



Elk Valley
Economic Initiative



Photo credit: *Jody Christopherson*

Elkford Business Retention & Expansion Report

SPRING 2022



ABOUT THE EVEI

The Elk Valley Economic Initiative has members representing the City of Fernie, the District of Sparwood, the District of Elkford, as well as each communities' Chambers of Commerce. We are supported by representatives from the BC Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation, Community Futures East Kootenay, Columbia Basin Trust, Economic Trust of the Southern Interior, and Teck Coal Limited as the industry partner.

The purpose of the Initiative is to collaboratively pursue regional economic development projects and initiatives in the Elk Valley, striving to expand opportunities for existing businesses, attract new ones and diversify the types of businesses. In addition, we aim to increase the number of permanent, full-time residents who spend their money locally thereby contributing to the region's sustainability.

The Elk Valley Economic Initiative will champion, support and articulate opportunities for projects and initiatives while creating a network and increasing communications among individuals and organizations involved in economic development.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes findings from a business retention and expansion (BRE) survey conducted online via Survey Monkey by the Elk Valley Economic Initiative for businesses operating in the Elk Valley. 318 individual business responses were received, amounting to approximately 1 out of 3 licensed businesses in the Elk Valley. 114, or 35.8%, of these business responses identified as operating in Elkford. This report is focused exclusively on these businesses and was written in tandem with the Elk Valley BRE report which encompasses all business responses.

BRE is an effective economic development tool that encourages local businesses to stay and grow in the community through identifying and responding to their needs. The key research findings below summarize the data obtained in the BRE survey, then the next steps and potential action items outline recommendations partner organizations could use to improve the business climate of Elkford. The appendix section showcases the full quantitative data obtained from Elkford businesses in the BRE survey.

Challenges identified in this report are not necessarily unique to the Elkford, however it is important that specific supports and action items are developed for the communities' businesses to stimulate a strong economic climate.

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

(n = 114)

Company Information

32.5%

of businesses identified as operating **only in Elkford**

63.2%

of businesses identified as operating in **all three communities** (Elkford, Sparwood & Fernie)

37.1%

of businesses reported an average gross **revenue of under \$250,000**

The highest number of businesses are classified as **"Construction", "Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services"** and **"Retail"** under the NAICS at

24%, 15%, and 11%

respectively

Cost of doing business

was identified as the biggest challenge facing Elkford businesses **other than labour**

34.8%

of businesses in Elkford have **been in operation for over 20 years** compared to

31.3%

of businesses that have **been in operation from 0-4 years**

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

(n = 114)

Workforce

53.3%

of businesses stated **employee recruitment** has been a problem in the last 3 years while

26.2%

of businesses stated **employee retention** has been a problem in the last 3 years

46.3%

of businesses expect their number of employees to **increase** over the next 3 years, while

2.8%

of businesses expect their number of employees to **decrease**

“Lack of skilled workforce”

was the **second highest ranked community weakness**, tied with **“Available Space”**

Lack of skilled staff

was listed as the highest ranked **major barrier of expansion** by

46.6%

of businesses

69.6%

of businesses experiencing employee recruitment issues stated that **“lack of applicants”** was an underlining issue

The average number of **full-time employees** at a business is

8*

(mean calculation)

**Teck has been removed from the data to avoid skewing the results*

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

(n = 114)

Housing

49.5%

of businesses listed housing as "**Very to extremely important**" to their business success

Housing was listed as both an underlining issue regarding **employee recruitment (41.1%)** and **employee retention (44.4%)**

35.8%

of businesses listed housing as a **top community weakness** as a place to do business, the highest ranked community weakness

Lack of housing

was selected as the **third biggest challenge** facing businesses (other than labour) behind "**cost of doing business**" and "**supply chain**"

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

(n = 114)

Business Expansion & Growth

47.3%

of businesses listed their current **state of business as growing** (customers know about your product / services and revenue is increasing)

90.8%

of businesses stated they have at least **one barrier of growth**

The highest ranked major barriers to growth were "**Lack of skilled staff**", and "**Finance**" at

46.6%
and
31%

respectively

61%

of businesses stated they **plan to expand their business** in the next 3 years

Lack of staff

was listed by

18.9%

of businesses as to **why they are not expanding**

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

(n = 37)

Businesses only operating in Elkford

41.9%

of businesses only operating in Elkford listed an **average gross revenue under \$25,000**

The largest business industry for these businesses was listed as

**“Retail”, then
“Arts,
Entertainment,
& Recreation”
and “Food
Services”**

**“Lack of customers” and
“Marketing”**

were listed as biggest challenges facing business behind only **“Cost of doing business”**

48%

of business only operating in Elkford listed **“Isolated location”** as a top community weakness

The **top desired business support** that is currently not available is

“Marketing training”

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

(n = 114)

Additional Findings

Construction

was the highest ranked sector to attract to Elkford **that would benefit businesses**

The average lease rate (based on triple net lease) in Elkford is

\$14.18 per square foot

(weighted average calculation)

Businesses listed ***“Cultural / recreational amenities”*** and ***“Vibrant downtown”*** as ***“Not at all important”*** at

**36.8% and
36.2%**

respectively, the highest ranked category for both.

The **top 4 community strengths** as a place to do business were identified as ***“Customer loyalty”, “Stable economy”, “Supportive community”, and “Proximity of mines”***

14.7%

of businesses stated that they plan to **retire or sell their business** within the next 3-5 years

The top desired business supports that are currently not available are

“Business planning” and “Leadership / management training”



NEXT STEPS AND POTENTIAL ACTION ITEMS

Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) is a highly effective economic development approach if there is an ongoing cooperative effort between business, local government, and support organizations. Economic development is defined by programs, policies, or activities that seek to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for a community.

The results of this survey can be used by the EVEI, its support organizations, and local member organizations (the District of Elkford & the Elkford Chamber of Commerce), to make well informed and data driven decisions focused on supporting local businesses retention and expansion.

Through data analyzation, and based on the key research findings, the following action items have been identified to have the greatest impact on improving Elkford's business climate:

Workforce Attraction

53% of businesses operating in Elkford stated employee recruitment has been a problem in the last 3 years. Businesses experiencing employee recruitment issues have an average of 11 full time employees, while businesses not experiencing employee recruitment issues have an average of 2.5 employees. The major underlying issue affecting employee recruitment was identified as “Lack of applicants”. Lack of skilled staff was also a major issue affecting Elkford businesses with 47% stating “lack of skilled staff” is a major barrier to expansion and “lack of skilled workforce” was the second highest ranked community weakness. With 46% of businesses expecting their number of employees to increase over the next 3 years, this issue will only continue to worsen unless specific action items are implemented to address the workforce shortage.

While increasing workforce housing, covered in the next section, will greatly help workforce attraction to Elkford, it is not a single solution. To help address the shortage of workers, especially skilled workers, the District of Elkford should:

DEVELOP A COMMUNITY WIDE LABOUR FORCE STRATEGY

The emphasis of this strategy would be on attracting and retaining a skilled workforce. A coordinated workforce strategy will create a positive impact on the community of Elkford by working towards the business challenges identified in the survey data. The labour market strategy can be multi-faceted, and the recommendations below highlight the first steps towards a successful strategy. For reference, two examples of completed labour market strategies are the “Cariboo Chilcotin Labour Market Strategy” and “BC’s Northeast Region Labour Market Strategy.” There are opportunities, including funding grants, for the EVEL to develop an official Elk Valley wide labour market strategy, supported by the District of Elkford, and broken down by community. A regional approach removes duplication, strengthens the findings, and decreases the cost and work burden for the communities.



FOCUS ON BARRIERS TO LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION

The largest barrier identified for labour market participation was housing, which is covered in the next section. The next barriers were cost of living and transient population. Childcare was also listed as an issue impacting employee retention for businesses at 11%. Addressing these issues will increase labour force participation and applicants for jobs openings at businesses. Action items listed throughout this report will be instrumental in reducing the labour market barriers identified above. For example, quantifying the transient population, as listed in the fourth recommendation below, would be the first step in addressing the transient population barrier to labour market participation.

Workforce Attraction



MARKET ELKFORD AS A PLACE TO LIVE, WORK, AND PLAY

The District of Elkford’s new website is a great start to this recommendation, and work should continue on updating the website with relevant material to help entice workers to move to Elkford. The Chamber of Commerce should also ensure this information is readily available on their website. The EVEI’s Elkford investment profile will focus on highlighting data that promotes Elkford as a place to live and work, in an easy to digest format. Community strengths identified in this report would be a strong guideline for the type of marketing material the District may want to focus on. Developing a digital marketing package is expected to be the most beneficial for local business workforce attraction, allowing businesses to utilize the package themselves, and creating a greater marketing reach.



OBTAIN ADDITIONAL DATA ON LABOUR FORCE REQUIREMENTS

Further data on the Elkford labour market and the classification of workers required by businesses would be beneficial to a concise labour market strategy and create a baseline for future workforce attraction work. It is recommended that the District of Elkford include a survey of Elkford’s shadow population, defined as “someone who resides in a municipality on a seasonal basis for a given period of time but has a residence elsewhere”, to ensure the labour force data is accurate. This survey could also include questions on housing requirements, allowing the District to obtain housing data for the shadow population as outlined in the “workforce housing” action items.

Workforce Attraction



PROMOTE AND SUPPORT EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

There are a wide variety of employment programs that focus on workforce attraction and development offered through the BC Government, Kootenay Employment Services, and Columbia Basin Trust. The Elkford Chamber of Commerce should support these programs and share them with local businesses, with the aim to decrease the number of employees struggling with employee recruitment.

In the future, with additional labour force data, specific training and development programs should be created that support staff development as identified by industry needs. Workforce skill development and training programs have been identified to lessen the cost of doing business in addition to reducing employee recruitment and retention issues. The District of Elkford should ensure they support these labour force development programs by offering their services and ability to build awareness in the community.



ATTEND “WORK IN FERNIE” SESSION FOR WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT

The District and Chamber should attend the information session, hosted by Tourism Fernie and the Fernie Chamber of Commerce, to discuss the job marketing site “Work in Fernie” and whether this website could be expanded to market the Elk Valley as a whole. Organizations can obtain more information on the recruit efforts produced from the website and discuss if a regional approach, spearheaded by the three Chambers of Commerce, is the best solution to actively recruiting a workforce. Over time, a data driven out-of-market recruitment strategy should be developed as one of the pillars of the labour market strategy, expanding on the initial recommendation of “Market Elkford as a place to live, work, and play.”

Workforce Housing

The lack of housing in Elkford was listed as the 3rd biggest challenge facing business and housing was identified as an underlining issue regarding both employee recruitment and retention. Nearly 50% of businesses listed housing as “Very to extremely important” to their business success. For strong business retention and economic growth in Elkford, an increased supply of housing is crucial. The following recommendations can help increase the housing supply.



UTILIZE PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH THE ELKFORD HOUSING COMMITTEE

This new organization was created to help tackle the housing issue in Elkford. The Elkford Housing Committee would benefit from attending the roundtable discussion, as outlined in the Elk Valley BRE report, on how the EVEI can help organizations in creating solutions for affordable housing. They should also come to the table in a regional manner, to share data and ideas, as well as discuss a regional approach to housing, an issue affecting all communities in the Elk Valley. This could create a greater chance of obtaining funding grants that support the development of workforce & affordable housing.



REVIEW & CONSIDER WAYS TO IMPROVE DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES BASED ON THE EVEI QUALITATIVE DATA PROVIDED TO THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT

In the Elk Valley BRE report, it was recommended that the EVEI bring forward qualitative data obtained in the BRE survey about housing barriers in local government regulations and overall developmental constraints. Reviewing and modifying these processes can stimulate the development of new housing construction. Special consideration should be put on reviewing options that will encourage an increase of affordable housing.

Workforce Housing



OBTAIN FURTHER DATA ON THE ELKFORD RENTAL MARKET

As mentioned in the 2022 Elkford Housing Needs report, further data is required for an accurate rental market analysis as there is uncertainty around Elkford’s shadow population. Obtaining this data could coincide with the recommendation, “Obtain additional data on labour force requirements” as listed in the previous section. Elkford has limited housing options for renters and as noted in the housing report, “Current rental vacancy rates are 0.0% (and have been so for several years now).” As such, there are inadequate opportunities for temporary and seasonal workers to rent in Elkford. This affects local businesses, impacting employee recruitment & retention and decreasing their customer base. Obtaining this data will be the first step in developing a plan that encourages the development of affordable, short-term rental housing for employees. A good example of a report which obtained further housing data would be Sparwood’s 2021 Housing Market Study.

Business Retention and Expansion

91% of businesses stated they have at least one barrier to growth. Responding to these barriers will be the most efficient way to improve business retention and expansion. Lack of skilled staff was the highest ranked barrier, which has been addressed in the previous section, with finance the second highest ranked barrier and available space tied for third.

FINANCE

In addition to the action item outlined in the Elk Valley BRE report, “Assistance exploring financing options”, where Community Futures East Kootenay will host an online financing options workshop, in which the Elkford Chamber and members should attend, there are two recommendations the District of Elkford could do to improve the business finance barrier.



REVIEW DISTRICT FEES AND CHARGES RELATED TO BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Cost of doing business was identified as the biggest challenge facing Elkford businesses (other than labour). While most costs accrued by businesses are not applicable to municipal government, the District of Elkford can review their fees and charges that affect business retention and expansion. The District should identify where reductions in fees and charges could result in minimizing the financial barrier to growth businesses are facing. Special consideration could be put on micro & home-based businesses, where a reduce in costs would make a greater difference and may be a catalyst for business development and growth. The District has recently passed a “Revitalization Tax Exemption” bylaw that addresses this specific recommendation and ensuring businesses are aware of it, and any other additional fee decreases for business development, will be beneficial to helping local business grow.



MEET WITH A CREDIT UNION TO GAIN AN UNDERSTANDING OF BUSINESS LOAN OFFERINGS

A District representative could meet with a local credit union to gain a better understanding of their business loan offerings. This recommendation could help the District gain further understanding of home-based businesses and the financial barrier to growth they are experiencing, as well as build awareness of the business loan environment.

There could be opportunities for the Chamber of Commerce to enact programs with local financial institutions to support local business expansions. A focus should be on loans for small businesses where micro-loans could minimize the financial barrier to growth and support small business development in the community.

Business Retention and Expansion

AVAILABLE SPACE



WORK WITH THE EVEI TO ENSURE THE REGIONAL LAND INVENTORY IS UP TO DATE

In 2020 an employment lands inventory research project was conducted by Selkirk College and is available online. The goal of the project was to address the issue of “access to land to accommodate existing business expansion and future investment and economic growth”. The EVEI is exploring creating a webpage to highlight this resource and the District of Elkford should ensure all relevant information is up to date on the land inventory, as well as identifying an appropriate contact for businesses that are looking to expand or secure a new business site. The District should build awareness of publicly available commercial and industrial sites in Elkford through the land inventory and public communication with local business. If the District believes that publishing their own inventory of public lands is more efficient than the land inventory, that would be an effective replication of this action item.



CONSIDER AREAS FOR COMMERCIAL / INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION BY TAKING A PRO-ACTIVE APPROACH AND BUILDING COMMUNICATION WITH LOCAL BUSINESS

The District of Elkford is currently low on vacant lands for business expansion. Taking a pro-active approach to land development by considering undeveloped lands for expansion would reduce the “available land” barrier to growth experienced by businesses. The District could contact landowners of vacant commercial / industrial land to provide relevant information about developing or selling the land and ask if they are experiencing any barriers to this development. Selkirk Innovates, in previous BRE reports, recommended that local government work with local business to “understand existing and future business needs and assess land planning at a micro level.” This communication with business could create opportunities for land use designations and zonings that would benefit both local business and the community at large.

Micro & Home-based Business



GROW THE MARKET / CUSTOMER BASE

This was the largest issue affecting micro-businesses in Elkford. 48% of businesses only operating in Elkford listed “isolated location” as a top community weakness and “lack of customers” was listed as a biggest challenge facing Elkford only businesses.

The recommendations listed above for workforce attraction and housing will be key in growing the customer base by increasing permanent residents. For the District of Elkford, steps outlined in their official community plan under “7.12 Promote Elkford as a year-round tourism destination”, and “5.4.1 Build a vibrant and mixed-use District core” will benefit business only operating in Elkford by growing the market.

For the Elkford Chamber of Commerce, there are 3 options listed below that would contribute to growing the market and businesses customer base, in addition to two recommendations to better support micro & home-based business.

*Option 1) **Community marketing campaign that extends past the Elk Valley.*** This could tie in with the District based workforce attraction recommendation of “Market Elkford as a place to live, work, and play”.

*Option 2) **Offering an online portal where local businesses can sell their wares together.*** This could be realized in conjunction to the below recommendation of “Offer marketing training”.

*Option 3) **Shop local campaign.*** The Elkford Chamber of Commerce received funding from the Columbian Basin Trust for a shop local campaign in 2021. Applying for this funding, or another funding source to continue the efforts of a shop local campaign will benefit micro & home-based business and build awareness of their offerings.

Micro & Home-based Business



OFFER MARKETING TRAINING

This was highlighted as the top training currently not available for businesses only operating in Elkford, as well as a top 3 biggest challenge facing businesses. The Elkford Chamber of Commerce should start offering training and supports for businesses looking to increase their knowledge of marketing. The EVEI will also be working on consolidating business skill training on their website to offer a beneficial and time saving resource for local businesses, with a focus on “E-commerce / digital adaptation / online presence” and “Marketing” training.



