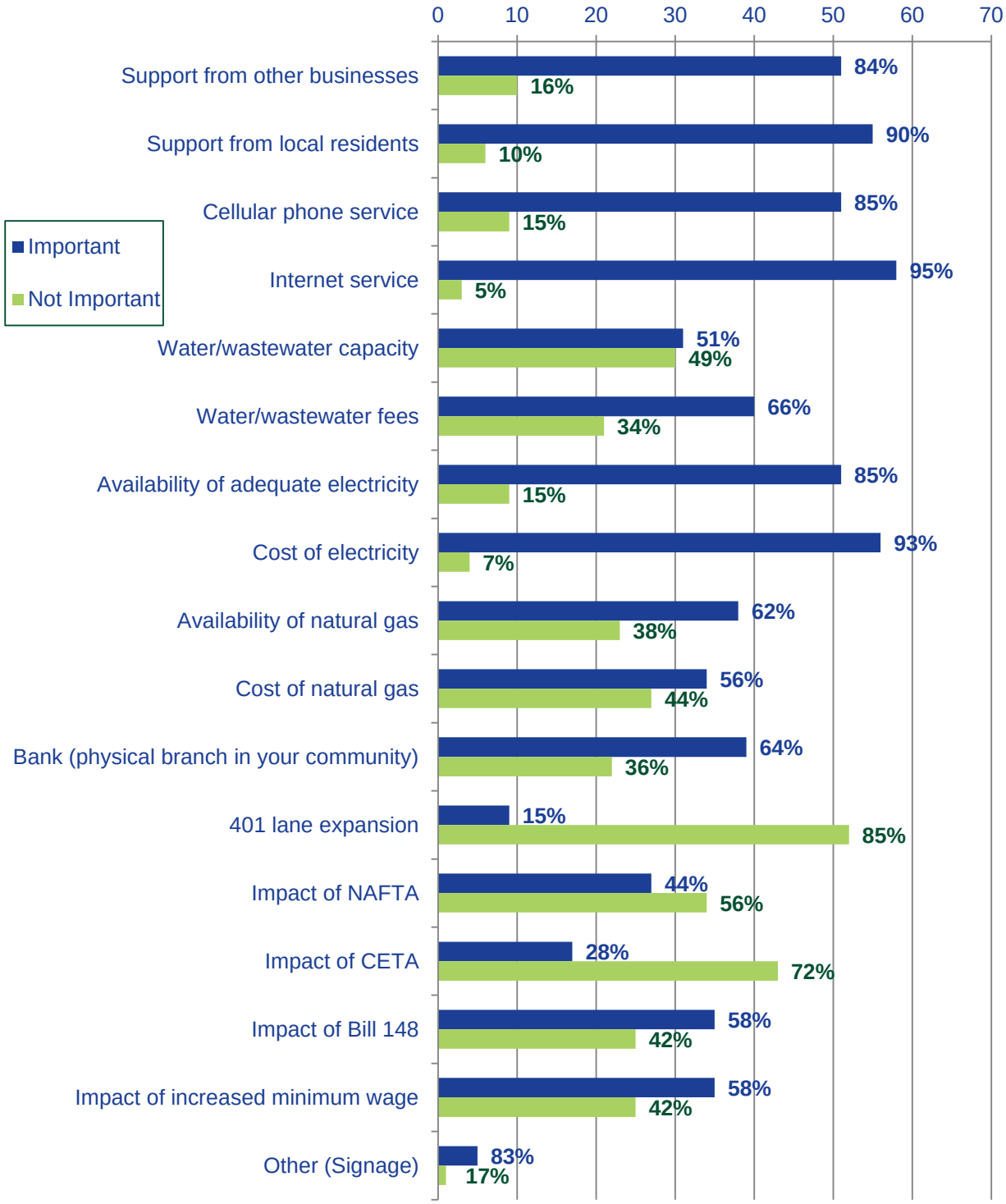
BC2b. Please explain the negative change in attitude:

- More cognizant of business climate in Merrickville.
- Mindset change.
- Ownership attitude of Village.
- Resisting change.
- No new ideas coming forth. Community is reverting.
- Provincial / counties level red tape and barriers.
- Costs of maintaining a business have grown exponentially.
- Hydro rates plus the significant jump in minimum wage.
- Municipality not in touch with businesses and changing times.
- General lack of cooperation. Studies exist; no investment to infrastructure.
- Lacking sense of community. Disconnect between Village office and needs of rural business community.
- Utility costs.
- Payroll costs.
- Challenging business environment / relationship among business and municipality.
- New competitors.
- Lack of cohesiveness in business circle.

BC3. Which of the following factors are important to your business?

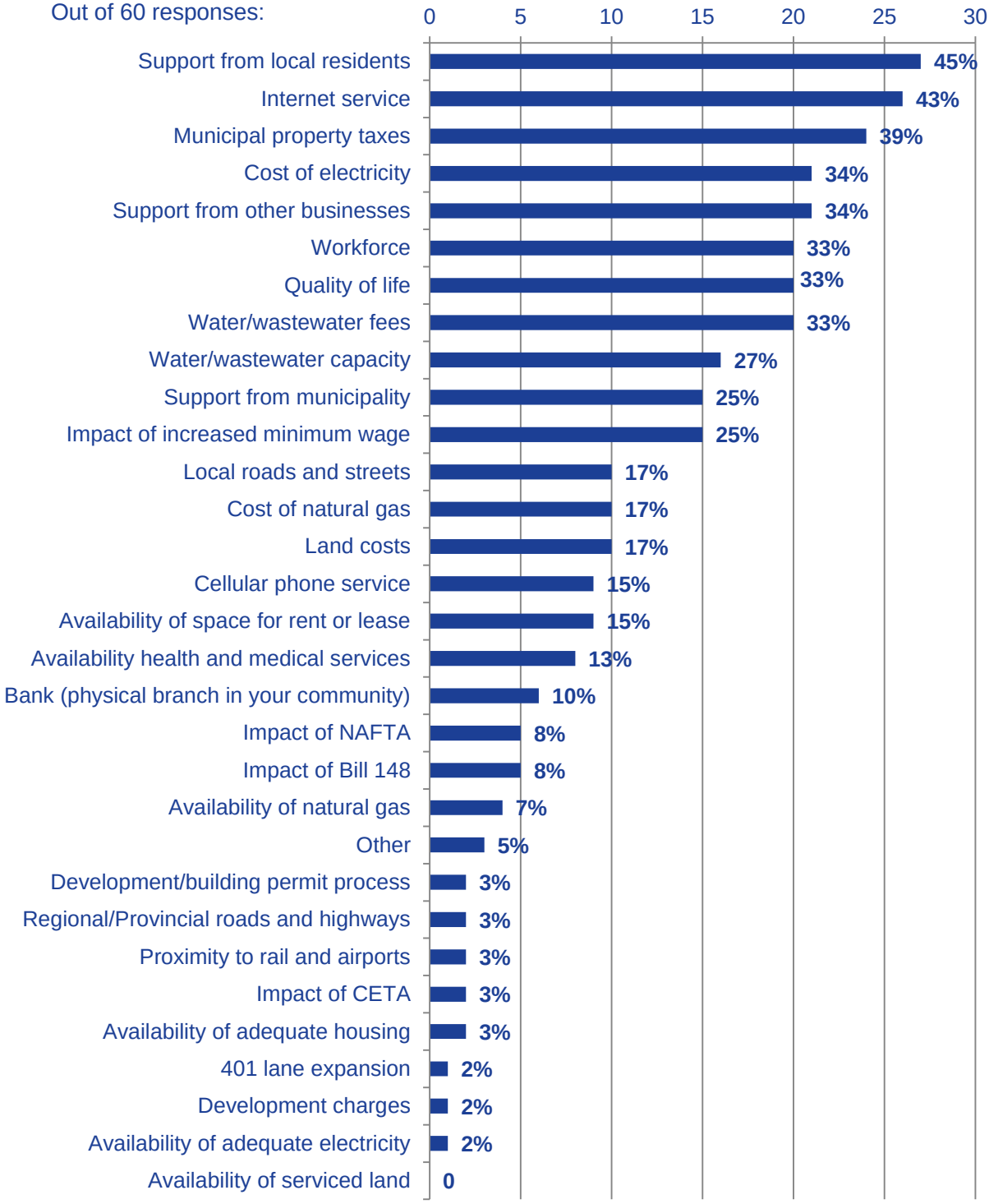
Out of 61 responses:




0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
Important
Not Important
Support from other businesses
84%
16%
Support from local residents
90%
10%
Cellular phone service
85%
15%
Internet service
95%
5%
Water/wastewater capacity
51%
49%
Water/wastewater fees
66%
34%
Availability of adequate electricity
85%
15%
Cost of electricity
93%
7%
Availability of natural gas
62%
38%
Cost of natural gas
56%
44%
Bank (physical branch in your community)
64%
36%
401 lane expansion
15%
85%
Impact of NAFTA
44%
56%
Impact of CETA
28%
72%
Impact of Bill 148
58%
42%
Impact of increased minimum wage
58%
42%
Other (Signage)
83%
17%

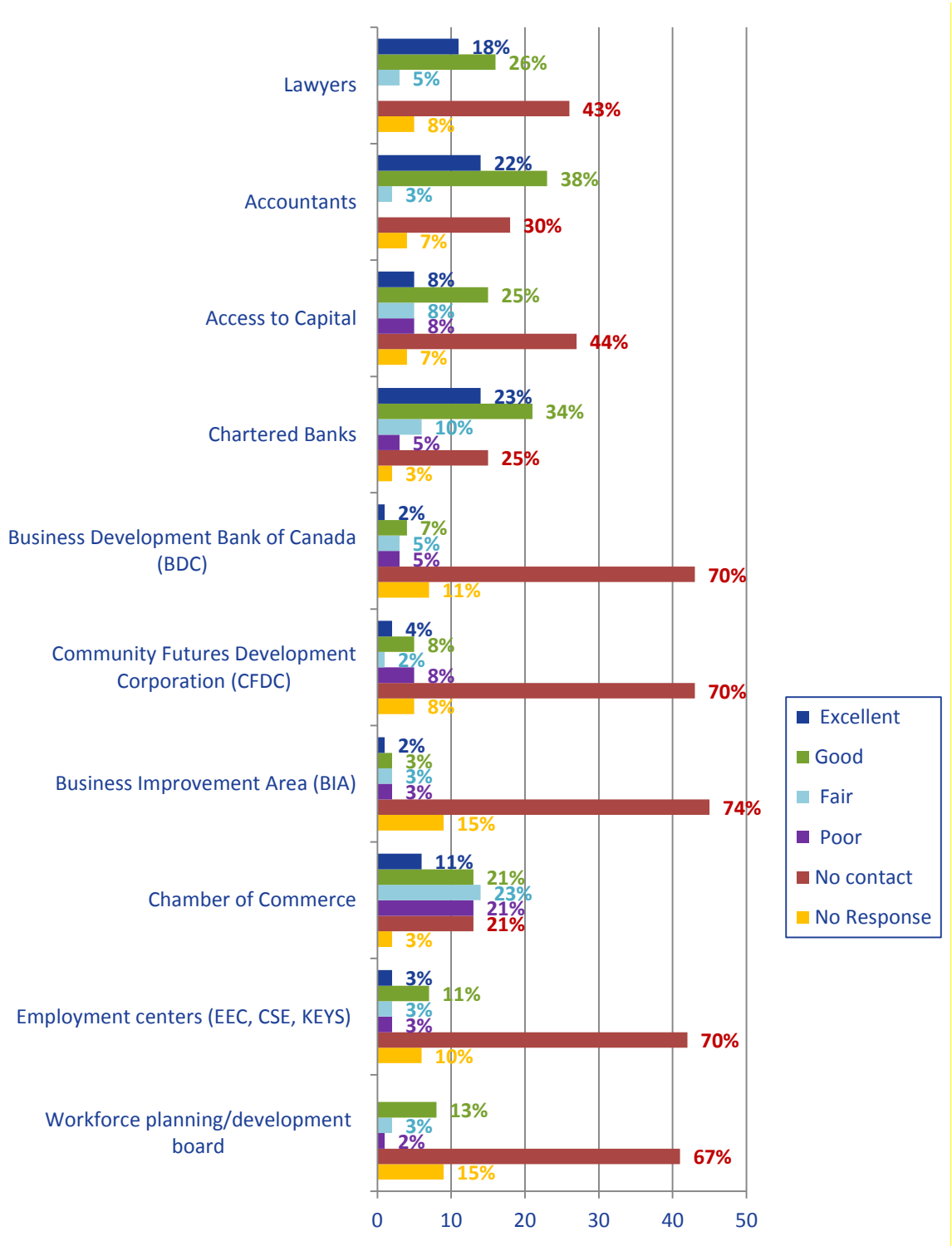
BC3. Then, select five (5) of the most important factors affecting your business:

Out of 60 responses:

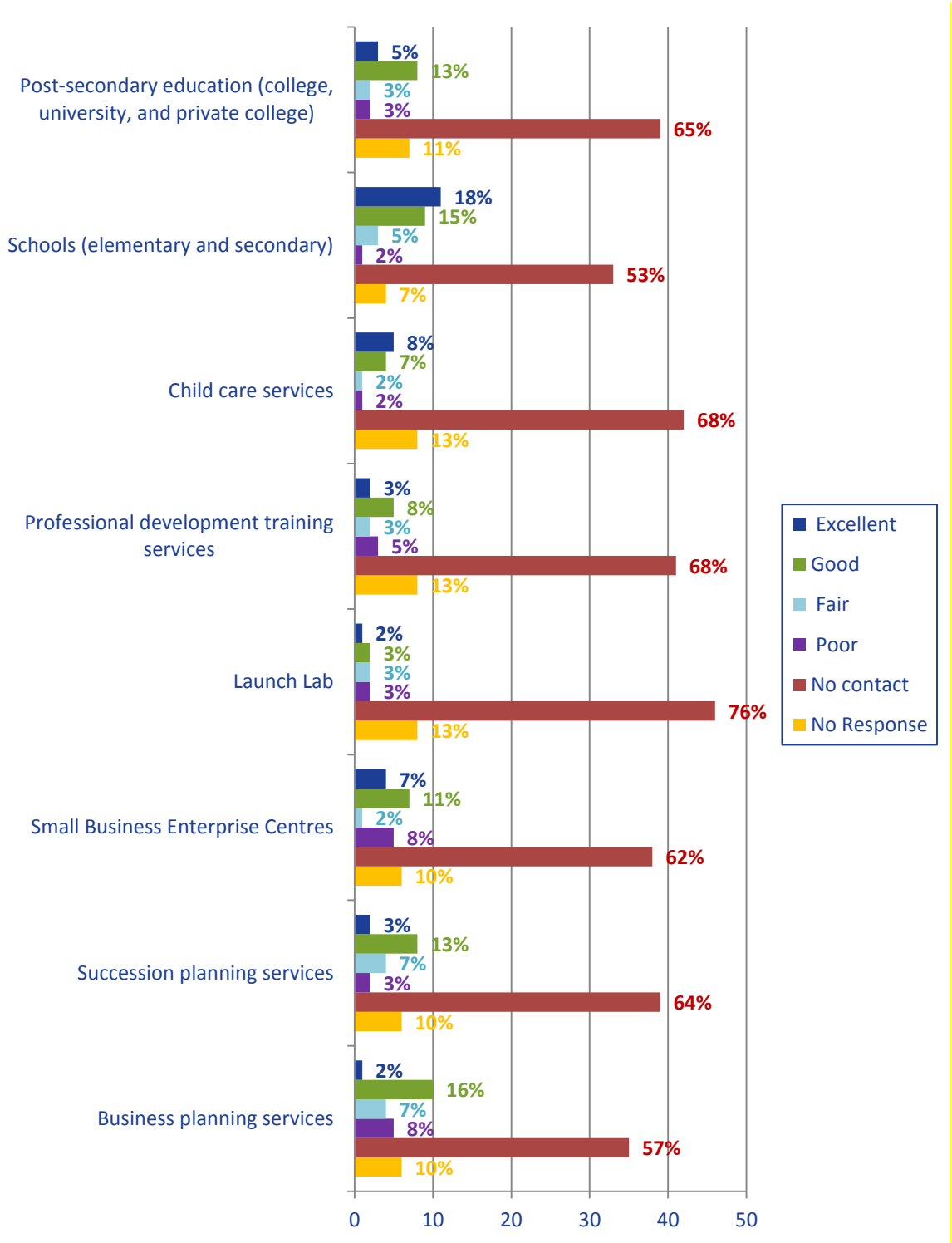


BC4a. From the perspective of your business, rate your level of satisfaction with each of the following community and business services:

Out of 61 responses:

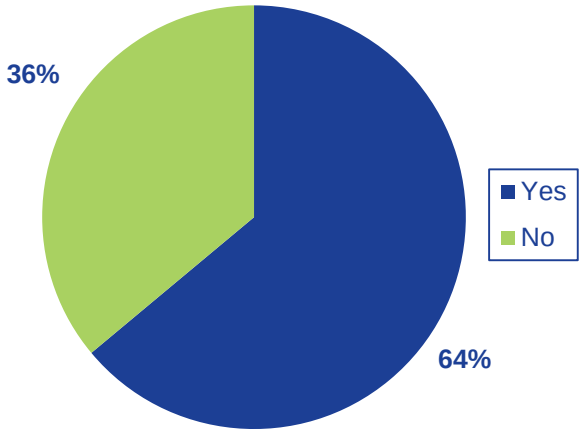


BC4a. From the perspective of your business, rate your level of satisfaction with each of the following community and business services (cont'd):

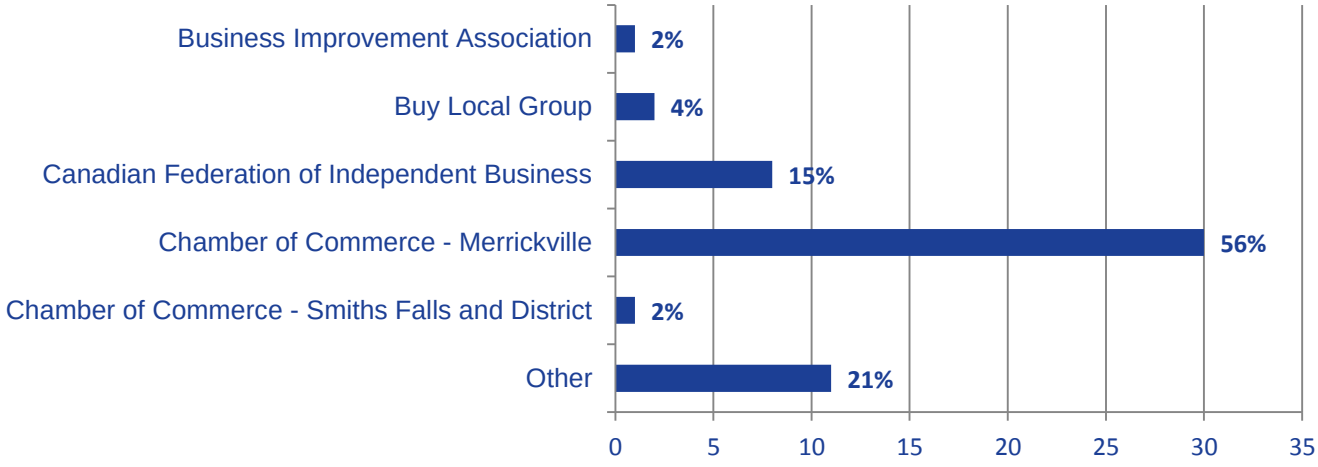


BC4b. Are you a member of any business organization(s)?:

Out of 61 responses:



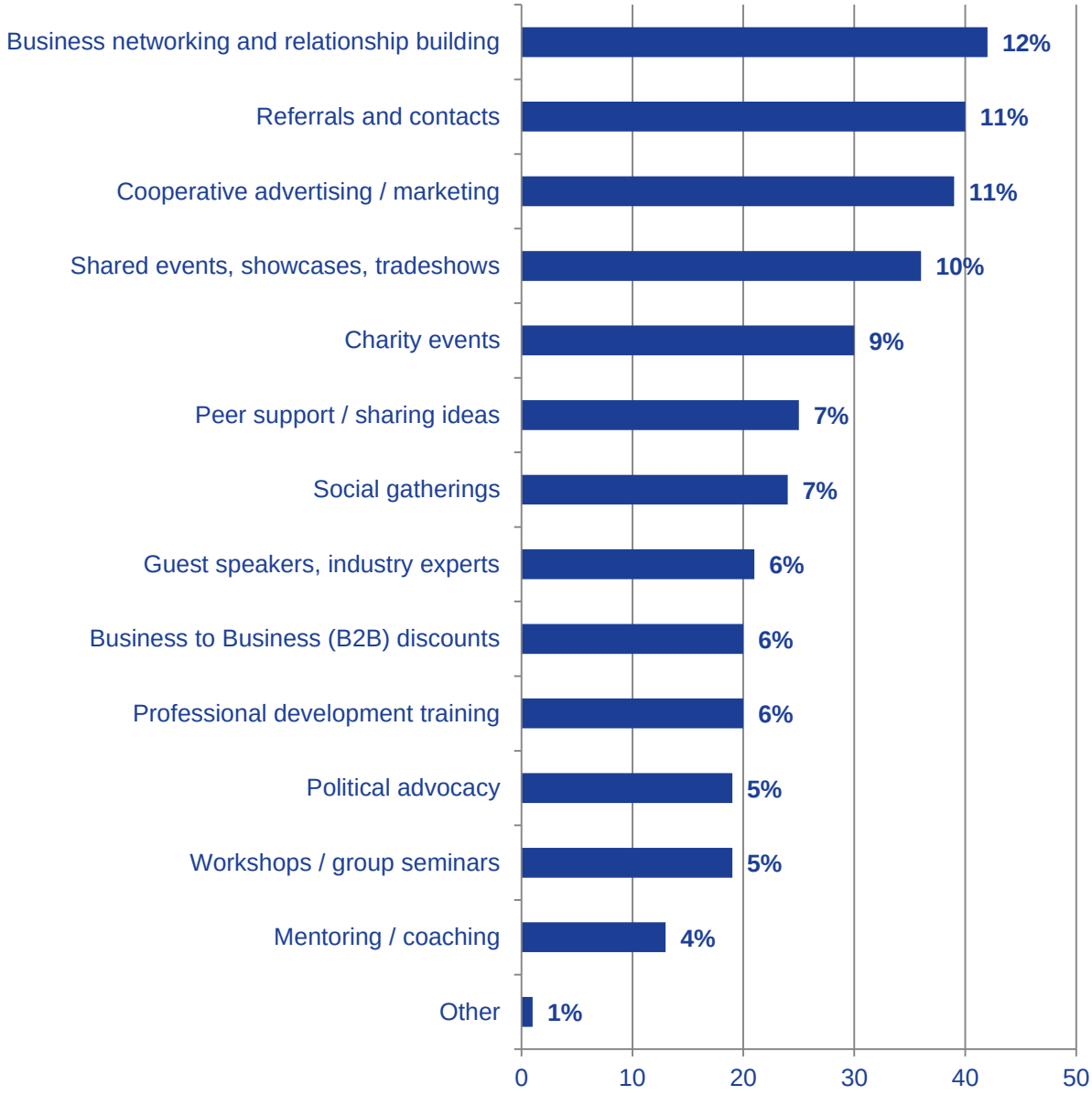
If yes, which ones?



