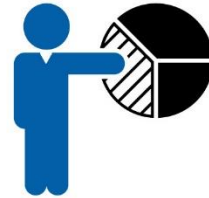


# 2024 CAMROSE BUSINESS SURVEY



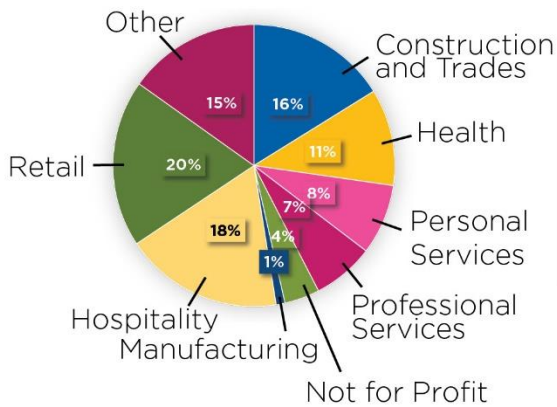
**92**  
Survey Responses



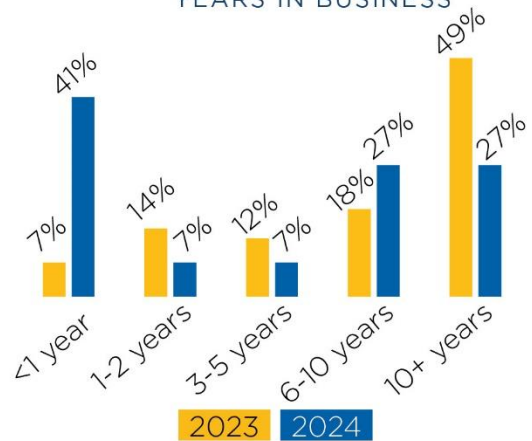
## BUSINESS LICENSE TYPES

**2** Regional  
**11** Home  
**72** City

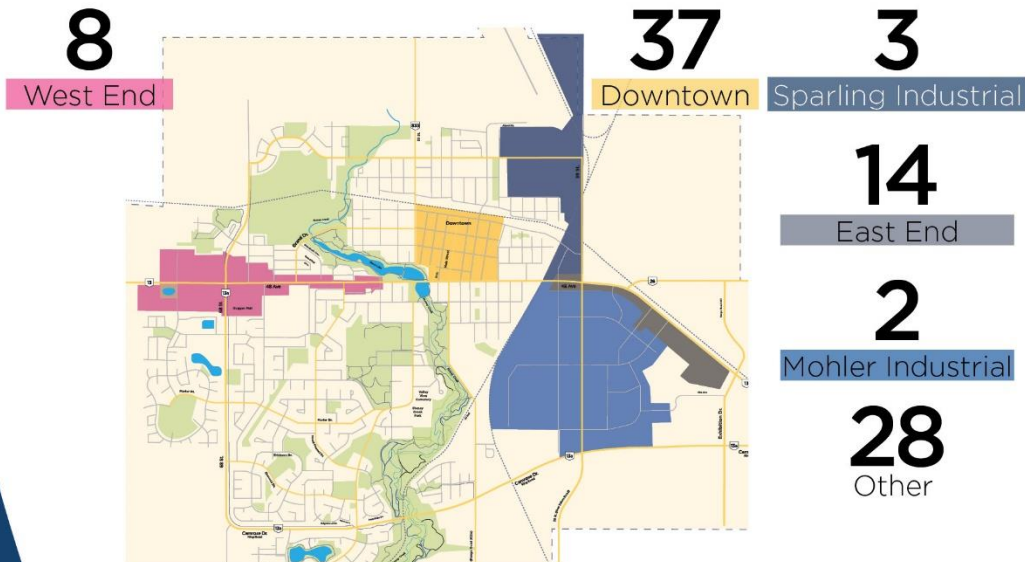
## INDUSTRY



## YEARS IN BUSINESS



## LOCATION OF RESPONDENTS



## **Background**

This is the fourth consecutive year of doing a local business survey with the first survey having been done in the Spring of 2021. The original 2021 survey focused on the effects of COVID on local businesses and how the City could best support businesses in dealing with the effects of that time. The results of the 2022 survey would show that businesses were recovering from the original devastation of COVID but many businesses were still suffering. The 2023 survey presented a great deal of optimism looking into the future, but a roughly a quarter of businesses expressed that they are still feeling the effects of COVID. The 2024 survey continues to show optimism from the business community going forward and seeks to gain a better understanding around employment trends, gaps in finding staff, and were possible supports could be offered.

## **Methodology**

The 2024 Camrose Business Survey was hosted online through the [www.OurCamrose.ca](http://www.OurCamrose.ca) Business Portal from March 25 until April 26, 2024 with a total of 92 businesses participating in the survey. As a comparison, the 2021 survey had 108 responses, 2022 had 82 responses, and there were 100 responses in 2024. Similar to the previous two surveys, it was advertised in the Camrose Booster as well as through business visits with a post card that featured a QR code that led directly to the online survey. The 2023 and 2024 surveys were also advertised in the monthly electronic newsletter.

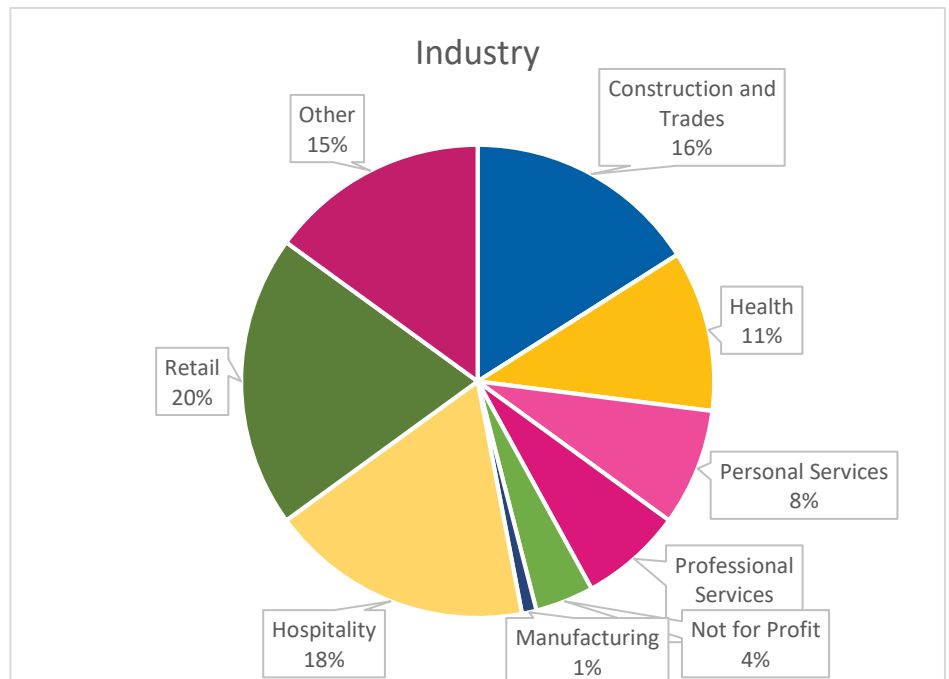
## **Purpose**

The survey was initiated to get a better understanding of the business climate and find out what type of services and opportunities would benefit the local business community. The business survey is used in conjunction with feedback gathered from business visits, industry round tables and other events to better understand how to strengthen and support local businesses. All of the feedback from businesses is used to develop future plans and for budgeting.

