



**Portsmouth Economic Development Commission  
Business Retention and Expansion Survey  
2022**

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The Survey Center  
University of New Hampshire  
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*The University of New Hampshire*  
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## Executive Summary

The University of New Hampshire Survey Center conducted the 2022 Business Retention and Expansion Survey on behalf of the Portsmouth Economic Development Commission in order to strengthen the connection between companies, the Portsmouth EDC, and the community while encouraging each business to continue to grow in the way that they see fit.

Survey invitations were sent to a list obtained by the Portsmouth EDC of 2,276 email addresses of Portsmouth business owners and proprietors. The invitation was sent on October 3 and reminder emails were sent on October 13 and October 17. In addition, the Portsmouth EDC posted an open-link on its LinkedIn website. One hundred seventy-two (172) participants completed the survey through a direct invitation received via email while fifteen (15) completed the survey through the open-link. Overall, one hundred eighty-seven (187) participants completed the survey between October 3 and October 24, 2022, yielding a response rate of 8%.

The following figures display survey results including any demographic differences. Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100%.

### Key Findings

#### Demographics

Most respondents say that their location in Portsmouth is their business's headquarters, that they are open year-round, and that they are for-profit. About half have been operating in Portsmouth for 10-39 years and more than half are located Downtown or in the West End. The most common types of businesses are those in the professional, scientific, and technical services, the arts, entertainment, and recreation, the health care and social assistance, and the retail trade industries.

#### Employees

Responding businesses have a mean of ten employees and a median of four. One in five say most or all of their employees have a one-way commute of half an hour or more and just over half say that at least some of their employees are working from home at least one day per week. Nearly half of respondents expect their business's staffing needs to increase over the next twelve months, with many interested in hiring mid-level or entry-level employees. A majority are very or somewhat confident in their ability to hire the employees they need in the next two years and a similar number describe the available pool of employees in Portsmouth and those surrounding area as very good or good.

#### Growth/Expansion

About one-third of respondents say it is very or somewhat likely that their business will expand in the next two years. Those who think it is unlikely that their business will expand most frequently say this is due to the owner not wanting to, economic uncertainty, or not believing they will have sufficient employees. If they were to expand, respondents are split between anticipating expanding in Portsmouth or elsewhere. Those who would prefer to expand elsewhere most often say they would do so because they want to access other markets or they want to lower overhead. Only about a quarter are confident their business could find an affordable location in Portsmouth if they were to expand there.

#### Overall Financial Health

Four in ten respondents expect their business to be better off financially in a year and less than one in ten expect it to be worse off. More than three-quarters of those whose business has been operating in Portsmouth for less than two years expect their business to be better off a year from now. When asked what would help them be in a better financial position, respondents most frequently mention finding employees, attracting additional revenue or clients, or having a better overall economic environment.

#### Problems Facing Business

Four in ten respondents, particularly those in the accommodation and food services sector, say that their business has been affected a lot or some by zoning or permitting restrictions in Portsmouth. Respondents indicate that economic uncertainty is by far the most serious concern for their business, followed by being unable to hire employees, high energy costs, lack of employee housing, and lack of demands for goods or services.

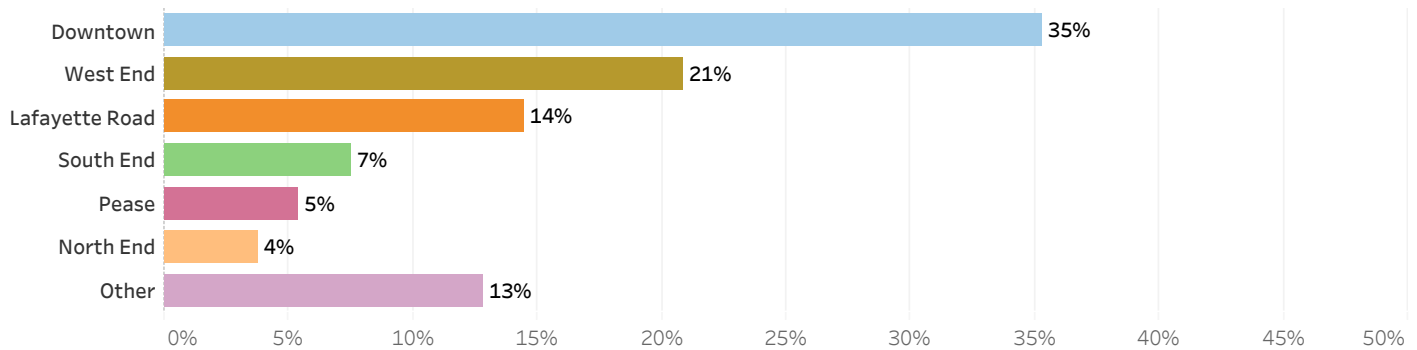
#### Overall Impression of Portsmouth

Just over one-quarter of respondents are promoters of starting or relocating a business in Portsmouth but nearly half are detractors. When asked why they feel this way, detractors overwhelmingly mention the high cost of doing business, while others mention difficulties with the city government. Among promoters, large numbers say they are likely to recommend Portsmouth due to the good quality of life, the good business environment, and them generally liking Portsmouth.

## Demographics

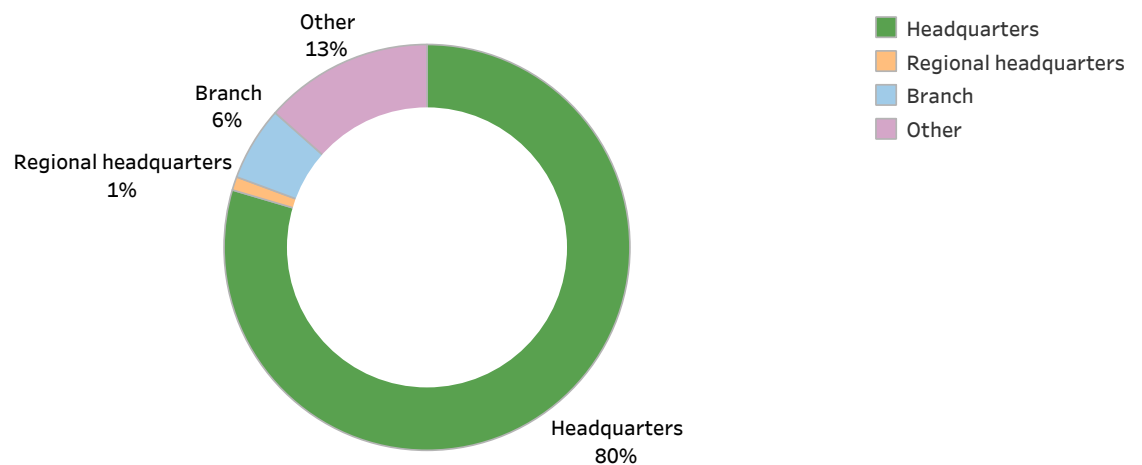
Just over one-third (35%) of respondents say that their business is located in Portsmouth's Downtown, 21% say it is located in the West End, 14% say it is located on Lafayette Road, 7% say it is located in the South End, 5% say it is located near Pease, 4% say it is located in the North End, and 13% say it is located elsewhere in Portsmouth.

**Figure 1: Which of the following best describes the location of your business in Portsmouth? - 2022**



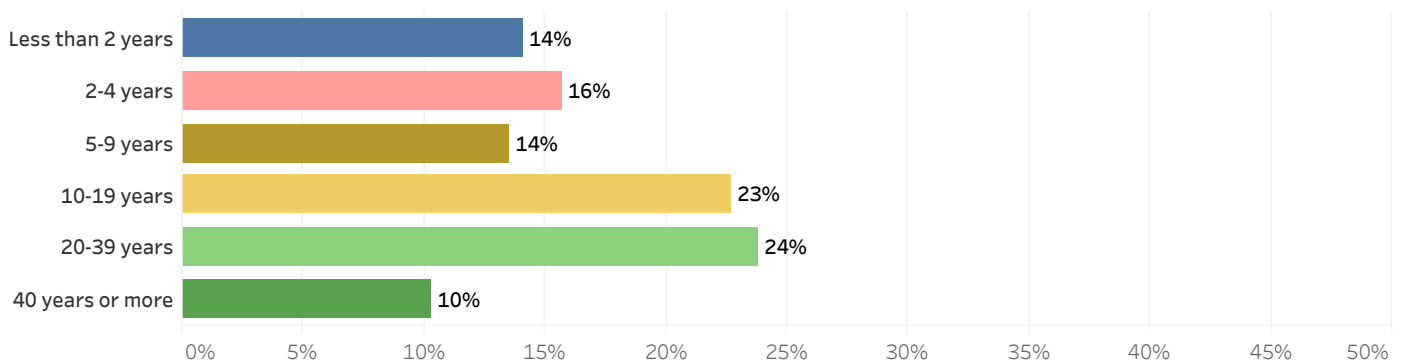
Four in five respondents (80%) say that their location in Portsmouth is their business's headquarters, 1% describe it as a regional headquarters, 6% describe it as a branch, and 13% describe it in another way.