PROVIDE BUSINESS PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT / LEADERSHIP TRAINING

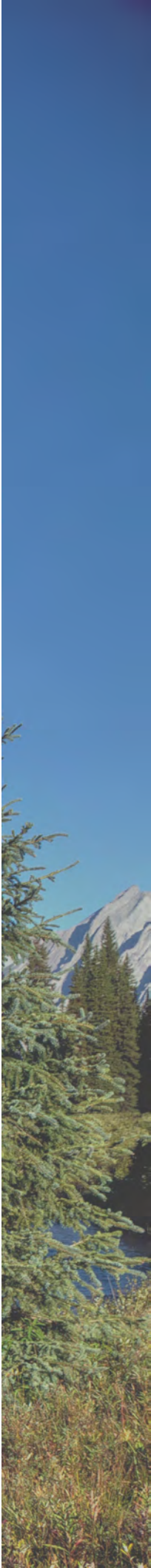
These were the top two desired business supports identified by Elkford businesses. As identified in the Elk Valley BRE report, the Elkford Chamber of Commerce, through a joint chamber initiative, should host two workshops with industry experts to provide training and knowledge for Elk Valley businesses and record the sessions for future use. These supports can help improve business retention and expansion, as well as employee retention for local business.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This report showcases BRE survey responses by businesses operating in Elkford. The BRE survey was conducted online from October 22nd to December 22nd, 2021, for registered businesses in the Elk Valley. Survey responses by businesses that do not operate in Elkford were removed for this report, as reflected in the appendix data. Additional data was obtained for businesses that *only* operate in Elkford and highlighted in the key research findings. The BRE survey and reports came to fruition via a funding grant from ETSI-BC (Economic Trust of the Southern Interior) with support from the Province of British Columbia. The Fernie Chamber of Commerce received full funding on behalf of the EVEI to hire an Elk Valley Economic Recovery Advisor based on the EVEI's 2021 strategic plan that identified the need for Elk Valley wide data and a better understanding of business needs to enhance business retention and expansion. The Elk Valley Economic Recovery Advisor was responsible for the project and was supported by the EVEI committee and its partner organizations.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

1. Identify business development needs / challenges
2. Create goal-oriented action items to allow the EVEI committee to respond to a business development need / challenge
3. Complete Elk valley wide market research & data collection to increase investment preparedness
4. Build awareness and connections between EVEI and Elk Valley business



EVEI COMMITTEE

VOTING MEMBERS

- **Shawna Bryant**
CEO, Founder of EV Ergonomics (Elkford Chamber of Commerce Representative)
- **Michael Boronowski**
Chief Administrative Officer, City of Fernie
- **Sharon Strom**
Coordinator Sustainability, Teck Coal Limited
- **Sheila Byers**
Sales Representative, Royal Lepage East Kootenay Realty (Sparwood Chamber of Commerce Representative)
- **Jeremy Johnston**
Director, Planning & Development Services, District of Elkford
- **Andy Cohen**
General Manager, Fernie Alpine Resort (Fernie Chamber of Commerce Representative)
- **Patrick Sorfleet**
Director of Planning and Development, District of Sparwood

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

- **Robyn Peel**
Community Economic Development Coordinator, Community Futures East Kootenay
- **Gerri Brightwell**
Regional Manager Central/East Kootenay of Rural Development Unit, Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation
- **Brad Parsell**
Executive Director of Fernie Chamber of Commerce, EVEI Coordinator
- **Kaylyn Gervais**
Manager, Community Relationships East, Columbia Basin Trust
- **Paul Wiest**
Business & Economic Development Consultant, ETSI-BC



BRE SURVEY CREATION

The survey was developed through a variety of methods to ensure the qualitative data captured would be accurate, relevant, and effective for long term economic development in the Elk Valley. The methods were as follows:

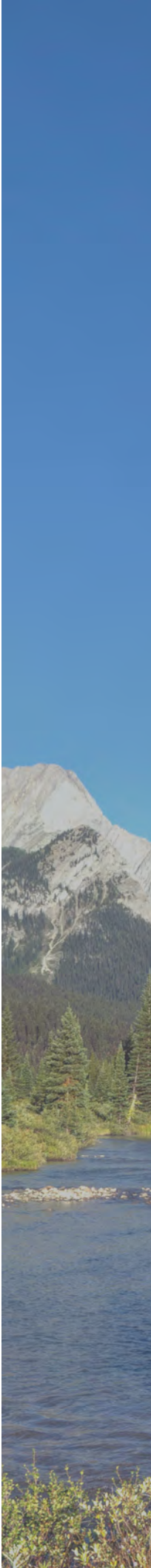
- The core of the BRE Survey was generated through material from Selkirk Innovates (formally the Columbia Basin Research Development Institute) and their 2015/16 BRE surveys on Fernie and Sparwood to ensure standardized data collection with additional material from more recent business surveys completed in Creston, Cranbrook, and Golden
- Meetings with 41 Elk Valley businesses to identify their current key issues and barriers to growth
- Meetings with individual EVEI committee members to discuss the current business climate and BRE survey to ensure the data obtained is beneficial for each community and the Elk Valley as a whole
- Meetings with Community Futures East Kootenay to consolidate all information sources into a working BRE survey, workshopping Elk Valley specific questions, and reviewing the overall goals of the survey to ensure each question was quantifiable and a building block for future economic development
- Meeting with Selkirk Innovates to certify all questions were non-leading, the answers were unbiased and quantifiable, and that the data captured was analytics based.
- Skip logic, through advanced branching, was built into the survey to increase the efficiency and completion rate of the survey. This allowed the survey to send businesses to different questions depending on their responses, skipping specific questions that were identified as non-applicable to certain businesses.

DATA COLLECTION

Survey data was obtained online via survey monkey. The Elk Valley Economic Recovery Advisor was solely responsible for the data collection and a focus was put on trying to contact every licensed business in the Elk Valley for a comprehensive data set.

Methods used to contact businesses and obtain responses were as follows:

- Direct email to 715 businesses operating in the Elk Valley
- 196 businesses called to request email addresses to send the survey link and to provide additional information about the EVEI and the BRE survey
- Direct Facebook messages to 29 businesses
- Working with each Chamber of Commerce to send the survey to their members via email distribution lists
- 400 EVEI marketing postcards mailed to business PO boxes in the Elk Valley
- Facebook ad campaign targeting businesses, seen by 3,250 people in the Elk Valley
- Advertising and articles in the Fernie Free Press, Fernie Fix, and on local radio
- Additional email marketing specifically to Inter-Community business license holders



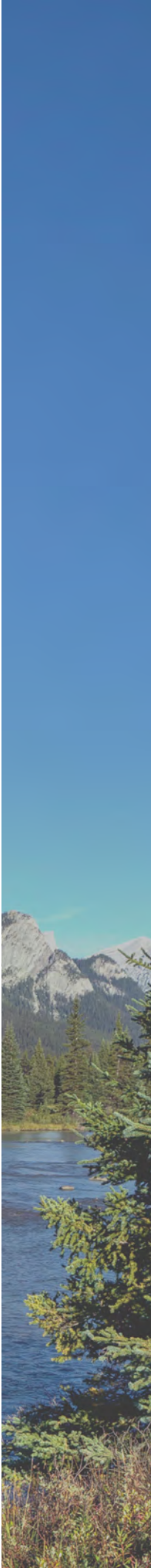
CONFIDENTIALITY

All data collected is stored in a password protected electronic format and only the paid contractor of the EVEI has access to the individual business answers from the BRE survey. All data released in each of the four BRE reports are quantitative and no individual business responses are used.

DATA ANALYSIS

The Elk Valley Economic Recovery Advisor, as the paid contractor of the EVEI, was responsible for the quantitative and qualitative data analysis of the BRE survey data. Quantitative data was analyzed using data software programs and descriptive statistics were obtained to summarize given data sets. To ensure robust and accurate data, with the support of Selkirk Innovates and Community Futures East Kootenay, statistical average calculations were utilized and data outliers were reviewed. Based on the results of the initial quantitative data, key research findings were presented to the EVEI committee, then recommendations based off these findings were written and compiled into four regional BRE reports (the Elk Valley, Fernie, Sparwood, and Elkford) by the Elk Valley Economic Recovery Advisor.

There is opportunity to conduct further data analysis on the survey data, broken down into a wide variety of business classifications. If there are any questions about the data, or an organization has identified a data point that could help with their economic development, please contact the EVEI at coordinator@theelkvalley.ca for further discussion.





SOURCES

- **Elk Valley Business Retention & Expansion 2021 Report:**
<https://theelkvalley.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Elk-Valley-BRE-Report-2021.pdf>
- **2020 Elkford Housing Needs Report:**
[https://elkford.civicweb.net/filepro/document/68670/Elkford%20Housing%20Needs%20Report%20-%20Final%20Report%20\(March%202021,%202022\).pdf](https://elkford.civicweb.net/filepro/document/68670/Elkford%20Housing%20Needs%20Report%20-%20Final%20Report%20(March%202021,%202022).pdf)
- **Sparwood Business Retention & Expansion 2015 Report:**
<https://theelkvalley.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2015-Sparwood-Business-Retention-Expansion-BRE-Survey-and-Report.pdf>
- **Elkford's 2010 Official Community Plan:**
<https://elkford.civicweb.net/filepro/documents/67670>



LIST OF FIGURES

- **Question 2:** Please select which communities in the Elk Valley that you operate in.
- **Question 3:** Is your business 51% or more owned by any the following groups?
- **Question 4:** What is your business industry?
- **Question 5:** What is the current state of your business?
- **Question 6:** How many years has your business been in operation?
- **Question 7:** If you think about the last 2-4 years, what is the average annual gross revenue of your company?
- **Question 8:** What is the typical number of employees at your business? (the owner classifies as an employee)? - with Teck Coal Limited removed
- **Question 9:** Do you expect the number of employees to change over the next 3 years?
- **Question 11:** What is the average hourly wage of your employees? Entry Level
- **Question 12:** What is the average hourly wage of your employees? Semi-Skilled
- **Question 13:** What is the average hourly wage of your employees? Skilled / Professional
- **Question 14:** Has employee recruitment been a problem in the last 3 years?
- **Question 15:** What are the underlining issues impacting employee recruitment for your business?
- **Question 16:** What strategies / factors have you employed that make employee recruitment not a problem?
- **Question 17:** Has employee retention been a problem in the last 3 years?
- **Question 18:** What are the underlining issues impacting employee retention for your business?
- **Question 19:** What strategies / factors have you employed that make employee retention not a problem?
- **Question 20:** What are the biggest challenges facing your business, other than labour? (Please select top 3)



LIST OF FIGURES

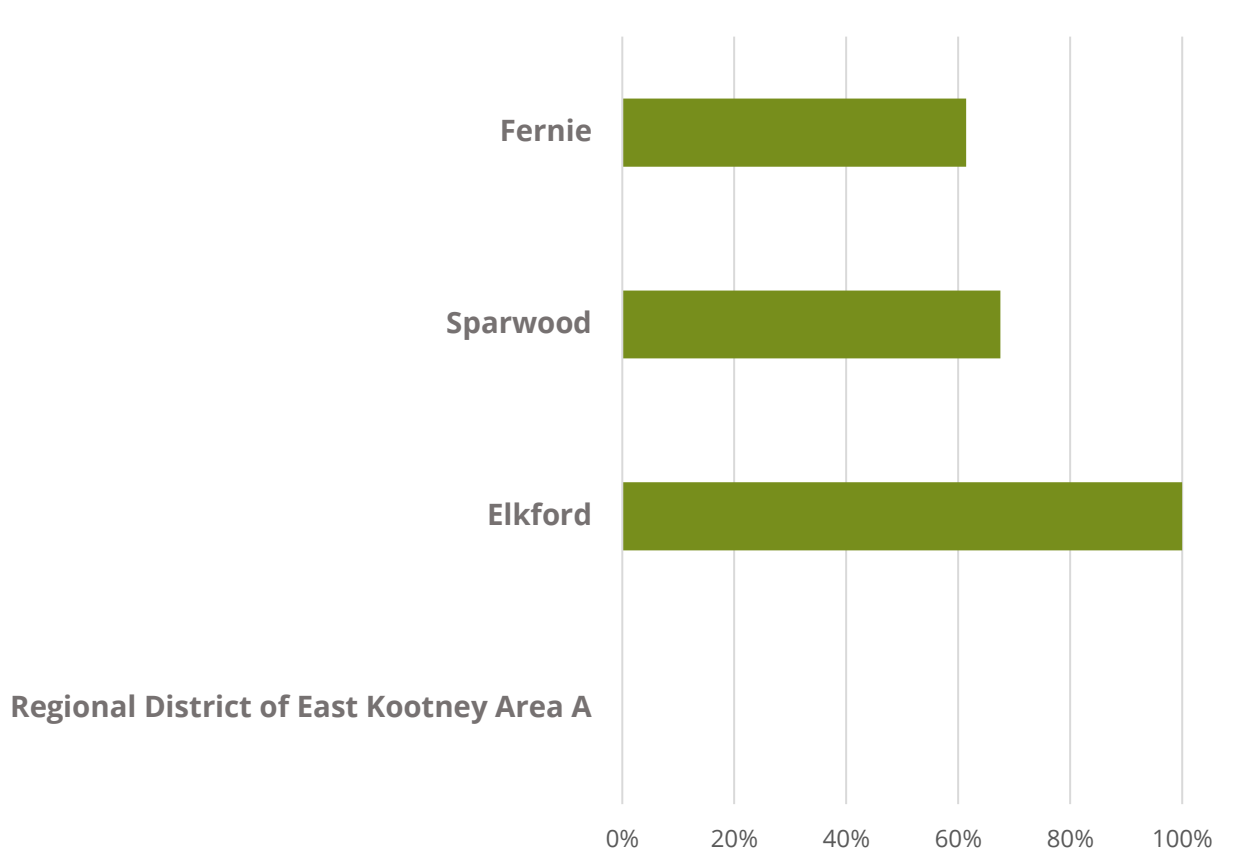
- **Question 22:** On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not important and 5 being extremely important, please rate how important the following categories are to your business's success.
- **Question 23:** What are the community's strengths as a place to do business? (Please select 1-3 answers)
- **Question 24:** What are the community's weaknesses as a place to do business? (Please select 1-3 answers)
- **Question 26:** Do you plan to expand your business in the next 3 years?
- **Question 27:** What are the major barriers for your expansion?
- **Question 28:** Why do you not plan on expanding?
- **Question 30:** Do you plan to retire or sell your business within the next 3-5 years?
- **Question 31:** How do you intend to exit the business?
- **Question 32:** What is the status of your business's building?
- **Question 33:** What is your current lease rate, based on triple net lease? (Lease agreement on a property whereby the tenant or lessee promises to pay all the expenses of the property, including real estate taxes, building insurance, and maintenance)
- **Question 34:** Do you have any barriers to updating your building, if needed?
- **Question 35:** If an effort was made to attract a business, sector, or industry to the Elk Valley, which options below would benefit you? (Please pick up to 2 answers)
- **Question 36:** What products or services, if any, are you purchasing from outside the area for which you would like to have a local supplier?
- **Question 37:** Do you have any desired business supports that are not currently available to you?

APPENDIX



Q2 Please select which communities in the Elk Valley that you operate in

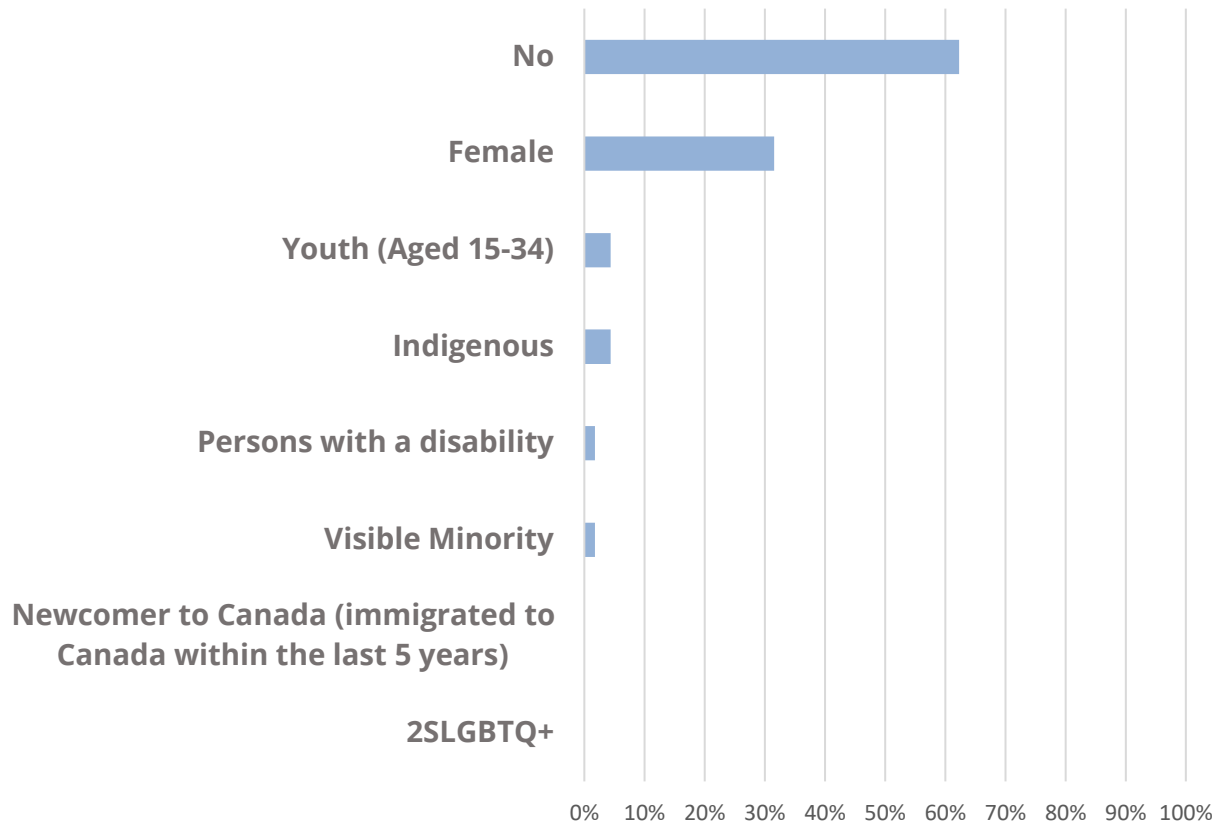
Answered: 114 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Fernie	61.40%	70
Sparwood	67.54%	77
Elkford	100.00%	114
Regional District of East Kootney Area A	0%	0
Total Respondents:		114

Q3 Is your business 51% or more owned by any the following groups?