## **Representation of businesses in the survey**

As of time of writing the survey, there are a total of 1242 active business licenses in the city of Camrose. City licenses make up the majority with 673, followed by 334 home licenses and 224 regional licenses. The 92 survey respondents represent 11% of the active business licenses.

Of the 1007 active city and home business licenses, construction and trades (329) is the biggest category, followed by professional services (215), retail (204), food services (101), and both health services and personal services (99). Figure 1 outlines the percentages represented in the survey with a more thorough breakdown in Appendix (figure 17).



**Figure 1 – 2024 What is your industry question response**

Figure 2 shows the contrast between years in business from the 2023 to the 2024 business survey respondents. The 2023 survey has its largest percentage in the '10+ category' (49%) while the largest group represented in the 2024 respondents is the 'less than a year' category (41%). This is important to keep in mind while looking at the survey results which often compares the 2023 and 2024 survey.

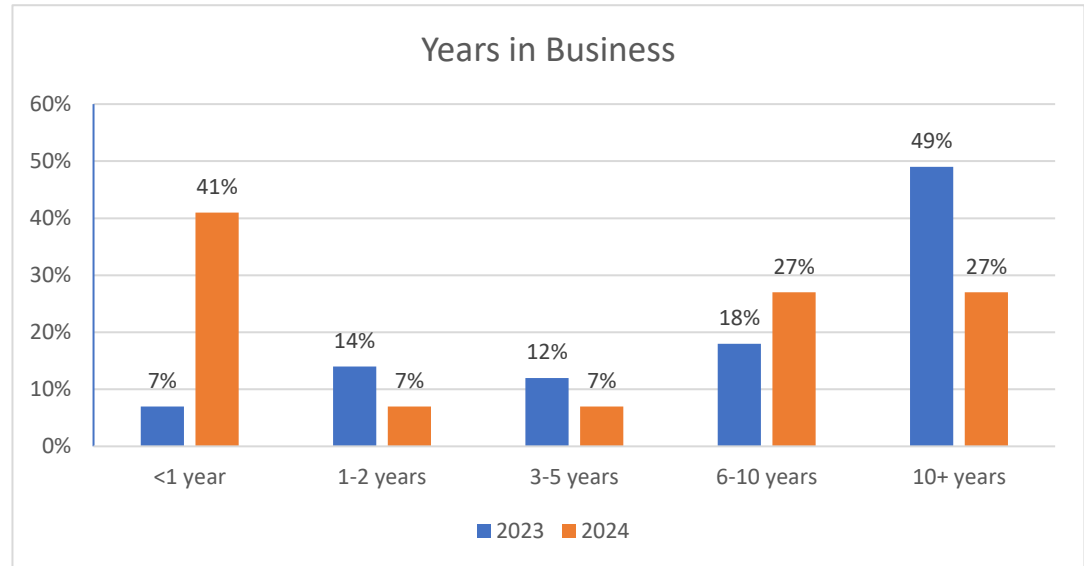
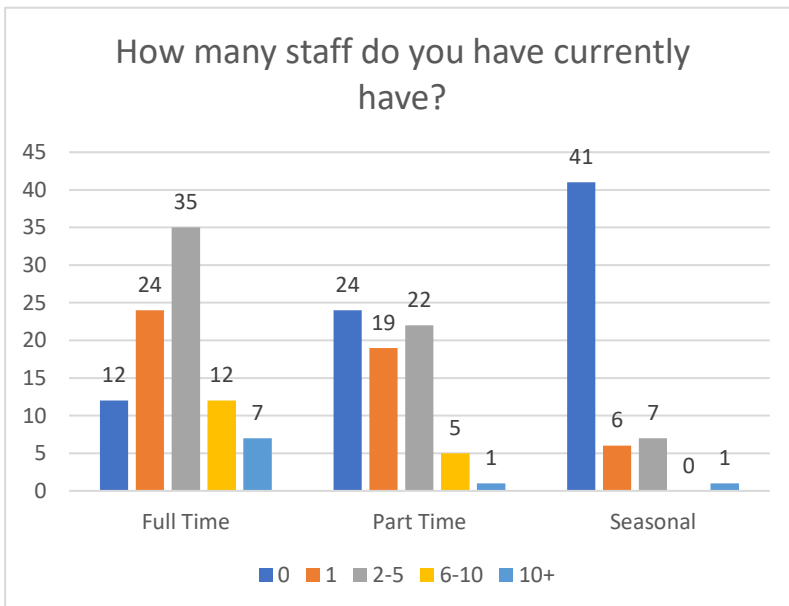


Figure 2 – 2024 survey question - What is your industry?

### Staffing

Several questions in the survey dealt with staffing as it remains an ongoing issue discussed in business visits and general feedback from businesses. Having businesses reflect on their future staffing needs helps to determine the general health of businesses that are taking the survey. A business that is expecting to hire additional staff typically indicates growth and optimism, suggesting a demand for its products or services, while having less staff may imply a need to streamline operations or a response to a decreased demand.

Taking a look at the full time staffing category, 90 total respondents answered the question. The 12 number indicates a sole proprietor businesses with the remaining 78 businesses having staff that work in their business. Nearly half (44%) of the 78 businesses employ 2-5 staff while nearly a third (24 businesses or 30%).



Looking at the part time staff category, 24 businesses indicated that they do not have any part time staff. The majority of the remaining businesses employ 5 or less staff.

Only 14 surveyed businesses employ seasonal staff.

To further explore the staffing trends in the local business community, the next three questions delved deeper by asking businesses if their staffing numbers have changed in the past year, if they anticipated their staffing numbers changing in the remainder of 2024 (roughly 7 months remaining in the year when the survey question was answered), or changing in the next 2-5 years.

