



BR+E

Growing the Villages
of Almaguin



Business Retention + Expansion 2015 - 2016

Building momentum and moving forward!

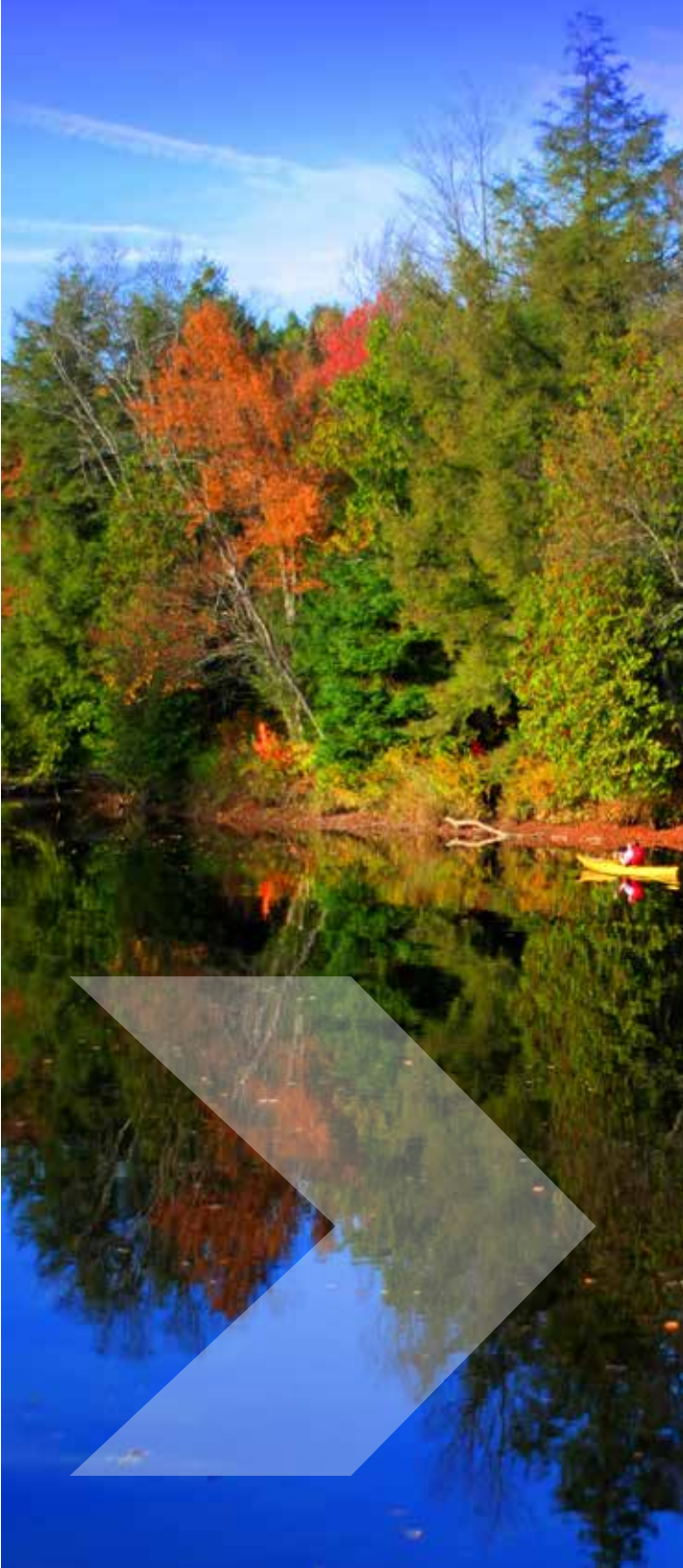


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Executive Summary

In June 2015, the Almaguin Chamber of Commerce (AHCC) launched a regional Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) program, in an attempt to help grow existing firms, identify investment attraction opportunities and gauge the health of the local business community. To ensure a regional approach, 13 communities in the Almaguin Region supported the Business Retention + Expansion initiative.

The 13 communities included:

- Chisholm
- Powassan
- Sundridge
- Strong
- Machar
- South River
- McMurrich/Monteith
- Kearney
- Magnetawan
- Perry
- Armour
- Burk's Falls
- Ryerson

The BR+E process provided an opportunity for AHCC and its partner communities to take on a grassroots approach to building trust and fostering relationships with area businesses. Engagement with businesses, volunteers, stakeholders, and organizations was integral to identifying key issues, opportunities, challenges and priorities. This program focused on each economic sector within the region and included a series of targeted questions to capture key information about the area's business climate. The information collected provides local intelligence and identifies priorities and action items for both the region and each community.

The AHCC BR+E project was implemented in four phases, beginning in June 2015 and concluding in July 2016. The phases included building the Leadership Team, conducting business visits and surveys, analyzing survey results, developing the final report and presenting the findings to local community representatives.

The survey process identified key trends and issues based upon responses received from the private sector. Once analyzed, this information formed the basis for priority areas. The four identified priority areas include regional collaboration, expansion opportunities, succession/exit planning and workforce development. The identified priorities will provide the AHCC and its partner communities with the opportunity to develop innovative solutions to address these needs.

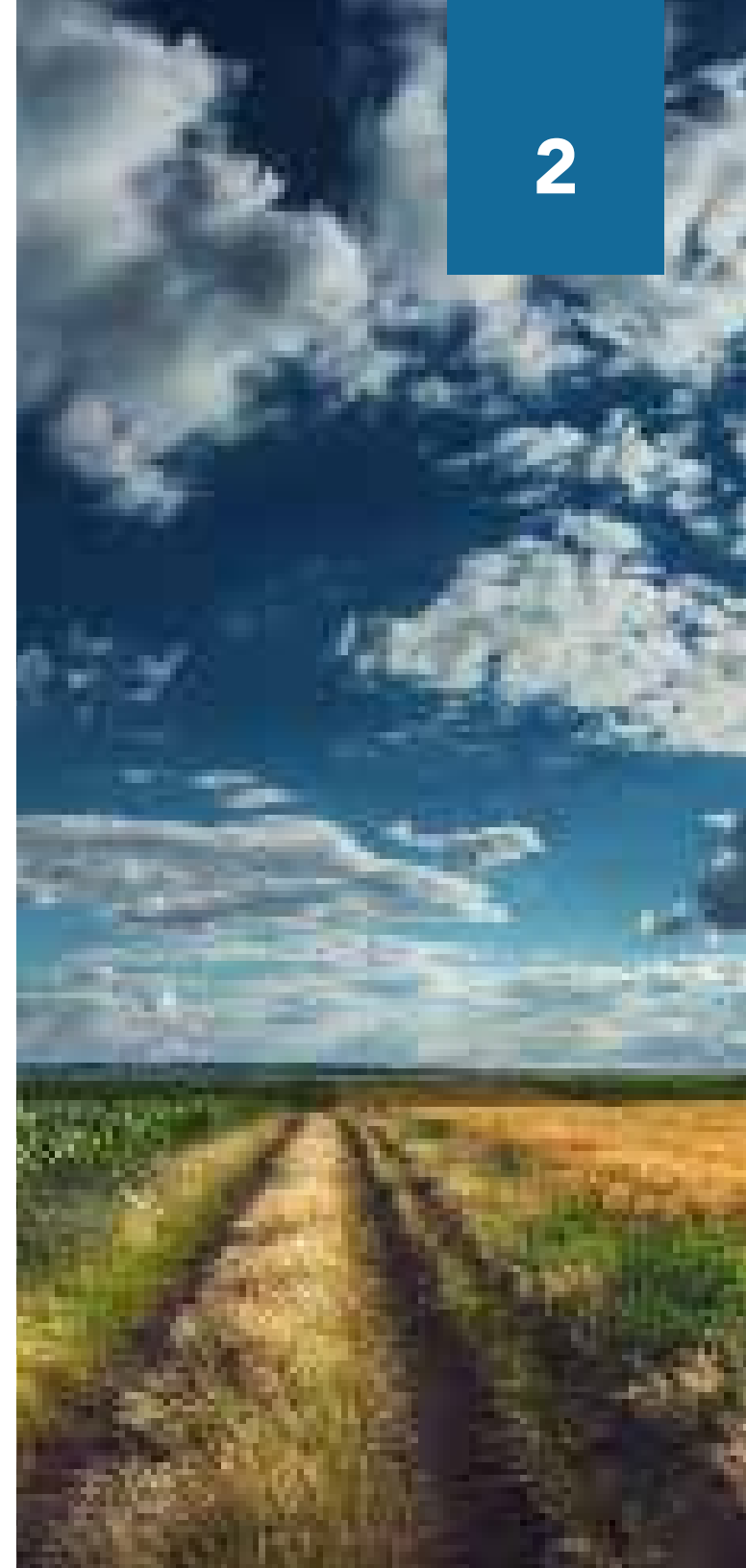
Five key areas of growth within the next five years expressed by local businesses pertaining to specific community needs include:

- 1 Strategic regional effort to attract residents, businesses and tourists through increased promotion and the development of enhanced products and services;
- 2 Formal downtown revitalization efforts;
- 3 Improved region wide access, dependability and affordability of infrastructure services such as internet, electricity, water and sewer;
- 4 Transparency and streamlined services and support of businesses from municipal staff and councils; and
- 5 Increased collaboration among communities and businesses.

The survey results highlighted the following key strengths within the Almaguin Region:

- 1 Demonstrated interest from area businesses in expanding operations;
- 2 Many businesses are owned by local people who are invested in the area and its success;
- 3 Business are well supported by other local businesses and residents;
- 4 Quality of Life is favourable (cost of living, landscape, community feel);
- 5 Proximity to regional centres and larger markets, quality roads, access to major highway system;
- 6 Access to quality services such as parks, roads, libraries, fire, police;
- 7 Increased willingness for 13 communities to work together as a region; and
- 8 Demonstrated commitment to partnering on initiatives such as the BR+E study, which was collaborated among, and partly funded by communities throughout the region.

The BR+E Final Report provides an in-depth look into the survey results from a regional level, along with individual snapshots of each community that took part in the initiative. Each key priority area has been broken down to include the issues, recommendations and key partners that should be involved in addressing the problems identified by local businesses.





Introduction

In an attempt to help grow existing firms, identify investment attraction opportunities and gauge the health of the local business community, the Almaguin Chamber of Commerce (AHCC) launched a regional Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) program. The results of this program provide insight into a number of opportunities as well as issues faced by local businesses.

The BR+E process provided an opportunity for AHCC and its partner communities to take on a grassroots approach to building trust and fostering relationships with area businesses in the economic development process. Engagement with businesses, volunteers, stakeholders, and organizations was integral to identifying key issues, opportunities, challenges and priorities. This program focused on each economic sector within the region and included a series of targeted questions to capture key information about the area's business climate. The information collected provides local intelligence and identifies priorities and action items for both the region and each of the partner communities.

REPORT CONTENT

The BR+E Report consists of a compilation of the business survey results for the region along with a summary of key findings for each partner community. The feedback provided through the survey process and its subsequent analysis forms the basis for each of the recommendations outlined herein. The Report also includes detailed survey results for the region which can be found in Appendix O (page 322). In addition, each participating community has been provided with the detailed survey results for their respective area.

GLOSSARY OF ORGANIZATIONS

- AHCC** - Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce
- NECO** - NECO Community Futures Development Corporation
- CB&DC** - Community Business & Development Centre
- CFDC** - Community Futures Development Corporation
- EDCs** - Economic Development Committees
- EDOs** - Economic Development Officers
- LMG** - The Labour Market Group
- TBC** - The Business Centre Nipissing Parry Sound Inc.
- SBEC** - Small Business Enterprise Centre
- NCIR** - Northern Communities Investment Readiness Initiative

Acknowledgments

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Thank You!

The work of the Project Team was enhanced by the participation of the Almaguin BR+E Leadership Team made up of representatives from the AHCC, each of the partner communities and government organizations whose insight and contributions were essential to the success of the overall project.



The contributions made by the AHCC, the Leadership Team members, the project volunteers and businesses who agreed to be interviewed, were instrumental to the development of this report. While assembled by the Consulting Team, the document is a true reflection of the input provided by the businesses along with the wide-ranging and insightful recommendations from the Leadership Team who are actively engaged in the various facets of community and economic development.

Report prepared by:



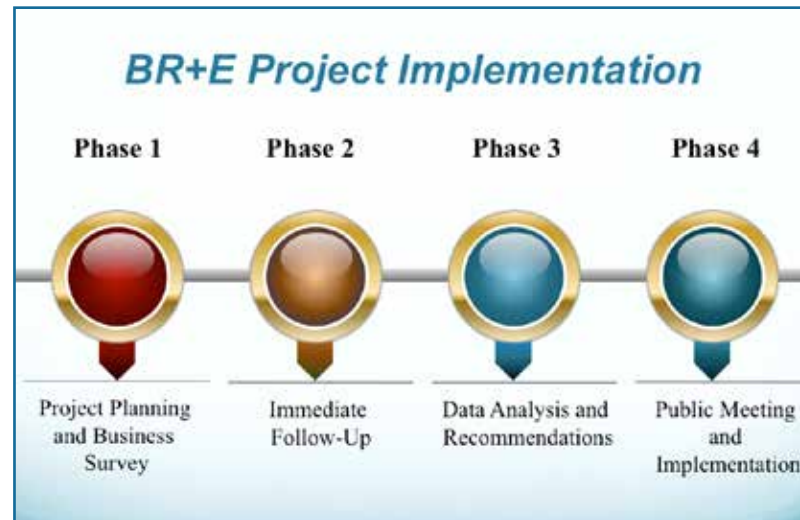
Karen Jones Consulting Inc.
Markey Consulting



BR+E Overview

Definition:

BR+E is an ongoing cooperative effort between business, local government, agencies, other organizations and people in the community with the purpose of identifying opportunities and actions to assist local businesses in expansion, the retention and creation of jobs and the diversification of the local economic base, as well as the implementation of defined actions to improve the local business climate.



A standardized, internationally recognized process, the BR+E is used to gauge the local business climate, and to help identify common issues, concerns and potential opportunities in the business community that can be used to help develop community based, economic development strategies. In undertaking this economic development focused approach for industry and business

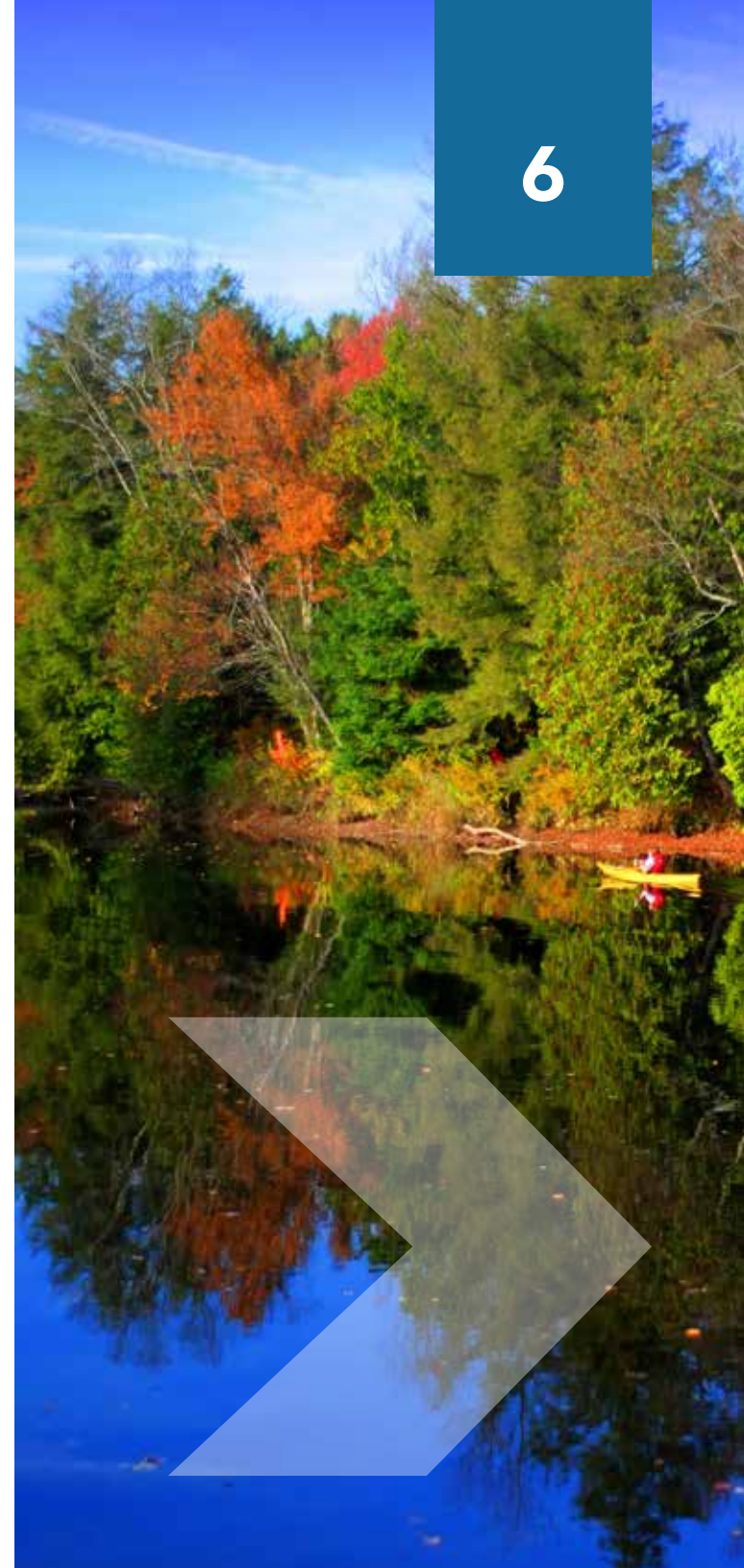
engagement, the AHCC sought to identify community and regional needs and priorities. Along with its partner communities, AHCC successfully accomplished the following key objectives over the short and long-term:

- Build relationships with the businesses, stakeholders, and key organizations;
- Identify urgent “red flag” and “green flag” issues;
- Identify opportunities and key areas for growth;
- Improve understanding about needs and requirements to retain businesses, jobs and support expansions;
- Identify gaps;
- Identify short and long term priorities;
- Identify common threads to provide basis to support advocacy and regional development;
- Develop and implement effective priority based strategies as they relate to each sector;
- Develop and implement programs and partnerships; and
- Communicate the role of the AHCC to area business.

The results of the survey process identified key trends and issues based upon responses received from the private sector. Once analyzed, this information formed the basis for key priority areas. The identified priorities will provide the AHCC and its partner communities with the opportunity to develop innovative solutions to address these needs. This process includes the development of key recommendations and the identification of industry partners to address the identified priorities.

The survey includes questions related to the following components:

- Business Climate
- Future Plans
- Company Information
- Business Development
- Financial
- Workforce Development
- Local Community





Methodology

The AHCC BR+E project was implemented in four phases. The project was formally launched in June 2015 and concluded in July 2016. The purpose of the initiative was to determine the needs of regional businesses, identify opportunities and address challenges. To accomplish this, interviews were set up to conduct surveys with 267 businesses in Chisholm, Powassan, Sundridge, Strong, Machar, South River, McMurrich/Monteith, Kearney, Magnetawan, Perry, Armour, Burk's Falls and Ryerson. Following the survey process, the results were reviewed and summarized for the final report. The project was conducted over four phases, which are described below.

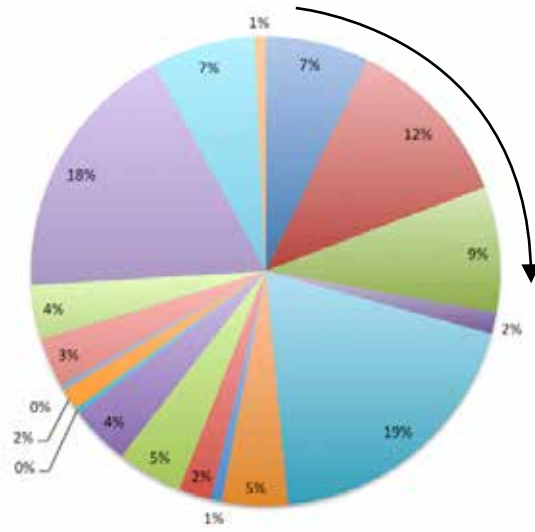
Phase 1: July 2015 – November 2015



Dedicated to establishing the project Leadership Team, increasing awareness and interest among potential businesses, analyzing the region's business makeup and developing sector based survey targets for each community, hosting various launch events, developing interview surveys and recruiting and training volunteers.

Phase 2: November 2015 – April 2016

Devoted to conducting interviews with area businesses, a total of 267 businesses representing all sectors of the regional economy were randomly selected and then interviewed by members of the BR+E Leadership Team and volunteers. Due to the significant amount of data acquired through the interview process, survey results were entered into the BR+E Executive Pulse database on an ongoing basis in order to avoid a back log in Phase 3.



Phase 3: May 2016

This phase was dedicated to reviewing the percentages (quantitative data) and anecdotal comments (qualitative data), derived from the surveys. The data was presented by survey question with the responses by percentage in one document and a collection of the anecdotal comments in another document. The information was presented at the Task Force Retreat for the Leadership Team to review and consider the findings and identify possible action items to address key concerns. The Leadership Team used the survey data, qualitative responses, local knowledge and expertise to collectively develop the SWOT analysis located on pages 15 & 16 and identified recommendations to mitigate challenges and

capitalize on opportunities. Using the information and insight gathered during this session, the results were further refined by the Consulting Team and developed into the recommendations embedded within this report. To identify key issues and areas that best fit recommendations, the following process was taken:

1. Consolidated all regional data and extracted from the Executive Pulse System.
2. Reviewed all survey responses and highlighted questions with the highest response rate for challenges businesses face.
3. Reviewed highlighted questions and identified key findings and priorities the Almaguin region faces collectively.
4. Concentrated on developing recommendations that could be realistically implemented at the grassroots level to foster local change.
5. Developed recommendations that the Leadership Team could implement to address the key priorities and stimulate growth within the region.

Red and Green Flag issues are defined through the Business Retention + Expansion program as

Red Flag: Urgent issues that require immediate action (ex. business closing)

Green Flag: Opportunities that require immediate action (ex. business expanding)

Red and Green Flags were brought to the Leadership Team on a regular basis throughout the BR+E project. Potential solutions, resources, programs and services to assist with the identified issues were discussed. Members of the Leadership Team would provide updates regarding Red and Green Flags occurring in their respected areas. As part of the Leadership Team process, feedback and suggestions would be shared amongst the group to mitigate issues and assist in identified opportunities. This process proved to successfully build and improve working relationships between local businesses, AHCC representatives and Economic Development Officers.

Phase 4: July 2016

This phase involved the synthesis and promotion of the findings and presentation of a final report to the region, its communities and stakeholders. To be used to develop community-based economic development strategies.



Profile of the Region

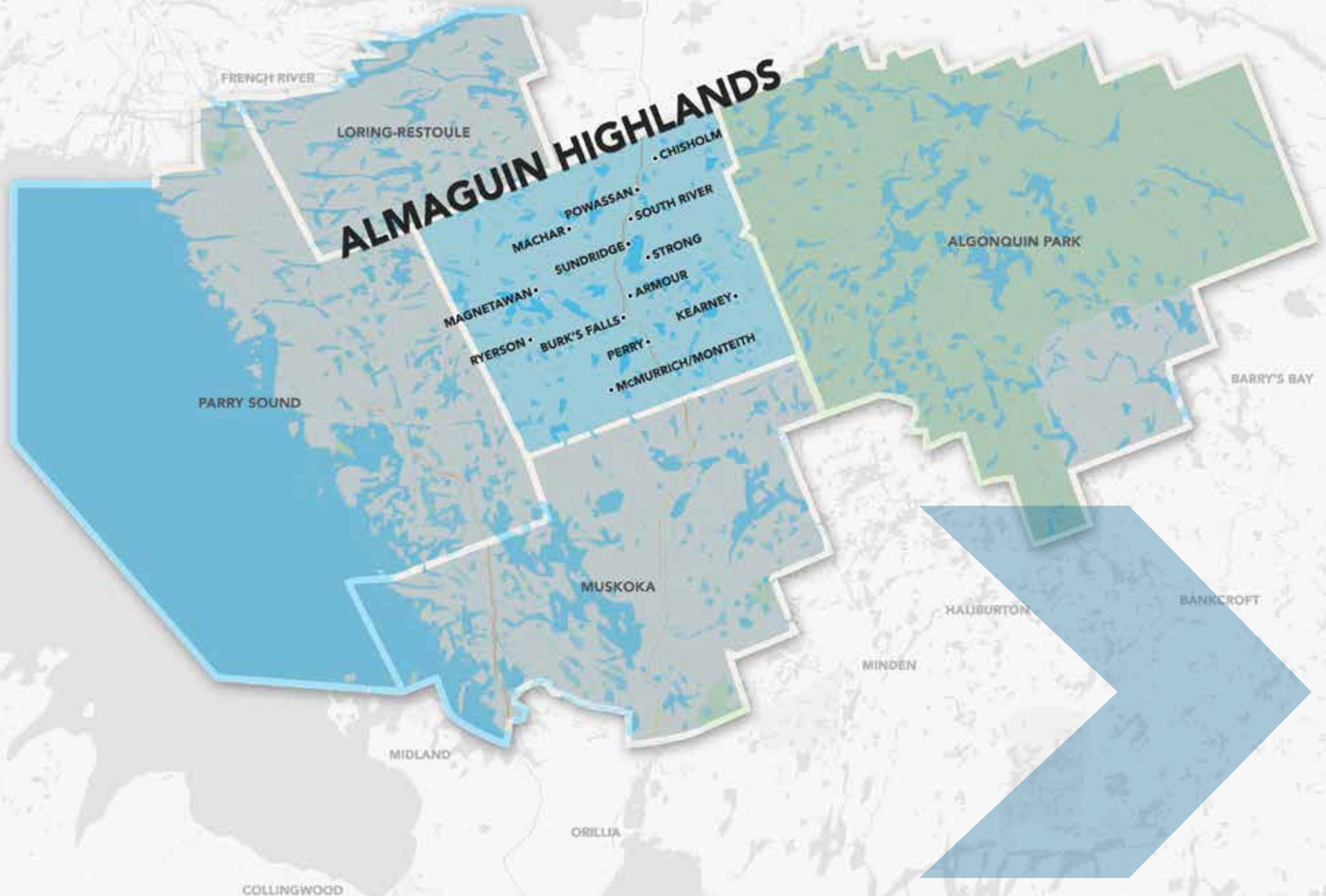
The Almaguin Region (colloquially known as Almaguin) covers approximately 8,000 km² and stretches north from Muskoka to Lake Nipissing. Comprising the eastern half of Parry Sound District, the eastern edge abuts the western boundary of Algonquin Provincial Park, Ontario's oldest and largest Provincial Park, to the west is the Parry Sound district and Georgian Bay. Originally derived from the words, Algonquin and Magnetawan, Almaguin is now used to describe the marketing region of East Parry Sound.

With a population of 23,570, based on the 2011 census, Almaguin benefits from being within close proximity to the most significant rail and highway transportation corridors in Northeastern Ontario, making it easily accessible from all four geographic corners. The Almaguin Region is made up of 18 distinctive Municipalities that encompass many small towns, villages and hamlets. This region of Northern Ontario presents to the visitor, the majestic landscape of the Canadian Shield, enhanced by the history and the charm of its many rural communities. With its wide open spaces of mixed woodlands, rolling hills and rocky crags, with hundreds of unspoiled lakes and rivers, the Almaguin Highlands is a paradise to be explored and enjoyed.



Regional Area

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Participating Communities

To ensure a regional approach, 13 communities in the Almaguin Region supported the Business Retention + Expansion initiative. Their collective involvement provides rich insight into business needs, challenges and opportunities at a local level and on a regional basis.

- Chisholm
- Powassan
- Sundridge
- Strong
- Machar
- South River
- McMurrich/Monteith
- Kearney
- Magnetawan
- Perry
- Armour
- Burk's Falls
- Ryerson

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

267 Businesses
Interviewed



47
Volunteers
Trained



Volunteer
Training Sessions



14 Members on
Leadership Team



Regional
Collaboration with
13 Communities

3

Project
Launches

Leadership Team



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The work of the Project Team was enhanced by the participation of the BR+E Leadership Team made up of representatives from the AHCC, partnering communities and government representatives whose insight and contributions were essential to the success of the overall project.

The Leadership Team members include:

- Anthony Rizzo, Almaguin Chamber of Commerce
- William Hollett, Almaguin Chamber of Commerce
- Emilio Foffano, Almaguin Chamber of Commerce
- Ron Begin / Gerry Spooner, FedNor
- Kimberly Bester, Municipality of Powassan
- Susan Phillips, Municipality of Powassan
- Melinda Torrence, Township of Perry
- Pat Aspin-Lecour, NECO
- John Santarossa, Central Almaguin Economic Development Association (Municipalities of Sundridge, South River, Strong, Machar and Joly)
- Courtney Rizzo, (Municipalities of Kearney, Perry, McMurrich/Monteith) and Magnetawan Economic Development Committee
- Dave Gray, Burk's Falls and Area Committee for Economic Development (Municipalities of Burks Falls, Ryerson and Armour)
- Stacie Fiddler, The Labour Market Group (Local Workforce Planning Board)
- Carole Mantha, Ministry of Northern Development and Mines



➤ Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce

VISION STATEMENT:

Almaguin Highlands is a premiere destination for residential and commercial development.



MISSION STATEMENT:

To be the voice for prosperous business community that fosters pride in our area; and to develop economic growth on behalf of its members and the communities it represents.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A CHAMBER OF COMMERCE?

A Chamber of Commerce is an organization that acts on behalf of its members to develop business contacts, promote economic development and the community it represents. It works to promote civic, commercial, industrial and agricultural progress in the community.

It also strives for legislation that is beneficial to its members and community.

HOW DOES A CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OPERATE?

The Almaguin Highland's Chamber of Commerce consists of the entire Almaguin Highlands district.

The decision making body, known as the Council, elected by the members at the annual general meeting, will include a president, treasurer, secretary and eight other members.

A member of the Chamber can be any reputable person, association or indirectly engaged or interested in trade commerce or the economic and social welfare of the district.

Regional





Regional Summary

When looking at both the regional and local results from the BR+E Survey, there are four clear key issues present.



WORKFORCE

The region's labour market poses a number of challenges which include the potential labour force as either inexperienced or needs preparation for the workplace, a lack of awareness about the career opportunities in the region and the need for relevant training.



EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES

While several respondents of the survey intend to expand their operations within the next 18 months, many of them indicated that they are facing challenges with respect to real estate including the ability to find readily available information about land and buildings for sale/lease within the region as well as appropriate and affordable options to meet their expansion needs. In addition, several respondents indicated a lack of knowledge regarding funding programs available to support their expansions. Furthermore, many businesses throughout the region expressed challenges related to over-regulation (i.e. red tape) associated with all government levels and the lack of municipal support for various business start-up and expansion opportunities.



SUCCESSION / EXIT PLANNING

A large percentage of survey respondents indicated that they have no succession or exit plan. This may result in the loss of businesses and consequentially, a loss of jobs, services and tax base within the region.



REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Survey respondents were unaware about or had no contact with organizations that are available to assist with business development, research, programs, networking opportunities and workshops, events, seminars. Awareness, understanding and cooperation among municipalities and organizations within the region must be improved to ensure clear communication among stakeholders, regional unity, efficiency and to avoid unnecessary redundancy.

The following provides an overview of the regional results during the interview process. 267 businesses and 18 sectors surveyed

83% locally owned and operate with one location, **8.9%** locally owned with more than one location, **3.9%** were a franchise, and **3.9%** were a part of a branch or division of a regional, national or international company.

63.4% of businesses have 1-4 employees.

18.9% of businesses have 5-9 employees.

8.7% of businesses have 10-19 employees.

3.1% of businesses have 20-29 employees.

4.3 % of businesses have 30-49employees.

1.2 % of businesses have 50-99employees.

0.4 % of businesses have 100-299employees.

95% of businesses have owners who are involved in day-to-day operations of the business.

81% of businesses own their facility.

42% of businesses are planning to expand their operations in the next 18 months.

53% of those businesses are currently experiencing troubles with their expansion plans.

67% of those businesses asked for assistance from the community to support their expansion plans.

51% of businesses expressed a good general impression of their community as a place to do business, and 16% rated it as excellent.

35% of businesses stated their general impression of their community has become more positive, **20%** more negative and **45%** stated no change.

89% of businesses rated quality of life in their community as good or excellent.

16% of businesses experience barriers with Internet costs.

22% of businesses experience barriers with Internet speed.

15% of businesses experience barriers with Internet access.

12% of businesses experience barriers with knowledge and training regarding I.T.

7% of businesses experience barriers with hardware/software support.

25% of businesses experience no barriers.

34% of businesses rated availability of qualified workers as poor.

41% of businesses are currently experience difficulties hiring and 52% of the businesses feel that hiring challenges are related to the community.

29% of businesses are currently participating in co-ops, internships and apprenticeship programs, however, 48% expressed interest for more information.

62% indicated an increase in number of employees in the past 3 years.

Graphical representations of the regional survey results can be found on page 29.



Regional SWOT

Strengths

- Demonstrated interest from area businesses in expanding operations (Fig. 57)
- Many businesses are owned by local people who are invested in the area and its success (Fig. 3)
- Many long standing businesses (35 years +) (Fig. 6)
- Business are well supported by other local businesses and residents (Fig. 25-27)
- Quality of Life is favourable (cost of living, landscape, community feel) (Fig. 23)
- Land costs are reasonable (Fig. 14)
- Proximity to regional centres and larger markets, quality roads, access to major highway system (Fig. 19 & 20)
- Employee retention for small businesses is high (Fig. 86)
- Access to quality services such as parks, roads, libraries, fire, police (Fig. 47, 48, 51-53)
- Businesses have demonstrated an interest in working collaboratively on regional marketing initiatives (Fig. 78 & 103)
- Increased willingness for 13 communities to work together as a region
- Demonstrated commitment to partnering on initiatives such as the BR+E study which was a collaboration among, and partly funding by communities throughout the region
- Some services are shared thus increasing coverage while reducing costs (i.e. fire services)
- Open communication with partnering organizations such as provincial and federal governments and agencies

Weaknesses

- Current inventory of commercial buildings / property is limited making it challenging to attract new businesses (Fig. 13 & 15)
- The seasonal nature of many businesses poses challenges for recruitment, retention and overall profitability (Fig. 92)
- Skilled/qualified workers hard to find/attract (Fig. 83, 87-89)
- Many new graduates are entering the workforce without the basic essential skills required by employers (Fig. 88)
- Cost of electricity & outages are high (Fig. 32 & 33)
- Availability and costs associated with broadband in rural areas (downloading speed, capacity) (Fig 29, 76 & 77)
- Lack of succession planning by many businesses and organizations (Fig. 63)
- Different views on employee expectations by Millennial generation (lack of workforce stability and potential source of issue) (Fig. 84 & 89)
- Recent shift by area secondary school away from trades
- Schools lacking resources – declining student intake, after school programs

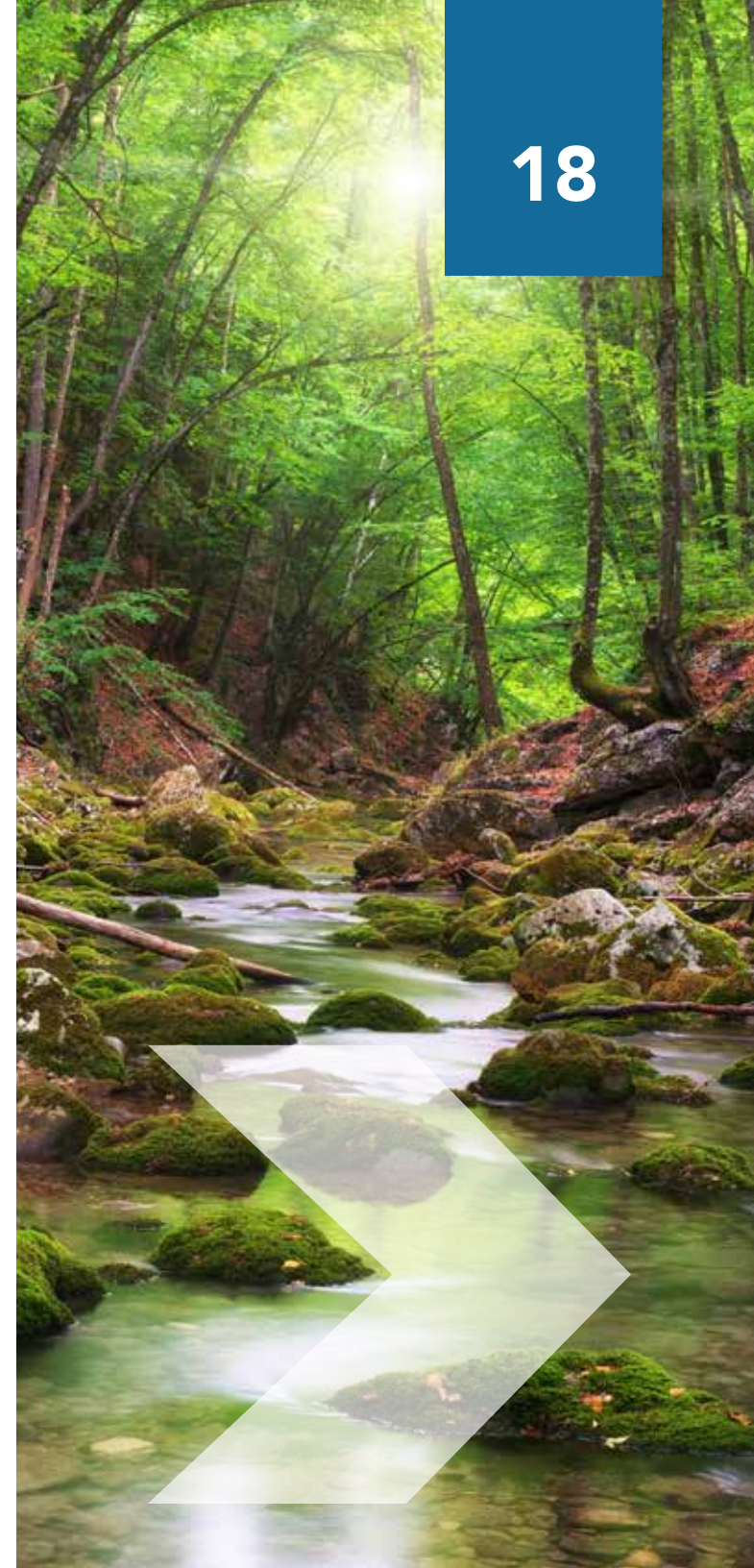
- Lack of recreation to support families and young adults serves as barrier for attraction/retention (Fig 22, 24, 28 & 50)
- Insufficient and/or aging infrastructure and/or buildings
- Businesses unaware of services, programs, funding and resources available to support growth/expansion (Fig. 57-72)
- “Red tape” from all levels of government limiting growth and expansion opportunities
- Building, planning, permitting challenges at municipal level (Fig. 44)
- Lack of medical and health services in certain geographic locations (Fig. 22)
- Very limited knowledge of services/organizations (Chamber, SBEC, CFDC, etc.) (Fig. 39-43 & 45)
- No unique value proposition or competitive advantage – businesses can find high quality of life with equal or more potential for profitability in many other regions

Opportunities

- Business support services to attract new entrepreneurs to the region and work with existing residents with start-up
- Attraction of new residents- families, new comers, young professionals
- More business offerings, social connection and services to support senior market
- Increased communication with groups (schools, municipalities, businesses)
- Shared marketing initiatives/programs with businesses
- Increased awareness about organizations (Chamber, SBEC, CFDC) through Ec.Dev/ Municipalities, Business Community
- Continue to work with businesses through direct contact and one on one communication
- Downtown revitalization, incentives for investment
- Communities investing in EDO positions
- Roundtable discussion for Ec.Dev orgs, municipalities, etc. to discuss and implement solutions
- Further develop and position Almaguin identity to resonate outside regional borders

Threats

- Unreliability of some services (e.g. hydro outages, internet, cellular)
- Aging population
- Semi-retirement community – must have strategy in place to ensure adequate services exist to support community as they age
- Low-cost programs with low-cost programming hinders attraction and retention of families seeking high quality art, sport, recreation opportunities
- Addition of development charges
- Government red-tape prevents expansion (licensing, regulations, building codes, studies) slow processes, barriers that impact businesses expansion/start-up plans
- The process to acquire land presently owned by the Ministry of Transportation declared as surplus is challenging
- Ministry of Transportation owned land is difficult to acquire thus hindering potentially significant growth opportunities along transportation routes
- Working with Ministries – unrefined process makes it difficult for progress
- Cost of doing business due to government imposed requirements and “red tape” creates significant barriers to business growth and attraction.