**Figure 2: Which of the following best describes your business in Portsmouth? - 2022**



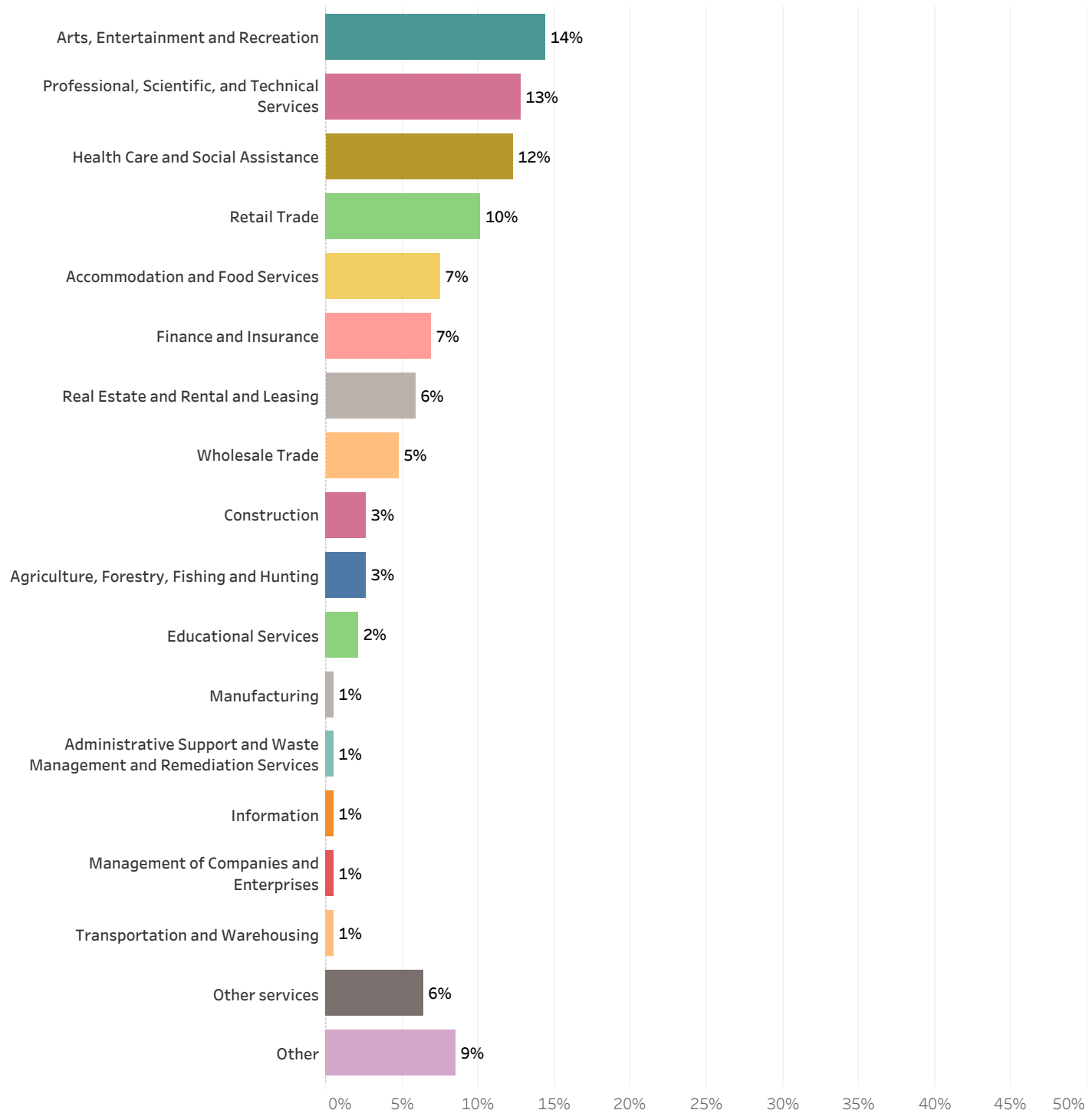
Fourteen percent of respondents say that their business has been operating for less than two years in Portsmouth, 16% have been operating for 2-4 years, 14% have been operating for 5-9 years, 23% have been operating for 10-19 years, 24% have been operating for 20-39 years, and 10% have been operating in Portsmouth for forty years or more.

**Figure 3: How long has your business been operating in Portsmouth? - 2022**



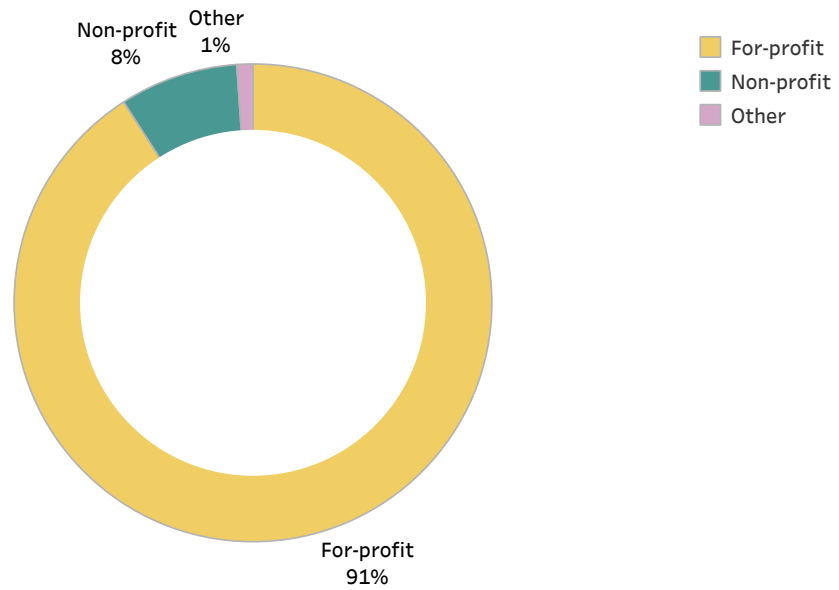
Fourteen percent of respondents say that their business is in the arts, entertainment, or recreation industry, 13% are in the professional, scientific, and technical services industry, 12% are in the health care and social assistance industry, 10% are in the retail trade industry, 7% each are in the accommodation and food services or the finance and insurance industries, and 6% are in the real estate, rental, and leasing industry. Five percent or less say that their business is in the wholesale trade (5%), the construction (3%), the agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting (3%), or the educational services (2%) industries, while 1% each say their business is in the manufacturing, the administrative support and waste management and remediation services, the information, the management of companies and enterprises, or the transportation and warehousing industries. Six percent say their business is in the other services industry while 9% say theirs is another type of business.

**Figure 4: Which one of the following best describes your organization’s primary industry? (Please select one) - 2022**



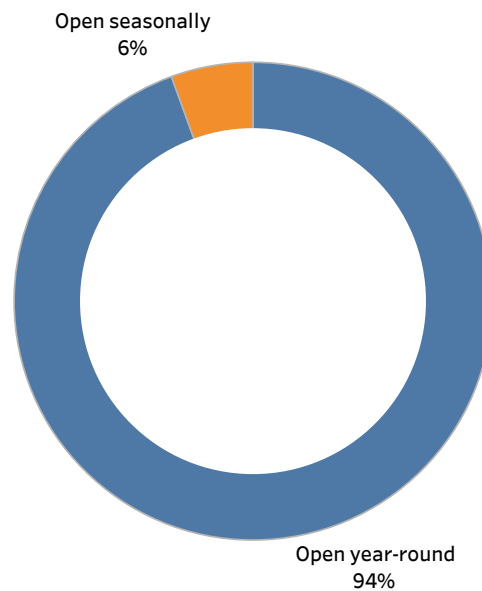
Nine in ten respondents (91%) say that their business is for-profit, 8% say their business is a non-profit, and 1% describe their business in another way.

Figure 5: Is your business a for-profit or non-profit business? - 2022



The vast majority of respondents (94%) say that their business is open year-round while 6% say it is open seasonally.

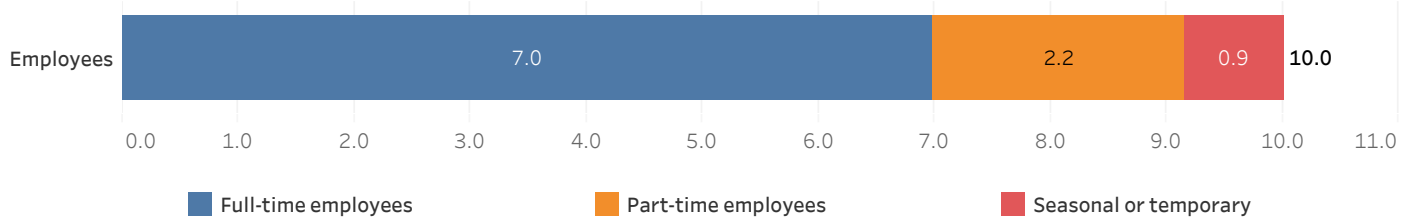
Figure 6: Is your business open year-round or seasonally? - 2022



## Employees

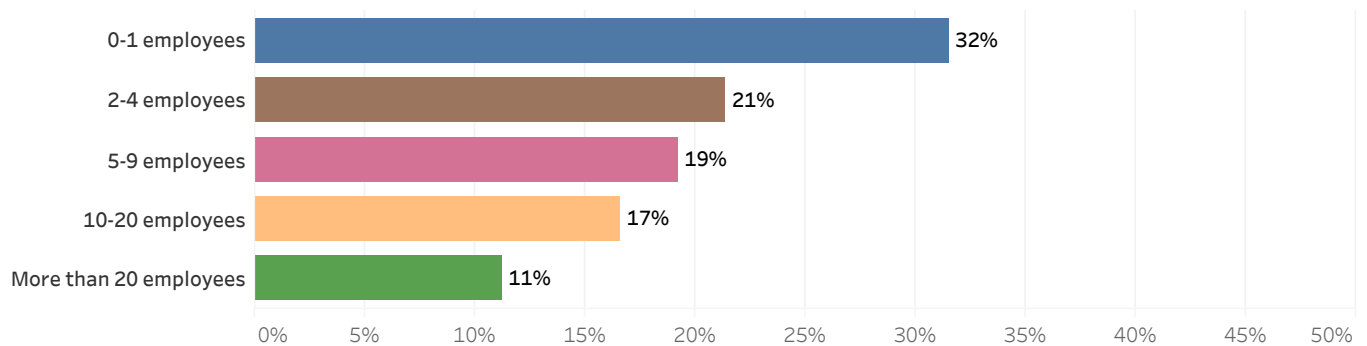
Respondents report that they currently employ a mean of 10.0 people in the state of New Hampshire; they have a mean of 7.0 full-time employees, 2.2 part-time employees, and .9 seasonal or temporary employees. The median respondent says their business has four total employees.

Figure 7a: Including the owner/proprietor, approximately how many employees in Portsmouth does your business currently employ? - 2022



Overall, 32% of respondents say they have 0-1 employees, 21% have 2-4 employees, 19% have 5-9 employees, 17% have 10-20 employees, and 11% have more than twenty employees.

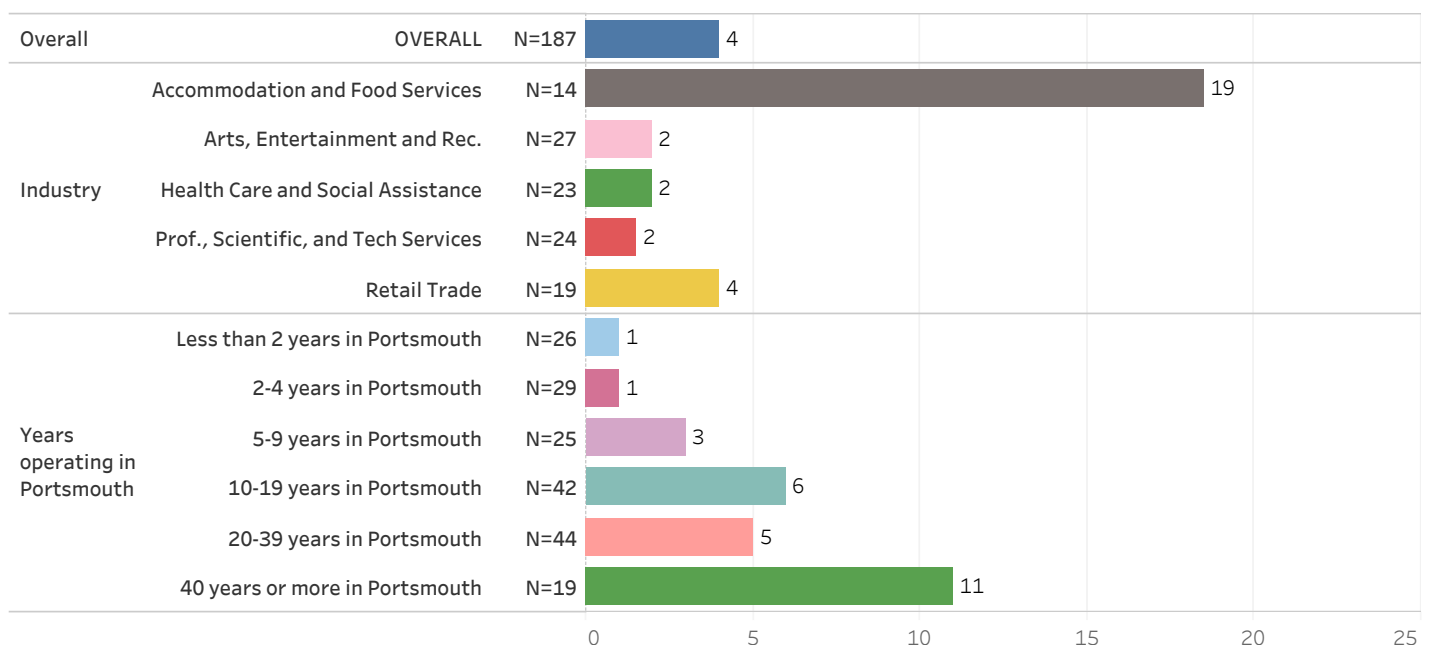
Figure 7b: Employees currently employed in Portsmouth (grouped) - 2022



Respondents whose business is in the accommodation and food services industry and those whose business has been operating in Portsmouth for forty years or more tend to have a greater number of employees.

