

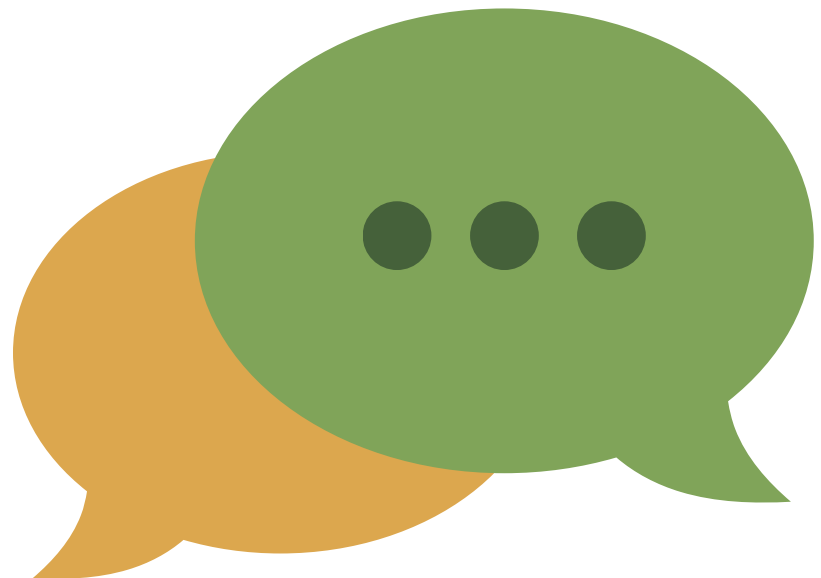


MUNICIPALITY OF

South Bruce

Business Retention & Expansion Survey Report 2025

Municipality of South Bruce



In 2025, the Municipality of South Bruce, in partnership with Bruce County Economic Development, conducted a Business Retention & Expansion Survey. This document is a summary of the responses provided by the 92 businesses that participated. Some percentages are based on the number of responses to an individual question.

Survey Questions

Business Information

- What is your business structure?
- Is your business locally owned/operated?
- Do you primarily sell to consumers or other businesses?
- Is your business facility/property owned, leased, or home-based?
- How many current employees do you have, and what is their employment status?
- What year did the business begin operations in the community?
- Why did you decide to operate your business in this community?
- Do you have a company website?
- Do you use social media for your business?
- Is your business engaging in online operations?
- Where are your customers located geographically?
- How many business locations do you operate?
- What is your general impression of this community as a place to do business?

Finances

- In terms of revenue, is your business doing better or worse than your last fiscal year?
- When did you last/when do you plan on making major capital investments or introducing a new product/service?

Planning

- Do you plan or expect growth, remaining the same, or downsizing of your business in the future?
- Do you plan on transitioning out of the business within the next five years?
- Do you have a plan for your business transition?
- Do you know of any business that may be interested in locating to this community?
- Is there a spin-off or by-product business opportunity from your business?
- What businesses do you feel are lacking in South Bruce?
- What are the short and long-term goals for your business?

Employees and Hiring

- How many current job vacancies exist for your business?
- During the past 3 years, what fluctuations have you experienced in the number of employees?
- What is the ideal number of employees for your business?
- What challenges are you having with hiring and/or retention?
- What positions are currently vacant or are you having difficulty filling?
- How are you attracting employees to your business?
- What factors influence your employee's ability to work?
- Does your business currently participate in any co-op, internship or apprenticeship programs?
- What training programs would you like to see?
- How would you rate this community for your business needs?

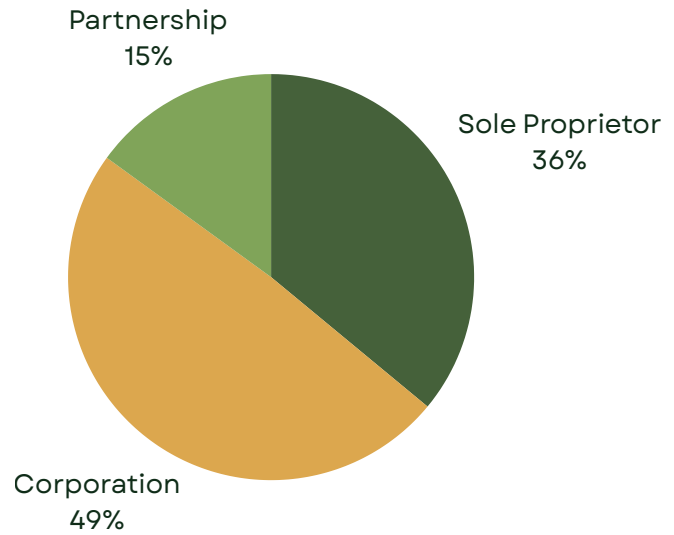
Survey Questions

Challenges and Supports

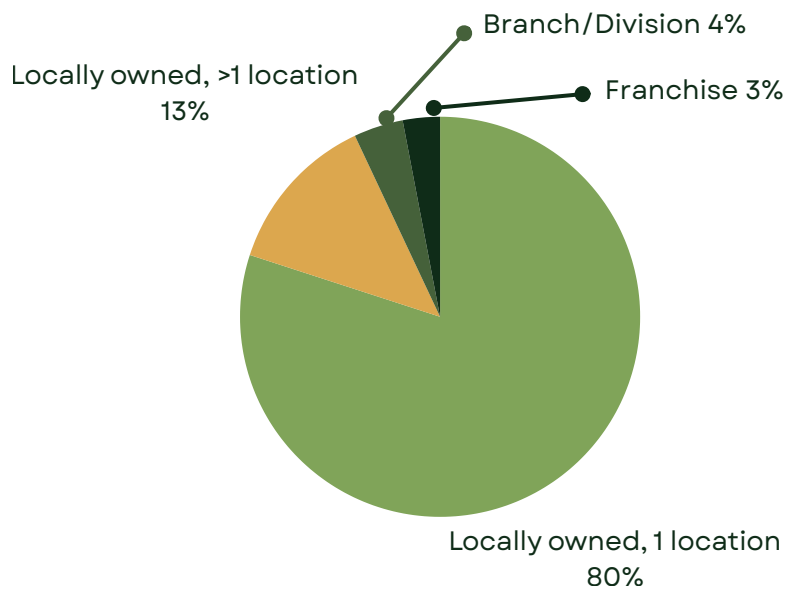
- What challenges have you encountered while starting your business in South Bruce, and what resources or support do you wish were available to you?
- What are some of the challenges you are experiencing doing business in this community?
- Are there any organizations you work with/are a member of that are doing a great job supporting your business?
- Do you rely on any specific data sources, information, etc. to make business decisions?
- What is your knowledge level on resources available to you?
- What assistance or opportunities would be beneficial to support your business?
- What can we do/what do you need from us to help you and your business succeed?
- What barriers do you face regarding usage or access to technology?
- How would you describe your relationship and networking opportunities with local businesses?

