

2021 HURON COUNTY BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION PROJECT

MAIN SURVEY DATA SUMMARY REPORT SOUTH HURON



Data Summary

Profile of Respondents

99 surveys were collected from Huron County businesses based in South Huron. (see figure 1).

Municipality	Surveys	Total business count	% of Municipal businesses	% of total return
ACW	48	310	15.5%	6.6%
Bluewater	83	403	20.6%	11.5%
Central Huron	96	460	20.9%	13.3%
Goderich	72	355	20.3%	10%
Howick	38	197	19.3%	5.3%
Huron East	137	577	23.7%	18.9%
Morris-Turnberry	54	270	20%	7.5%
North Huron	68	258	26.4%	9.4%
South Huron	99	530	18.7%	13.7%
Unknown	28	N/A	N/A	3.8%
Total	723	3,360	21.5% (avg)	100%

Figure 1

Agriculture businesses led responses with 37% of respondents indicating they are an agriculture business. These agriculture businesses include primary producers as well as businesses along the value chain. There were 7 businesses that did not identify what sector (NAICS code) they fall under (see figure 2).

Sector by NAICS Code	Main Survey Count	%
Agriculture	37	37%
Retail	11	11%
Manufacturing	9	9%
Accommodations & Food Services	7	7%
Construction	5	5%
Health Care & Social Assistance	3	3%
Finance & Insurance	2	2%
Other Services	6	6%
Other	12	12%
Unknown	7	7%
Total	99	100%

Figure 2

Business Information

Ownership

Which of the following best describes your business?

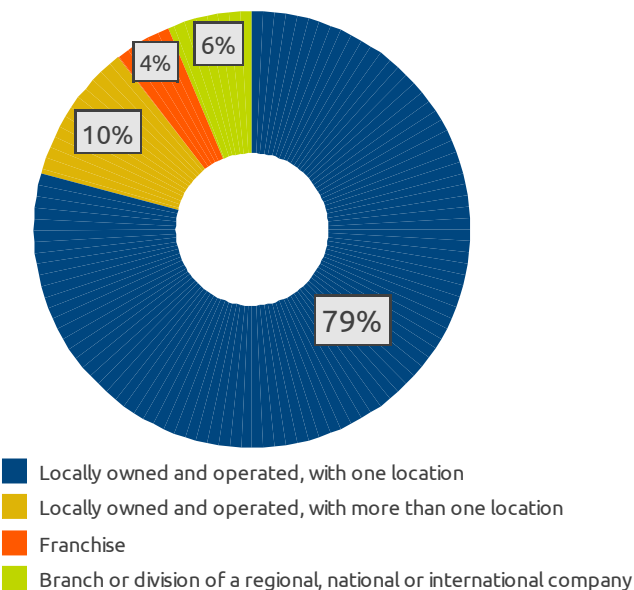


Figure 3

South Huron is dominated by locally owned and operated businesses, making up 89% of business respondents (see figure 3).

95% of business respondents have at least one of the primary owners involved in the day-to-day operations of the business with 85% of businesses having at least one of the owners a resident of Huron County.

Business Plans

The survey revealed that 48% of business respondents do not have a business plan with 49% of those with a business plan had not updated it in at least 5 years.

Years in Business

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

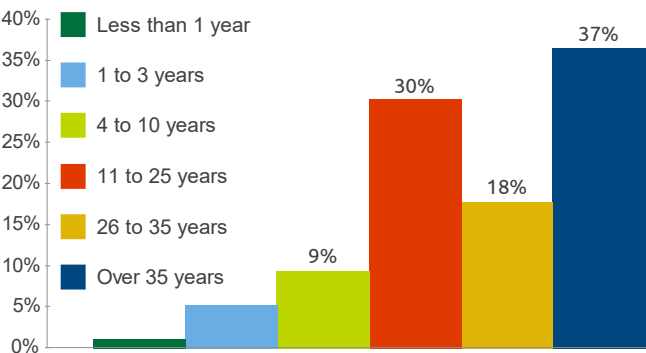


Figure 4

How many years has the current owner(s) been operating this business:

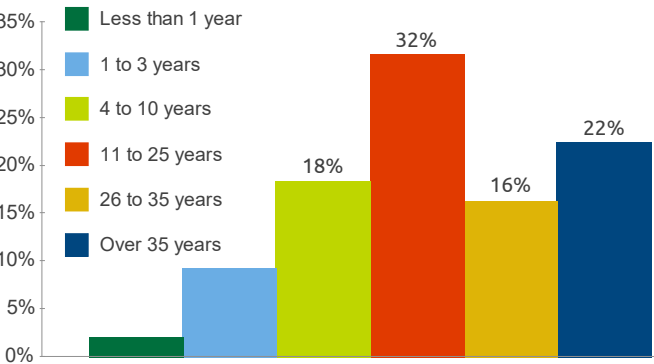


Figure 5

The South Huron business community is well established with a majority of businesses having been in operation for 11 years or more and with current owners operating their business for 11 years or more (see figures 4 & 5).