Figure 7c: Employees currently employed in Portsmouth - by Demographics - 2022

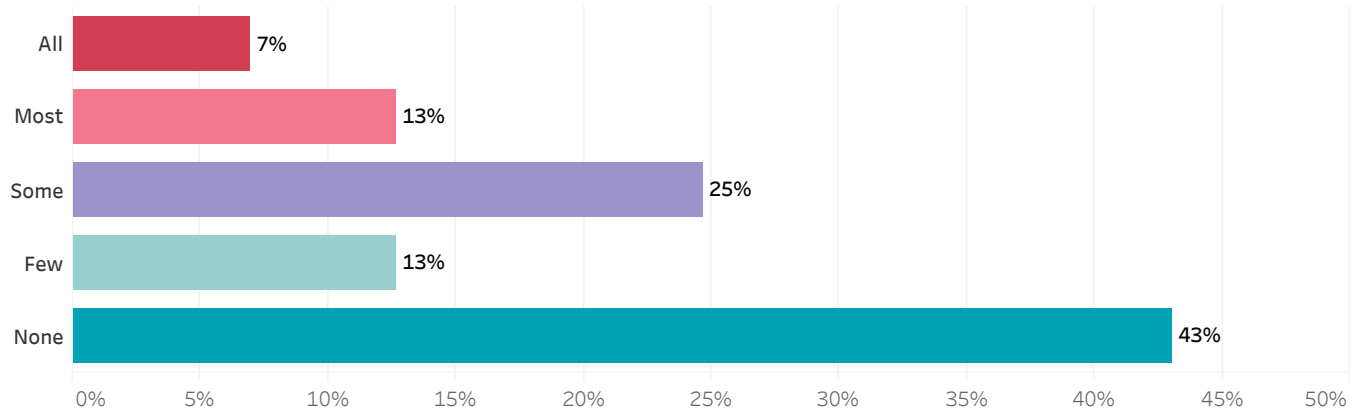
Median





Seven percent of respondents say that, to the best of their knowledge, all of their employees travel more than thirty minutes each way to get to work, 13% say that most of their employees have this long of a commute, 25% say that some of their employees have this commute, 13% say that few have this commute, and 43% say that none of their employees travel more than thirty minutes each way to get to work.

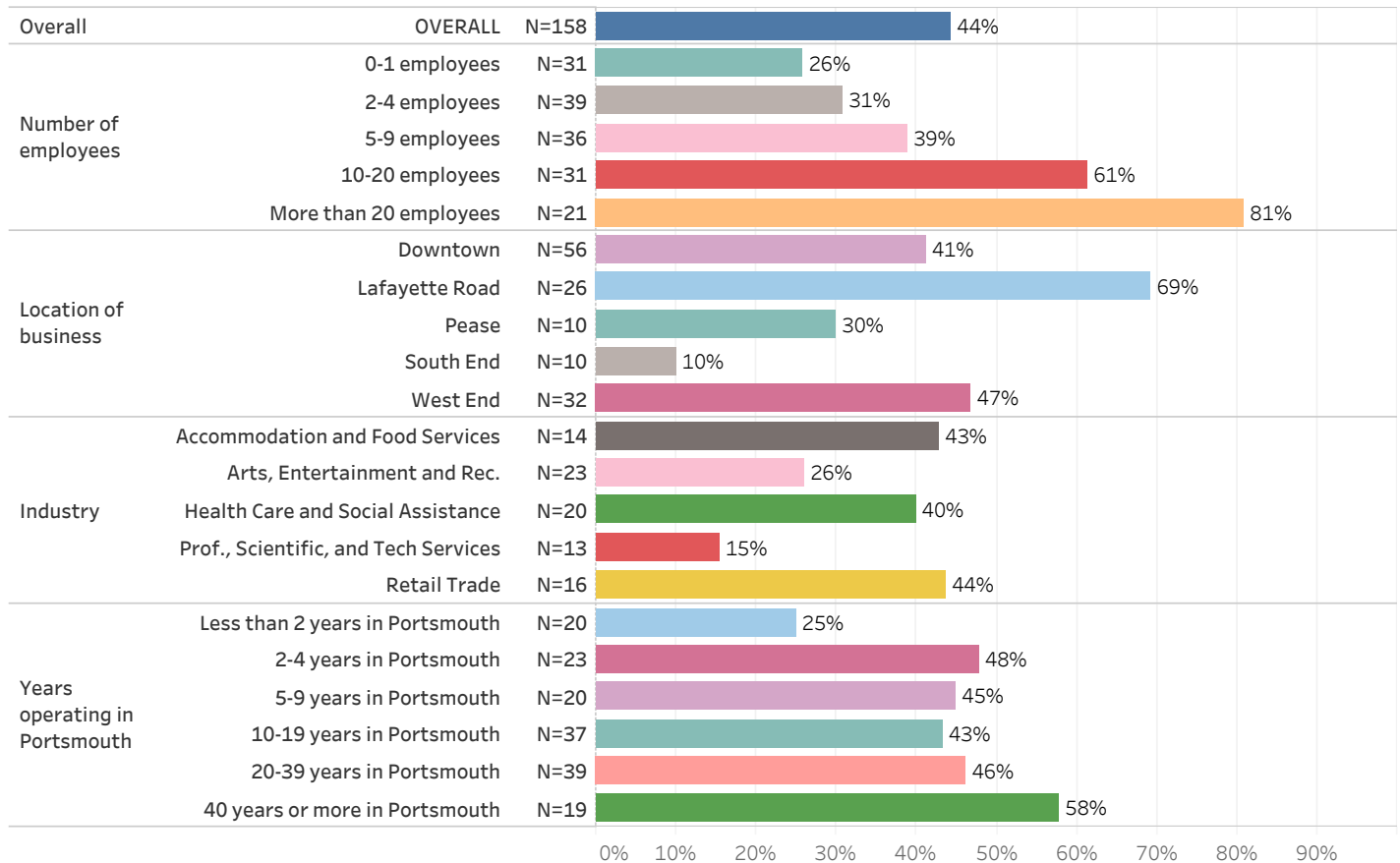
**Figure 8a: To the best of your knowledge, about how many of your employees travel more than 30 minutes each way to get to work? - 2022**



Larger businesses, those located on Lafayette Road, and those which have been operating for forty years or more in Portsmouth are more likely than others to say that at least some of their employees travel more than thirty minutes each way to get to work. Those with few employees, those located near Pease or in the South End, and those in the professional, scientific, and technical services or the arts, entertainment, and recreation industries are less likely to say so.

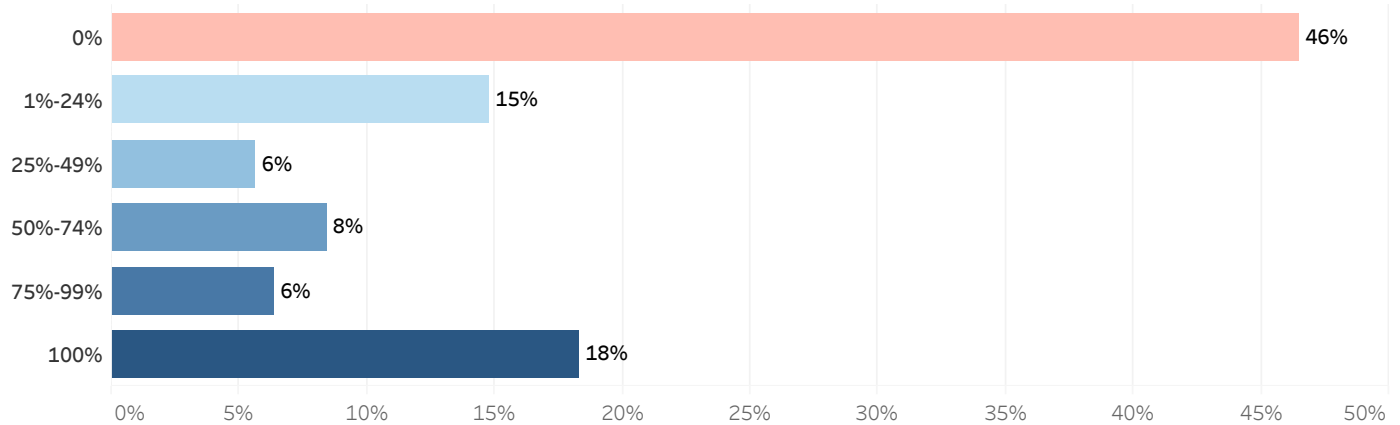
**Figure 8b: How many of your employees travel more than 30 minutes each way to get to work - by Demographics - 2022**

At least some



Nearly half (46%) of respondents say that none of their employees currently work remotely at least one day per week, 15% say that 1%-24% of their employees are working remotely at least one day a week, 6% say that 25%-49% are, 8% say that 50%-74% are, 6% say that 75%-99% are, and 18% say that all of their employees are currently working remotely at least one day per week.