Other includes:

- Ontario Real Estate Association
- Ontario Highlands Tourism Association (OHTO)
- Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers
- Beef Farmers Ontario
- Grain Farmers Ontario
- Canadian Federation of Agriculture
- Ontario Sheep Association
- Restaurants Canada
- Ontario Federation of Independent Schools

BC4c. If you are a member or choose to join an organization which promotes and supports businesses, what benefits or services are of value to your business?

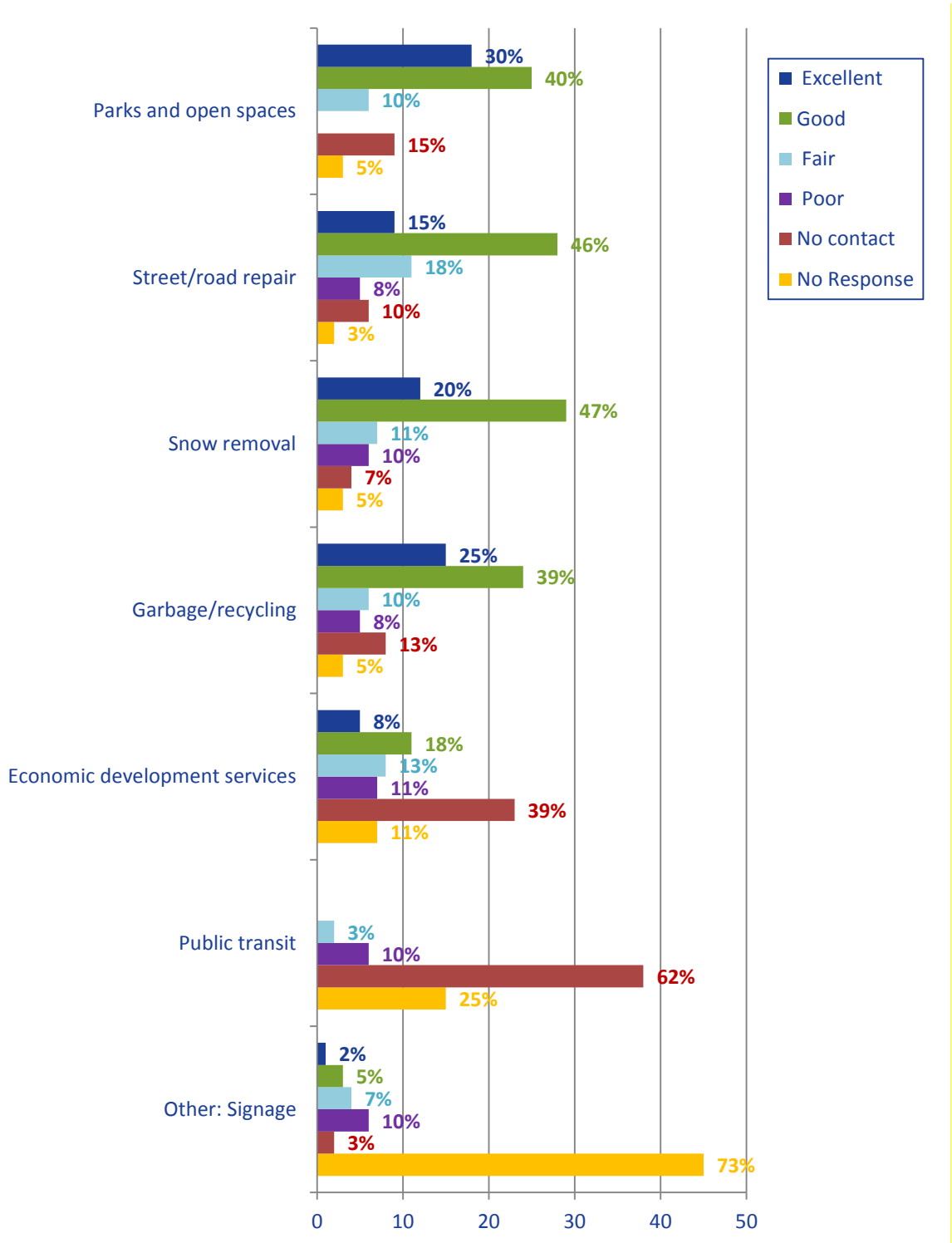


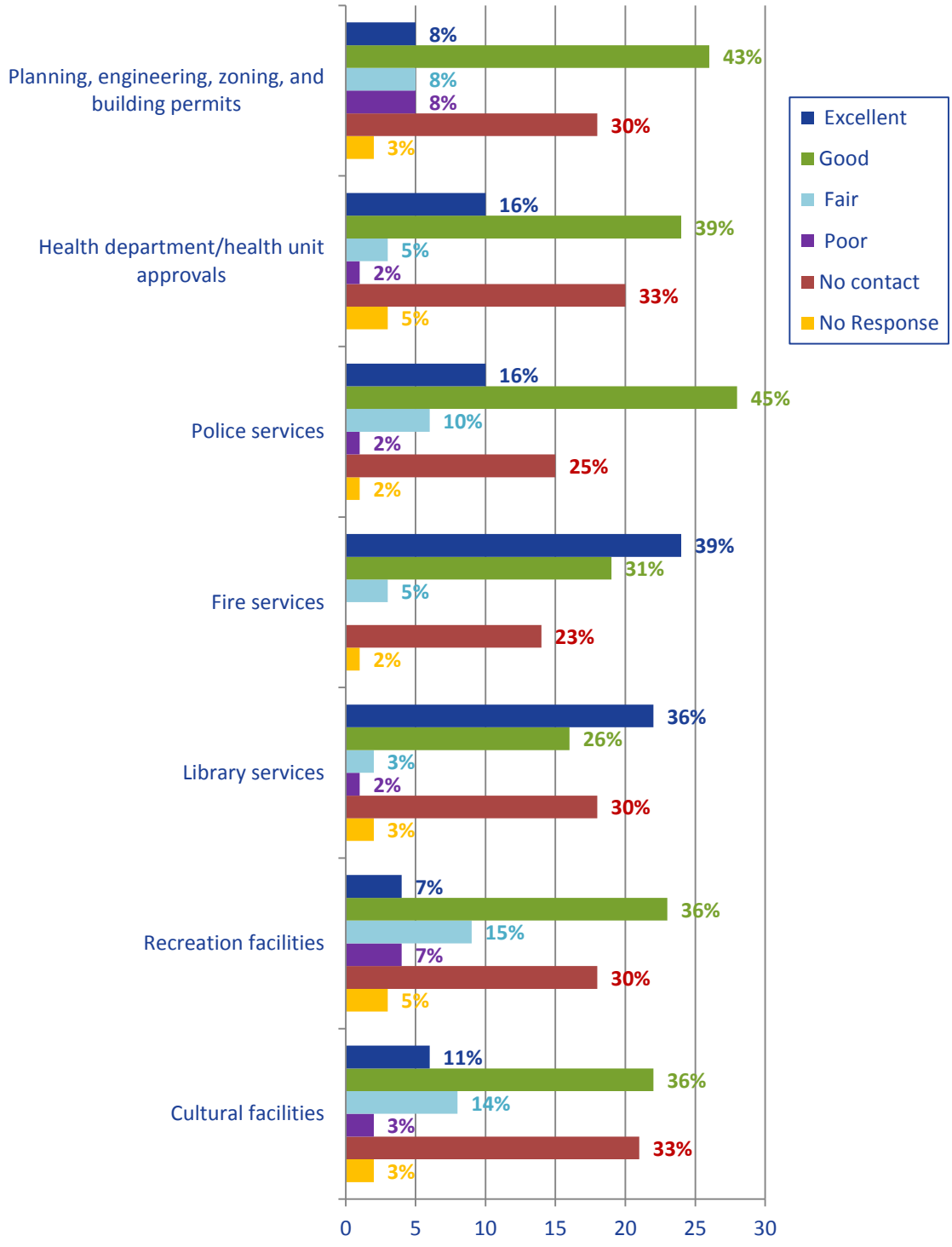
Other includes:

- Boat shows

BC4d. From the perspective of your business, rate your level of satisfaction with each of the following local government services:

Out of 61 responses:

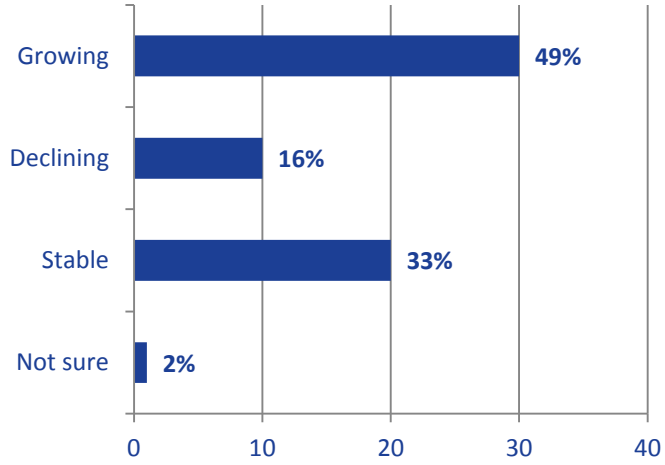



Planning, engineering, zoning, and building permits
8%
43%
8%
8%
30%
3%
Health department/health unit approvals
16%
39%
5%
2%
33%
5%
Police services
16%
45%
10%
2%
25%
2%
Fire services
39%
31%
5%
23%
2%
Library services
36%
26%
3%
2%
30%
3%
Recreation facilities
7%
36%
15%
7%
30%
5%
Cultural facilities
11%
36%
14%
3%
33%
3%
Excellent
Good
Fair
Poor
No contact
No Response
0
5
10
15
20
25
30

Appendix C: Business Development

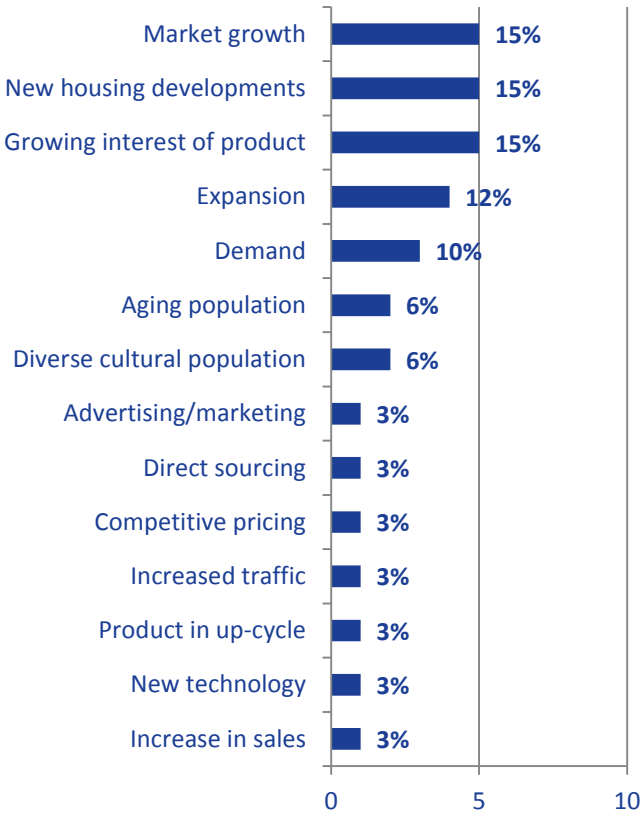
BD1a. What is the outlook for your industry?

Out of 61 responses:

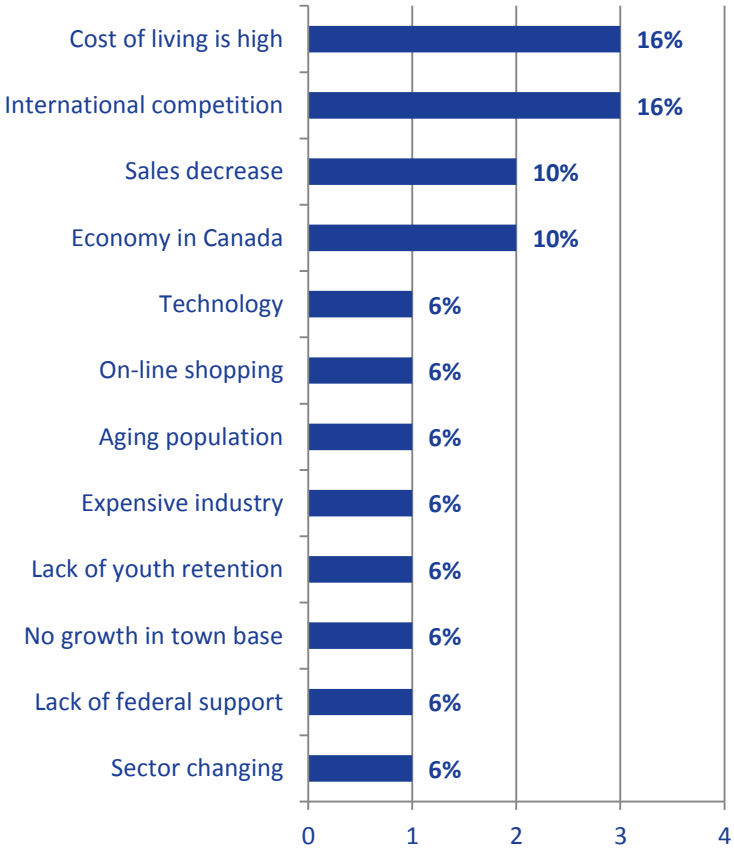


BD1b. What do you feel are the main reasons for this?

Reasons indicated for growth:

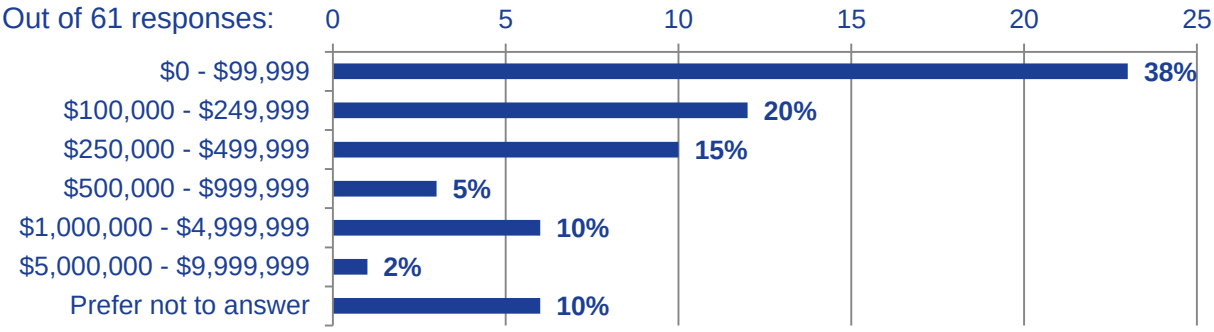


Reasons indicated for decline:



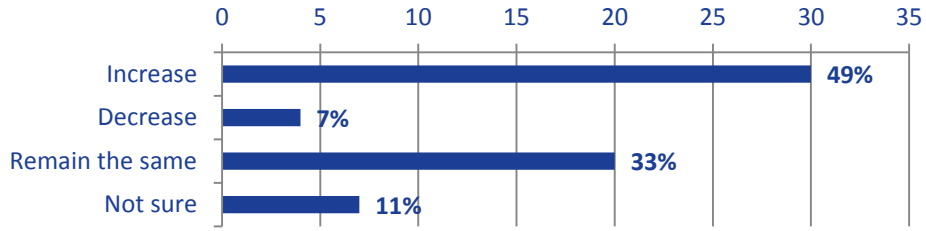
BD2. Please give an approximate annual sales range for your business:

Out of 61 responses:



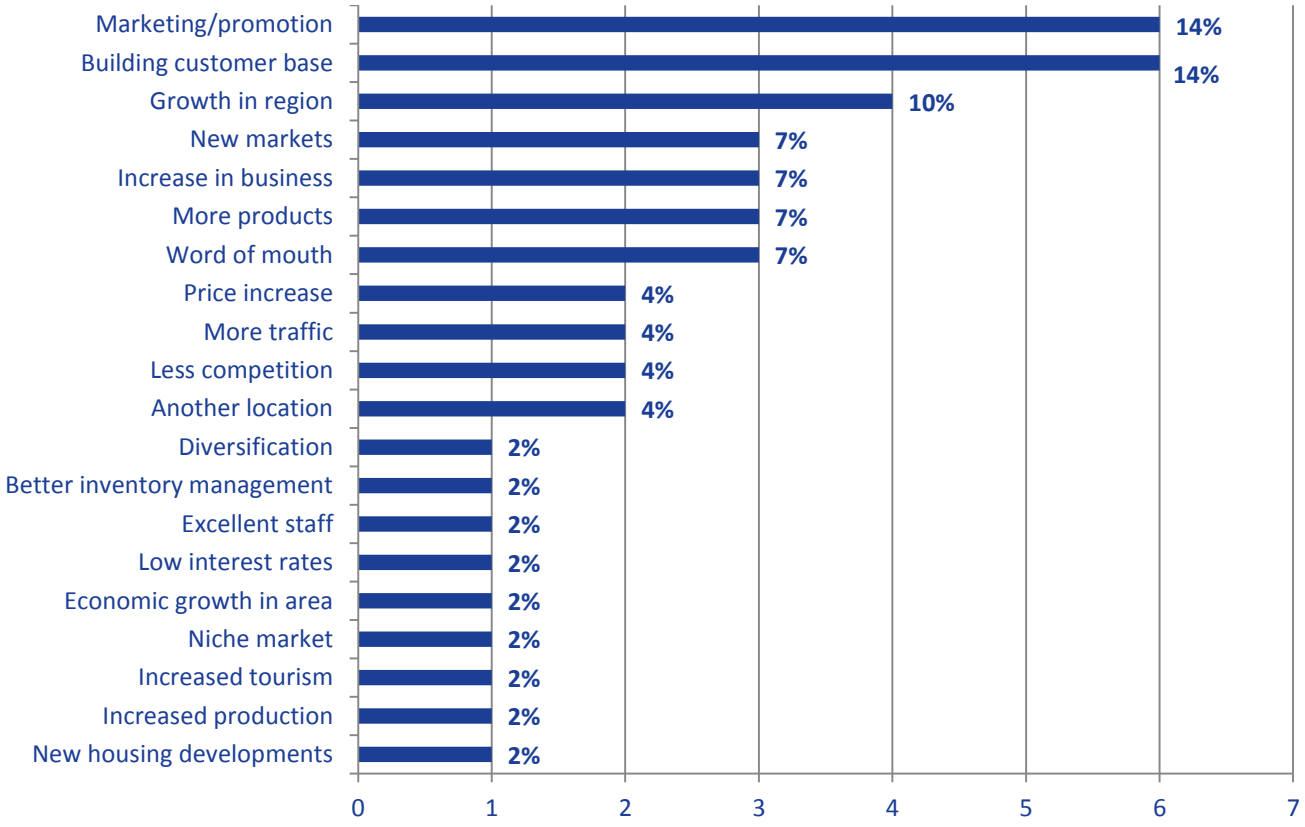
BD3a. Are your projected sales in the next year expected to:

Out of 61 responses:

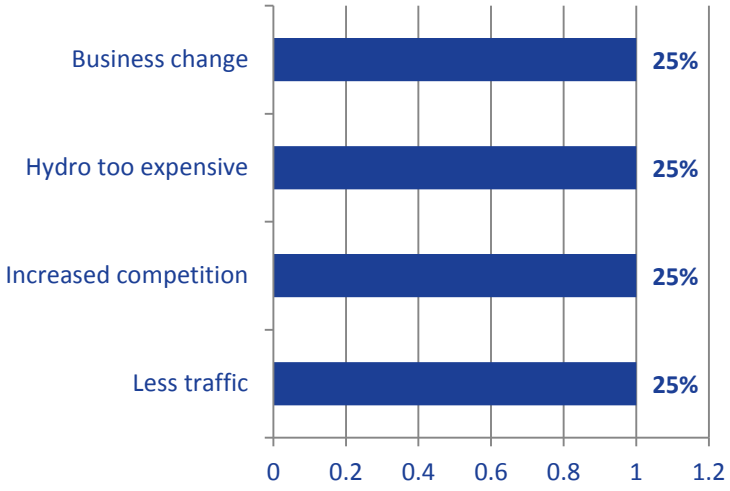


BD3b. What do you feel are the main reasons for this?