Business Size

A significant majority (81%) of the businesses surveyed have 19 or less employees, with 64% of those having only between 1 and 4 employees, including the owner.

Primary Markets

The primary market of your business is:

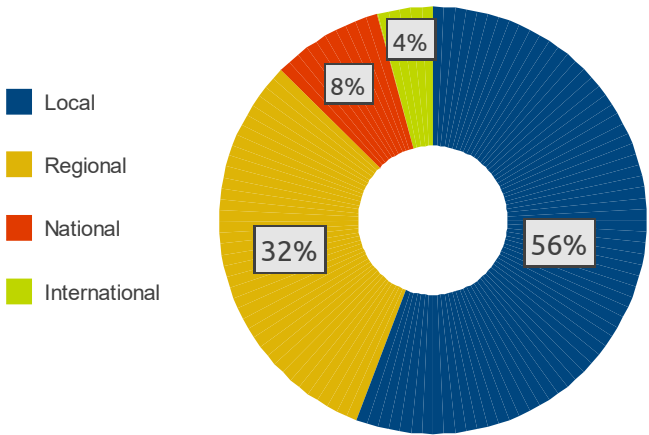


Figure 6

A majority of businesses surveyed primarily serve local or regional markets. Only 12% of those surveyed market outside of the province (see figure 6).

Doing Business in Huron County

What is your general impression of Huron County as a place to do business?

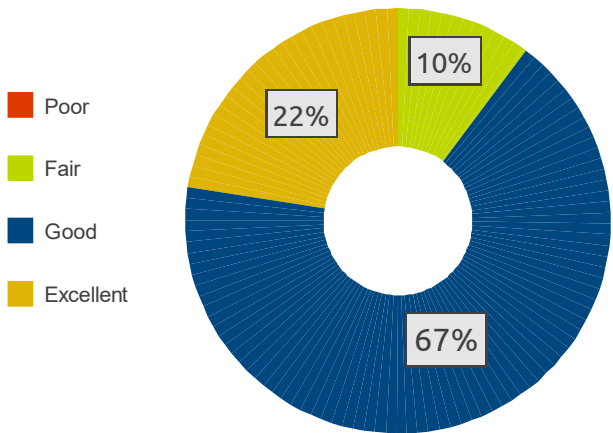


Figure 7

Attitude towards Doing Business in Huron County

There are signs of stability in the attitude towards doing business in Huron county as 74% of business respondents indicated no change in attitude over the past 3 years.

Changes in Attitude

14% of respondents experienced a positive shift in attitude towards doing business in Huron County as a result of community growth, support and an improved business climate. Respondents also felt doing business in Huron County provided them with a high quality of life, and are happy with the availability of health and medical services. Businesses also feel well supported in their community by local residents and other businesses (see figure 8).

Advantages to doing business in Huron County

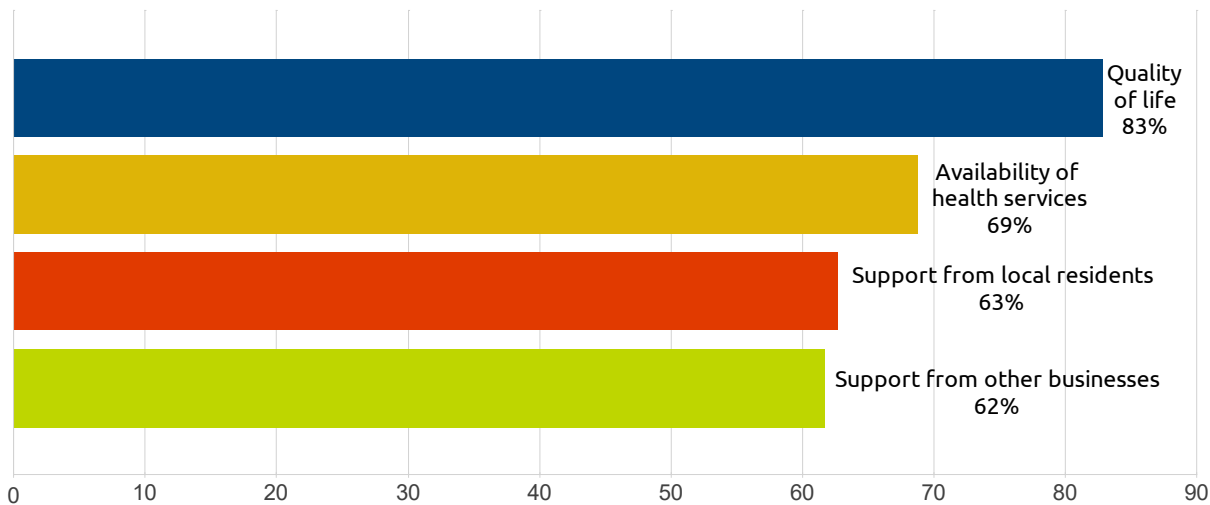


Figure 8

13% of respondents indicated a negative change in attitude, attributing this change to challenges with government processes and regulations (red tape), views on taxes and the current political climate. Challenges to doing business include development and building permit processes, the availability of adequate housing, and costs of land (see figure 9).