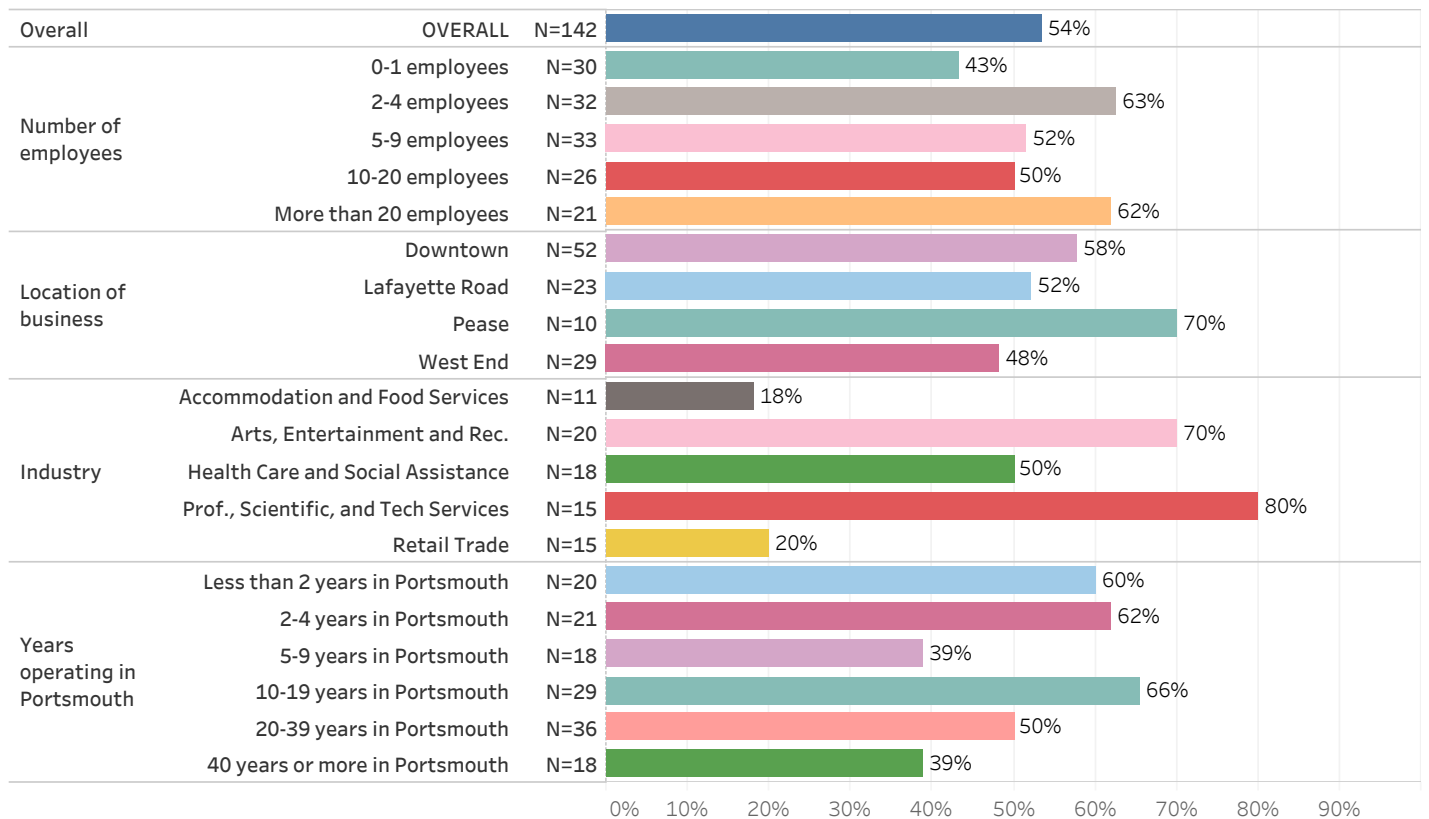
**Figure 9a: Approximately what percentage of your employees are currently working remotely at least one day per week? - 2022**



Businesses with 2-4 employees or more than twenty employees, those located near Pease, those in the professional, scientific, and technical services industry or the health care and social assistance industries, and those who have been operating for less than five years or for 10-19 years in Portsmouth are more likely than others to say that at least some of their employees currently work remotely at least one day per week. Those in the accommodation and food services and the retail trade industries and those who have been operating in Portsmouth for 5-9 years or more than forty years are less likely to say so.

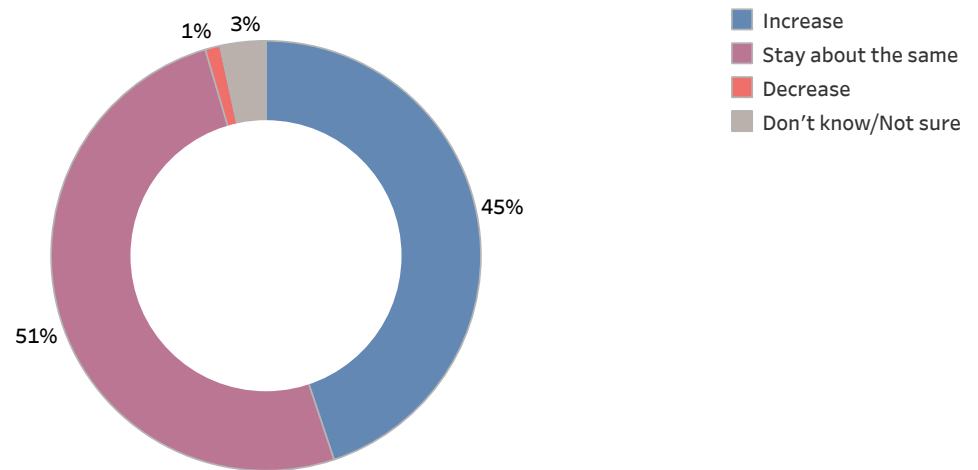
**Figure 9b: Percentage of your employees currently working remotely at least one day per week - by Demographics - 2022**

1% or more



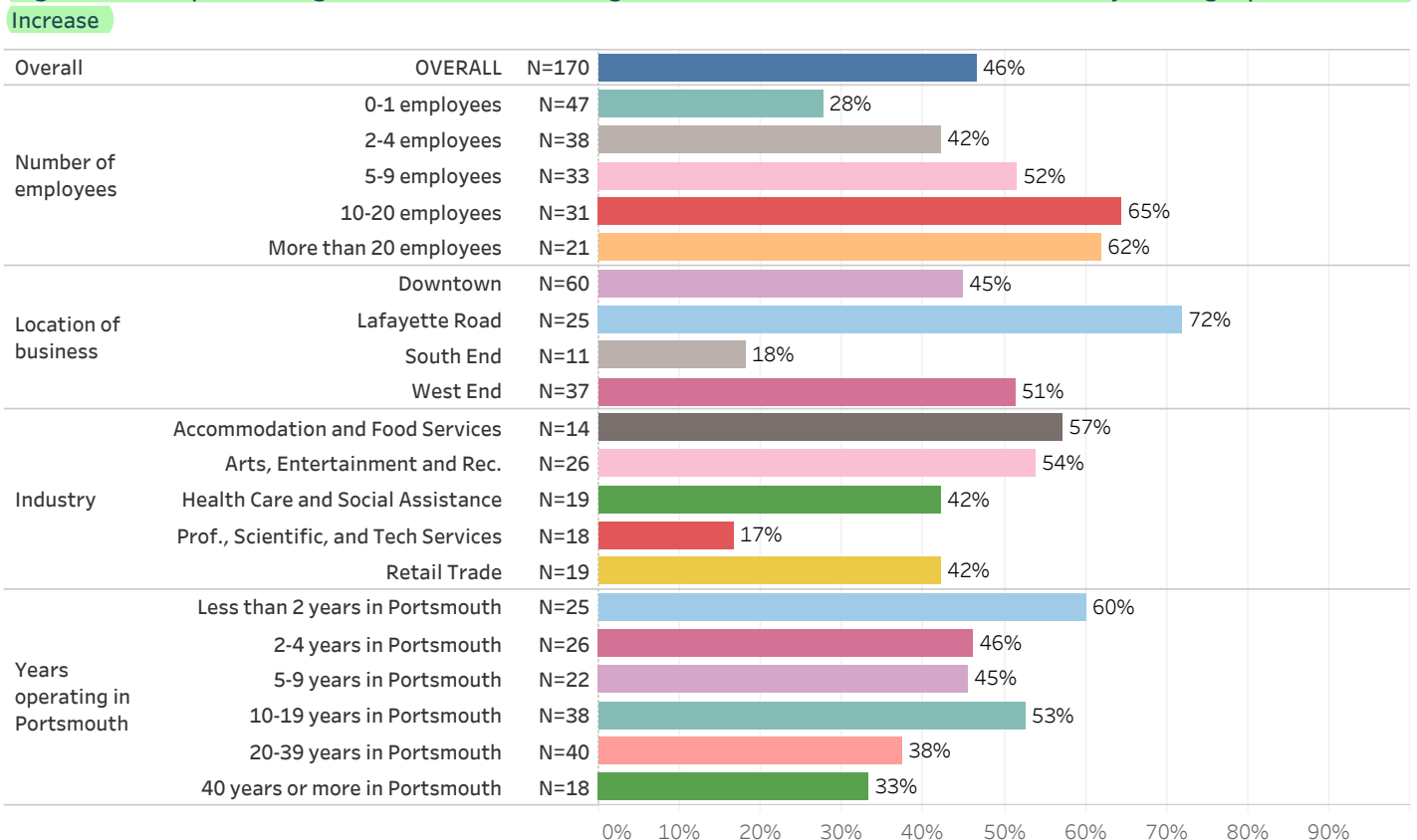
Forty-five percent of respondents say that they expect their staffing needs to increase over the next twelve months, 51% expect their staffing needs to stay the same, 1% expect their staffing needs to decrease, and 3% don't know or are unsure.

Figure 10a: Do you expect your business's staffing needs to increase, decrease, or stay the same over the next twelve months? - 2022



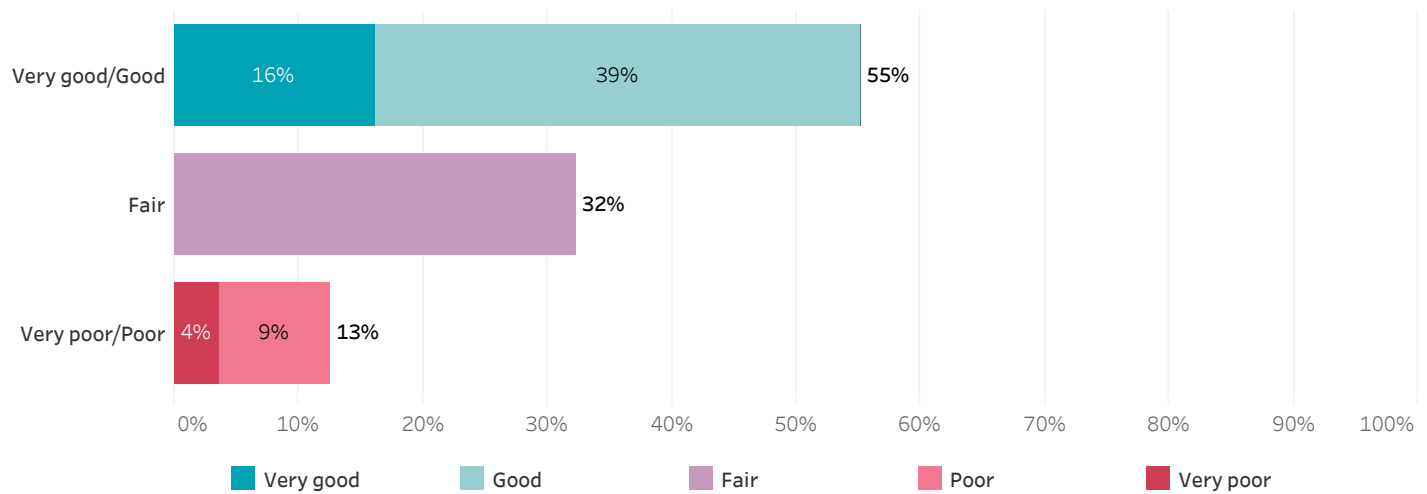
Respondents whose business has a larger number of employees, those located on Lafayette Road, those in the accommodation and food services or the arts, entertainment and recreation industries, and those whose business has been operating for in Portsmouth for less than two years or for 10-19 years are more likely than others to expect their staffing needs to increase over the next twelve months. Those with few employees, those whose business is located in the South End, those in the professional, scientific, and technical services industry, and those whose business has been operating in Portsmouth for forty years or more are less likely to expect their staff needs to increase.