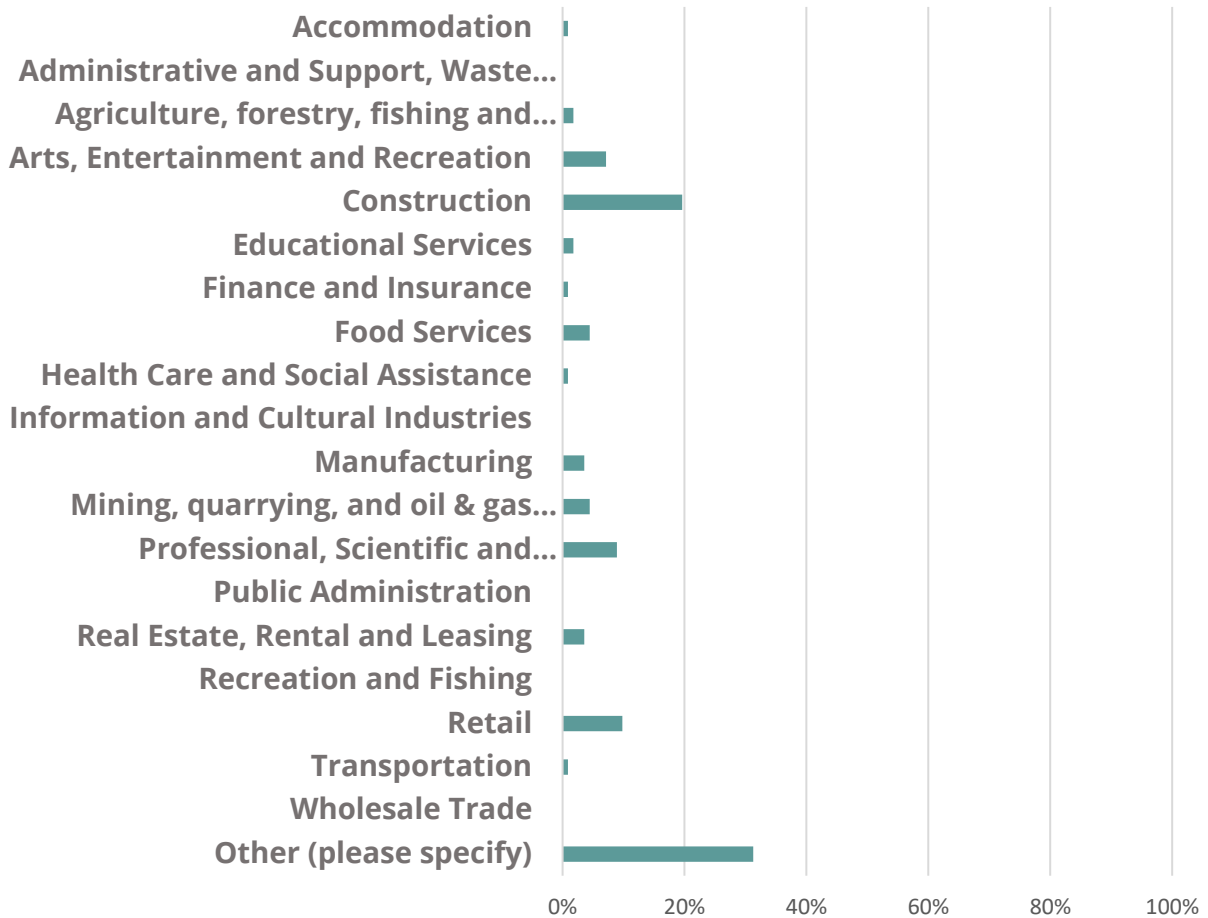
Answered: 114 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No	62.28%	71
Female	31.58%	36
Indigenous	4.39%	5
Youth (Aged 15-34)	4.39%	5
Visible Minority	1.75%	2
Persons with a disability	1.75%	2
Newcomer to Canada (immigrated to Canada within the last 5 years)	0.00%	0
2SLGBTQ+	0.00%	0
Total Respondents:		114

Q4 What is your business industry?

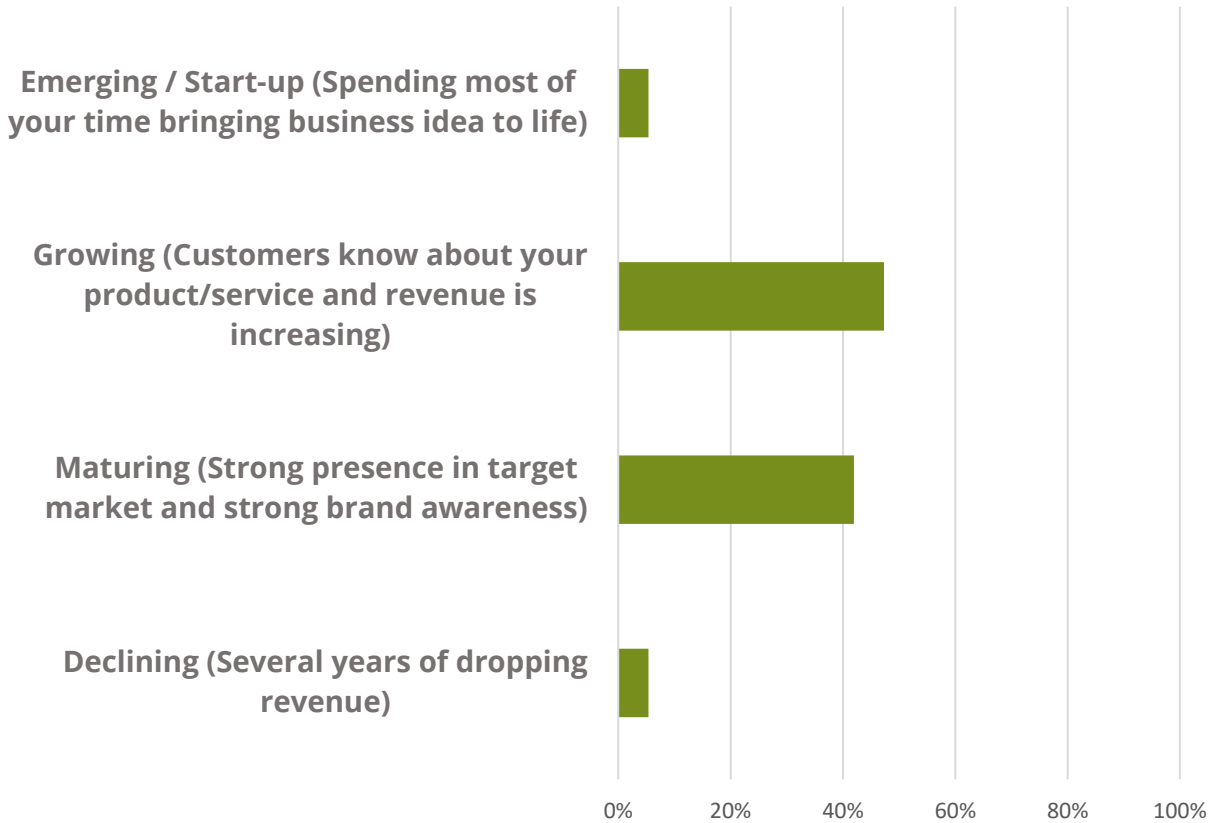
Answered: 112 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Accommodation	0.89%	1
Administrative and Support, Waste Management and Remediation Services	0.00%	0
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	1.79%	2
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	7.14%	8
Construction	19.64%	22
Educational Services	1.79%	2
Food Services	4.46%	5
Finance and Insurance	0.89%	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	0.89%	1
Information and Cultural Industries	0.00%	0
Manufacturing	3.57%	4
Mining, quarrying, and oil & gas extraction	4.46%	5
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	8.93%	10
Public Administration	0.00%	0
Recreation and Fishing	0.00%	0
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	3.57%	4
Retail	9.82%	11
Transportation	0.89%	1
Wholesale Trade	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	31.25%	35
Total Respondents:		112

Q5 What is the current state of your business?

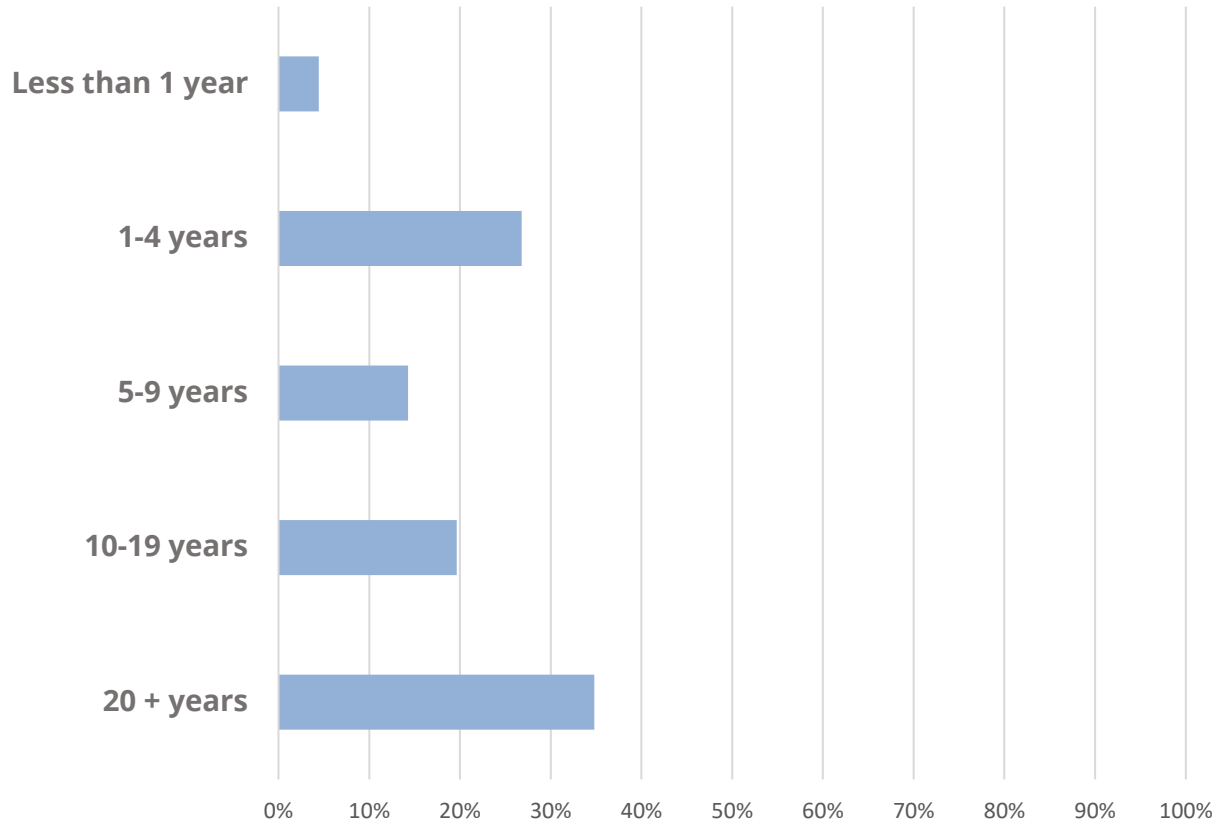
Answered: 112 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Emerging / Start-up (Spending most of your time bringing business idea to life)	5.36%	6
Growing (Customers know about your product/service and revenue is increasing)	47.32%	53
Maturing (Strong presence in target market and strong brand awareness)	41.96%	47
Declining (Several years of dropping revenue)	5.36%	6
Total Respondents:		112

Q6 How many years has your business been in operation?

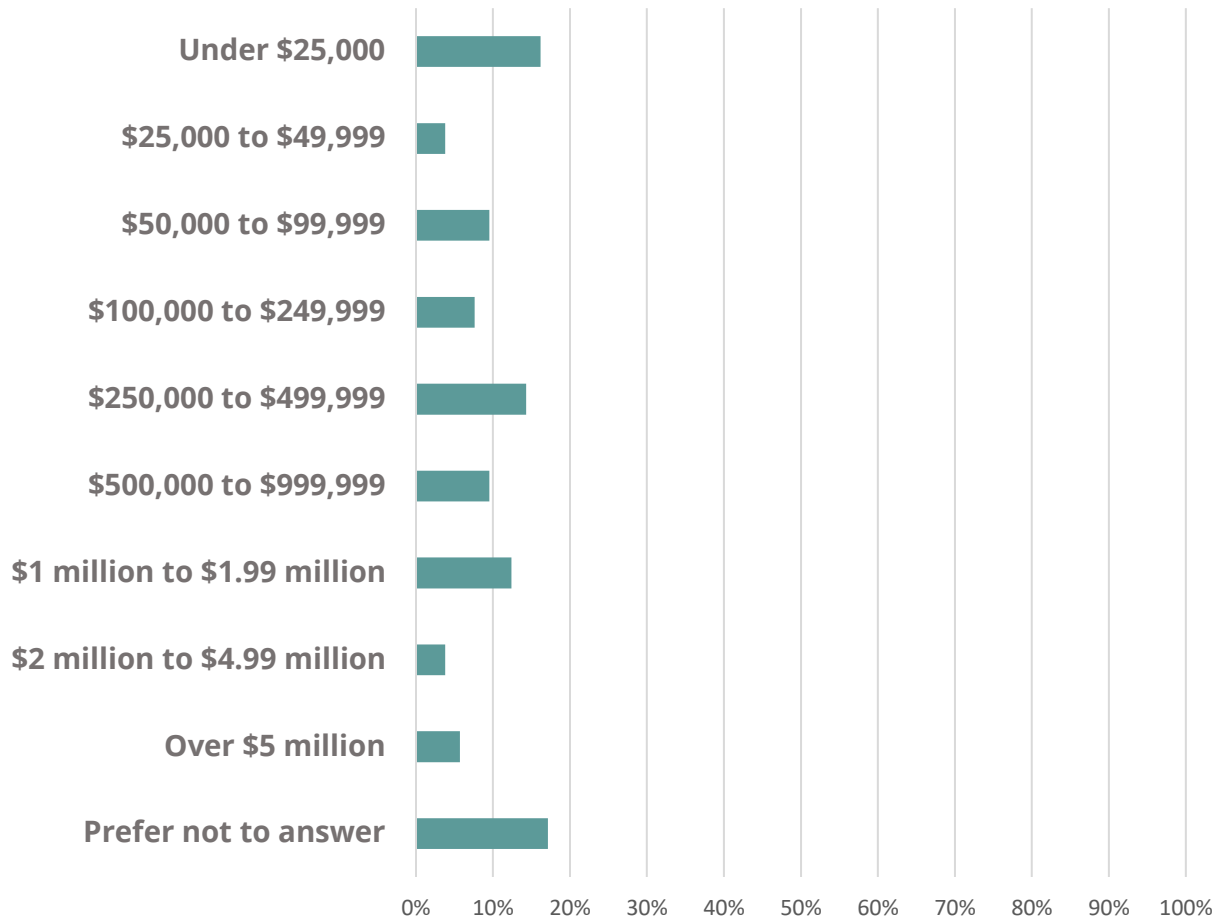
Answered: 112 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 1 year	4.46%	5
1-4 years	26.79%	30
5-9 years	14.29%	16
10-19 years	19.64%	22
20+ years	34.82%	39
Total Respondents:		112

Q7 If you think about the last 2-4 years, what is the average annual gross revenue of your company?

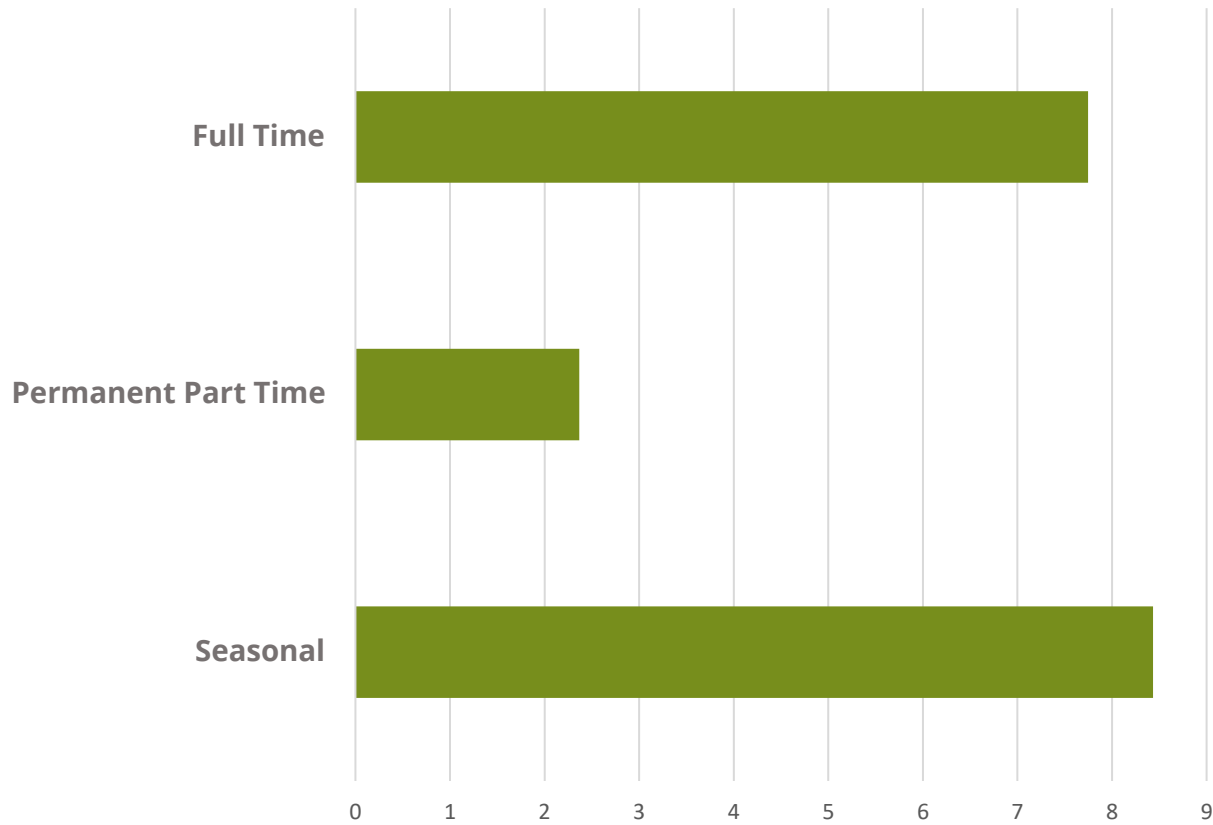
Answered: 105 Skipped: 9



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under \$25,000	16.19%	17
\$25,000 to \$49,999	3.81%	4
\$50,000 to \$99,999	9.52%	10
\$100,000 to \$249,999	7.62%	8
\$250,000 to \$499,999	14.29%	15
\$500,000 to \$999,999	9.52%	10
\$1 million to \$1.99 million	12.38%	13
\$2 million to \$4.99 million	3.81%	4
Over \$5 million	5.71%	6
Prefer not to answer	17.14%	18
Total Respondents:		105

Q8 What is the typical number of employees at your business? (the owner classifies as an employee)? - with Teck Coal Limited removed

Answered: 95 Skipped: 0

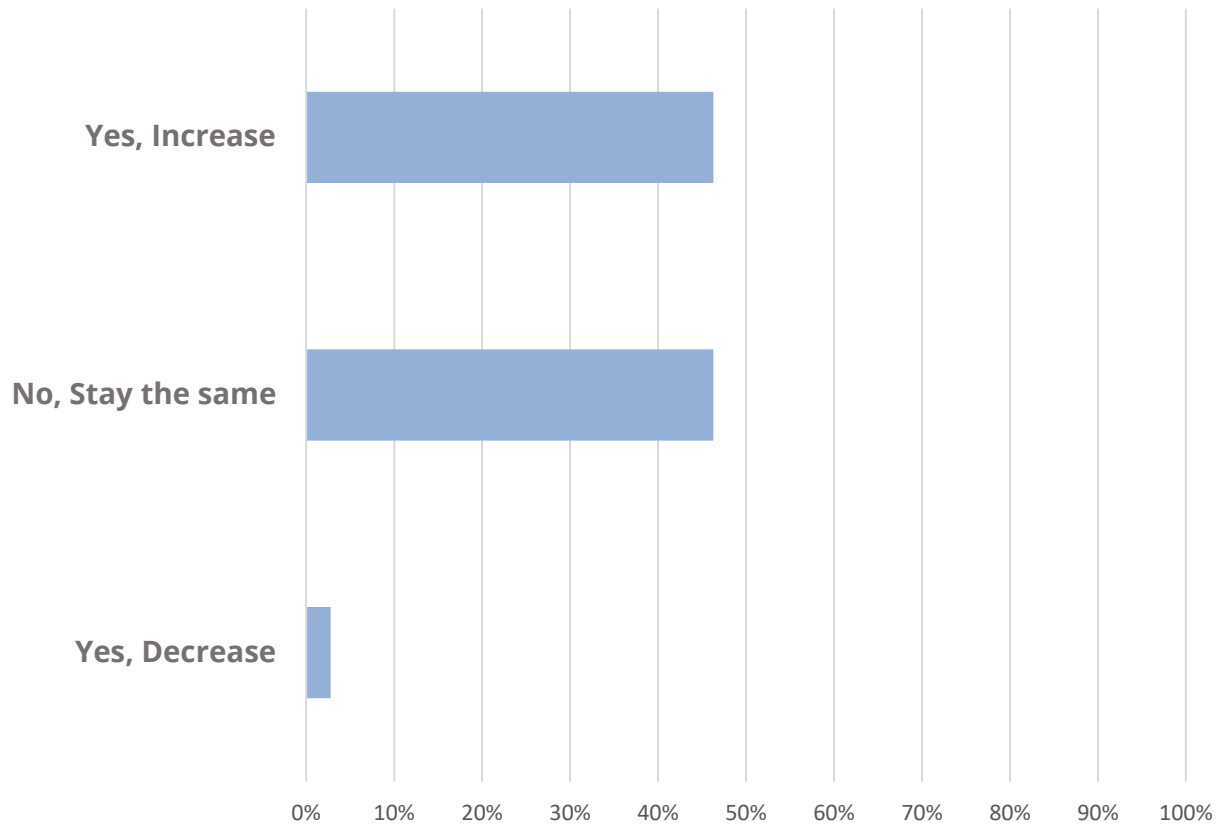


ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
Full Time	8	736	95
Permanent Part Time	2	116	49
Seasonal	8	253	30
Total Respondents:			95

ANSWER CHOICES	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	MEDIAN	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Full Time	0.00	120.00	3.00	7.75	16.17
Permanent Part Time	0.00	37.00	1.00	2.37	5.18
Seasonal	0.00	150.00	1.00	8.43	27.03

Q9 Do you expect the number of employees to change over the next 3 years?