Recommendations

Fundamental Factors: Local Economic Development (LED) is acting to ensure that the economy of your community grows faster than your population so you have the extra resources in the future to finance improvement. This is achieved when public, business and non-governmental sector partners work collectively to create better conditions for economic growth and employment generation. LED is thus about communities continually improving their investment climate and business enabling environment to enhance their competitiveness, retain jobs and improve income. Inefficient or weak business environments impede businesses from starting up, expanding, modernizing or surviving. In order to ensure that communities and regions are well positioned to encourage and accommodate growth several fundamental factors must be considered and addressed.

Issue	Recommendation	Partners
Limited community programs and services such as recreation, sport, arts and music compared to what is offered in other areas hinders the attraction and retention of families and young professionals to the area. Residential attraction and retention is essential to creating a critical mass of local people to utilize business services and products and to provide a workforce. (Fig. 22, 24, 29, 48 & 50)	<p>Develop a regional facilities master plan to include strategies that align with available services/programs in the areas of recreation, sport, arts and music. This strategy should include an asset inventory, existing human resources and initiatives within all communities.</p> <p>Develop a needs analysis to explore and understand citizen needs, current gaps and potential opportunities to retain and attract young professionals, families and retirees.</p> <p>Collaborate at the regional level to provide programs and services, share resources and assets to reduce costs and improve quality.</p>	<p>AHCC</p> <p>Local EDCs</p> <p>Municipalities</p>
Businesses lack awareness regarding available programs, services and opportunities to them. (Fig. 39-43, 59, 61, 65, 68-70, 72 & 103)	<p>Partner with complementary organizations to fund a speaker series as part of Chamber of Commerce social events where various service providers can share information about their services and programs with the business community.</p> <p>EDOs to collaborate to increase the number of half day/full day regional workshops and seminars to address the needs of businesses.</p>	<p>AHCC</p> <p>Local EDCs</p> <p>The Labour Market Group (LMG)</p>

Issue	Recommendation	Partners
<p>The lack of appropriate regional public transportation reduces the potential pool of individuals who could be recruited for jobs and limits the opportunity for students seeking co-op and apprenticeship placements (Fig. 56)</p>	<p>Investigate various shared transportation options and best practices such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixed-route services; • Demand-response services; • Van-pooling; • Guaranteed ride home programs (some parents feel they must take a car to work in case they need to get home unexpectedly, usually because of something related to their children); • Partnering with transit providers to design options that best help employees (flexible routes, shuttles, express buses); • Shared-ride programs. 	<p>AHCC</p> <p>Local EDCs</p> <p>Municipalities</p>
<p>Lack of Regional Promotion and lack of opportunities for businesses to participate in joint-marketing and networking on a regional scale (Fig. 78 and 103).</p>	<p>Develop and implement regional marketing strategy/committee to identify target markets, partnerships and actions. Support existing businesses and provide more networking and joint-marketing opportunities across the region.</p>	<p>Municipalities</p> <p>EDOs</p> <p>AHCC</p>



Recommendations



Workforce: The region's labour market poses a number of challenges: it's current potential labour force lacks the experience and training required to enter local jobs and employers are having difficulties finding qualified workers. In order to find solutions to these challenges, local employment and training agencies need to be engaged in order to implement local solutions.

Issue	Recommendation	Partners
<p>Businesses are faced with recruitment and retention challenges due to limited HR capacity, awareness regarding tools and resources available to them, and employment related trends.</p> <p>Recruitment - (Fig. 85, 87-89)</p> <p>Retention - (Fig. 86, 91 & 92)</p>	<p>Engage employers to consider alternative attraction and retention approaches by introducing them to a range of considerations over a period of time through a variety of methods including electronic or in-person, webcasts, newsletters or a series of interactive workshops and/or speakers. Topics could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relevance and application of employee engagement strategies • The value of training • Resources available to employers to help address their HR needs • Career advancement and career ladders • Engagement with high schools • Managing the Millennium Generation • The value of work placements and how to get the most out of them • How to develop recruitment packages to promote employment opportunities including creating documents such as a company overview, job descriptions, benefit information, company website, etc. • Interview processes • Retention strategies • Available funding programs for internships/ co-ops, apprenticeships, training • Concrete tools / practices / approaches (sector based panel of best practices and success stories) 	<p>AHCC</p> <p>Local EDCs</p> <p>The Labour Market Group</p>

Issue	Recommendation	Partners
<p>Businesses are faced with recruitment and retention challenges due to limited HR capacity, lack of awareness regarding tools and resources available to them, and employment related trends.</p>	<p>Provide awareness of local programs and services to employers using a variety of methods in order that they become more aware of programs and services offered to them in their communities. These methods include:</p> <p>Develop, promote and distribute employer resources related to job descriptions, wages, employment trends, etc... (e.g. Generation x+y= Employer Guide; LMG Tools for the Trade)</p> <p>Support business in accessing funding for training and recruitment including the development of applications</p> <p>Host breakfast session for seasonal employers to encourage collaboration and the development of creative solutions to address recruitment and retention issues tied to seasonal work.</p> <p>Establish regular roundtable discussion among employment related organizations and program delivery agents.</p> <p>Work with middle schools, high schools, colleges and universities to promote regional career opportunities and develop relevant educational curriculum.</p> <p>Develop immigration attraction friendly strategies.</p>	<p>AHCC</p> <p>Near North District School Board</p> <p>Almaguin Highlands Secondary School</p> <p>NECO</p> <p>Community Business Development Centre (CB&DC)</p> <p>Local EDC's</p> <p>LMG</p> <p>Employment Centres</p> <p>Area Businesses</p> <p>North Bay Multicultural Centre</p>



Workforce (CONT.)

Issue	Recommendation	Partners
Lack of awareness regarding local career opportunities that are available within the region such as skilled trades, entrepreneurship and tourism.	<p>Develop a series of social media based communications highlighting area employers and potential career opportunities targeting young professionals regarding employment and lifestyle (e.g. Youtube; Snapchat; Instagram)</p> <p>Create videos and/or other tools to post to Facebook targeting parents, educators and community at large. Videos could include interviews, testimonials and success stories from participants in skill trades, tourism and entrepreneurial training programs.</p> <p>Invest in social media advertising such as Facebook ads to promote created tools.</p> <p>Utilize all tools during regional and community events.</p>	<p>AHCC</p> <p>Local EDCs</p> <p>LMG</p> <p>Explorers' Edge</p> <p>Local schools, colleges and universities</p>
Training opportunities are limited and uncoordinated throughout the region.	<p>Identify training needs throughout the region.</p> <p>Collaborate regionally to organize more relevant, effective and efficient training opportunities.</p>	<p>AHCC</p> <p>EDOs</p> <p>Municipalities</p> <p>Private sector</p>



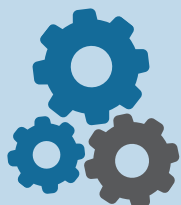
Expansion Opportunities: While several respondents of the survey intend to expand their operations in the relatively short term, many of them indicated that they are facing challenges with respect to real estate including the ability to find readily available information about land and buildings for sale/lease within the region as well as appropriate and affordable options to meet their expansion needs. In addition, several respondents indicated a lack of knowledge regarding funding programs available to support their expansions. When

business owners speak of how “business friendly” a community is, often times they are referring to how easy or difficult it is to start up or expand a business. Creating and maintaining an efficient, simple, and streamlined system that makes it easier to start, expand, and operate businesses should be a short term priority for the Almaguin region.

Issue	Recommendation	Partners
<p>Businesses seeking space or land for lease/ purchase within the region are faced with challenges with respect to finding information and finding affordable and appropriate options to meet their needs. (Fig. 13-15 & 18)</p>	<p>Develop a consistent and integrated regional system including a property database, relevant forms, information on permitting requirements and procedures to save costs and time and allow developing businesses to focus on substantive matters rather than dealing with challenges associated to locating the real estate and/or other support they require.</p> <p>Identify a single point of contact to deal with all inquiries.</p> <p>Work with realtors, landlords and private land / property owners to develop database and encourage regional promotion.</p> <p>Undertake a comparative analysis of similar sized communities and markets to determine average rental costs; educate area landlords about competitive pricing and assist them with promotion of their properties to fill vacancies</p>	<p>EDOs</p> <p>Municipal Councils</p> <p>Municipal Staff (planning; building)</p> <p>Realtors</p> <p>Landlords / Landowners</p>
<p>Lack of collaboration and sharing of information/ resources between communities is limiting the region's competitiveness.</p>	<p>Educate municipal councils and staff about the competitive advantages to cross promoting community assets on a regional level; encourage collaboration as opposed to competition. (e.g. better to help a business expand in a neighbouring community if it meets their needs then to have them relocate to another region entirely)</p> <p>Undertake a regional investment readiness assessment (assessing availability of key considerations for investors) to identify assets (advantages) and work together to address gaps (challenges). This could include a community profile, industrial & commercial land inventory, investment marketing, land use planning, economic development, site selection process and monitoring investment inquiries. For more details, review the investment readiness test through Northern Communities Investment Readiness Initiative (NCIR).</p> <p>Host a regional investment readiness workshop to assist communities with increasing their investment readiness.</p>	<p>EDOs</p> <p>Municipal Council</p> <p>Municipal Staff</p> <p>NCIR</p>



Recommendations



Regional Collaboration: Survey respondents were either unaware of, or had no contact with organizations that are available to assist with business development, research, programs, networking opportunities and workshops, events, seminars. Awareness and understanding about existing organizations is required to ensure efforts are not duplicated and the region is perceived as united. Awareness and increased communication by a region-wide coordinating body, such as the AHCC, is necessary in order to equally represent the needs and address the challenges of businesses within each community in Almaguin.

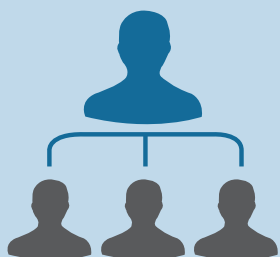
Issue	Recommendation	Partners
<p>There is a disconnect among existing regional organizations and municipalities with respect to roles, expectations, deliverables, events and resources resulting in duplication of efforts, a lack of cohesiveness and consequentially limited impact. (Fig. 39-43 & 45)</p>	<p>Facilitate discussion with regional Economic Development Officers and the AHCC to strategize ways to unite the region, work together on local economic development related priorities and create relevant resources/tools to help foster collaboration.</p> <p>Host an event featuring best practices focused on how to effectively forge local partnerships, understand community dynamics, find solutions and work together on regional economic development initiatives.</p> <p>Further explore and understand role of existing economic development committees (e.g. Almaguin Regional Economic Alliance, Almaguin Highlands Economic Development, Municipal Economic Development, etc.) to align efforts and recognize assets. Ensure partnership opportunities for regional initiatives are maximized, silos barriers are removed and duplication is avoided.</p> <p>Build a visual and information package that can be shared with Councils, Municipal staff, committees and organizations about regional collaboration opportunities, key players, deliverables, programs, roles, expectations and resources that can benefit the region as a whole.</p> <p>Increase education by developing a presentation that can be delivered by EDO's, AHCC and other key players that limits the disconnect and encourages collaboration. Focus of presentation should be geared towards regional opportunities and "Pro-Almaguin" mindset.</p> <p>Host business roundtable meetings to showcase success stories, investment opportunities and information about available programs/resources to assist with retention and expansion. Use a variety of traditional and digital marketing tools to promote the session to the business community.</p>	<p>AHCC</p> <p>Local EDCs</p> <p>Municipalities</p> <p>LMG</p> <p>NECO</p> <p>CB&DC</p> <p>The Business Centre (TBC)</p>

Regional Collaboration (CONT.)

Issue	Recommendation	Partners
<p>Lack of formalized process to advocate for economic development and business expansion opportunities within region. (FIG. 25, 44, 45, 57, 67-70)</p>	<p>Work with Economic Development Officers to develop an Ambassador Program that relies on local community champions to encourage a unified grassroots approach for business investment attraction.</p> <p>Build capacity throughout the region to ensure Economic Development professionals, Chamber of Commerce Board Members, Council, Municipal staff and committee members are aware of tools, programs and resources for businesses development.</p>	<p>AHCC</p> <p>Local EDCs</p> <p>Municipalities</p> <p>Business Champions</p>
<p>Lack of collaboration and sharing of information/ resources between communities is limiting the region's competitiveness. (Fig. 39-43)</p>	<p>Develop a formal communication plan to identify target audiences, communication objectives, key players, key messages, tactics, timelines and budgets. Chamber and EDOs to investigate additional opportunities to encourage joint marketing and networking/ information sharing. Implement the plan to increase awareness about key players, programs, resources and tools to assist businesses and organizations alike.</p> <p>Work together as a region to fund, develop and implement a regional marketing partnership. Develop a business community identity/brand and use the marketing efforts as a tool to increase awareness about economic development initiatives in the region.</p> <p>Increase awareness of programs and services to the business community by hosting workshops, presentations and seminars on a consistent and regular basis.</p> <p>Use existing resources from partners to create relevant information packages for businesses available online through Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce website and through hard copy distribution. Develop internal tools and resources for the Economic Development Officer's and organizations, and external tools for the community-at-large.</p> <p>Host relevant business support related links and available resources on the Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce website. Use the website as a portal of information that can assist businesses and ensure they are directed to the organizations that can assist with program delivery and access to information.</p>	<p>AHCC</p> <p>Local EDCs</p> <p>Municipalities</p>



Recommendations



Exit Planning* & Succession Planning*: A large percentage of survey respondents indicated that they have no succession or exit plan. In order to ensure that said businesses continue to operate within the region once their current owners have retired thus retaining jobs, services and the associated tax base, assisting with succession and exit planning should be a short term priority for all partner communities.

*Refer to the right side of the page for definitions.

Issue	Recommendation	Partners
Business owners do not have an organized or formal plan on how they will exit their business upon retirement which could result in closures and job losses. (Fig. 57, 63-65)	<p>Host lunch and learn sessions to educate business owners on alternatives and how to determine what is the best fit for them. (e.g. succession vs. exit)</p> <p>Work with lawyer, accountant and real estate agent to develop and distribute a one page resource on key steps to take for both succession and exit planning. (e.g. assessing and ensuring value; legal responsibilities; long term planning)</p> <p>Contact those businesses which indicated that they intend to retire and work with them one on one to support them with their exit / succession process.</p> <p>Promote businesses whose owners are looking to retire but are willing to stay on as mentors to potential young entrepreneurs.</p> <p>Develop immigration attraction strategies to recruit new potential buyers.</p>	<p>AHCC</p> <p>EDOs</p> <p>Businesses</p> <p>Professional Resources (accounting firms, legal firms, realtors)</p>
Cost of meeting new legislative and government regulations (required upgrades to meet standards) poses a significant challenge to buyers looking to purchase grandfathered businesses. (Fig. 16, 25, 45, 63-65 and 72)	Almaguin Chamber to work with other local Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade throughout the province to identify key legislative issues and approach Ontario and Canadian Chamber of Commerce for lobbying support.	AHCC

Critical Success Factors



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To ensure the successful implementation of the recommendations identified, several critical factors should be considered.

- 1 Continue with the operations of the Business Retention + Expansion Leadership Team to ensure continued momentum and strategic direction during the implementation of the identified recommendations. Consideration should be given to what member organizations make-up this group.
- 2 As the project lead, the Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce should invest in capacity building and succession planning to ensure the long-term sustainability of the organization. This may include the development and distribution of internal strategic plans to foster partnership and collaboration with partners.
- 3 A dedicated position should be established to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations. Regular communication with the Leadership Team, Economic Development Officers, partnering organizations, businesses and community stakeholders is critical.
- 4 Municipal interest and support from the 13 participating communities is essential to developing the foundation required to successfully implement the initiatives.
- 5 Discussion among local communities to agree and identify the primary economic development coordinating body is required to ensure streamlined services, reduced duplication, improve productivity and avoid confusion to the business community.
- 6 The continuation of the Business Retention + Expansion Program is essential to maintain open communication and understanding about the business challenges needs.

* Exit Planning:

The comprehensive analysis of all of the factors that impact a business owner. Exit Planning addresses a wide variety of issues that are important to business owners, including their current and future planning with respect to their business (its value, its employees, its position in the market), their family and their community. Exit Planning starts from the perspective of the business owner's goals and objectives in each of these critical areas, along with his or her current and projected resources (business value, personal and business financial resources), to identify the specific strategies and steps that are most likely to allow the business owner to reach his or her goals.

* Succession Planning:

The process of identifying successors within a business and providing them with an opportunity to develop their skills and experience in order to replace the existing leaders of the business at a future date. Succession Planning primarily focuses on the transfer of leadership and/or management from one generation to the next within the business. Succession Planning is essentially a business continuity approach, which is one of the critical components of Exit Planning.



SECTION OVERVIEW

Business Overview

FIGURE 1: Which of the following best describes your business?

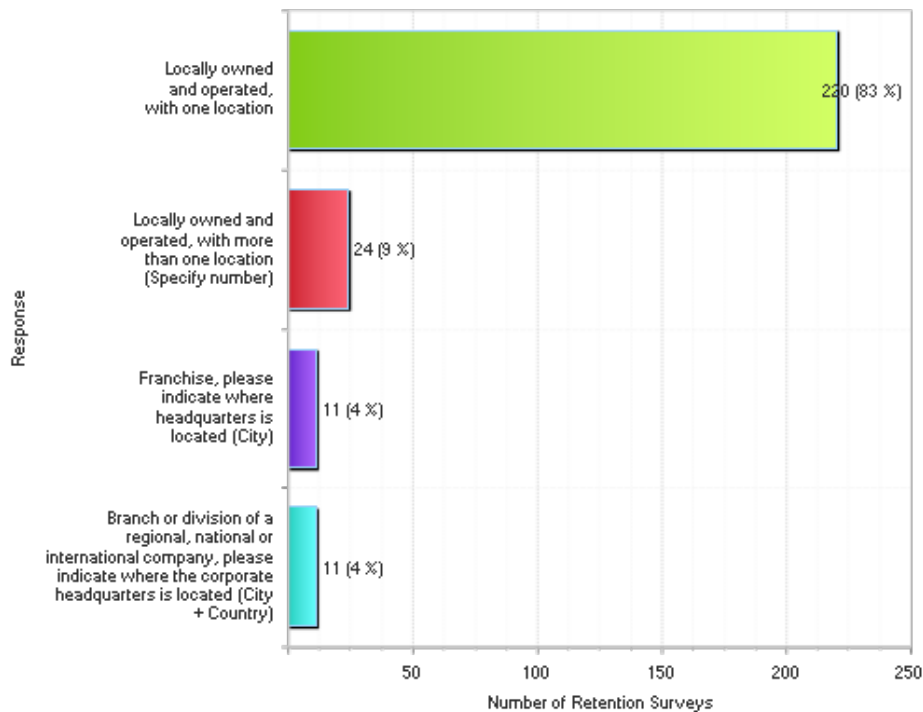
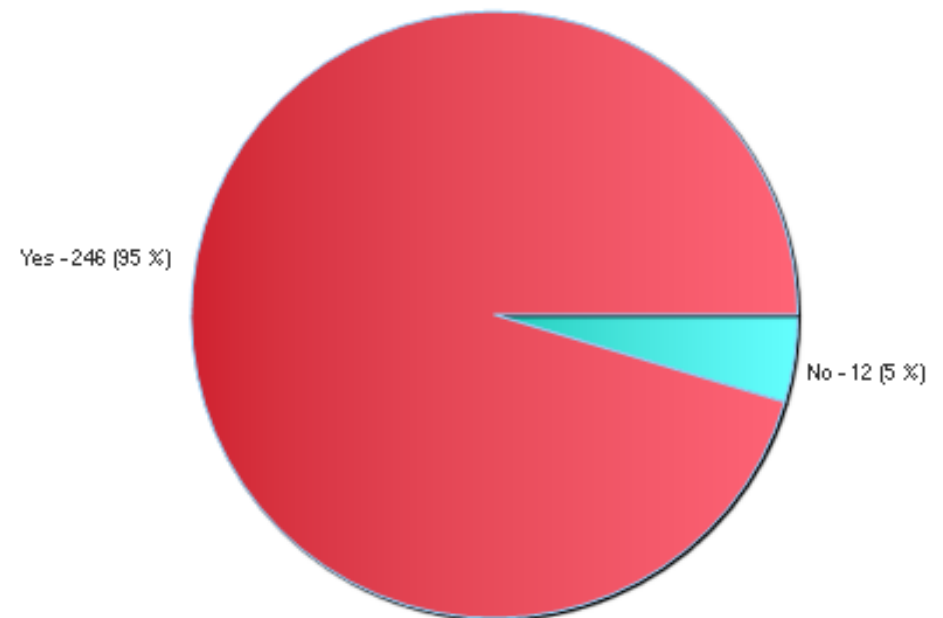


FIGURE 2: Is at least one of the owners involved in the day-to-day operation of the business?



Regional Snapshot



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FIGURE 3: Is at least one of the owners a resident of the community?

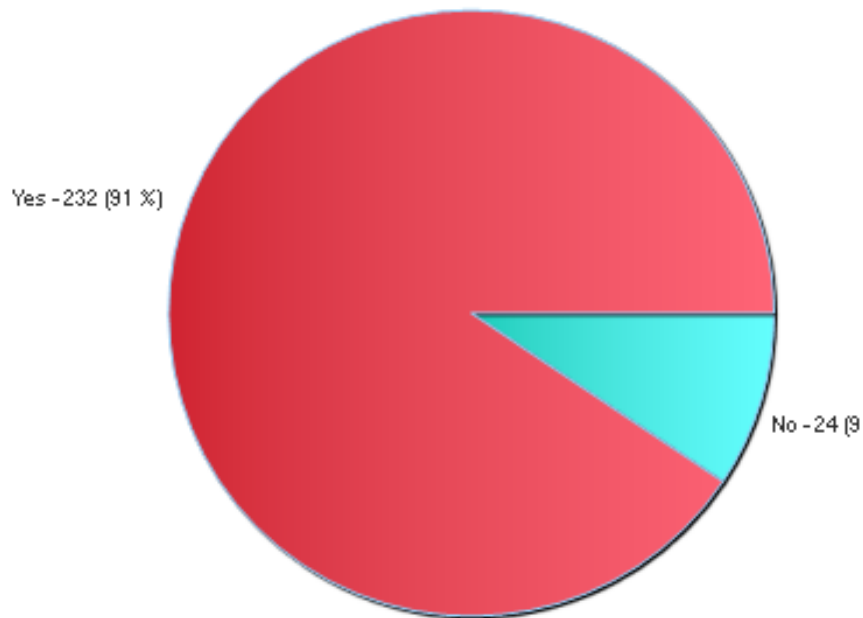


FIGURE 4: Does your business have a business plan?

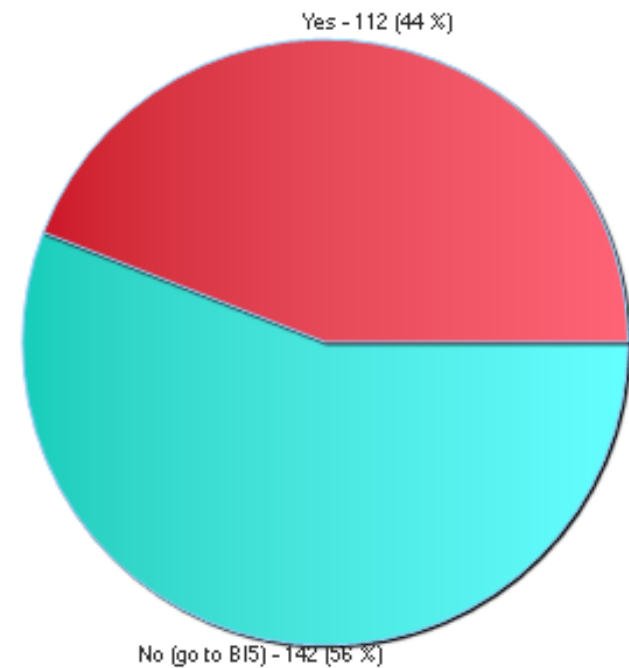




FIGURE 5: When was it last updated?

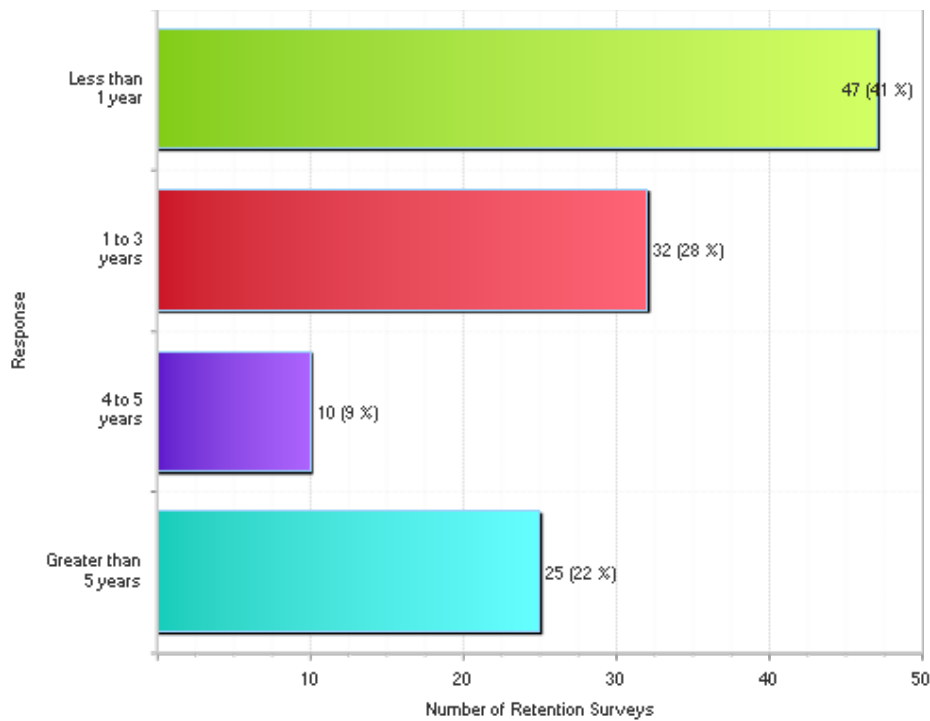
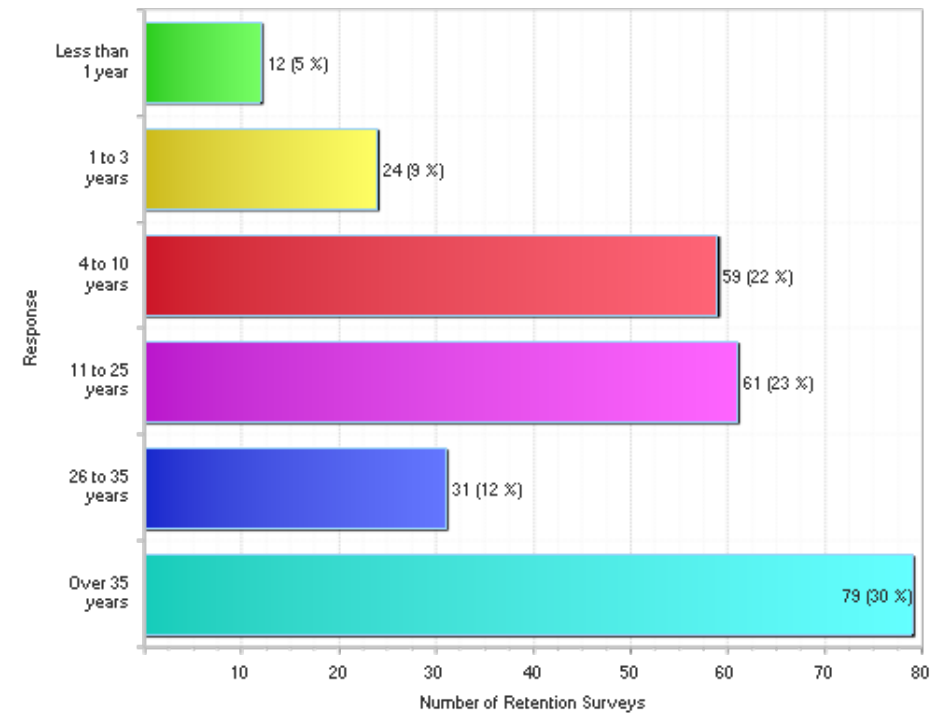


FIGURE 6: How many years has your business been in operation in this community?



Regional Snapshot



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FIGURE 7: How many years have the current owner/owners been operating this business?

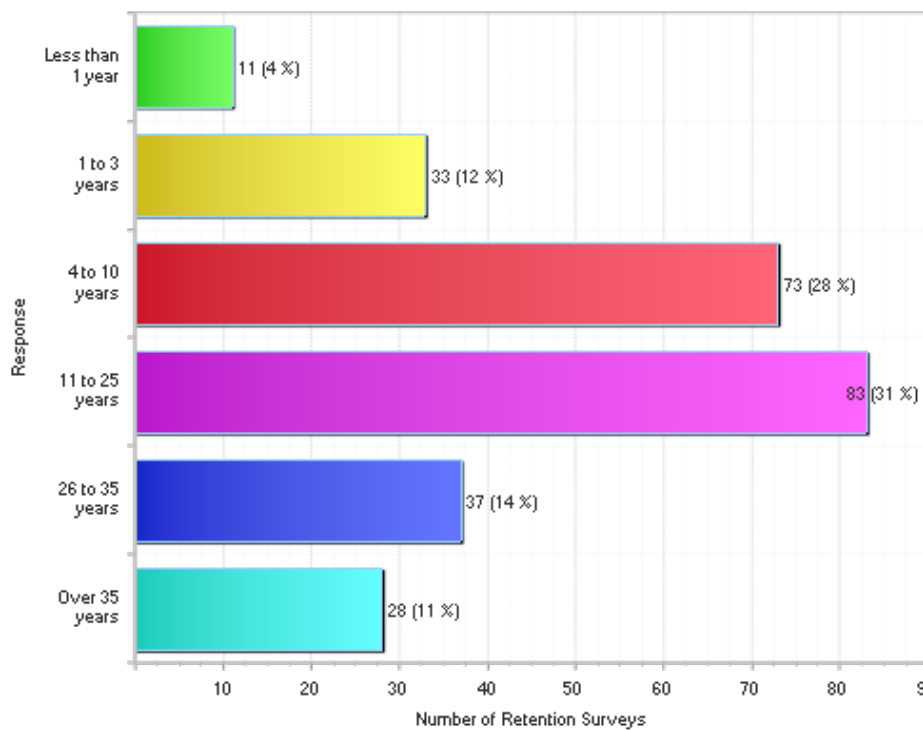
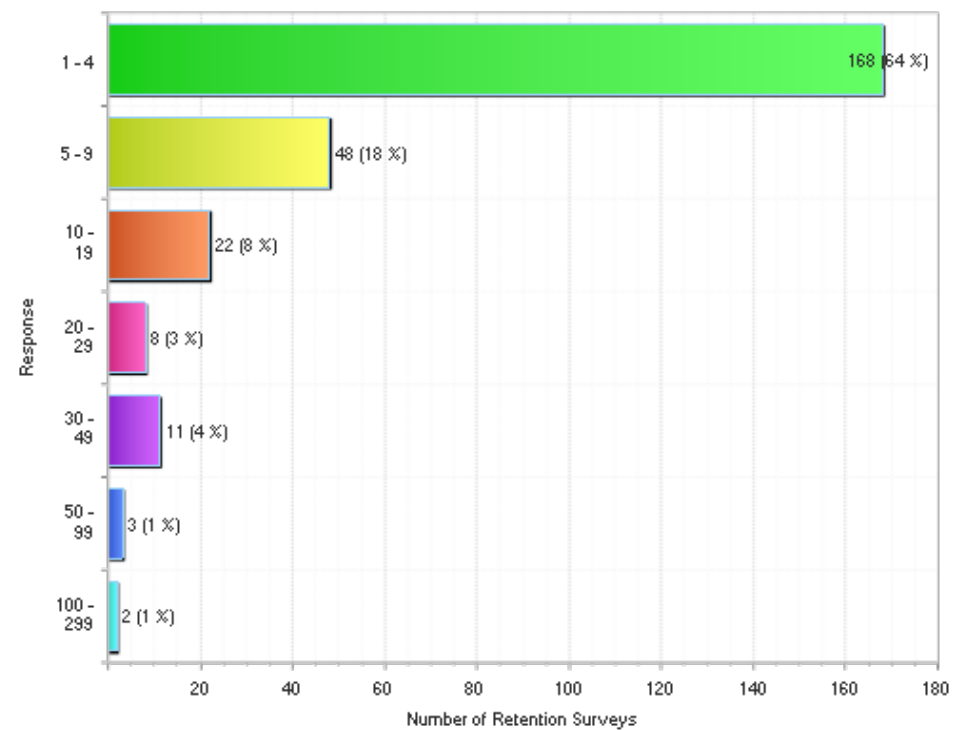


FIGURE 8: Including owner/owners, how many employees work at this location?





SECTION OVERVIEW

Business Climate

FIGURE 9: The primary market of your business is:

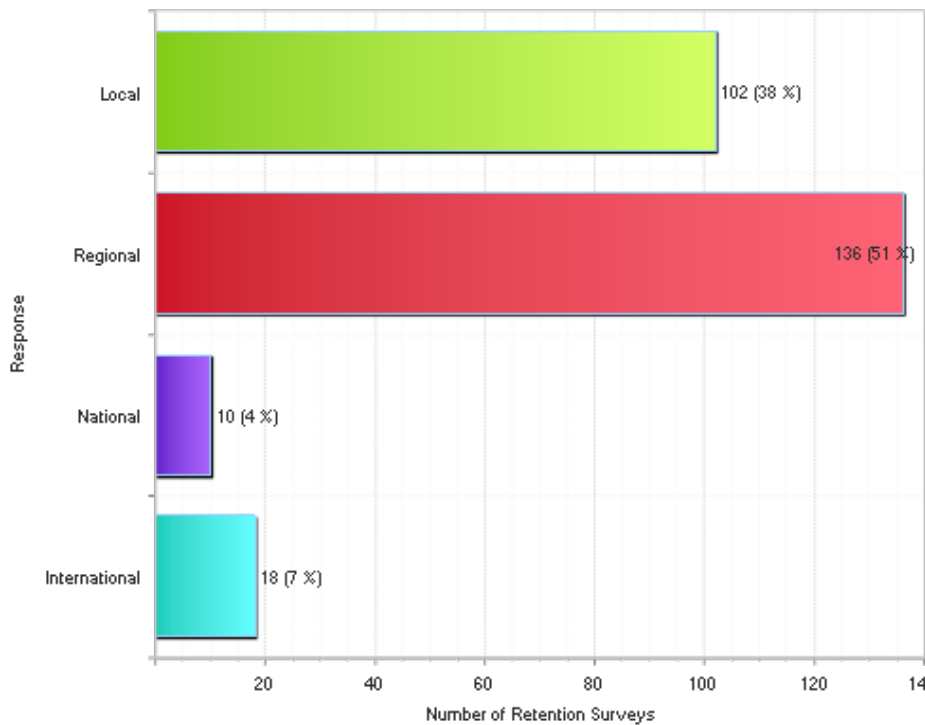
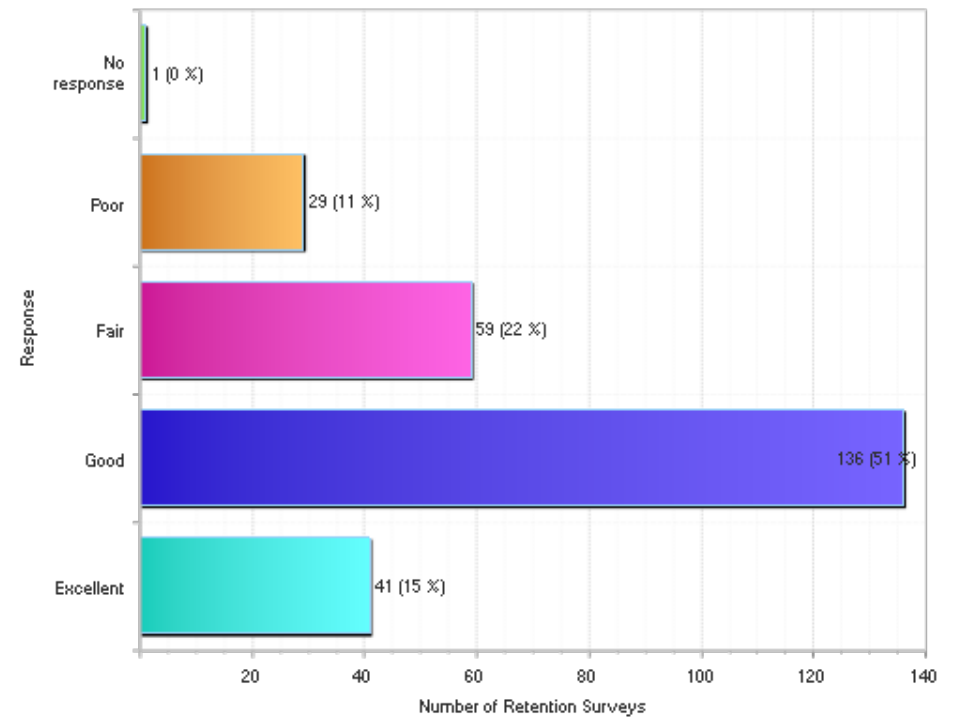


FIGURE 10: What is your general impression of this community as a place to do business?