Figure 10b: Expect change to business's staffing needs over the next twelve months - by Demographics - 2022



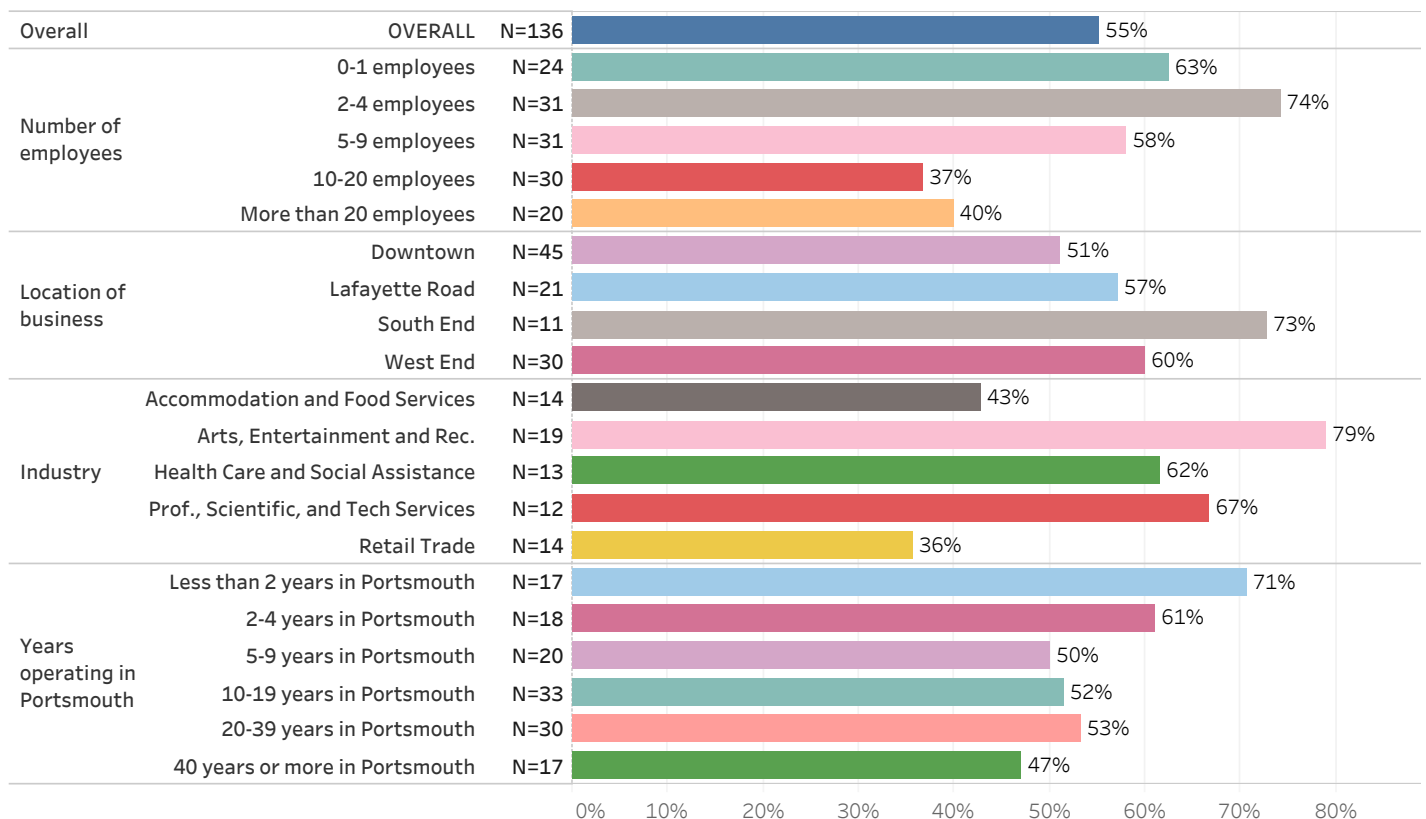
More than half of respondents (55%) believe the quality of employees available in Portsmouth and the surrounding area is very good (16%) or good (39%), 32% describe the available local employees as fair in quality, and 13% describe them as poor (9%) or very poor (4%).

**Figure 11a: In your experience, how would you rate the quality of employees currently available in Portsmouth and the surrounding area? - 2022**



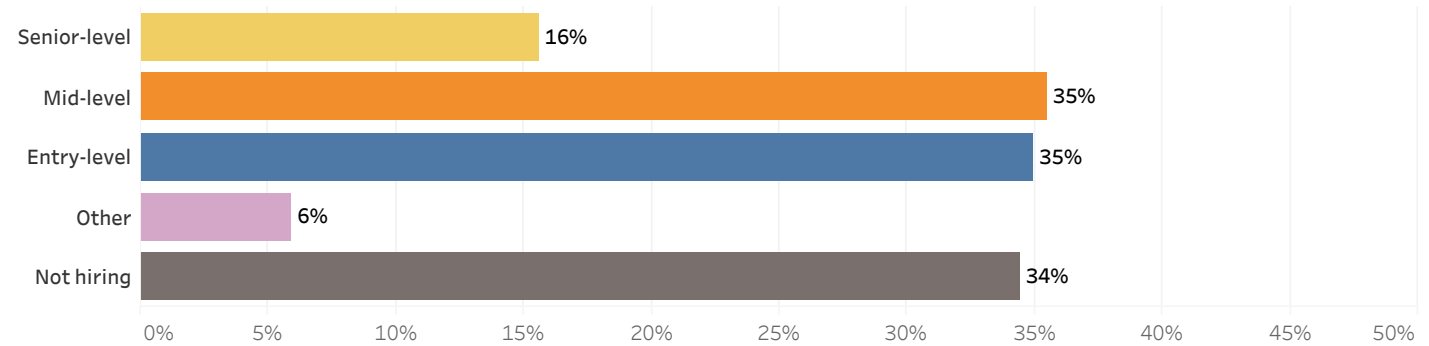
Those whose business has 2-4 employees, those located in the South End, those in the arts, entertainment, and recreation industry, and those which have been operating in Portsmouth for less than two years are more likely than others to rate the quality of employees available in Portsmouth and the surrounding area as very good or good. Those with ten employees or more and those in the accommodation and food services and the retail trade industries are less likely to rate available employees as very good or good.

**Figure 11b: How would rate the quality of employees currently available in Portsmouth and surrounding area - by Demographics - 2022**  
Very good/Good



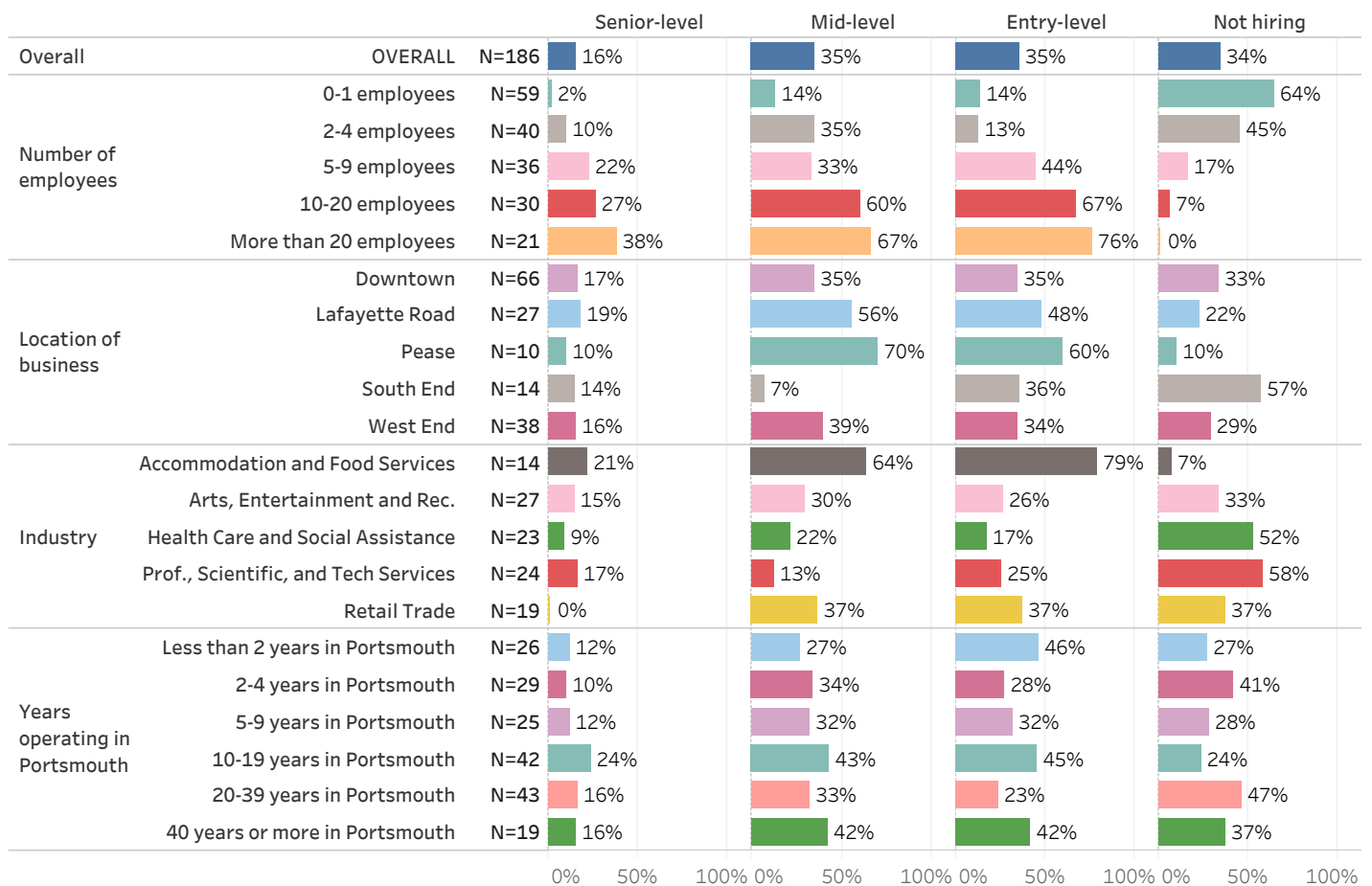
Sixteen percent of respondents anticipate their business needing to hire senior-level employees in the next twelve months, 35% expect to hire mid-level employees, 35% expect to hire entry-level employees, 6% plan to hire other types of employees, and 34% do not anticipate hiring any employees in the next twelve months.