Answered: 108 Skipped: 6



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, Increase	46.30%	50
No, Stay the same	46.30%	50
Yes, Decrease	2.78%	3
Total Respondents:		108

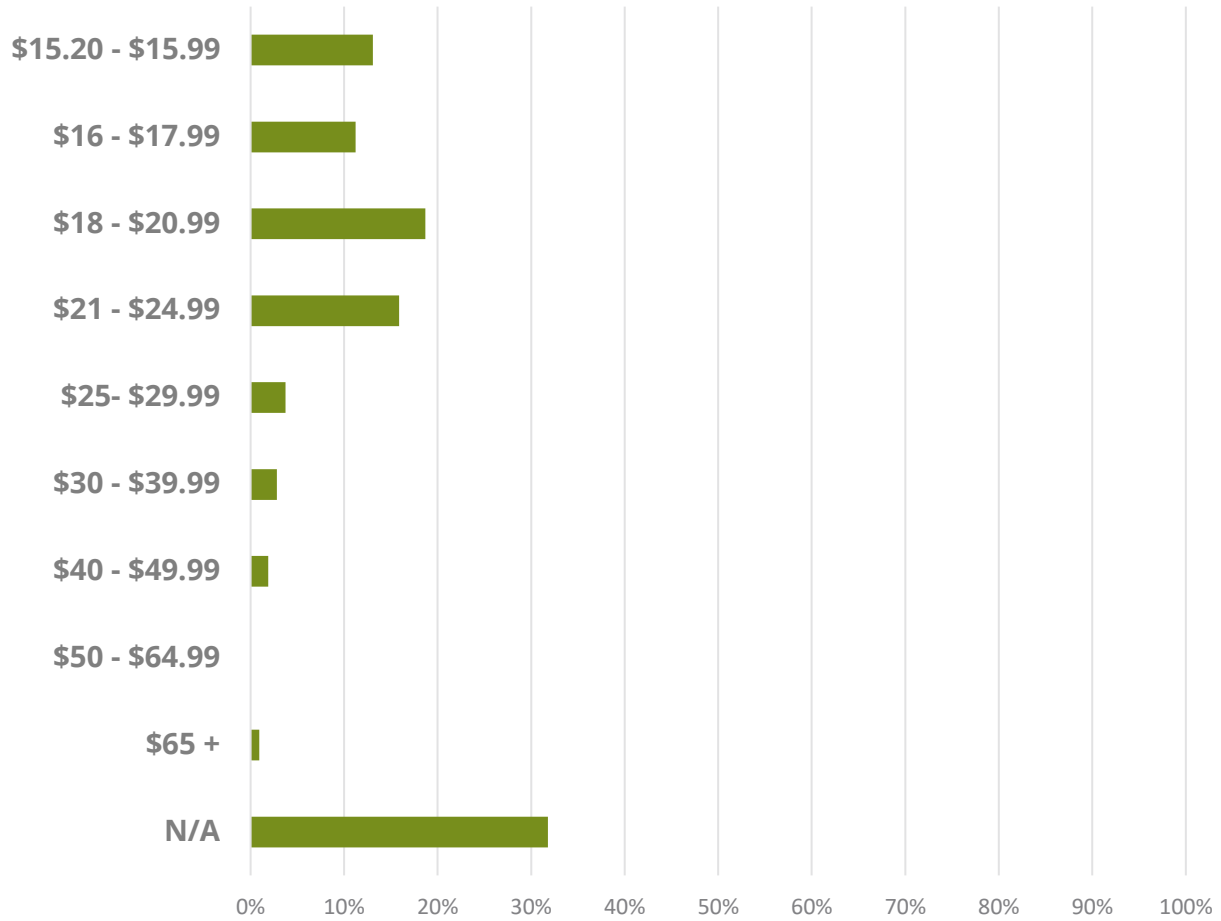
Q10 Why do you expect this?

Answered: 96 Skipped: 18

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Q11 Entry Level

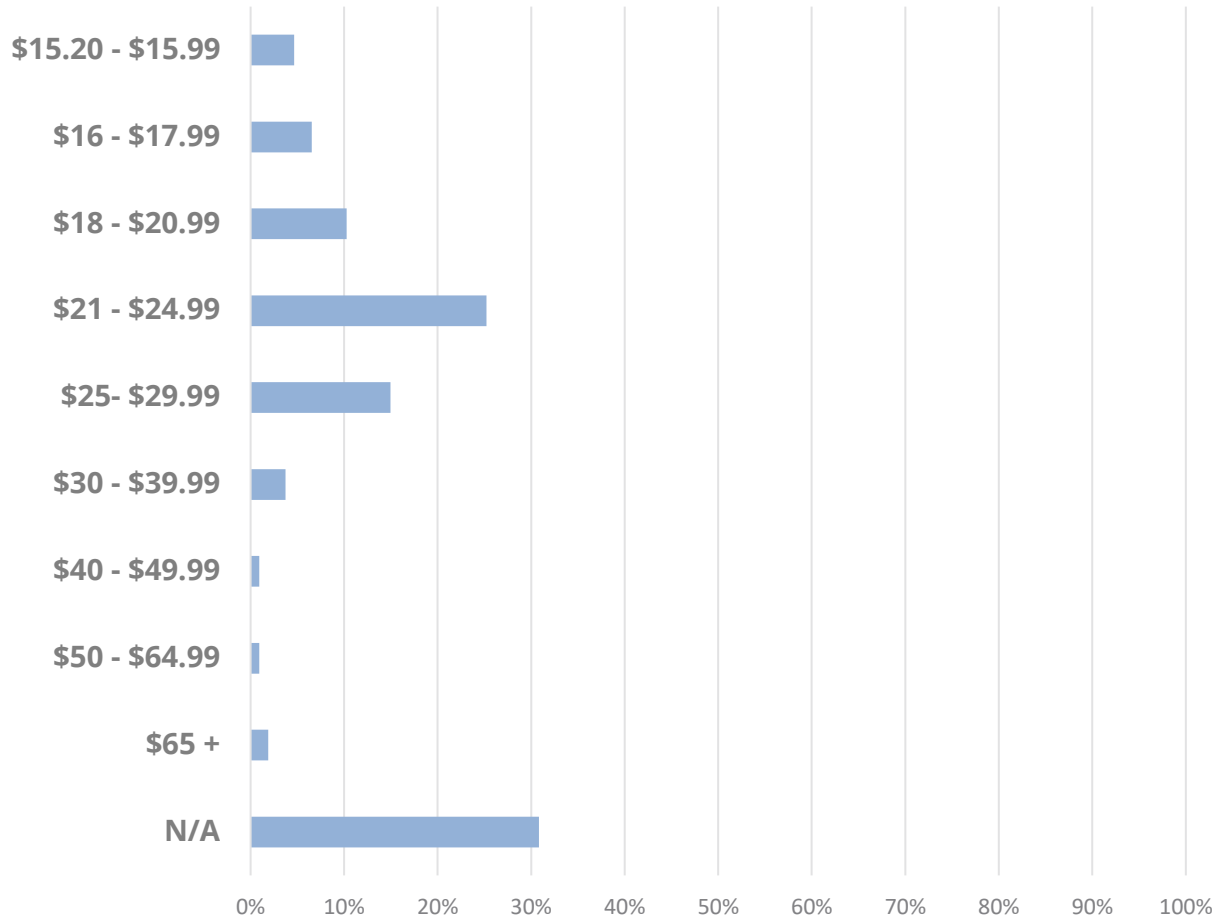
Answered: 107 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
\$15.20 - \$15.99	13.08%	14
\$16 - \$17.99	11.21%	12
\$18 - \$20.99	18.69%	20
\$21 - \$24.99	15.89%	17
\$25 - \$29.99	3.74%	4
\$30 - \$39.99	2.80%	3
\$40 - \$49.99	1.87%	2
\$50 - \$64.99	0.00%	0
\$65 +	0.93%	1
N/A	31.78%	34
Total Respondents:		107

Q12 Semi-Skilled

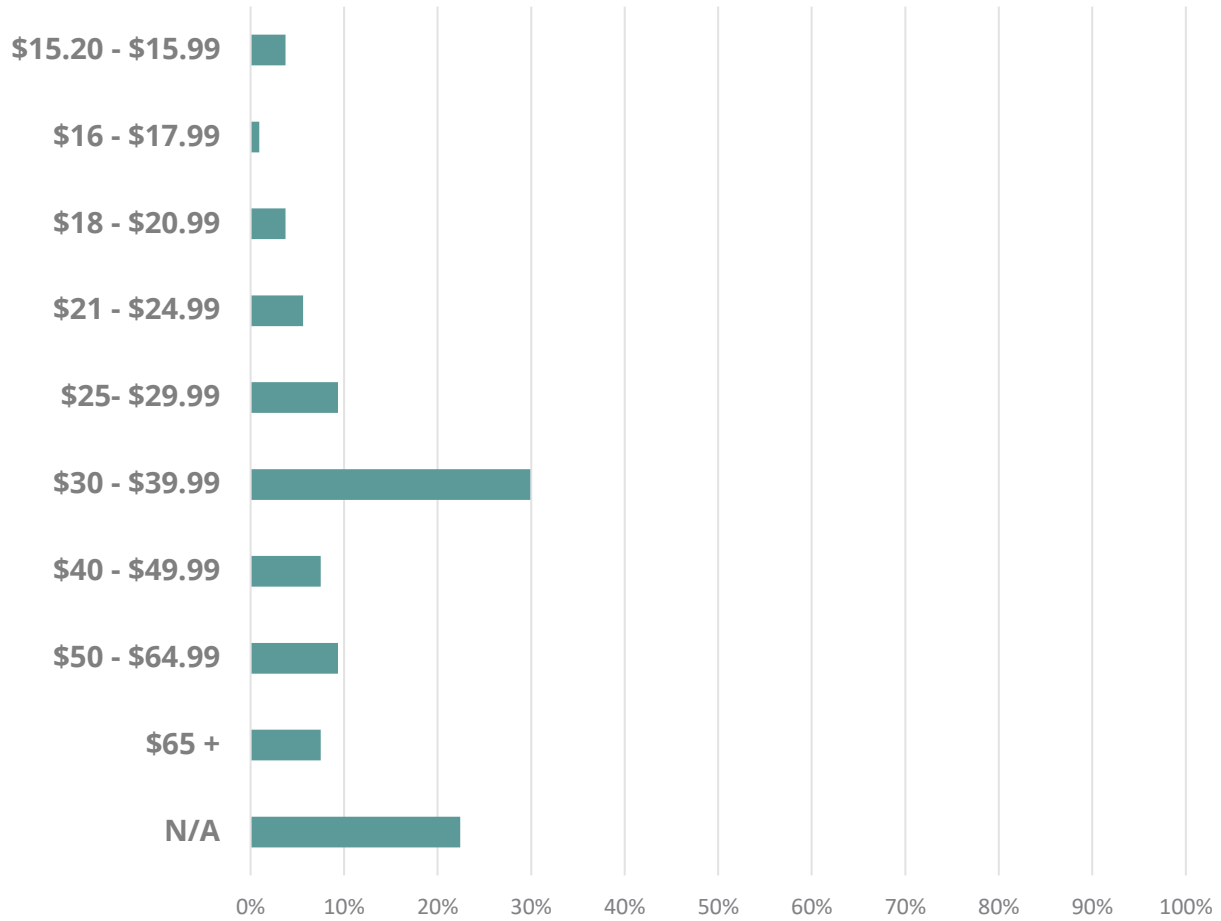
Answered: 107 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
\$15.20 - \$15.99	4.67%	5
\$16 - \$17.99	6.54%	7
\$18 - \$20.99	10.28%	11
\$21 - \$24.99	25.23%	27
\$25- \$29.99	14.95%	16
\$30 - \$39.99	3.74%	4
\$40 - \$49.99	0.93%	1
\$50 - \$64.99	0.93%	1
\$65 +	1.87%	2
N/A	30.84%	33
Total Respondents:		107

Q13 Skilled / Professional

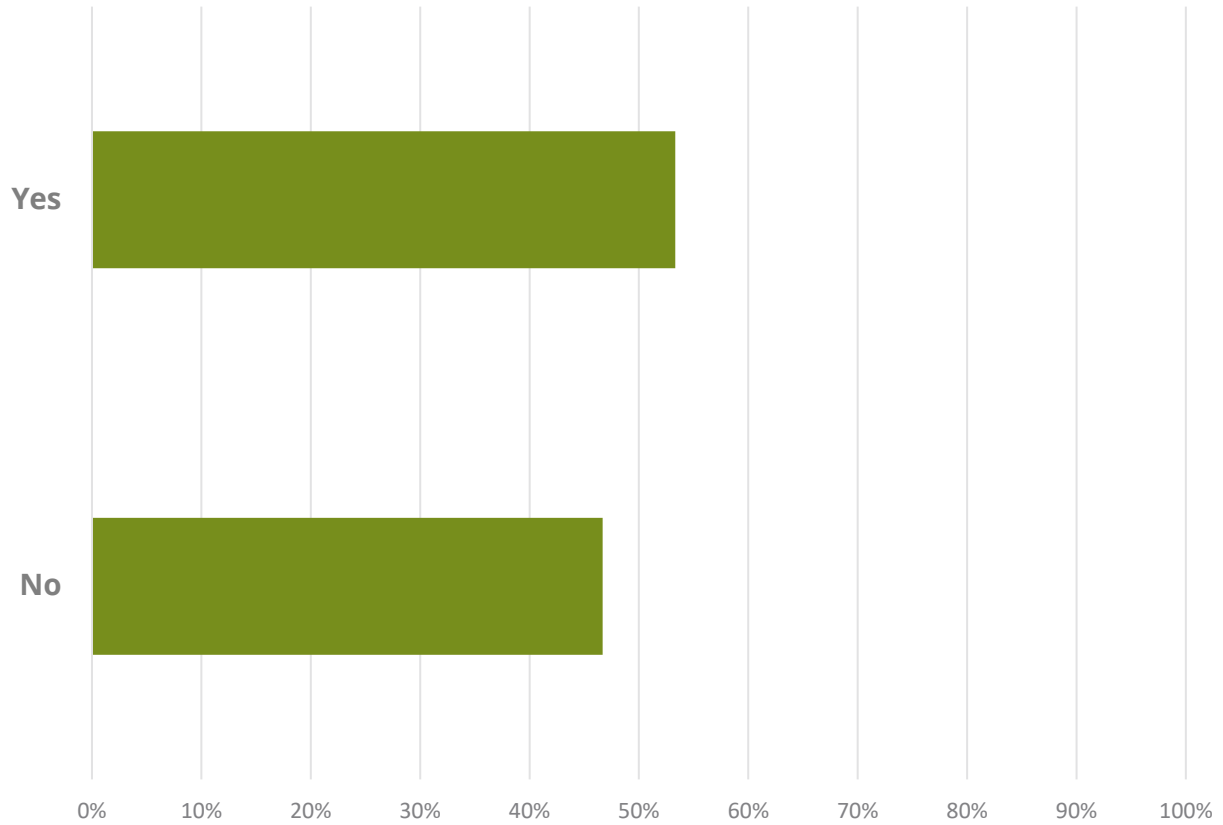
Answered: 107 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
\$15.20 - \$15.99	3.74%	4
\$16 - \$17.99	0.93%	1
\$18 - \$20.99	3.74%	4
\$21 - \$24.99	5.61%	6
\$25- \$29.99	9.35%	10
\$30 - \$39.99	29.91%	32
\$40 - \$49.99	7.48%	8
\$50 - \$64.99	9.35%	10
\$65 +	7.48%	8
N/A	22.43%	24
Total Respondents:		107

Q14 Has employee recruitment been a problem in the last 3 years?