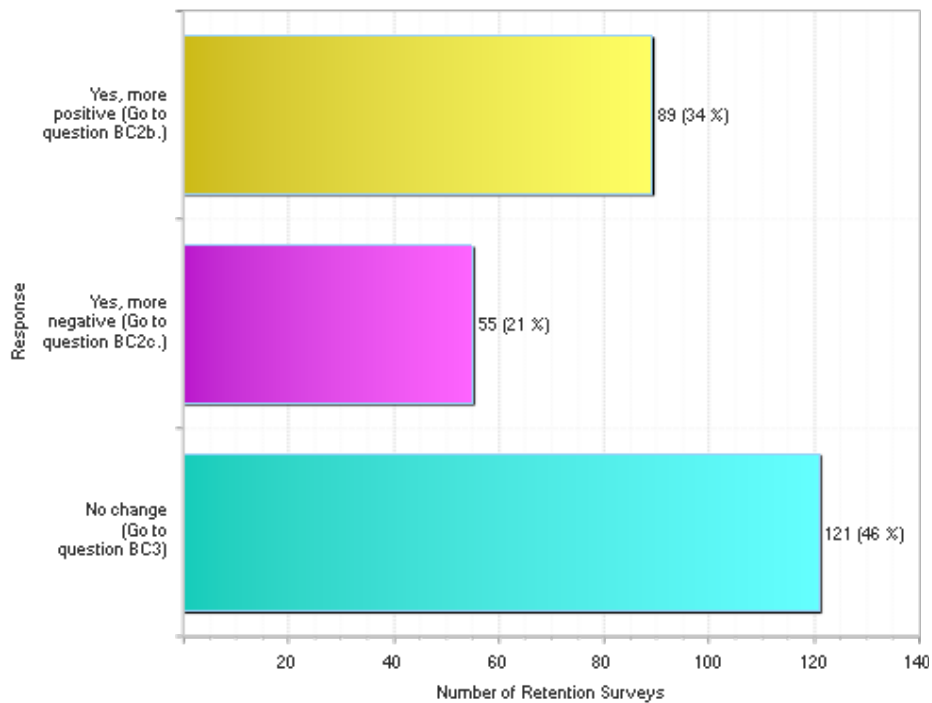


Regional Snapshot



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FIGURE 11: In the past 3 years has your attitude about doing business in this community changed?



How would you rate the following factors of doing business in this community?

FIGURE 12: Workforce

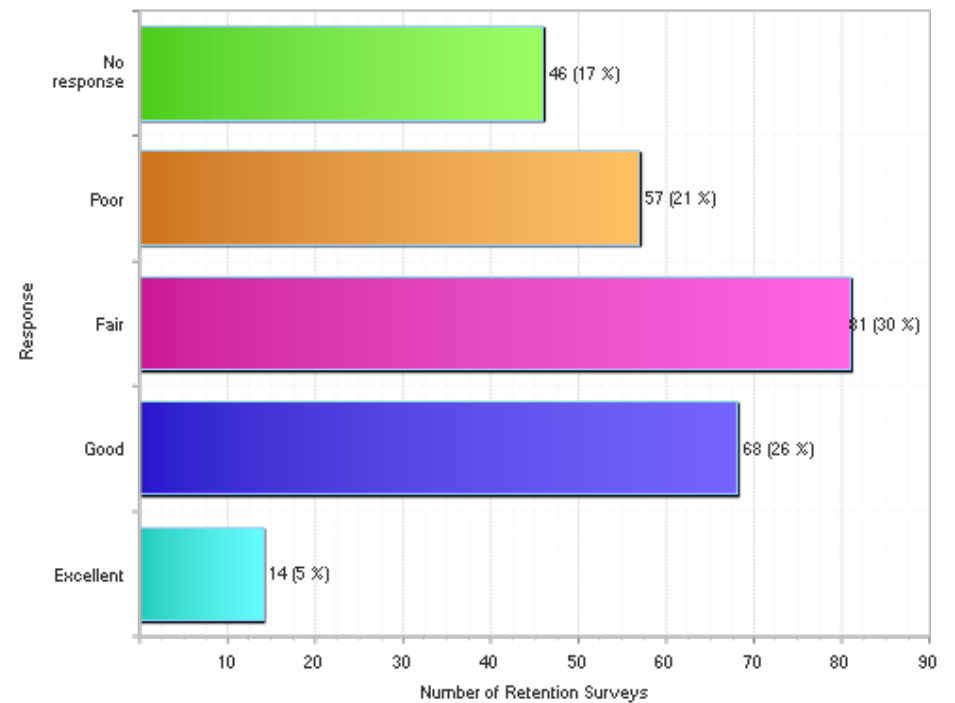




FIGURE 13: Availability of serviced land

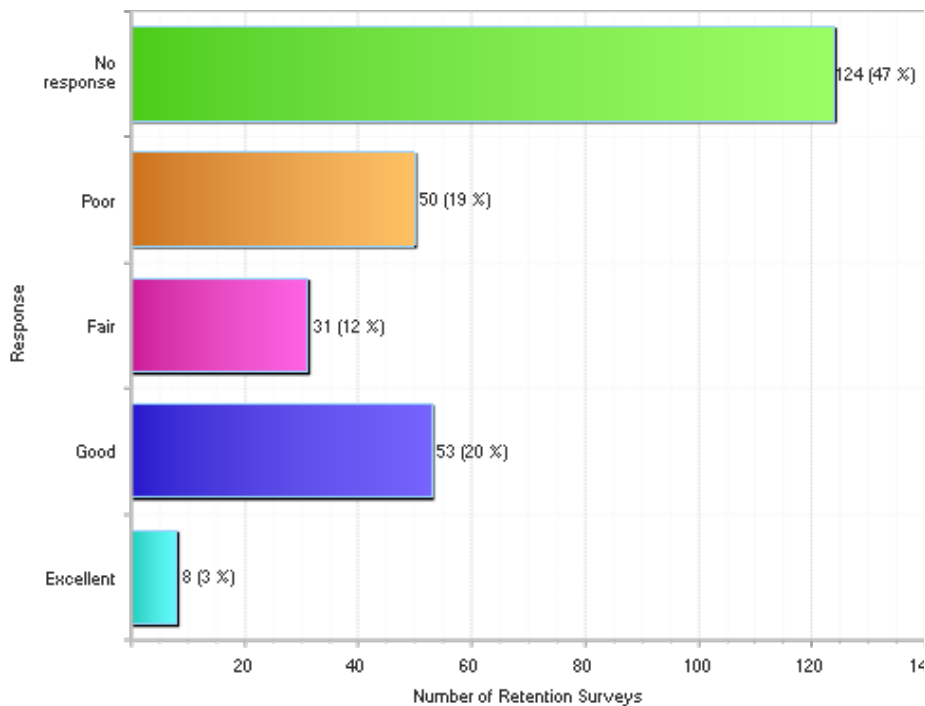
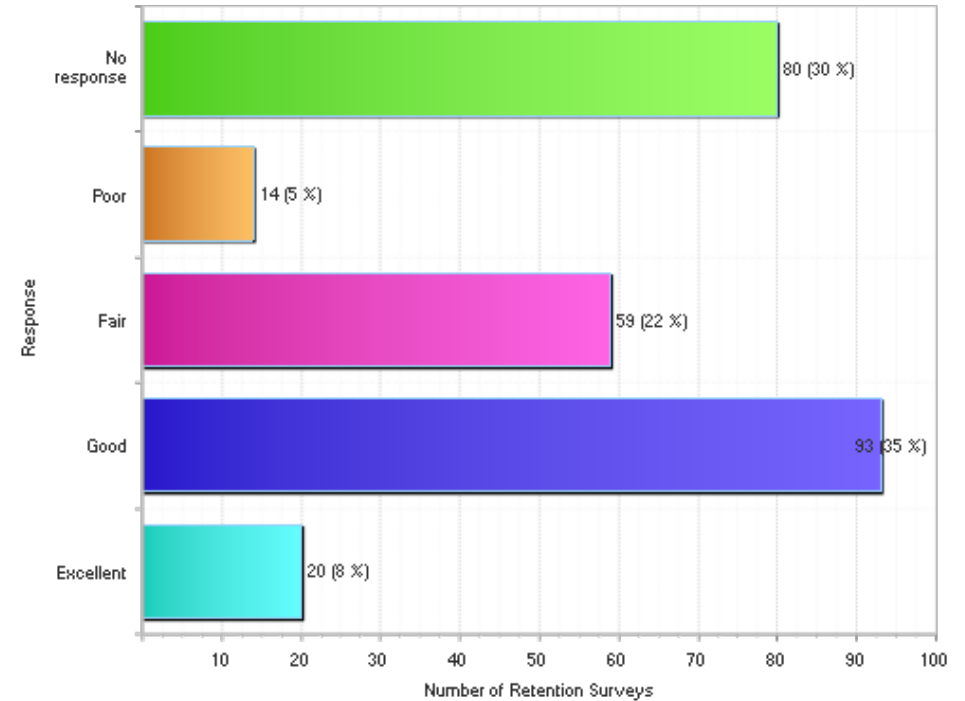


FIGURE 14: Land costs



Regional Snapshot



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FIGURE 15: Availability of space for rent or lease

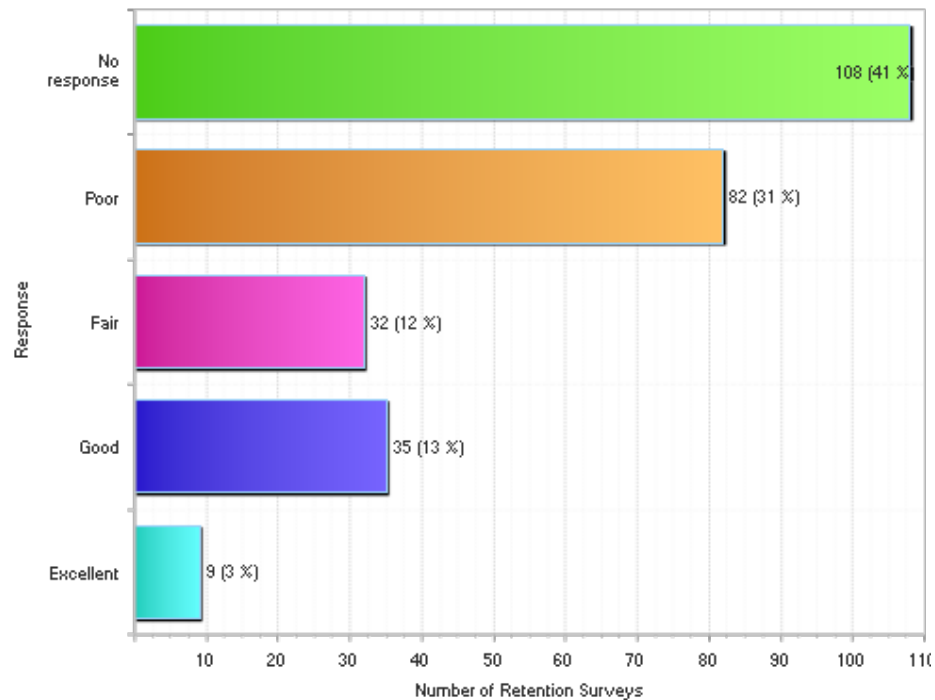


FIGURE 16: Development/building permit process

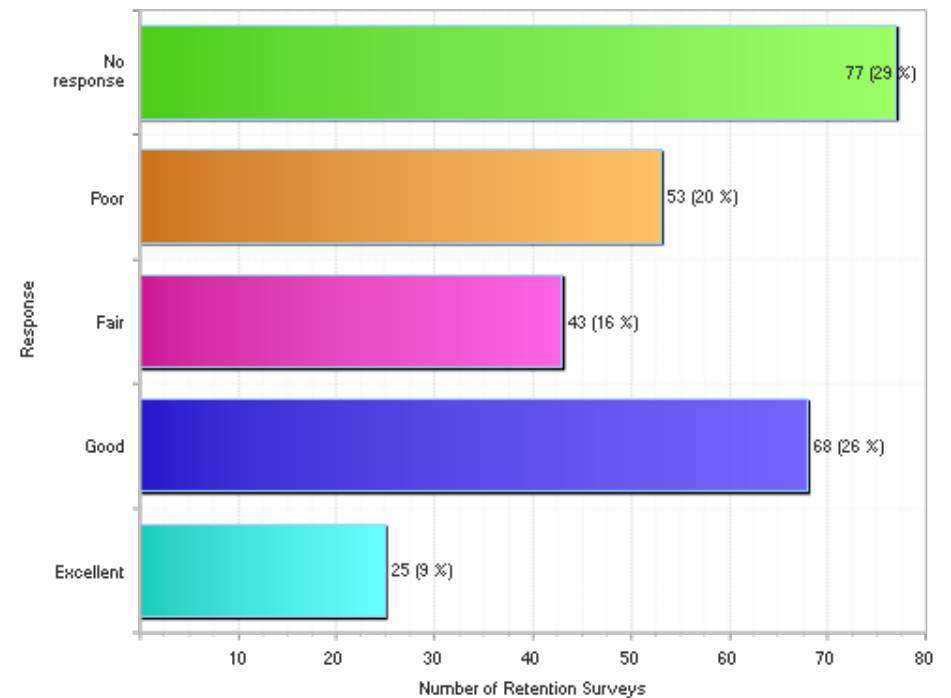




FIGURE 17: Development charges

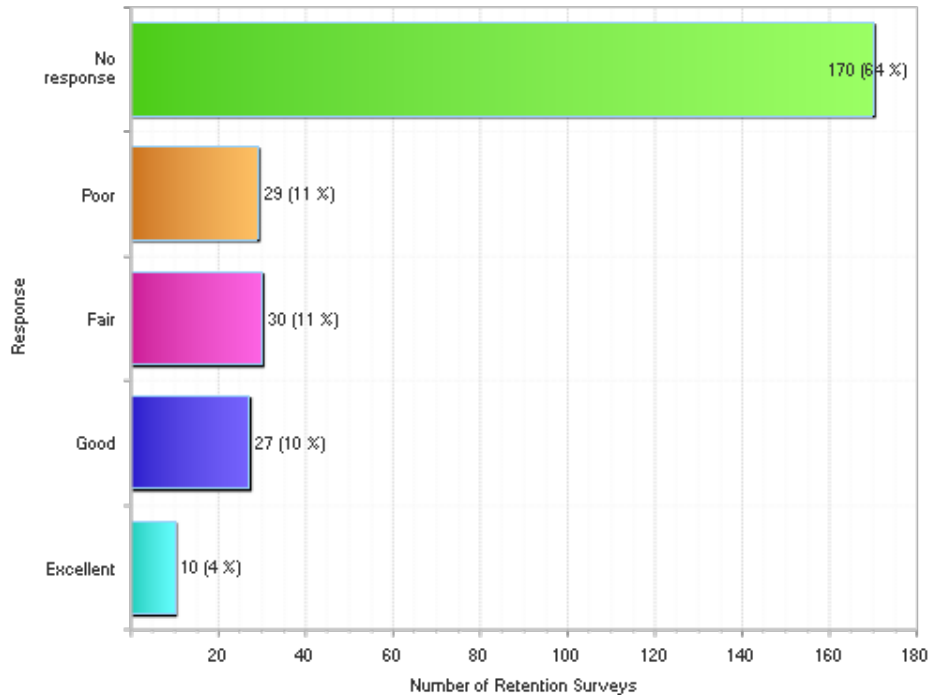


FIGURE 18: Municipal property taxes

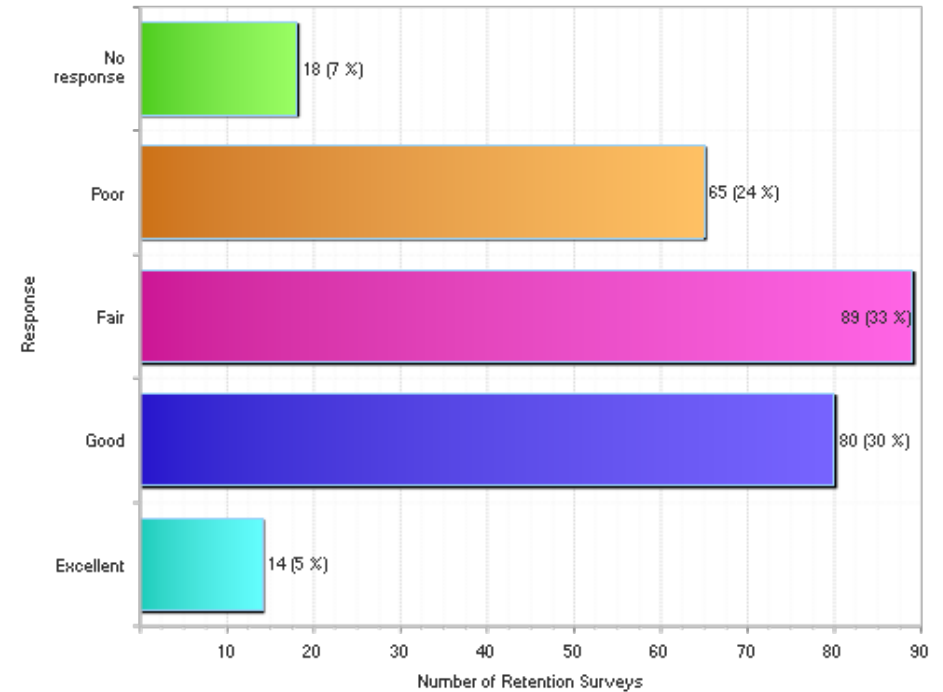




FIGURE 19: Local roads and streets

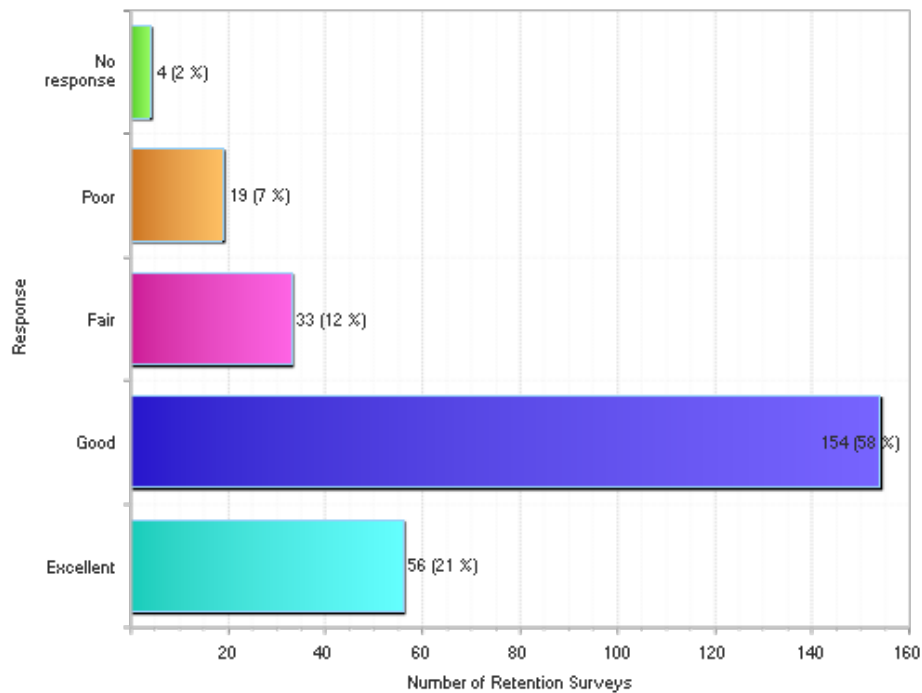


FIGURE 20: Regional/Provincial roads and highways

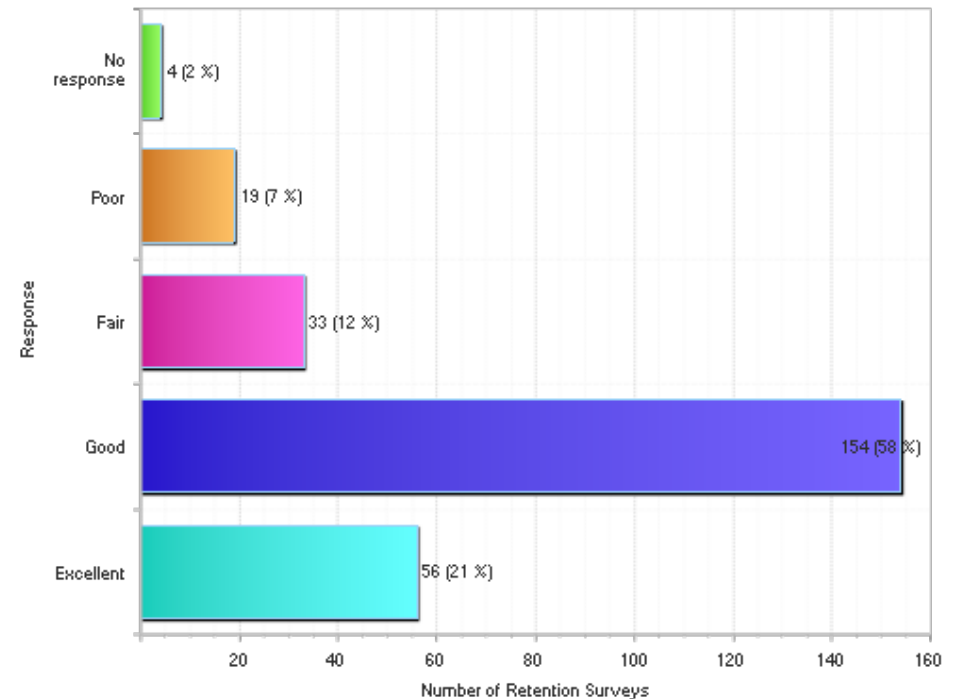




FIGURE 21: Proximity to rail and airports

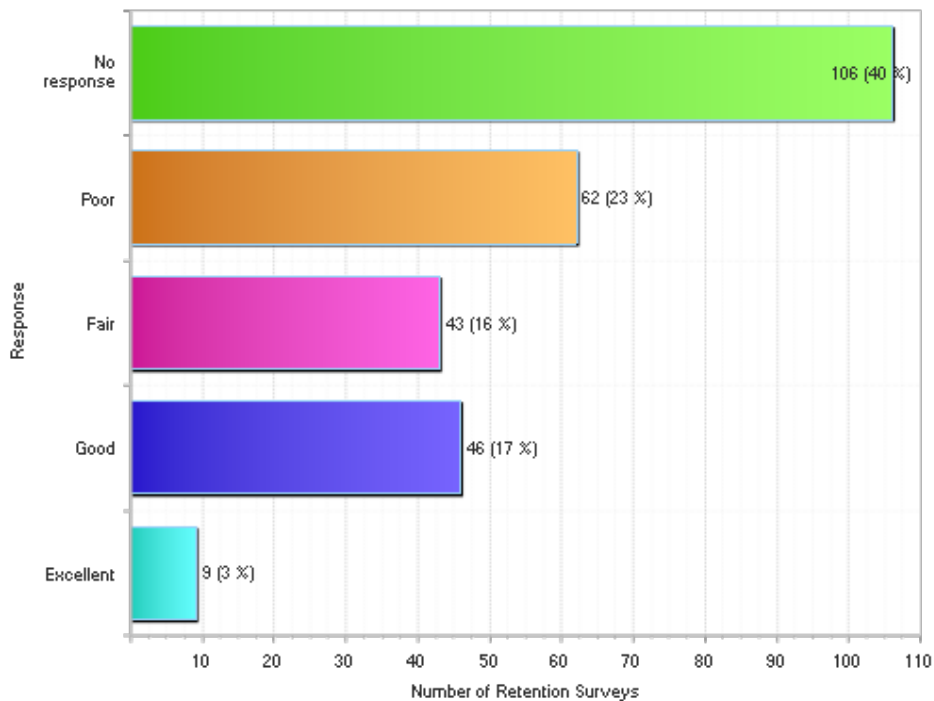
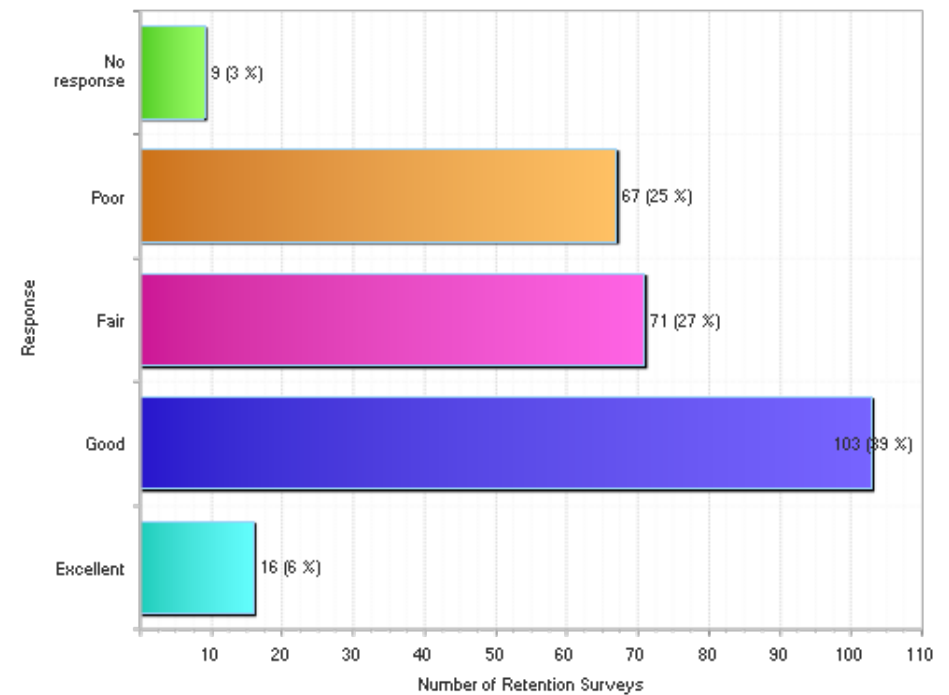


FIGURE 22: Availability of health and medical services



Regional Snapshot



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FIGURE 23: Quality of life

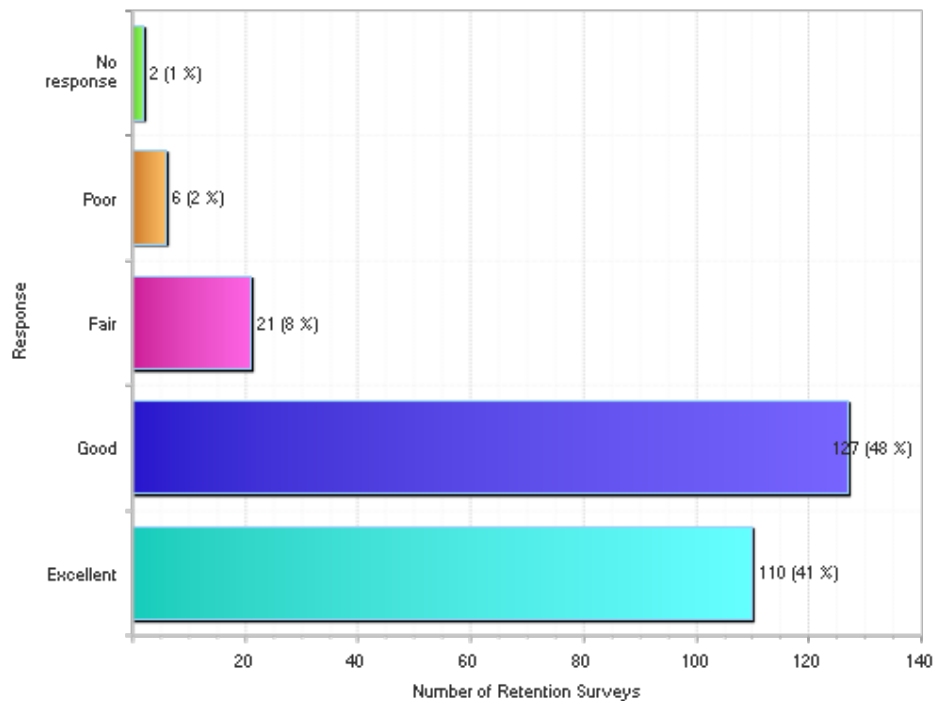


FIGURE 24: Availability of adequate housing

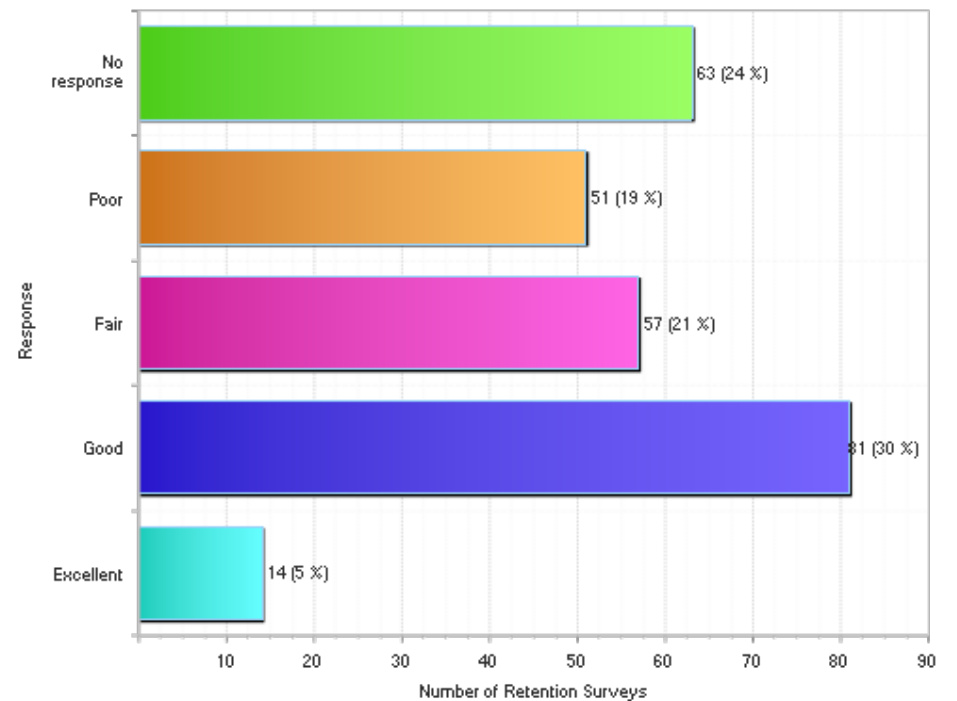




FIGURE 25: Support from municipality

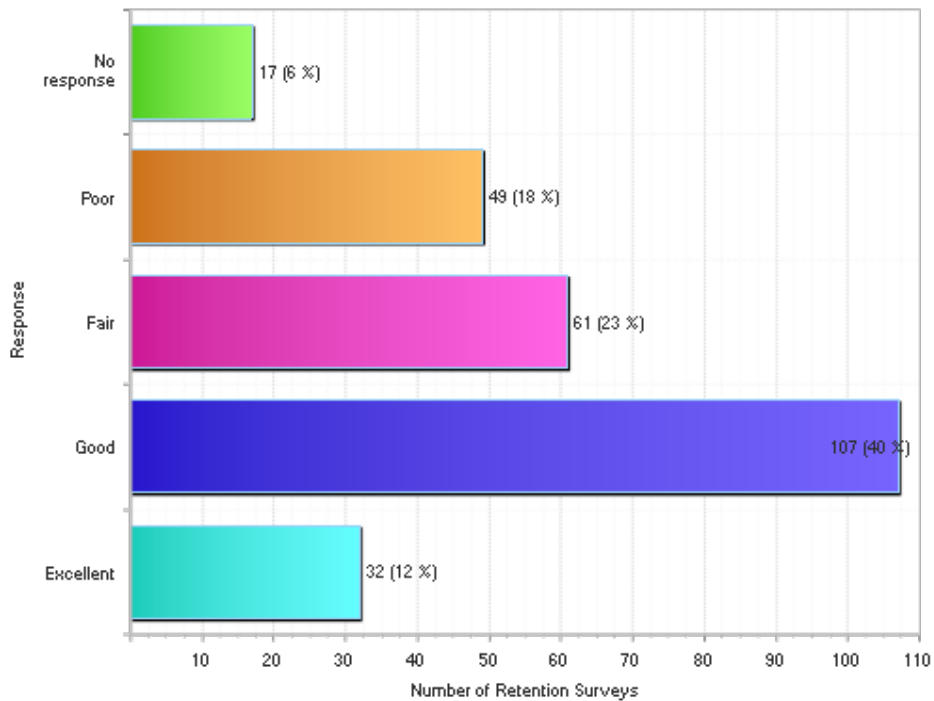
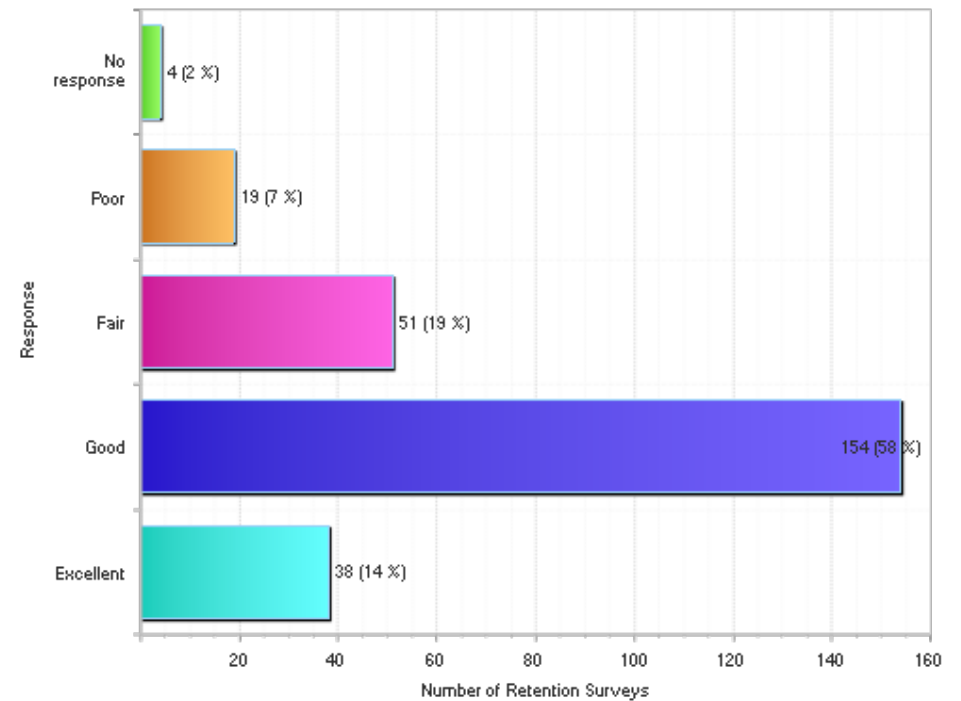


FIGURE 26: Support from other businesses



Regional Snapshot



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FIGURE 27: Support from local residents

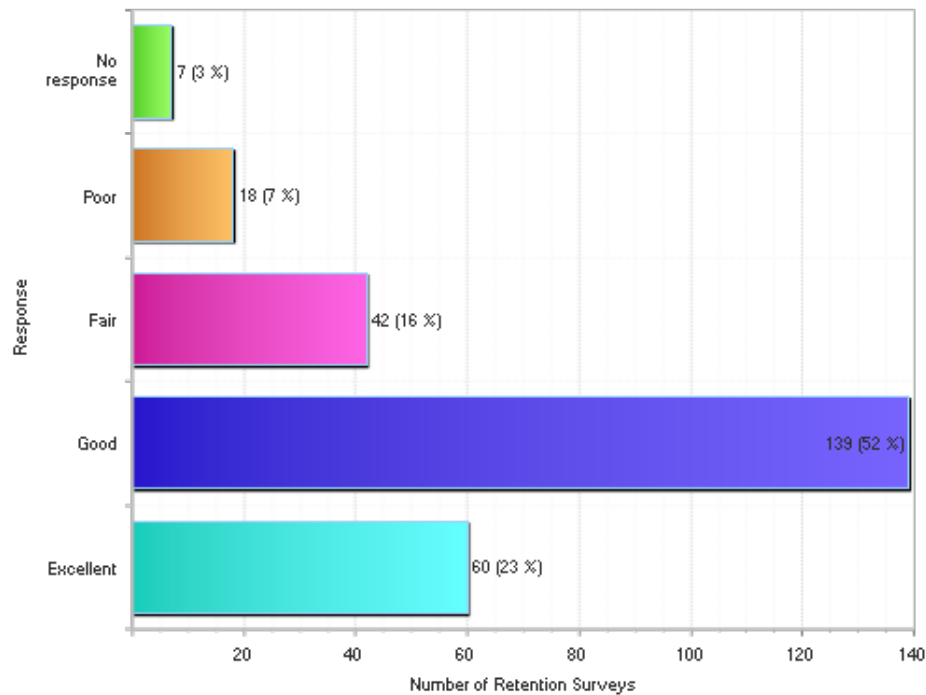


FIGURE 28: Cellular phone service

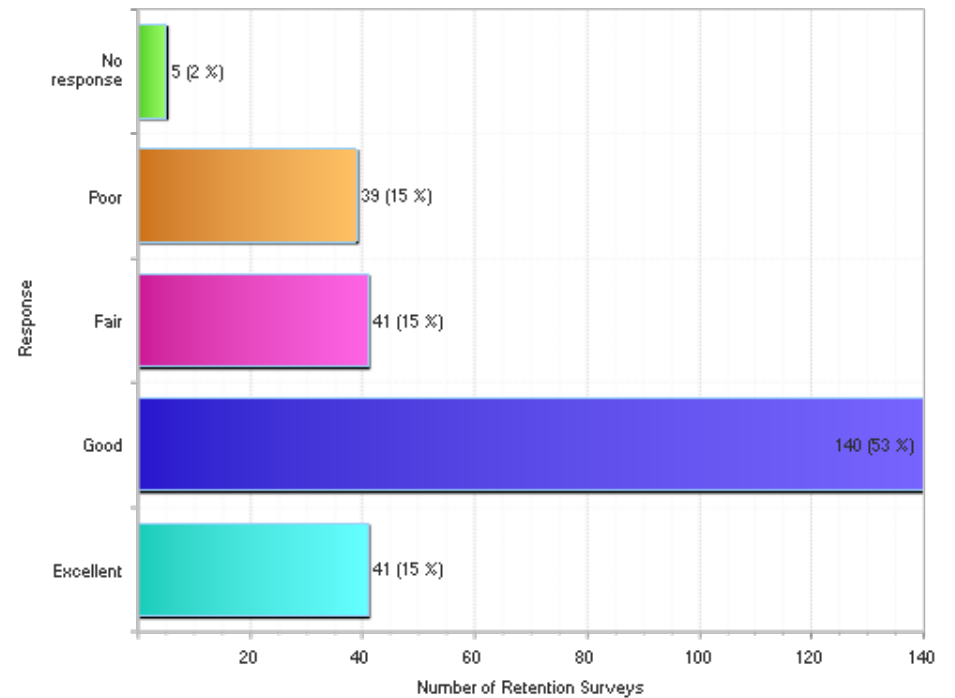




FIGURE 29: Internet service

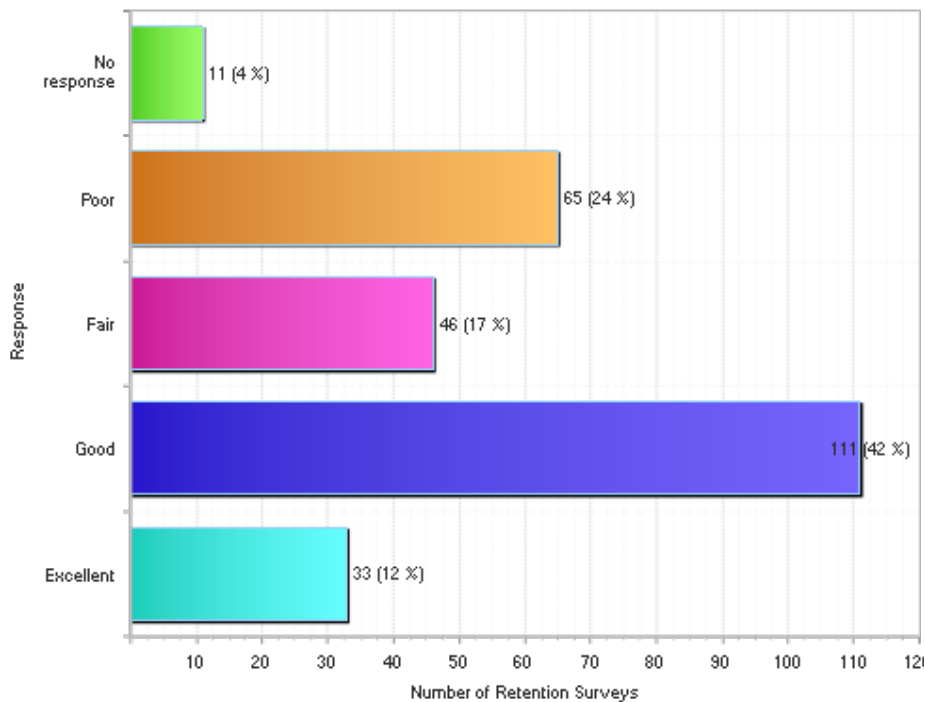
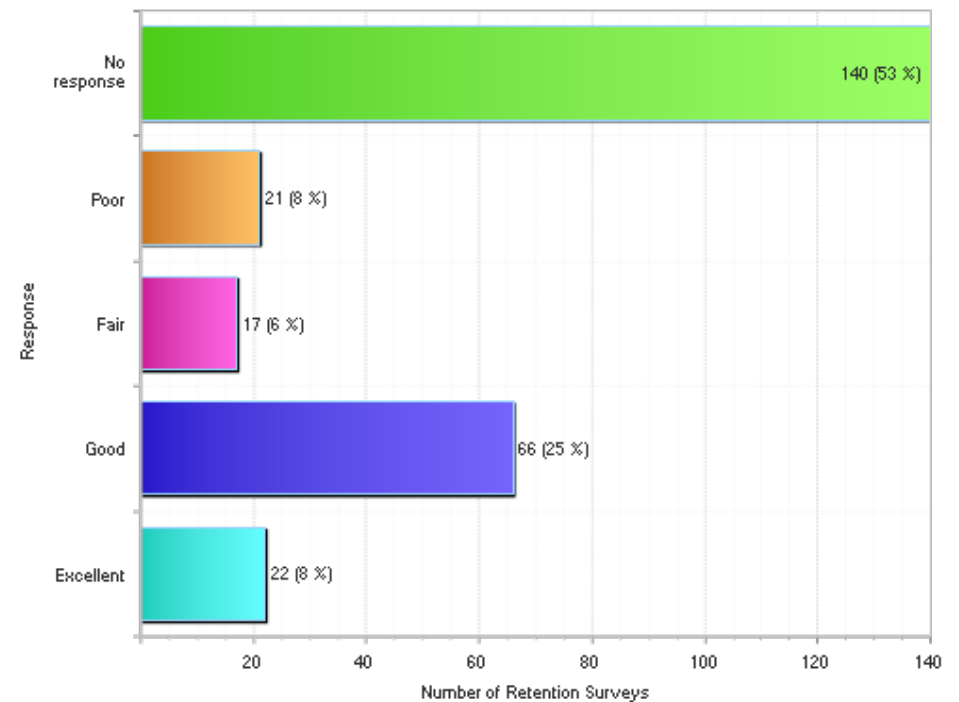