Challenges to doing business in Huron County

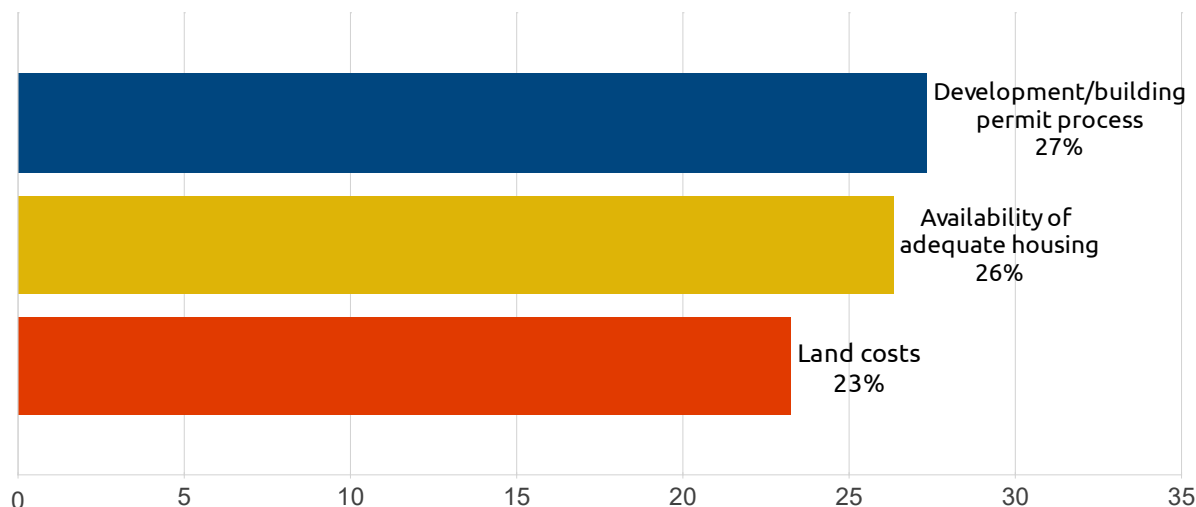


Figure 9

Future Business Plans

Within the next 18 months, do you plan on:

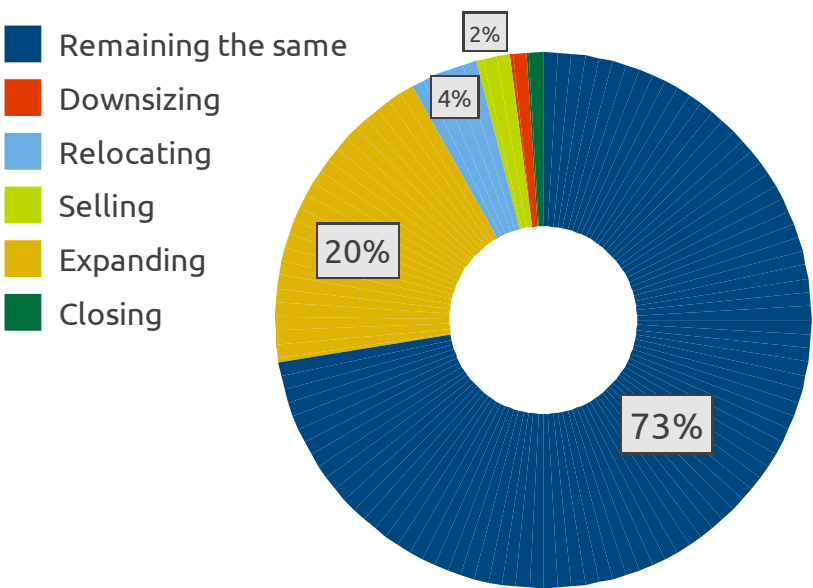


Figure 10

The future plans of businesses showed characteristics of a stable business community in South Huron (see figure 10). However, 8% of businesses are planning on downsizing, selling, relocating or closing their businesses within the next 18 months.

Business Expansions

The main reasons for the potential expansion of your business:

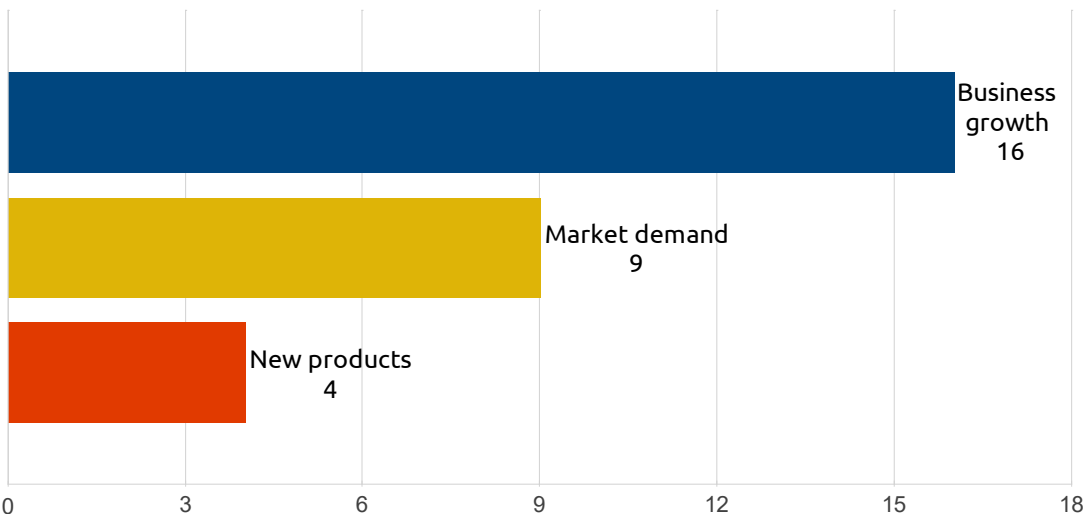


Figure 11

Impacts of expansion

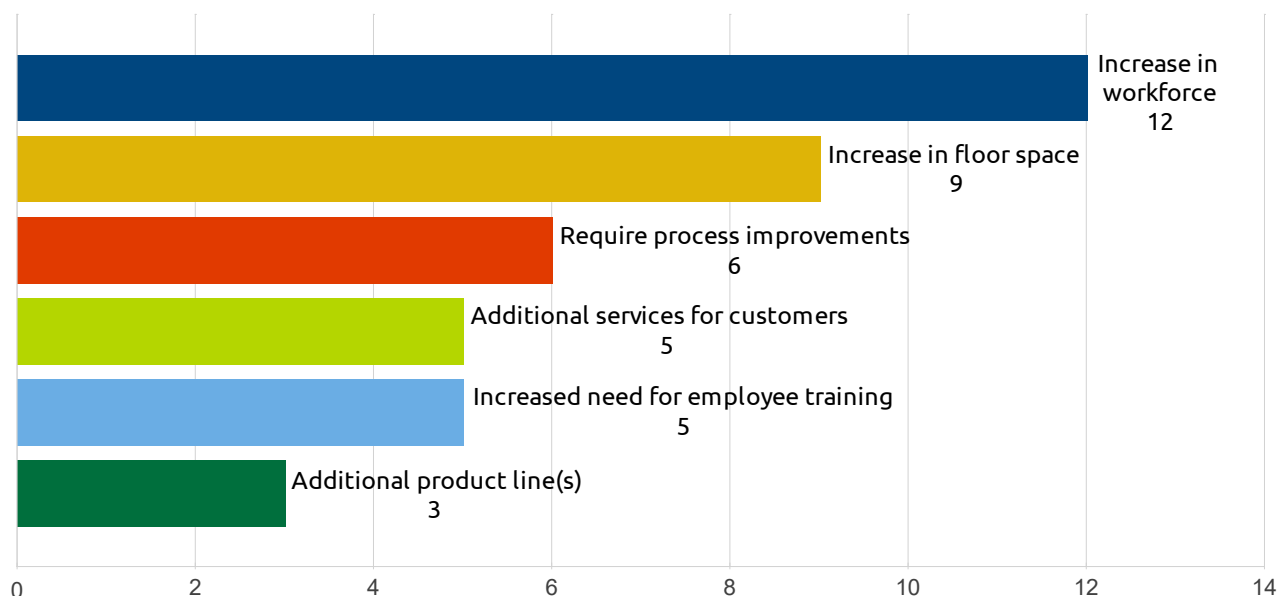


Figure 12

56% of businesses with plans of expansion are planning on funding their own expansion while 72% are interested in federal/provincial programs to assist with their expansion.

56% of respondents are currently experiencing challenges with their expansions related to:

- Difficulty identifying or securing suitable property
- Difficulty navigating red tape
- Increased workload and stress
- Difficulties due to COVID-19

60% of respondents view assistance with their expansion plans as beneficial, with the most valuable assistance being identified as providing more skilled workers and securing suitable housing for staff (5 responses each).

Business Downsizing, Selling, Relocating and Closing

- 1 business expects to downsize their business due to age/retirement
- 2 businesses expect to sell their business
 - 1 of those businesses indicate retirement to be the main reason, the other workload
- 4 businesses expect to relocate their business, all of whom expect to move within the county
- 1 business expects to close their business
 - The respondent indicated the business is not viable

Business Development

Business Outlook & Projected Sales

Most business respondents have a neutral or positive outlook for their industry (see figure 13).

What is the outlook for your industry?