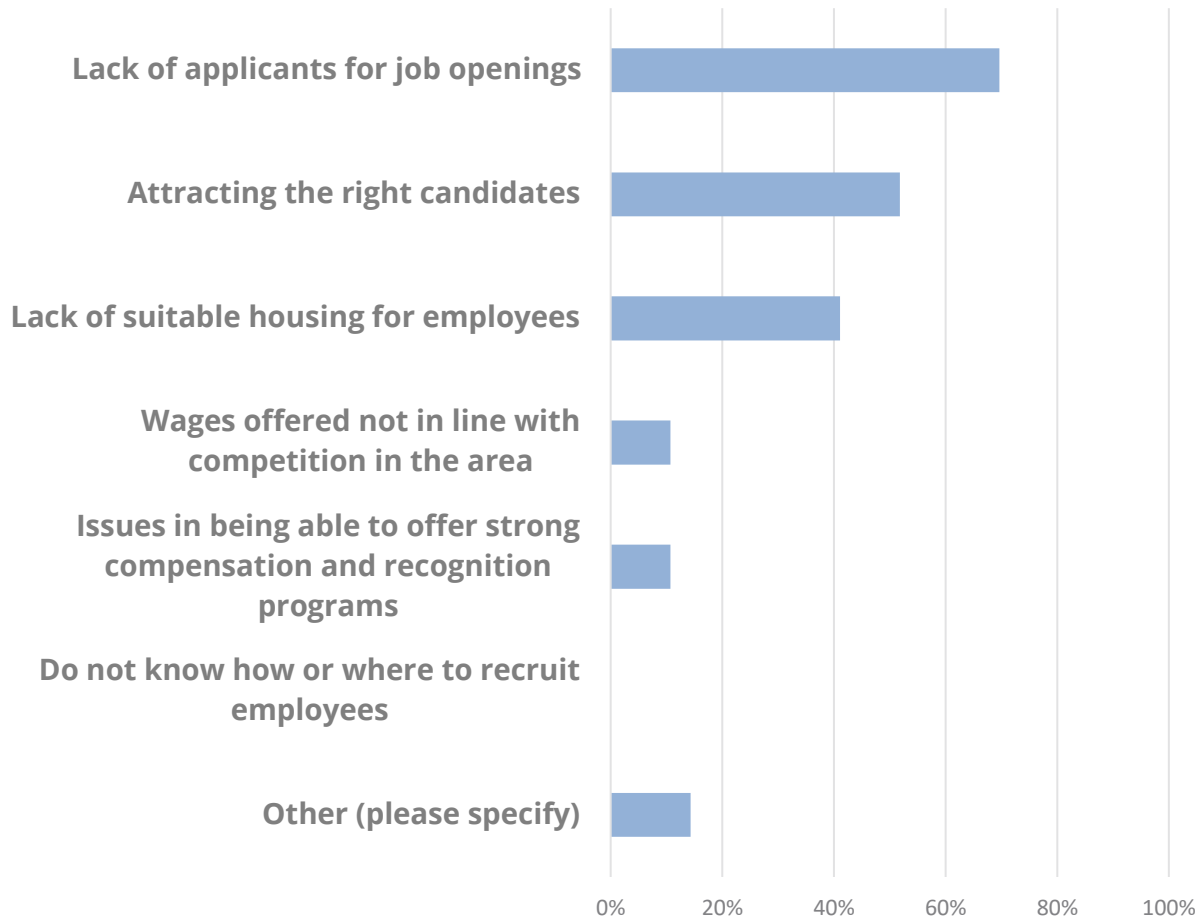
Answered: 105 Skipped: 9



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	53.33%	56
No	46.67%	49
Total Respondents:		105

Q15 What are the underlining issues impacting employee recruitment for your business?

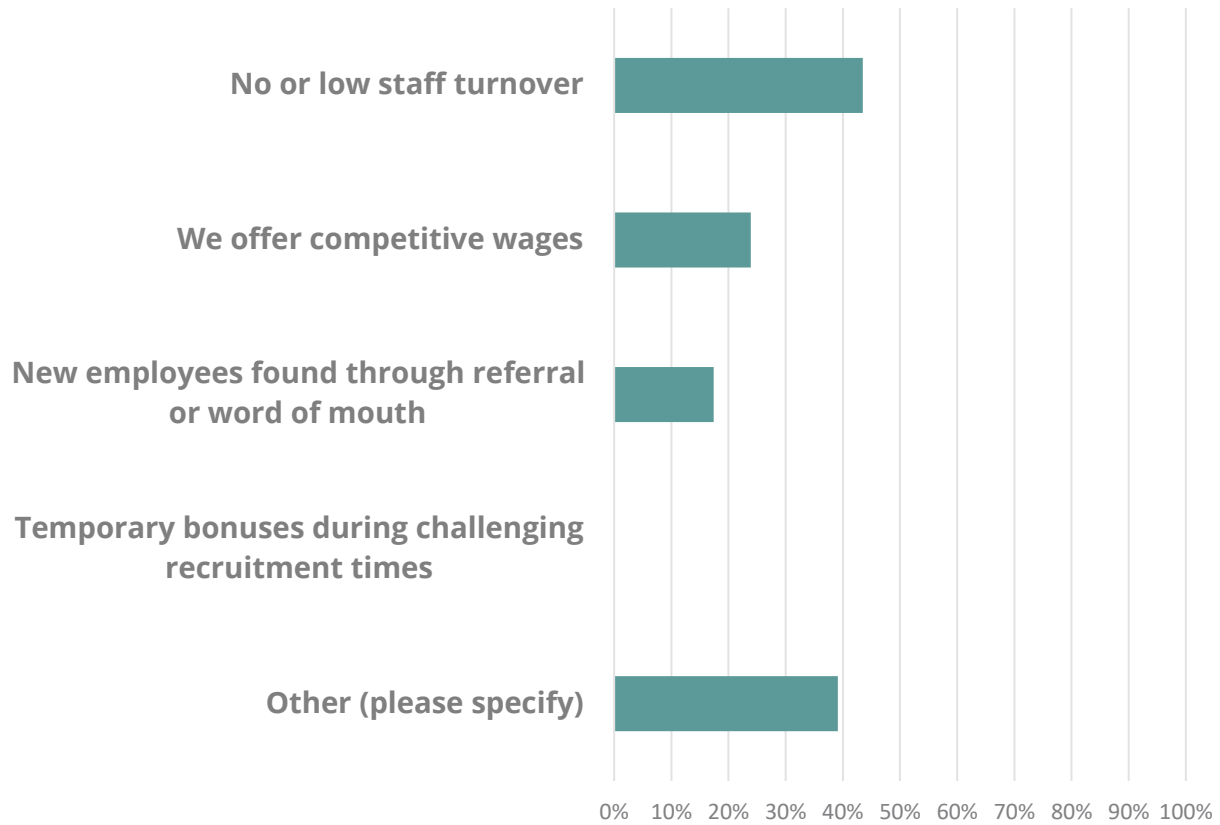
Answered: 56 Skipped: 58



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Lack of applicants for job openings	69.64%	39
Attracting the right candidates	51.79%	29
Lack of suitable housing for employees	41.07%	23
Issues in being able to offer strong compensation and recognition programs	10.71%	6
Wages offered not in line with competition in the area	10.71%	6
Do not know how or where to recruit employees	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	14.29%	8
Total Respondents:		56

Q16 What strategies / factors have you employed that make employee recruitment not a problem?

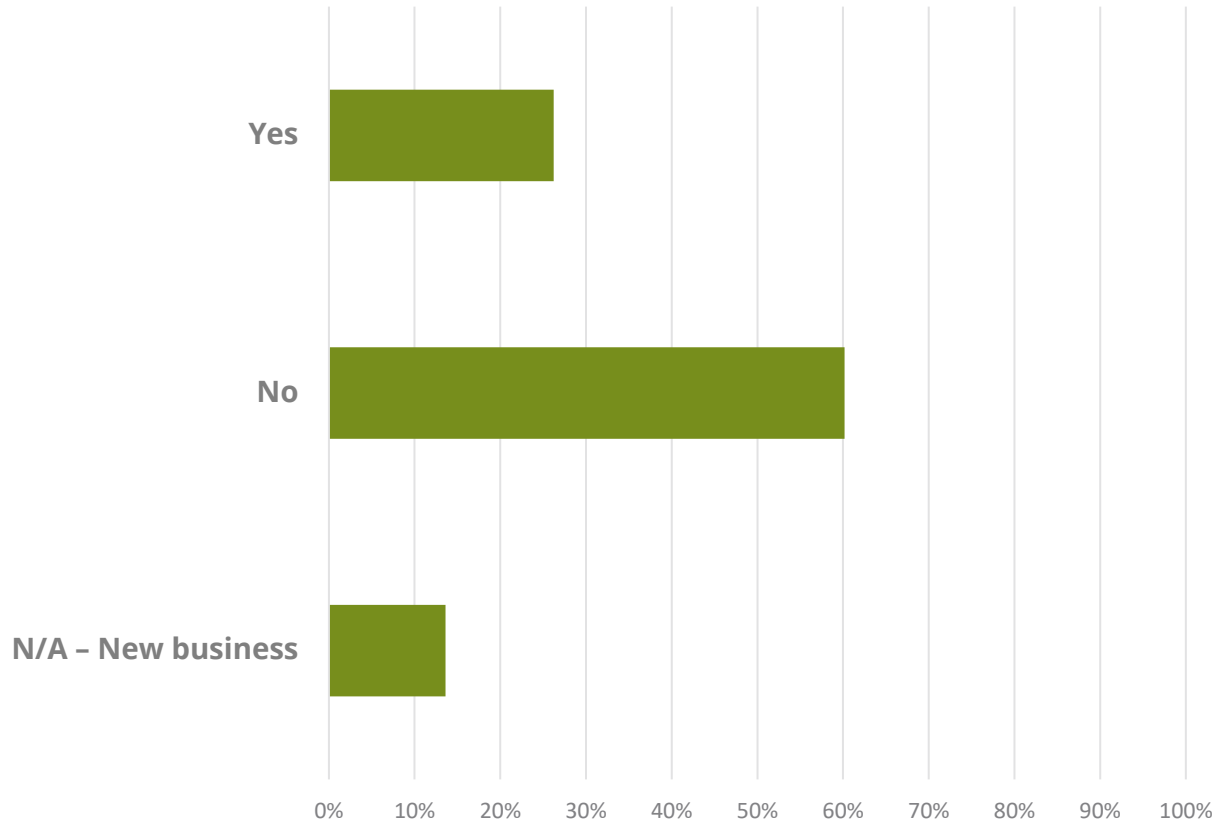
Answered: 46 Skipped: 68



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No or low staff turnover	43.48%	20
We offer competitive wages	23.91%	11
New employees found through referral or word of mouth	17.39%	8
Temporary bonuses during challenging recruitment times	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	39.13%	18
Total Respondents:		46

Q17 Has employee retention been a problem in the last 3 years?

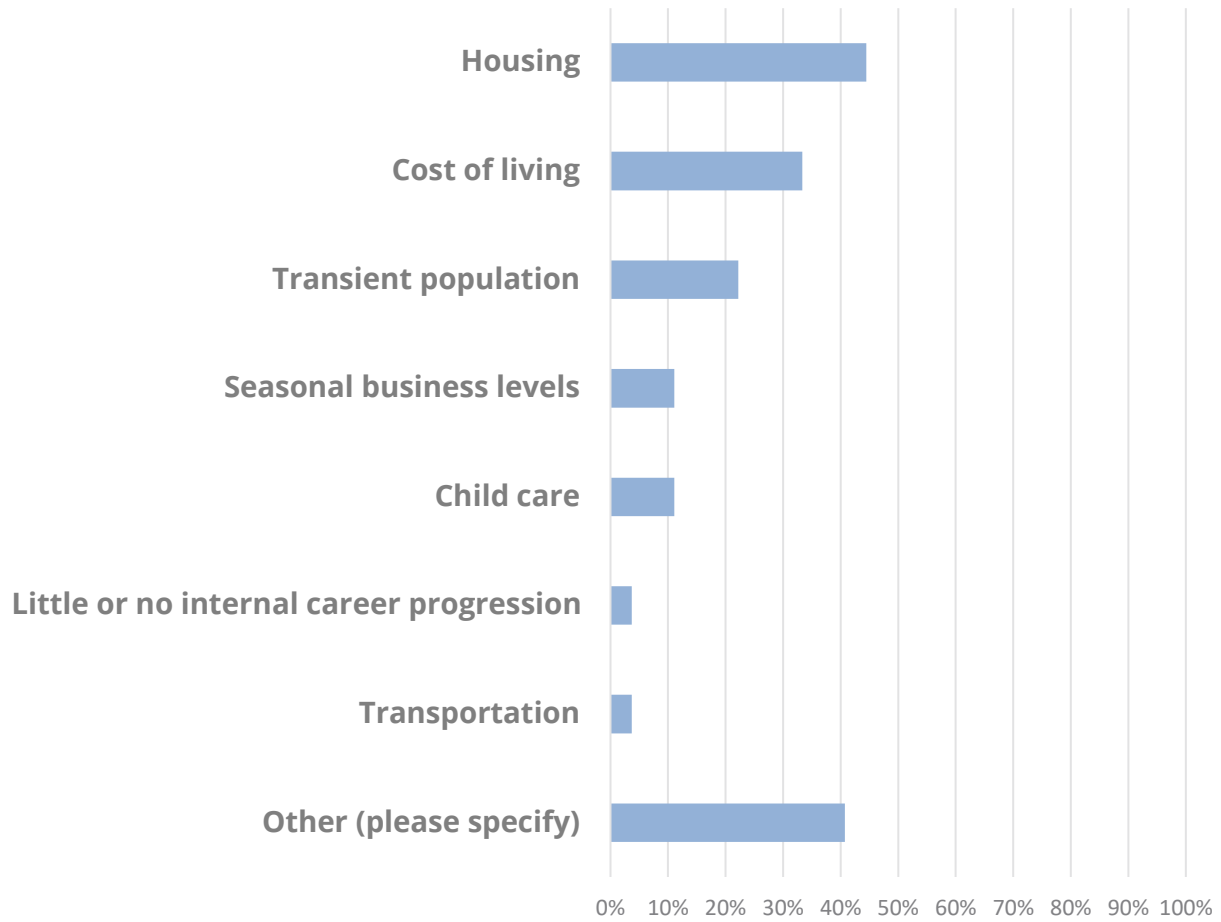
Answered: 103 Skipped: 11



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	26.21%	27
No	60.19%	62
N/A - New business	13.59%	14
Total Respondents:		103

Q18 What are the underlining issues impacting employee retention for your business?

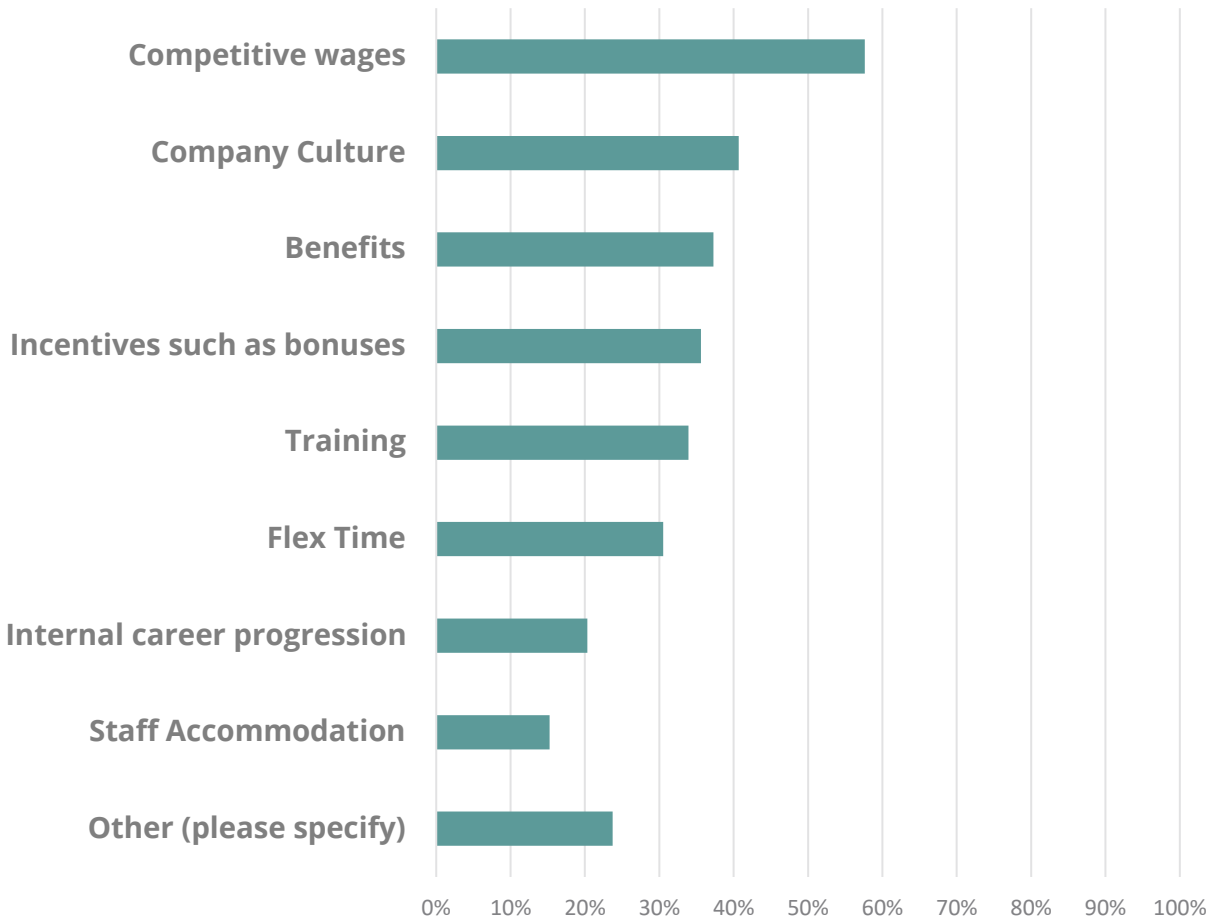
Answered: 27 Skipped: 87



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Housing	44.44%	12
Cost of living	33.33%	9
Transient population	22.22%	6
Child care	11.11%	3
Seasonal business levels	11.11%	3
Transportation	3.70%	1
Little or no internal career progression	3.70%	1
Other (please specify)	40.74%	11
Total Respondents:		27

Q19 What strategies / factors have you employed that make employee retention not a problem?