Overview of Respondents' Businesses

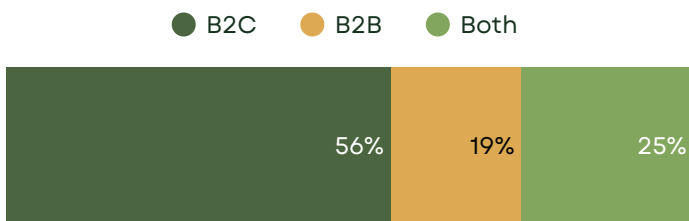
Business structure



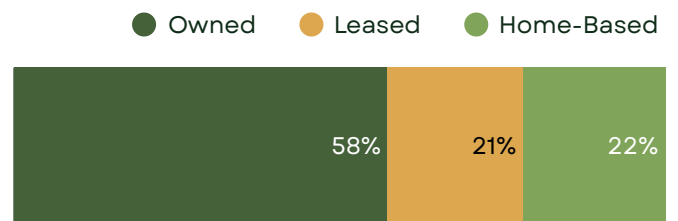
Business ownership



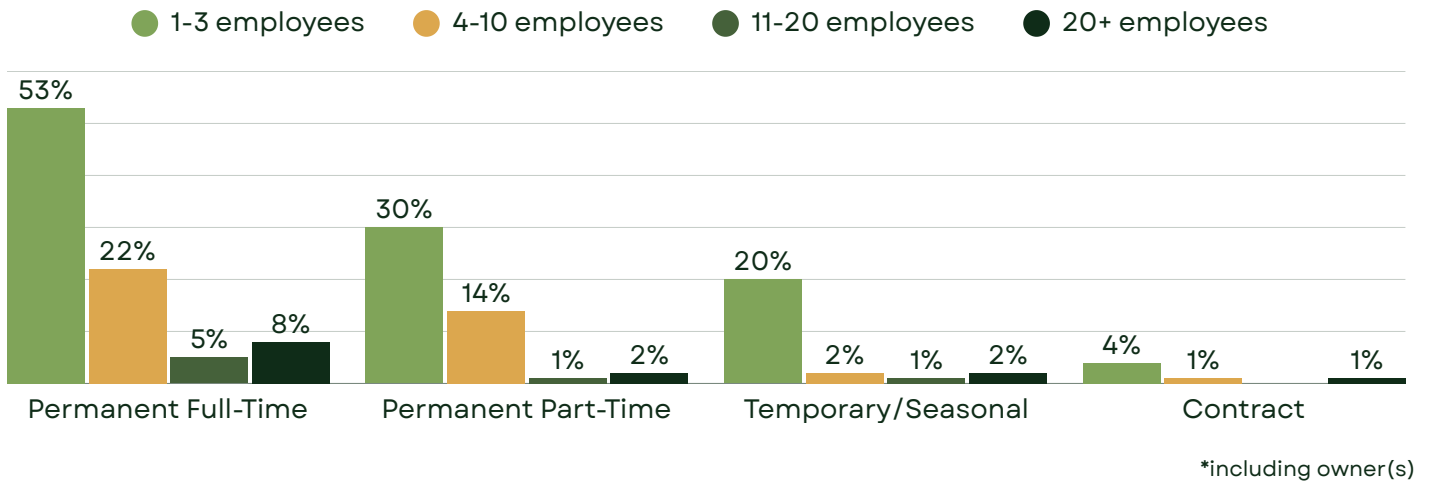
Primary customer base



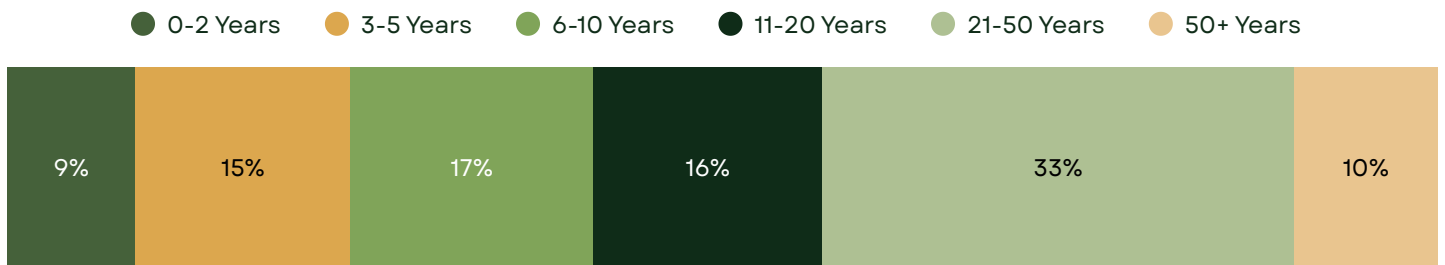
Status of business facility/property



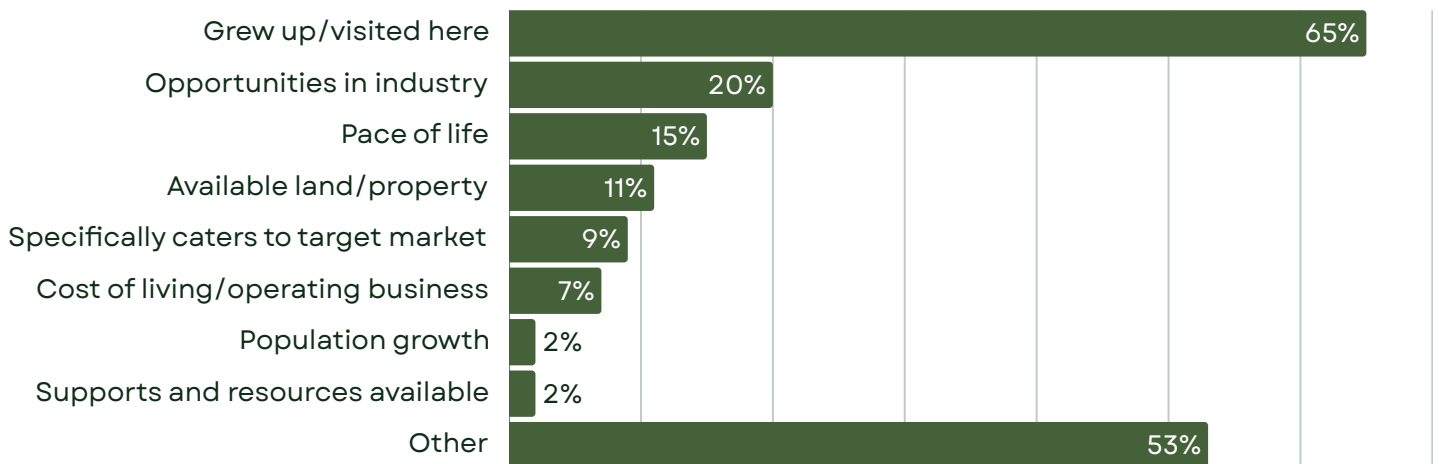
Number and status of current employees*



How long businesses have operated in the community



Top reasons owners decided to operate in this community

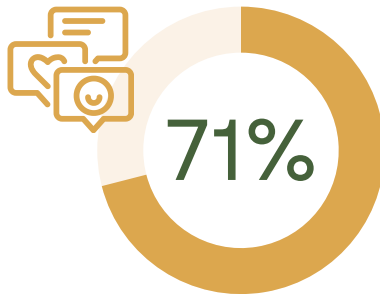


Other reasons cited:

- Reputation
- Community support
- Less competition
- Purchased an existing business in the area



Businesses with a website

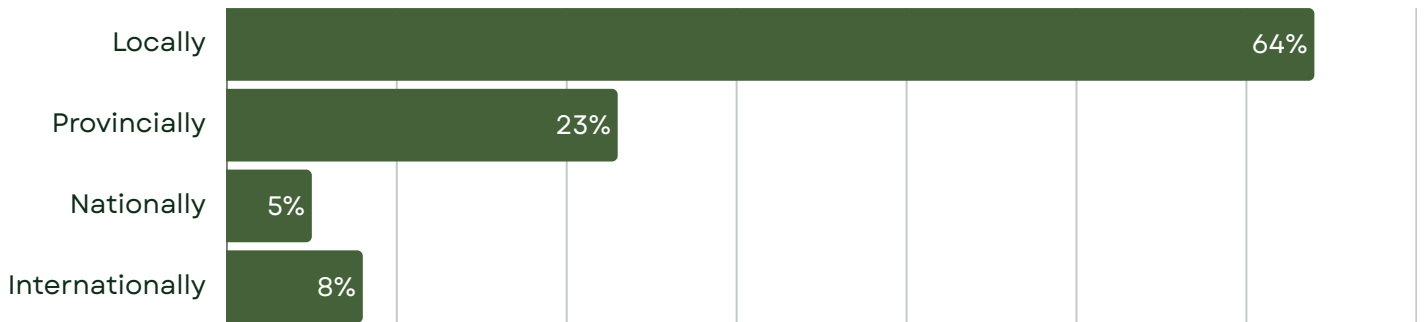


Businesses using social media

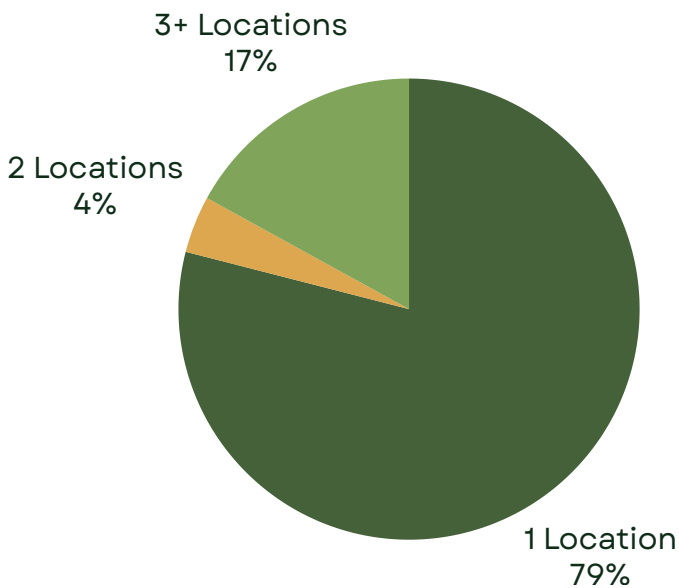


Businesses with online operations
(i.e. e-commerce)

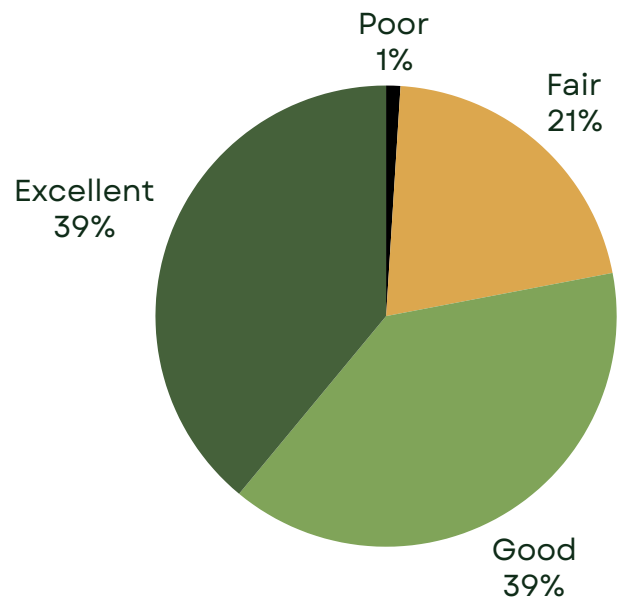
Where customers are located



Number of business locations operated

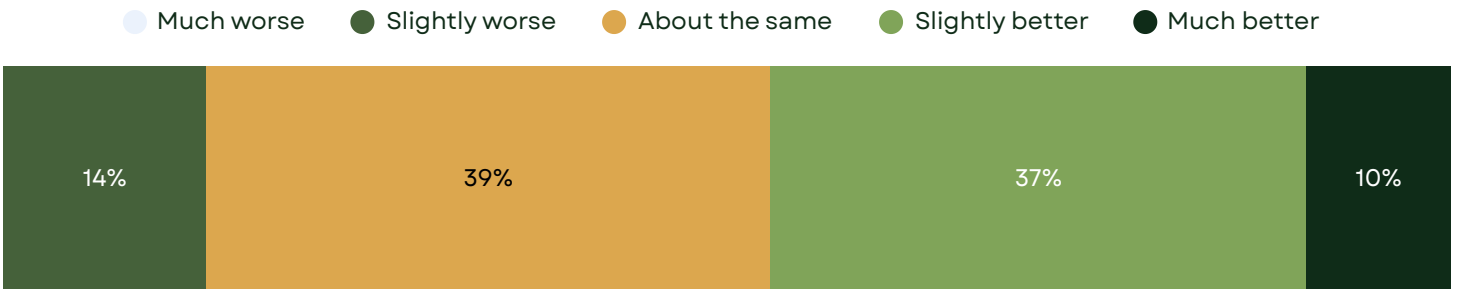


General impression of South Bruce as a place to do business:

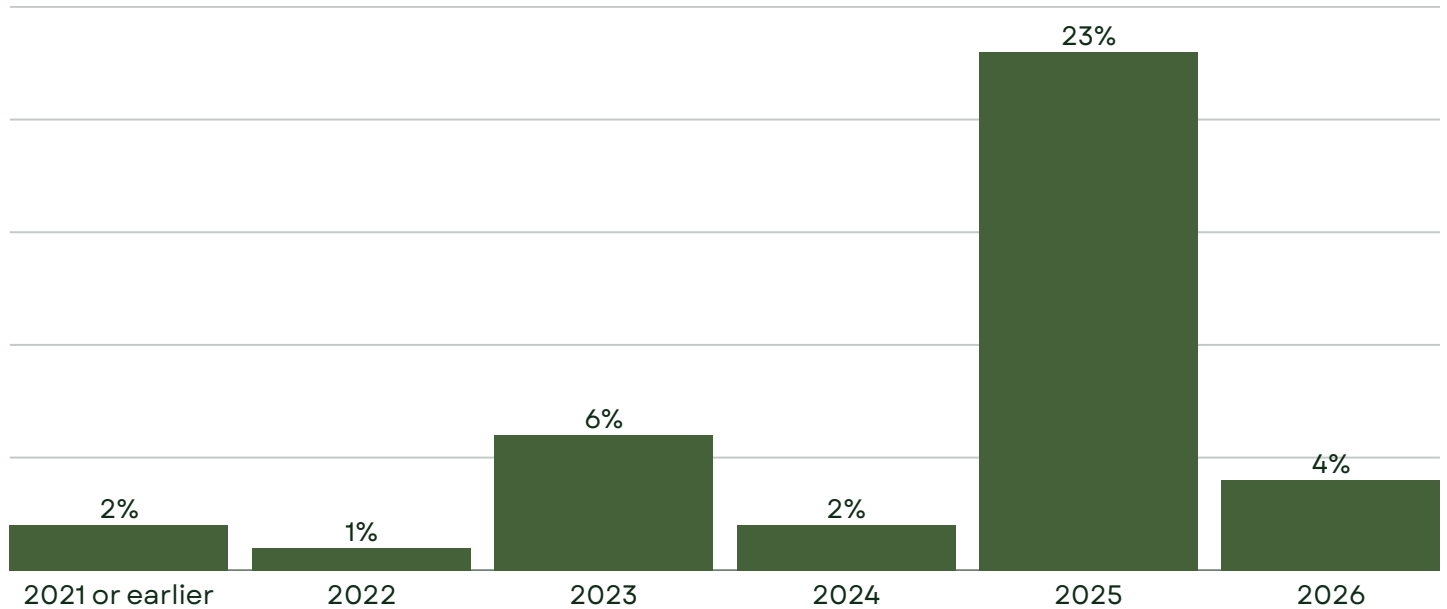


Finances

How businesses felt they were doing financially, compared to the previous fiscal year

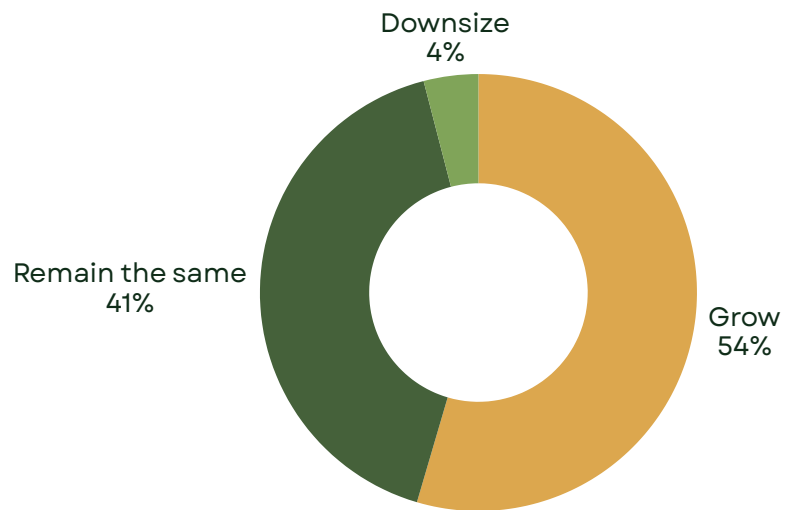


The last time businesses made (or plan to make) major capital investments or introduce a new product/service



Planning

What businesses plan or expect to do in the future



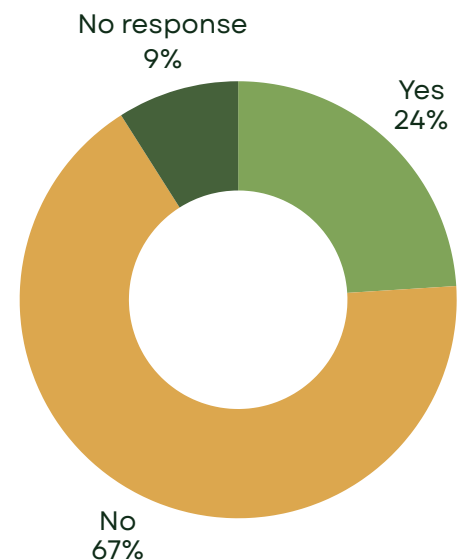
Respondents that plan to transition out of their business within the next 5 years



Of those that replied 'Yes':

- 2 plan to close
- 4 plan to sell
- 6 plan to have family/employees carry on the business

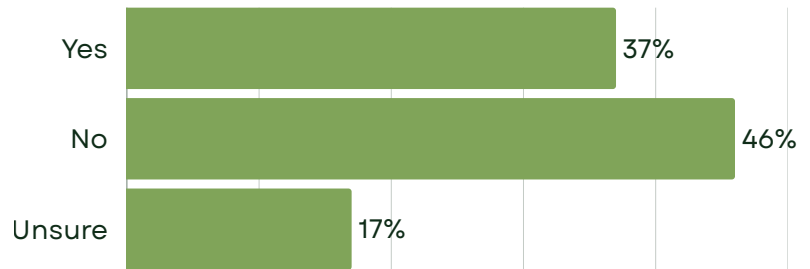
Businesses that report having a plan for transition



8%

know a business that may be interested in locating to South Bruce

Is there a spin-off or by-product opportunity from your business?



Examples of spin-offs & by-products:

- home delivery service
- coffee & reading/word area
- healthcare/medical services
- local food vendors
- trades (electrician, plumbing etc.)
- financial/bookkeeping services

What businesses are *lacking* in South Bruce?