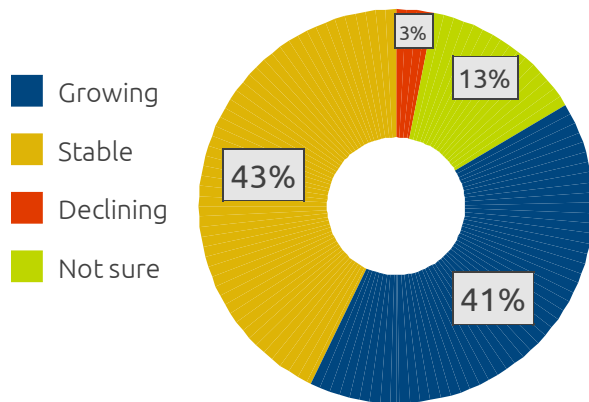


Figure 13

Are your projected sales in the next year expected to:

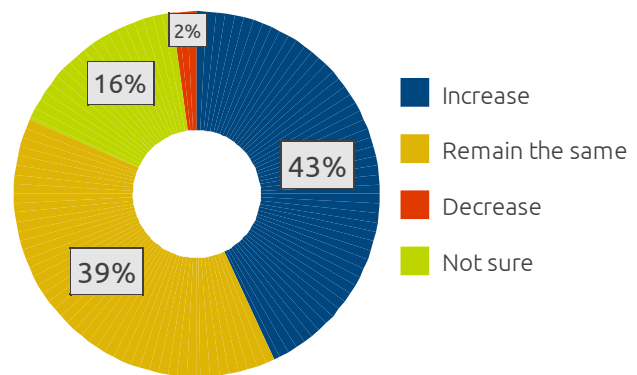


Figure 14

For those with an outlook of growth for their industry, general market conditions/trends (34 responses) and industry changes (28 responses) were the most commonly selected reasons.

Reasons for increase in projected sales

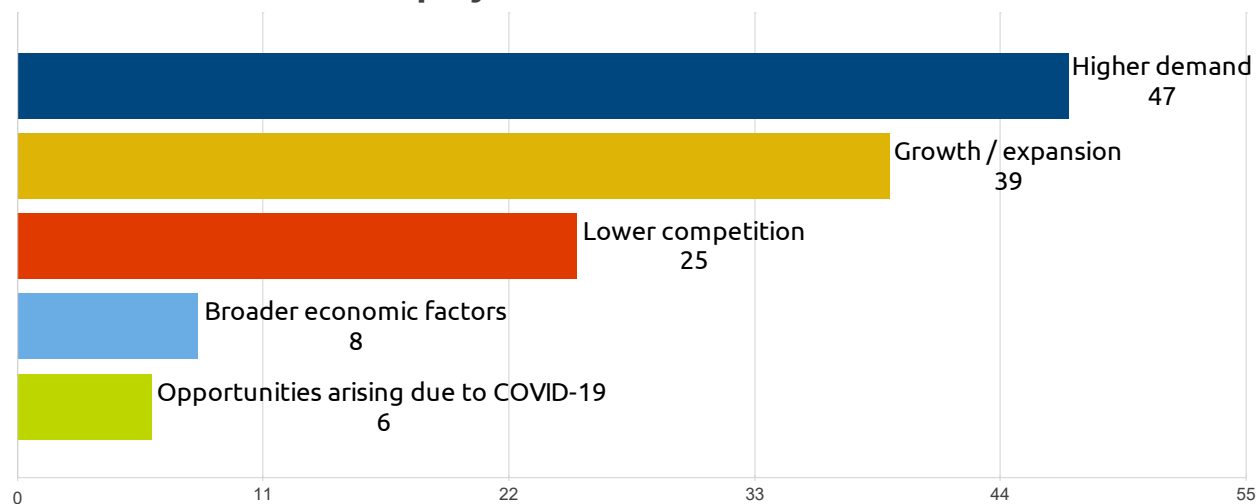


Figure 15

Technology use in your business

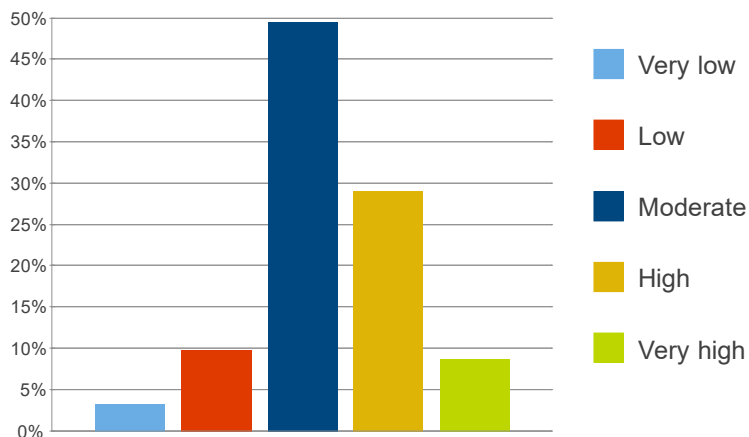


Figure 16

84% of respondents are experiencing **no barriers** to their information technology requirements. For those that are experiencing technological barriers, common causes include internet speed/access (8 responses) and knowledge and training (4 responses).