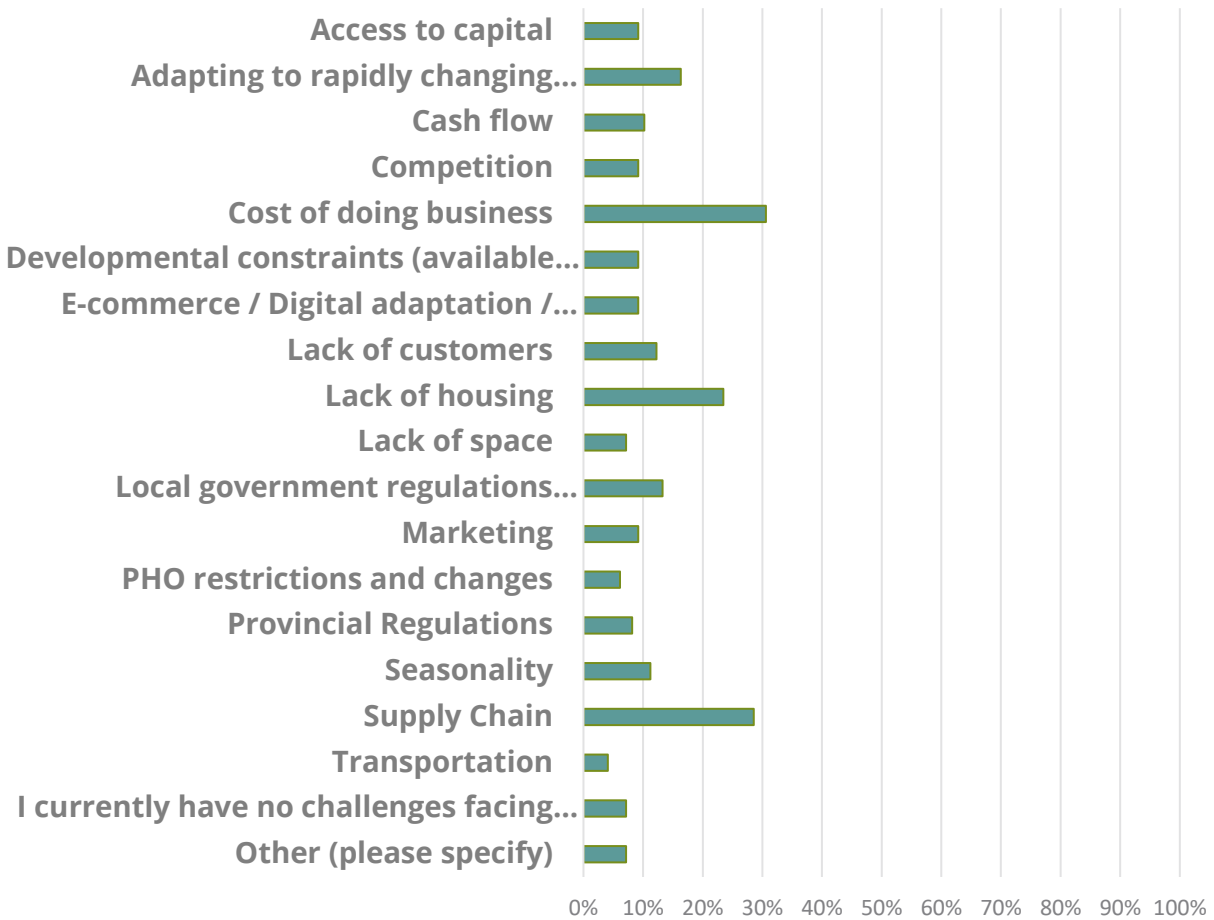
Answered: 59 Skipped: 55



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Competitive wages	57.63%	34
Company Culture	40.68%	24
Benefits	37.29%	22
Incentives such as bonuses	35.59%	21
Training	33.90%	20
Flex Time	30.51%	18
Internal career progression	20.34%	12
Staff Accommodation	15.25%	9
Other (please specify)	23.73%	14
Total Respondents:		59

Q20 What are the biggest challenges facing your business, other than labour? (Please select top 3)

Answered: 98 Skipped: 16



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Access to capital	9.18%	9
Adapting to rapidly changing business landscape	16.33%	16
Cash flow	10.20%	10
Competition	9.18%	9
Cost of doing business	30.61%	30
Developmental constraints (available land, financing, building age)	9.18%	9
E-commerce / Digital adaptation / Online presence	9.18%	9
Lack of customers	12.24%	12
Lack of space	7.14%	7
Local government regulations (approval process, inspections, licensing, bylaw, "red tape")	13.27%	13
Marketing	9.18%	9
PHO restrictions and changes	6.12%	6
Seasonality	11.22%	11
Supply Chain	28.57%	28
Transportation	4.08%	4
Lack of housing	23.47%	23
Provincial Regulations	8.16%	8
I currently have no challenges facing my business	7.14%	7
Other (please specify)	7.14%	7
Total Respondents:		98

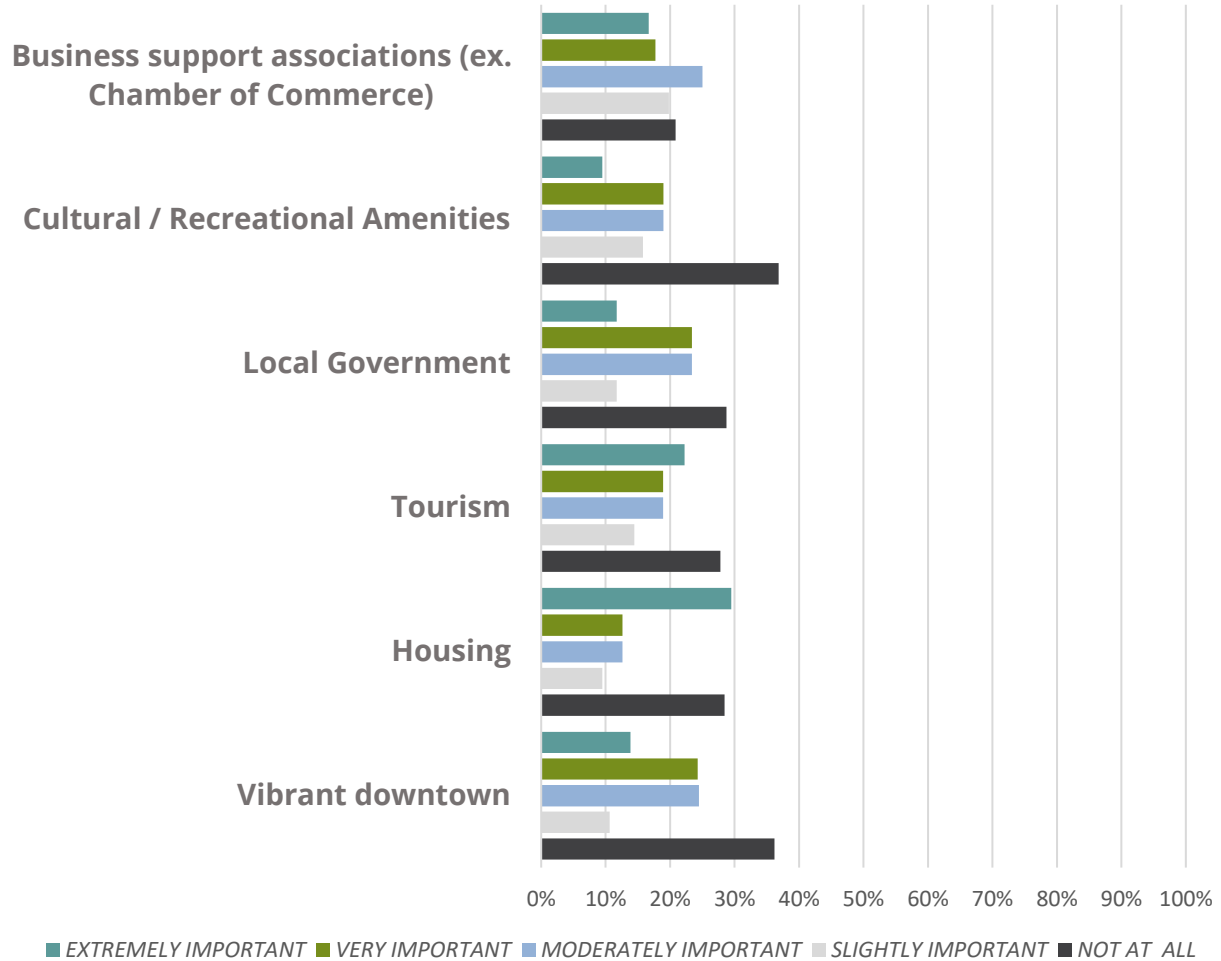
Q21 What specifically about "Development constraints" or "Local government regulations" are a challenge for your business? Please feel free to provide as much detail as wanted.

Answered: 9 Skipped: 105

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Q22 On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not important and 5 being extremely important, please rate how important the following categories are to your business's success.

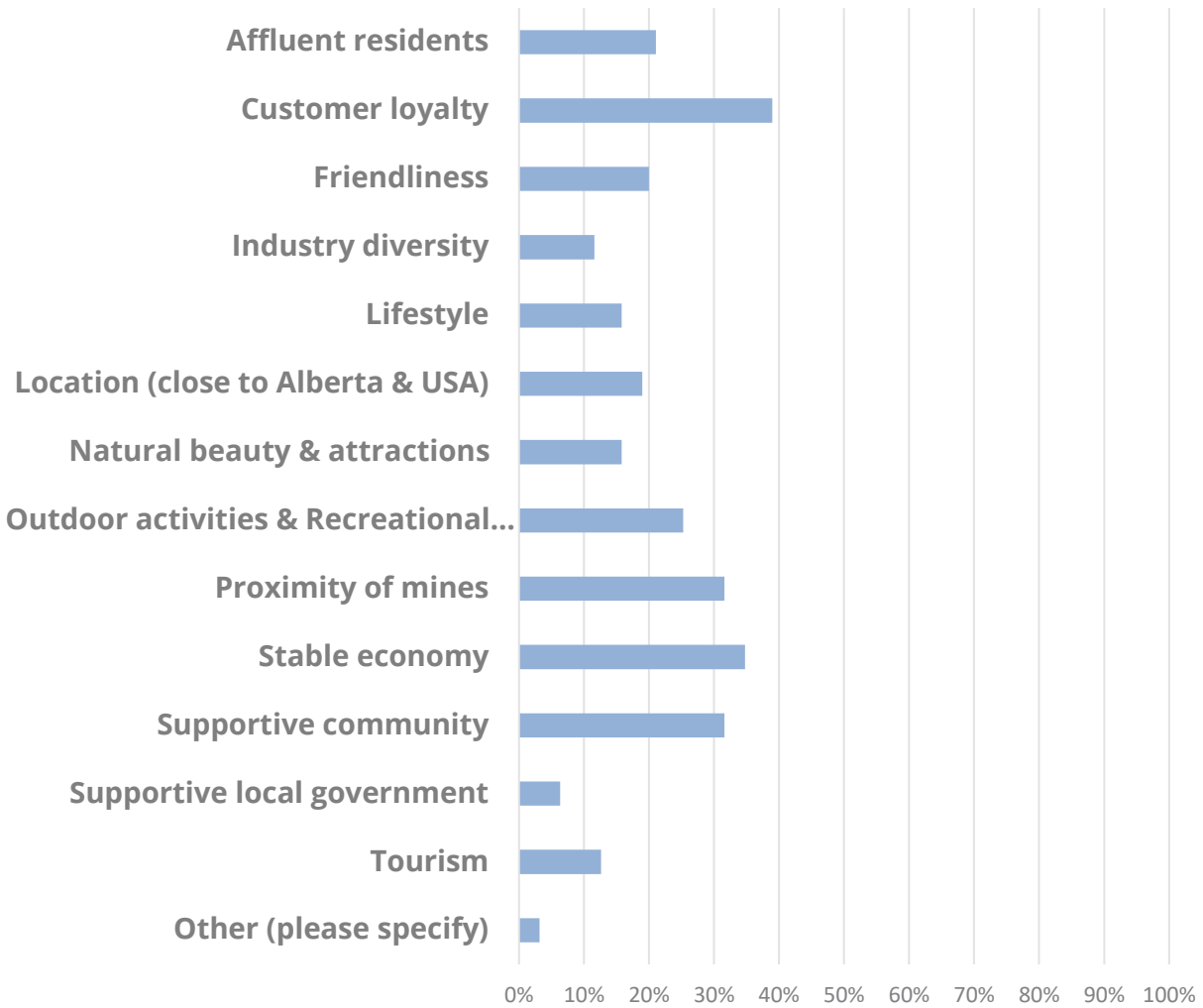
Answered: 96 Skipped: 18



	NOT AT ALL	SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	MODERATELY IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT	TOTAL
Business support associations (ex. Chamber of Commerce)	20.83%	19.79%	25.00%	17.71%	16.67%	96
Cultural / Recreational Amenities	36.84%	15.79%	18.95%	18.95%	9.47%	95
Local Government	28.72%	11.70%	23.40%	23.40%	11.70%	94
Tourism	27.78%	14.44%	18.89%	18.89%	22.22%	90
Housing	28.42%	9.47%	12.63%	12.63%	29.47%	95
Vibrant downtown	36.17%	10.64%	24.47%	24.27%	13.83%	94

Q23 What are the community's strengths as a place to do business? (Please select 1-3 answers)

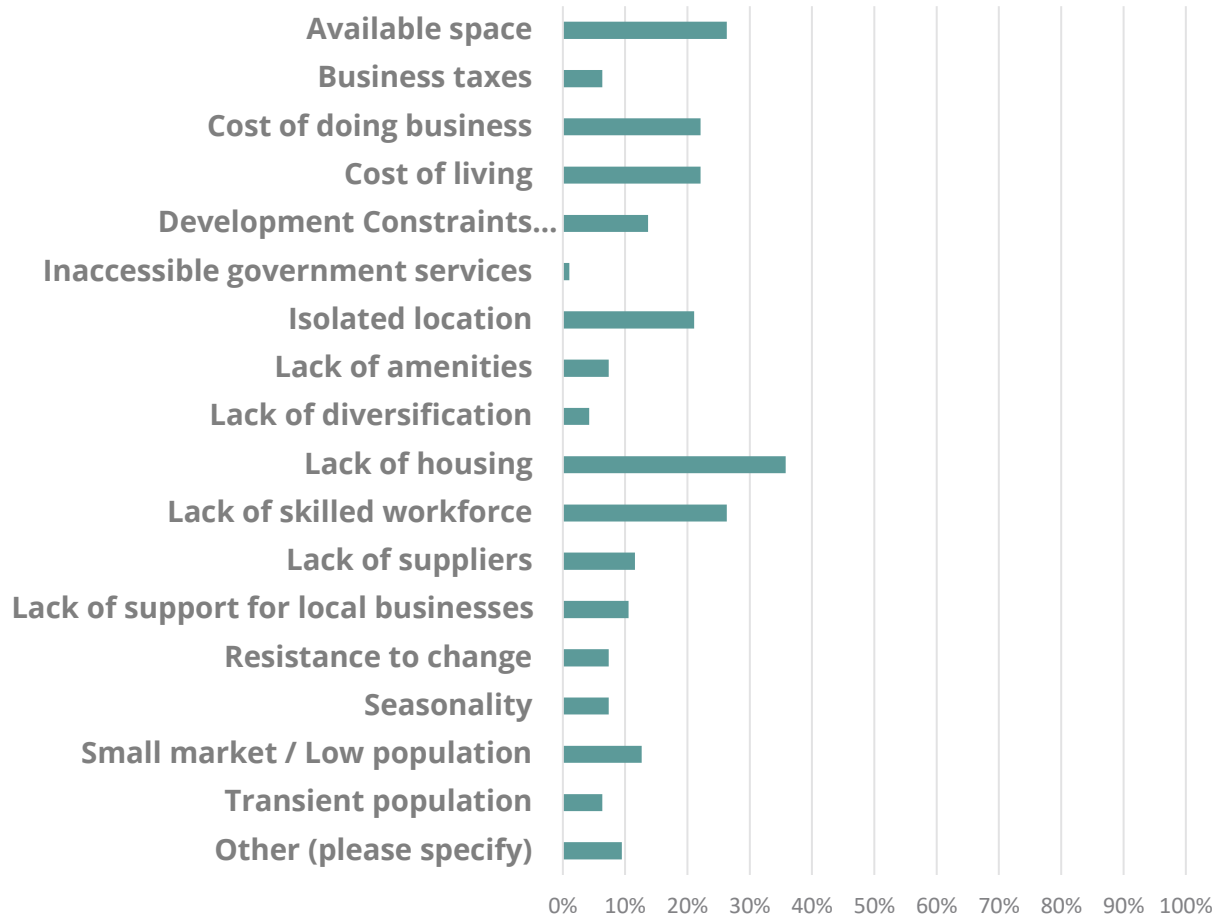
Answered: 95 Skipped: 19



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Affluent residents	21.05%	20
Customer loyalty	38.95%	37
Friendliness	20.00%	19
Industry diversity	11.58%	11
Lifestyle	15.79%	15
Location (close to Alberta & USA)	18.95%	18
Natural beauty & attractions	15.79%	15
Outdoor activities & Recreational Opportunities	25.26%	24
Proximity of mines	31.58%	30
Stable economy	34.74%	33
Supportive community	31.58%	30
Supportive local government	6.32%	6
Tourism	12.63%	12
Other (please specify)	3.16%	3
Total Respondents:		95

Q24 What are the community's weaknesses as a place to do business? (Please select 1-3 answers)

Answered: 95 Skipped: 19



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Available space	26.32%	25
Cost of doing business	22.11%	21
Development Constraints (Zoning/Bureaucracy/Permits)	13.68%	13
Business taxes	6.32%	6
Cost of living	22.11%	21
Inaccessible government services	1.05%	1
Isolated location	21.05%	20
Lack of housing	35.79%	34
Lack of amenities	7.37%	7
Lack of diversification	4.21%	4
Lack of skilled workforce	26.32%	25
Lack of suppliers	11.58%	11
Lack of support for local businesses	10.53%	10
Resistance to change	7.37%	7
Seasonality	7.37%	7
Small market / Low population	12.63%	12
Transient population	6.32%	6
Other (please specify)	9.47%	9
Total Respondents:		95

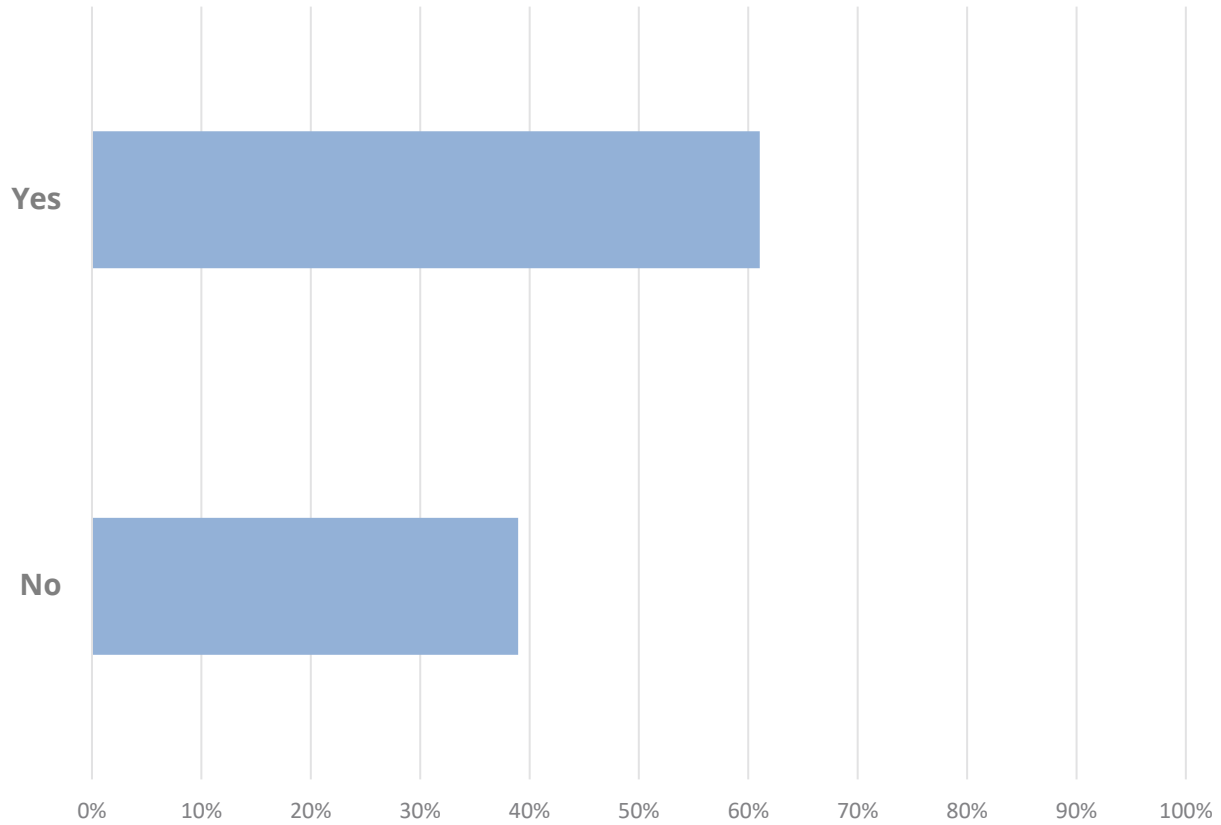
Q25 If you would like to expand on the community weakness's you identified above, please enter your comments below.