**Figure 12a: What types of employees do you anticipate your business needing to hire in next twelve months? (Please select all that apply) - 2022**



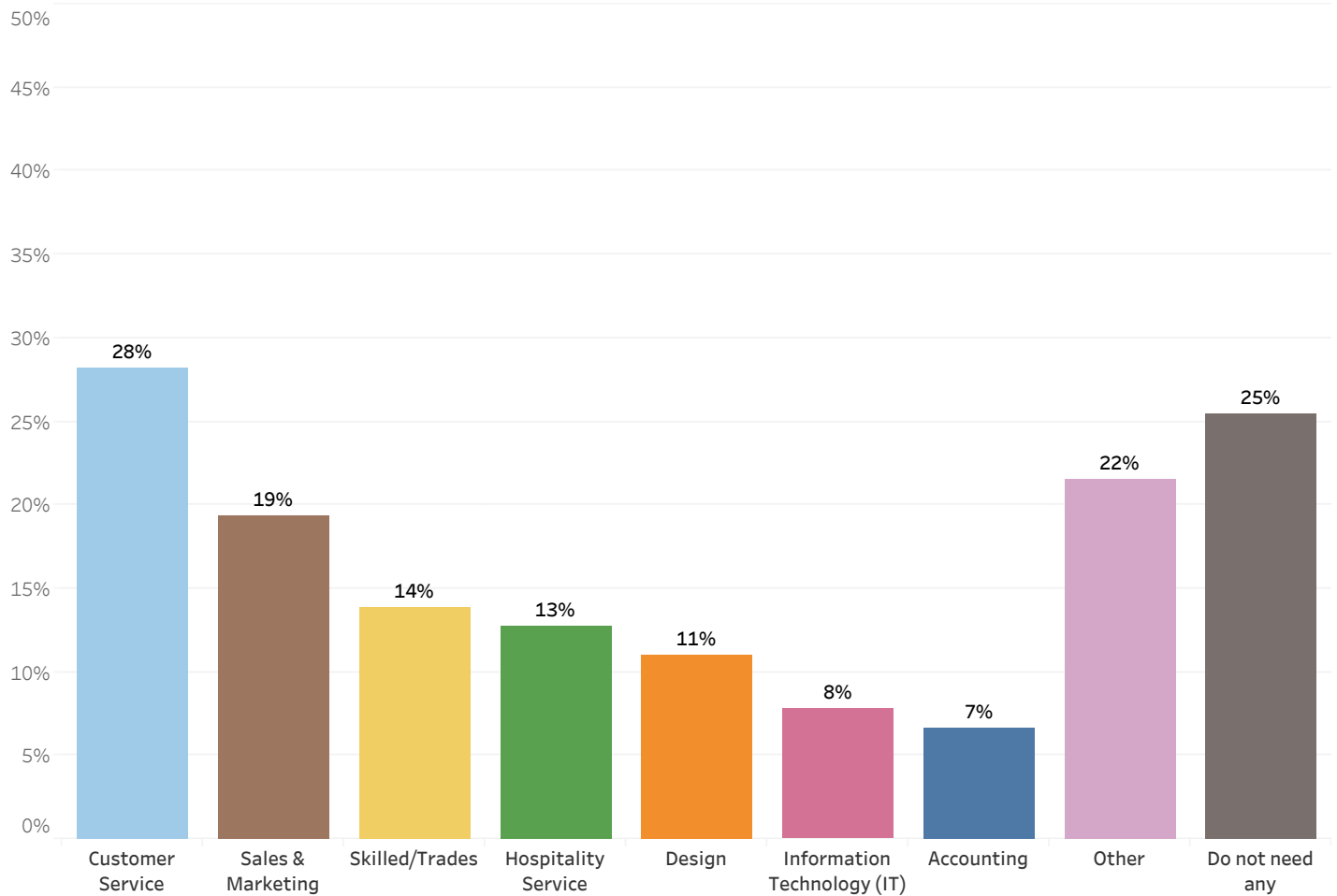
Respondents with larger businesses are generally more likely to anticipate hiring each of these types of employees while more than half of those with fewer than five employees do not expect to hire anyone. Those whose business is in the accommodation and food services industry and those located near Pease or on Lafayette Road are particularly likely to say they plan to hire mid and entry-level employees in the next twelve months. More than half of those whose business has 0-1 employees, those located in the South End, and those in the professional, scientific, and technical services or the health care and social assistance industries say they do not plan to hire anyone in that time.

**Figure 12b: Types of employees anticipate business needing to hire in next twelve months (Please select all that apply) - by Demographics - 2022**



Twenty-eight percent of respondents anticipate their business looking for employees with customer service skills, 19% anticipate needing those with sales and marketing skills, 14% anticipate needing those with skilled/trades skills, 13% anticipate needing those with hospitality service skills, 11% anticipated needing those with design skills, 8% anticipate needing those with information technology skills, and 7% anticipate needing those with accounting skills. Twenty-two percent anticipate needing those with other types of skills while 25% say they don't need any more employees.

**Figure 13a: Which types of employees skills do you anticipate your business looking for in the people you attempt to hire? (Please select all that apply) - 2022**



**Figure 13b: Types of employees skills anticipate business looking for in the people you attempt to hire? - 2022 - Other - Selected quotations**

*"Child Care Teachers"*

*"Engineering"*

*"Healthcare"*

*"Knowledge of portsmouth history and biking"*

*"Occupational therapists"*

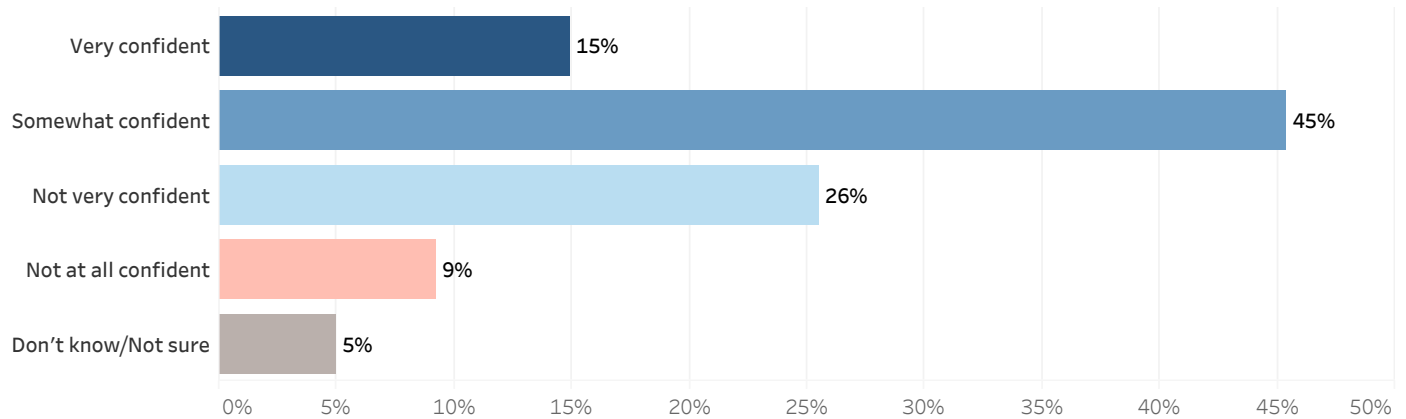
*"Project Management"*

*"Value employee retention, the turnover has devastated the sense of community."*

*"Restaurant & delivery"*

Fifteen percent of respondents are very confident that their business will be able to hire the employees it needs in the next two years, 45% are somewhat confident, 26% are not very confident, 9% are not at all confident, and 5% don't know or are unsure.

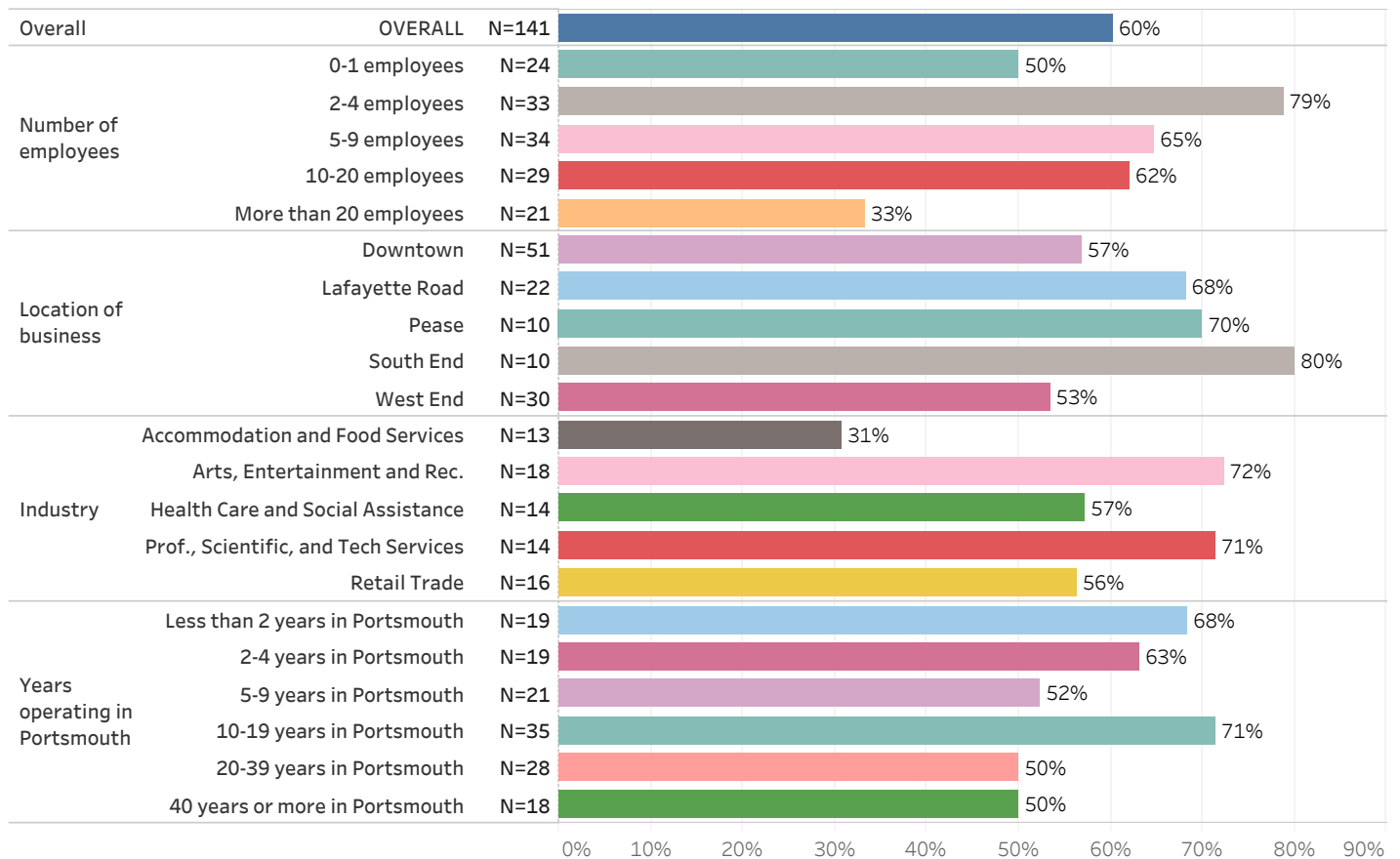
**Figure 14a: How confident are you that your business will be able to hire the employees it needs in the next two years? - 2022**



Those with 2-4 employees, those whose business is located in the South End, those in the art, entertainment, and recreation and the professional, scientific, and technical services industries, and those whose business has been operating in Portsmouth for 10-19 years are more likely than others to be very or somewhat confident that their business will be able to hire the employees it needs in the next two years. Those with more than twenty employees, those in the accommodation and food services industry, and those whose business has been operating in Portsmouth for twenty years or more are less likely to be confident that their business can do this.