Workforce

Changes in Staffing

Between 2016 and 2019, the number of people you employ in this business:

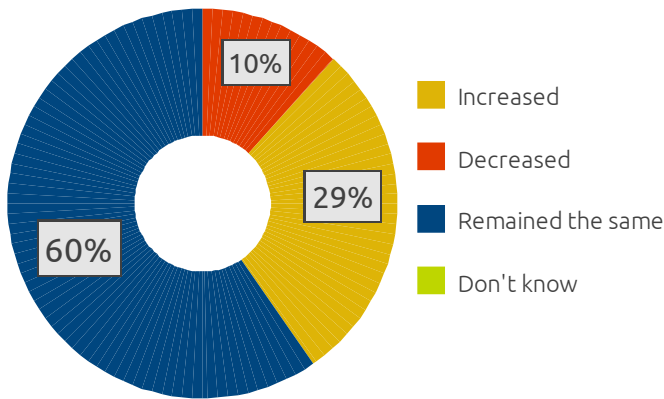


Figure 17

In the year 2020, the number of people you employ in this business:

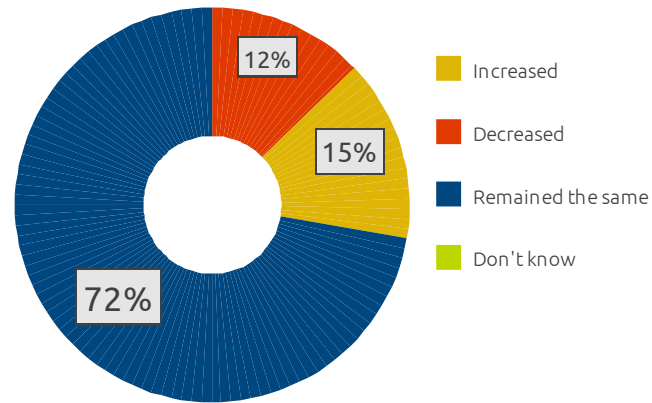


Figure 18

Survey responses confirmed that workforce is a significant issue. Between 2016 and 2019, a majority of businesses had the same number of employees, with a considerable number of respondents increasing the number of people they employ (see figure 17).

In 2020, we see the amount of businesses remaining the same increase to 72% while those who increased staff decreased dramatically to 15% (see figure 18).

Out of the 12 respondents who decreased the number of people they employ in 2020, 8 indicated this was due to negative impacts of COVID-19, along with 7 who had difficulty finding skilled staff.

Workforce Needs

Availability of qualified workers

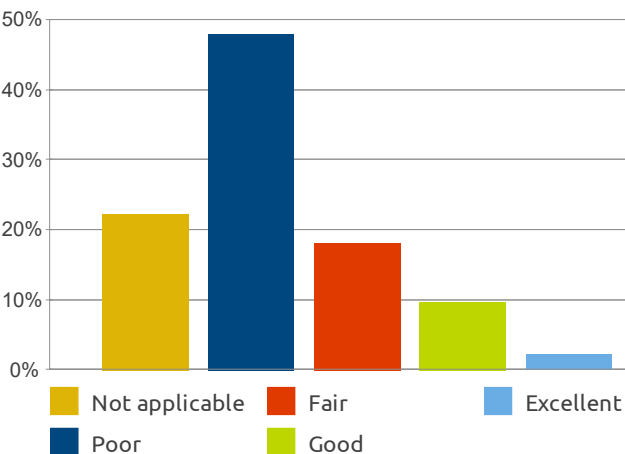


Figure 19

Ability to attract new employees

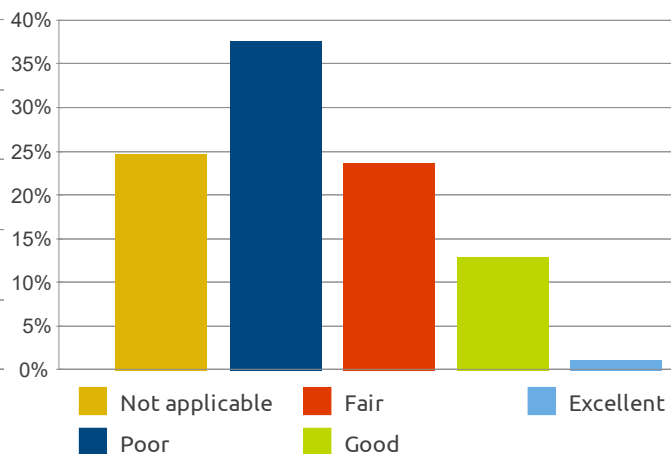


Figure 20

In terms of county factors related to workforce, business respondents rated availability of qualified workers and ability to attract new employees the poorest (see figures 19 & 20).

Stability of the workforce and ability to retain new employees were ranked more evenly.