FIGURE 30: Water/wastewater capacity



Regional Snapshot

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FIGURE 31: Water/wastewater fees

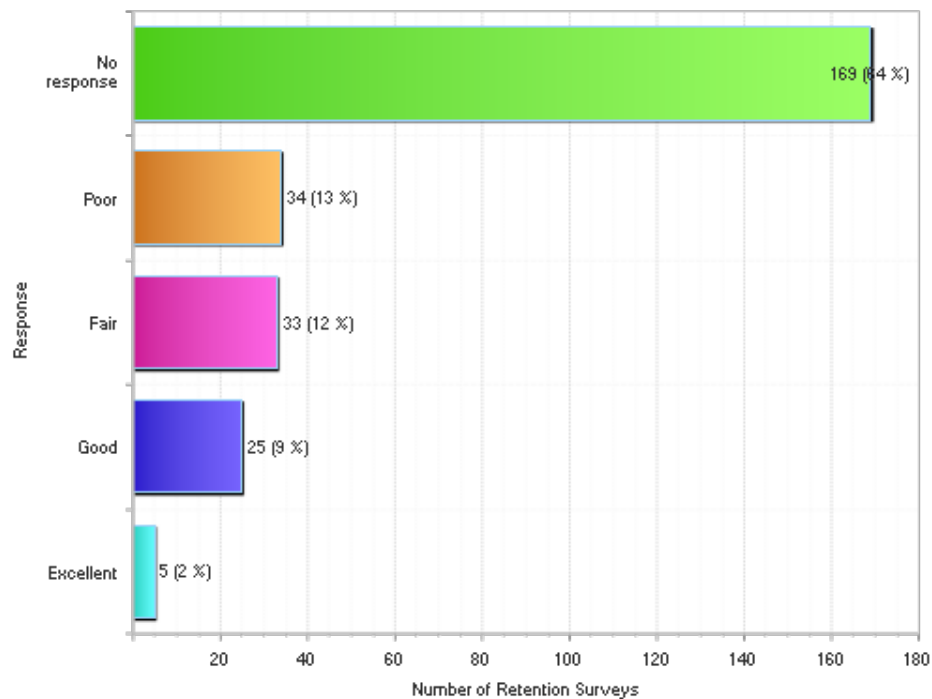


FIGURE 32: Availability of adequate electricity

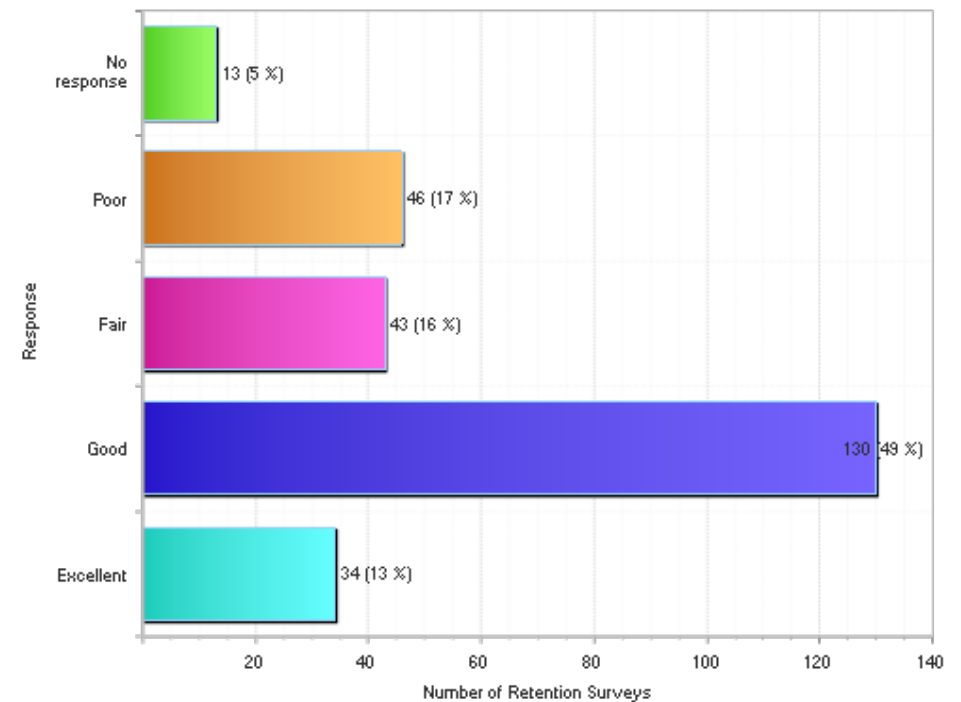




FIGURE 33: Cost of electricity

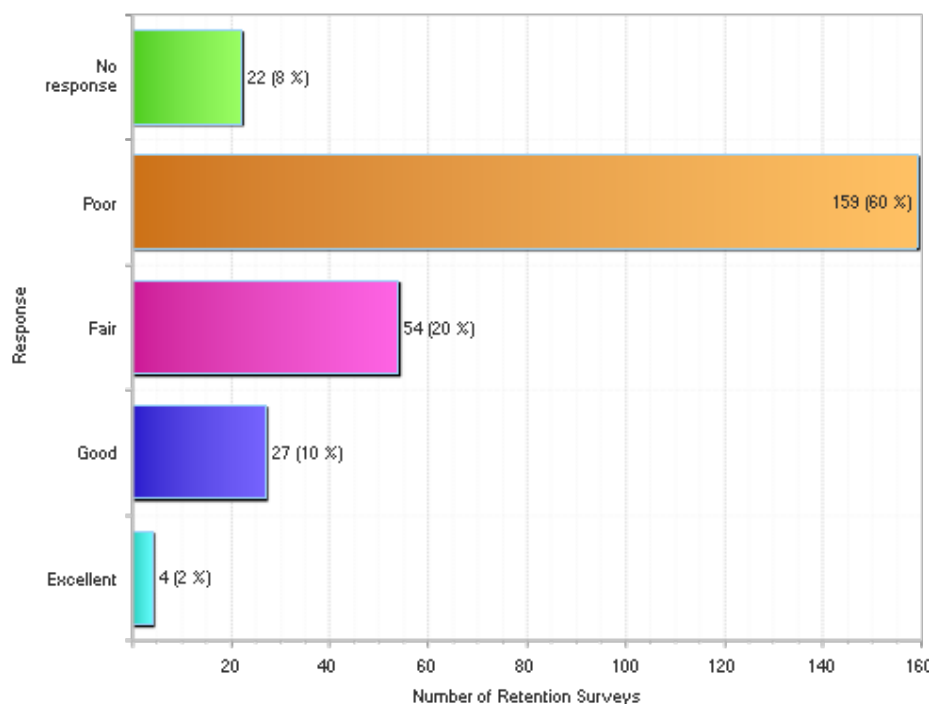
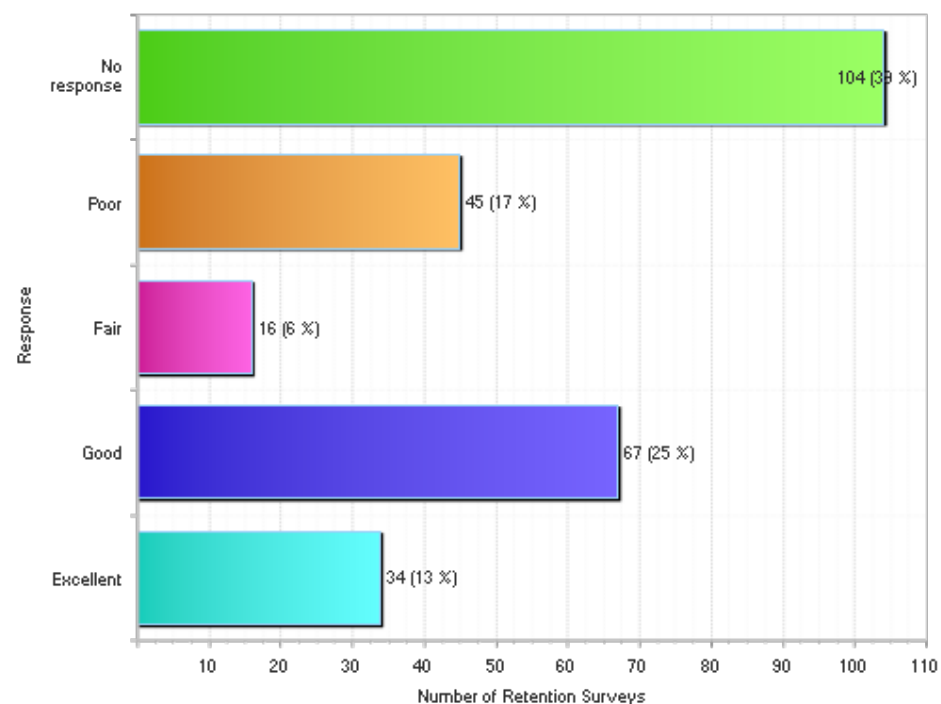


FIGURE 34: Availability of natural gas



Regional Snapshot



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

FIGURE 35: Cost of natural gas

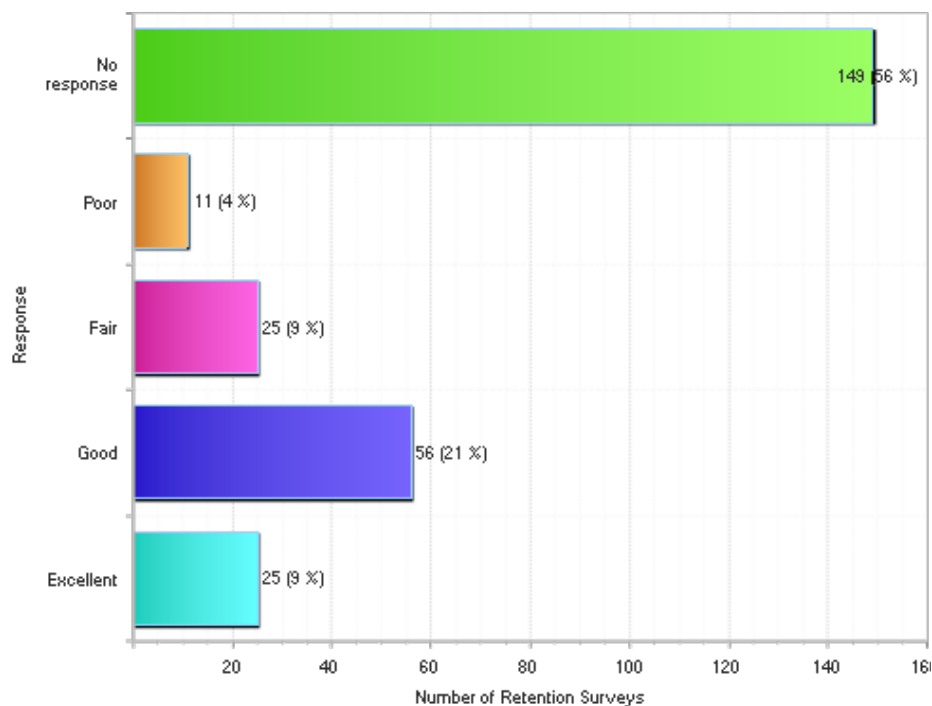


FIGURE 36: Child care services

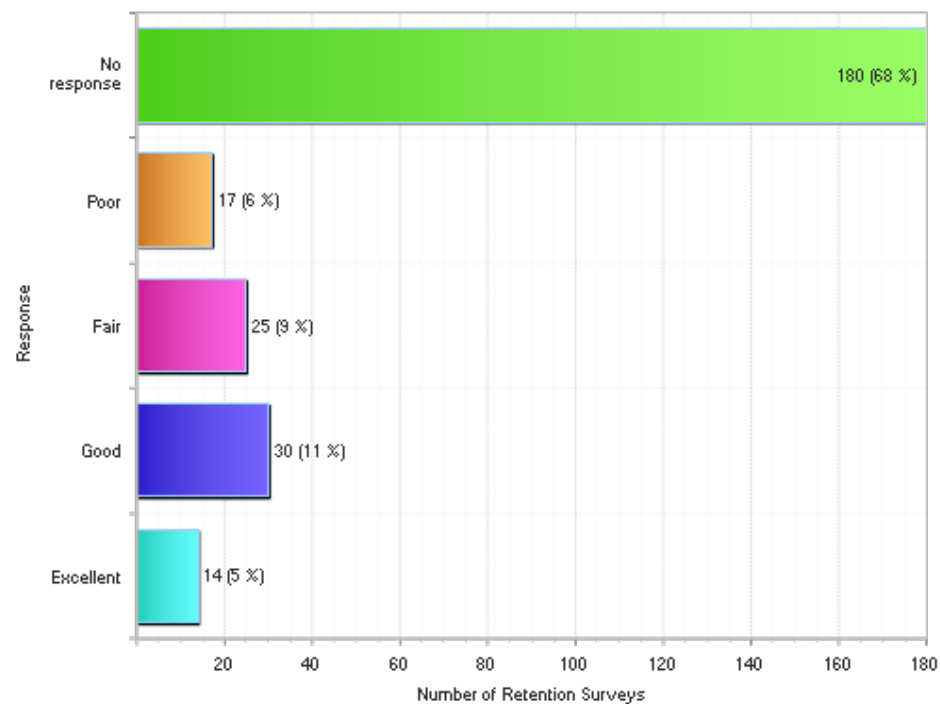




FIGURE 37: Schools (elementary and secondary)

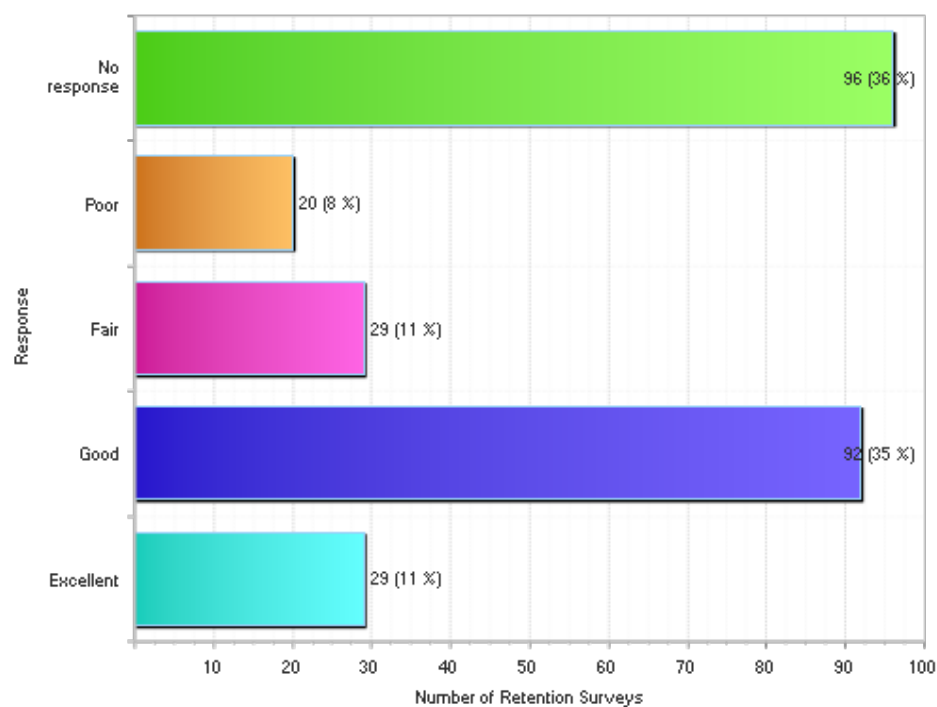
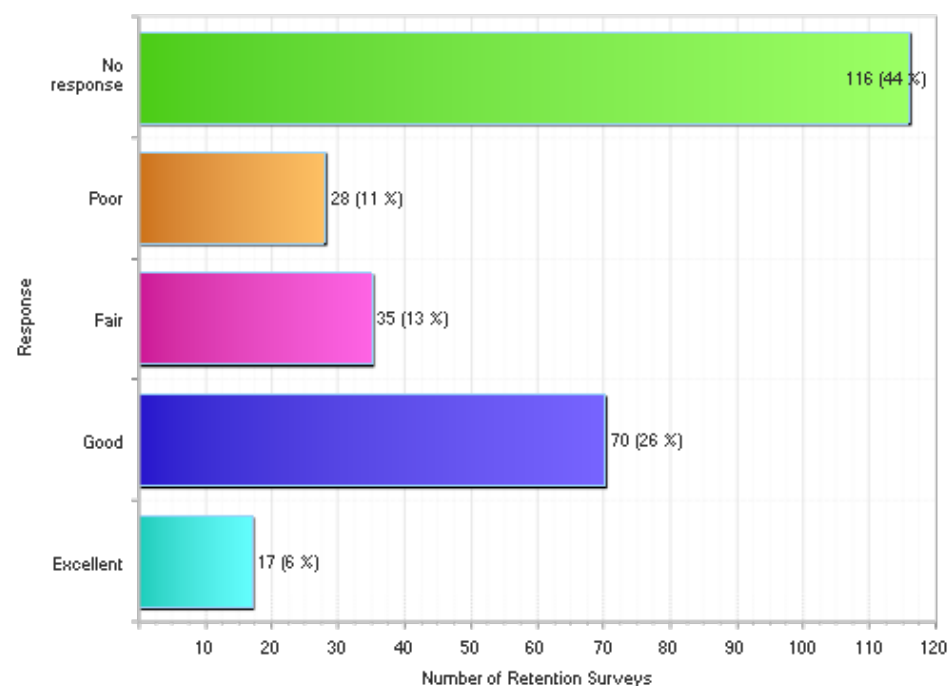


FIGURE 38: Post-secondary education (college, university, and private college)



Regional Snapshot



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FIGURE 39: Workforce planning/development board

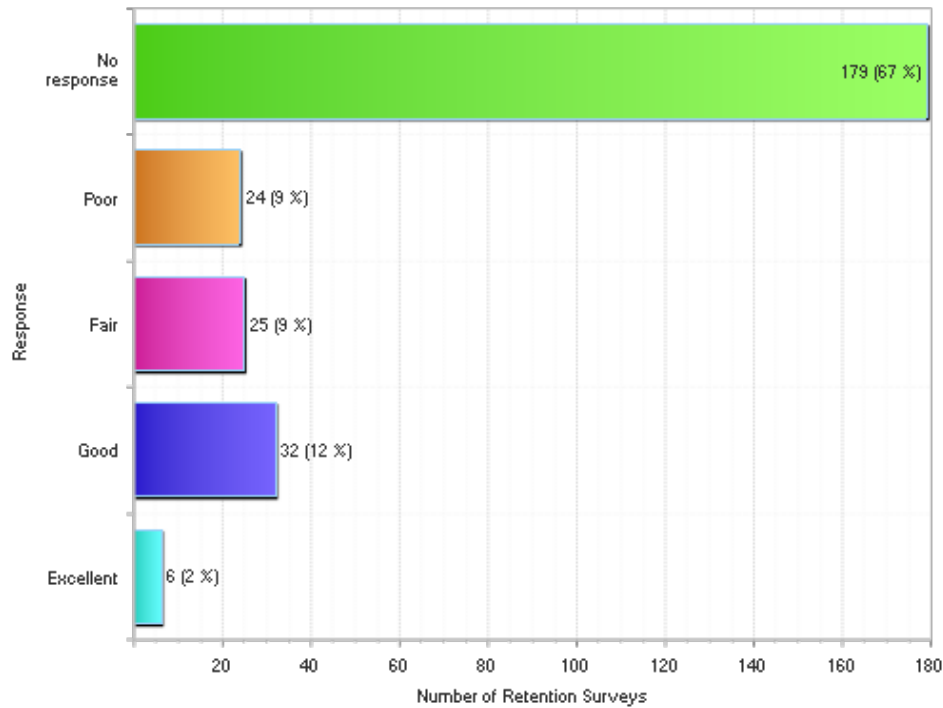


FIGURE 40: Chamber of Commerce/Board of Trade

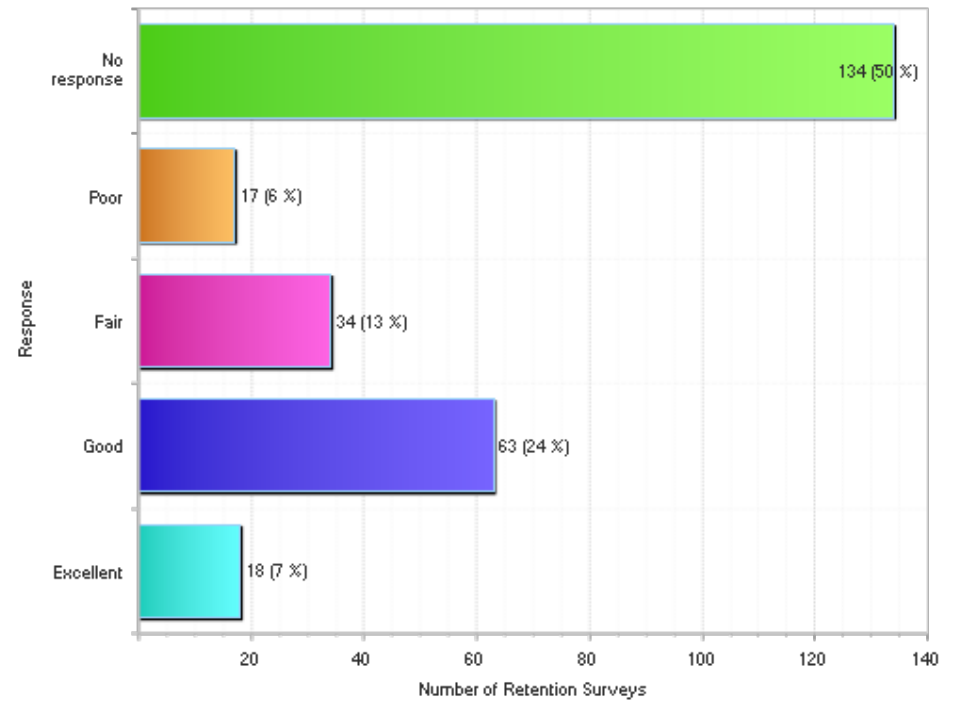




FIGURE 41: Business Improvement Area (BIA)

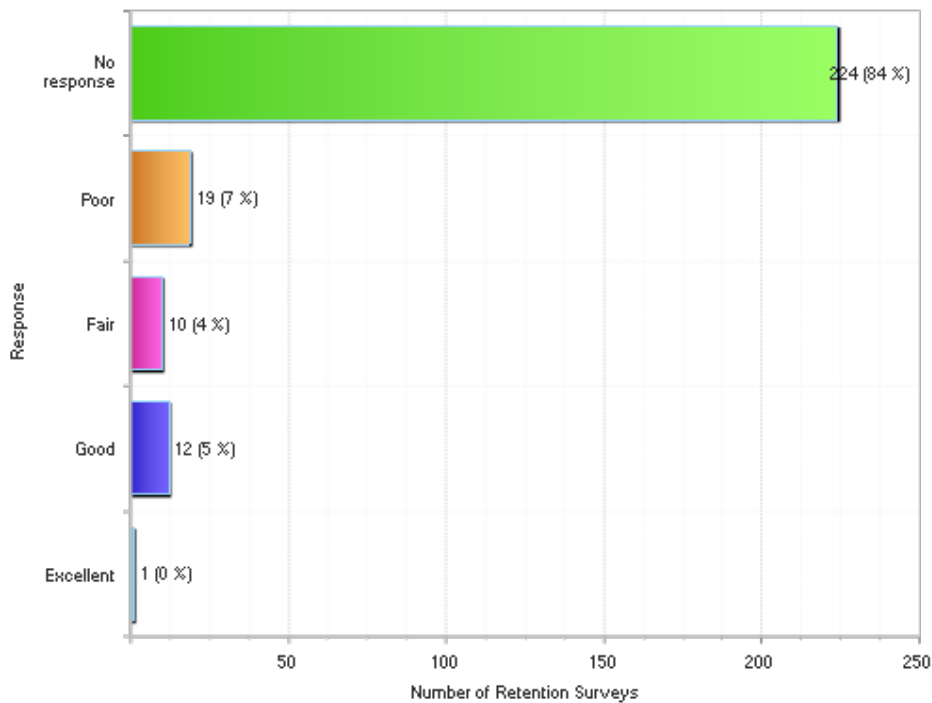
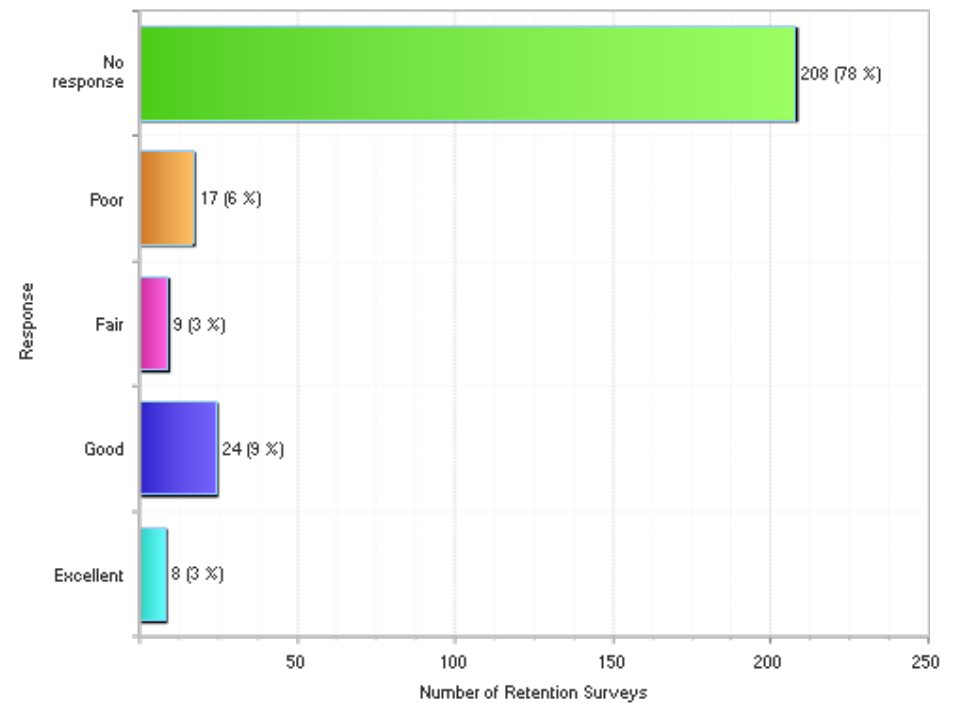


FIGURE 42: Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC)



Regional Snapshot



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

FIGURE 43: Small Business Enterprise Centre

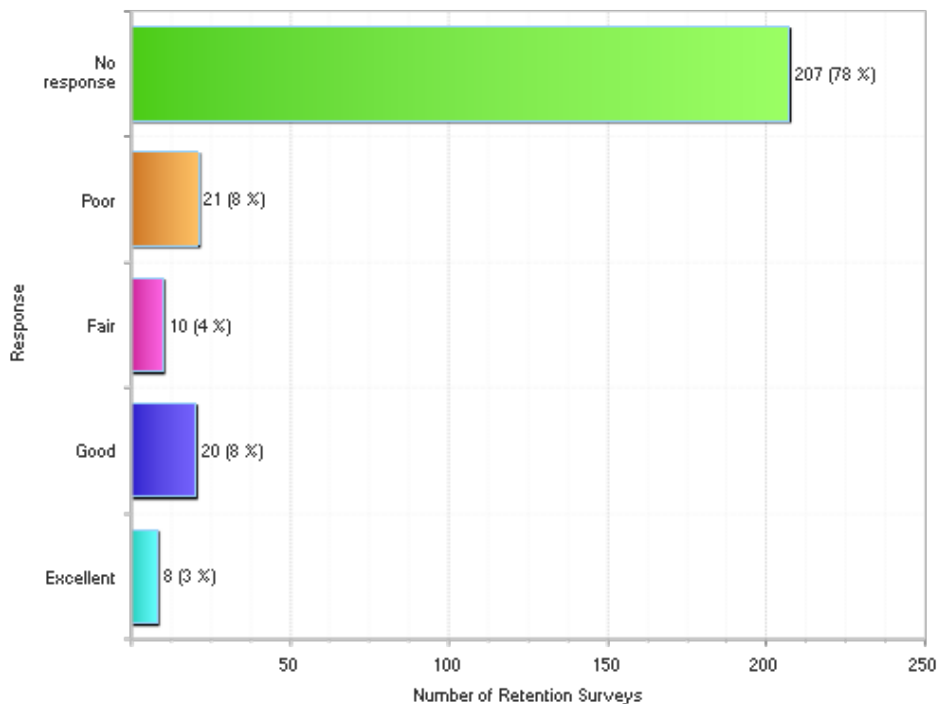


FIGURE 44: Planning, engineering, zoning, and building permits

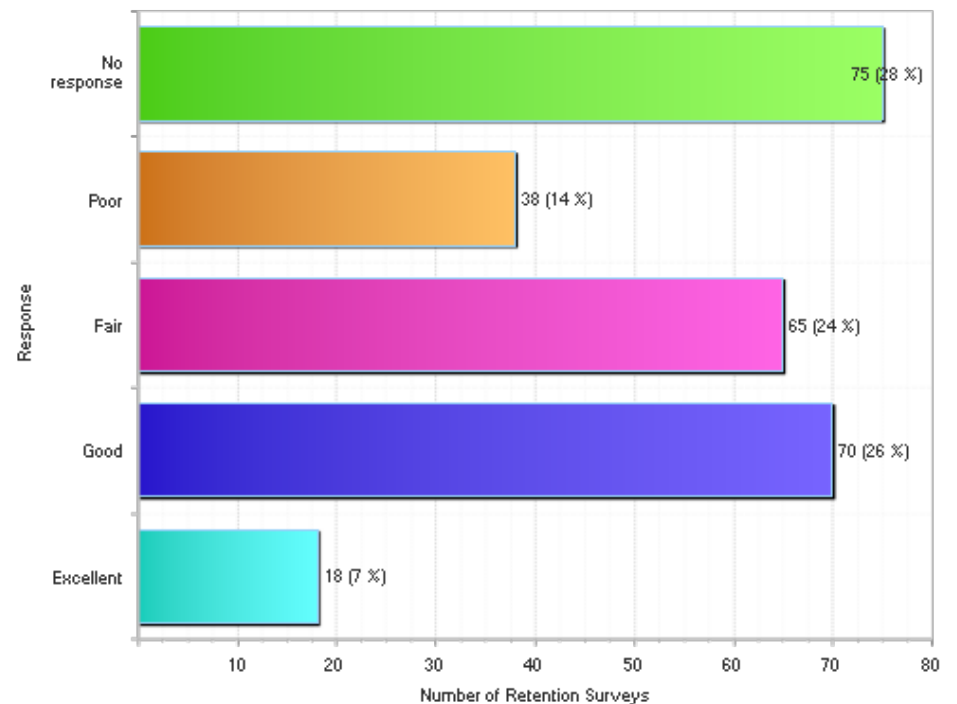




FIGURE 45: Economic development services

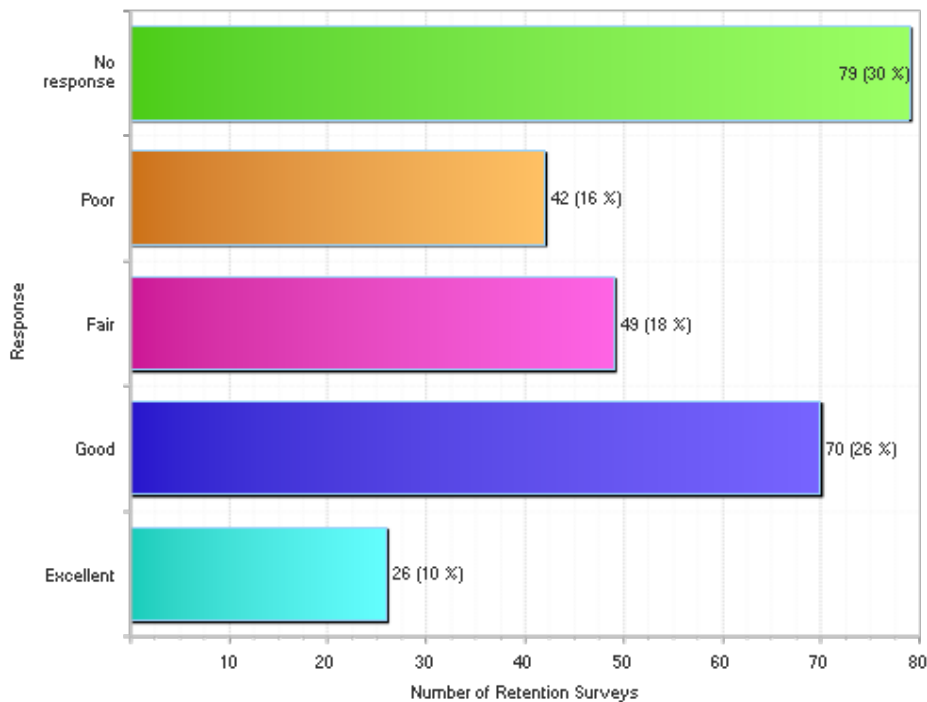
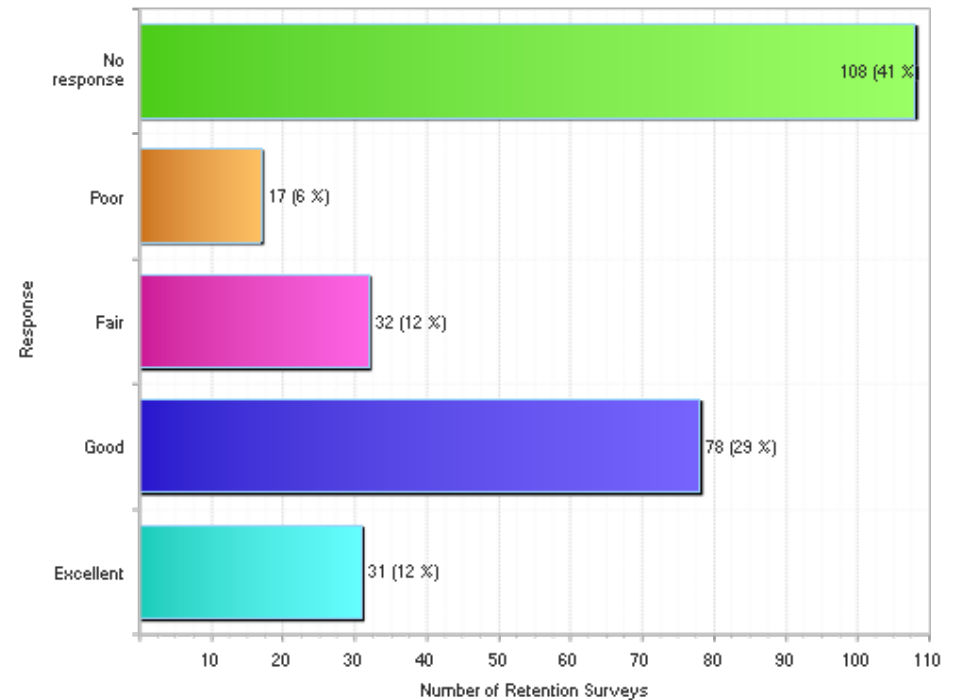