Reasons indicated for Increase:

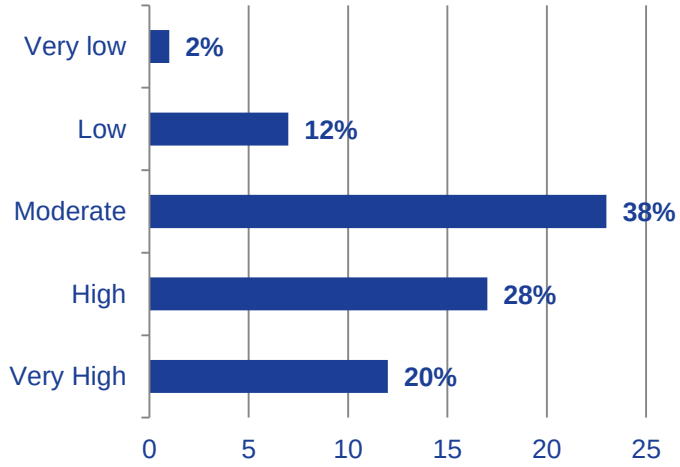


Reasons indicated for Decrease:



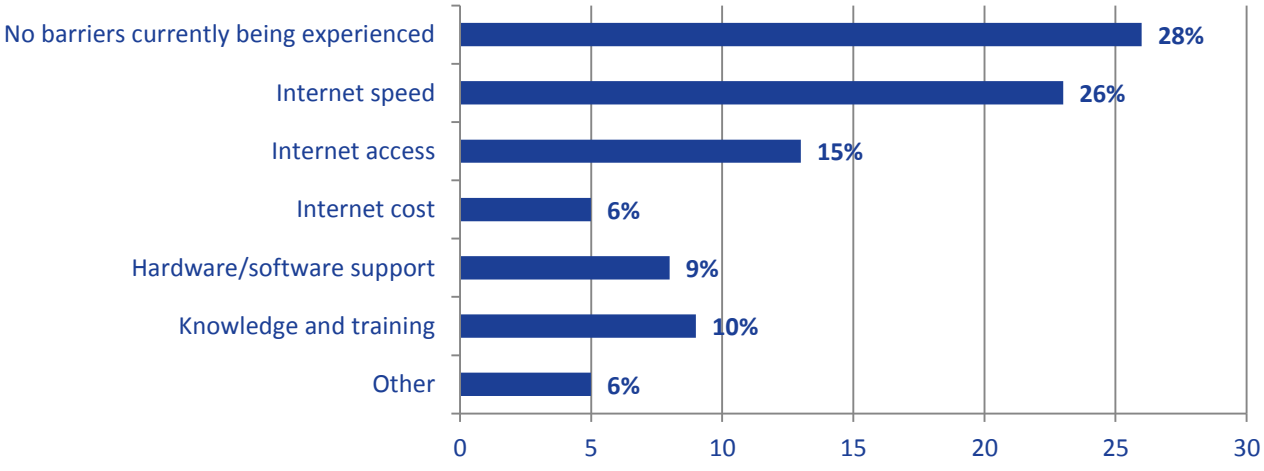
BD4. How would you rate your business related to the use of technology?

Out of 60 responses:



BD5. Is your business currently experiencing any barriers related to your information technology requirements?

Out of 60 responses:



Other includes:

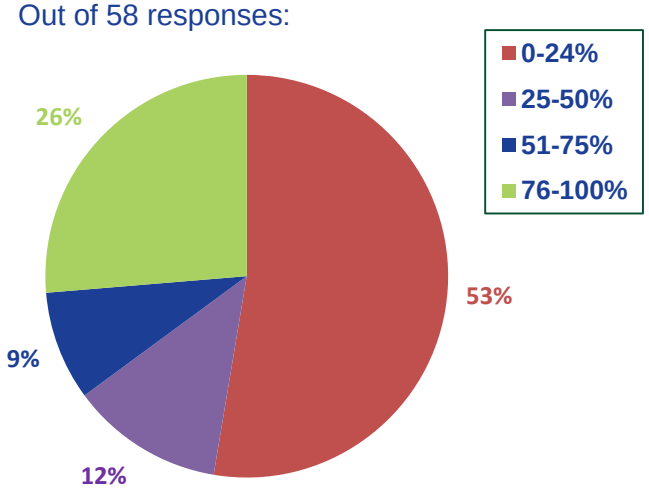
- Reliability
- Cell phone coverage
- Access to source data
- Available time to use technology resources

Please explain barriers related to your information technology requirements:

- Slow speed
- Need fast and reliable internet service
- Phone lines unstable, internet spotty
- Sporadic internet
- We do not know about social media
- Internet not reliable. Copper line is only thing available in Easton Corners, no fibre
- Rural location
- Want fibre, currently using DSL
- Have had to contact provider for trouble with the internet line and was told there was mice in wire down the road
- Intermittent loss of internet service
- Internet is slow and undependable

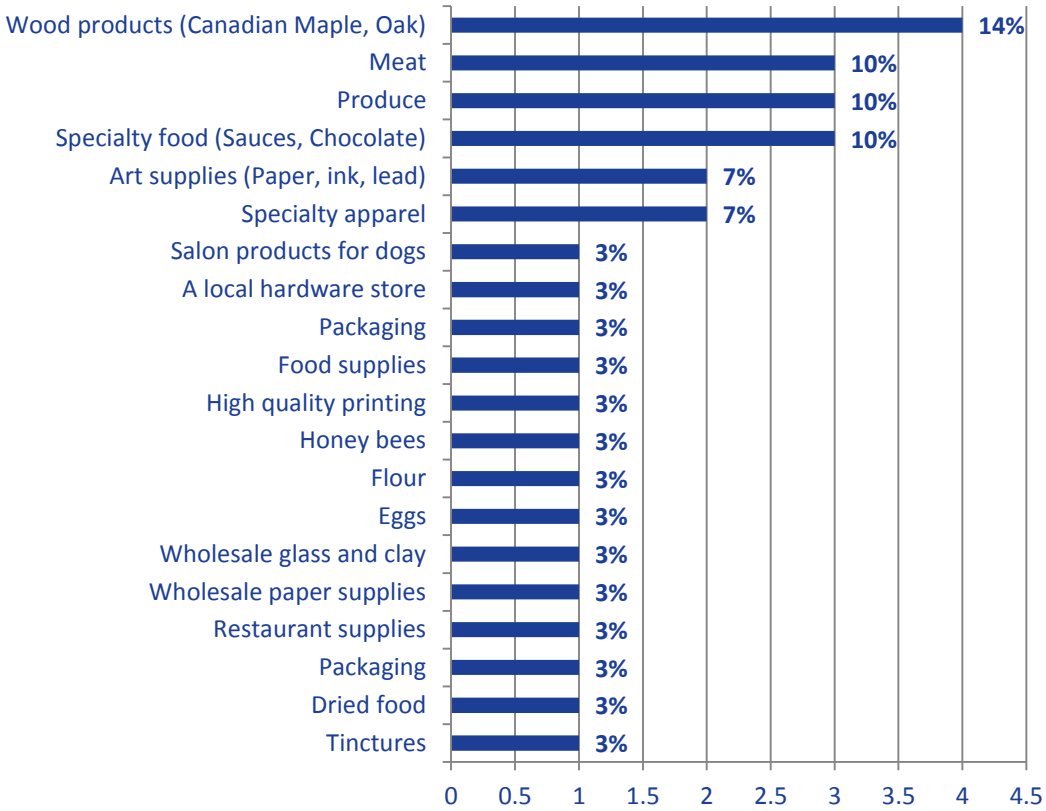
BD6a. What percentage of your supply chain is locally sourced?

Out of 58 responses:



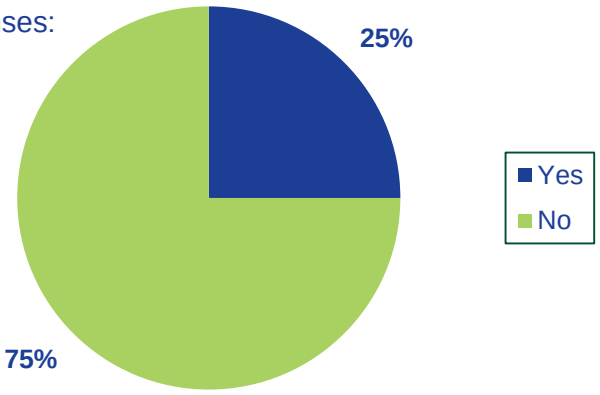
BD6b. What products or services would you like to purchase locally that are now being purchased outside the area?

Out of 31 responses



BD7. Do you conduct research and development activities or are you involved in other types of innovation at this location?

Out of 60 responses:



If yes, what type of products/services are you developing and how are you innovating? Note: only general comments shared.

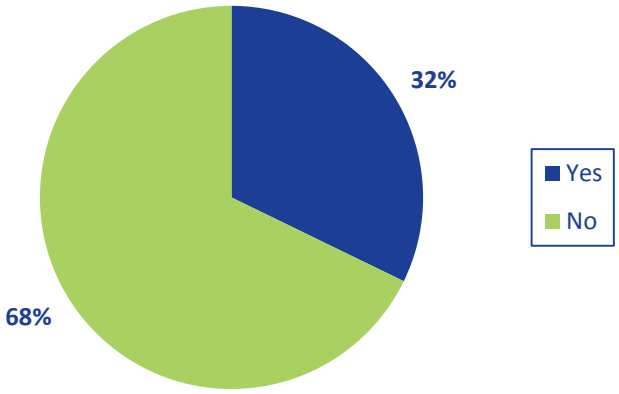
- Test new technology
- Test new products
- Creates prototypes
- Customer survey/canvassing

- Packaging
- Innovative techniques
- Innovative food

Public Sector Support

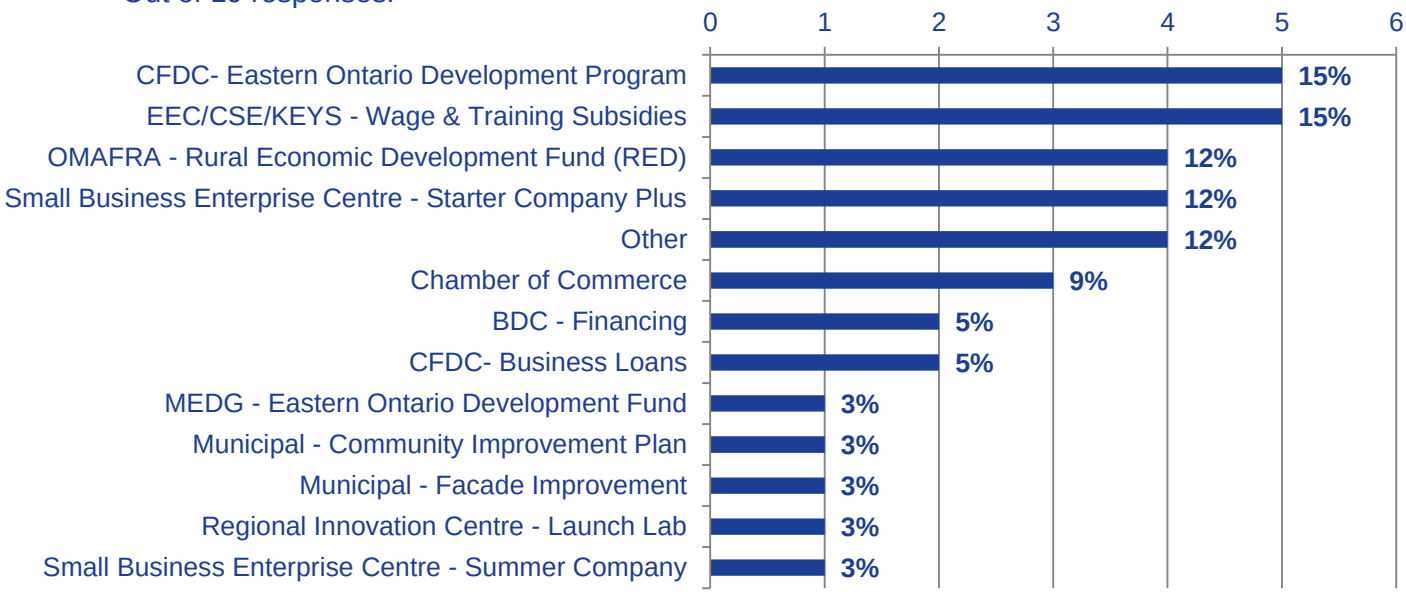
BD8a. Have you accessed funding or business support services from public or not-for-profit agencies?

Out of 59 responses:



If yes, what public sector / not-for-profit funding or support do you use?

Out of 19 responses:



CFDC: Community Development Corporation

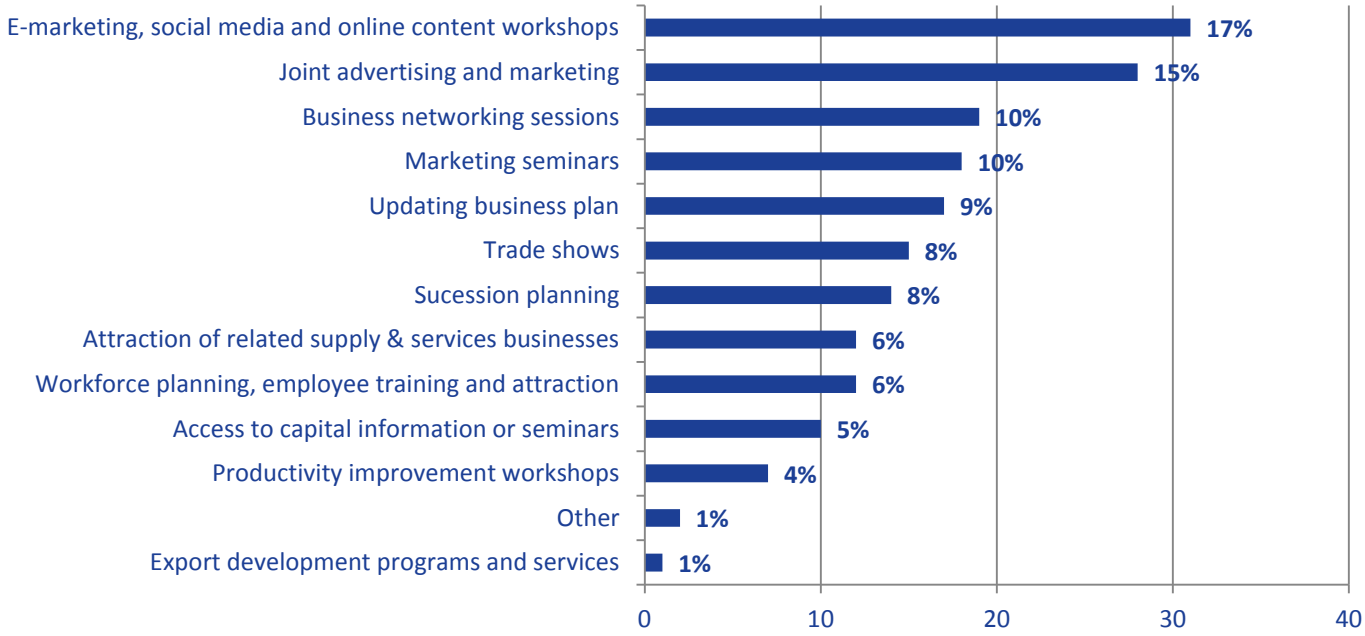
OMAFRA: Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

MEDG: Ministry of Economic Development and Growth

Other includes:

- Canadian Youth Business Foundation
- Grazing mentoring
- Agriculture Farm Plan
- AgriStability

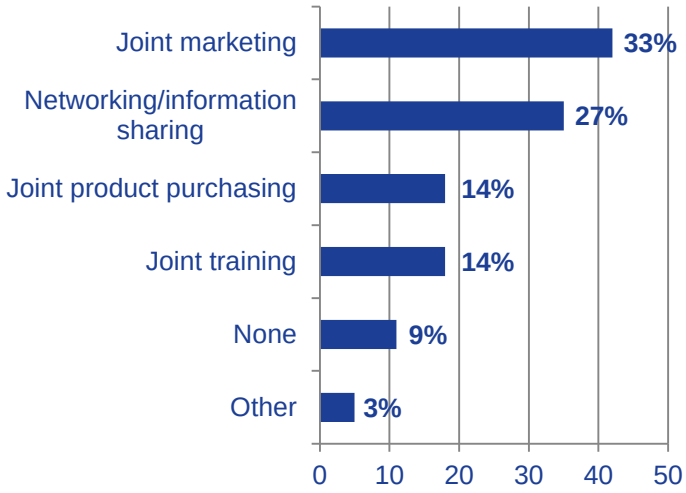
BD8b. What assistance or opportunities would be beneficial to support your business?



Other includes:

- Networking with healthcare providers
- Mentoring

BD9. Are you interested in working co-operatively with other businesses in the community to pursue any of the following?

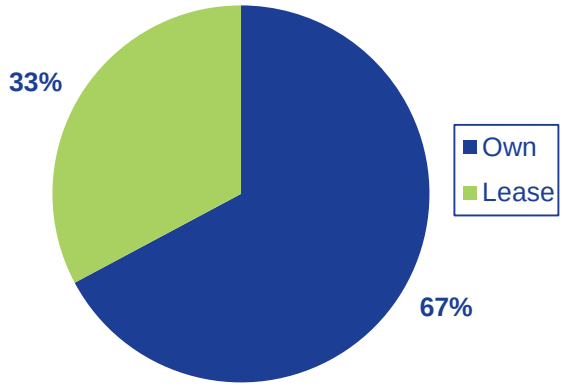


Other includes:

- Relationship with equivalent businesses
- Partner with fish outfitters, golf courses
- Special events
- Tourism

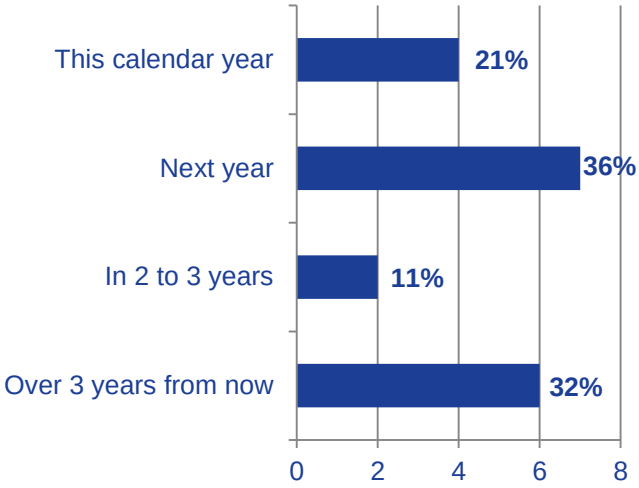
BD10a. Does your business own or lease its facility/facilities?

Out of 61 responses:



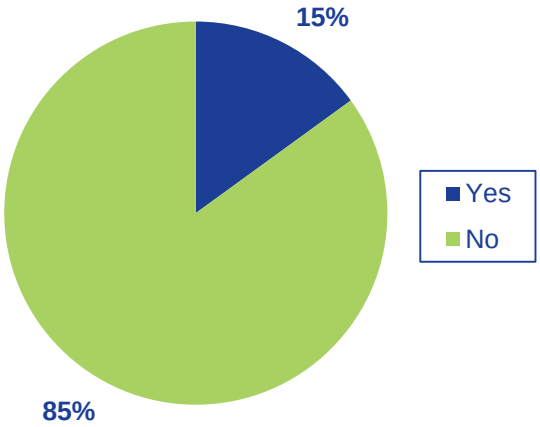
BD10b. When does the lease expire?

Out of 19 responses:



BD10c. Do you anticipate problems in renewing the lease?

Out of 20 responses:



If yes, please specify:

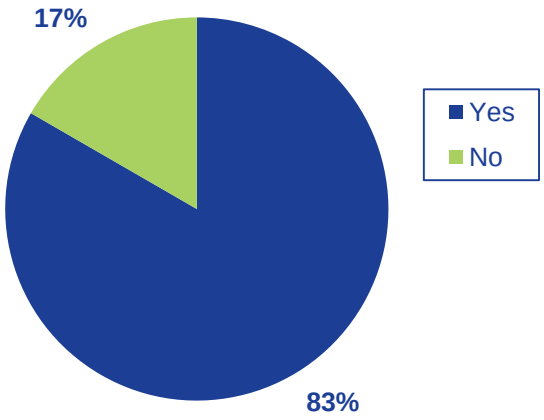
- Unclear renewal parameters.
- The lease will not be renewed
- Unknown depending on owners' interest in renewing.