Figure 3 – Total full time, part time and seasonal staff

Out of the 90 businesses that responded to inquiries about workforce changes during the previous year, 57 (63%) stated that their staffing remained unchanged.

A follow-up question revealed that eight of the businesses that reported having an increase in workers were full-time, seven were part-time, and one was seasonal. A total of seventeen businesses indicated that their workforce had grown.

Out of the sixteen businesses that experienced a reduction in staff, eight of them reported having eight full-time employees and eight part-timers.

The next staffing question of the survey looks at where business see their staffing numbers changing in the remaining 7-8 months of the year.

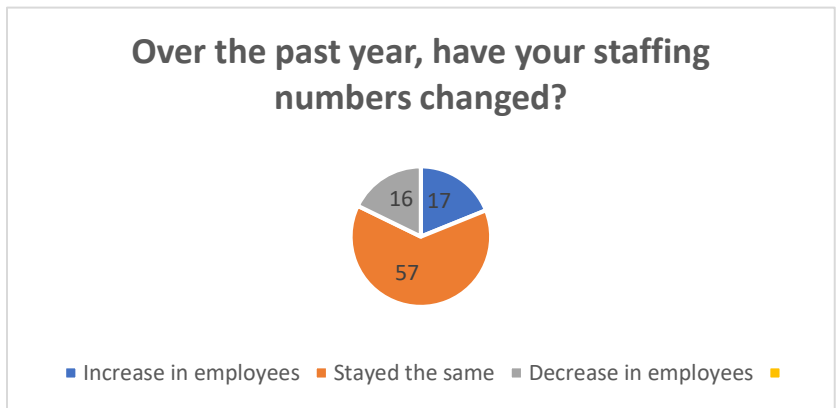
The dominant orange section, accounting for 64 businesses (71% of the responses), indicates a significant majority of businesses do not see any changes to staffing for the remainder of the year. This would generally indicate stability with the optimal number of employees being used to run the business and maintaining the status quo.

This is contrasted by the smaller blue and gray sections, representing the remaining 30% of the pie with 22% of respondents predicting an increase in hiring additional staff and the grey section with 8% of respondents predicting a decrease in staffing.

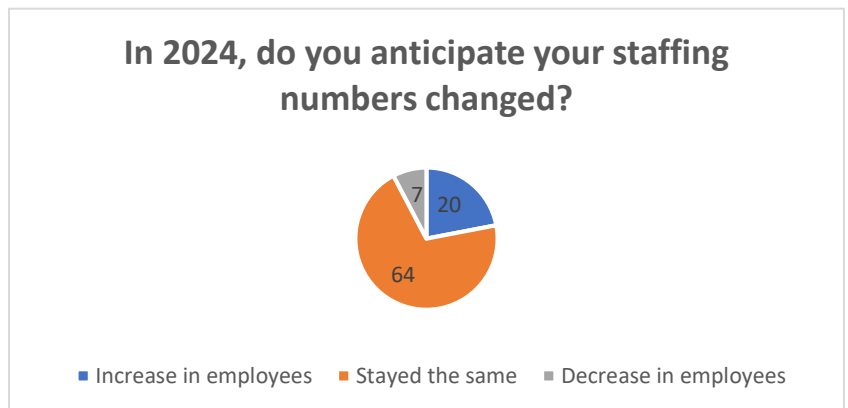
The final staffing question asked businesses to predict their increase or decrease in employees over the next 2-5 years.

The orange section of the pie chart, which indicates how many employees anticipate their numbers to remain the same over the next two to five years, still makes up the largest portion. The 50 businesses who anticipate having the same number of employees are representing 54 percent of the responses. The largest portion, which is orange, continues to suggest stability, much like in Figure 5.

The blue portion of the figure 5 pie chart, which shows the anticipated increase in employees over the next two to five years, has the biggest growth. A total of 32 companies, or 30% of the businesses who answered this question, said



**Figure 4** – Businesses were asked in late March, April and early May to reflect on this question into 2023



**Figure 5** – Businesses were asked to reflect on the remainder of 2024

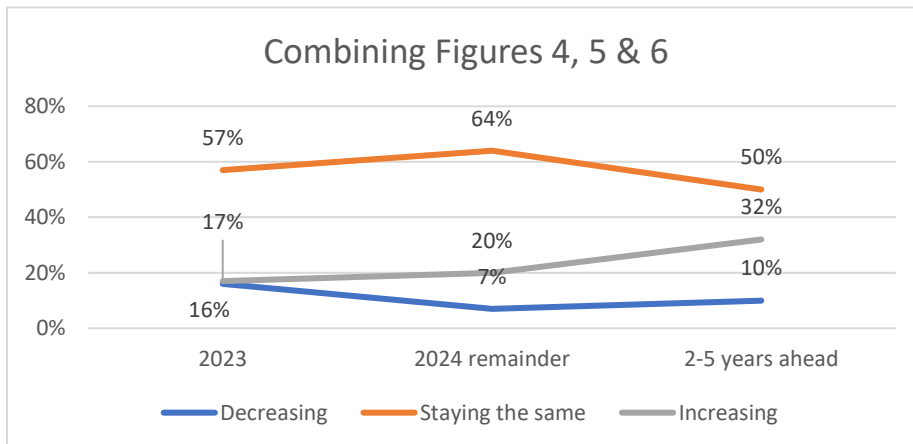


**Figure 6** – Businesses were asked to reflect on the remainder of 2024

they expected to hire more staff. Of these 32 companies looking to hire additional staff, 17 are anticipated to be full time staff, 12 are expected to be part time staff, and 3 would be temporary or seasonal.

In contrast to the figure 4 chart, the grey area of the pie chart in Figure 5 (which depicts the projected decrease in staff) also indicates growth, albeit very slightly, from 7 to 10. The decreasing in staffing is expected to be 7 full time employees, and 2 part time employees.

A line graph created by combining Figures 4, 5, and 6 (figure 7) can be used to show changes in reflecting back on 2023, and then projecting the remainder of 2024 and two to five years down in the future. The orange line shows businesses



with their staff numbers staying the same, with a gradual drop over time to accommodate the expected rise in the number of workers businesses anticipate needing to hire. The graph shows that employment growth is expected to be favorable overall and that many businesses are getting ready to expand with hiring additional staff in the next couple of years. If the sample is representative of the overall market attitude, then this data may point to a wider economic trend toward growth and recovery.