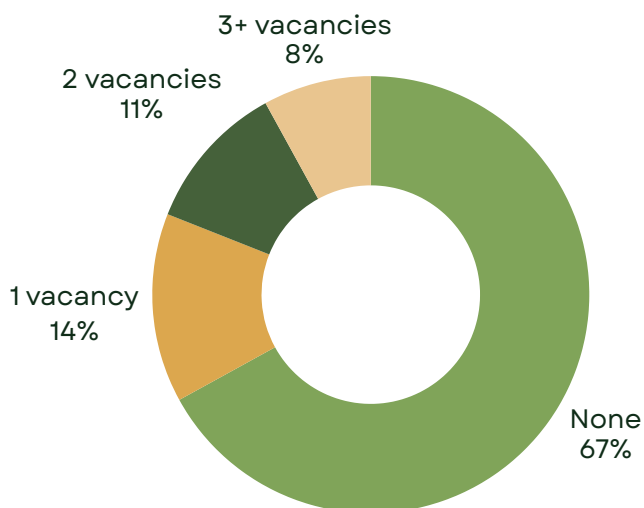
- childcare
- health care and professional services
- industrial / manufacturing
- retail stores
- restaurants and grocery options
- senior care
- transportation
- youth services

Short- and long-term goals of South Bruce businesses:

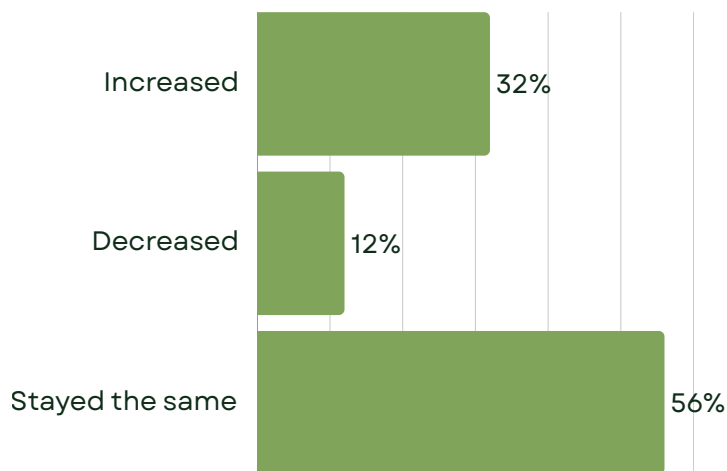
 Expand to new locations	 Hire more employees
 Increase profitability	 Increase customer base
 Steady and continuous growth	 Improve marketing and communications
Transition planning	 Community involvement

Employees and Hiring

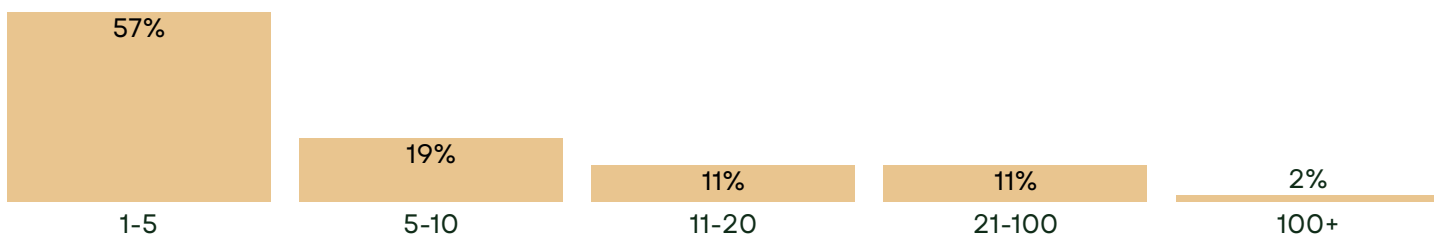
Number of job vacancies at the time of the survey



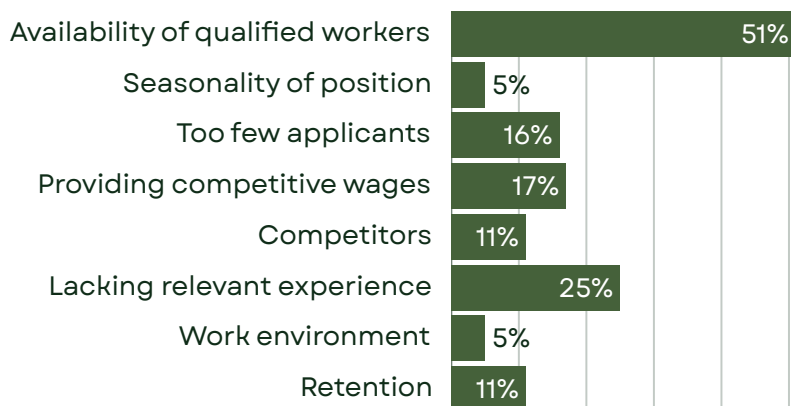
In the past 3 years, the number of people you employ has:



Ideal number of employees



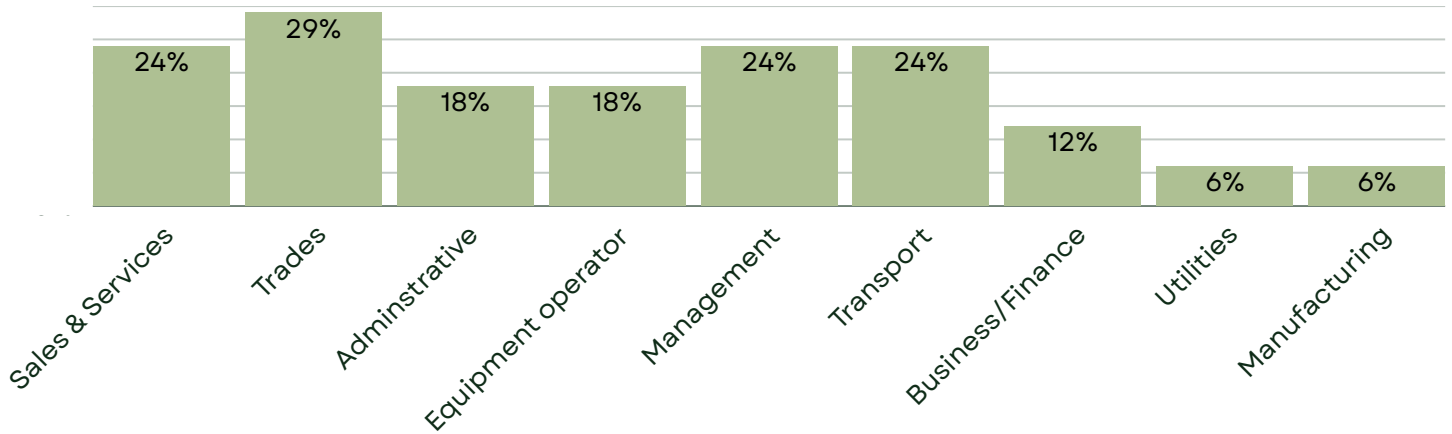
Most common hiring and retention challenges