Answered: 23 Skipped: 91

QUALITATIVE DATA – CONFIDENTIAL

Q26 Do you plan to expand your business in the next 3 years?

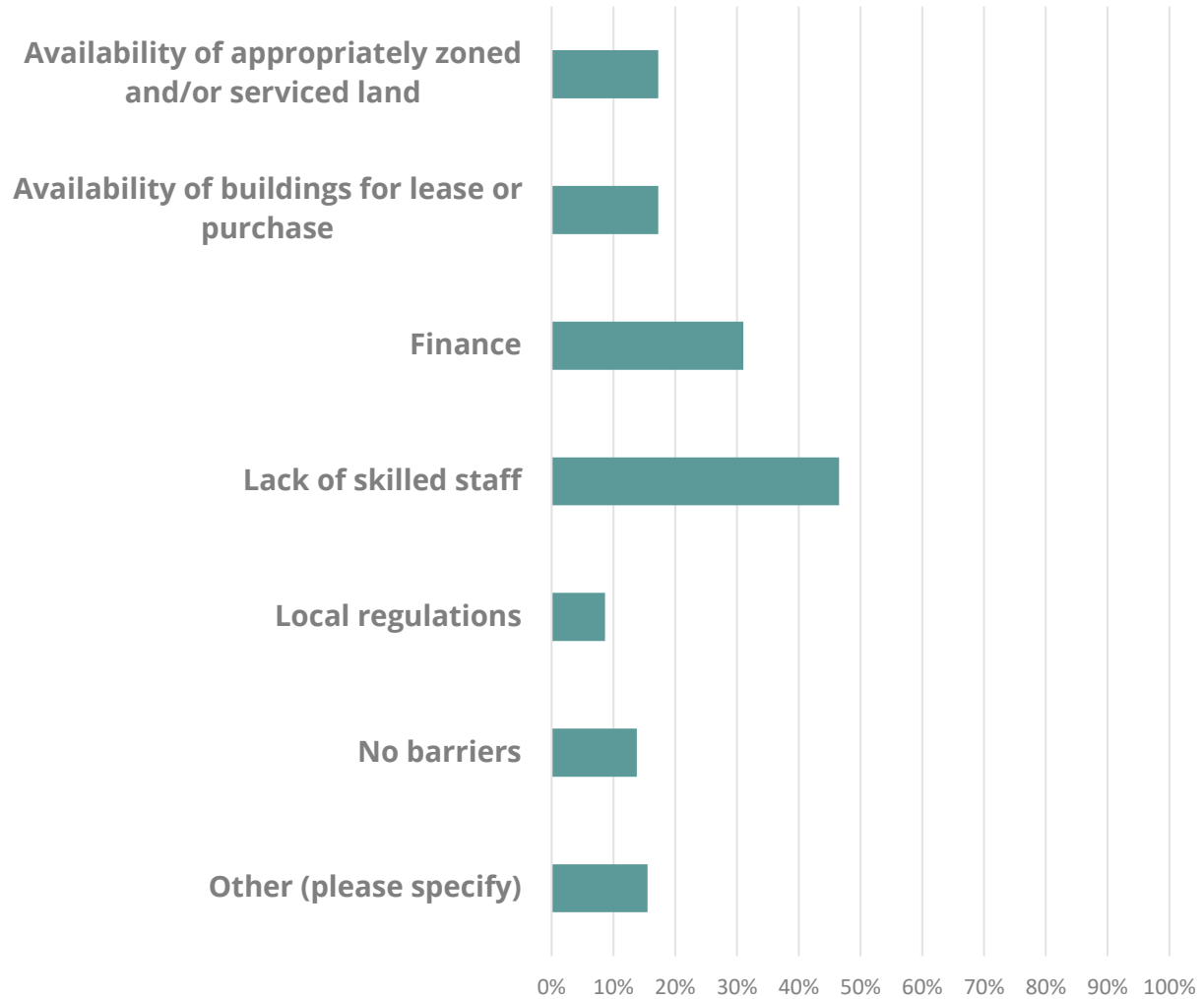
Answered: 95 Skipped: 19



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	61.05%	58
No	38.95%	37
Total Respondents:		95

Q27 What are the major barriers for your expansion?

Answered: 58 Skipped: 56



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Availability of appropriately zoned and/or serviced land	17.24%	10
Availability of buildings for lease or purchase	17.24%	10
Finance	31.03%	18
Lack of skilled staff	46.55%	27
Local regulations	8.62%	5
No barriers	13.79%	8
Other (please specify)	15.52%	9
	Total Respondents:	58

Q28 Why do you not plan on expanding?

Answered: 37 Skipped: 77



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Covid-19 restrictions creating uncertainty	10.81%	4
I do not have the resources (available space, additional equipment, increased operational work etc.)	24.32%	9
I do not want debt / I do not want more debt	13.51%	5
Lack of staff	18.92%	7
Lifestyle choice (less stress, more time for yourself, family etc.)	45.95%	17
The time or industry is not right	10.81%	4
Other (please specify)	18.92%	7
	Total Respondents:	37

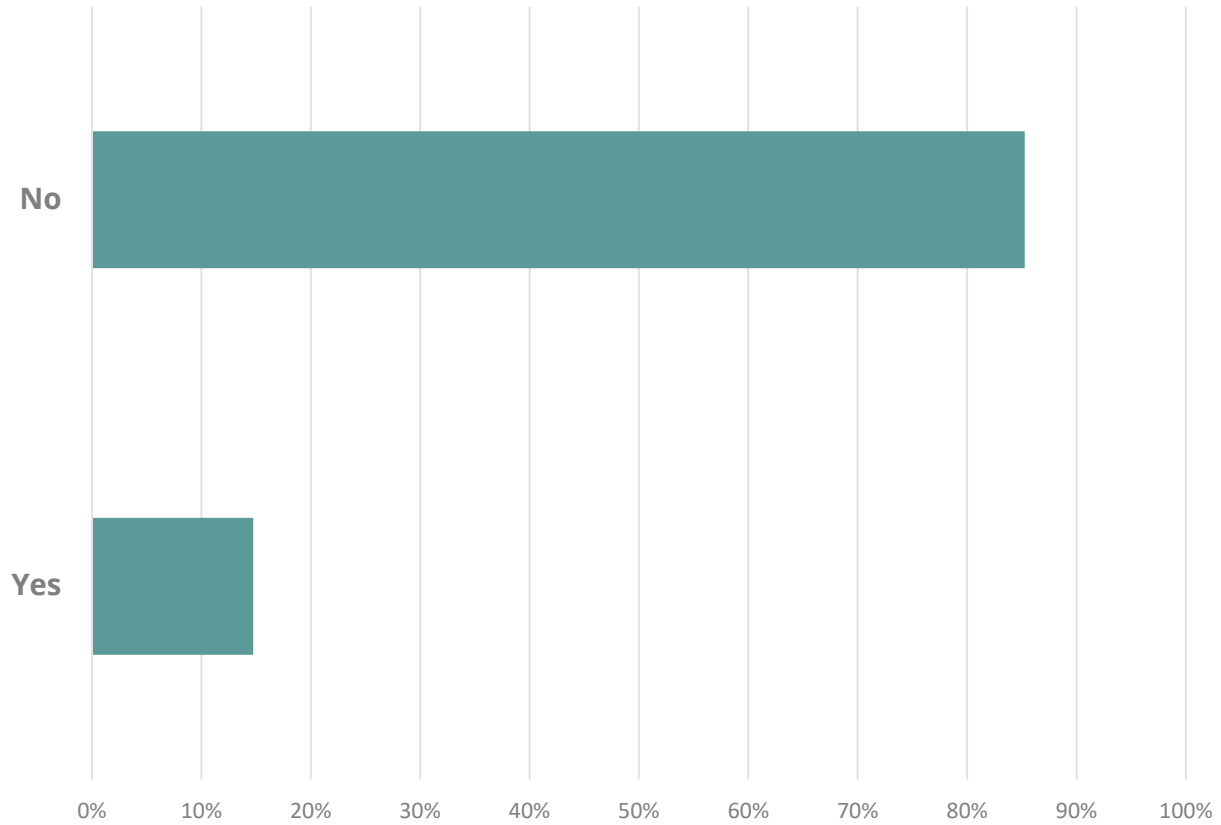
Q29 What specifically about "Local regulations" are a barrier to your expansion? Please feel free to provide as much detail as wanted.

Answered: 3 Skipped: 111

QUALITATIVE DATA – CONFIDENTIAL

Q30 Do you plan to retire or sell your business within the next 3-5 years?

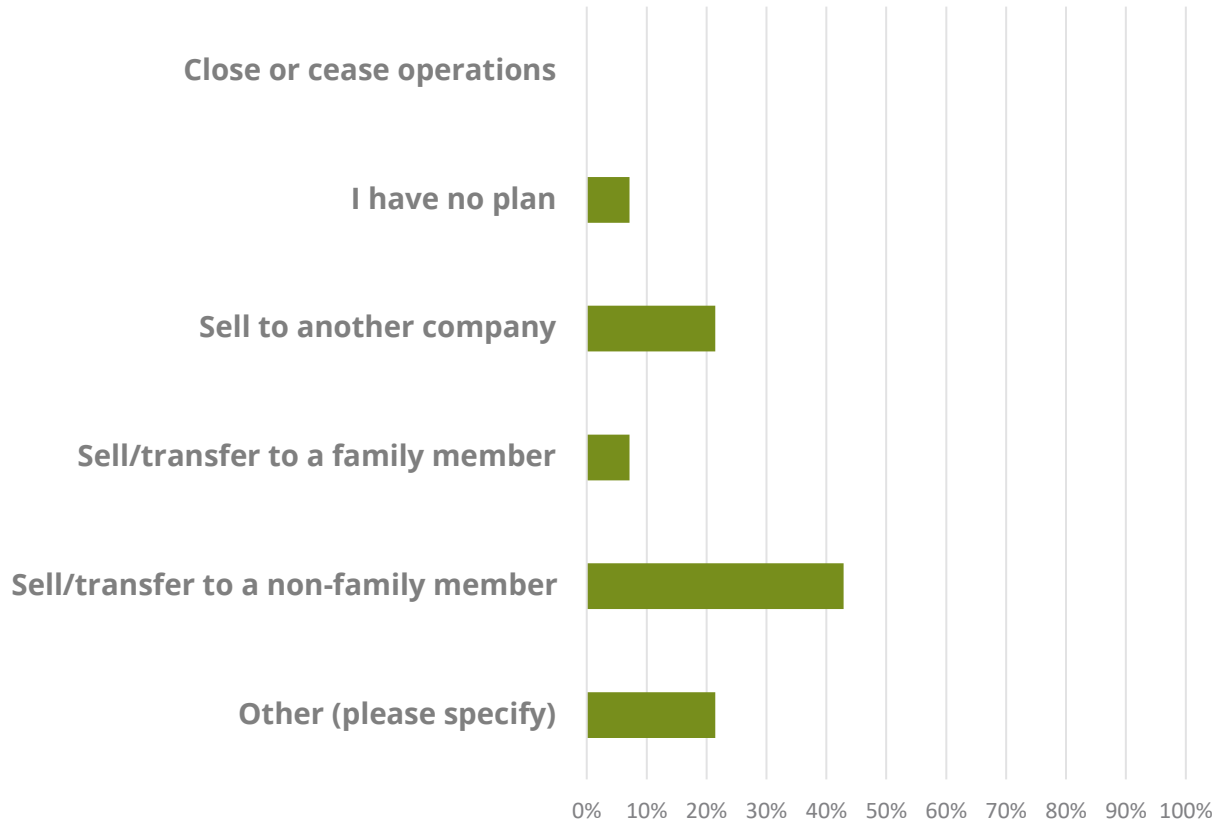
Answered: 95 Skipped: 19



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	14.74%	14
No	85.26%	81
Total Respondents:		95

Q31 How do you intend to exit the business?

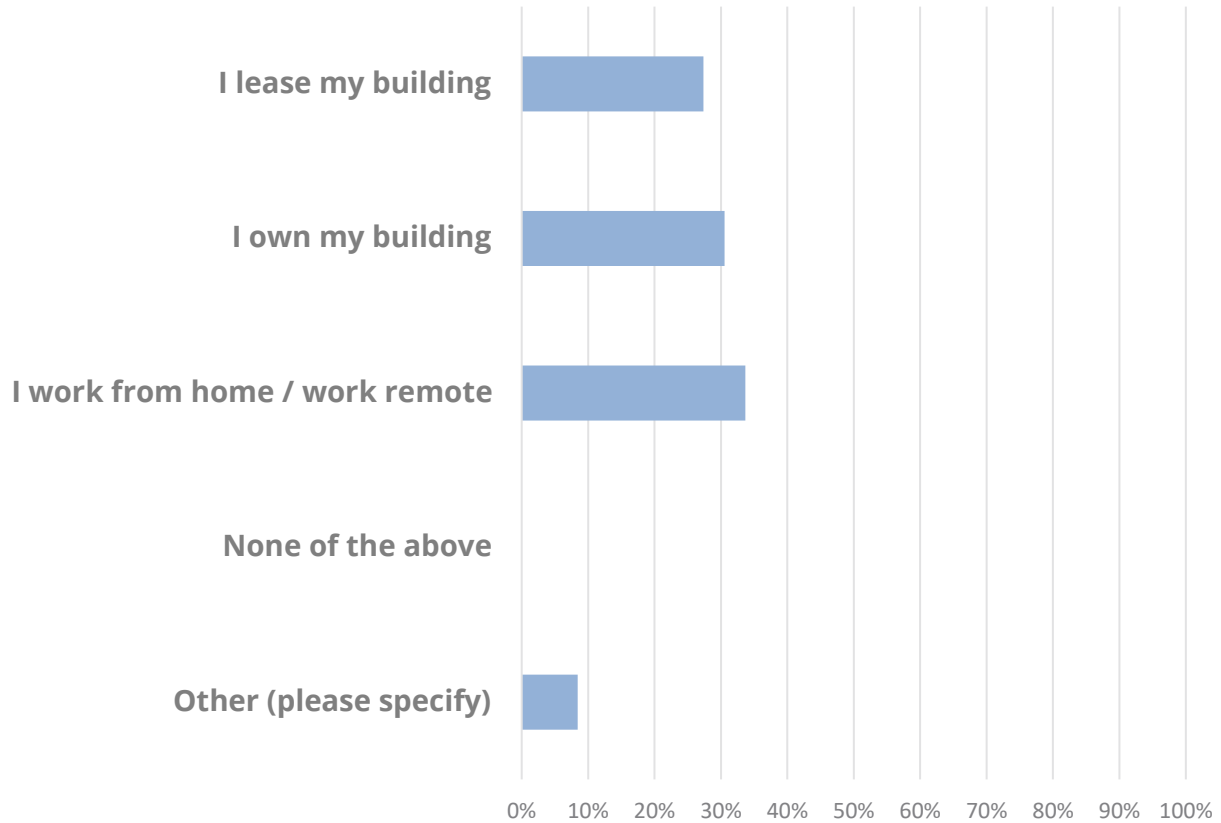
Answered: 14 Skipped: 100



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Close or cease operations	0.00%	0
I have no plan	7.14%	1
Sell to another company	21.43%	3
Sell/transfer to a family member	7.14%	1
Sell/transfer to a non-family member	42.86%	6
Other (please specify)	21.43%	3
Total Respondents:		14

Q32 What is the status of your business's building?