Appendix D: Future Plans

Future Plans

FP-A. Does your business have the capacity and / or the interest to increase business activity at this location?

Out of 57 responses:



If yes, please specify considering areas such as seasonality and staffing:

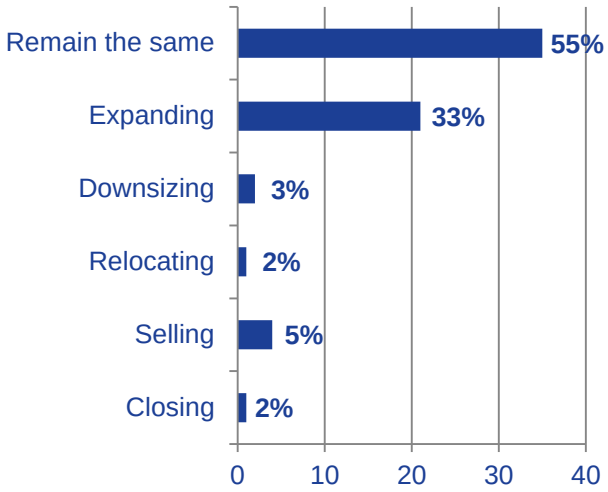
- More billable hours
- More viable year-round
- Hiring staff
- Beer sales
- Special events, community booking events
- Offering more services
- Access to Capital restriction
- More products
- Add new services
- Addition to square footage
- Accommodations for people to stay overnight

FP-B. If there was one thing that would substantially increase your business success, what would it be?

- Capital / financing x8
- Beer sales
- Less restrictive signage x3
- Increased off-season tourism x4
- Community growth x3
- Support from municipality
- Marketing / promoting village x11
- Less competition
- Lower taxes x2
- Increased traffic x3
- Natural gas
- Improved sewer / water infrastructure
- Lower hydro
- Partnerships with other businesses
- Access to affordable retail space options
- Local economic success
- Location permanence

FP1a. Within the next 18 months, do you plan on:

Out of 44 responses:



FP1b. What are the main reasons for remaining the same?

- Foundation established
- Lack of time
- Safest
- Limited options
- Traffic patterns same
- Physical restraints
- Stable industry
- Age of owner / succession planning
- At capacity
- Economy
- Lifestyle

Downsizing

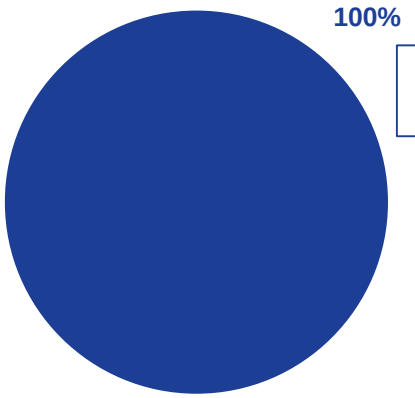
FP2. What are the main reasons for downsizing?

- Financial reasons
- Economics

FP3. Will your downsizing lead to a decrease in?

- Workforce
- Floor space
- Services for customers
- Product lines

FP4. Is there any assistance that could be provided to prevent/limit the downsizing of your business?



Please specify: Financing for equipment, facilitating a tourist destination.

Relocating

FP5. Where do you plan to relocate this business?

Within the community.

FP6. Why are you planning to relocate business?

To expand and combine.

FP7. Is there any assistance that could be provided to prevent or assist with the relocation of your business within the community?

Yes.

If yes, please specify:

Grant funding, find space. Community support for a wellness hub.

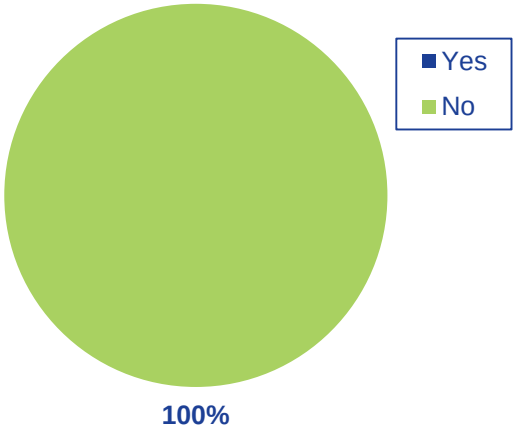
Selling

FP8. Why are you selling your business?

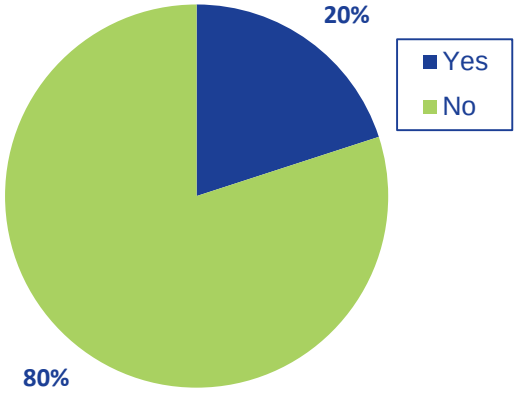
Out of 4 responses

- Retirement x2
- Competition
- Pursue other opportunities x2
- Lack of profit x2
- Workload
- Personal x2

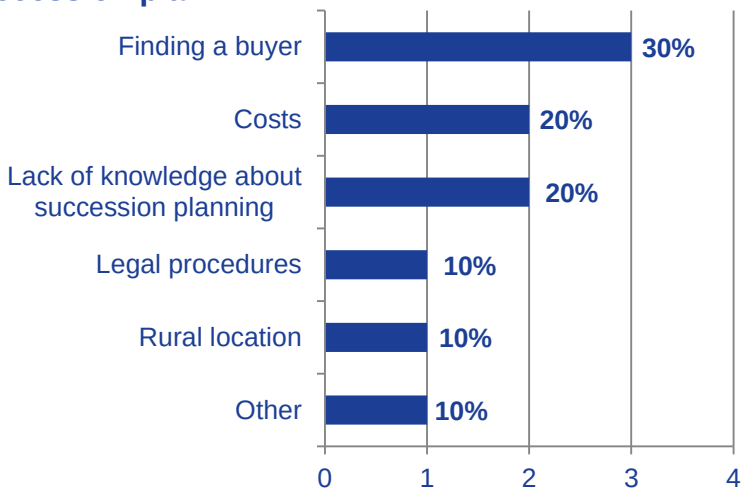
FP9a. Do you have a succession plan for your business?



FP9b. Would you like assistance/information with developing a succession plan?



FP9b. What type of barriers, if any, do you believe will be an obstacle in your succession plan?



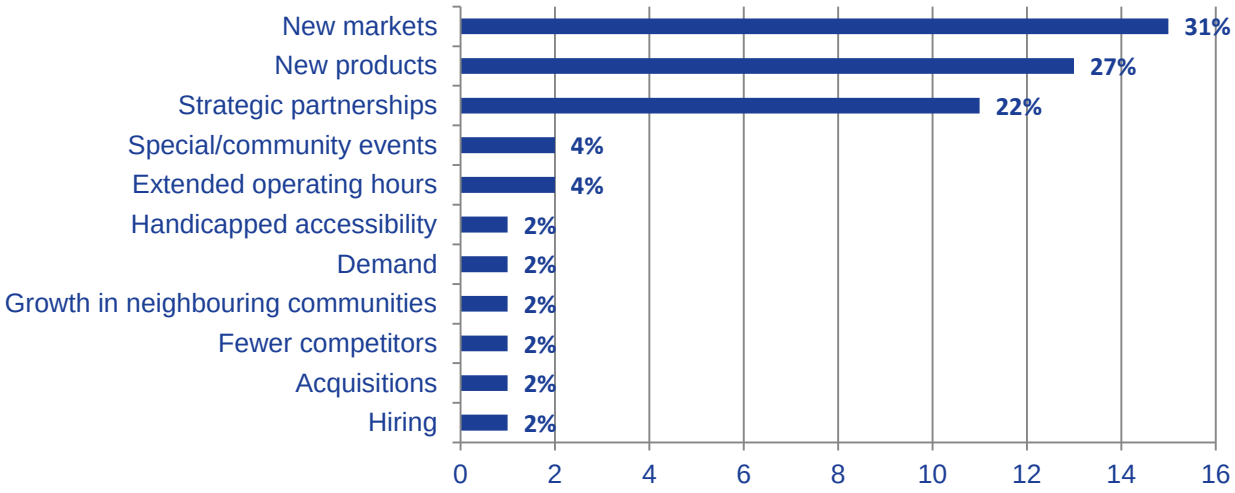
FP10. Would you like assistance / information on selling your business?

- Any assistance would be positive
- Experienced realtors
- Business listings
- Legal process

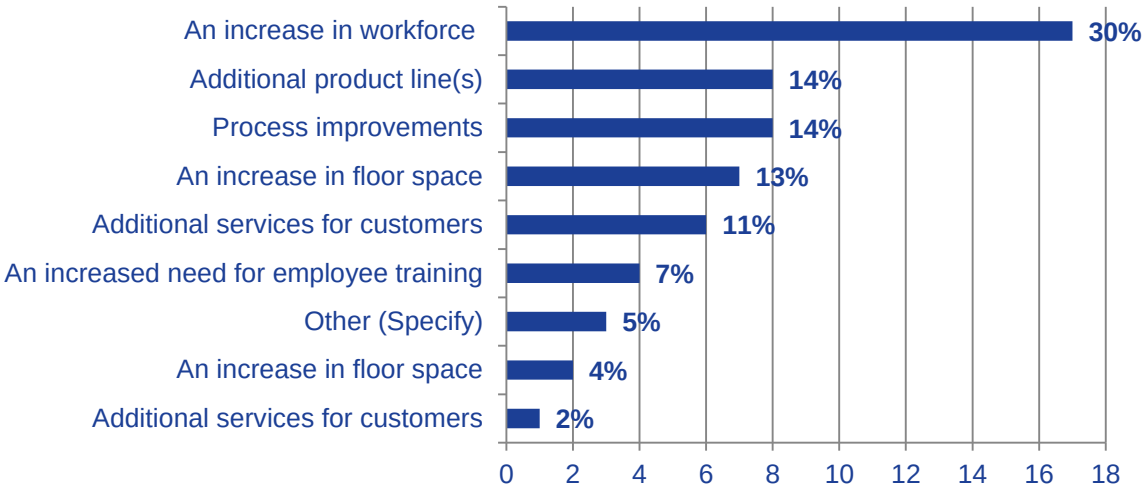
Expanding

FP11. What are the main reasons for the potential expansion of your business?

Out of 21 responses:



FP12. Will your expansion require or lead to:



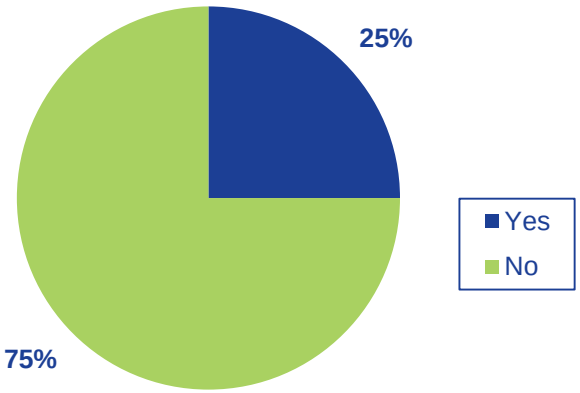
If an increase in workforce, how many?: 49 jobs

If an increase in floor space, how much? 5,800 total square feet

Other includes:

- New barn
- Retail space

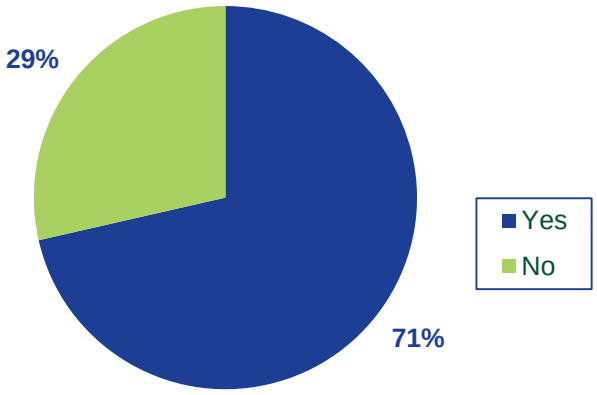
FP13. Are you planning on accessing any Federal or Provincial programs/services to assist with the expansion?



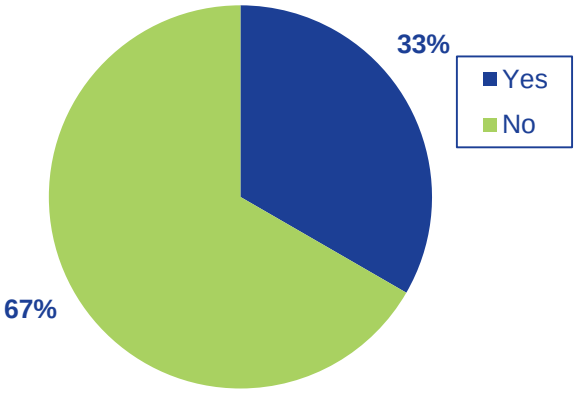
If yes, please specify:

- OMAFRA grant
- Valley Heartland

FP14. Would you like to receive information on potential Federal or Provincial programs / services that might assist with your expansion?



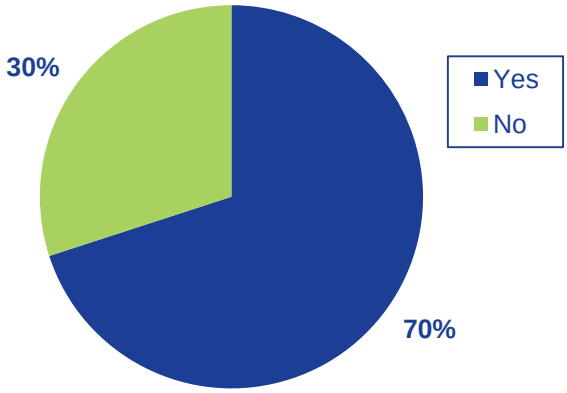
FP15. Is your business currently experiencing difficulties with your expansion plans?



If yes, please specify:

- Space
- Capital
- Lease uncertainty
- Marketing
- Available time to plan
- Retail space availability
- Natural gas
- Limited suppliers for equipment

FP16. Could the community potentially provide some assistance to support your expansion plans?



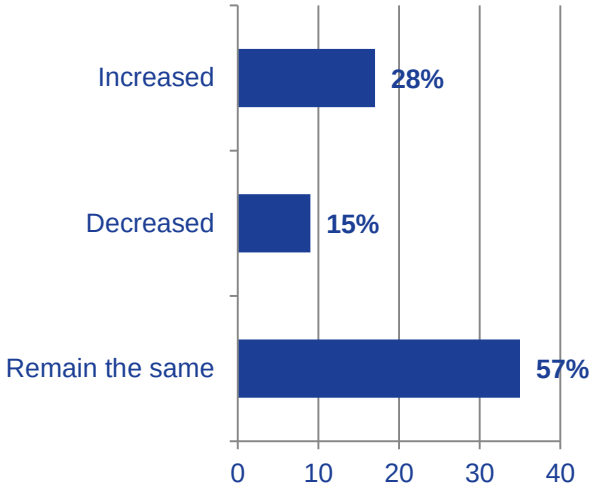
If yes, please specify:

- Grant funding
- Space
- Community support
- Buy local
- Marketing
- Signage
- Communications
- Buy products

Appendix E: Workforce

WF1a. During the past 3 years, has the number of people you employ in this business increased, decreased or stayed the same?

From 61 responses:



Businesses in Merrickville-Wolford have **increased** their workforce by a total of **8** employees over the past 3 years.

WF1b. What factors are responsible for this change?

For increasing:

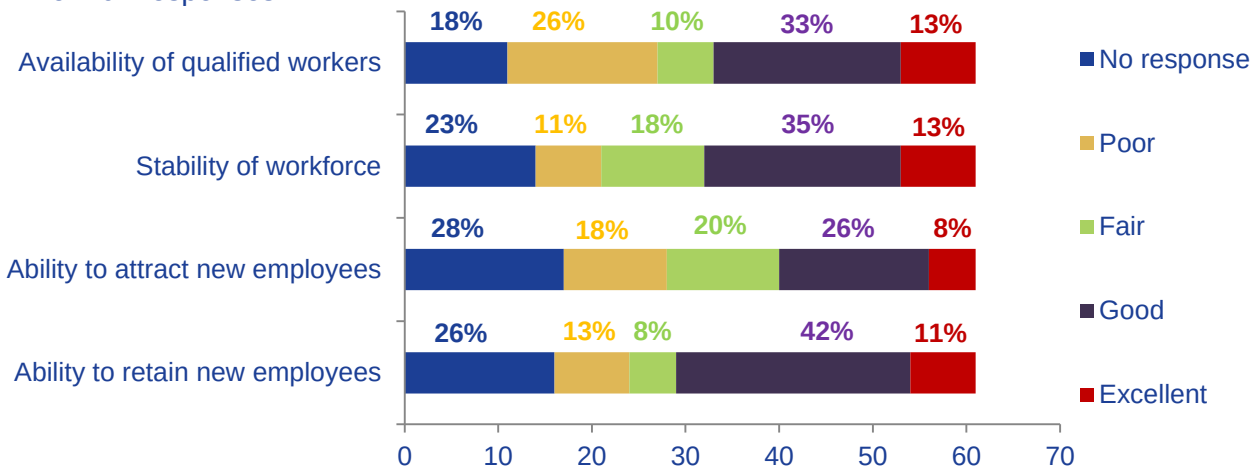
- Increased business
- Seasonal increase
- Growth
- More part timers/flexible hours
- Acquisition

For decreasing:

- Change in industry
- Retiring
- Lack of support
- Capital
- Minimum wage
- Apprenticeship ended
- Downsizing
- Legislation requirements for employees

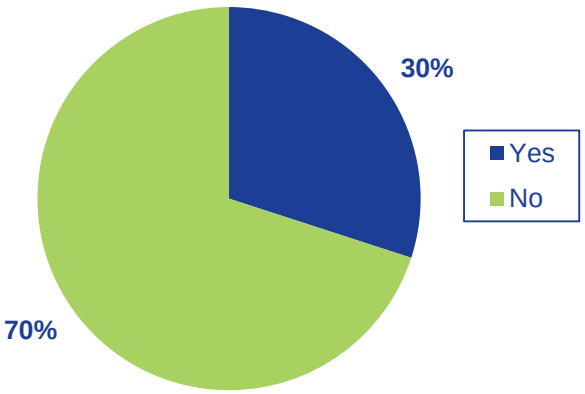
WF2. How would you rate the following factors in this community for your business needs?

From 61 responses:

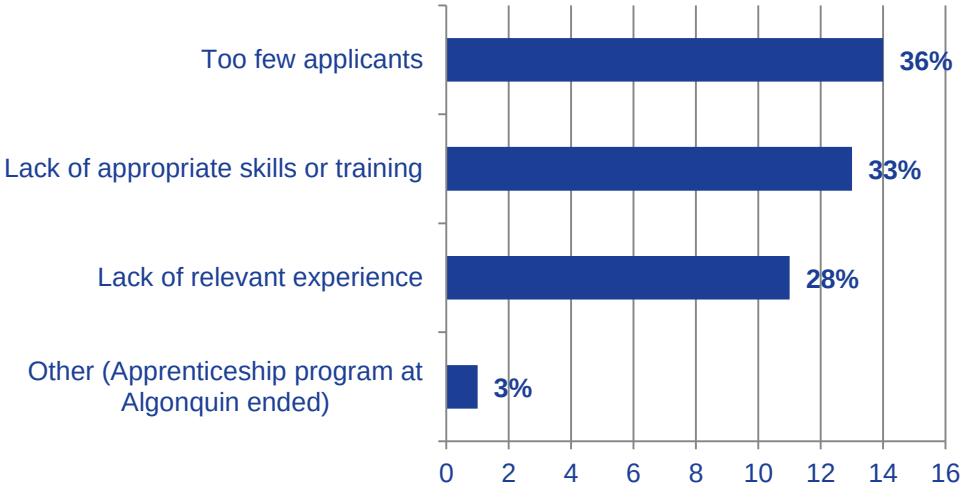


WF3a. Does your business currently have difficulties hiring?

From 60 responses:

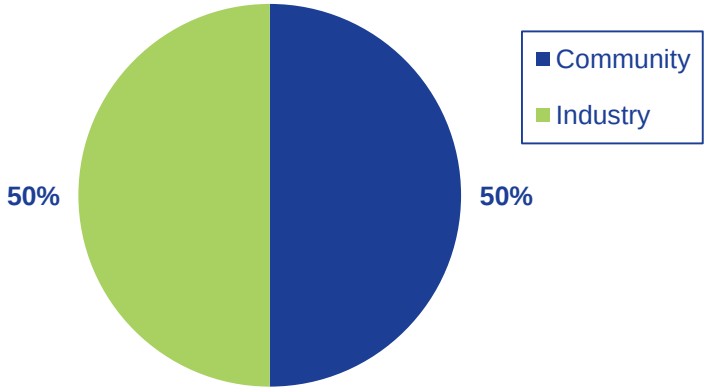


WF3b. How would you describe your company's hiring challenges? (Select all that apply).