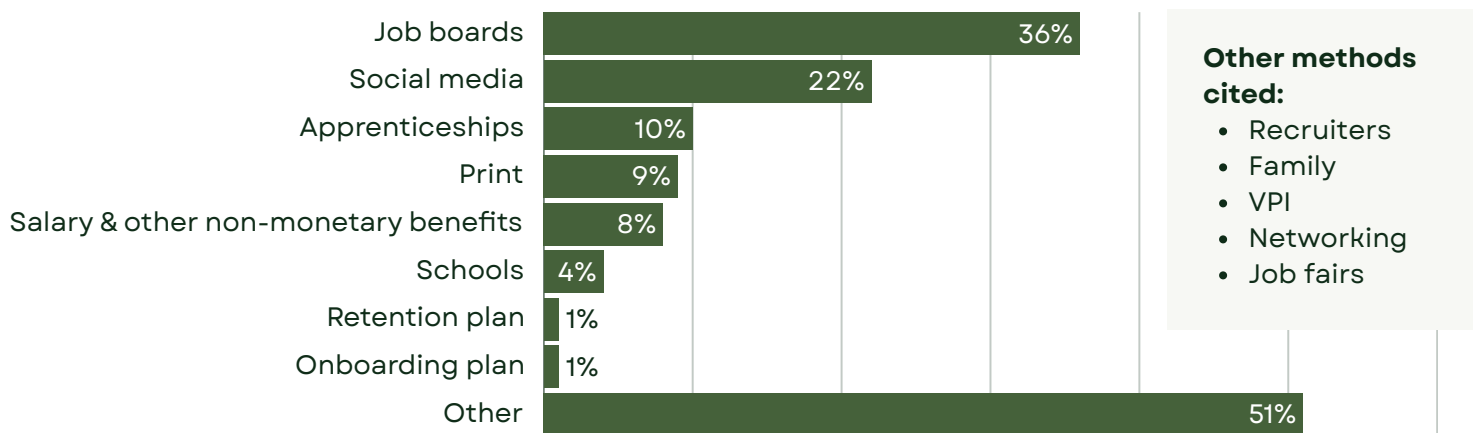
Other challenges cited:

- Unreliable workers
- Unwilling to relocate to area
- Employee expectations
- Cost to train employees

Positions that have been difficult to fill



Methods used to attract employees



Factors that affect employees



Childcare



Rising cost of living/
affordable housing

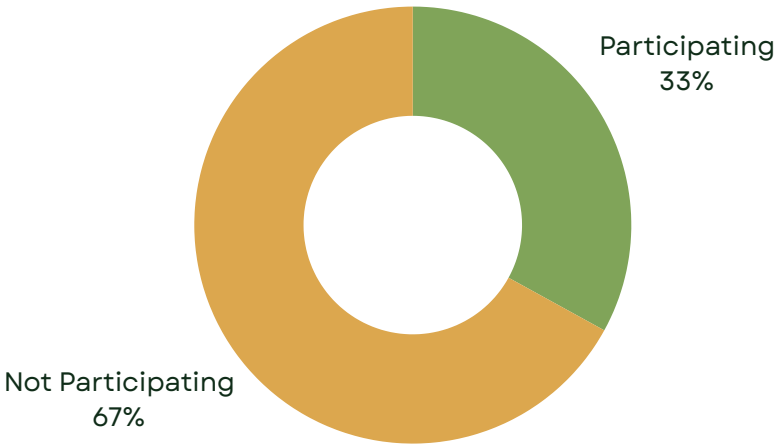


Transportation



Access to resources/
professional services

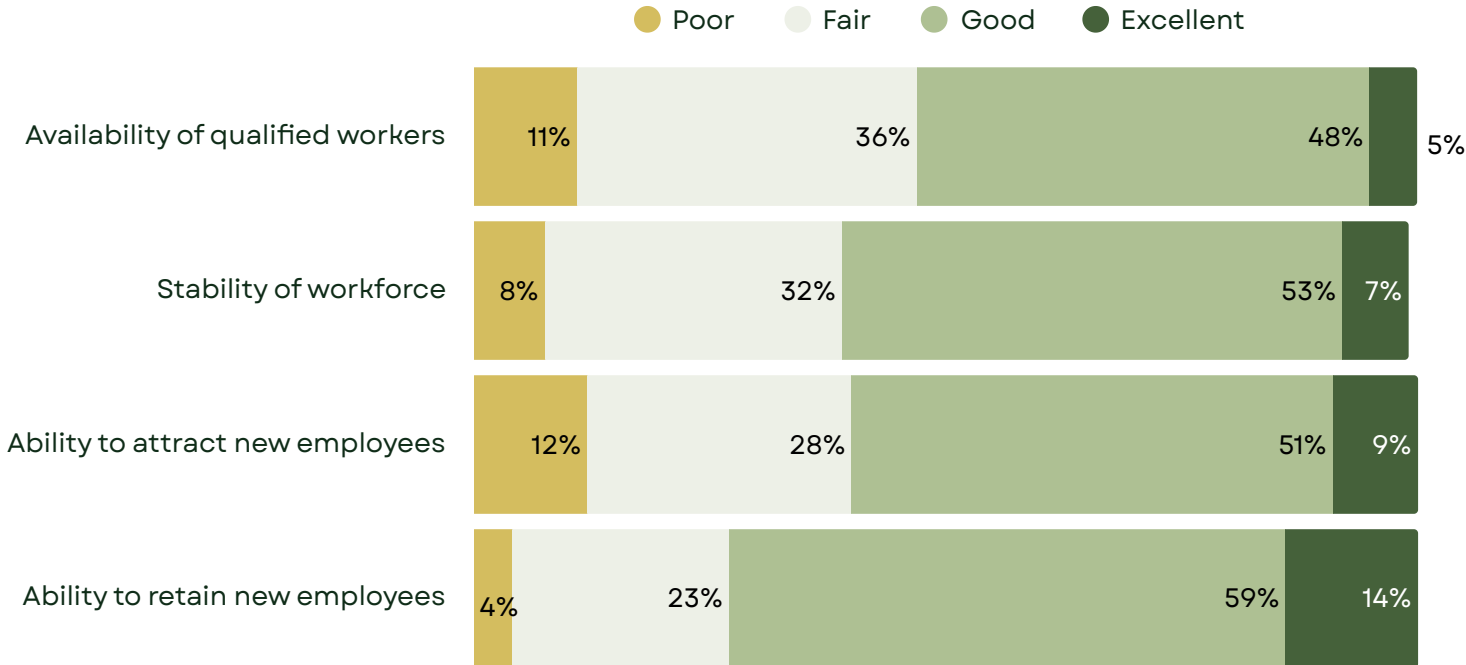
Businesses participating in co-op, internship or apprenticeship programs