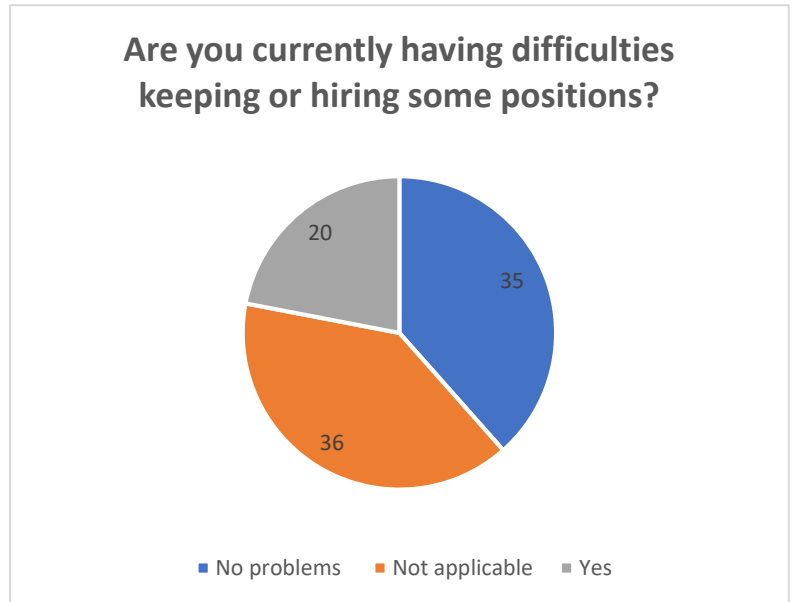
**Figure 7** – Businesses were asked to reflect on the remainder of 2024

The following section of the staffing questions examines the number of businesses that are experiencing hiring difficulties, the positions for which they are experiencing hiring difficulties, and some of the causes of the staffing difficulties.

Twenty businesses said they are having trouble hiring certain positions out of the 91 respondents who answered the question (Figure 8). The remaining 71 respondents answered that the question is not applicable to their particular business or that they were not having an issue hiring staff for a particular position.

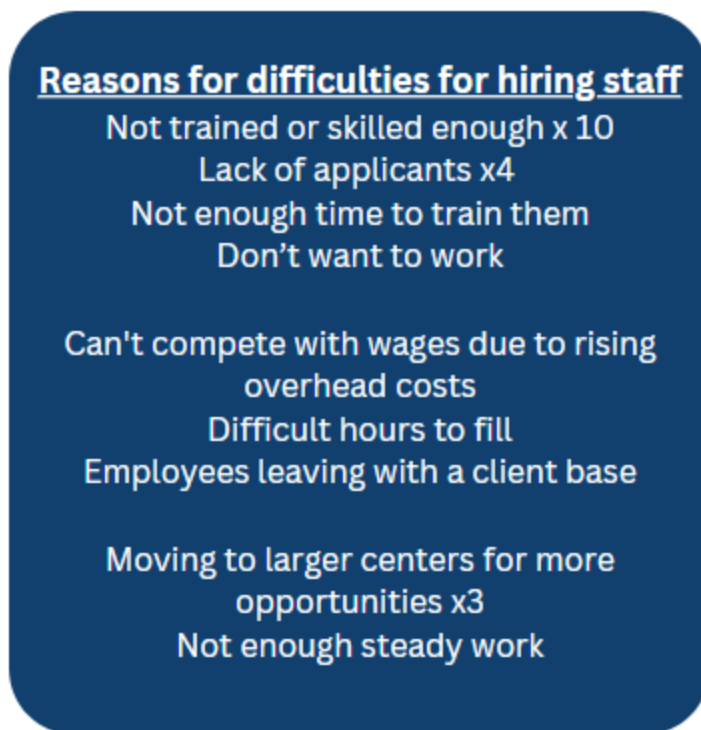
A follow-up question was posed to these 20 businesses to find out which positions they were having trouble filling (Figure 9). The list that follows was extracted from the text field and summarized.

Most of the positions derived from the follow-up inquiry were skilled jobs, primarily from the hospitality and trades sectors. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list of hard-to-fill positions in the Camrose area; rather, it is a compilation of the twenty businesses that responded to the follow-up inquiry. This list, however, is in line with comments that are obtained via business visits and discussions with businesses. It also makes sense that hiring higher skilled workers is more challenging. For instance, hiring someone for a laborer position would be easier than hiring a journeyman carpenter.



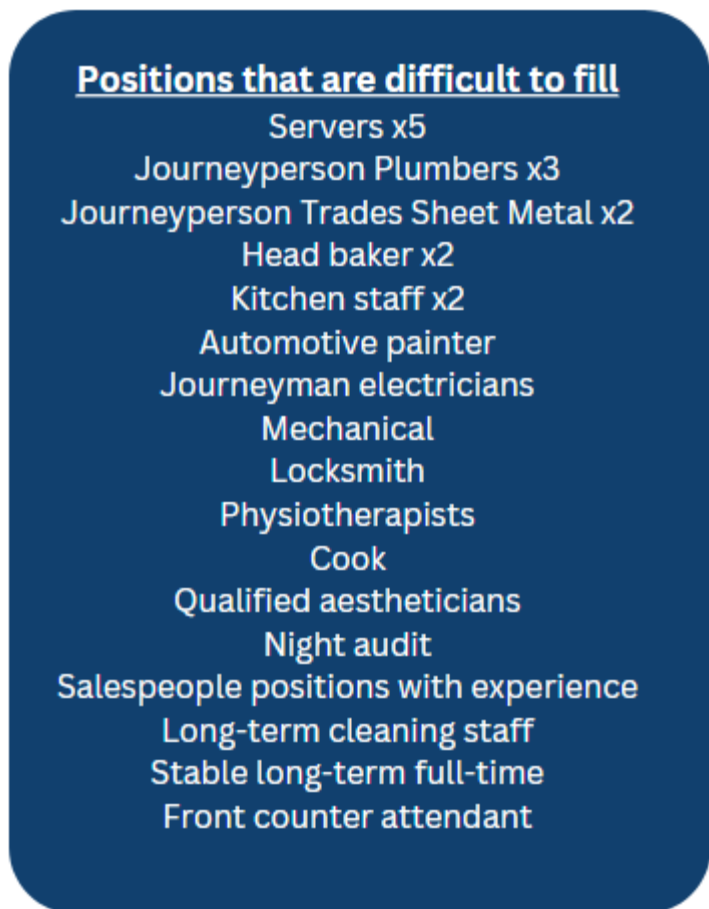
**Figure 8** –

The follow-up question, which businesses experiencing trouble hiring people were asked to explain, is seen in Figure 10. The most frequent replies concur with those shown in Figure 9, stating that there is a lack of applicants applying for positions requiring a certain level of skill and that the pool from which future hires is to be drawn is not sufficiently skilled. The third most frequently expressed statement was about workers relocating to larger centers in search of greater employment opportunities.