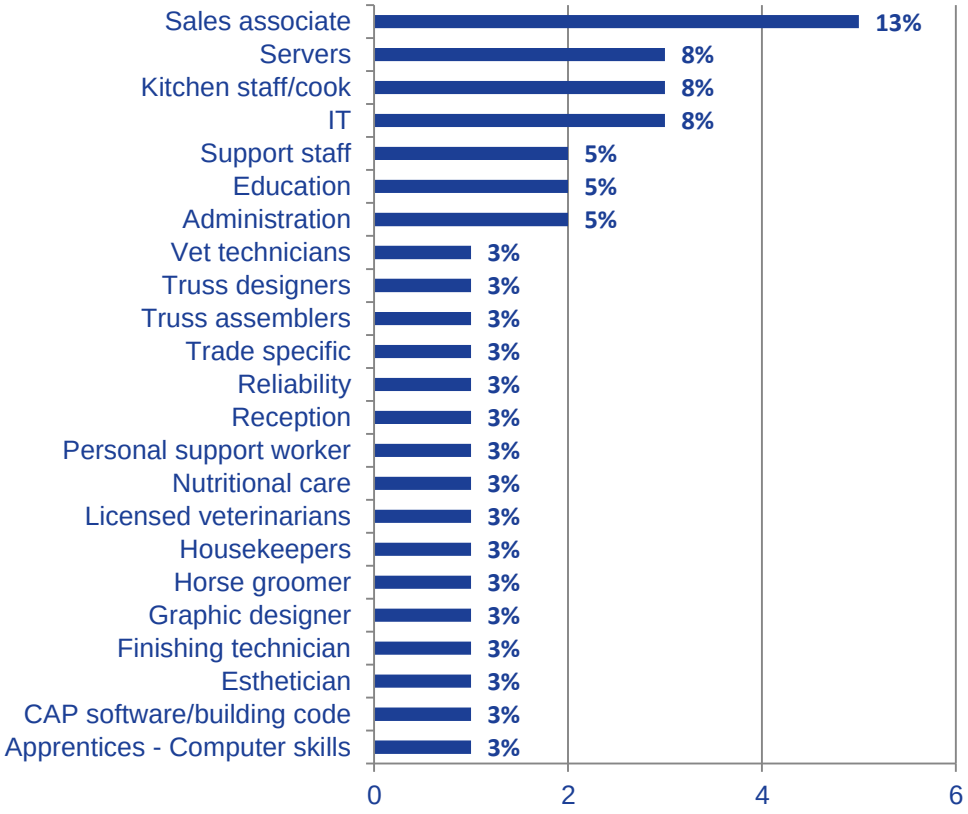


WF3c. Are the hiring challenges specifically related to the community or industry?

From 20 responses:

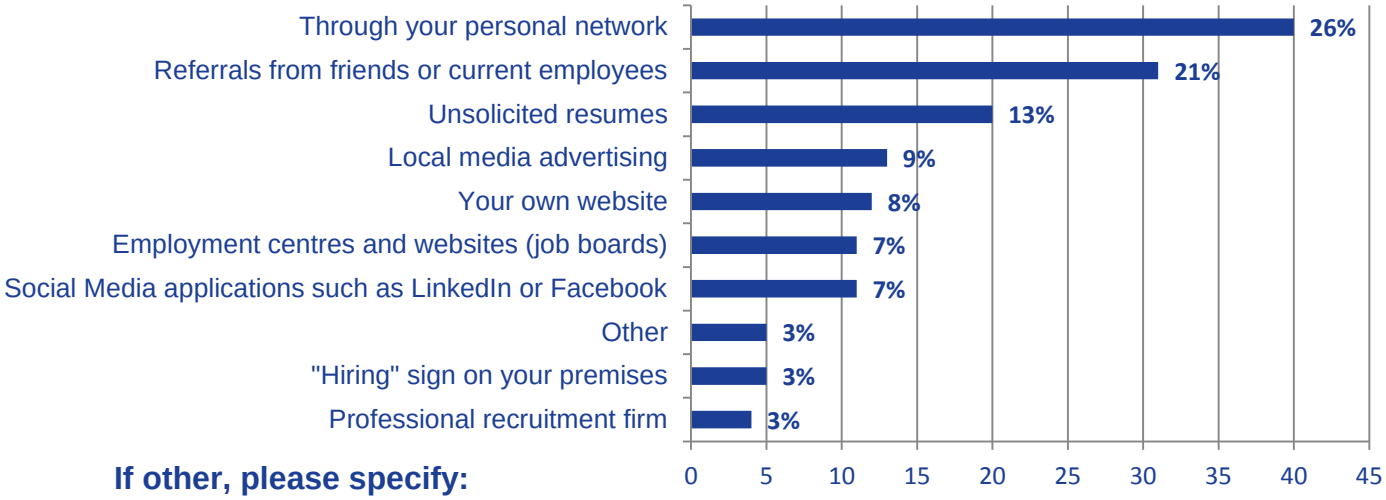


WF3d. What positions/skills do you have difficulty recruiting for your business?



WF4. How do you currently recruit new employees?

From 61 Responses:

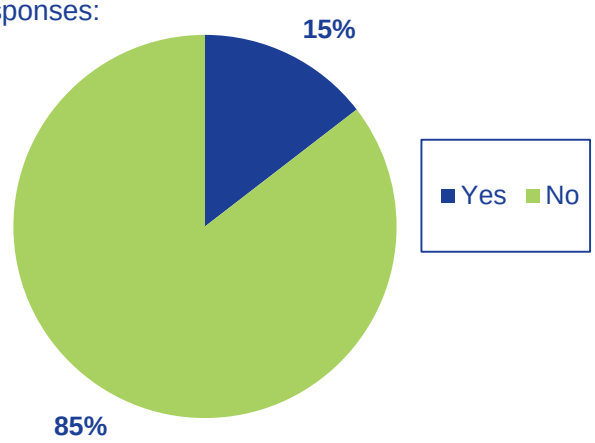


If other, please specify:

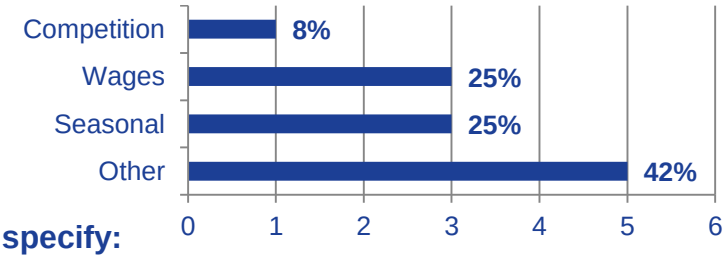
- Referrals from clients
- Industry specific online ads

WF5a. Does your business have difficulty retaining employees?

From 55 Responses:



WF5b. What are the reasons for these difficulties in retaining employees?



If other, please specify:

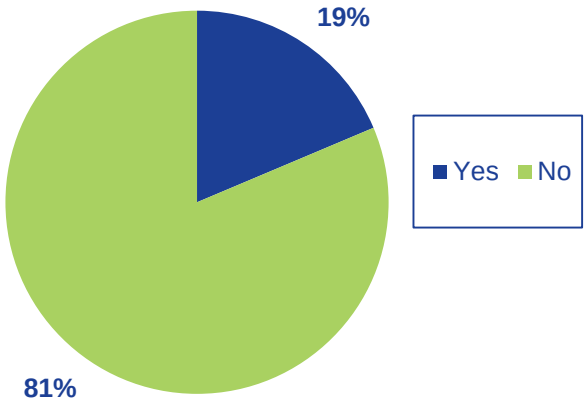
- Work ethic
- Location (commute)

WF5C. What assistance could the community provide to assist you in hiring employees?

- Improving overall quality of life through community services
- Transportation to Ottawa

WF6. Does your business currently participate in any co-op, internship or apprenticeship programs?

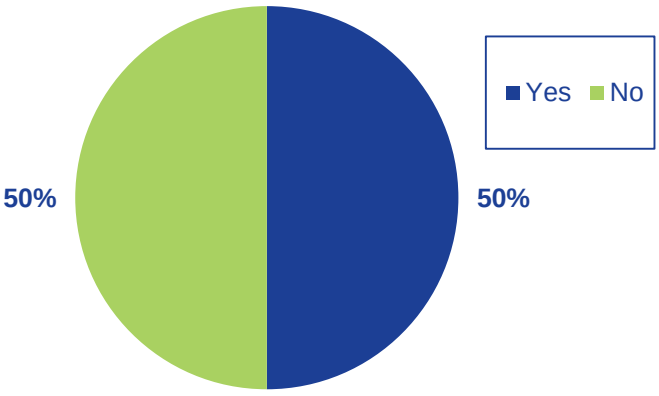
From 37 Responses:



If yes, please specify:

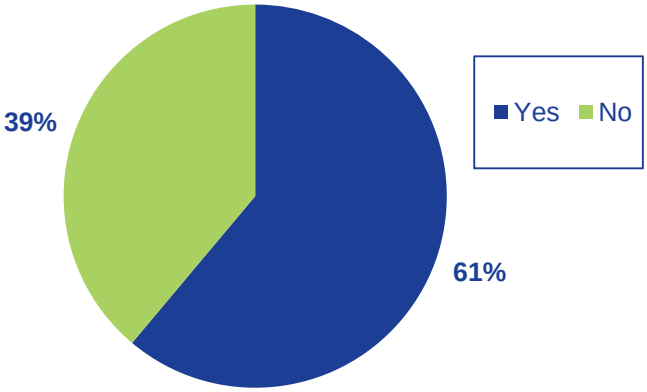
- Community living
- High school co-op x8
- Apprenticeship
- Dog grooming
- Vet placements
- Post-secondary placements x2
- Apprentice for technicians

If no, would you like to receive more information?



WF7a. Does your company provide in house (internal) staff training and development opportunities?

From 54 Responses:

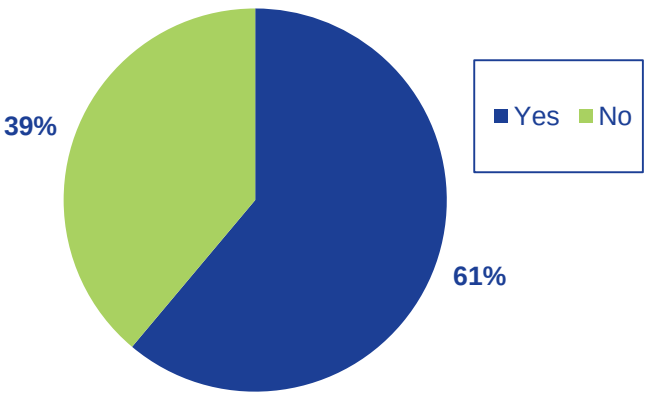


If yes, please specify:

- Trade specific
- Kitchen staff procedures
- Leadership
- Sales
- Marketing training
- Design, aesthetics
- Food handling
- Butchering
- Sheep handling
- Technology updates
- Team Building
- Operational
- Mentoring junior staff
- Health and Safety
- Workplace harassment
- Train both assemblers and designers
- Sales
- Customer service
- Foundry
- Health and Safety
- Gallery training
- Industry training

WF7b. Does your company encourage and financially support external training and education?

From 56 Responses:

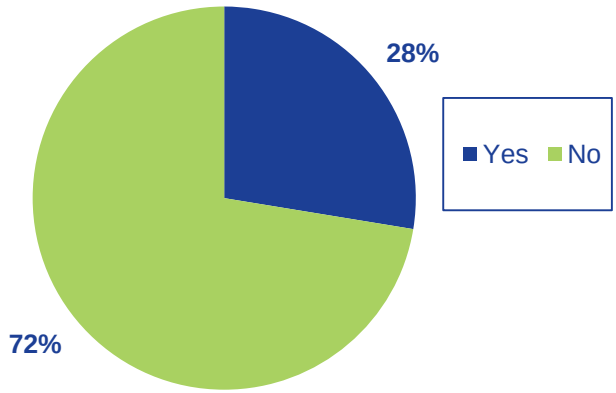


WF7b. Does your company encourage and financially support external training and education? If yes, please specify:

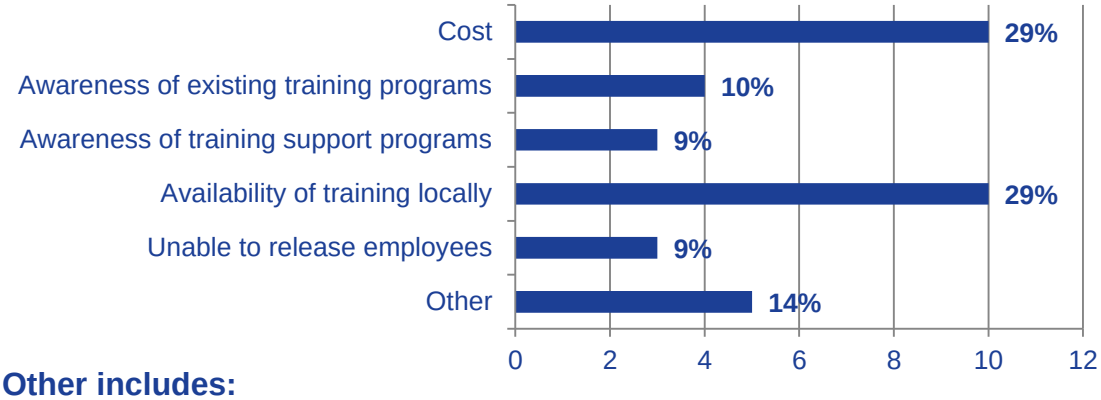
- Industry training
- Seminars
- Food handling
- Paid time
- Paid continuing education allowances
- Smart serve
- Food handling
- Trade shows
- First aid
- Food certification program
- Forklift training
- Health and Safety
- Student college courses
- Bee Keeping Courses
- Management

WF8a. Are there currently any barriers for you and/or your employees receiving the necessary training?

From 58 Responses:



WF8b. If yes, please specify:

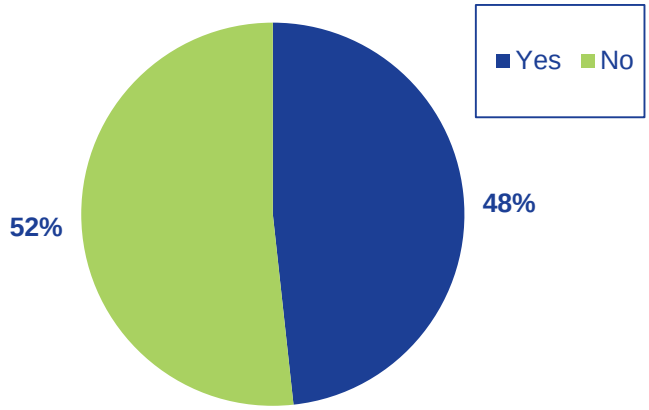


Other includes:

- No Canadian facility
- Time / cost as applied to seasonal employees

WF9. Are there any training programs / topics that would be beneficial to you and your employees?

From 58 Responses:



If yes, please specify:

- Computer skills x10
- Health and safety x12
- Sales management x7
- Food handling x3
- Human Resources x4
- Basic business courses
- Baking
- Bakery management
- Cleanliness
- Financial management
- First aid
- Bookkeeping
- Marketing x2
- Recruitment
- Smart serve
- Social media
- Simply Accounting
- Inventory management

WF10a. What changes or employment positions will emerge over the next 2-5 years that will require skills your current workforce does not have?

- Customer service
- Social media management
- New technology knowledge
- Sales
- Heavy lifting
- Catering events on location
- Technology for eCars and hybrids
- Management
- Human resources
- Information technology
- Bookkeeping

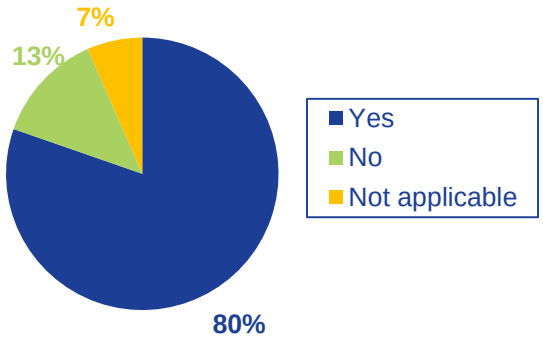
WF10b. What is your company doing, if anything to address this concern?

Training and planning.

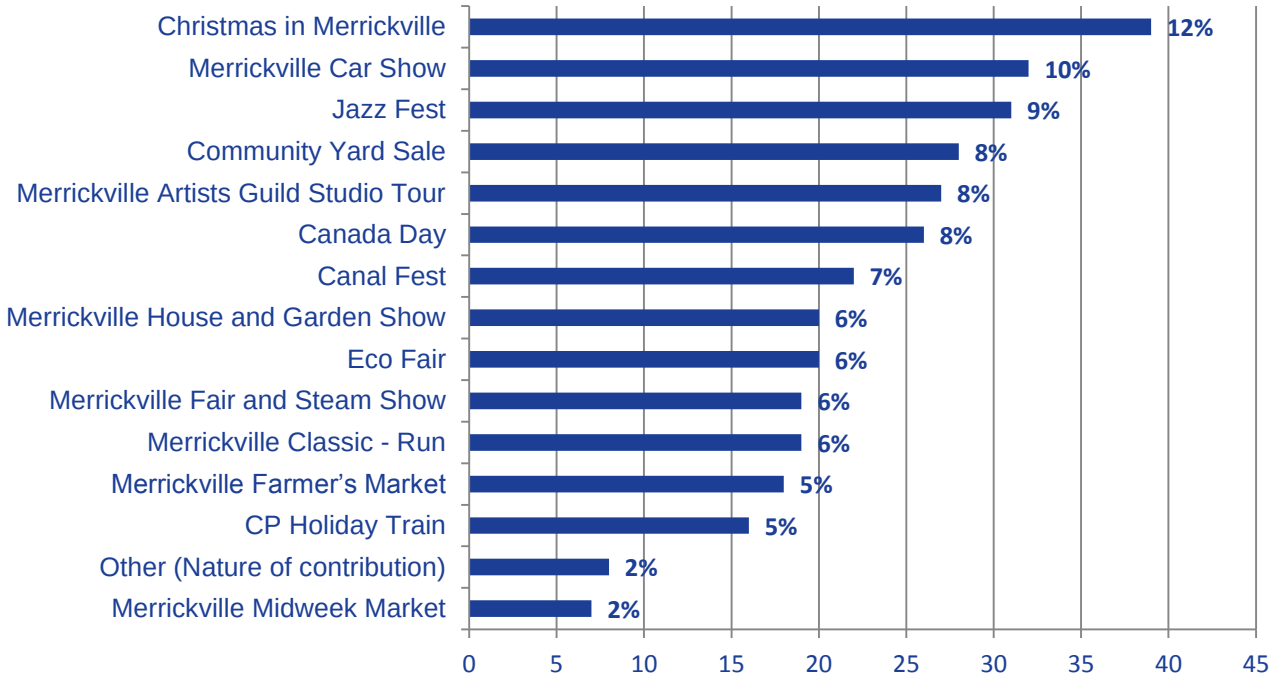
Appendix F: Community Questions

CQ1. The Village of Merrickville-Wolford supports several local festivals and community events. Are the local community festivals and events of benefit to your business?

From 61 Responses:



If Yes, do you contribute to any of the following local festivals and community events?

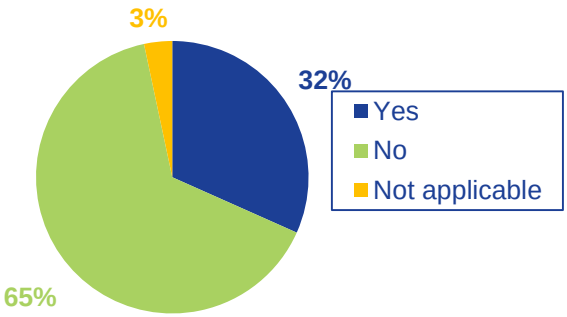


Describe the nature of your contribution, or Other:

- We support these in spite of the fact that they do not support our business
- Financial sponsorship
- Contribute to all local events with goods or monetary donations
- Motorcycle show
- Lions club
- Community garden
- Village social
- Discounted pricing
- Anglican roast beef dinner
- Sells tickets for Merrickville Fair and Steam Show
- Donates and sells food at Goatfest
- Re-enactment World War
- Attend with residents

CQ2. Considering the current canal lock hours; do they impact your business and/or clientele?