FIGURE 46: Health department/health unit approvals



Regional Snapshot



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FIGURE 47: Police services

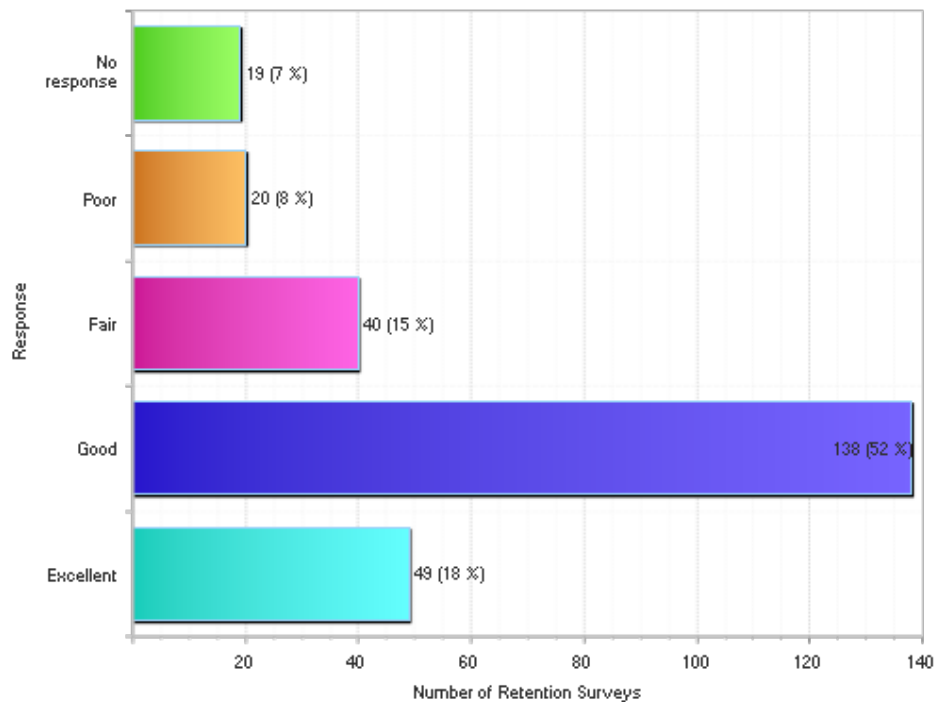


FIGURE 48: Fire services

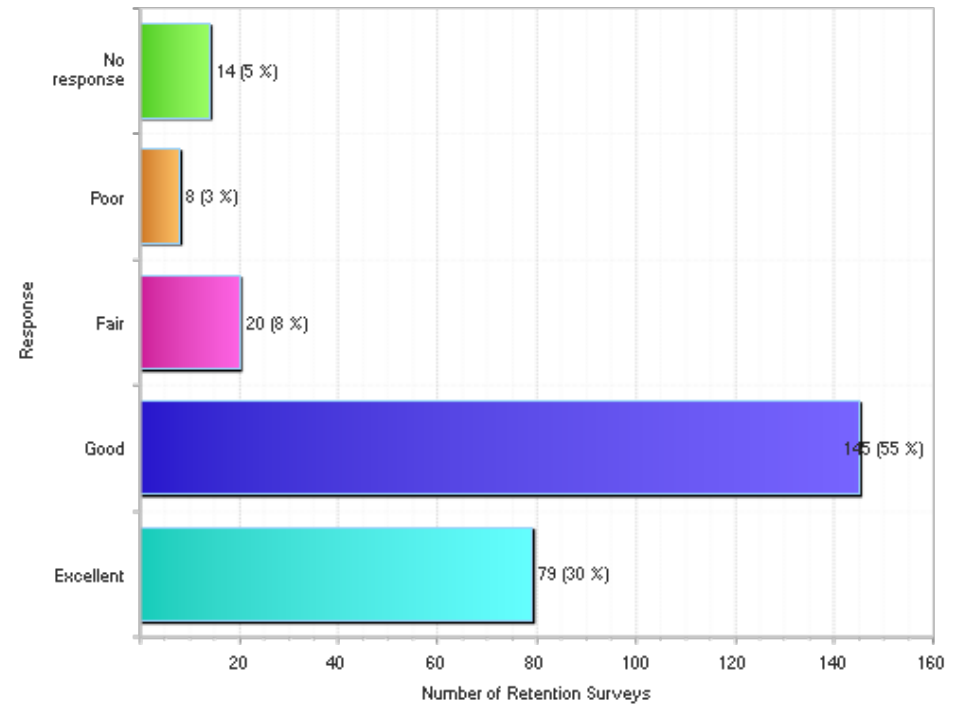




FIGURE 49: Recreation facilities

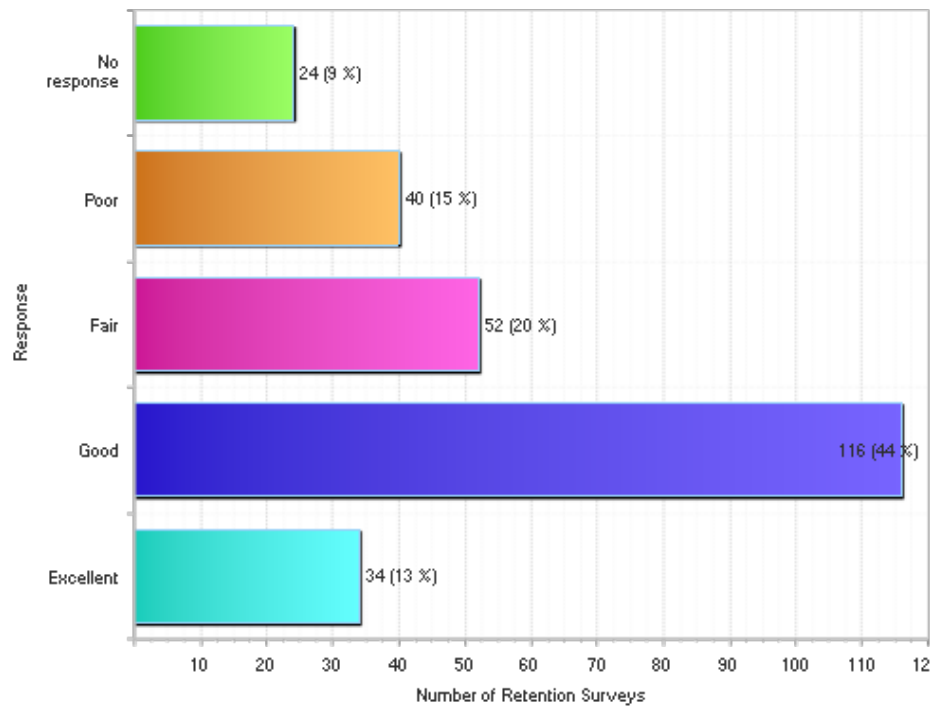
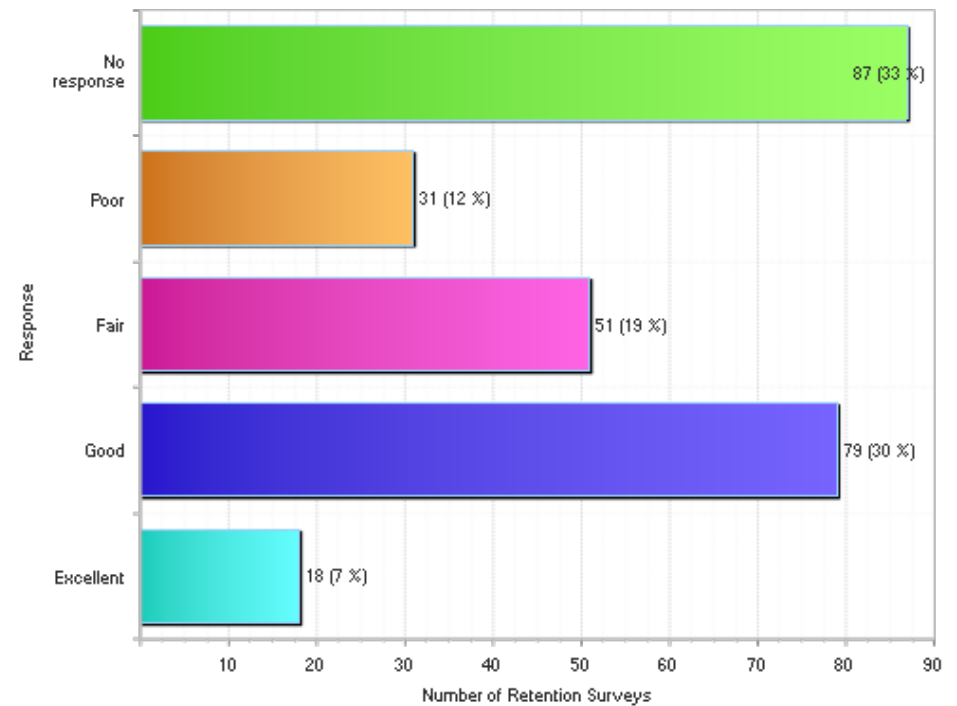


FIGURE 50: Cultural facilities



Regional Snapshot



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FIGURE 51: Parks and open spaces

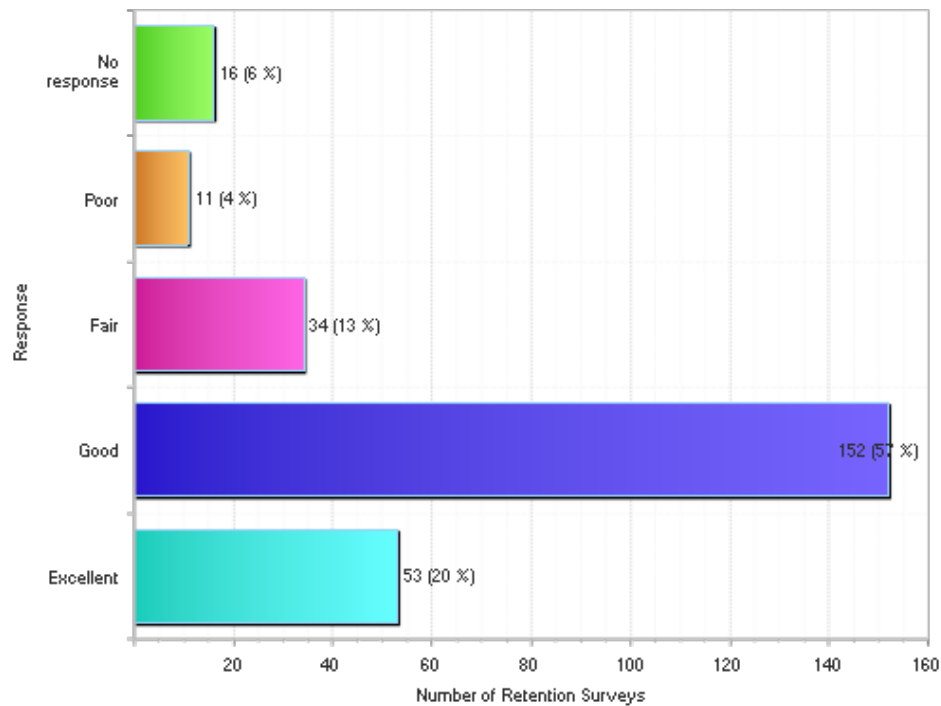


FIGURE 52: Support from local residents

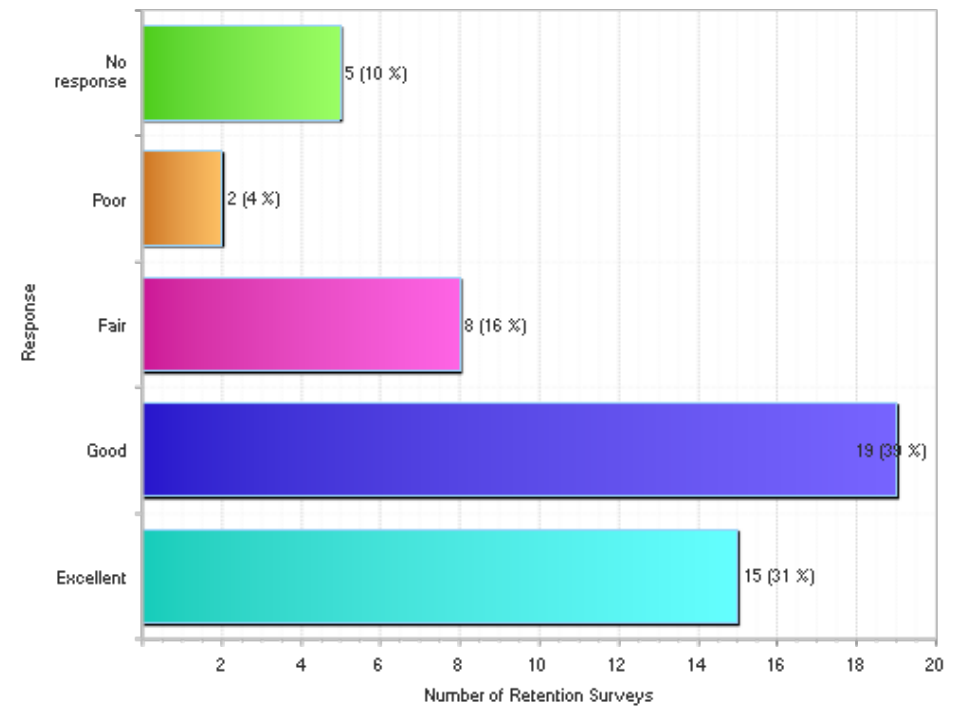




FIGURE 53: Street/road repair

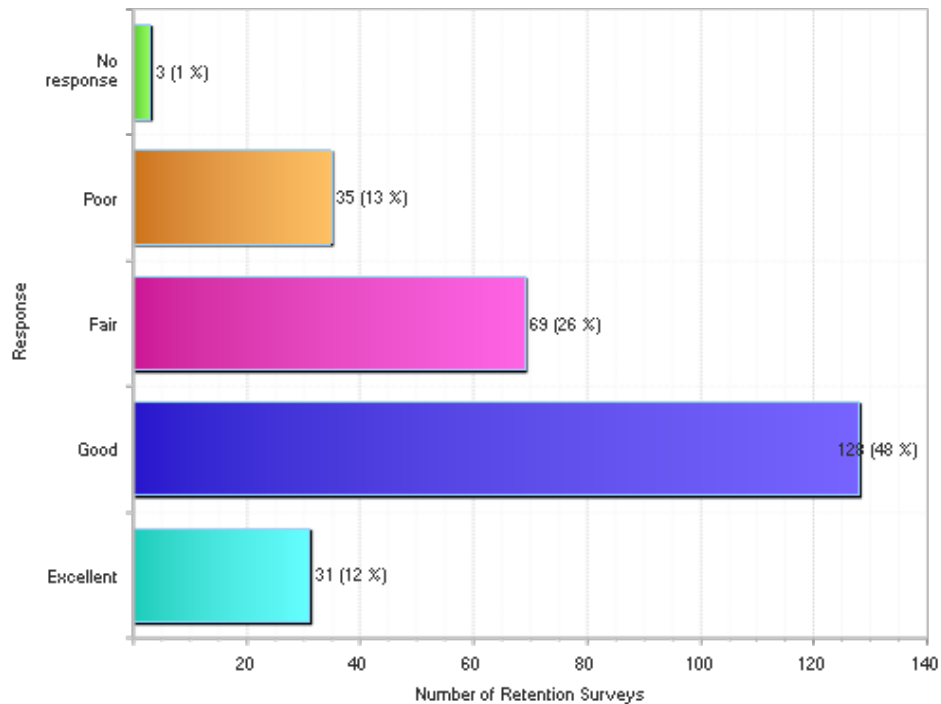
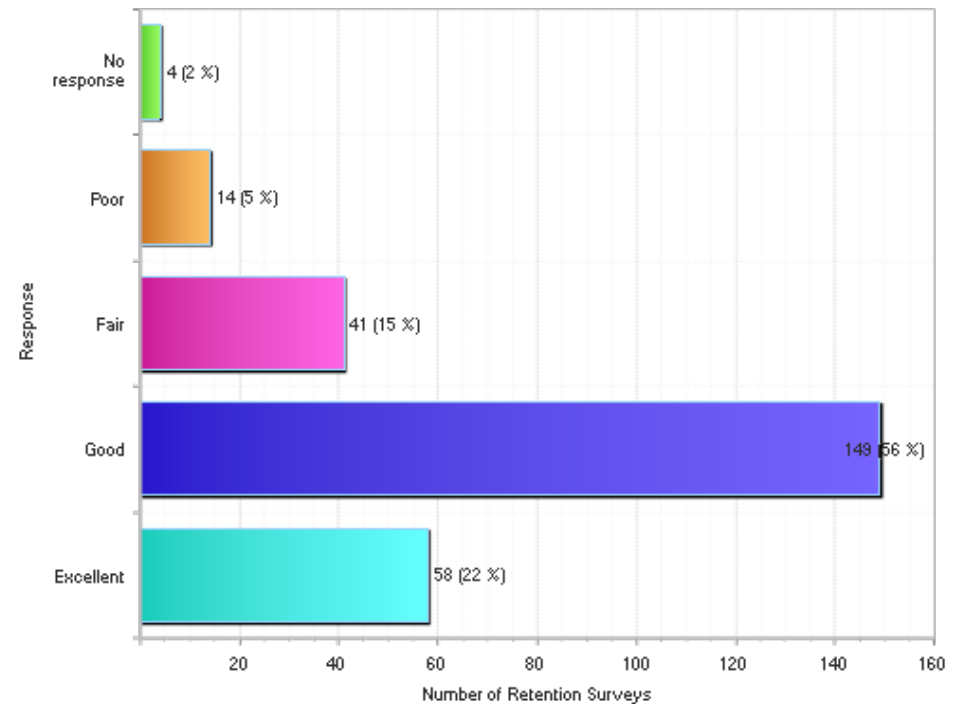


FIGURE 54: Snow removal



Regional Snapshot



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FIGURE 55: Garbage/recycling

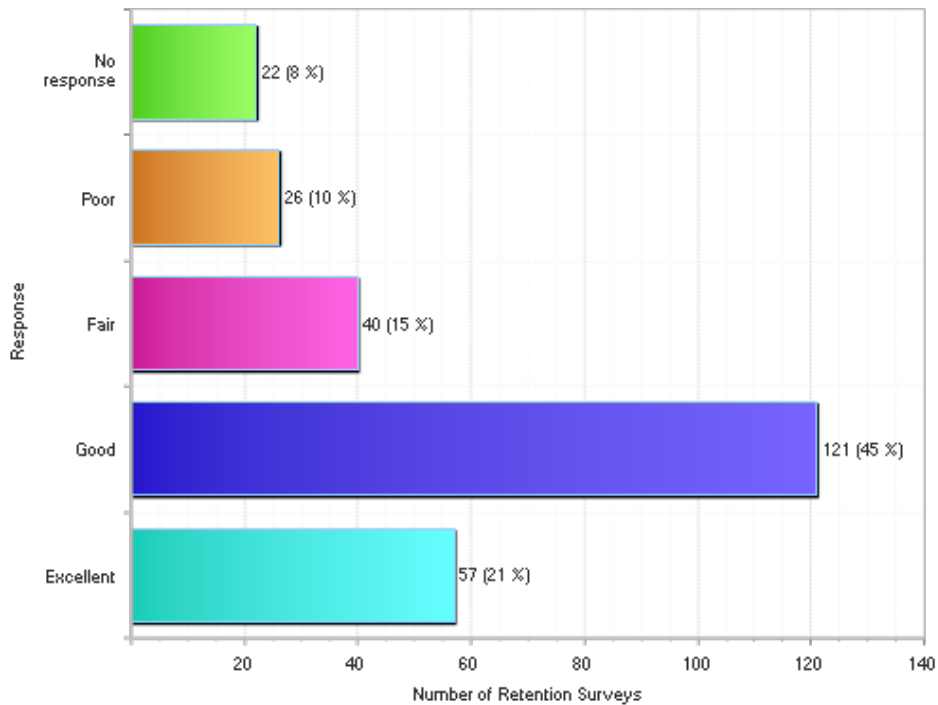
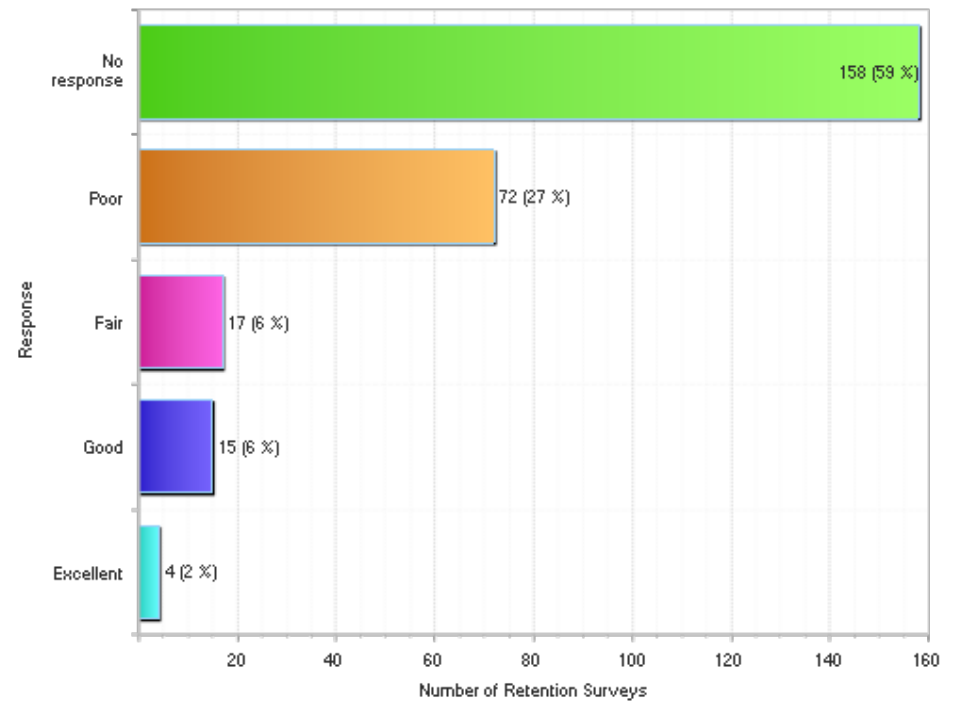


FIGURE 56: Public Transit

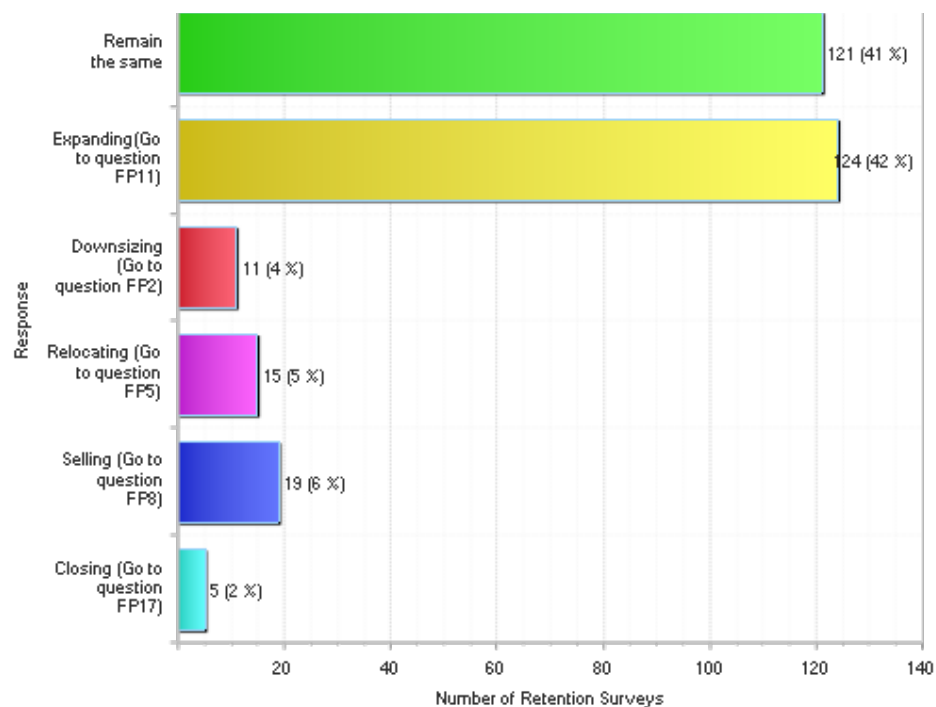




SECTION OVERVIEW

Future Plans

FIGURE 57: Within the next 18 months, which do you plan on



Downsizing

FIGURE 58: Will your downsizing lead to a decrease in

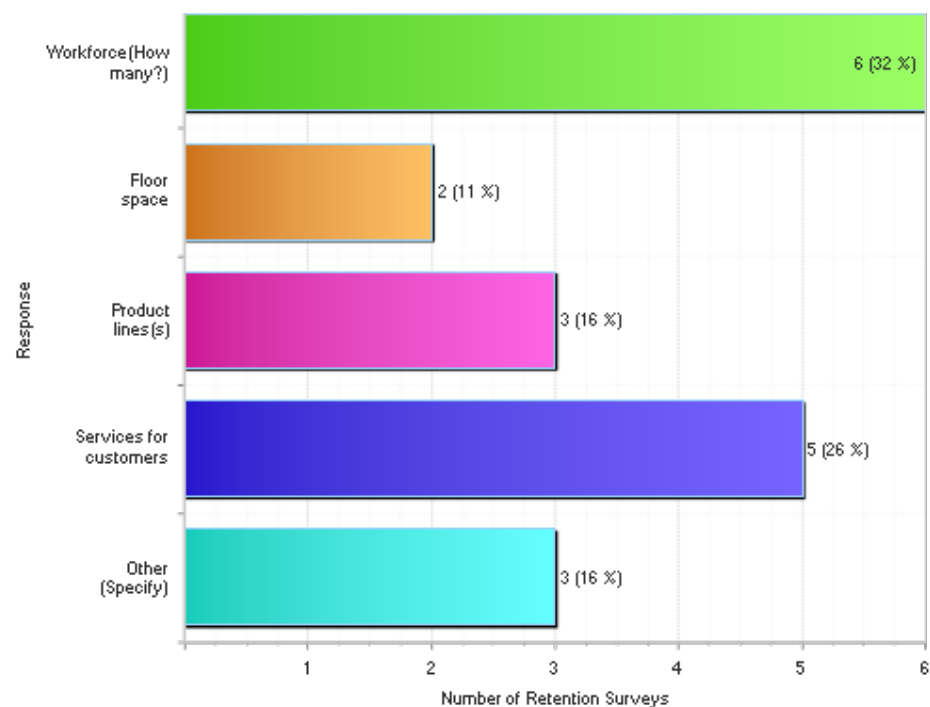
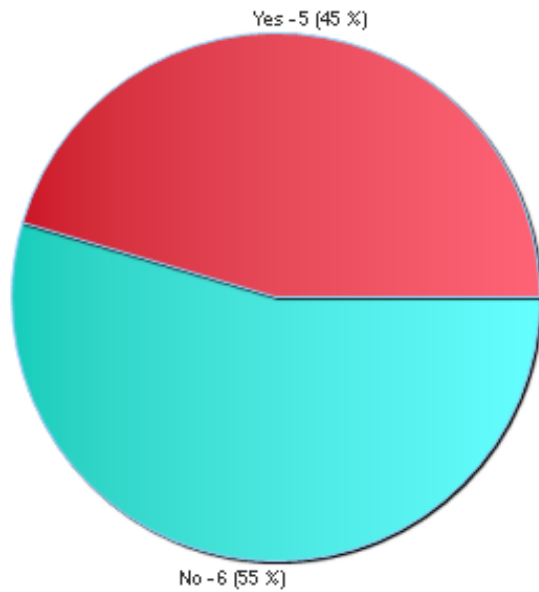




FIGURE 59: Is there any assistance that could be provided to prevent/limit the downsizing of your business?



Relocating

FIGURE 60: Where do you plan to relocate this business?

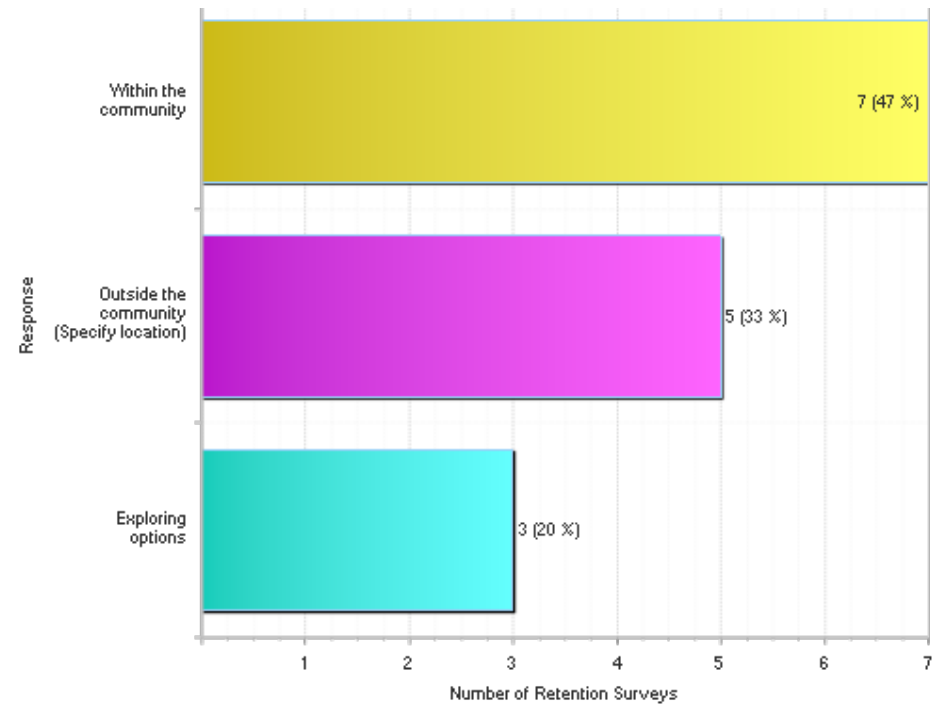
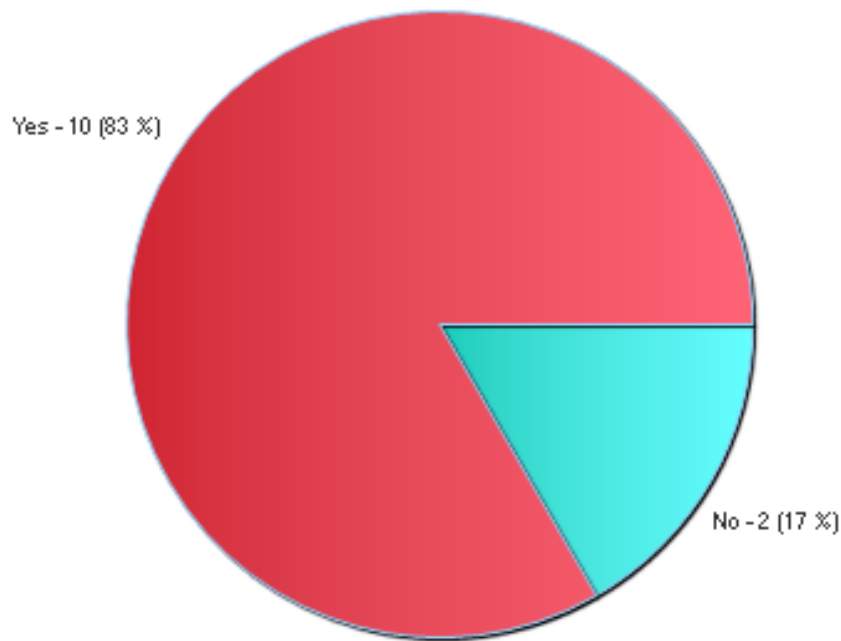


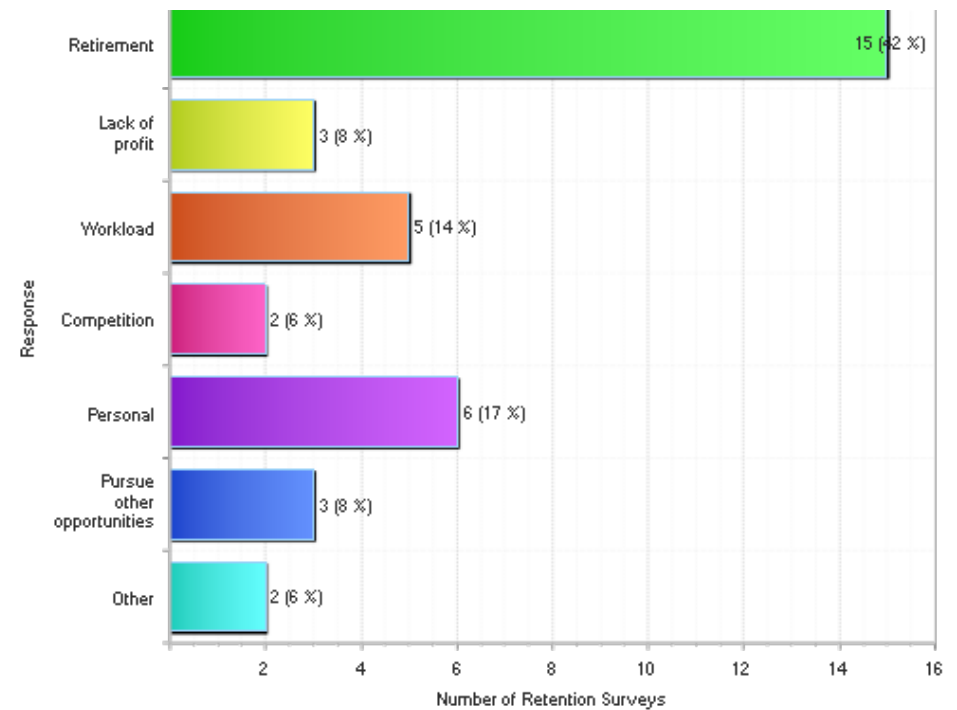


FIGURE 61: Is there any assistance that could be provided to prevent or assist with the relocation of your business within the community?



Selling

FIGURE 62: Why are you selling your business?



Regional Snapshot >

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FIGURE 63: Do you have a succession plan for your business?

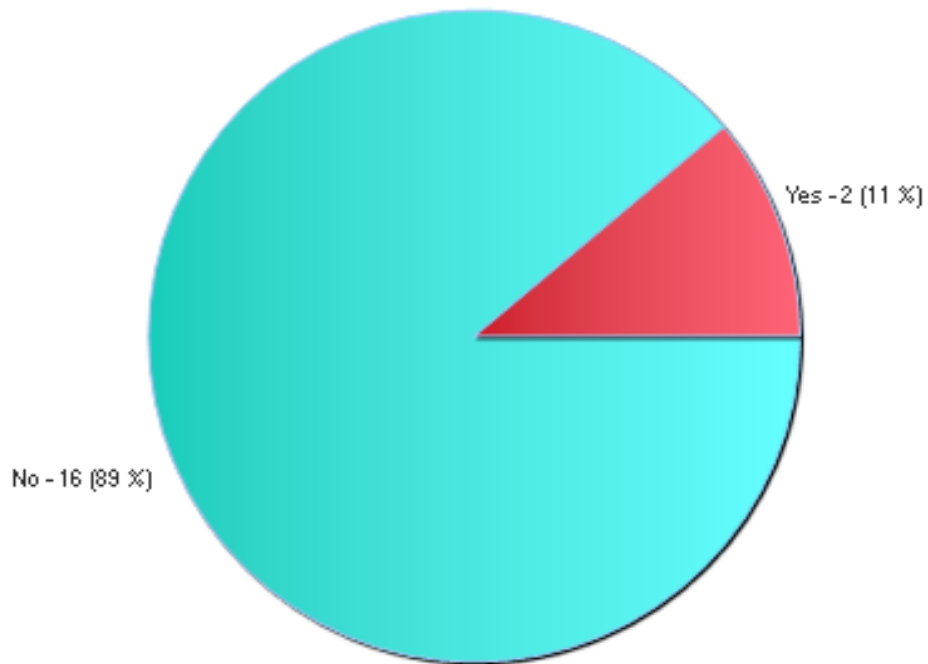


FIGURE 64: Would you like assistance/information with developing a succession plan?

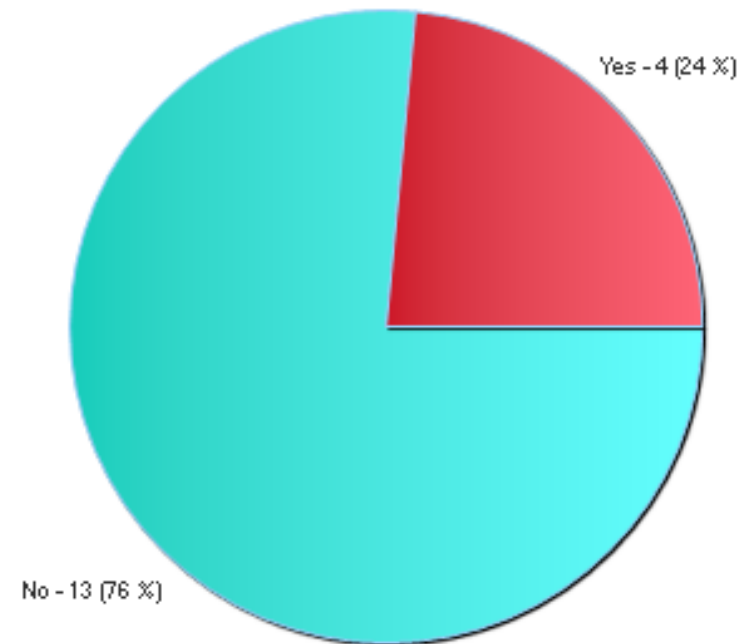
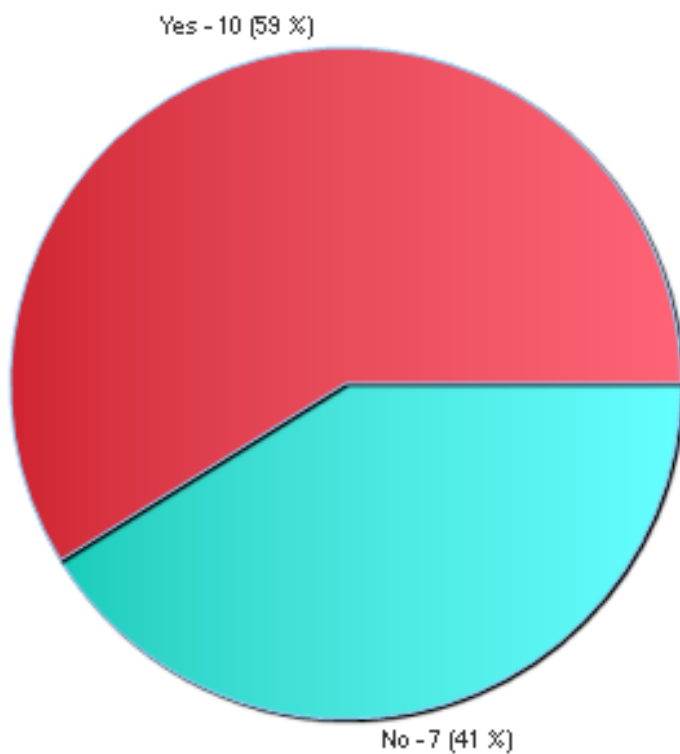




FIGURE 65: Would you like assistance/information on selling your business?