Hiring Challenges

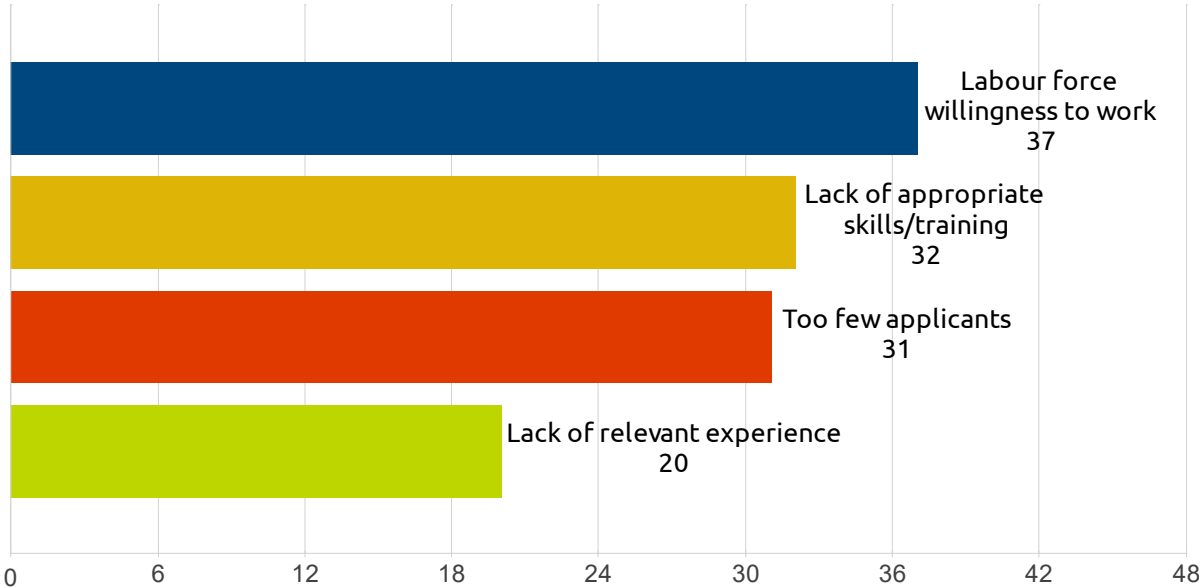


Figure 21

42% of businesses report difficulties hiring.

Workforce Shortages

Shortages by skill level

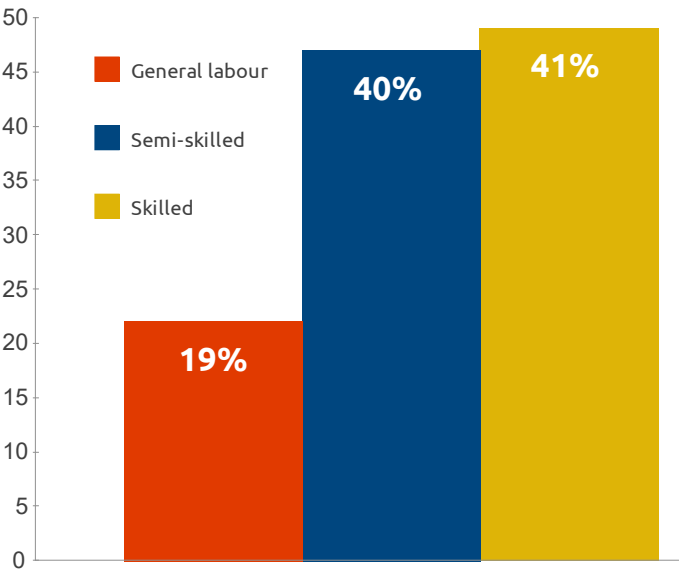


Figure 22

- Examples of general labour occupations: farm labourers, dishwashers and line workers
- Examples of semi-skilled occupations: cooks, construction workers and drivers
- Examples of skilled occupations: nurses, engineers, technicians and management staff