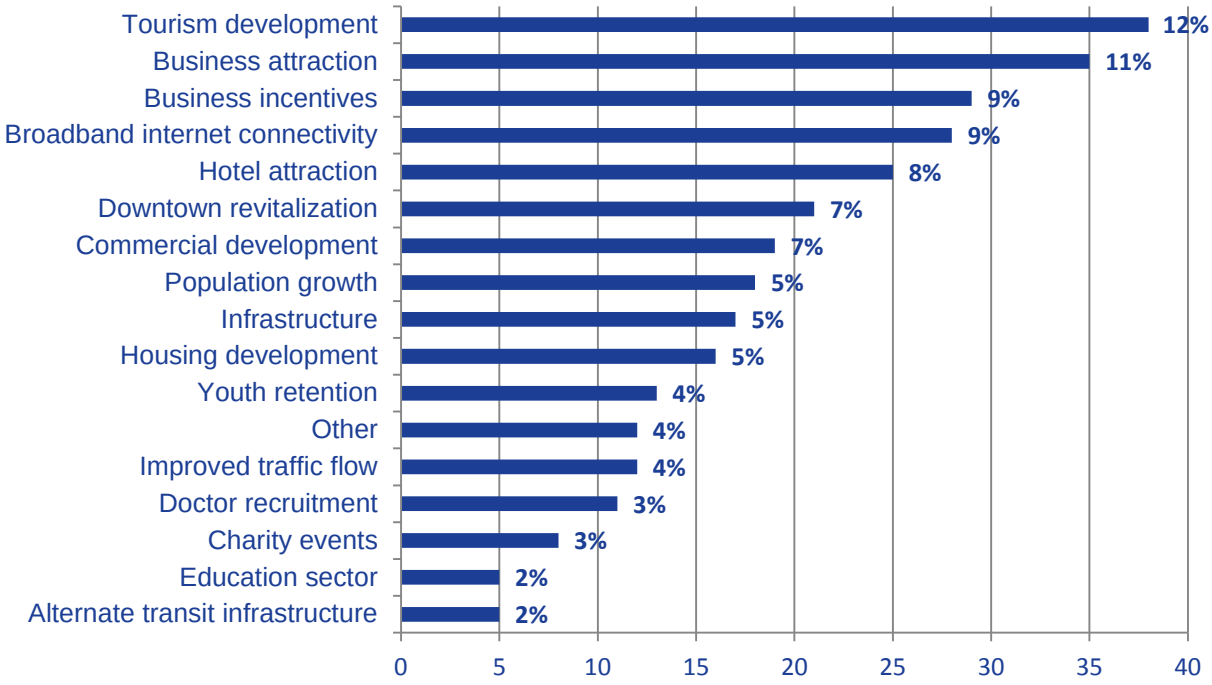
From 60 Responses:



If yes, how do the canal lock hours impact your business and/or clientele?

- Reduction in boats with shorter hours means fewer customers
- Less people go through when lock hours are shorter, prevents travellers from doing weekend trips
- Less traffic at night
- Closed locks mean less business
- Hours are too short, cannot do a day trip and get back in time
- Longer hours open would mean more clients
- No overnights due to lock closures
- Need longer hours, need longer season
- People cannot get to the B&B on time as required to pick up at Lock 17
- Some boaters need services completed before locks close

CQ3. What should the municipality be focusing on over the next 5 – 10 years?



Other includes:

- Public washrooms
- Walking loop
- WiFi for tourists and boaters
- Environment policy
- Natural gas in rural ward
- Expand retail to side streets
- Increase service for youth sport recreation
- More rooms
- More off season events
- Investing in local events
- Maintaining village culture
- More beds / B&Bs
- Tourist information
- Decrease water bill

CQ4. What is your vision for the business community in Merrickville-Wolford over the next 5 – 10 years?

- Thriving community – x2
- Sustainable community
- To create more local jobs and improve long-term sustainability including focusing on keeping our region rural and agriculturally based.
- All-encompassing vision.
- Tax reductions.
- Continue on track.

- Renewed business community.
- Development restrictions - regulations could impact agriculture activity negatively.
- Population
    - Growing population.
    - Increase more population, but cost to live here is too high.
    - Increase in population.
    - Reasonable growth driving new business.
- Get a walking loop to incorporate side street businesses to downtown.
- Business survival. Overcome seasonality of village.
- More interaction with each other and municipal government.
- Tourism
    - Expansion of recognized tourism region.
    - More tourism, more promotion.
    - Strengthening destination for tourists.
    - Too much focus on tourism.
    - Tourism support.
    - Emphasis on tourist industry. Tap into wedding market.
    - Different tourists might come if different marketing
    - Develop as a cultural destination including agricultural visits.
- Events
    - Bring weekend events back.
    - Huge bison horse show
- Attracting younger folks. Embracing technology. January - March viability. Council support.
- More partnerships between Merrickville-Wolford not just Merrickville. Include Wolford.
- Business Engagement & Collaboration
    - Better communication between council and business owners.
    - Unified vision between business and municipality.
    - More collaborating and cooperation
    - Facilitate collaboration and mutually beneficial business relationships.
    - Increased collaboration/goals between businesses.
    - More cooperation between businesses.
    - Businesses working more cooperatively.
    - Better cooperation between businesses.
    - Business Association. More cooperation efforts between businesses. More unified approach to needs of businesses.
    - Better communication and unity.
- EDO services.

- Business Development Office would be helpful.
- Expansion of natural gas would free up funds to use for expansion.
- Marketing
  - Better promotion of Wolford businesses
  - Made in Merrickville branding.
  - More showcasing for service industry and trades people. Almost word-of-mouth marketing.
  - Currently doing good job promotion.
  - More Inclusive marketing/promotion of business beyond first few blocks
  - Promote side street businesses.
  - Promotion of area.
  - Marketing of local history.
  - Promotion of St. Lawrence St.
- Business Attraction / Business Mix
  - More local businesses that aren't solely tourism based.
  - Remain with artisanal products and artists.
  - Maintain uniqueness of businesses.
  - More craft including brewery, distillery.
  - More specialization for men.
  - Attract artisans.
  - Increase in number of businesses.
  - No laundry mat. x2
  - No franchises / No big box store
  - Need to diversify. All shops seem to be the same.
  - Store and product diversification.
  - Diverse business sector. x2
  - Merrickville to have hardware store.
  - More business services (legal/accounting).
  - Hotel accommodation to keep people overnight. x3
  - More new businesses with supported business cases.
  - Expand / more retail.
  - Growth in business core. Greater diversity in business.
  - Increased diversification beyond retail.
  - Increase in numbers of businesses.
  - Expansion of retail.
  - Growing, with more unique shops and artisans.
  - Affordable for new businesses.
- Destination village.
- Mini Niagara on lake.
- Equestrian Capital of Canada.

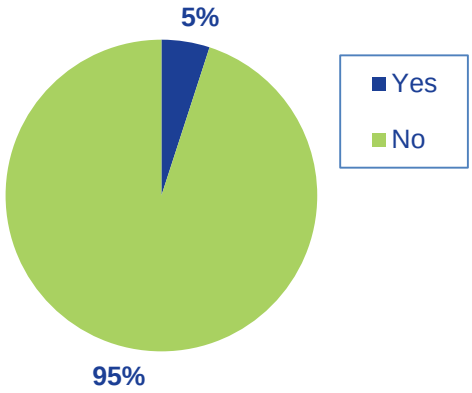
- Continued to focus on downtown
- Chamber
  - Have Chamber unify businesses.
  - Consistent. Chamber
  - Chamber feels exclusion from municipal decisions. Meeting can be held without a quorum.
  - Equitable sharing of resources / chamber.
- Entrepreneurship
  - Encourage young entrepreneurs.
  - More entrepreneurial based.
  - Changing demographics and entrepreneurs.
  - Encourage locally owned businesses.
- Business Hours
  - Grocery store open at night.
  - Some standardized and posted business hours.
  - More consistent, later store hours.
  - Longer business hours.
- Sustainable community.
- More growth. x 2 / Continued growth x2. / Expect growth.
- More local products.
- Maintain the essence.
- Thriving business community.
- Merrickville is pretty good, was a dump.
- More community engagement
- More small business friendly
- Need for young fresh blood on Council
- Mainstay businesses will remain.
- Extend business zoning down St. Lawrence.
- Main street for shopping could be expanded
- Flexible signage bylaw.
- More business friendly / available housing.
- Expand season / hours by attracting clients / more activities
- Open year round - move past seasonality
- Promote Diversity of experience
- Old systems old guard - room for breath of fresh air. Hearing from more demographics Bring in a BIA. Feel resistance and divisive. Need real leadership to move forward.
- Growth generated by surrounding communities.
- As long as local products continue to be promoted things will go well.
- More local products sold. x2

- Consistency.
- More help from various levels of government.
- Maintaining uniform approach to keep heritage alive and promote.
- Refresh.
- Expanded participation with more businesses.
- Investigate loans and grants and lower cost of information.
- More inclusive and recognition of farming as a business.
- More farm based / farm gate sales.
- Farm land kept productive.

Appendix G: Business Attraction

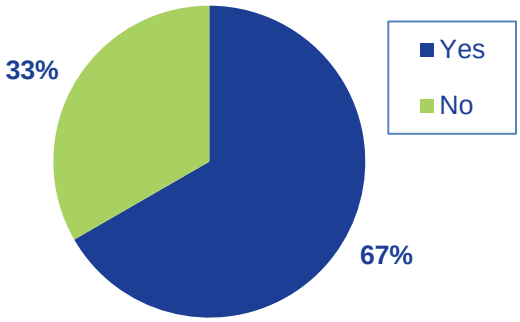
CD1a. Do you know of a business that may have an interest in locating in this community (region)?

From 60 Responses:



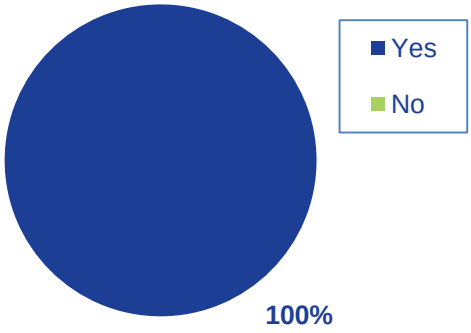
CD1b. Would you be willing to contact this business on behalf of our community directly?

From 3 Responses:

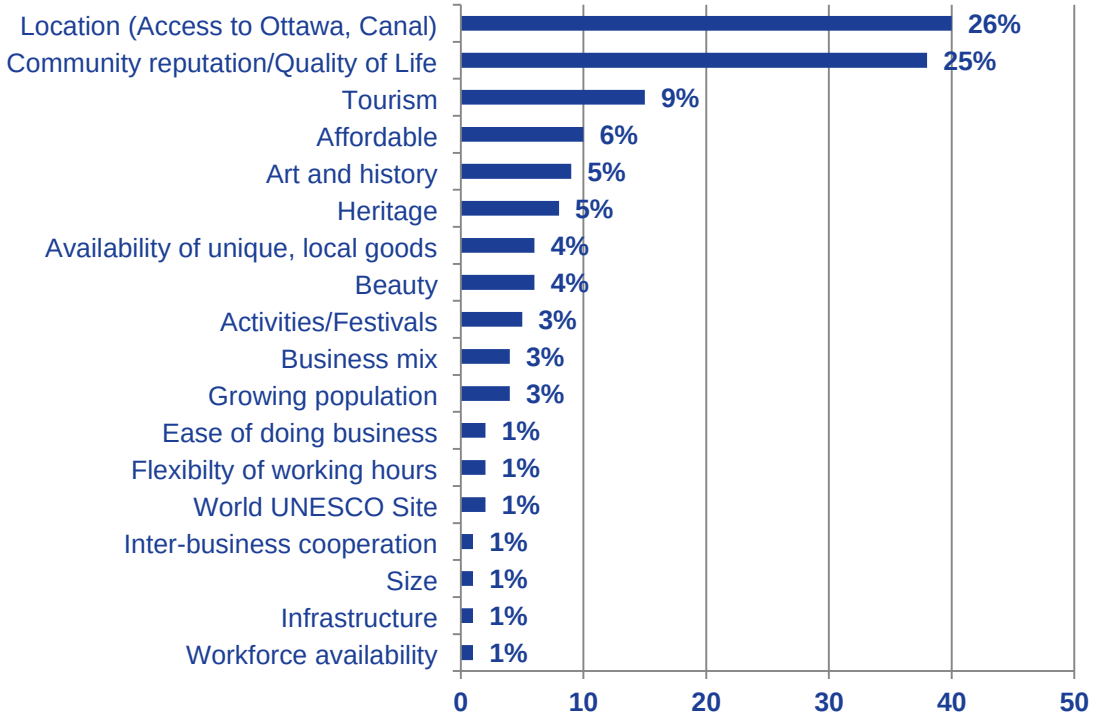


CD1b. Would you be willing to provide the contact information for this business?

From 3 Responses:



CD2. What are the community's (municipality and region) top three advantages as a place to do business?



CD3. What are the community's (municipality and region) top three disadvantages as a place to do business?

CD4. In terms of overall impact on this community (municipality and region) as a place to do business what is the most significant change you would like to see in the next five years?

- High speed internet. x3
- Festivals and Events
  - Cooperative community events lead by businesses.
  - Winter festival.
  - More festivals.
  - Return of large community centre festivals
  - Off season community events.
- Phoenix newspaper has more editions more often.
- Community website that includes a calendar to share events to prevent overlap.
- Upturn in regional economy.
- Business Engagement & Collaboration
  - Government and provincial outreach to businesses. Businesses should not have to contact them.
  - Closer cooperation between businesses and municipality through a town hall event.
  - Cooperative business events.
  - Communications between business and village.
  - More consistent transparent support for business.
  - Improved relationship with village office.
  - Better communications
- Infrastructure
  - Invest in infrastructure.
  - Removal of hydro lines and additional beautification of downtown.
  - Infrastructure. x2
- Parking
  - Clean up parking lots.
  - Parking.
- Public washrooms. x3
- Residential
  - More housing developments. Retirees and young families looking further. Have support to put in new housing.
  - More homes on sewers.
  - Allow homes to be built with septic systems.
  - Make it a great place to live not just a shopping retail stop.
- Population growth. x5
- Less bureaucracy.
- Reduced Red Tape / offer more support.

- Lower taxes. x3
- Spending of municipality funds and taxes reduced.
- Cellphone.
- Stable, effective and responsible elected government officials.
- Business Attraction
    - Attract more diverse businesses.
    - Higher end restaurant. x2
    - More accommodations.
    - More businesses. x2
- Maintain small village.
- Greater local focused commercial growth for medium businesses and larger businesses.
- Solidarity corporate relationship.
- Hours
    - Consistent operative hours.
    - Hours (extend).
    - Minimum store hours and days.
- Improving local job opportunities and improving the local economy to keep jobs and businesses very local and sustainable. Smiths Falls and Athens downtown rejuvenation.
- Continued expansion in neighboring communities brings traffic to Merrickville.
- Expansion of County Road 43.
- Nobody wants to change.
- A lot of turnover and failure in new businesses.
- Adapting to major change in a more seamless method.
- Expanding downtown core.
- No change.
- Consistency.
- More traffic.
- More infrastructure / business.
- Better access to Blockhouse Park
- Reduce the hydro cost we are an energy intensive business.
- More local attractions.
- Increase in tourism.
- Information center.
- Marketing and economic development better organized and not left to a group of volunteers or businesses to have better consistency and approach.
- Stronger Economic Development integration with tourism, agriculture and comprehensive plan.
- New Chamber of Commerce

- Need a real Chamber of Commerce.
- Public infrastructure and tourism.
- Regional / municipal cooperation.
- Encourage 100 mile sourcing.
- Retail space increased.
- Art centre.
- Keep moving forward.
- Expansion on experimental culture and tourism.
- Unified business vision.
- Address municipal costs.
- Bike paths.
- Invest in a rink, beach.
- Help the regional / rural divide.
- Encourage rural residences and development.
- More open signage policy.
- Consistent bylaws between municipality and county.
- Economic Development Officer
- Buy local / support local.
- Municipal marketing.
- Remove the turmoil in municipal office.
- Bring more commerce to the area, more wealth.
- Develop unique businesses.

D5. What is your vision for the business community in the Leeds Grenville Region?

- Investment Attraction
  - Growth in tourism sector, more manufacturing in Eastern Ontario.
  - Attracting large employers.
  - Attract diverse businesses.
  - More regional business growth.
  - Increase in businesses.
- Population growth. x4
- Concern that the future is not good for little companies. Everything being taken over by large companies - online shopping.
- Growth while maintaining character.
- More networking.
- Local pride and support from residents of local businesses to create a sustainable rural economy.
- Appropriately segmented between the various municipalities as presence culturally defined.
- Brockville still too far away.
- Excited about Kemptville growing.
- Business Engagement and Collaboration
  - Better cooperation between businesses. x2
  - Cooperative business events
  - Cooperative community events hosted by businesses.
- Stay healthy and vibrant.
- Keep it attractive.
- Merrickville has good history of supporting businesses.
- Business Retention + Expansion
  - Businesses to stay in area, and not flow out into different places.
  - More support of businesses.
  - Attract upscale customers with money. Expansion.
- More creative costs structure for rental for smaller businesses.
- Municipal and regional.
  - Better sharing of resources between regions and municipalities
  - Greater synergy.
  - Municipalities need better planning for larger facilities.
  - More joint efforts. Leeds and Grenville Counties should unite municipalities.
- Emphasis on local made and Canadian made.
- Industry is gone. Attract businesses and attract people.
- Tourism.

- Think out of box, focus on innovation.
- Marketing
  - Working together more cooperatively (marketing).
  - Work together to promote entire region.
- Create a unified vision for a larger scale destination like Prince Edward County.
- More artistic community.
- High speed internet
- Innovative and creative young generation.

CD6. Do you have any other comments?

- Grant application process is difficult and arduous when running your own business. Business owners need help and guidance with grant applications and a better community-minded approach from the municipality will help facilitate growth.
- Very heartening to see initiatives such as the BR+E.
- This is the first time being contacted by anyone in a government level.
- Technical Standards and Safety Authority impacted a few sales.
- Better understanding of Counties and services offered to the municipality and local business.
- Increased communications from Counties.
- Open cannabis market to private business.
- Tourism information centre needs a central location.
- Would like to see the municipality supply bicycles and canoes to rent or for guided tours.
- The municipality does not help owners of businesses.
- The municipality needs to increase their awareness that we need support for business.
- Lobbying.
- Should take advantage of Smiths Falls and participate in cannabis tourism.
- Other issues include signage and accessibility.
- Step back and look at the bigger picture

STRONG BUSINESS STRONG COMMUNITIES

The Village of Merrickville-Wolford
317 Brock Street West
Merrickville, ON K0G 1N0

United Counties of Leeds and Grenville
Economic Development Office
32 Wall Street, Suite 300
Brockville, ON K6V 4R9

MERRICKVILLE-WOLFORD
Jewel of the Rideau

Downtown Retail

October 15, 2019

Prepared by:

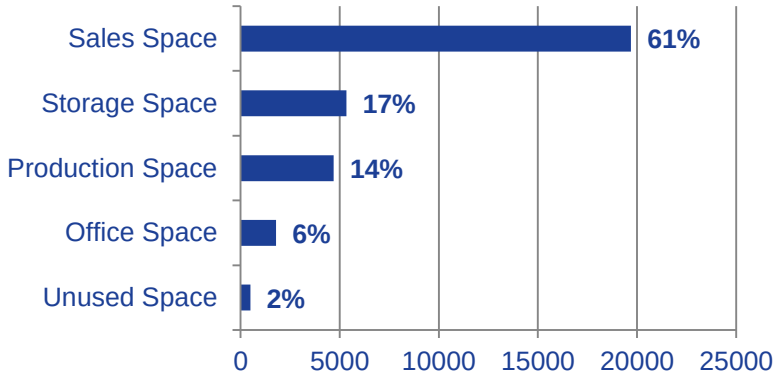
Leeds Grenville
where lifestyle grows good business

Funding provided by:

Government of Ontario
United Counties of Leeds and Grenville
The Village of Merrickville-Wolford