Training programs businesses would like to see offered:

- Artificial Intelligence
- Accounting and finance
- CPR and first aid
- Machinery and forklift
- Marketing and social media
- Safe food handling and Smart Serve
- Succession planning
- WHMIS
- Working at heights

How businesses rated the following factors in the community:

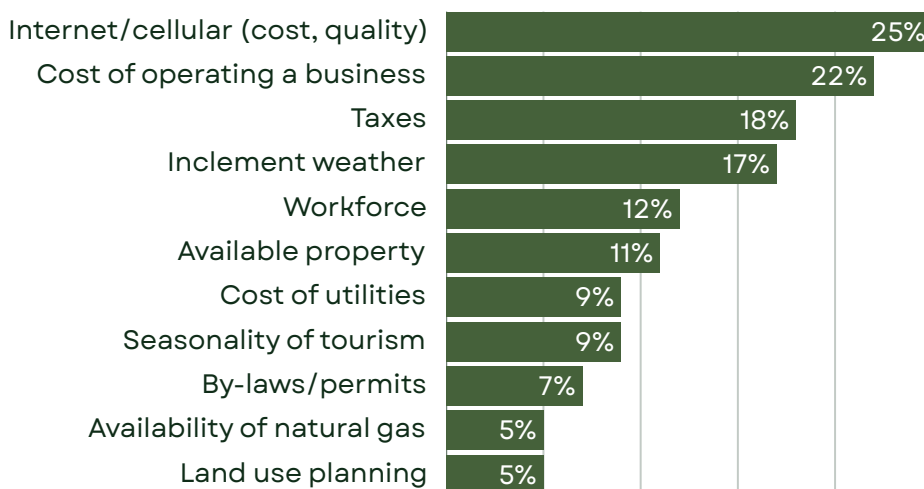


Challenges and Supports

Challenges experienced while starting a business

- storefront availability / affordable property / parking
- lack of knowledge of grants and resources
- licensing and permits
- following regulations
- startup costs
- accounting and finance
- supply chain
- marketing

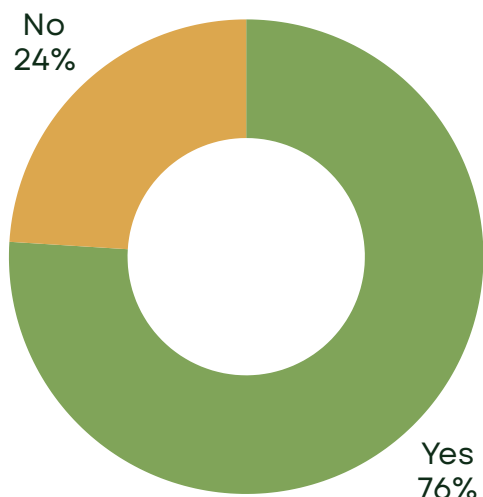
Challenges experienced while doing business in this community



Other challenges cited:

- Supply chain
- Small market
- Shipping costs
- Tariffs
- Marketing
- State of economy

Are there organizations you work with/are a member of that are doing a great job supporting your business?



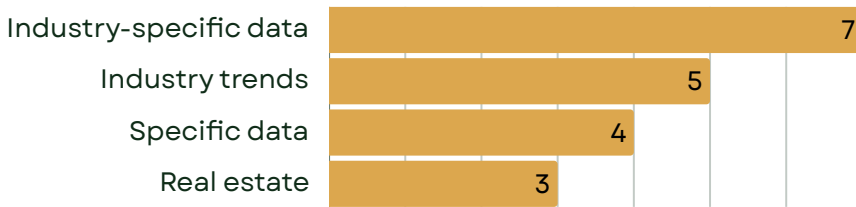
Local organizations mentioned:

- Mildmay Chamber of Commerce
- Municipality of South Bruce
- South Bruce Community & Business Association
- South Bruce Tourism Association
- Business to Bruce
- Service clubs (Rotary, Optimist, Knights of Columbus, Kinsmen, Lions)
- Teeswater Agricultural Society
- Teeswater Horticultural Society
- Roots of Bruce
- Walkerton Little Royal Fair
- Church groups
- Local schools

Local businesses mentioned:

- Cheese Haus
- Circle K
- Harley's
- Holst Office Supplies
- Home Hardware
- Kirstine Ellis Group
- Midwest Co-op
- Pharmachoice
- Wightman
- Local banks

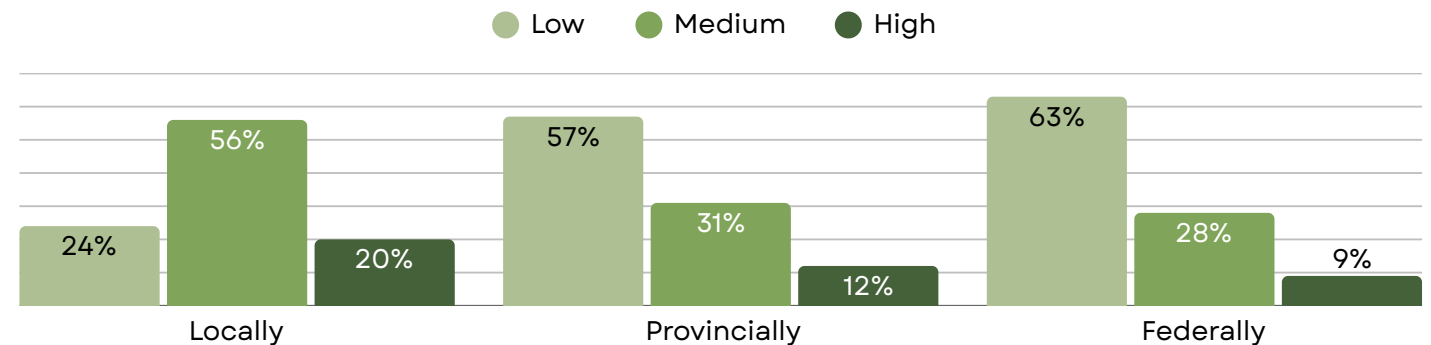
Resources used to make business decisions