Expanding

FIGURE 66: Will your expansion require or lead to:

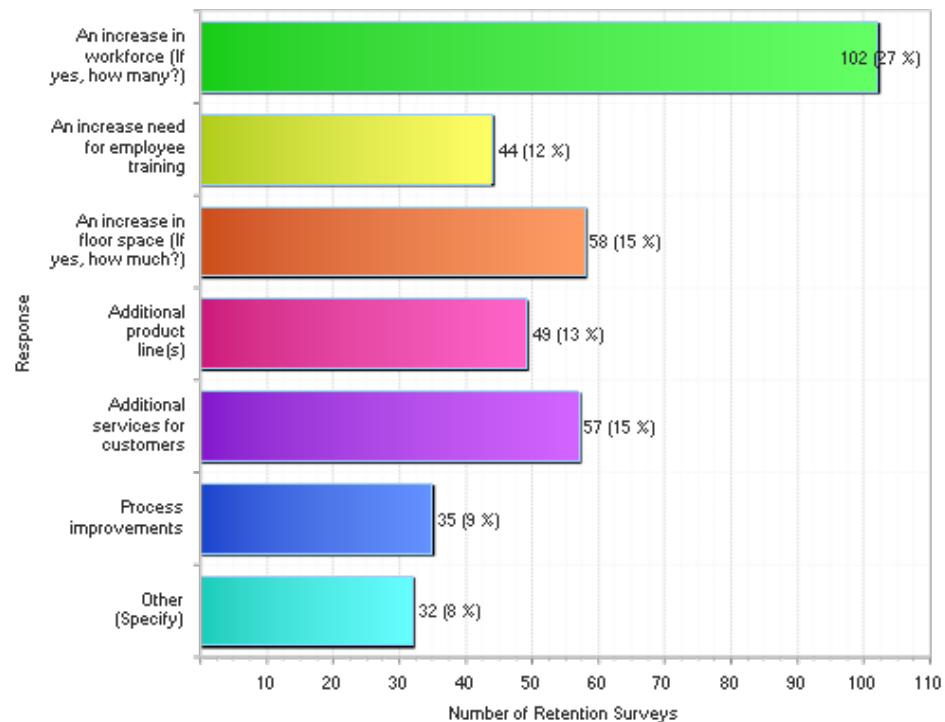




FIGURE 67: Are you planning on accessing any Federal or Provincial programs/services to assist with the expansion?

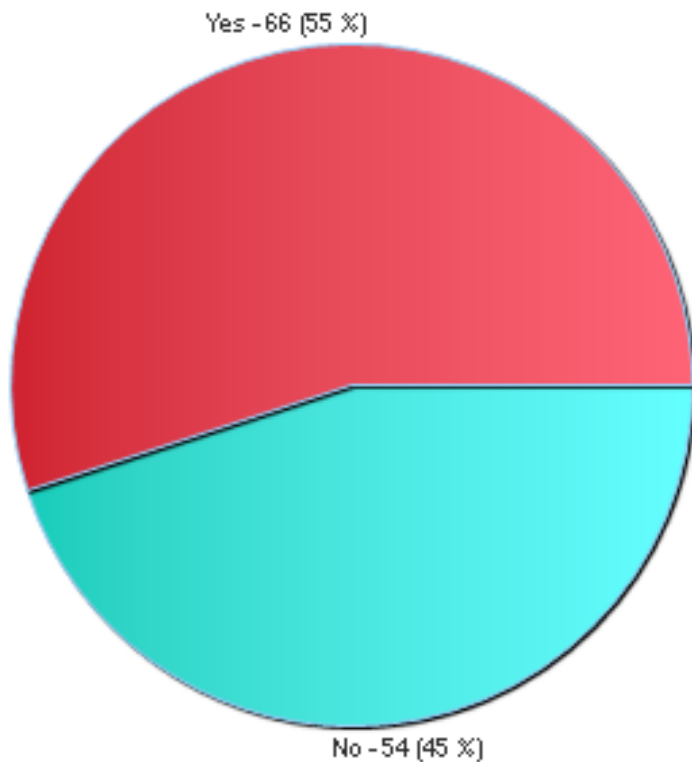


FIGURE 68: Would you like to receive information on potential Federal or Provincial programs/services that might assist with your expansion?

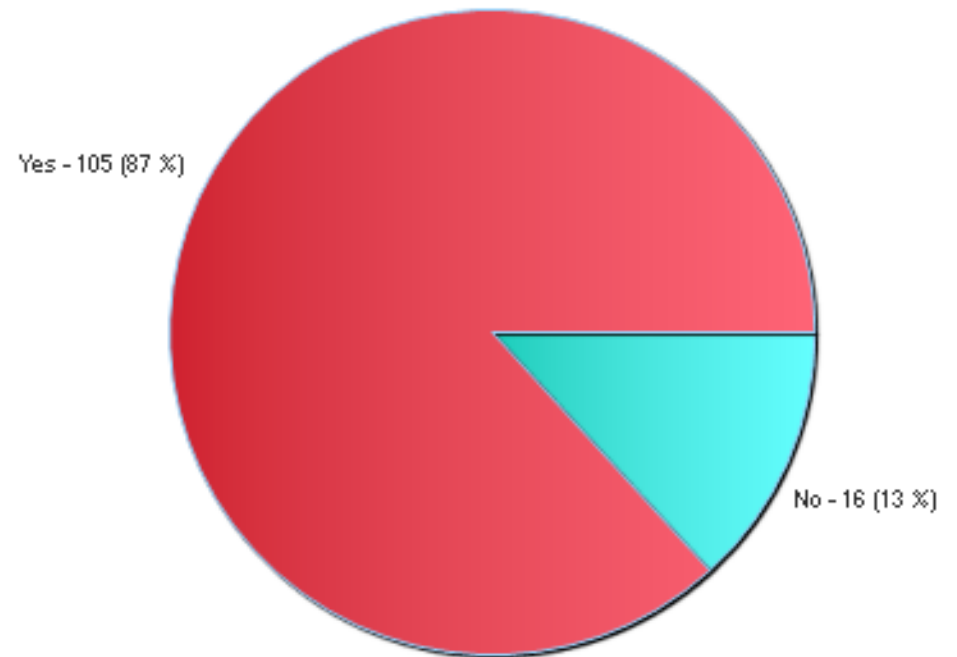




FIGURE 69: Is your business currently experiencing difficulties with your expansion plans?

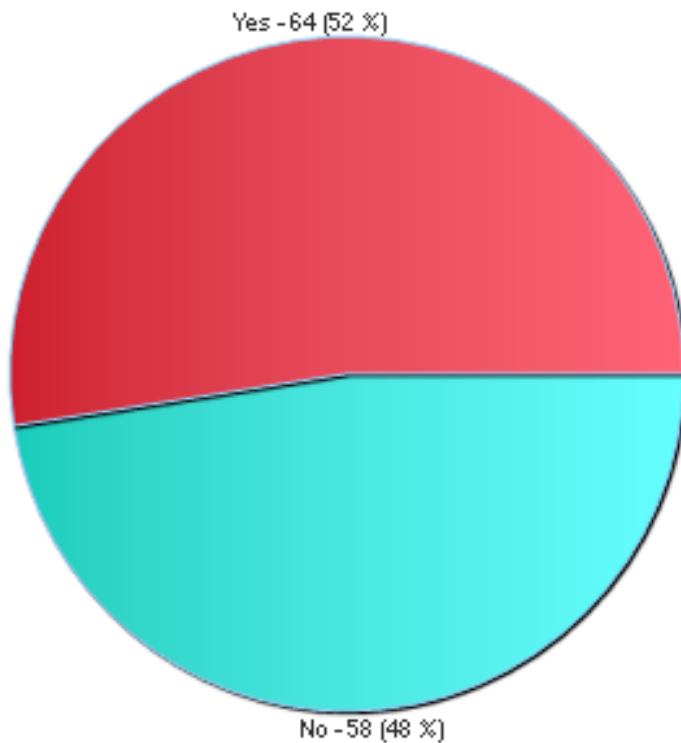
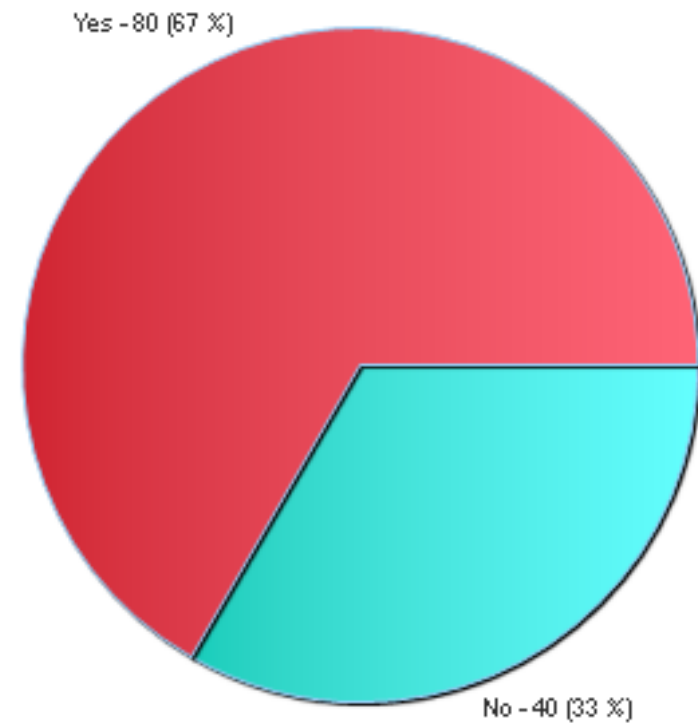


FIGURE 70: Could the community potentially provide some assistance to support your expansion plans?





Closing

FIGURE 71: Do you plan to close this business at this location without re-opening in another location?

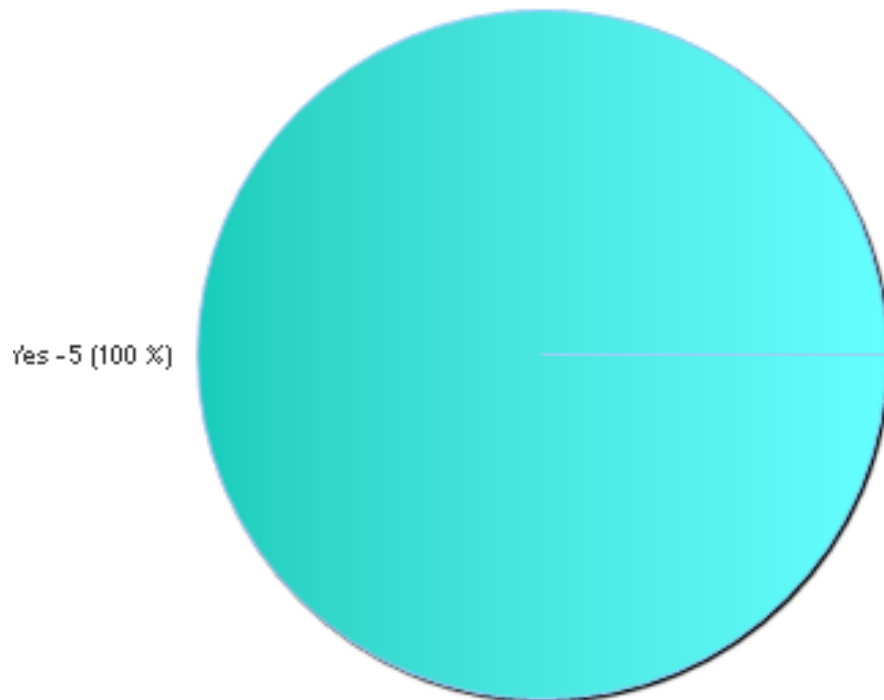
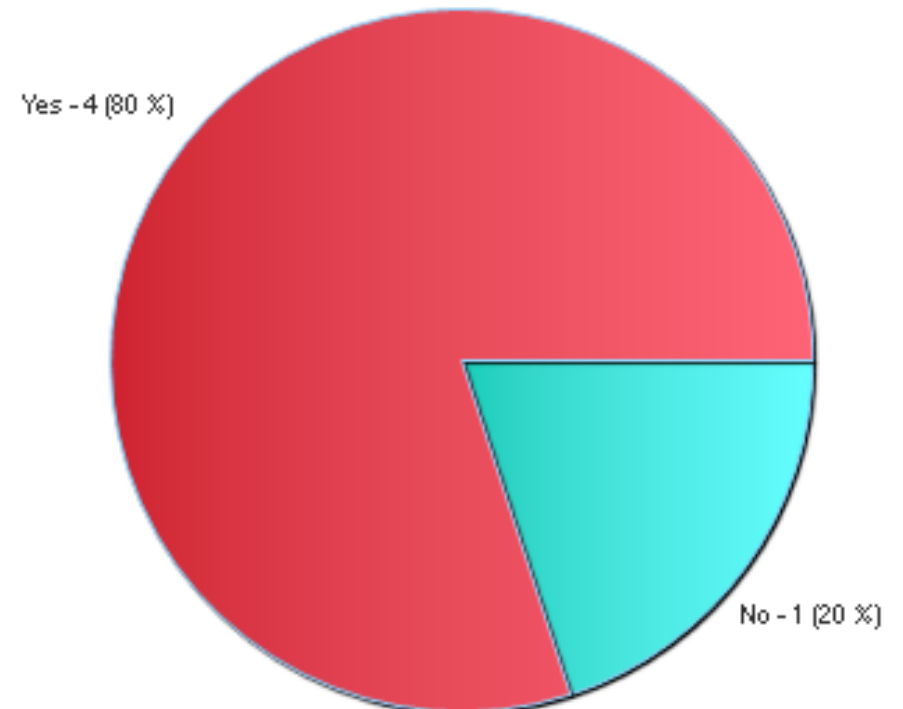


FIGURE 72: Could the community potentially provide any assistance to prevent the closure of your business?





SECTION OVERVIEW

Business Development

FIGURE 73: What is the outlook for your industry?

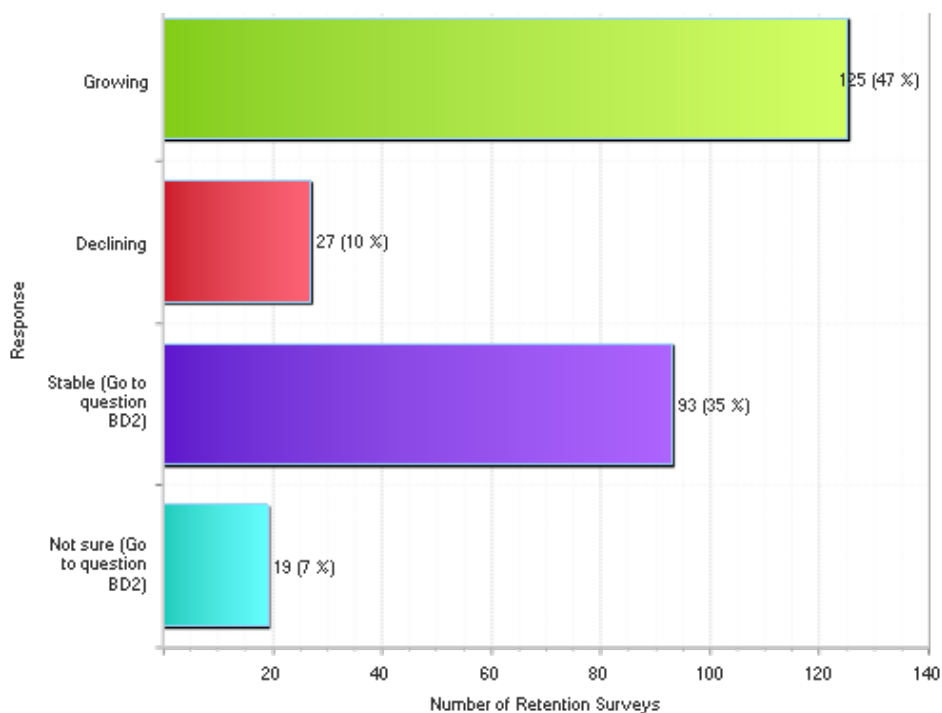
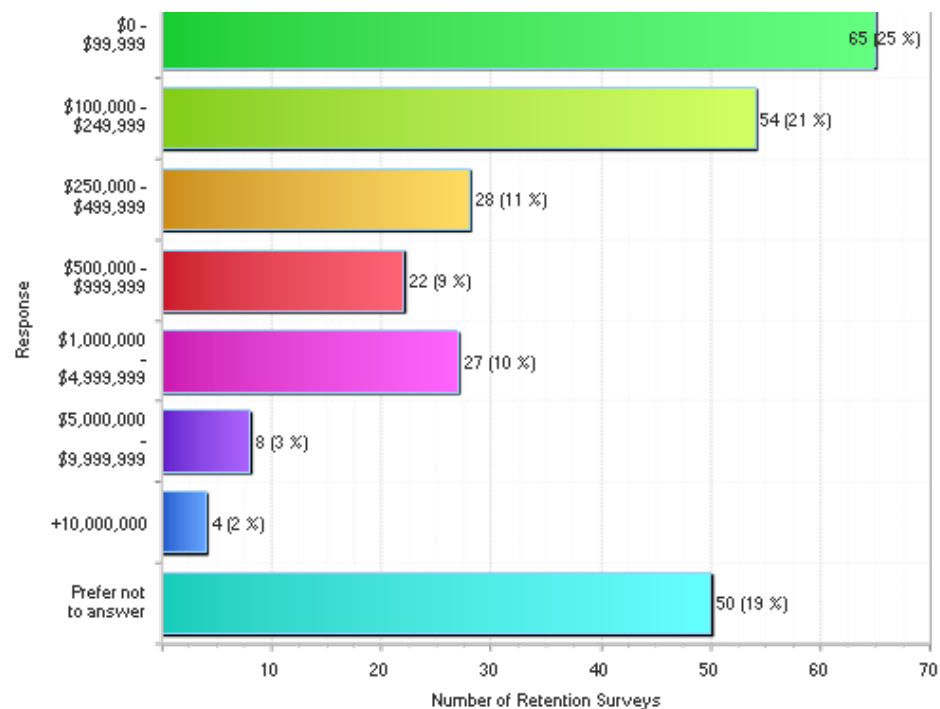


FIGURE 74: Please give an approximate annual sales range for your business.



Regional Snapshot



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FIGURE 75: Are your projected sales in the next year expected to:

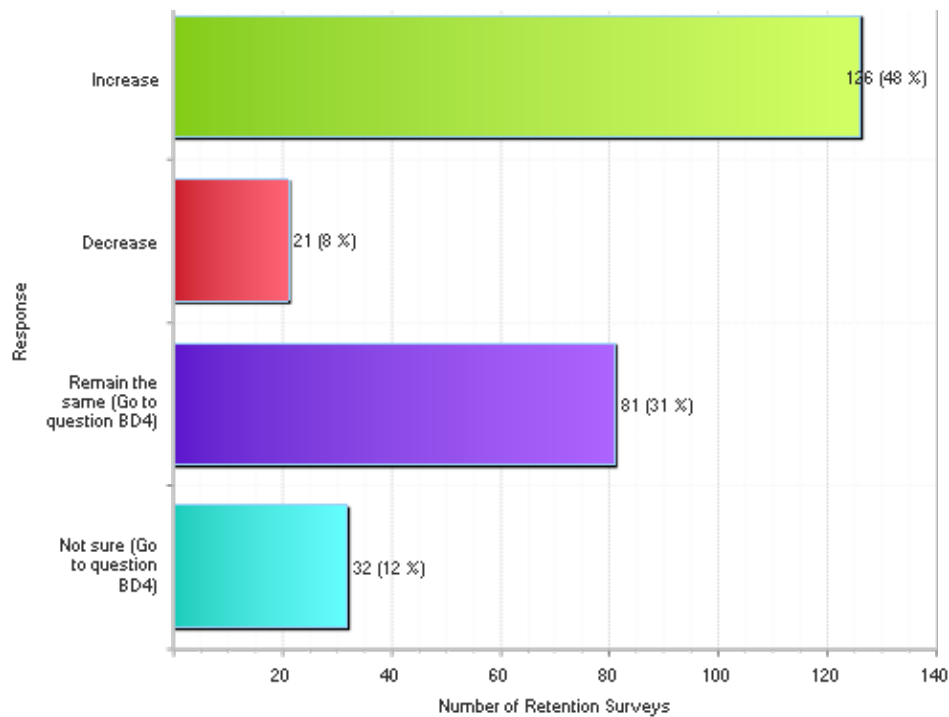


FIGURE 76: How would you rate your business related to the use of technology?

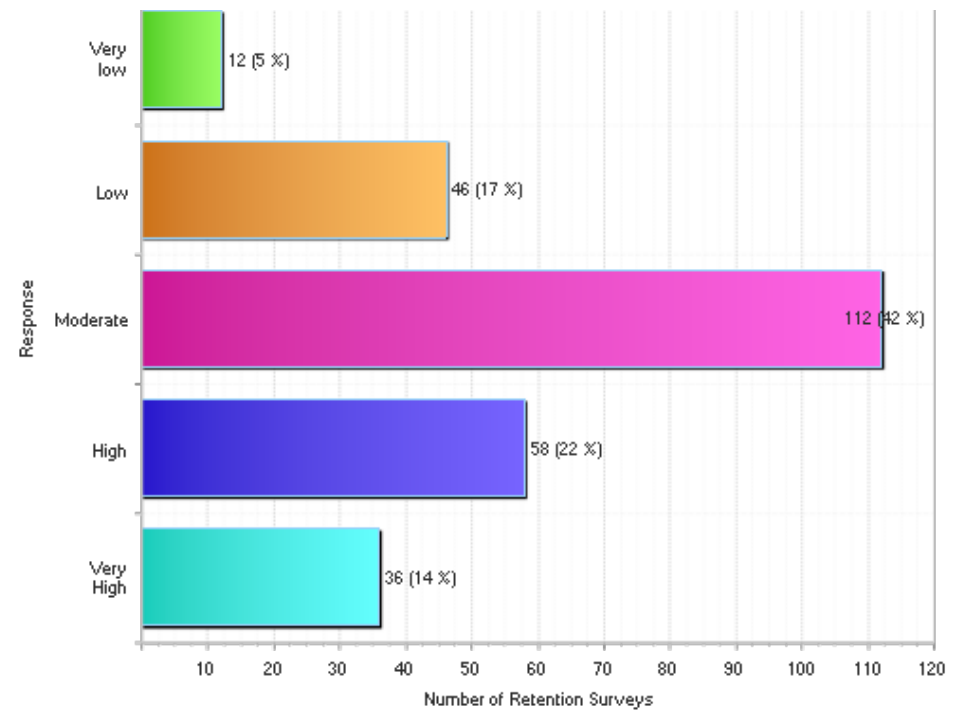




FIGURE 77: Is your business currently experiencing any barriers related to your information technology requirements?

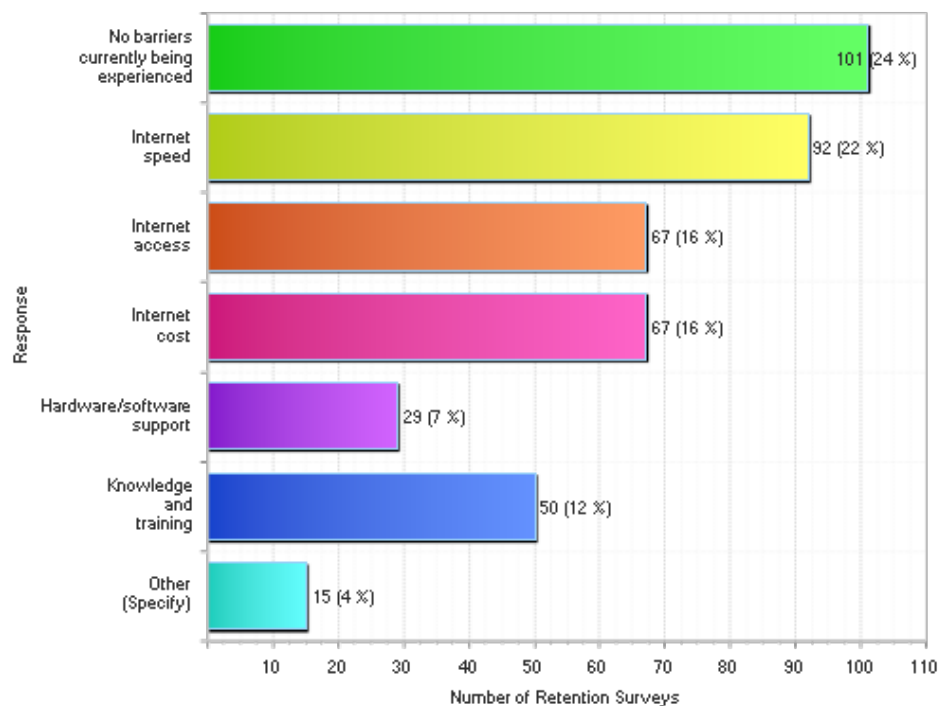


FIGURE 78: Are you interested in working co-operatively with other businesses in the community to pursue any of the following?

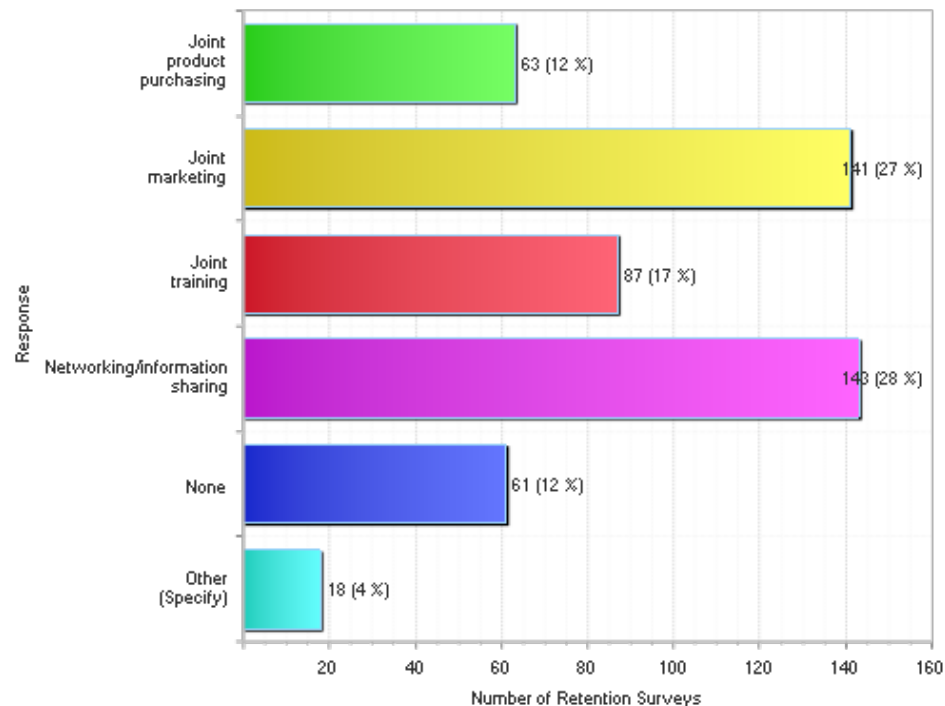


FIGURE 79: Does your business own or lease its facility/facilities?

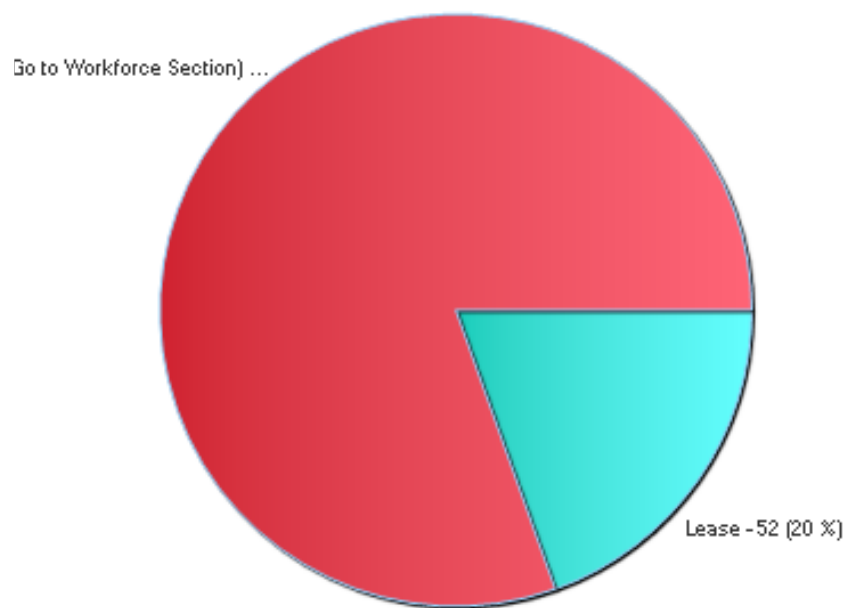
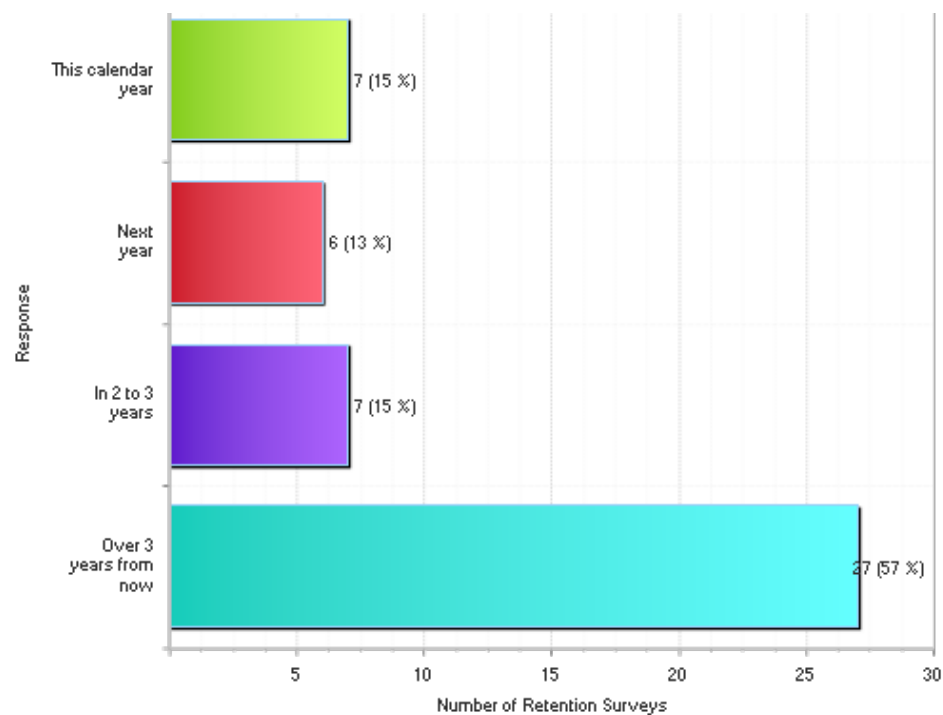


FIGURE 80: When does the lease expire?





SECTION OVERVIEW

Workforce

FIGURE 81: Do you anticipate any problems in renewing the lease?

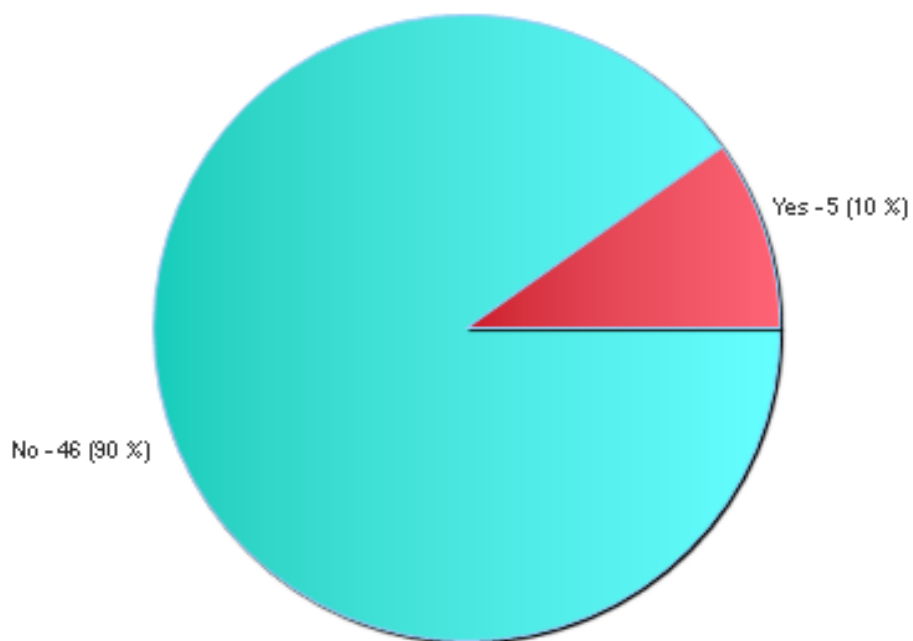
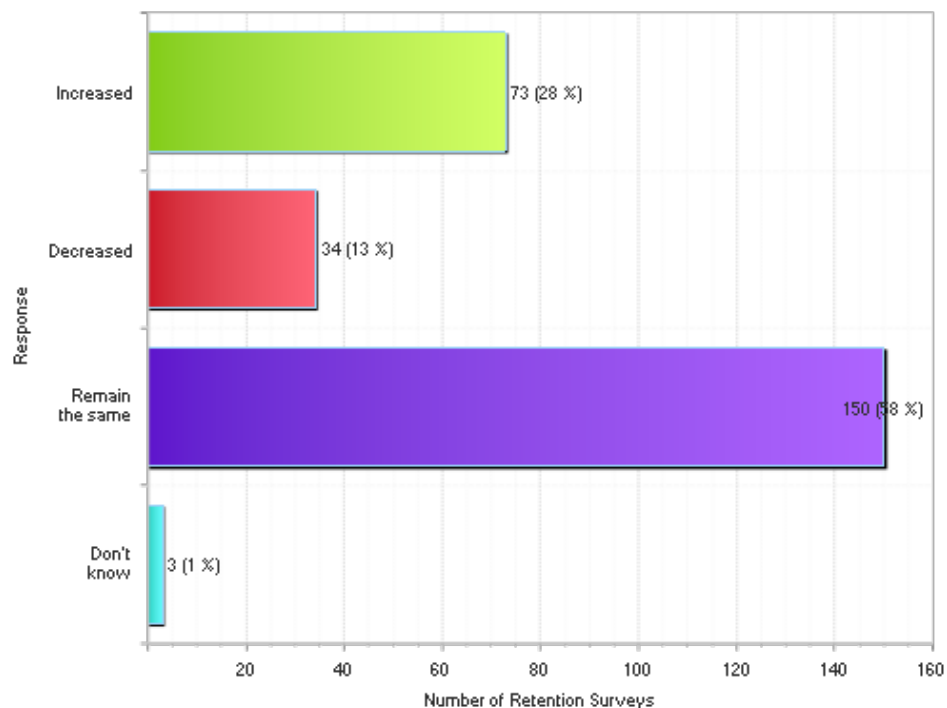


FIGURE 82: During the past 3 years, has the number of people you employ in this business increased, decreased or stayed the same?