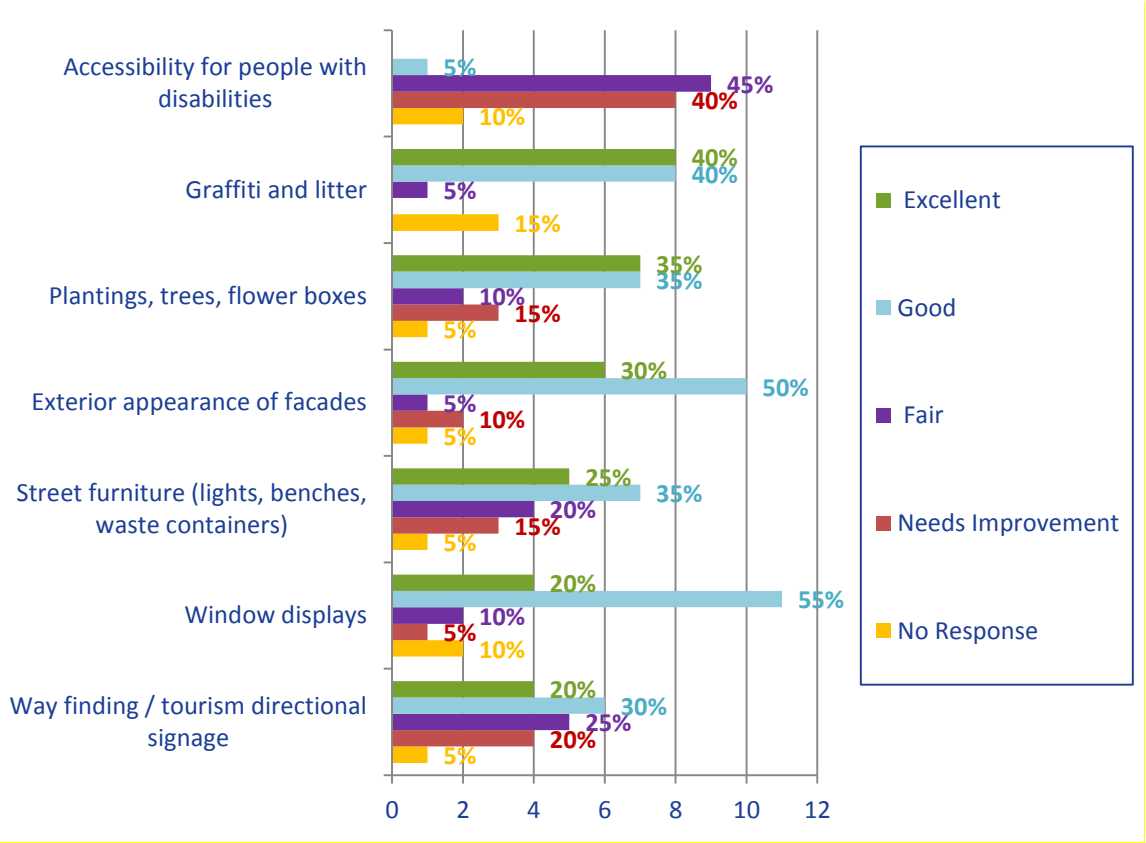
Downtown Retail

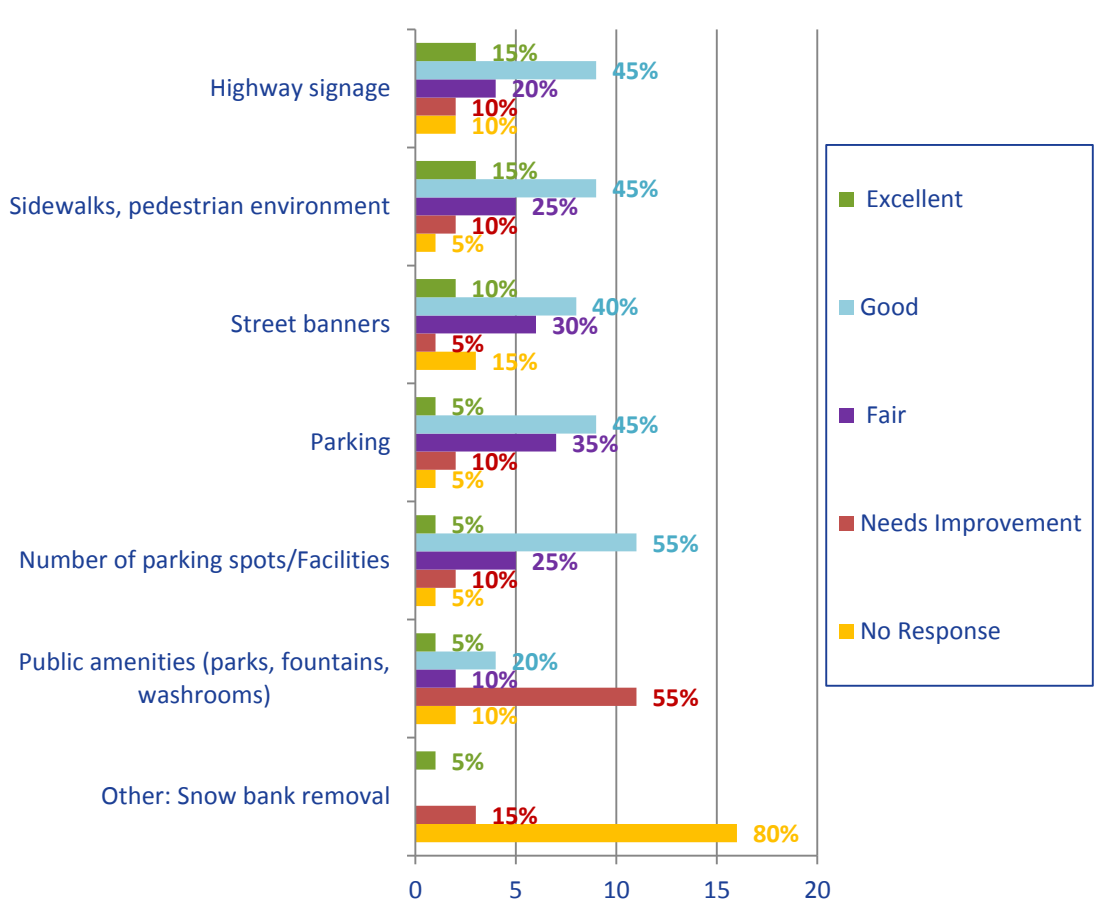
DR1. For this business, how many square feet are devoted to the following?
Out of 17 responses:



DR2. Please rate the condition of your downtown for each of the following:

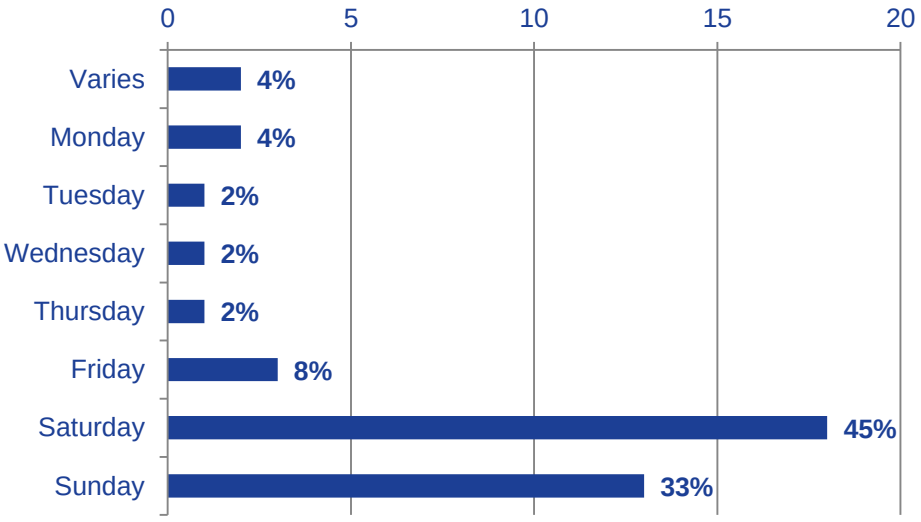
Out of 20 responses:





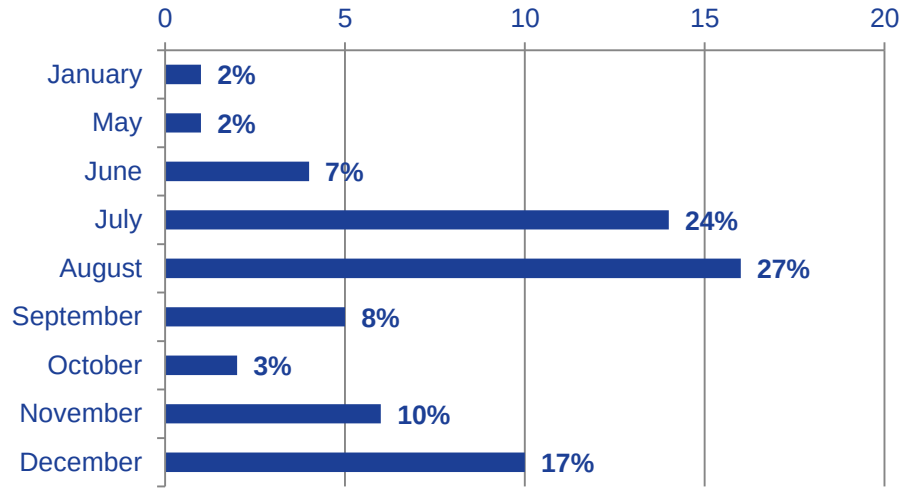
DR3. What are the two busiest days of the week for this business?

Out of 20 responses:



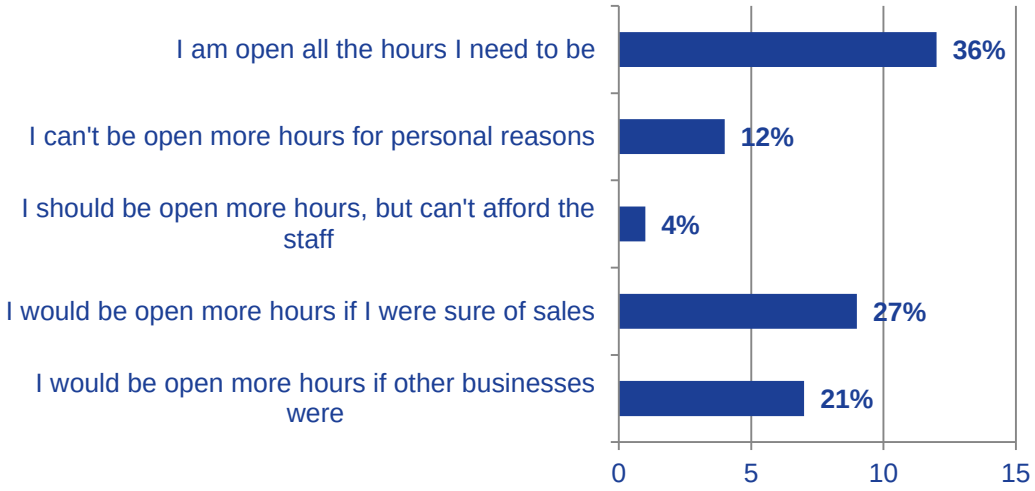
DR4. What are the busiest months of the year for this business?

Out of 20 responses:



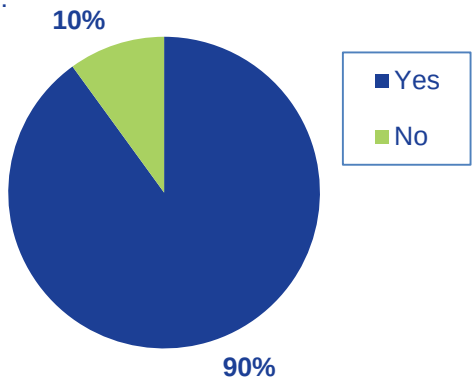
DR5. What are your thoughts on store hours?

Out of 20 responses:



DR6a. Do community events/festivals increase sales in your business?

Out of 20 responses:



DR6b. If yes, please specify which events:

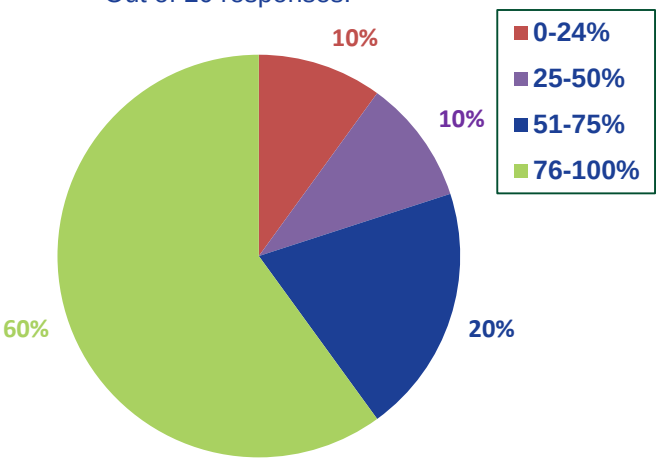
- All events
- Car show
- Antique show
- Yard sale
- Artist tour
- Home and Garden Tour
- Christmas in Merrickville
- Garage sale
- CP Train
- Makers market

Customers/Clients

DR7. Please indicate the percentage of customers/clients activity that are:

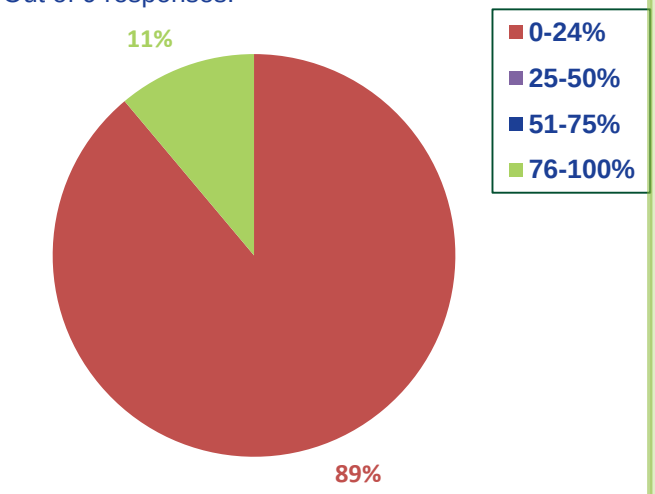
Foot Traffic:

Out of 20 responses:



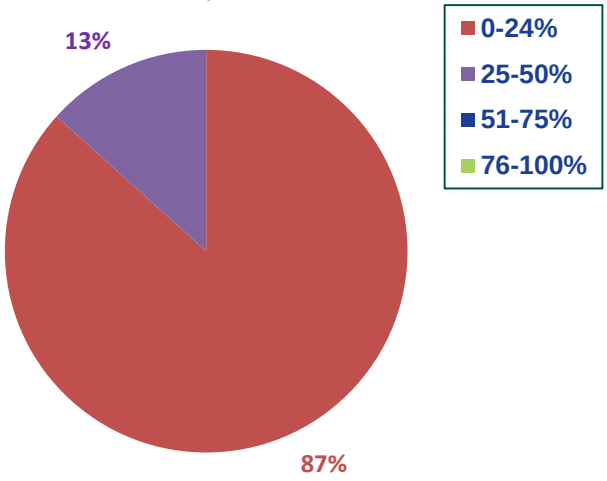
Telephone based:

Out of 9 responses:

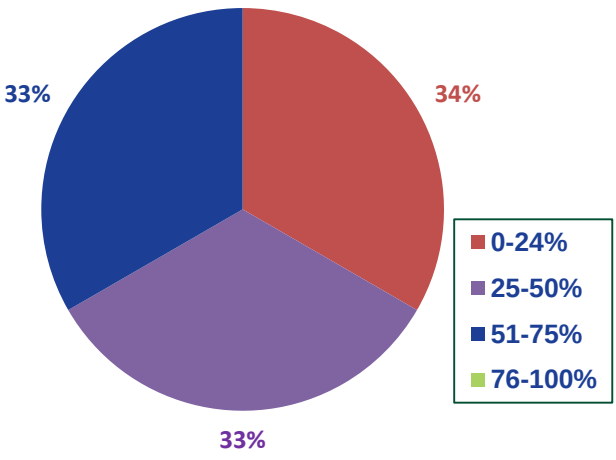


Internet based:

Out of 15 responses:

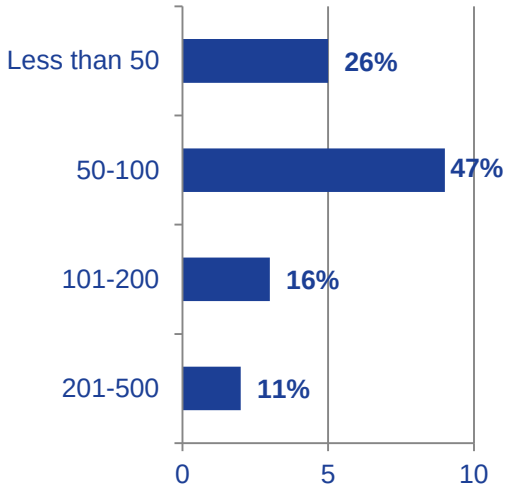


Other (unspecified):



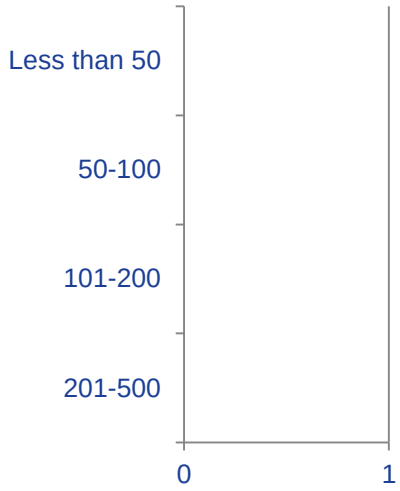
DR8a. How many customers/clients visit your business each day during the summer months of May to October?

Out of 19 responses:



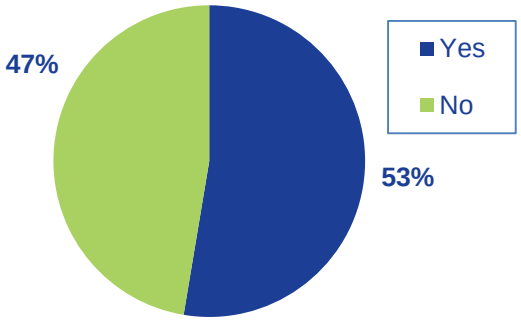
DR8b. How many customers/clients visit your business each day during the winter months of November to April?

Not answered.



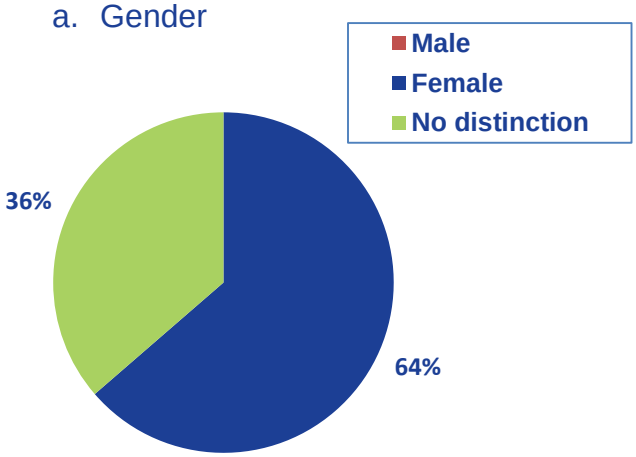
DR9. Do you have specific target markets?

Out of 19 responses:

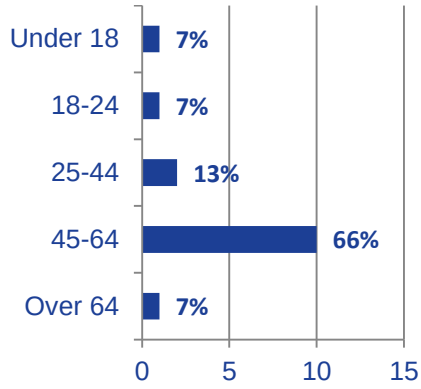


DR10. Please describe your business' target market, regarding:

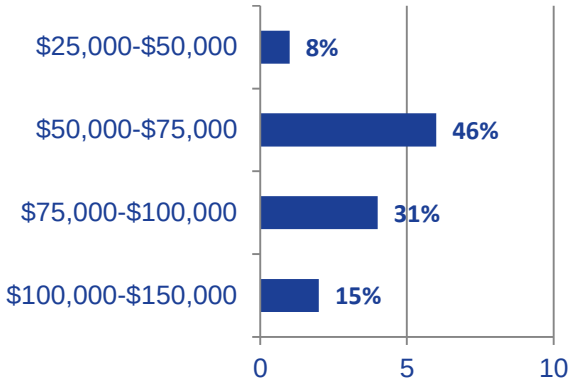
a. Gender



b. Age

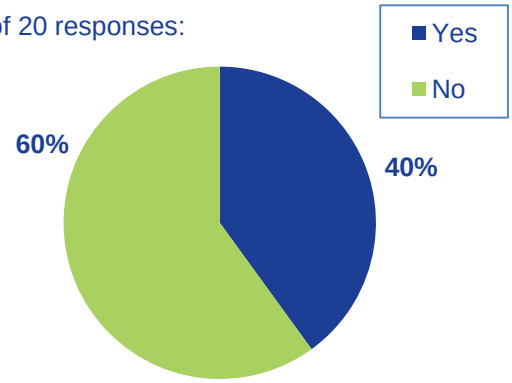


c. Household income



DR11. Do you track where your customers are from?

Out of 20 responses:



Business Mix

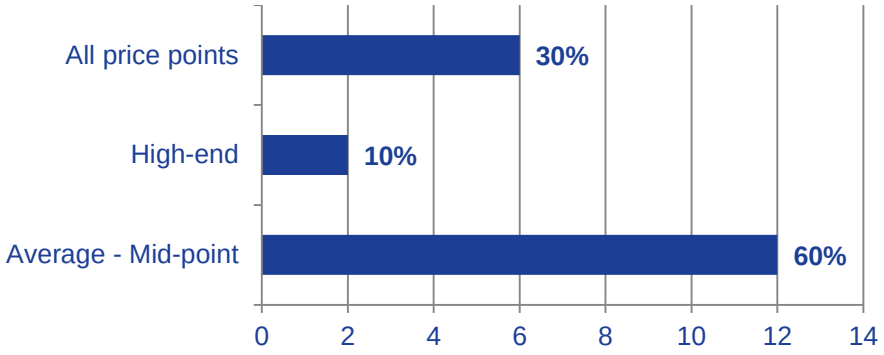
DR12. Please list three products and/or services that separate your business from your competition.