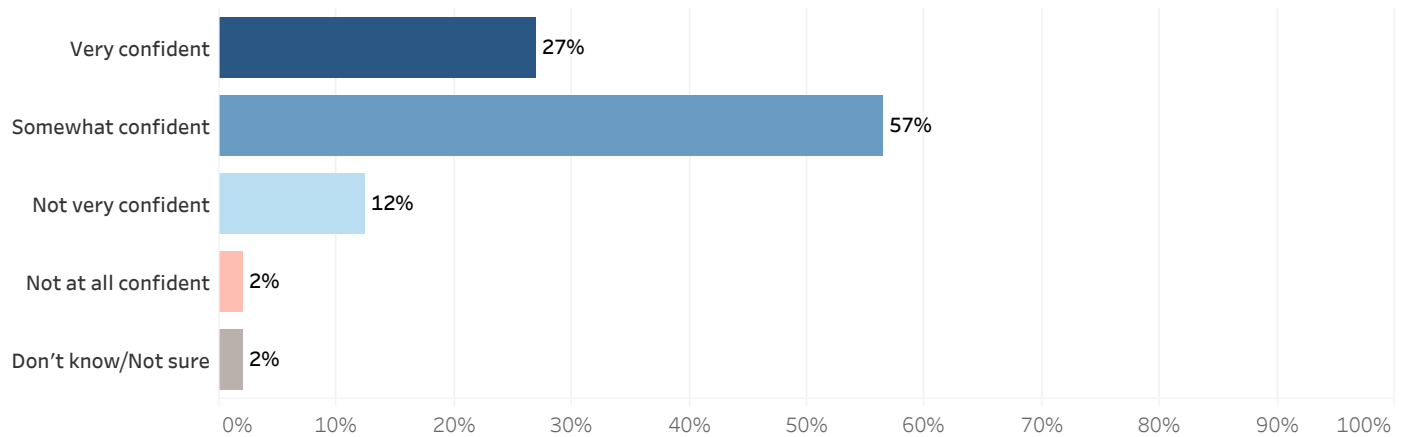
**Figure 14b: Confidence business will be able to hire the employees it needs in the next two years - by Demographics - 2022**

Very or somewhat confident



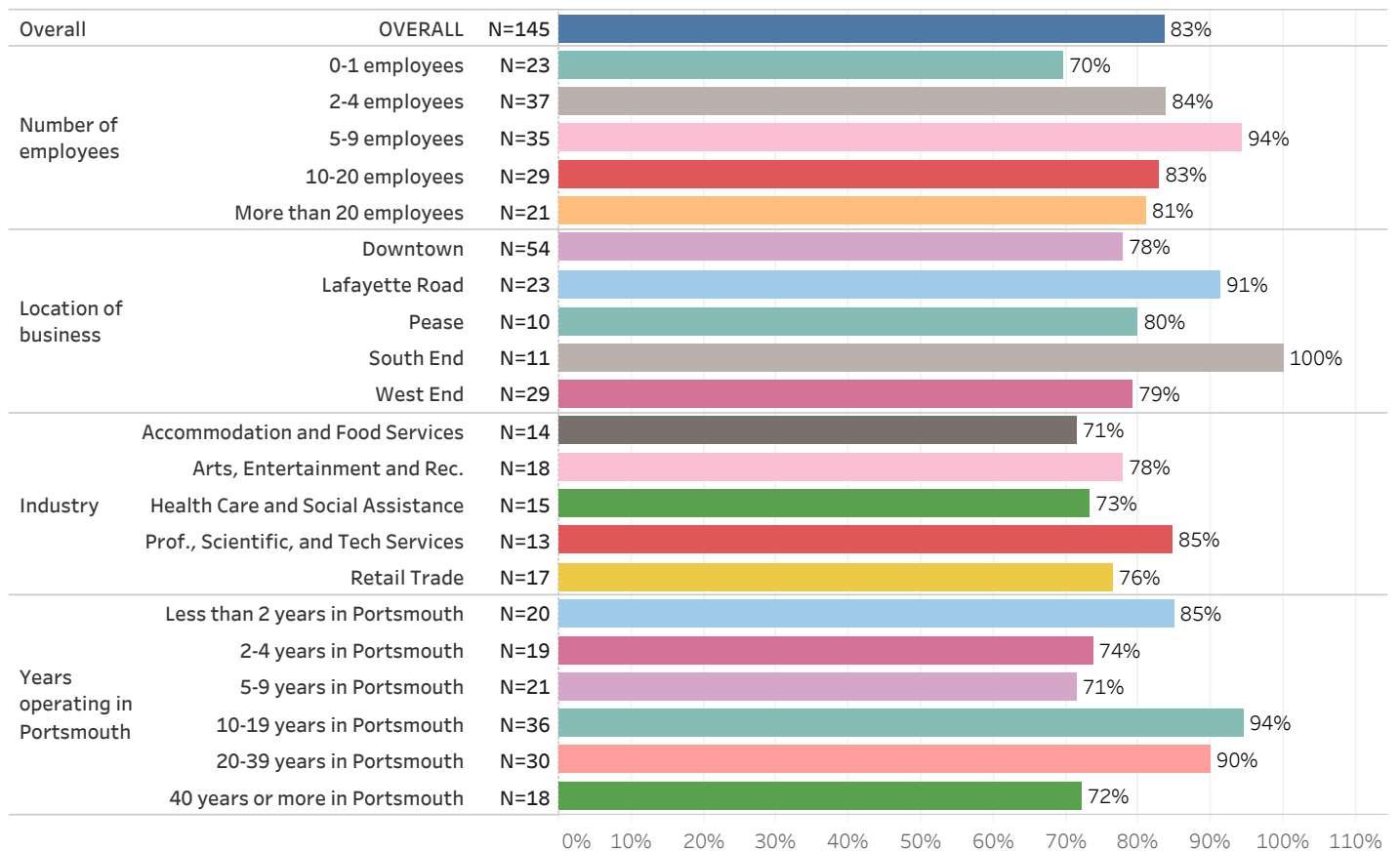
Just over one-quarter of respondents (27%) are very confident that their business will be able to retain critical employees it needs in the next two years, 57% are somewhat confident, 12% are not very confident, 2% are not at all confident, and 2% don't know or are unsure.

**Figure 15a: How confident are you that your business will be able to retain critical employees it needs in the next two years? - 2022**



Respondents whose business has 5-9 employees, those located in the South End, and those whose business has been operating in Portsmouth for 10-19 years are more likely than others to be very or somewhat confident that their business will be able to retain critical employees it needs in the next two years. Those with 0-1 employees, those in the accommodation and food services or the health care and social assistance industries, and those whose business has been operating in Portsmouth for 5-9 years or for more than forty years are less likely to be very or somewhat confident.

**Figure 15b: Confidence business will be able to retain critical employees it needs in the next two years - by Demographics - 2022**  
Very or somewhat confident