Regional Snapshot



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

FIGURE 83: Availability of qualified workers

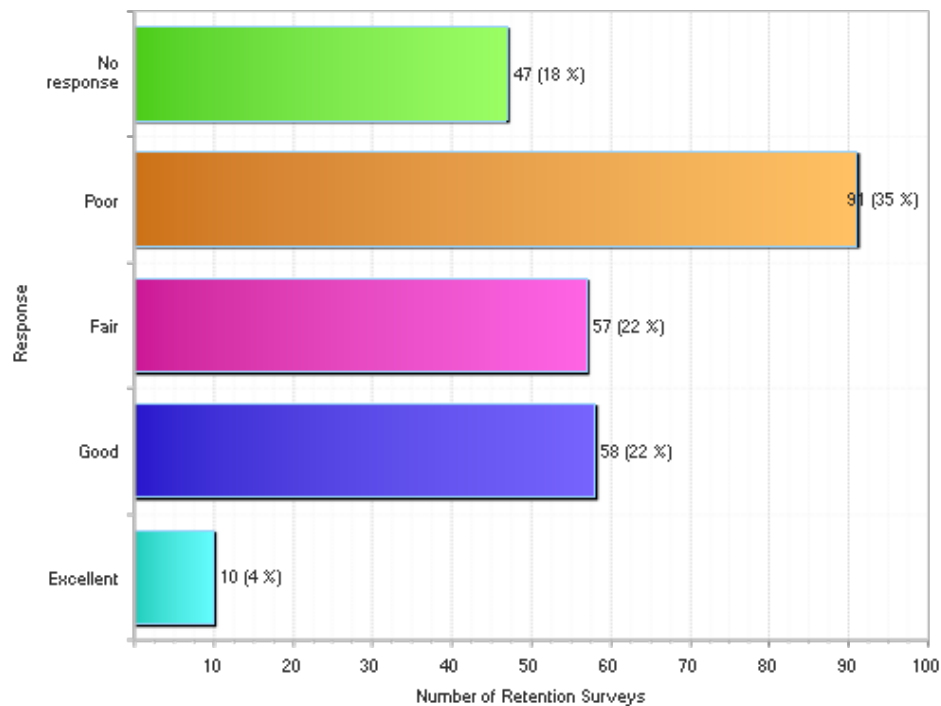


FIGURE 84: Stability of the workforce

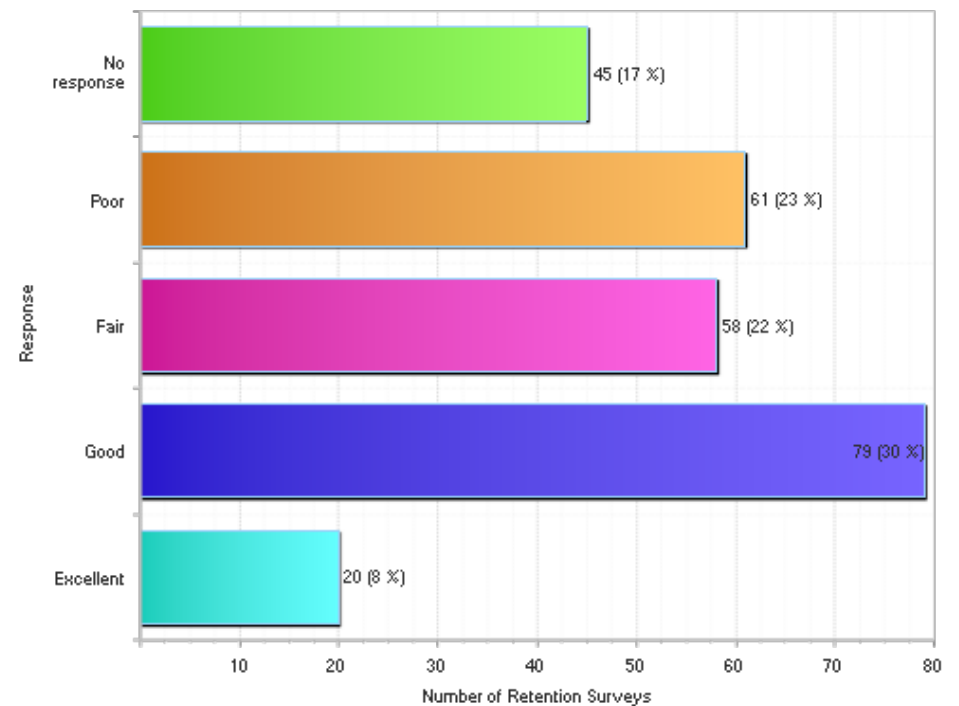




FIGURE 85: Ability to attract new employees

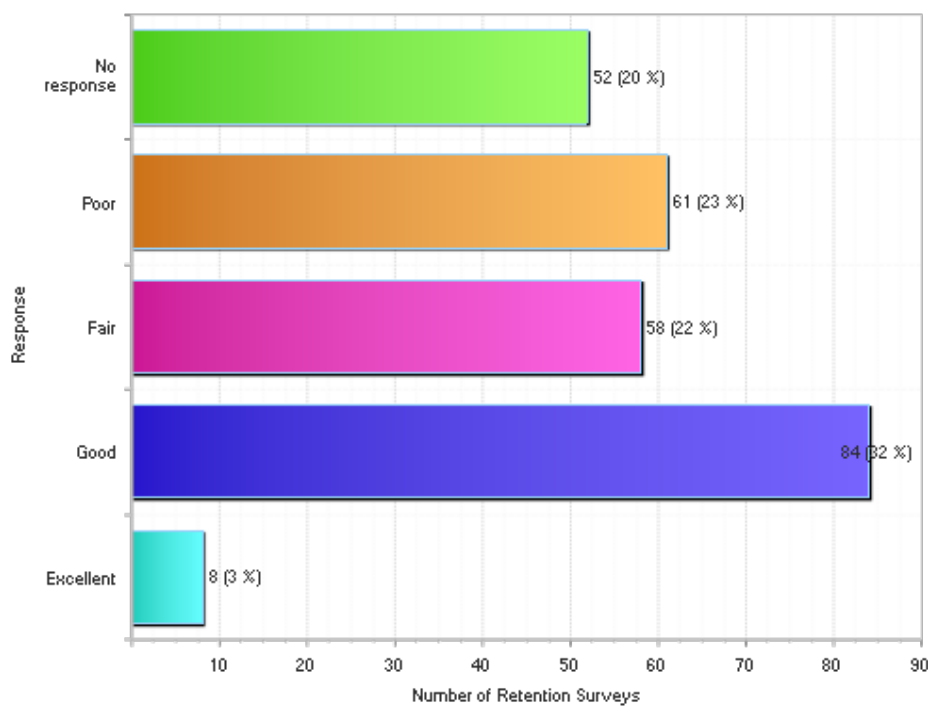
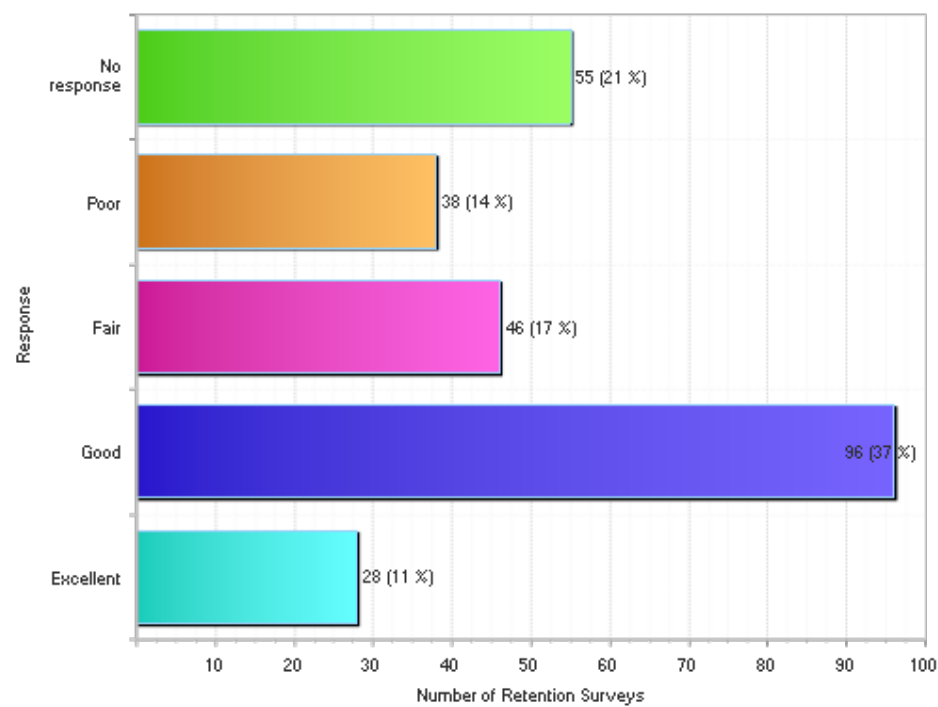


FIGURE 86: Ability to retain new employees



Regional Snapshot >

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FIGURE 87: Does your business currently have difficulty hiring?

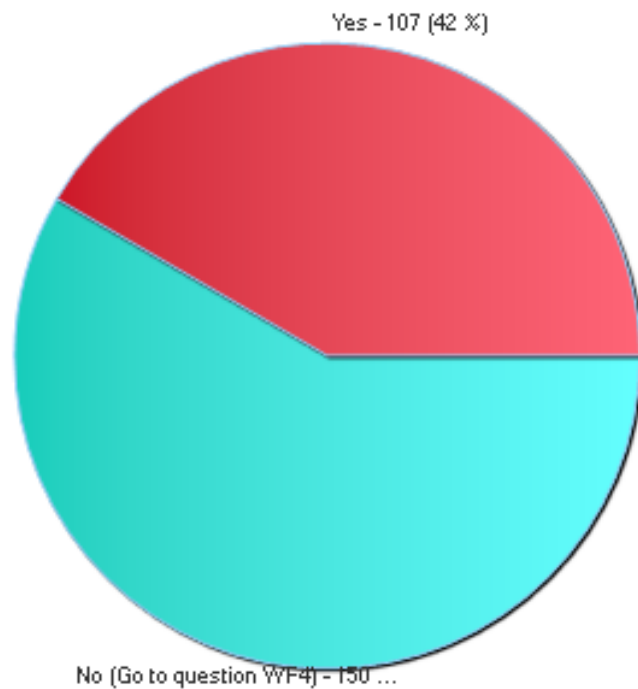


FIGURE 88: How would you describe your company's hiring challenges?

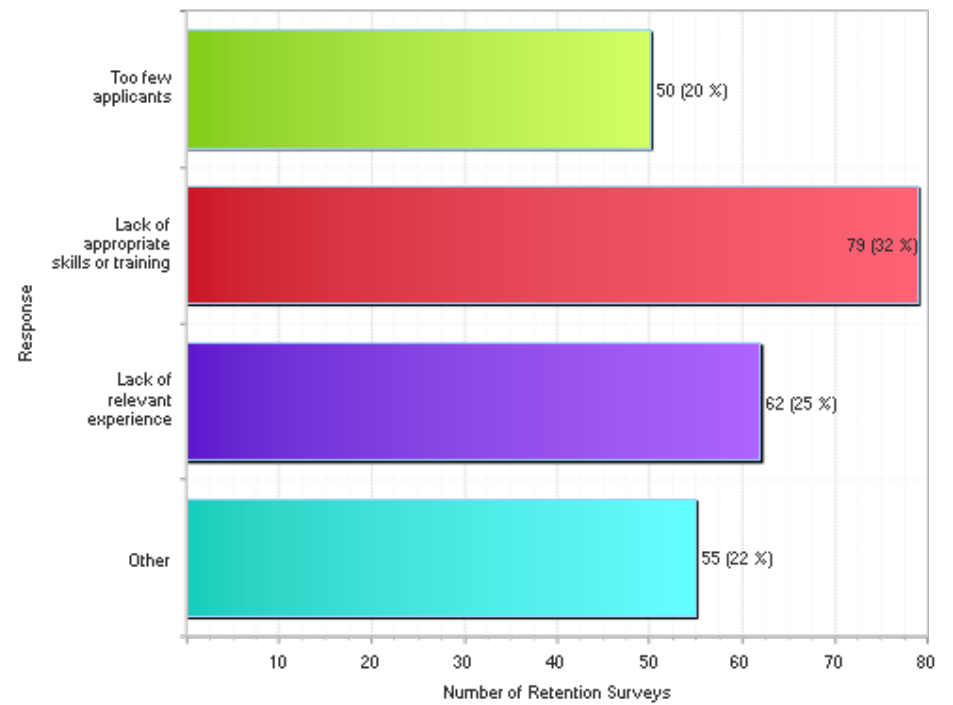




FIGURE 89: Are the hiring challenges specifically related to the community or industry?

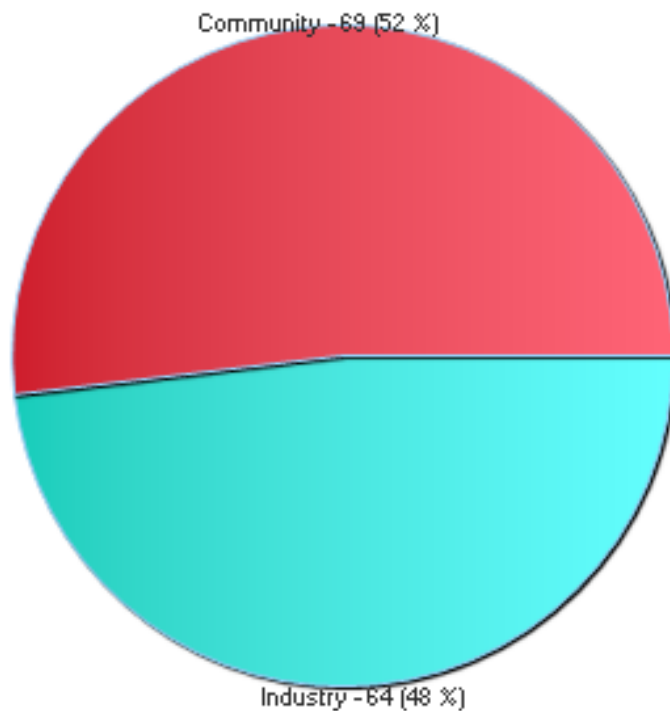
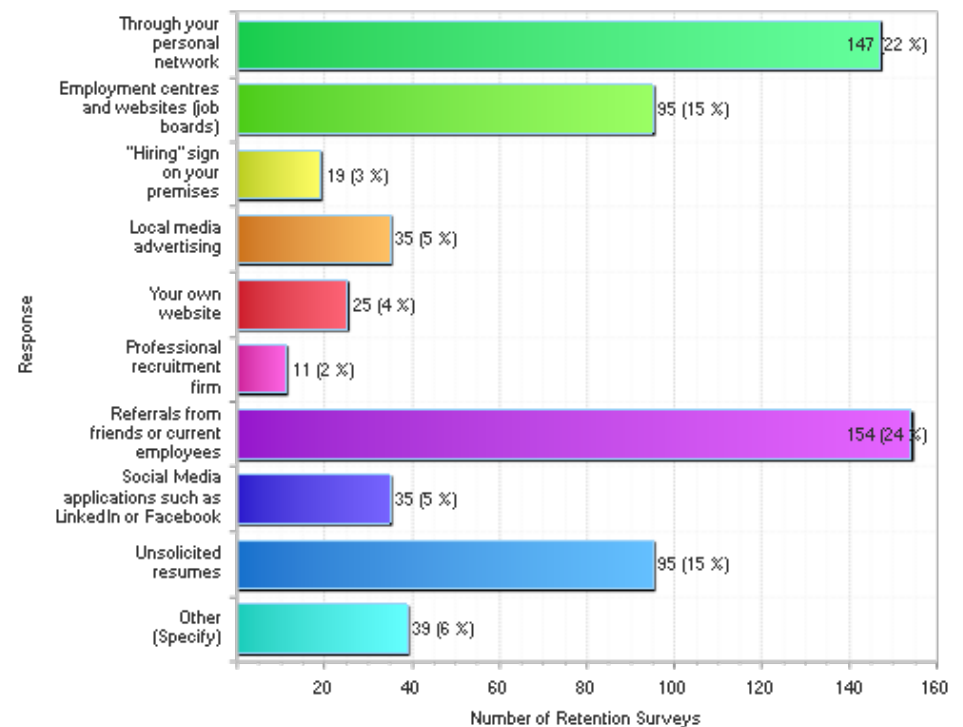


FIGURE 90: How do you currently recruit new employees?



Regional Snapshot



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FIGURE 91: Does your business have difficulty retaining employees?

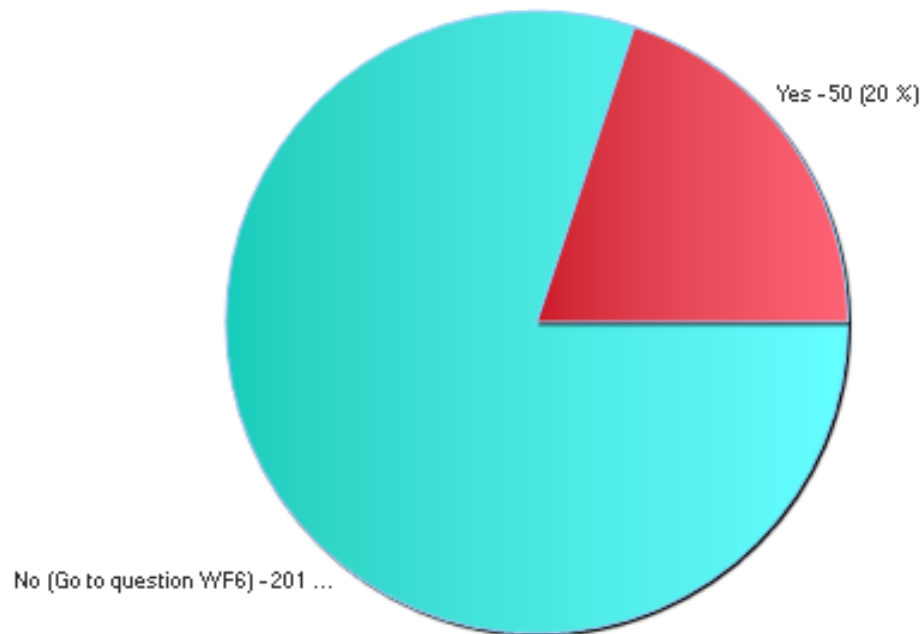


FIGURE 92: What are the reasons for these difficulties in retaining employees?

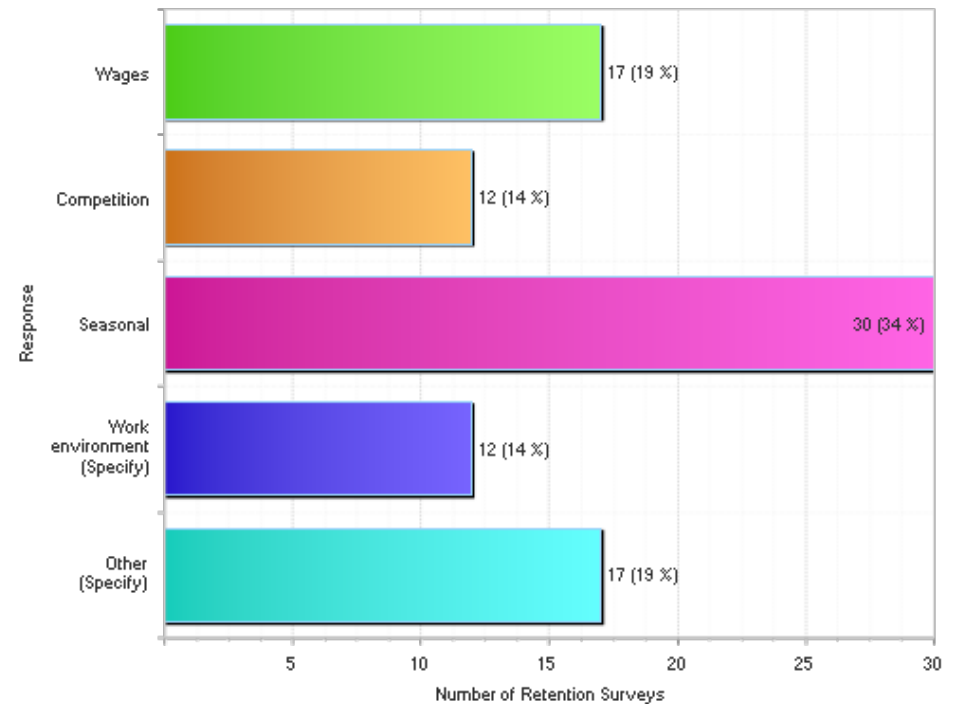




FIGURE 93: Does your business currently participate in any co-op, internship or apprenticeship programs?

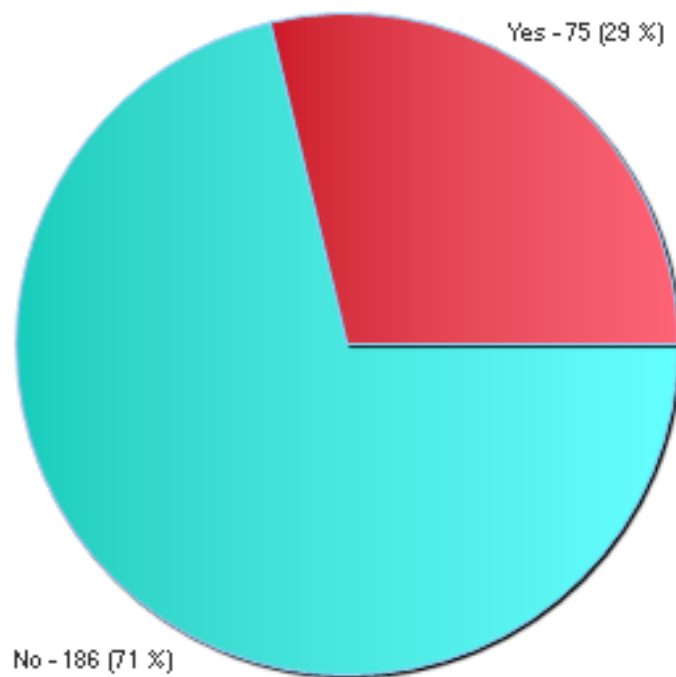


FIGURE 94: If No, are you interested in information?

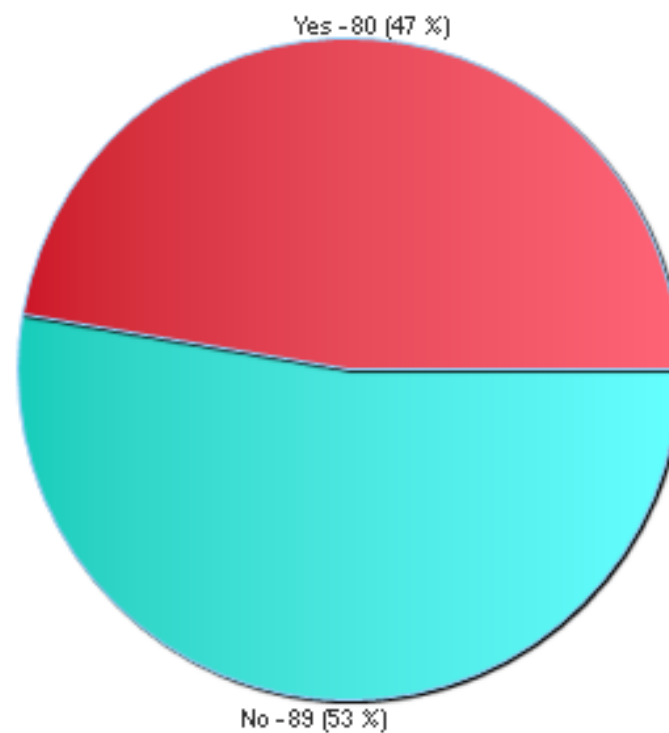




FIGURE 95: Does your business currently use any external training?

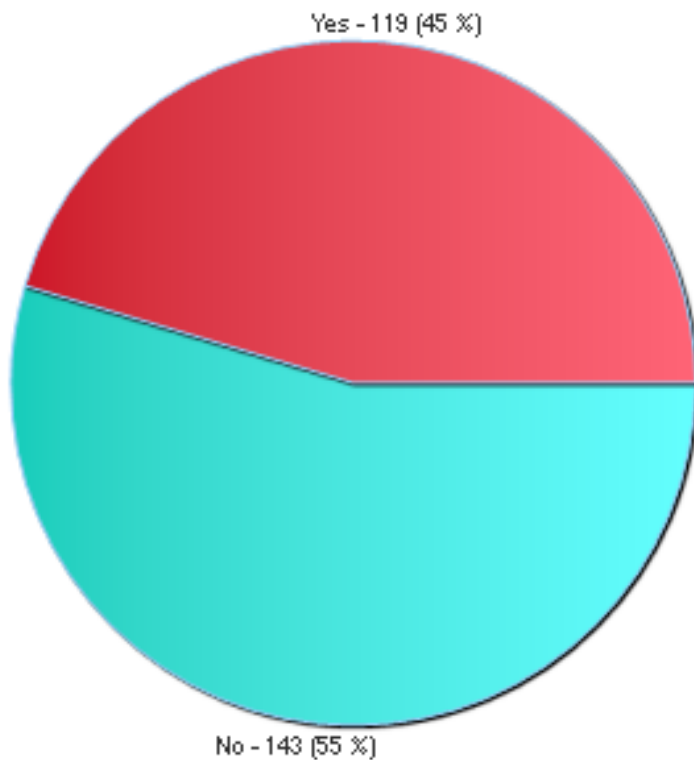


FIGURE 96: Are there currently any barriers for you and/or your employees receiving the necessary training?

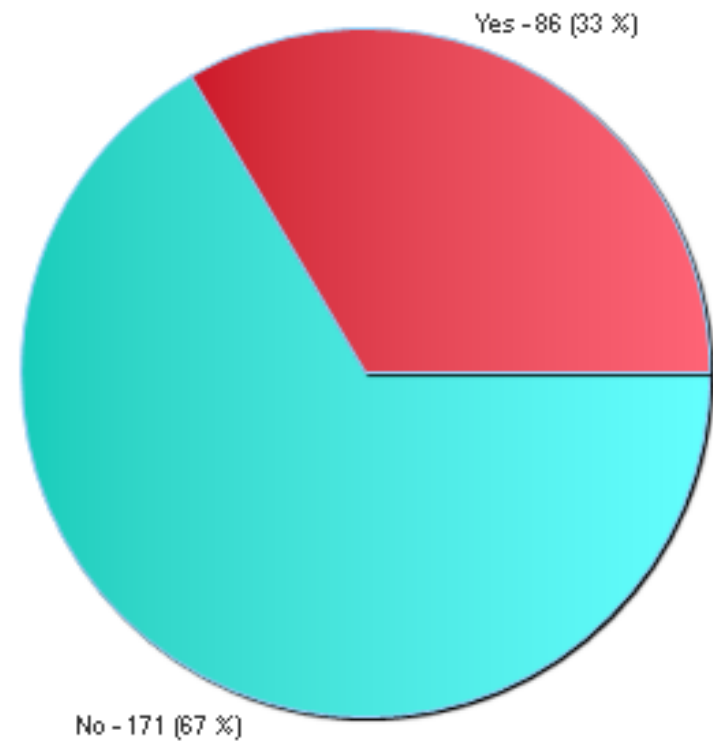




FIGURE 97: If Yes, please specify.

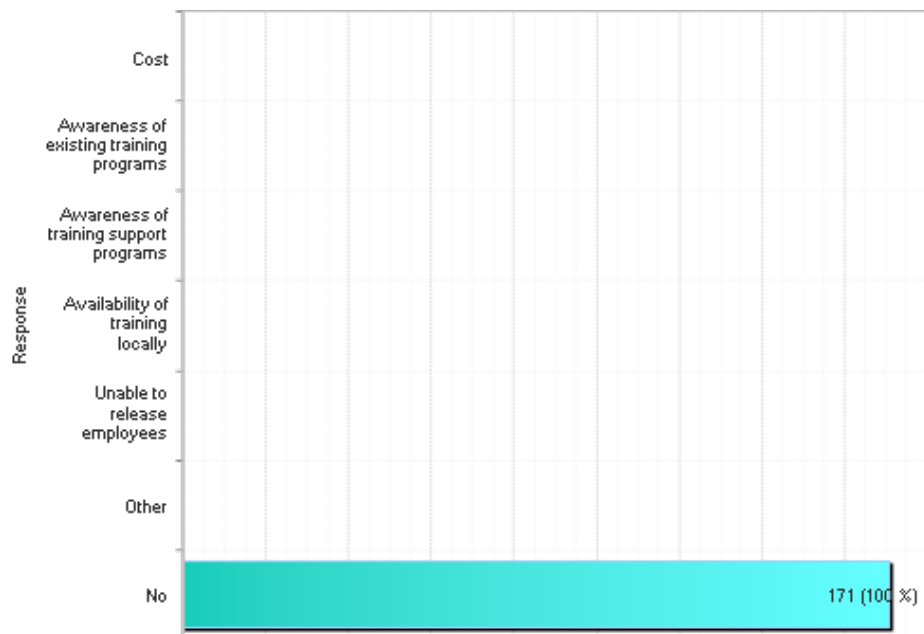
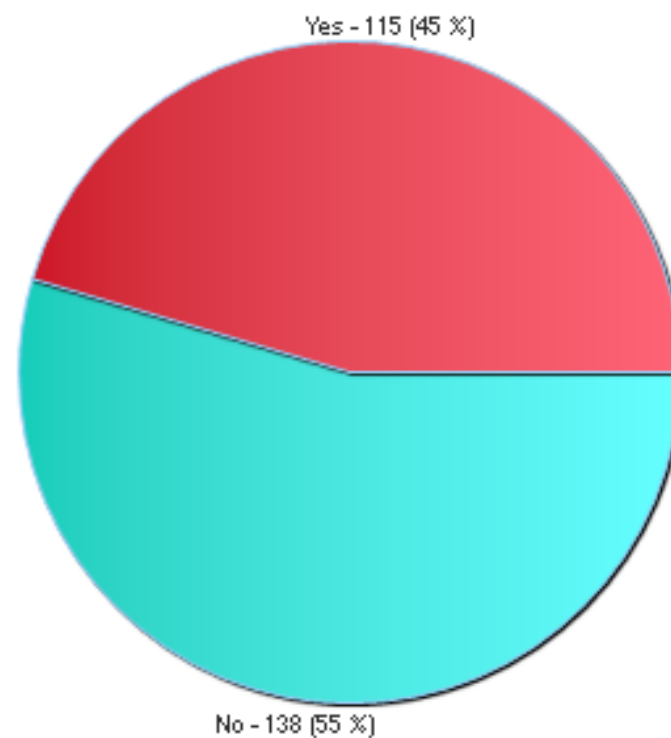


FIGURE 98: Are there any training programs/topics that would be beneficial to you and your employees?





SECTION OVERVIEW

Community Development

FIGURE 99: Do you know of a business that may have an interest in locating in this community?

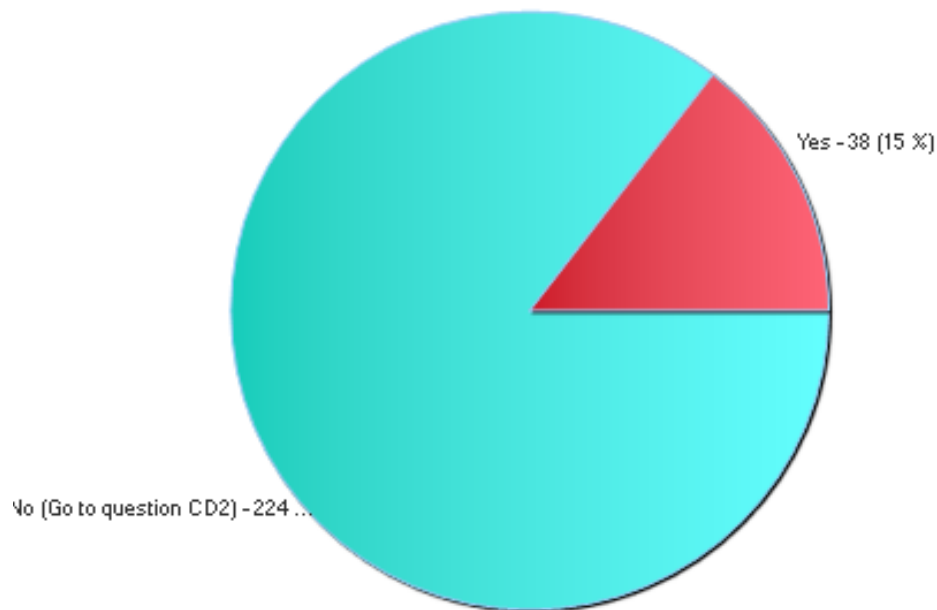


FIGURE 100: Would you be willing to provide the contact information for the business in support of a community business attraction strategy? - Contact business directly

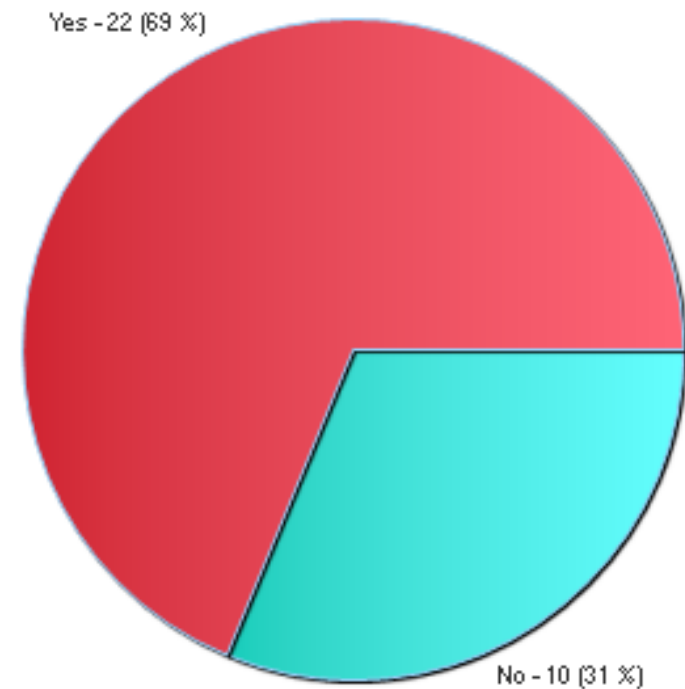




FIGURE 101: Would you be willing to contact this company on behalf of our community as part of a business attraction strategy? - Provide the contact information for this business

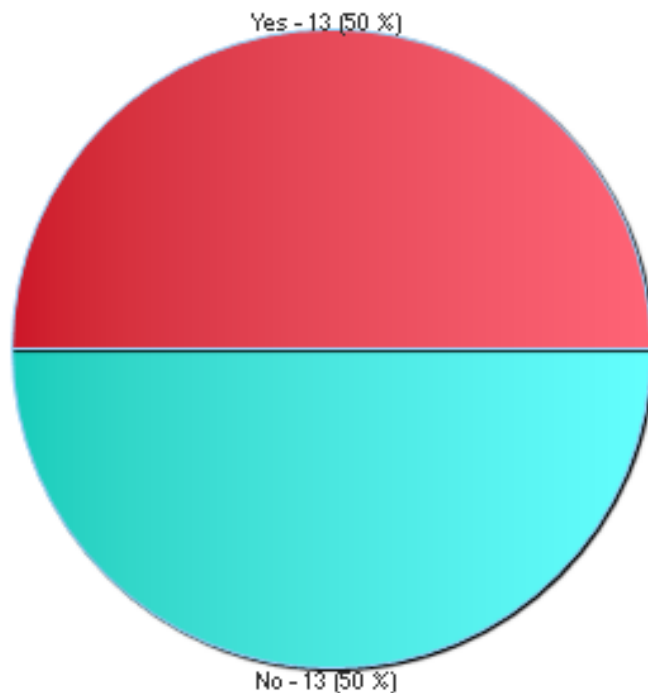


FIGURE 102: What assistance or opportunities would be beneficial to support your business?

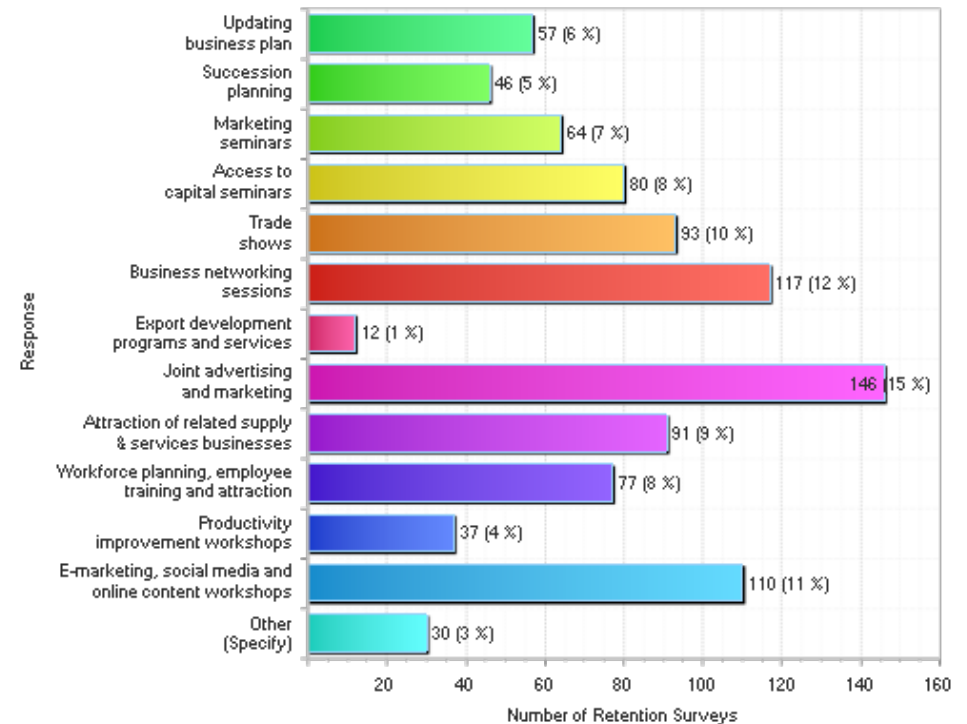
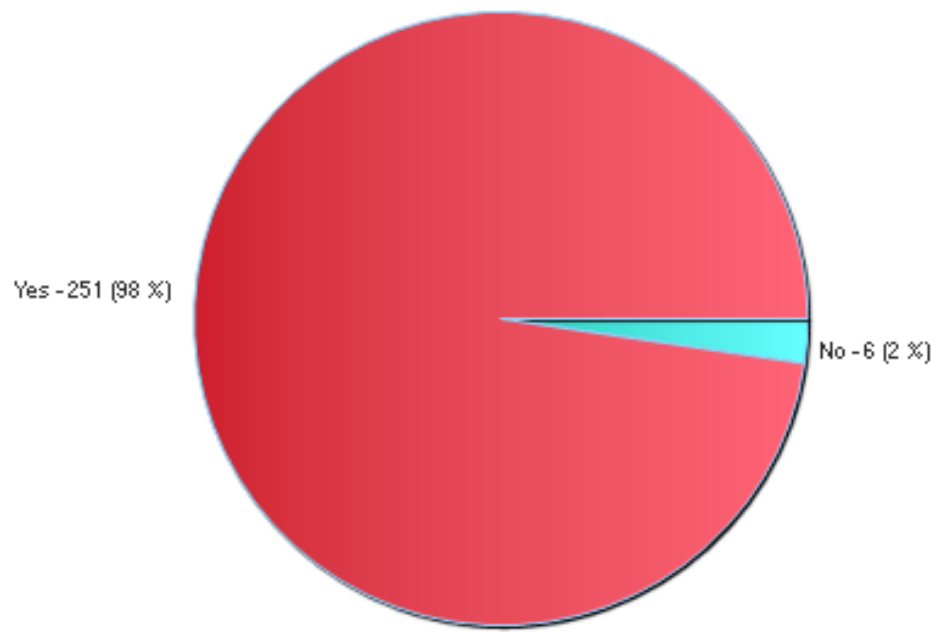


FIGURE 103: Would you like to be kept informed of the Business Retention and Expansion project as it moves forward?





Appendices

Community Overviews

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Appendix A: Community Overviews Introduction

The following section, showcases key information pertaining to the 13 participating communities as identified during the BR+E process.

The community overviews include the following information:

- Total number of businesses surveyed;
- The ownership and structure of the businesses;
- A breakdown of sector representation among the businesses surveyed;
- Number of employees;
- Top disadvantages as a place to do business; and
- Top advantages as a place to do business.

KEY THEMES

As demonstrated in the Profile of the Region section of this report, there were 4 key themes that emerged from this BR+E initiative:



Workforce



Expansion
Opportunities



Exit Strategy



Regional
Collaboration

The community overviews will provide information pertaining to these key themes, as they relate to each of the 13 communities.

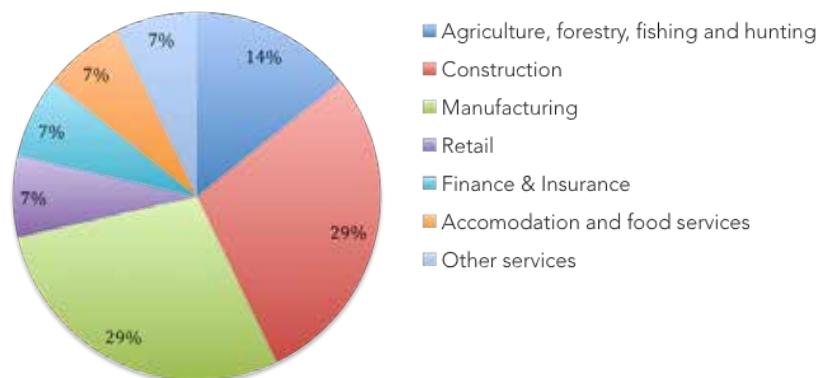


Appendix B: Chisholm Community Overview & Survey Results

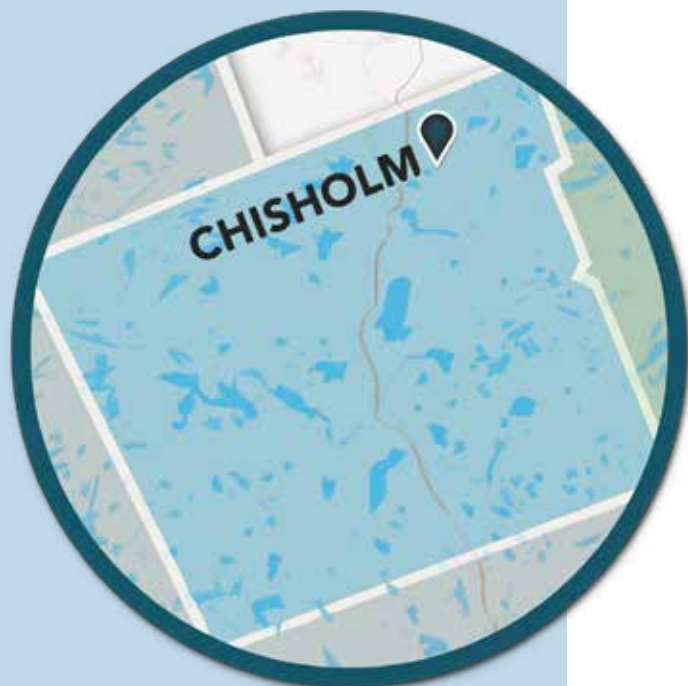
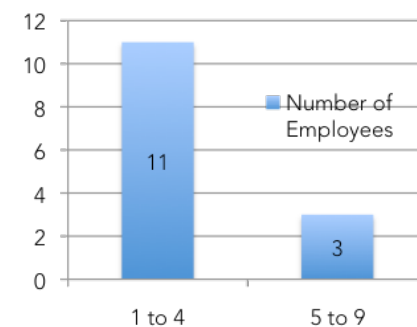
PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Of the **14 businesses** that participated in the interviews, 100% were "locally owned and operated with one location".