**Figure 10** – Answers taken from question 16 on the 2024 Camrose Business Survey

The final question in the survey that examines staffing takes a look at where businesses are having the most success in finding their current employees. Taking a look at the figure 11 chart, it is clear that word of mouth is the most dominant method in finding employees with a total of 40 respondents. Networking was the second most answered with 24, closely followed by businesses using job posting sites with 23.



**Figure 9** – Answers taken from question 15 on the 2024 Camrose Business Survey

# What service(s) do you find most useful for recruiting employees?

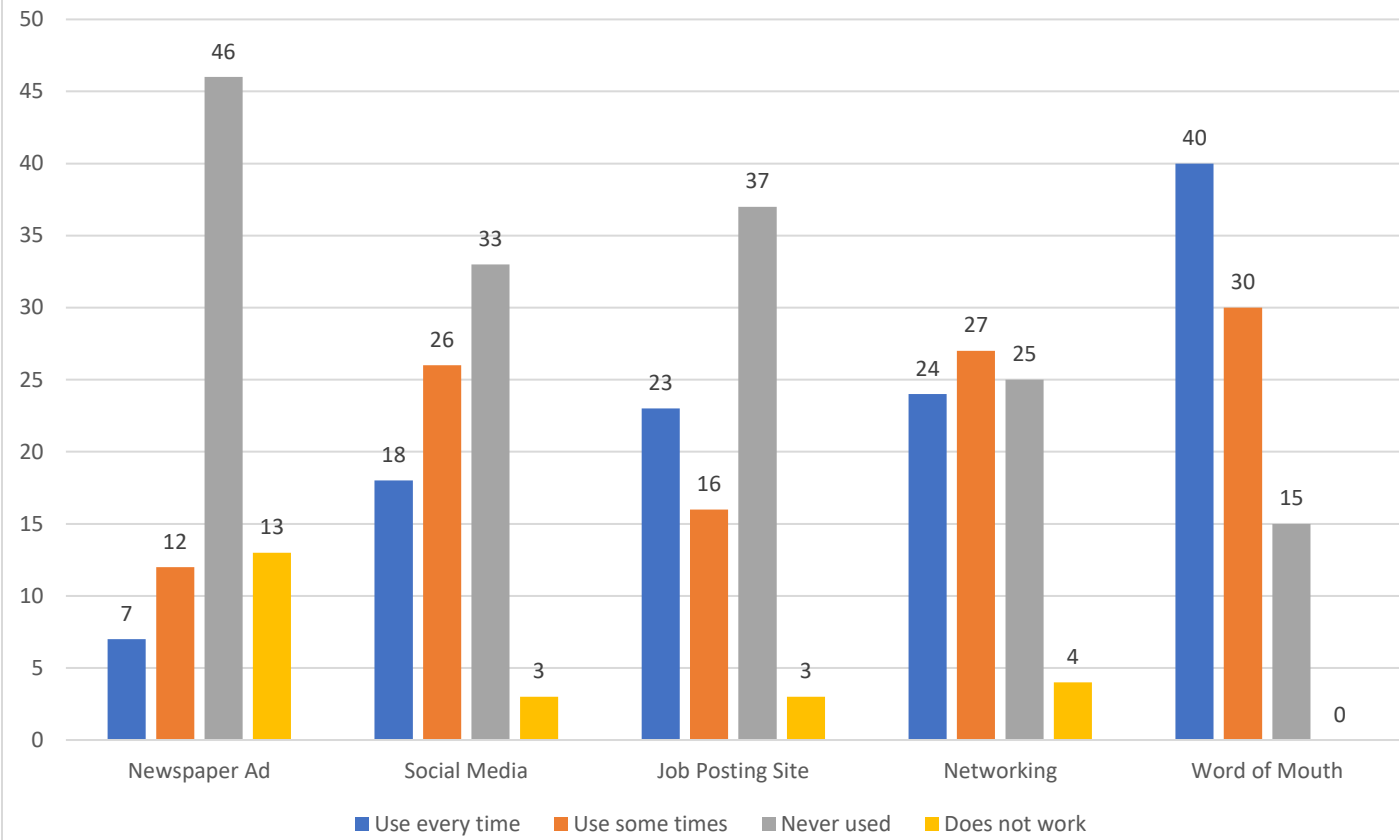


Figure 11 – What service(s) do you find most useful for recruiting employees?