Products and/or Services	Total
Locally made	6
Art	4
Handmade	4
Artisanal food	3
Live demonstration/workshops	3
Custom	3
Bilingual	1
Antiques	1
Lighting products	1
Water fountains	1
Brand	1
Children's toys and books	1
Specialize in Casting	1
Trousers/clothing	1
Product knowledge	1
Size of business	1

Products and/or Services	Total
Product knowledge	1
German brand of product	1
Flexible hours	1
Collectibles	1
Clocks	1
Pottery	1
Import from UK	1
Candles	1
Pricing	1
Fine crafts	1
Direct contact/phone app	1
Unique services	1
Location	1
Customer service	1
Sausage rolls	1
Tea Towels	1
Glass	1
Parking	1

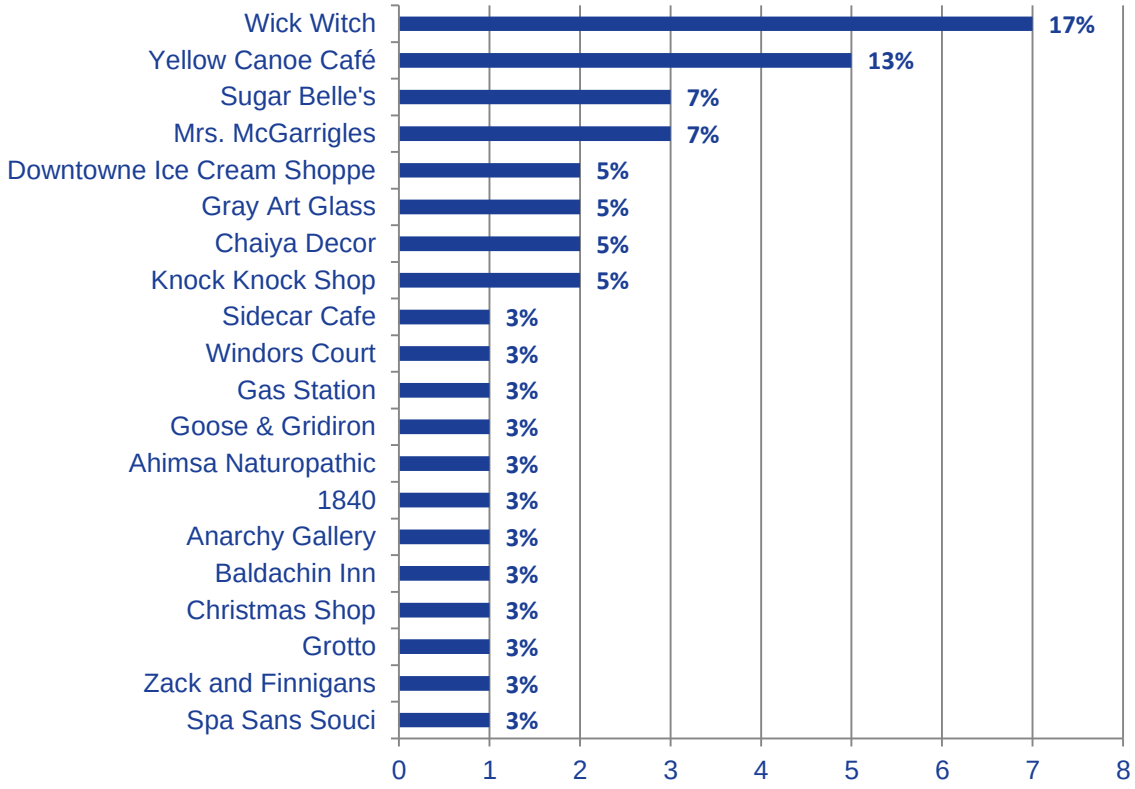
DR13. Relative to other businesses in your trade area, what price point do you target?

Out of 20 responses:



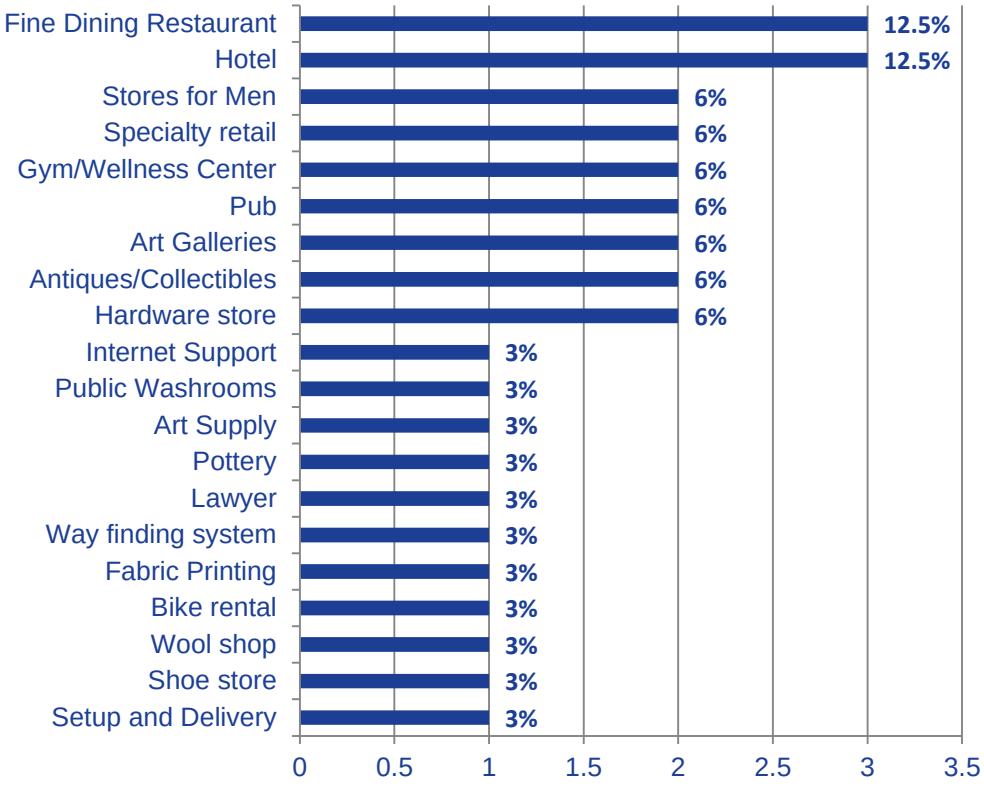
DR14. What three existing downtown businesses/services complement this business the most?

Out of 20 responses:



DR15. With this business in mind, what three additional businesses/services would you most like to see available downtown?

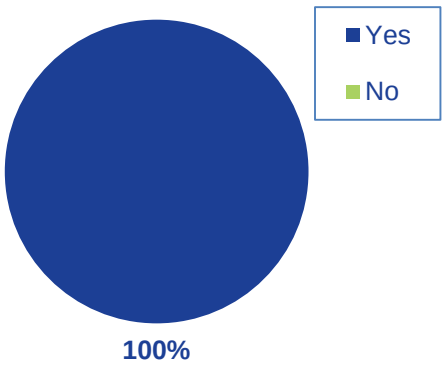
Out of 20 responses:



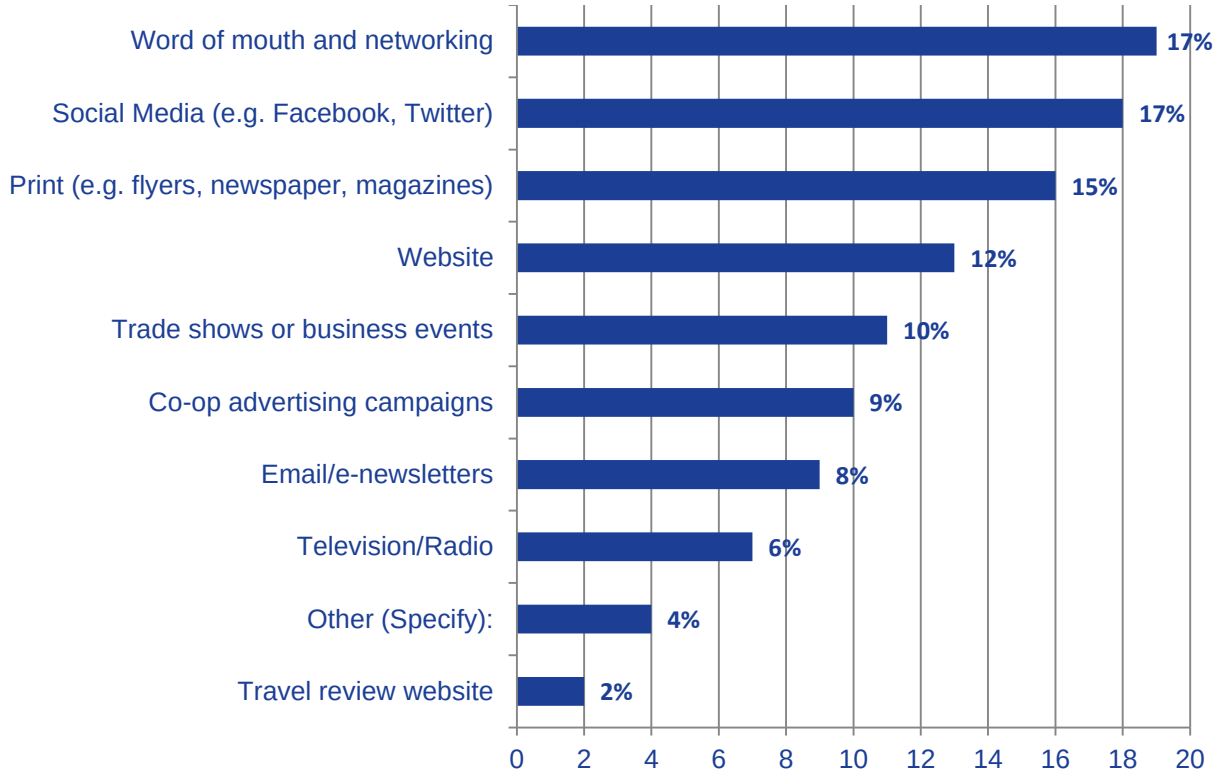
Advertising

DR16. Does your business advertise?

Out of 20 responses:

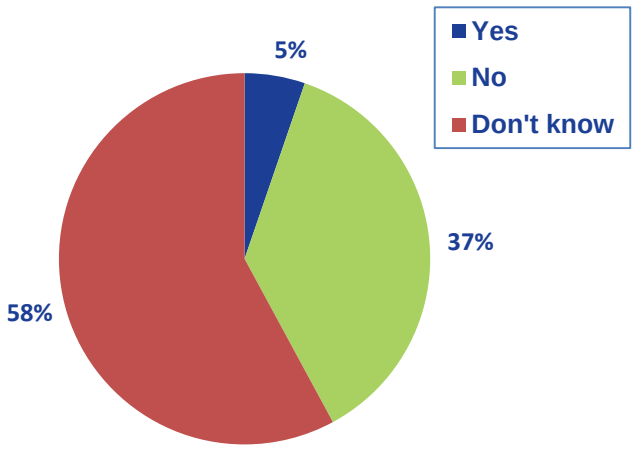


What methods do you use to promote your business?



DR17a. Do you know if your community offers any financial assistance programs to its businesses?

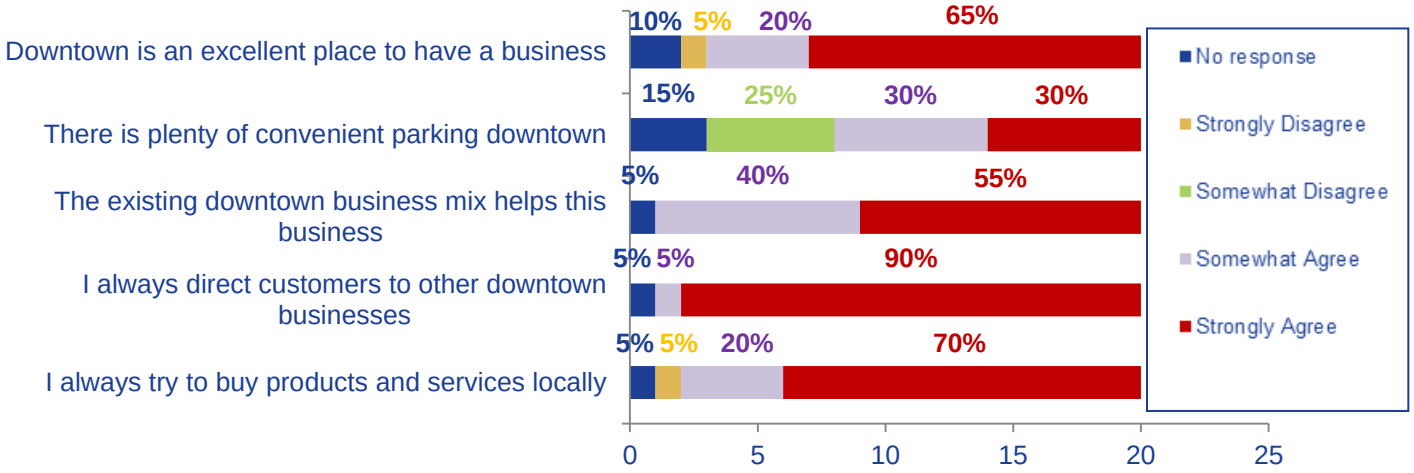
Out of 19 responses:

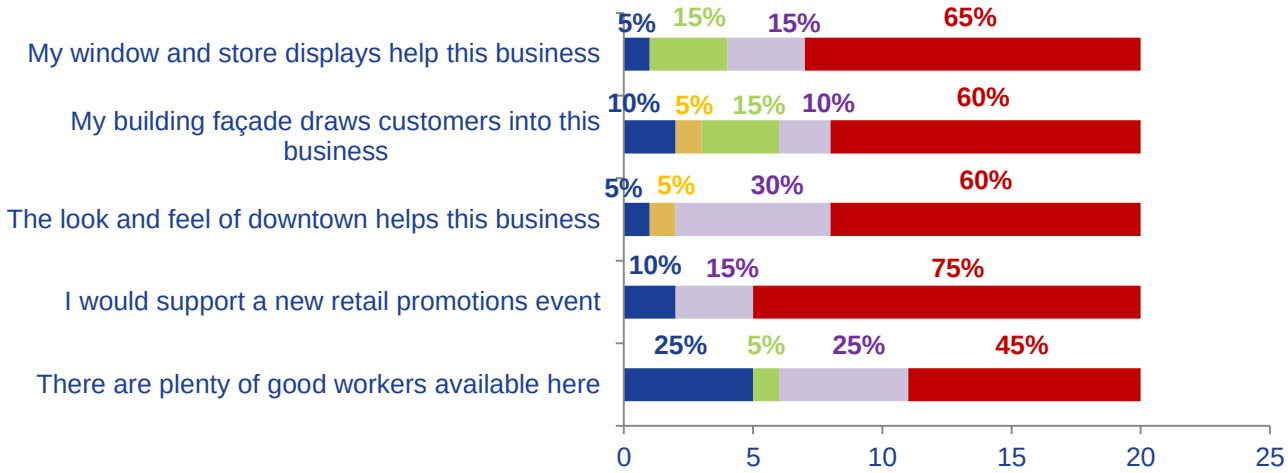


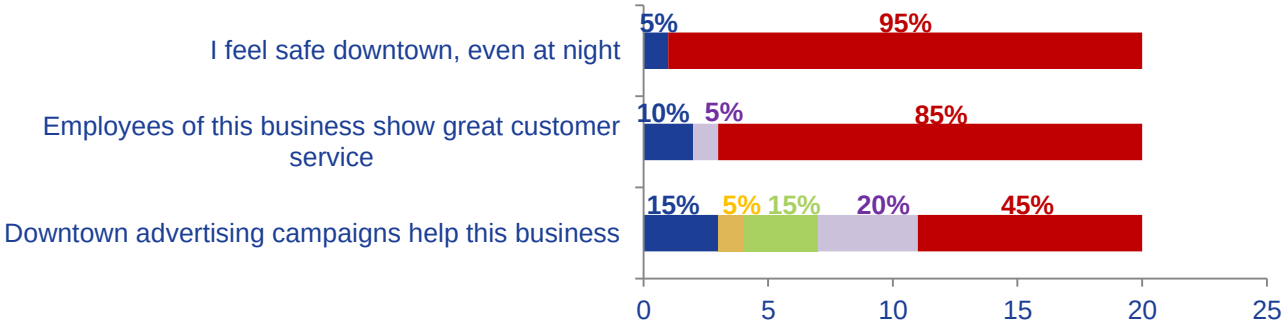
DR17b. If yes, indicate which of the following types of incentives are available and their potential applicability to your business.

Chamber offers co-op advertising, 20% paid.

DR18. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

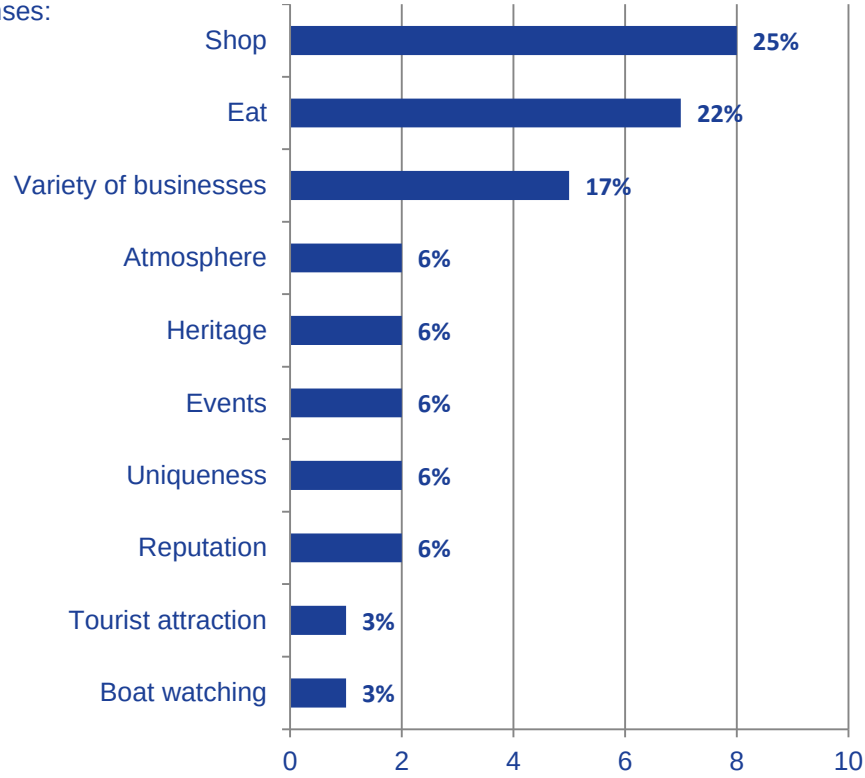






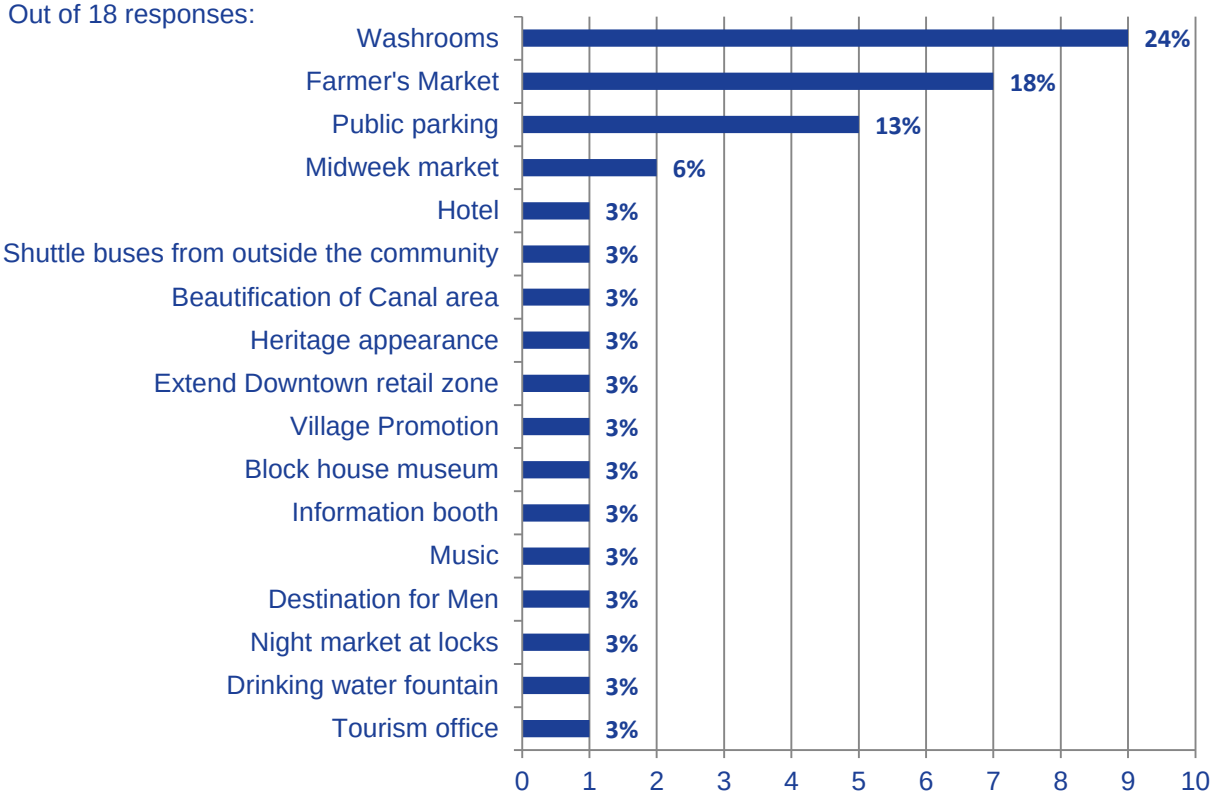
DR19. What are the two main reasons people visit downtown?

Out of 18 responses:



DR20. What three community assets would you most like to see developed in the downtown?

Out of 18 responses:



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PREPARATORY SCHOOL
SINCE 2022
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STRONG BUSINESS STRONG COMMUNITIES

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317 Brock Street West
Merrickville, ON K0G 1N0

United Counties of Leeds and Grenville
Economic Development Office
32 Wall Street, Suite 300
Brockville, ON K6V 4R9