The 14 businesses surveyed were represented in the following industries:



Data indicated that out of the 14* businesses surveyed:



WORKFORCE



19%

of businesses stated they are looking to hire within the next 18 months

29%



of businesses stated they have difficulty finding qualified people

EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES



27%

of businesses stated they are looking to expand within the next 18 months

36%



of businesses stated there is limited service land or available space for rent or lease.



EXIT STRATEGY

0 businesses stated that they were retiring in the next 18 months

0%

21%



however 21% of businesses owners have been operating their businesses for over 26 years.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION



89%

of businesses stated they had no contact with service organizations and were unaware of programs and services available.

of businesses stated they are interested in collaborating on local and regional initiatives.

81%

TOP DISADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- Challenges with respect to infrastructure such as quality of roads, cost and dependability of hydro, limited cellular and internet services
- Permitting and development processes / procedures and costs
- Low population and resulting elevated tax rates

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TOP ADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- ☐ Life / work balance is possible and even encouraged.
- ☐ Strong support of local businesses from both the community and municipality.
- ☐ Affordability and availability of land and space for various types of businesses.



*Note: Number of responses may not correspond to the number of surveys completed due to respondents not answering identified questions.



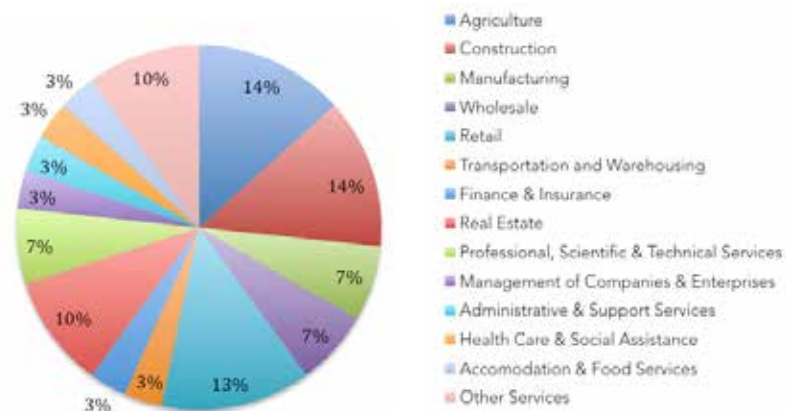
Appendix C: Powassan Community Overview & Survey Results

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

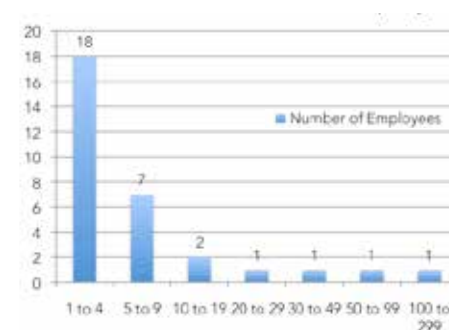
Of the **31 businesses** that participated in the interviews, 77% were "locally owned and operated with one location", 7% were "locally owned and operated with more than one location", 3.2% were a "franchise", and 12.9% were a "branch or division of a regional, national or international company".



The 31 businesses surveyed were represented in the following industries:



Data indicated that out of the 31* businesses surveyed:



WORKFORCE



29%

of businesses stated they are looking to hire within the next 18 months

39%



of businesses stated they have difficulty finding qualified people

EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES



48%

of businesses stated they are looking to expand within the next 18 months

58%



of businesses stated there is limited service land or available space for rent or lease.

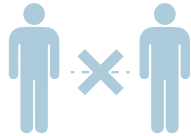


EXIT STRATEGY

of businesses stated they plan to retire in the next 18 months

3%

100%



of those stated they do not have a succession plan.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION



50%

of businesses stated they had no contact with service organizations and were unaware of programs and services available.

of businesses stated they are interested in collaborating on local and regional initiatives.

79%

TOP DISADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- Municipality lacking vision and strategy related to growing residential and business communities
- Lack and cost of services such as public transportation and electricity
- Lack of serviced land and spaces for business development

TOP ADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- ☐ Availability and affordability of land, storefronts and housing with lower tax rates
- ☐ Proximity to North Bay and HWY 11 helps with transportation, attraction of residents and customers
- ☐ Benefits of small community but with access to many amenities



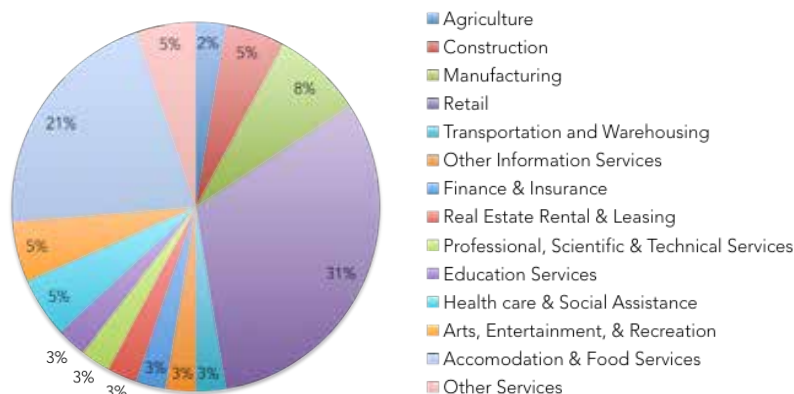
*Note: Number of responses may not correspond to the number of surveys completed due to respondents not answering identified questions.

Appendix D: Sundridge Community Overview & Survey Results

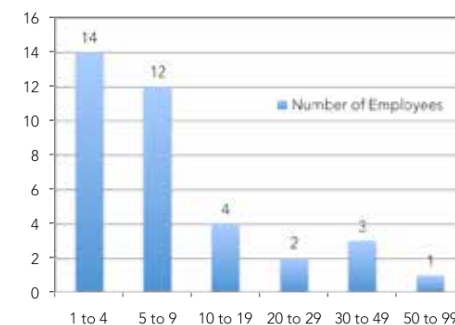
PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Of the **38 businesses** that participated in the interviews, 79% were "locally owned and operated with one location" and 22% were "locally owned and operated with more than one location".

The 38 businesses surveyed were represented in the following industries:



Data indicated that out of the 38* businesses surveyed:



WORKFORCE



45%

of businesses stated they are looking to hire within the next 18 months

57%



of businesses stated they have difficulty finding qualified people

EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES



28%

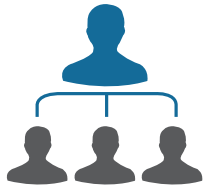
of businesses stated they are looking to expand within the next 18 months

50%



of businesses stated there is limited service land or available space for rent or lease.



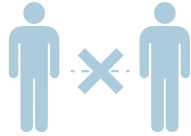


EXIT STRATEGY

of businesses stated they plan to retire in the next 18 months

3%

100%



of those stated they do not have a succession plan.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION



74%

of businesses stated they had no contact with service organizations and were unaware of programs and services available.

of businesses stated they are interested in collaborating on local and regional initiatives.

76%

TOP DISADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- Small aging population / workforce and limited labour pool
- High taxes and utility costs
- Limited space for lease and development lands; lack and unreliability of infrastructure services such as municipal water, 3 phase electricity and fibre communications

TOP ADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- ☐ Strong sense of community contributes to overall quality of life
- ☐ Potential for further development of the tourism sector due to natural amenities and location
- ☐ Diversity of existing businesses including commercial, service based, retail and industrial



*Note: Number of responses may not correspond to the number of surveys completed due to respondents not answering identified questions.

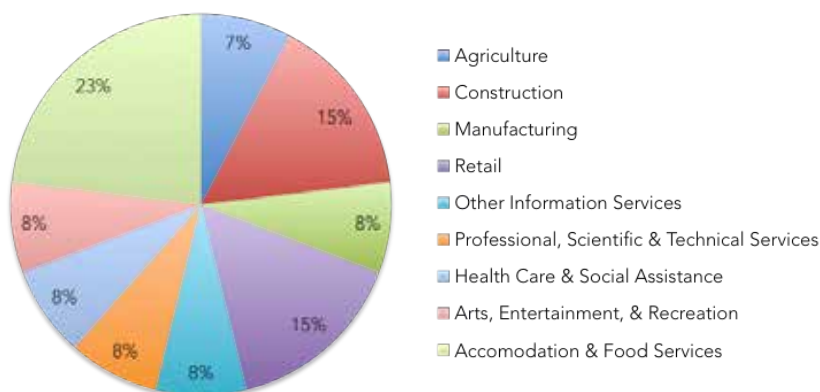


Appendix E: Strong Community Overview & Survey Results

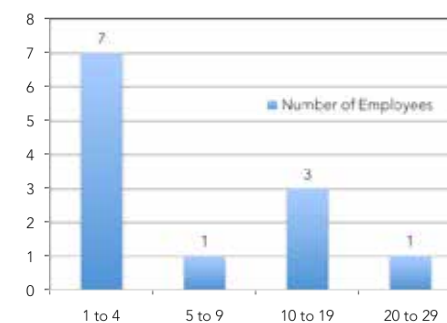
PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Of the **13 businesses** that participated in the interviews, 92% were "locally owned and operated with one location" and 8% were "locally owned and operated with more than one location".

The 13 businesses surveyed were represented in the following industries:



Data indicated that out of the 13* businesses surveyed:



WORKFORCE



33%

of businesses stated they are looking to hire within the next 18 months

39%



of businesses stated they have difficulty finding qualified people

EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES



62%

of businesses stated they are looking to expand within the next 18 months

39%



of businesses stated there is limited service land or available space for rent or lease.



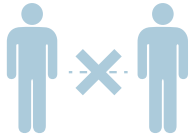


EXIT STRATEGY

of businesses stated they plan to retire in the next 18 months

15%

100%



of those stated they do not have a succession plan.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION



78%

of businesses stated they had no contact with service organizations and were unaware of programs and services available.

of businesses stated they are interested in collaborating on local and regional initiatives.

72%

TOP DISADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- Costs due to tax rates and lack of municipal support act as barriers to businesses
- Lack of skilled workers
- Distance to markets and low population

TOP ADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- ☐ Friendly community that offers work/life balance and slow paced lifestyle
- ☐ Proximity to HWY provides access to amenities and a sound transportation route
- ☐ Community support and involvement



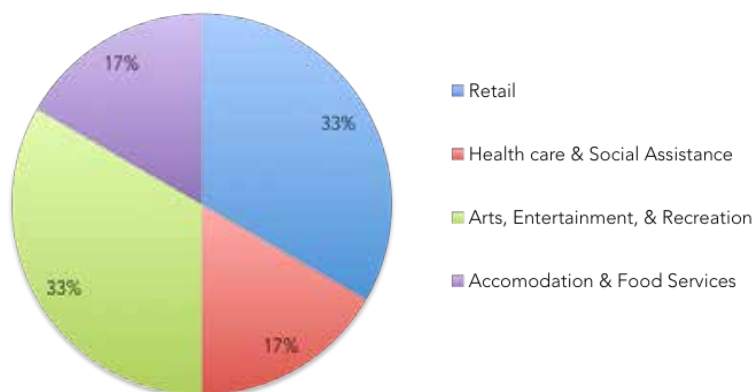


Appendix F: Machar Community Overview & Survey Results

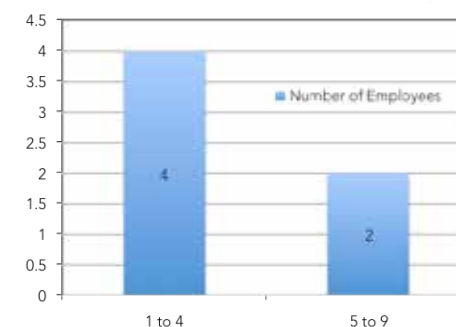
PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Of the **6 businesses** that participated in the interviews, 100% were “locally owned and operated with one location”.

The 6 businesses surveyed were represented in the following industries:



Data indicated that out of the 6* businesses surveyed:



WORKFORCE



29%

of businesses stated they are looking to hire within the next 18 months

17%



of businesses stated they have difficulty finding qualified people

EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES



33%

of businesses stated they are looking to expand within the next 18 months

67%



of businesses stated there is limited service land or available space for rent or lease.



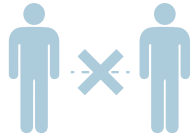


EXIT STRATEGY

of businesses stated they plan to retire in the next 18 months

16%

100%



of those stated they do not have a succession plan.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION



63%

of businesses stated they had no contact with service organizations and were unaware of programs and services available.

of businesses stated they are interested in collaborating on local and regional initiatives.

57%

TOP DISADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- Low volume of customers, limited support of local shopping and difficult for people (potential customers) to access the community with the new bypass
- Lack of community and government support
- Internet and GPS service is limited

TOP ADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- ☐ Schools, playgrounds and lifestyle are appealing to families
- ☐ Affordability of housing and property
- ☐ Reduced travel times to work for residents due to new bypass



*Note: Number of responses may not correspond to the number of surveys completed due to respondents not answering identified questions.

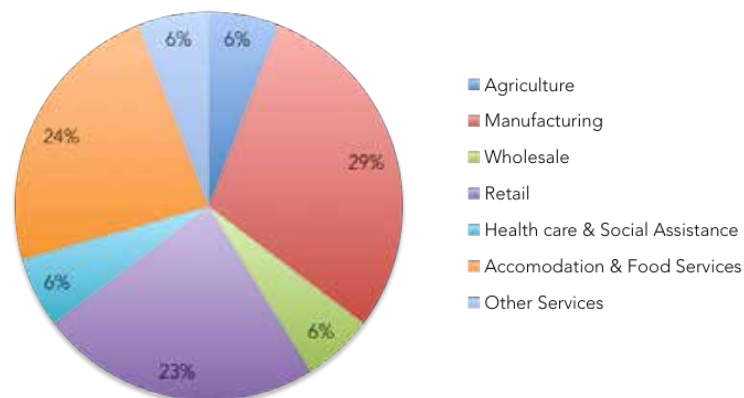


Appendix G: South River Community Overview & Survey Results

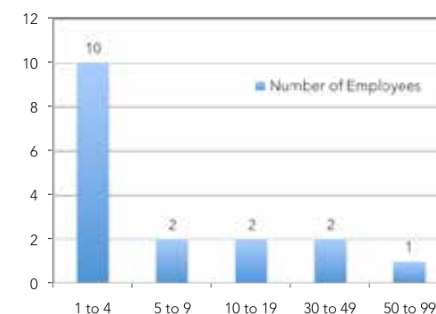
PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Of the **17 businesses** that participated in the interviews, 94% were "locally owned and operated with one location" and 6% were "locally owned and operated with more than one location".

The 17 businesses surveyed were represented in the following industries:



Data indicated that out of the 17* businesses surveyed:



WORKFORCE



28%

of businesses stated they are looking to hire within the next 18 months

50%



of businesses stated they have difficulty finding qualified people

EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES



58%

of businesses stated they are looking to expand within the next 18 months

47%



of businesses stated there is limited service land or available space for rent or lease.





EXIT STRATEGY

0 businesses stated that they were retiring in the next 18 months

0%

35%



however 35% of businesses owners have been operating their businesses for over 26 years.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION



87%

of businesses stated they had no contact with service organizations and were unaware of programs and services available.

of businesses stated they are interested in collaborating on local and regional initiatives.

79%

TOP DISADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- Lack of skilled, motivated workforce and youth outmigration
- Distance to markets, bypass and rural location
- High municipal taxes

TOP ADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- ☐ Cost of doing business
- ☐ Lifestyle, nature, landscapes and community feel
- ☐ Available services including 3 phase hydro, fibre optics, and gas



*Note: Number of responses may not correspond to the number of surveys completed due to respondents not answering identified questions.



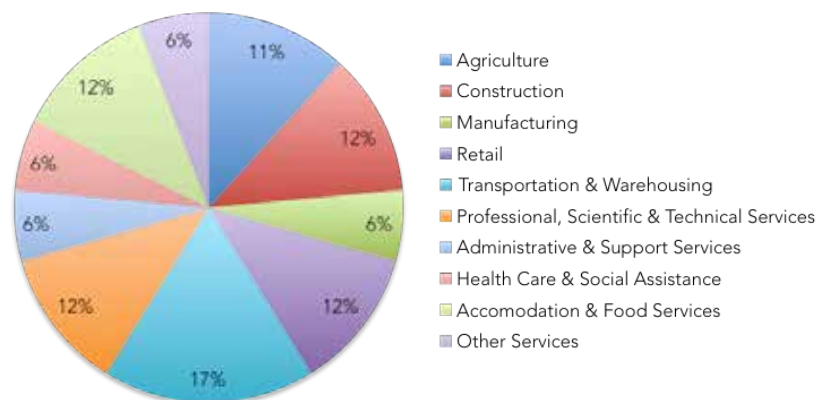
McMurrich / Monteith

Appendix H: McMurrich / Monteith Community Overview & Survey Results

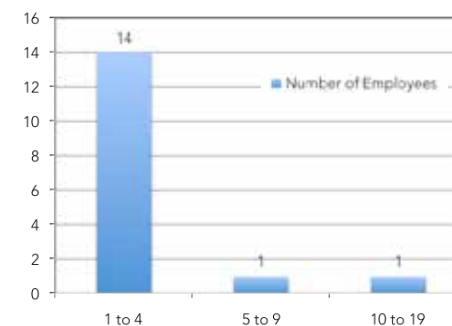
PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Of the **17 businesses** that participated in the interviews, 100% were "locally owned and operated with one location".

The 17 businesses surveyed were represented in the following industries:



Data indicated that out of the 17* businesses surveyed:



WORKFORCE



24%

of businesses stated they are looking to hire within the next 18 months

44%



of businesses stated they have difficulty finding qualified people

EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES



60%

of businesses stated they are looking to expand within the next 18 months

41%



of businesses stated there is limited service land or available space for rent or lease.



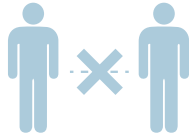


EXIT STRATEGY

of businesses stated they plan to retire in the next 18 months

18%

67%



of those stated they do not have a succession plan.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION



56%

of businesses stated they had no contact with service organizations and were unaware of programs and services available.

of businesses stated they are interested in collaborating on local and regional initiatives.

58%

96

TOP ADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- ☐ Slower pace, natural landscape, friendliness of people and relaxed lifestyle
- ☐ Strong tourism sector with great potential for growth
- ☐ Low taxes and flexible zoning



TOP DISADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- Remoteness of area makes it difficult and costly to access supplies and to transport goods
- Lack of new businesses or expansions in the area in part due to limited support from municipality
- Small population with low income makes it difficult for businesses to succeed

*Note: Number of responses may not correspond to the number of surveys completed due to respondents not answering identified questions.

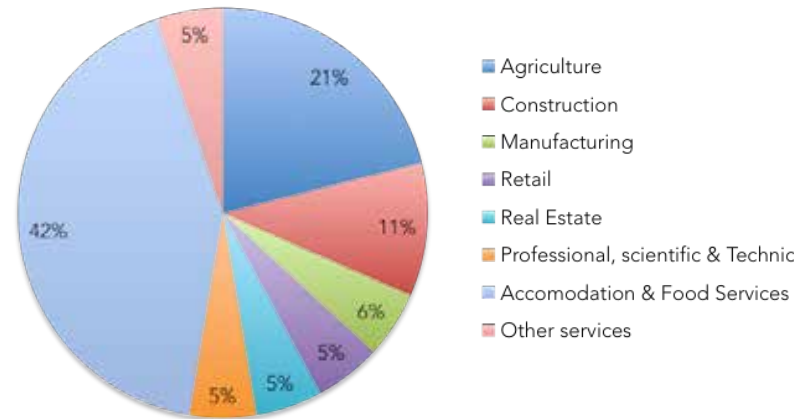


Appendix I: Kearney Community Overview & Survey Results

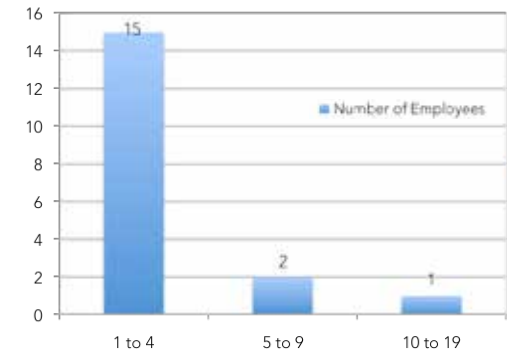
PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Of the **19 businesses** that participated in the interviews, 90% were "locally owned and operated with one location" and 10% were "locally owned and operated with more than one location".

The 19 businesses surveyed were represented in the following industries:



Data indicated that out of the 19* businesses surveyed:



WORKFORCE



32%

of businesses stated they are looking to hire within the next 18 months

42%



of businesses stated they have difficulty finding qualified people

EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES



57%

of businesses stated they are looking to expand within the next 18 months

42%



of businesses stated there is limited service land or available space for rent or lease.





EXIT STRATEGY

of businesses stated they plan to retire in the next 18 months

5%

100% 

of those stated they do not have a succession plan.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION



56%

of businesses stated they had no contact with service organizations and were unaware of programs and services available.

of businesses stated they are interested in collaborating on local and regional initiatives.

70%

TOP DISADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- Remoteness / isolation of the community and distance to markets, potential client base and amenities
- Limitations with respect to internet services, lack of public transportation, signage and municipal services including garbage pick-up and water & sewer
- Limited promotion to attract visitors, residents and businesses

TOP ADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- ☐ Proximity to Algonquin Park and the recreational and outdoor opportunities it brings
- ☐ Strong tourism sector which attracts large numbers of visitors to the area
- ☐ Availability and affordability of land



*Note: Number of responses may not correspond to the number of surveys completed due to respondents not answering identified questions.

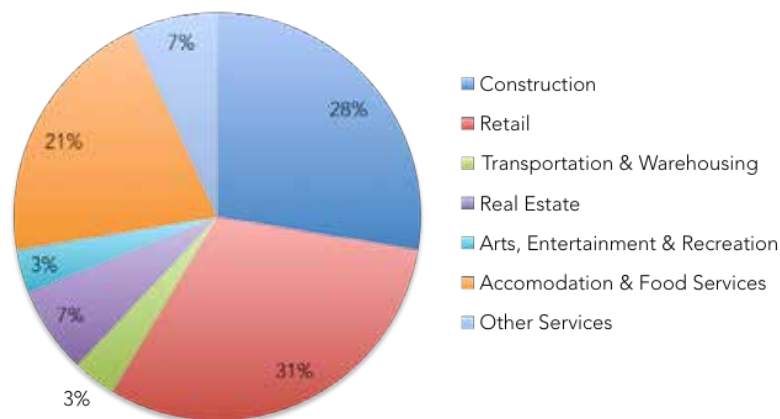
Appendix J: Magnetawan Community Overview & Survey Results

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

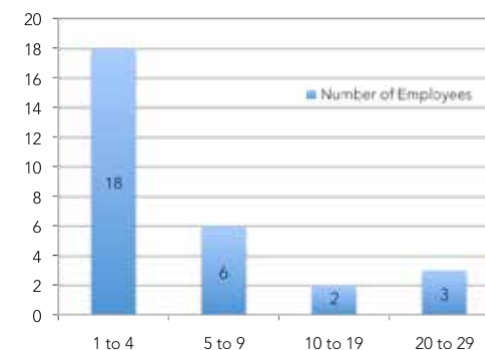
Of the **29 businesses** that participated in the interviews, 90% were "locally owned and operated with one location", 3% were "locally owned and operated with more than one location" and 7% were a "franchise."



The 29 businesses surveyed were represented in the following industries:



Data indicated that out of the 29* businesses surveyed:



WORKFORCE



24%

of businesses stated they are looking to hire within the next 18 months

59%



of businesses stated they have difficulty finding qualified people

EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES



42%

of businesses stated they are looking to expand within the next 18 months

66%



of businesses stated there is limited service land or available space for rent or lease.

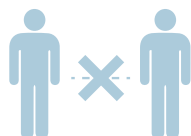


EXIT STRATEGY

of businesses stated they plan to retire in the next 18 months

10%

100%



of those stated they do not have a succession plan.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION



72%

of businesses stated they had no contact with service organizations and were unaware of programs and services available.

of businesses stated they are interested in collaborating on local and regional initiatives.

87%

100

TOP ADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- ☐ Strong sense of community and collaboration
- ☐ Established seasonal tourism market with natural beauty and good road access from larger centers that encourage repeat visitors
- ☐ Quality of life with low land costs, taxes and cost of living



TOP DISADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- Seasonality of many businesses and lack of support from locals makes it difficult to attract workforce and maintain a business on a year round basis
- Isolation of community from main corridor poses challenges to accessing services such as internet, acquisition of supplies, and attraction of new visitors passing by on the HWY 11 corridor
- Lack of support from municipality for business start-ups and small businesses

*Note: Number of responses may not correspond to the number of surveys completed due to respondents not answering identified questions.

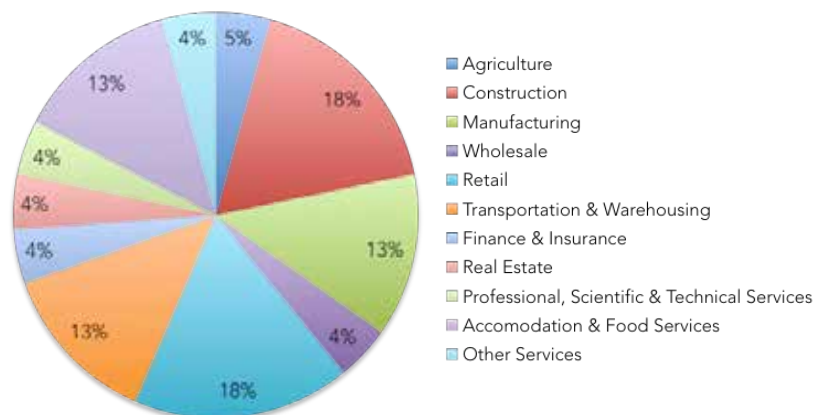
Appendix K: Perry Community Overview & Survey Results

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

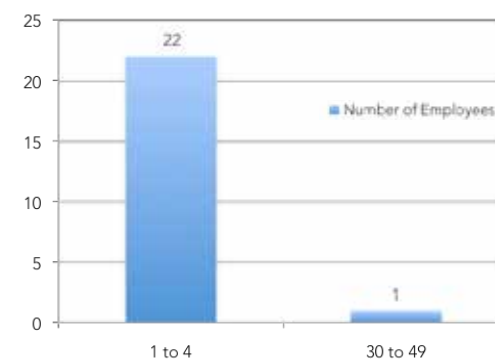
Of the **23 businesses** that participated in the interviews, 87% were "locally owned and operated with one location", 4% were a "franchise", and 9% were a "branch or division of a regional, national or international company".



The 23 businesses surveyed were represented in the following industries:



Data indicated that out of the 23* businesses surveyed:



WORKFORCE

 **24%**

of businesses stated they are looking to hire within the next 18 months

27% 

of businesses stated they have difficulty finding qualified people

EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES

 **37%**

of businesses stated they are looking to expand within the next 18 months

39% 

of businesses stated there is limited service land or available space for rent or lease.

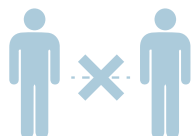


EXIT STRATEGY

of businesses stated they plan to retire in the next 18 months

7%

100%



of those stated they do not have a succession plan.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION



74%

of businesses stated they had no contact with service organizations and were unaware of programs and services available.

of businesses stated they are interested in collaborating on local and regional initiatives.

89%

TOP DISADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- Small and aging population with limited disposable income and limited relevant workforce skills
- Unreliable or lack of utilities and services including internet, electricity, natural gas, waste disposal, etc
- Lacks amenities and distance to larger centers poses challenges when acquiring business supplies and services.

TOP ADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- ☐ Strong tourism base with good access via HWY 11 and proximity to Algonquin Park, Huntsville and North Bay
- ☐ Availability and low cost of land and property taxes
- ☐ Good quality of life in beautiful natural setting



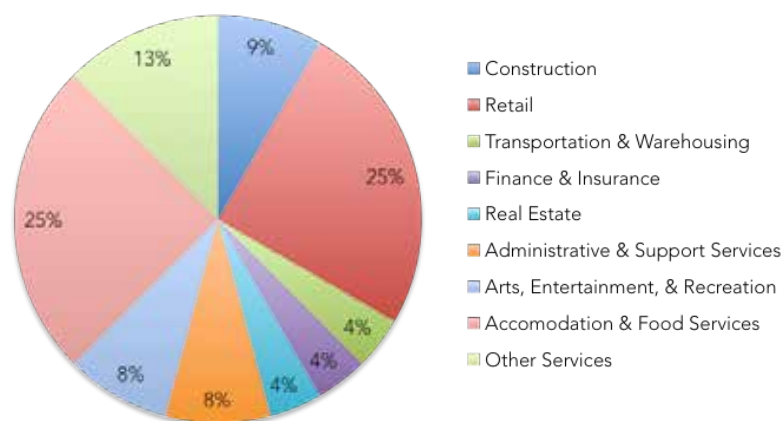
*Note: Number of responses may not correspond to the number of surveys completed due to respondents not answering identified questions.

Appendix L: Armour Community Overview & Survey Results

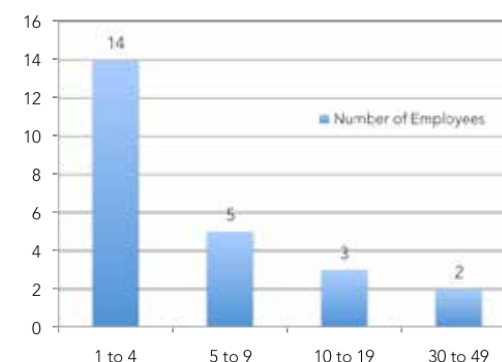
PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Of the **24 businesses** that participated in the interviews, 67% were "locally owned and operated with one location", 8% were "locally owned and operated with more than one location", 13% were a "franchise", and 12% were a "branch or division of a regional, national or international company".

The 24 businesses surveyed were represented in the following industries:



Data indicated that out of the 24* businesses surveyed:



WORKFORCE



of businesses stated they are looking to hire within the next 18 months



of businesses stated they have difficulty finding qualified people

EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES



of businesses stated they are looking to expand within the next 18 months



of businesses stated there is limited service land or available space for rent or lease.



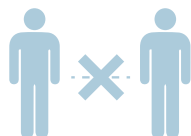


EXIT STRATEGY

of businesses stated they plan to retire in the next 18 months

4%

100%



of those stated they do not have a succession plan.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION



60%

of businesses stated they had no contact with service organizations and were unaware of programs and services available.

of businesses stated they are interested in collaborating on local and regional initiatives.

92%

TOP DISADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- Lack of infrastructure such as dependable internet service, hydro, water and sewer for development and growth and limited services including restaurants and shopping to attract and retain residents
- Low population and limited labour pool which lack the skills and training necessary to fill existing positions or meet the needs of new businesses that could potentially be attracted to locate in the community
- Municipal and provincial regulations (red tape) create many barriers and costs for growing businesses.

TOP ADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- ☐ Geographic location provides HWY access, transportation network and proximity to major markets
- ☐ Natural setting and affordability provide a high quality lifestyle for residents
- ☐ Community members, customers and all levels of government are supportive of local businesses



*Note: Number of responses may not correspond to the number of surveys completed due to respondents not answering identified questions.



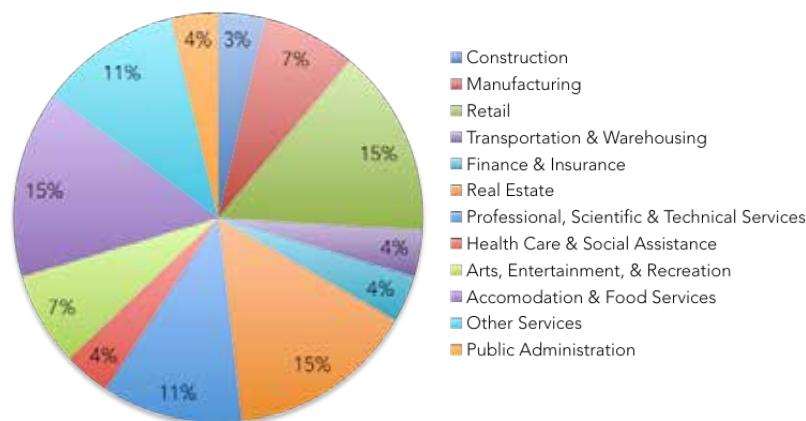
Appendix M: Burk's Falls Community Overview & Survey Results

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

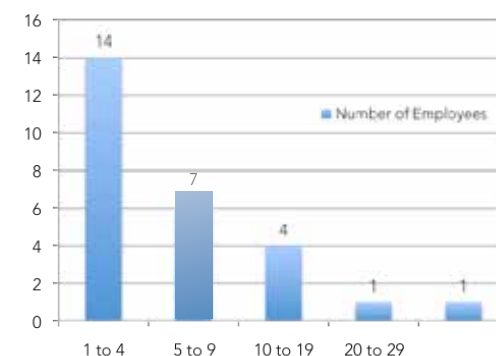
Of the **27 businesses** that participated in the interviews, 61% were "locally owned and operated with one location", 19% were "locally owned and operated with more than one location", 12% were a "franchise", and 8% were a "branch or division of a regional, national or international company".



The 27 businesses surveyed were represented in the following industries:



Data indicated that out of the 27* businesses surveyed:



WORKFORCE



28%

of businesses stated they are looking to hire within the next 18 months

40%



of businesses stated they have difficulty finding qualified people

EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES



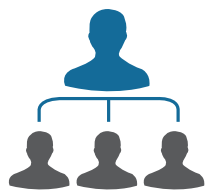
41%

of businesses stated they are looking to expand within the next 18 months

73%



of businesses stated there is limited service land or available space for rent or lease.

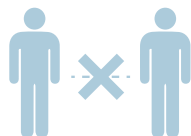


EXIT STRATEGY

of businesses stated they plan to retire in the next 18 months

4%

100%



of those stated they do not have a succession plan.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION



65%

of businesses stated they had no contact with service organizations and were unaware of programs and services available.

of businesses stated they are interested in collaborating on local and regional initiatives.

84%

TOP DISADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- Low population density and incomes limit potential for business success
- Infrastructure and services need improvement. Lack of 24 hour / emergency health care or clinics
- The downtown area lacks visual appeal and there are many empty storefronts in the main business section

TOP ADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- ☐ Small town community feel with access to all required amenities
- ☐ HWY access and excellent transportation routes
- ☐ Affordable land, taxes, development charges and housing



*Note: Number of responses may not correspond to the number of surveys completed due to respondents not answering identified questions.

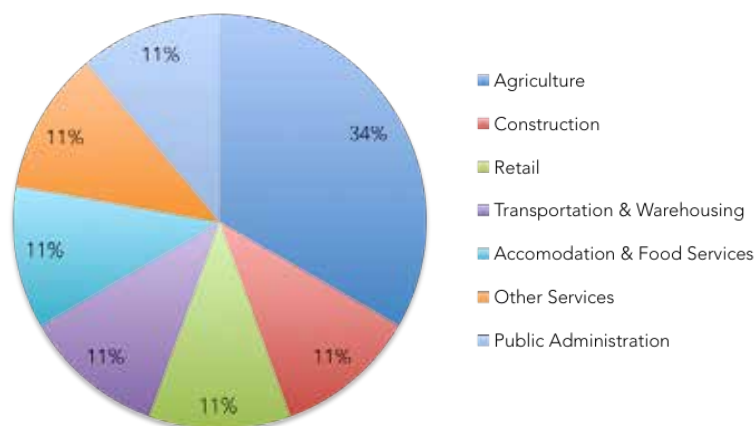
Appendix N: Ryerson Community Overview & Survey Results

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

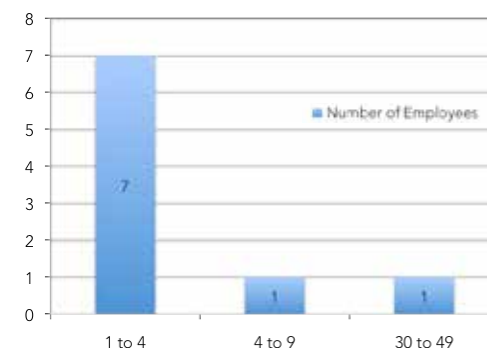
Of the **9 businesses** that participated in the interviews, 78% were "locally owned and operated with one location" and 22% were "locally owned and operated with more than one location".



The 9 businesses surveyed were represented in the following industries:



Data indicated that out of the 9* businesses surveyed:



WORKFORCE



0%

of businesses stated they are looking to hire within the next 18 months

22%



of businesses stated they have difficulty finding qualified people

EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES



18%

of businesses stated they are looking to expand within the next 18 months

11%



of businesses stated there is limited service land or available space for rent or lease.



EXIT STRATEGY

of businesses stated they plan to retire in the next 18 months

11%

100%

of those stated they do not have a succession plan.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION



82%

of businesses stated they had no contact with service organizations and were unaware of programs and services available.

of businesses stated they are interested in collaborating on local and regional initiatives.

75%

TOP DISADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- Difficult to compete against larger centres
- Seasonality of businesses paired with small unqualified population with low incomes
- Distance to major markets results in high transportation costs

TOP ADVANTAGES AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- ☐ Available and affordable land with low taxes, no development charges and accommodating zoning
- ☐ Naturally beautiful with access to many lakes and water bodies. Slower paced lifestyle
- ☐ Strong community feel - businesses and residents work together and are willing to help each other. Easy to build "word of mouth" reputation



*Note: Number of responses may not correspond to the number of surveys completed due to respondents not answering identified questions.



BR+E

Growing the Villages
of Almaguin



Building momentum and moving forward!