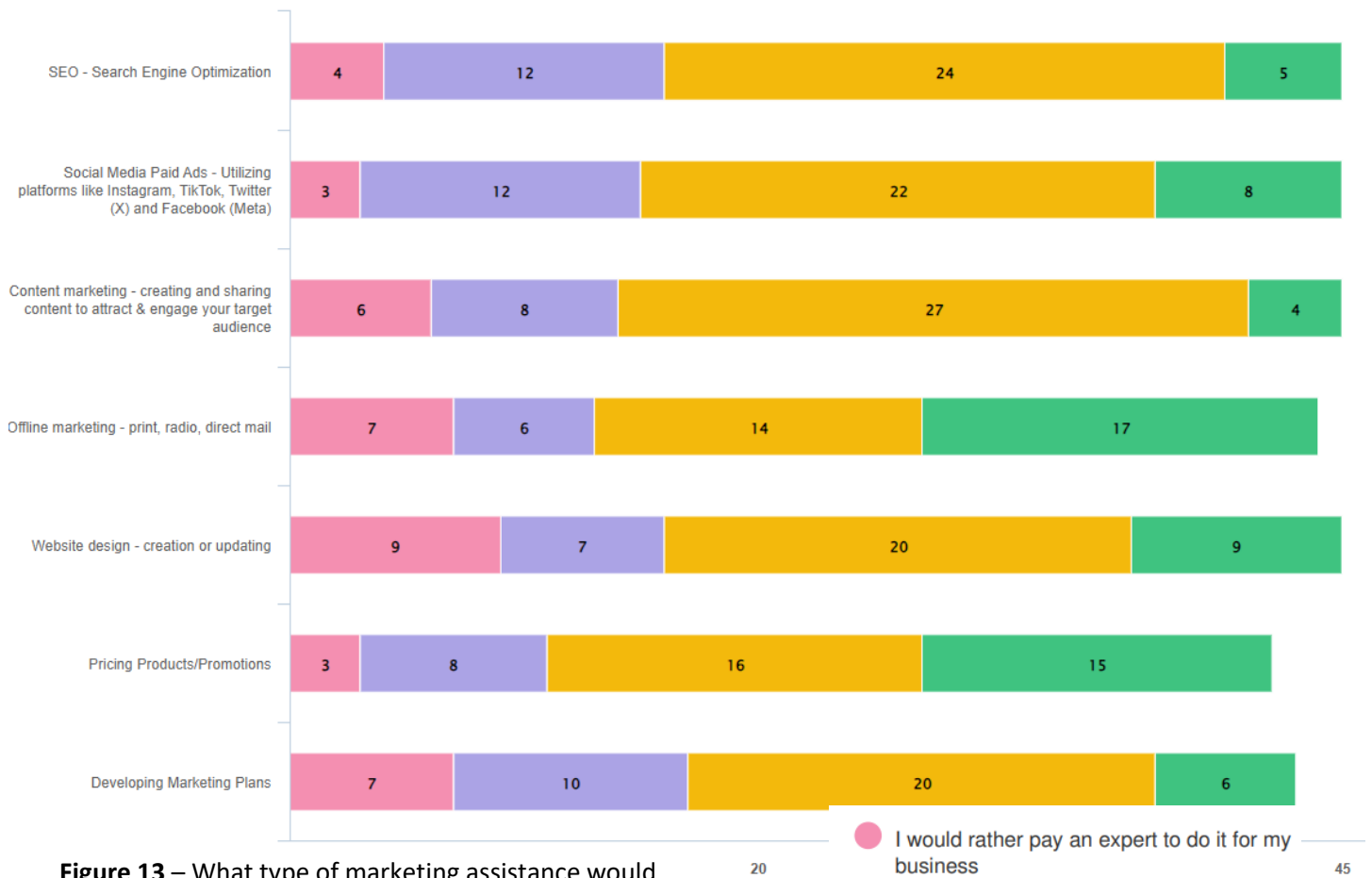


## Marketing and Other Supports

Marketing has consistently been ranked number one in previous surveys in regards to what type of supports would be best for your business. To get a more detailed understanding in the 2024 survey, the first question asked businesses to identify if they would be interested in marketing support or learning opportunities (figure 11). Respondents were split in their answer with an even 43 answering either yes or no. Those that answered yes were asked a follow up question around what type of marketing supports would be best suited for their business (figure 12).



**Figure 12** – Would you be interested in marketing support or learning opportunities?



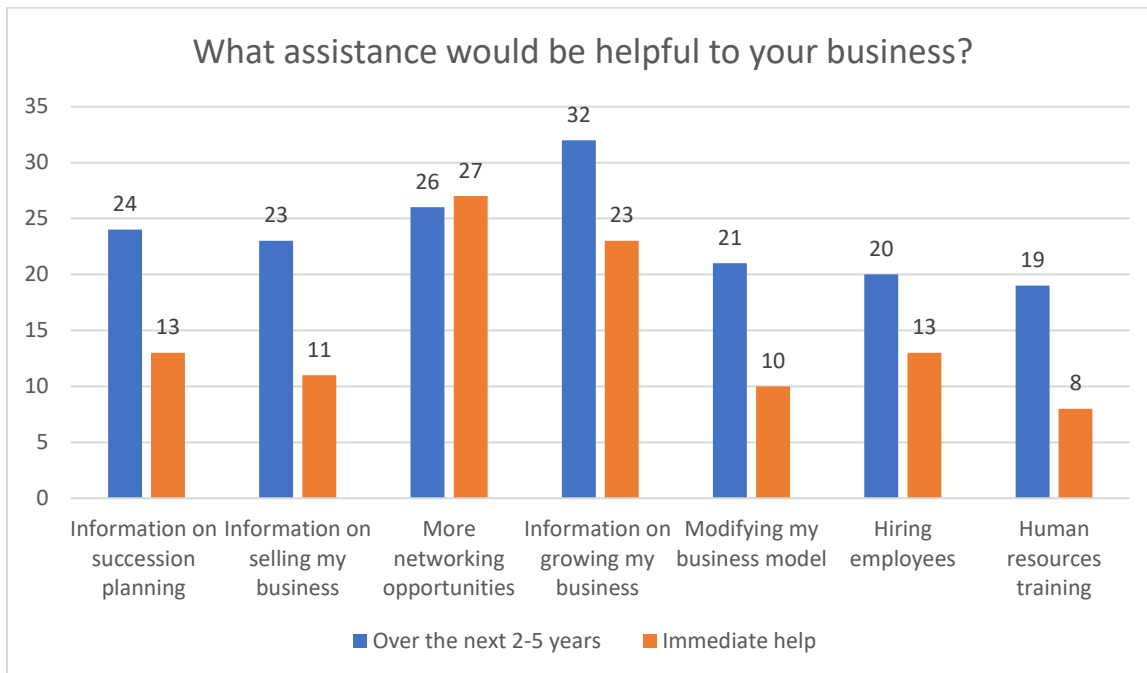
**Figure 13** – What type of marketing assistance would be helpful to your business?



The top three answers for what business want to learn in 2024 are; Content marketing - creating and sharing content to attract & engage your target audience, SEO - Search Engine Optimization, and Social Media Paid Ads - Utilizing platforms like Instagram, Tik Tok, Twitter (X) and Facebook. Each of these will be explored further and offered or highlighted for businesses to access.

There is a slight shift when businesses looked two to three years in the future with SEO - Search Engine Optimization moving into the number one spot with Social Media Paid Ads - Utilizing platforms like Instagram, Tik Tok, Twitter (X) and Facebook moving from third into second and finally, Developing Marketing Plans moving into the third spot.

When businesses were asked if they would prefer to pay for any marketing services, it was discovered that while some were interested in hiring someone, most said they would prefer to learn the skill themselves rather than outsource it.