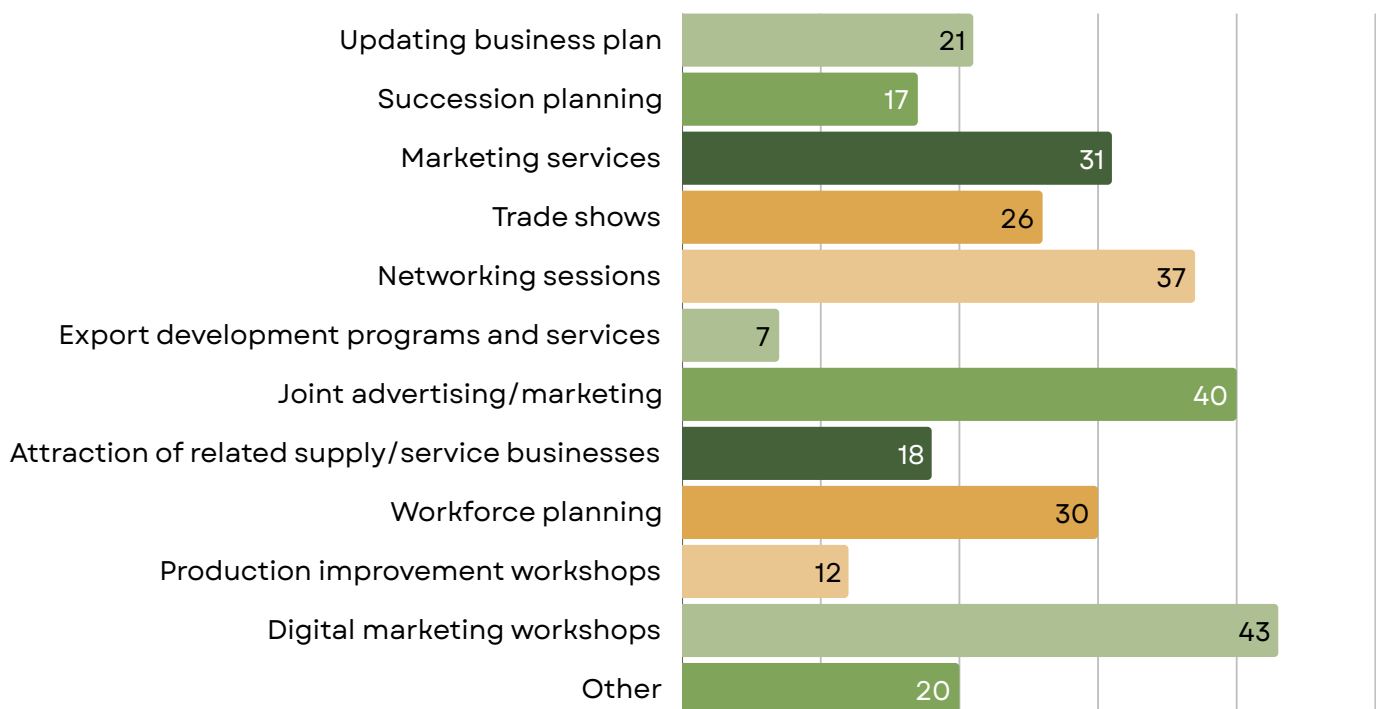
Other resources cited:

- Industry news
- Stats Canada
- Market trends
- Population data
- Development data
- Local trends

What is your knowledge level on available resources?



Assistance or opportunities that would benefit your business



What can we do/what do you need from us to help you and your business succeed?

Support and Growth

- Help navigate government regulations
- Help with grant applications
- Assistance with planning an expansion
- Digital marketing, social media, and AI training
- Lower taxes
- Encourage growth by eliminating development charges and reducing permits/fees, tax incentives etc.
- Reduce red tape for start-ups
- Ability to sever properties to create more available land
- Reliable internet and cellular services
- Change event times so more people can attend
- Employee retention
- Promote businesses outside of downtowns

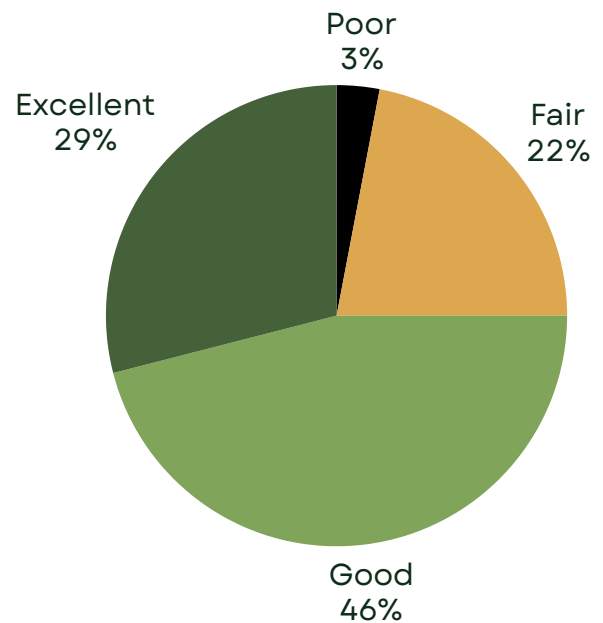
Communications and Awareness

- Improve communications from the Municipality on decision-making
- Clarity on who to contact at the Municipality
- A dedicated page to list local events/sports games
- Communication on community events
- Encourage community to support local businesses

Networking and Collaboration

- Create focus groups by industry
- More networking opportunities
- Local business list
- Host an Open Doors event, touring local businesses
- Encourage other local businesses to support local
- Business promotion and advertising

Relationships and networking opportunities with other local businesses



What are the biggest barriers to using technology?

- Implementation process
- Lack of knowledge on tech available
- Training
- Internet quality
- Affordability

Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Would like to see videos on social media promoting businesses in South Bruce.

Stop hiring companies outside the municipality to do work in the municipality when there are businesses here that can do the same work.

Vacant buildings are a problem; many are not appealing and make our towns look unpresentable. Add some sort of by-law to encourage business owners to care for their properties and use them for their intended purpose.

Joint advertising and promoting stores and services.

Business owners on a main street have totally different needs than business owners off the main street. Always keep that in mind.

Concerned about Council's talk of introducing development charges.

Teeswater lacks adequate parking for businesses and living spaces. Would love to see some of the older buildings repurposed into parking lots.

Appreciative of the Municipality and the opportunity to investigate economic development and collecting this type of data. Keep up the positivity and trying to create a thriving community.

Summary of Impact

The survey engaged
92 businesses

The survey identified:



51 businesses
with hopes to expand
operations in the future



26 businesses
with 1 or more
job vacancies



56 businesses
with low-medium
knowledge of resources
available locally



12 businesses
with plans to transition out of the
business within 5 years, with 5 of
those businesses requiring
assistance in developing a
transition plan



70 businesses
are not currently engaged
in online operations (e-
commerce)



9 businesses
are experiencing reduced
revenue compared to the
last fiscal year

- Survey connections resulted in 180+ contacts included in our e-mail blast.
- Assisted businesses with social media marketing.
- Updated online business directory with business summaries.