Employee retention issues

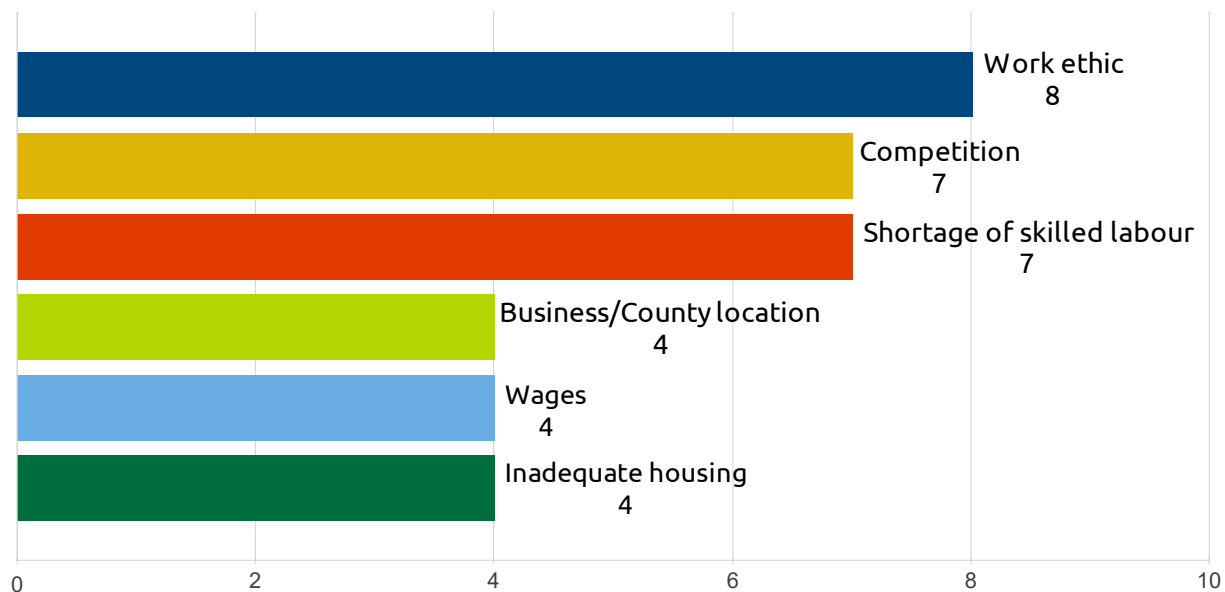


Figure 23

Co-op, Internship and Apprenticeship Programs

Only 27% of respondents are currently participating in co-op, internship or apprenticeship programs. This reveals a significant workforce development opportunity to increase business participation in these programs as a means for employers to connect with potential future staff.

Beneficial Training Opportunities

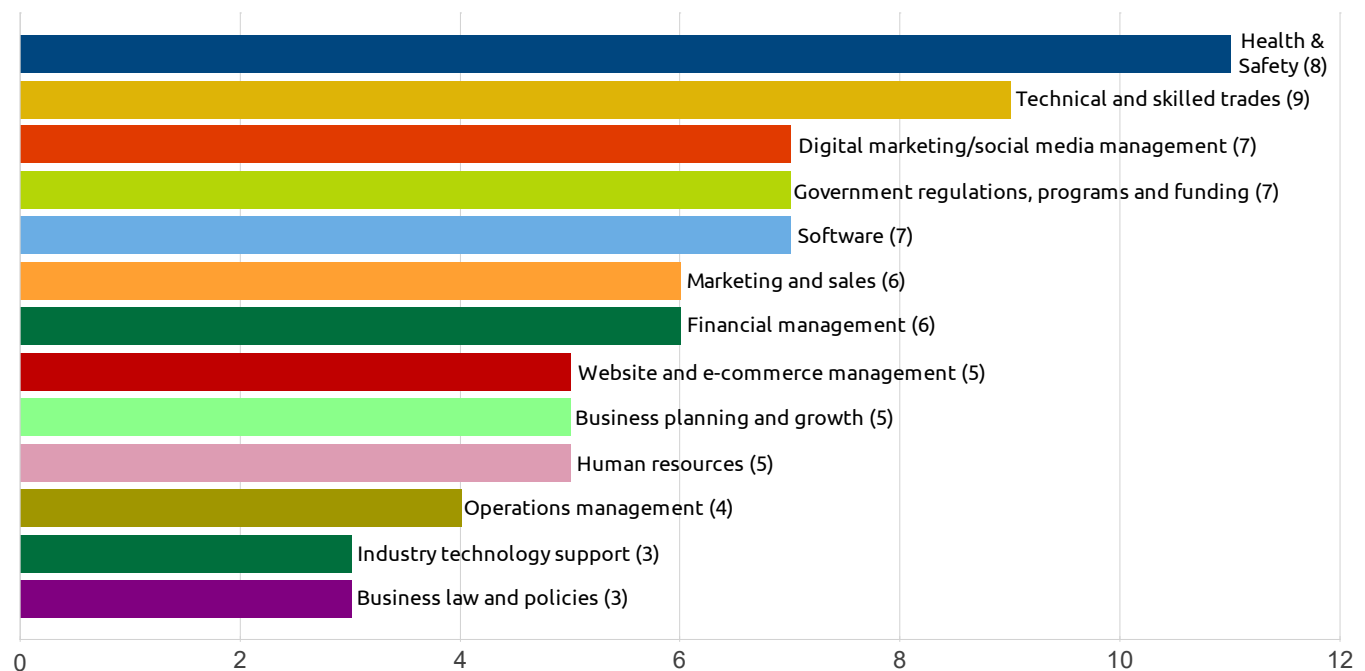


Figure 24

Community Development

Community Services

The general impression of community services is good. Respondents were very satisfied (rated good or excellent) with local elementary & secondary schools and the local Business Improvement Area (BIA). Community services viewed negatively (rated poor or fair) include workforce planning and mental health support services. These services were not highly engaged by businesses.

Local Government Services

The level of satisfaction with local government services is also very good, as businesses were very satisfied with most service categories. Businesses were more likely to be satisfied with services that they were more familiar with, while services that were rated less positively, such as public transit, saw very little contact. Services that were seen most positively include garbage/recycling, fire services and snow removal.

A Good Place to do Business

Respondents highlighted advantages of doing business in Huron County as a sense of community, the supportive people, its desirable location, and local support from residents and businesses.

Opportunities for Community Improvement

Respondents felt that Huron County could be a better place to do business if improvements were made to address the shortage of attainable* housing and workforce.

Requested Changes

Respondents highlighted the most significant changes they would like to see in the next five years to be infrastructural improvements that address the lack of attainable housing.

Beneficial Support Opportunities



Figure 25

*Housing attainable by those with general labour or semi-skilled occupation incomes