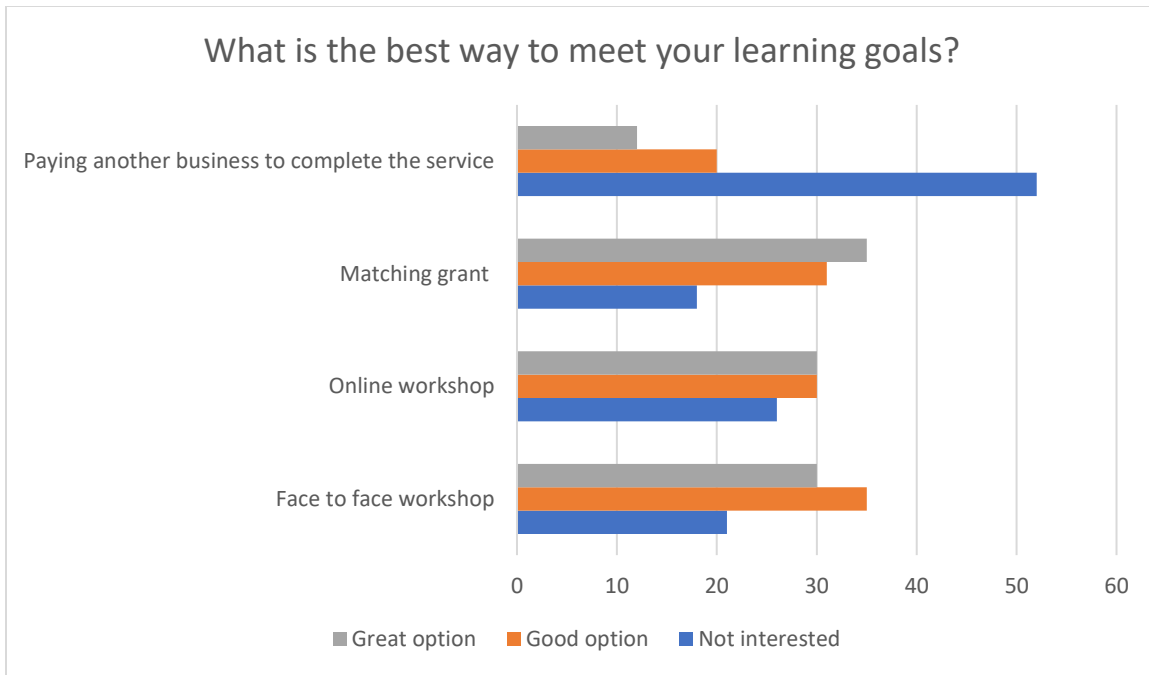


**Figure 14** – What assistance would be helpful to your business?

The above graph breaks down what type of assistance would be helpful to businesses in way of immediate help, with the second category looking into the future over the next 2-5 years. The seven categories were taken from previous surveys and common feedback received from business during business visits, industry roundtables or other events. It is important to note that the immediate help had 105 responses compared to 165 responses in the 2-5-year section.

In taking a look at the immediate help (orange bars), **More networking opportunities** and **Information on growing my business** were the two biggest requests for assistance. Both of these items will become focal points in planning over the next year in conjunction with other community partners.

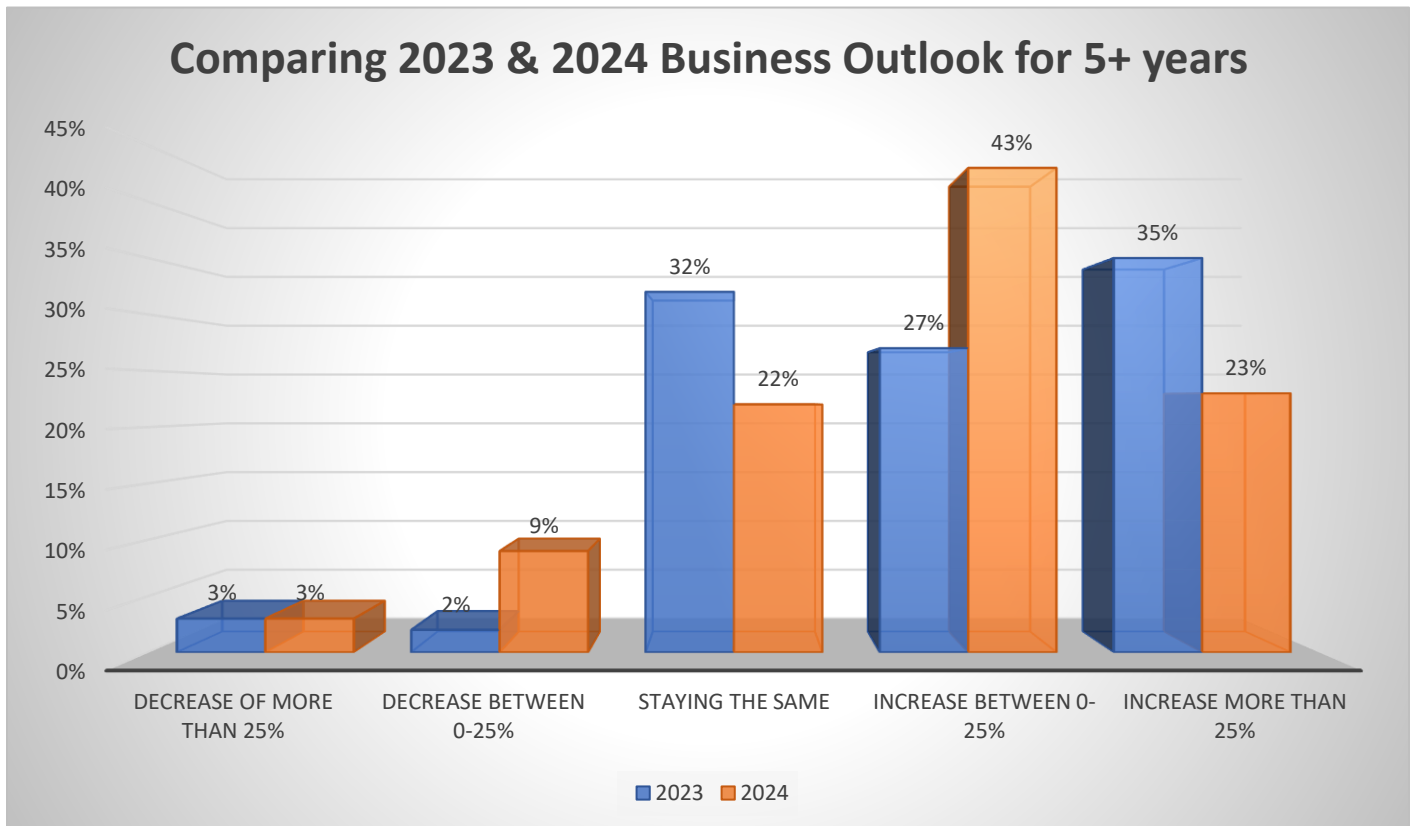
In taking a look at were businesses want support over the next 2-5 years, **information on growing my own business** rose to the top as the number one answer. This could be due to the larger number of first year businesses that took the survey. This answer was also reflected in the favorable growth that businesses answered in their business outlooks over the next five years. **More networking opportunities** is still in high demand but is now second with not as much variance to the other remaining five categories.