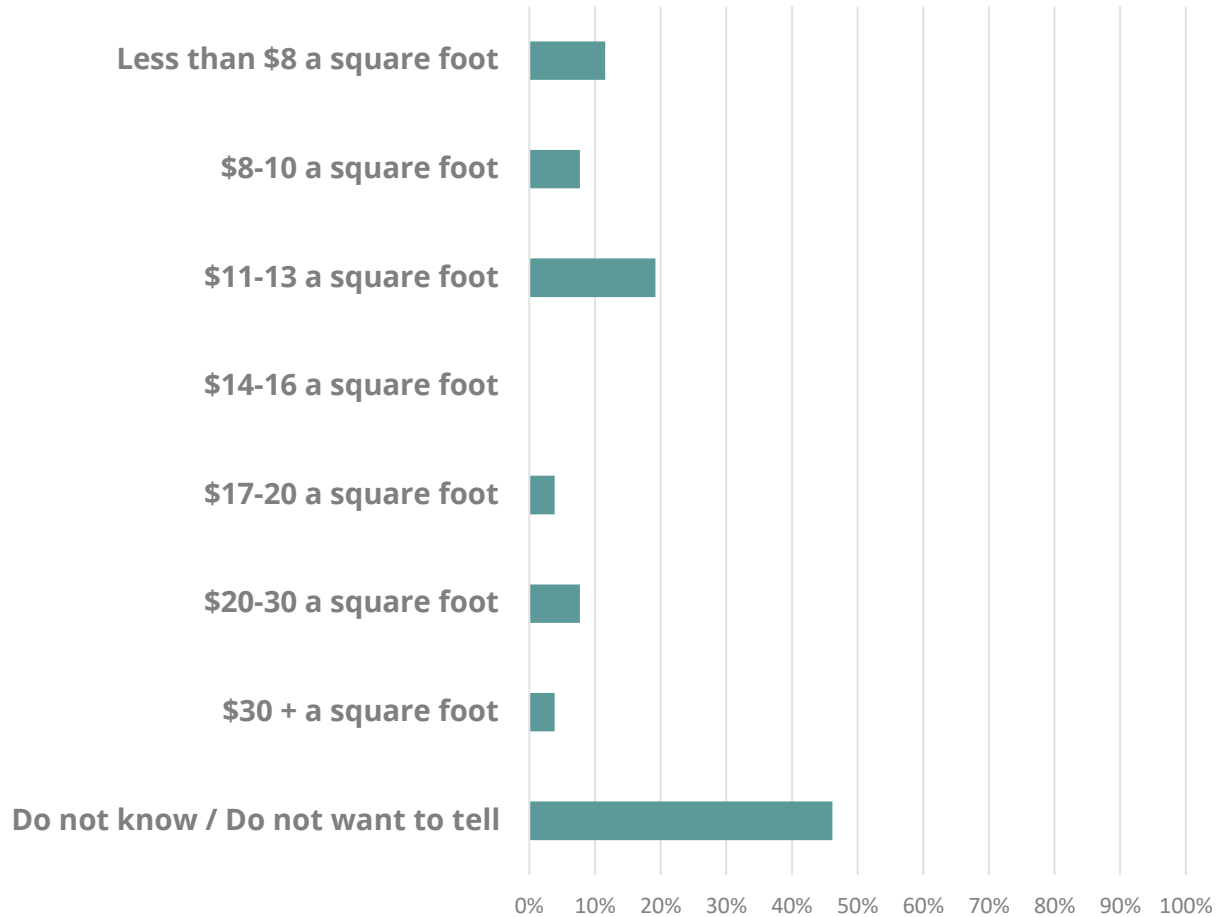
Answered: 95 Skipped: 19



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I lease my building	27.37%	26
I own my building	30.53%	29
I work from home / work remote	33.68%	32
None of the above	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	8.42%	8
Total Respondents:		95

Q33 What is your current lease rate, based on triple net lease? (Lease agreement on a property whereby the tenant or lessee promises to pay all the expenses of the property, including real estate taxes, building insurance, and maintenance)

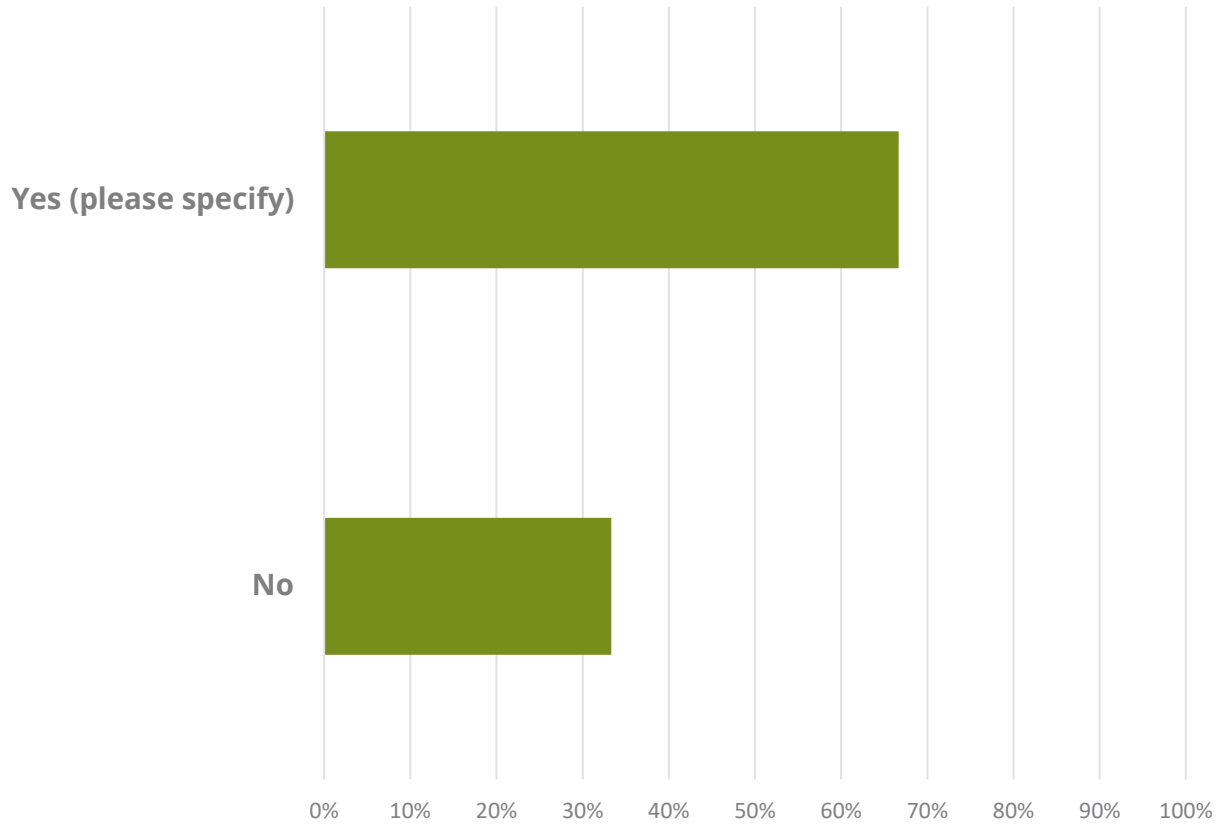
Answered: 26 Skipped: 88



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than \$8 a square foot	11.54%	3
\$8-10 a square foot	7.69%	2
\$11-13 a square foot	19.23%	5
\$14-16 a square foot	0.00%	0
\$17-20 a square foot	3.85%	1
\$20-30 a square foot	7.69%	2
\$30 + a square foot	3.85%	1
Do not know / Do not want to tell	46.15%	12
Total Respondents:		26

Q34 Do you have any barriers to updating your building, if needed?

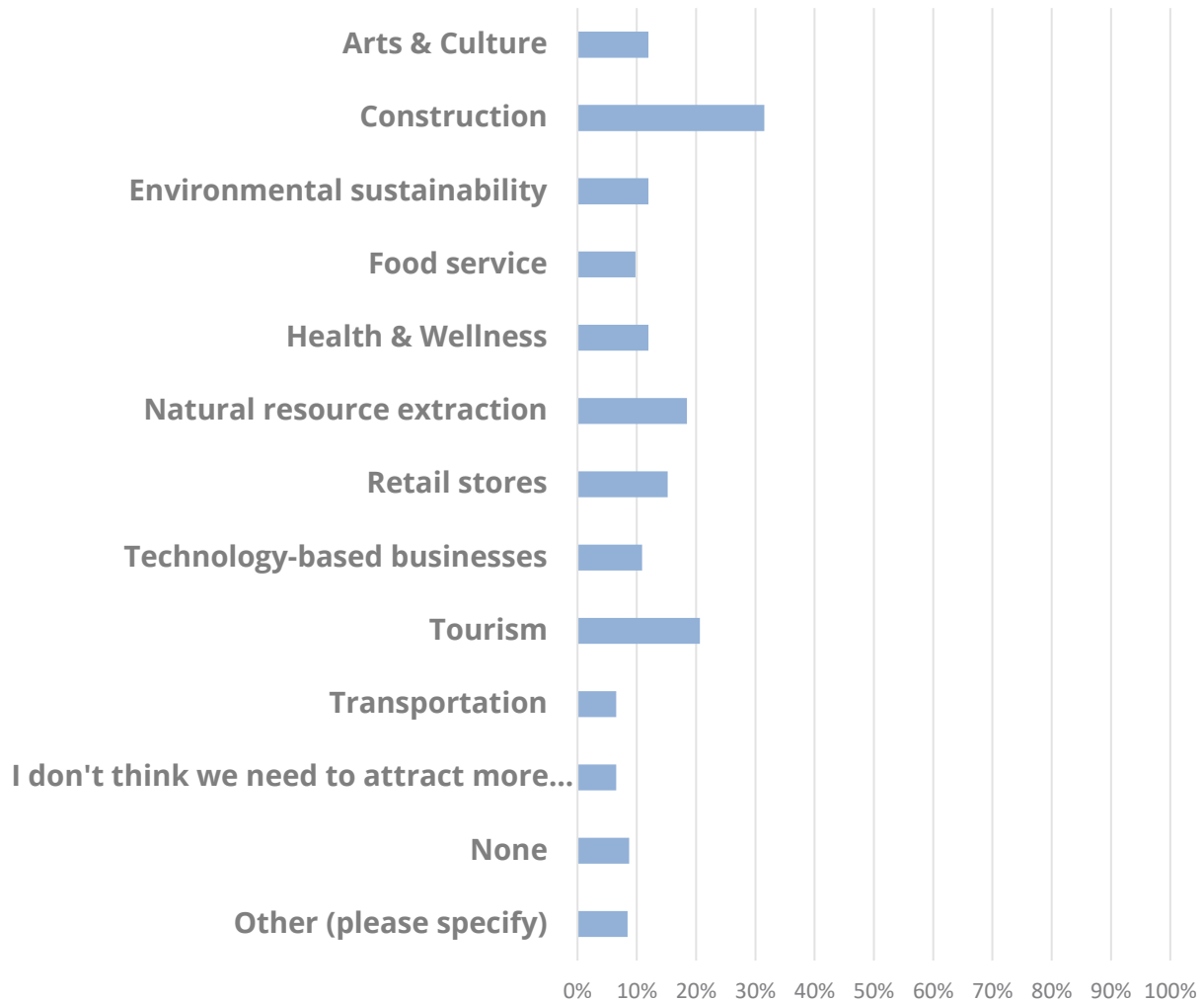
Answered: 39 Skipped: 75



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes (please specify)	66.67%	26
No	33.33%	13
Total Respondents:		39

Q35 If an effort was made to attract a business, sector, or industry to the Elk Valley, which options below would benefit you? (Please pick up to 2 answers)

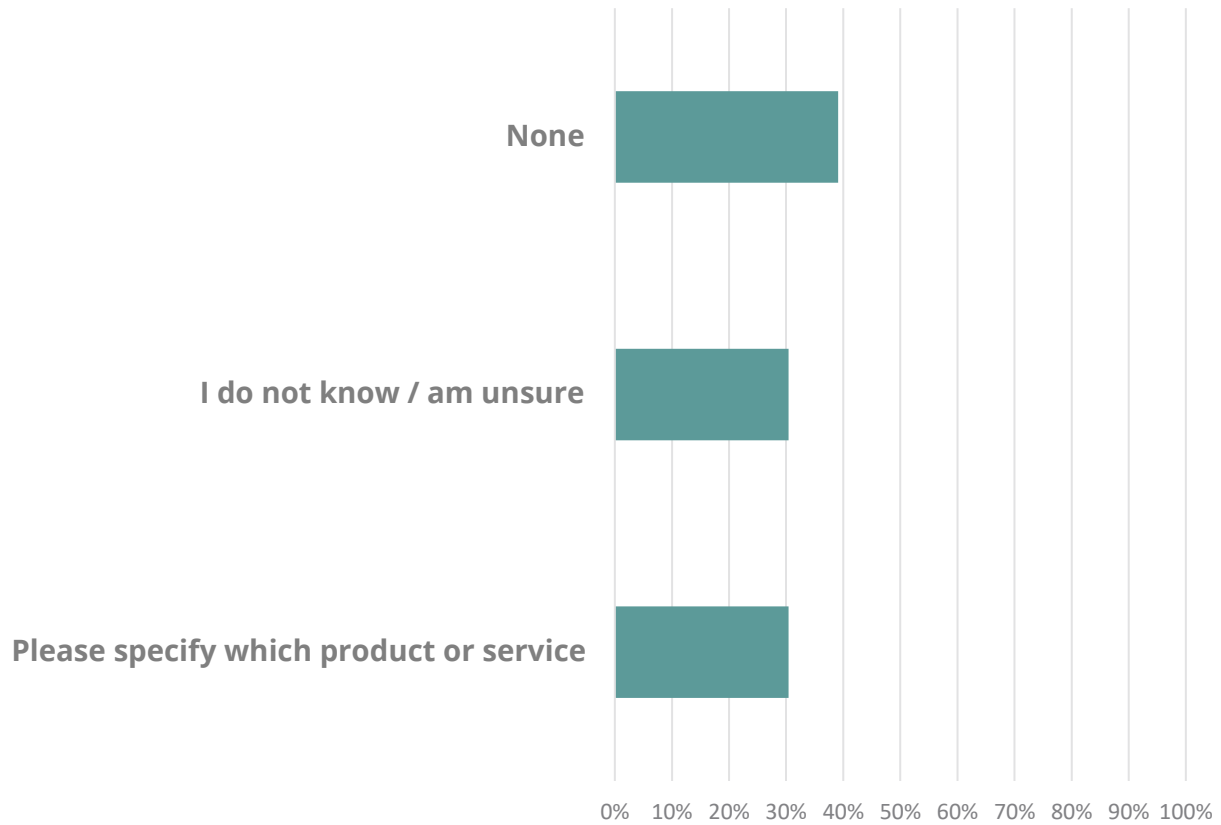
Answered: 92 Skipped: 22



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Arts & Culture	11.96%	11
Construction	31.52%	29
Environmental sustainability	11.96%	11
Food service	9.78%	9
Health & Wellness	11.96%	11
Natural resource extraction	18.48%	17
Retail stores	15.22%	14
Technology-based businesses	10.87%	10
Tourism	20.65%	19
Transportation	6.52%	6
I don't think we need to attract more business	6.52%	6
None	8.70%	8
Other (please specify)	4.35%	4
Total Respondents:		92

Q36 What products or services, if any, are you purchasing from outside the area for which you would like to have a local supplier?

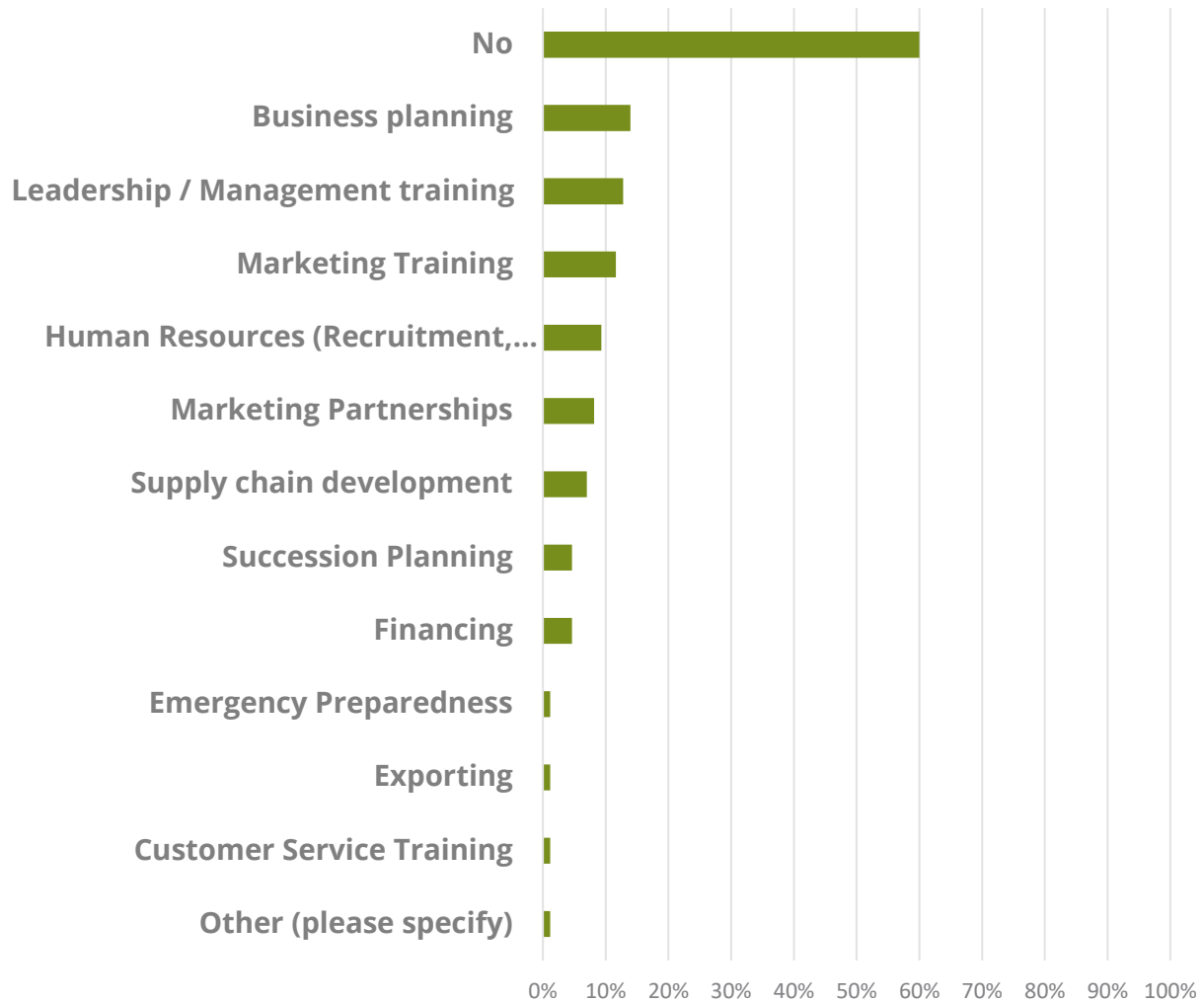
Answered: 92 Skipped: 22



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None	39.13%	36
I do not know / am unsure	30.43%	28
Please specify which product or service	30.43%	28
Total Respondents:		92

Q37 Do you have any desired business supports that are not currently available to you?

Answered: 86 Skipped: 28



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No	60.00%	147
Business planning	13.95%	12
Customer Service Training	1.16%	1
Exporting	1.16%	1
Financing	4.65%	4
Human Resources (Recruitment, Retention, Policies etc.)	9.30%	8
Marketing Partnerships	8.14%	7
Marketing Training	11.63%	10
Succession Planning	4.65%	4
Supply chain development	6.98%	6
Emergency Preparedness	1.16%	1
Leadership / Management training	12.79%	11
Other (please specify)	1.16%	1
Total Respondents:		86

Q38 Is there something you would like to add, that we did not ask?

Answered: 23 Skipped: 91

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