**Figure 15** – What is the best way to meet your learning goals?

A total of 52 businesses out of 84 total businesses (62%) agreed that they are not interested in paying outside businesses to assist them in meeting their learning goals. The remaining three categories were even balanced with 30-35 of the respondents choosing the three options as a great or good option.

## Business Outlook for 5+ Years



**Figure 16** – This chart combines the 2023 and 2024 business survey results for the question what is your business outlook for the next 5+ years?

The final question explored in this summary is asking businesses to project their business outlook for the next five plus years. This question was also asked in the 2023 small business survey and was used to compare and contrast the two years side by side in the Figure 16 graph. It is important to note that there may be some overlap in businesses that take the survey each year but there is no tracking of individual businesses that respond for year to year.

A quick observation of the chart shows that the vast majority of businesses in 2023 and 2024 plan to stay the same size or increase business in their five-year outlook. From the 2024 survey (orange bars), a total of 43% of businesses feel that they will have a 0-25% increase in business, which makes up the largest percentage of businesses. The next largest category with 23% of business responses feel they will have an increase of more than 25% over the next 5 years, followed closely by the staying the same size opinion that was held by 22% of businesses.

Businesses feeling that they would have a decrease in business of 25% or less was 9% with a decrease of more than 25% was at 3%. A total of 12% felt that they would have a decreasing business outlook over the next 5 years.

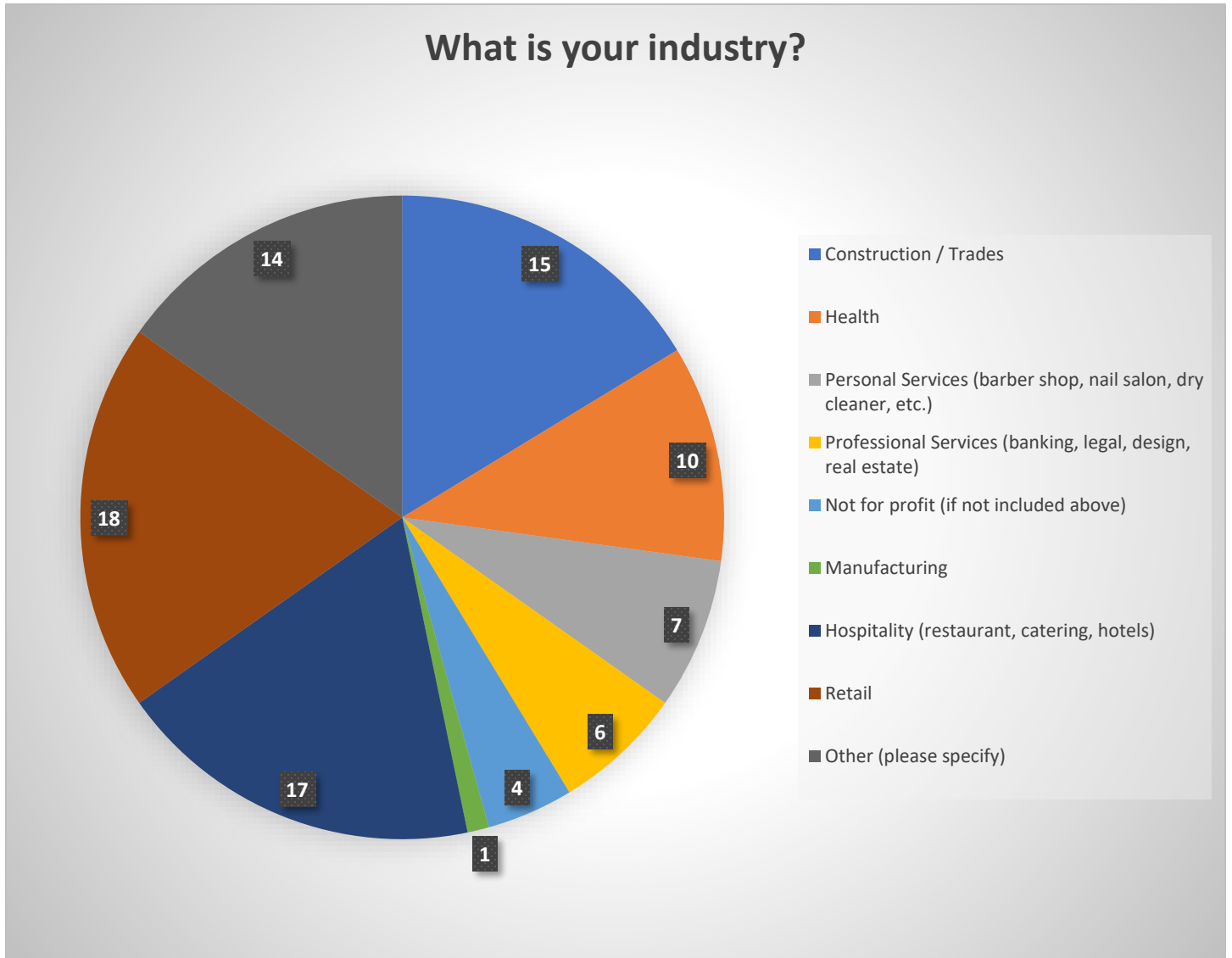
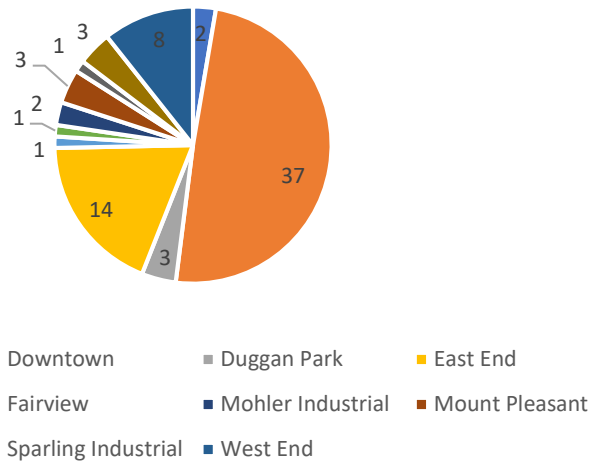


Figure 17 – What is your industry?

## What community neighborhood is your business located in?



**Figure 18** – What community neighborhood is your business located in?