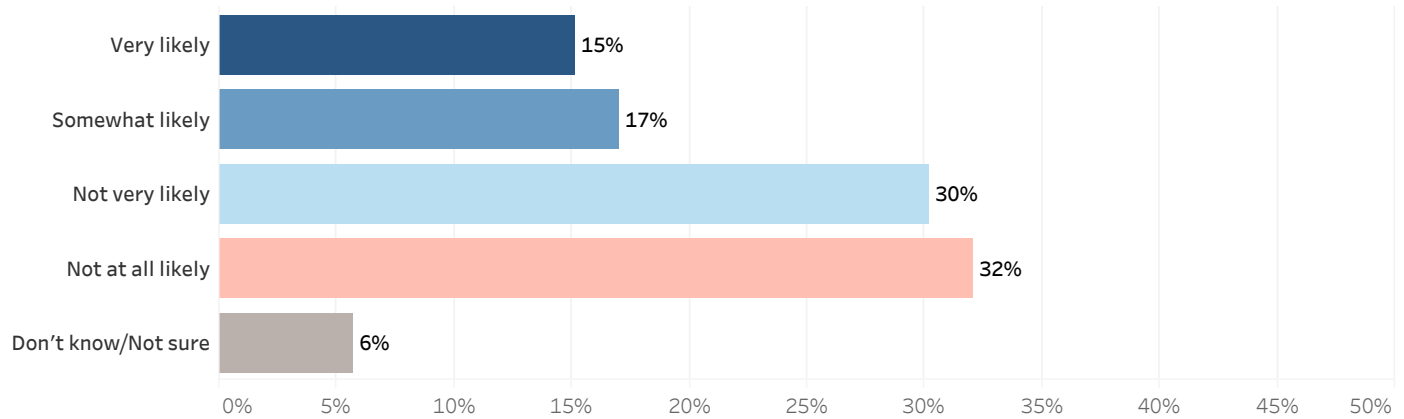




## Growth/Expansion

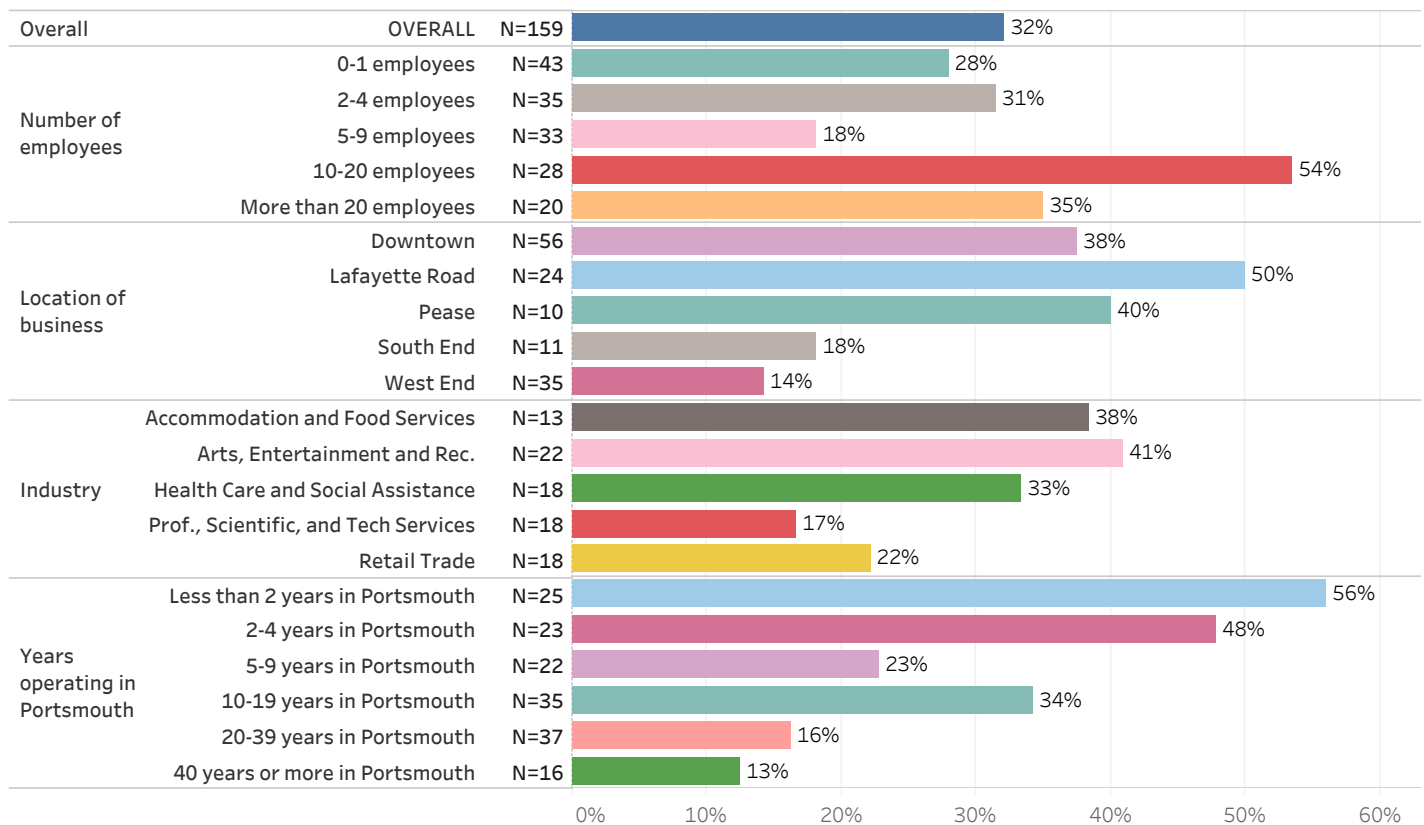
Only 15% of respondents say that they think their business is very likely to expand to a new location or locations in the next two years, 17% are somewhat likely to do so, 30% are not very likely to do so, 32% are not at all likely to do so, and 6% don't know or are unsure.

**Figure 16a: Based on what you know now, how likely would you say your business is to expand to a new location or locations in the next two years? - 2022**



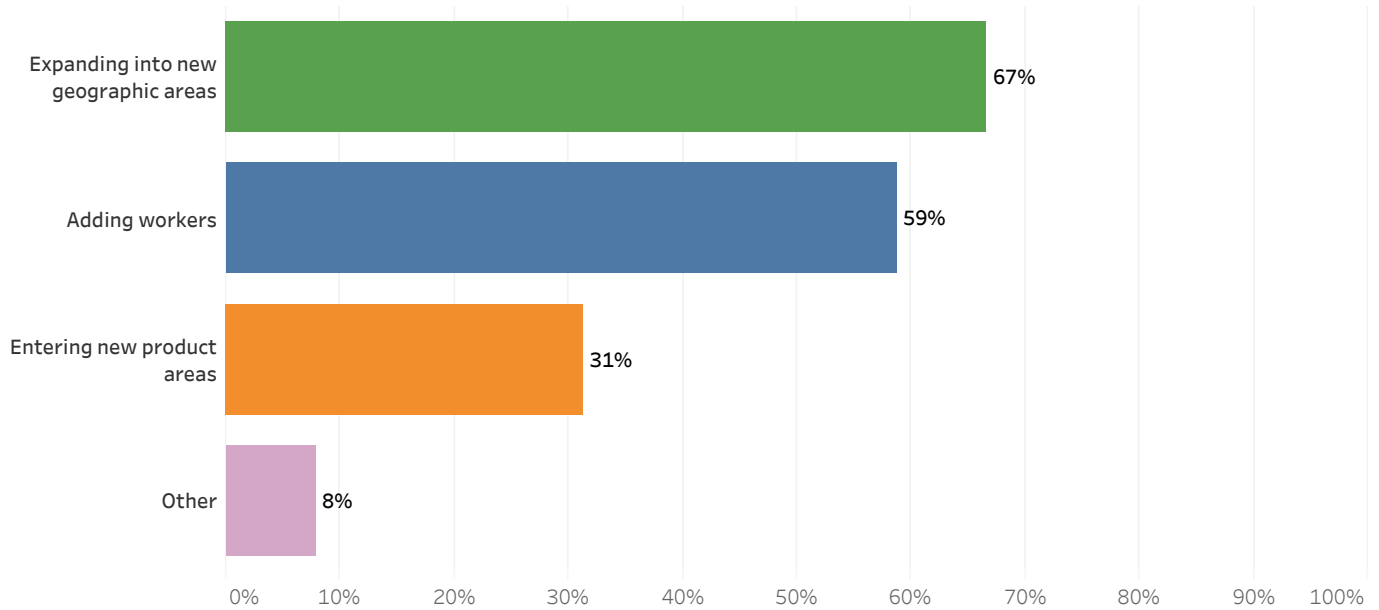
Respondents with 10-20 employees, those whose business is located on Lafayette Road, and those whose business has been operating in Portsmouth for less than five years are more likely than others to say that their business is very or somewhat likely to expand in the next two years. Those with 5-9 employees, those located in the South End or the West End, those in the retail trade or the professional, scientific, and technical services industries, and those whose business has been operating in Portsmouth for twenty years or more are less likely to say so.

**Figure 16b: Likelihood business will expand to a new location or locations in the next two years - by Demographics - 2022**  
Very or somewhat likely



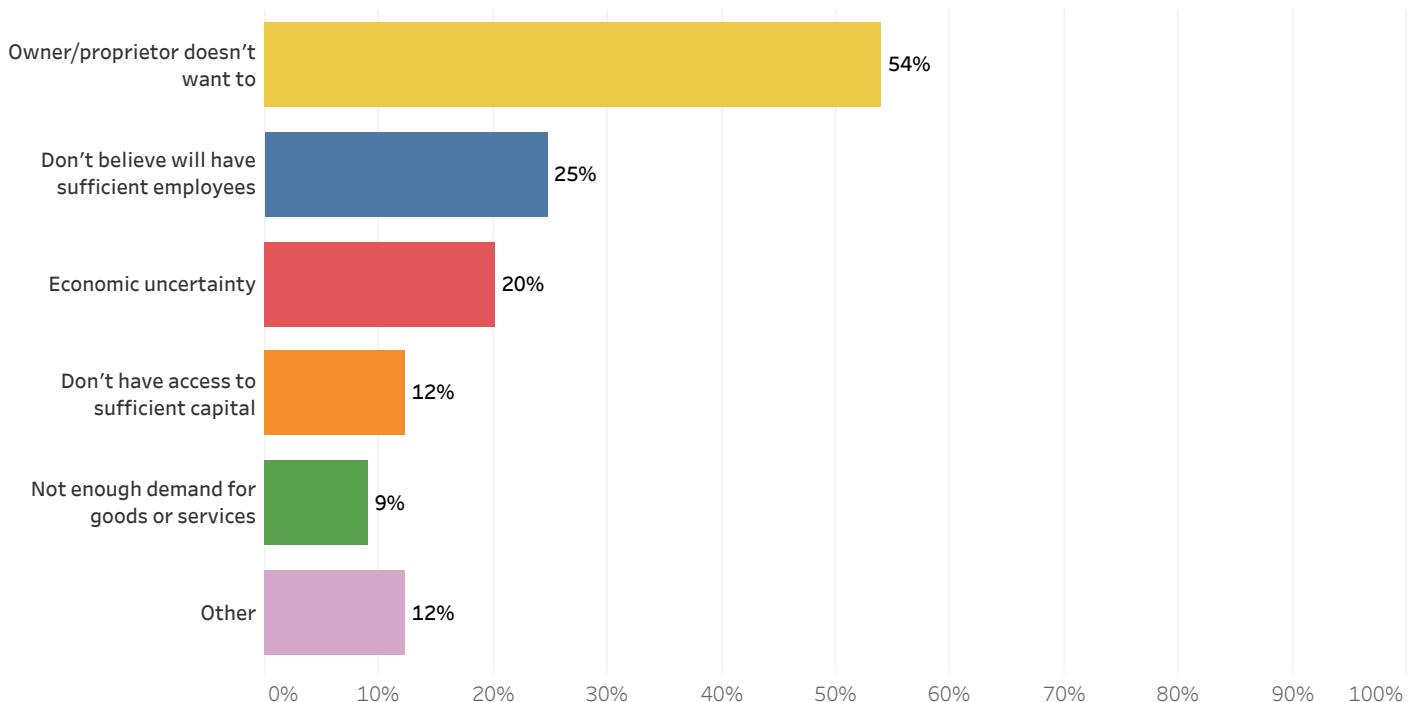
Among those who think their business is very or somewhat likely to expand to a new location or locations in the next two years (N=51), 67% say they anticipate their business expanding into new geographic areas, 59% anticipate expansion by adding workers, 31% anticipate expanding by entering new product areas, and 8% anticipate expanding in another way.

**Figure 17: In which of the following ways do you anticipate your business expanding in the next two years? (Please select all that apply) - 2022**



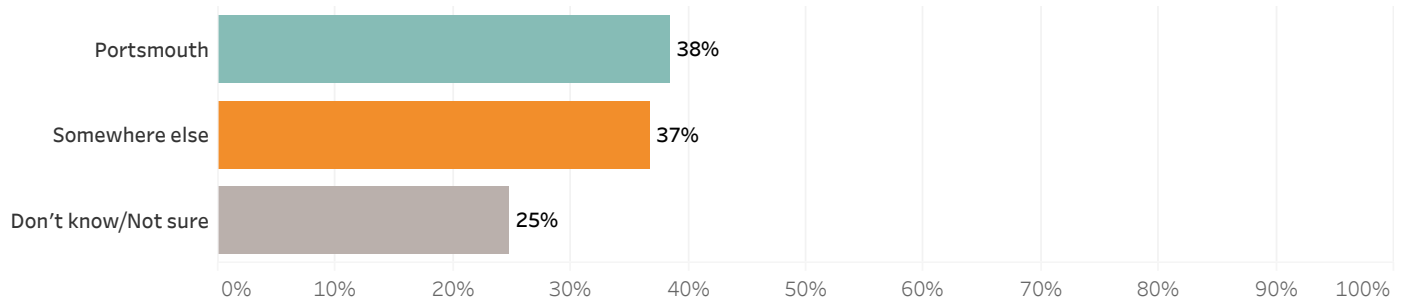
Among those who think their business is not very or not at all likely to expand to a new location or locations in the next two years (N=89), just over half (54%) say they think this because the owner or proprietor doesn't want to, 25% say it is because they don't believe they will have sufficient employees to do so, 20% say it is because of economic uncertainty, 12% say it is because they don't have sufficient access to capital, 9% say there is not enough demand for their business's goods or services, and 12% provide another reason for why they think their business is not very or not at all likely to expand.

**Figure 18: Why would you say that your business is unlikely to expand to a new location in the next two years? (Please select all that apply) - 2022**



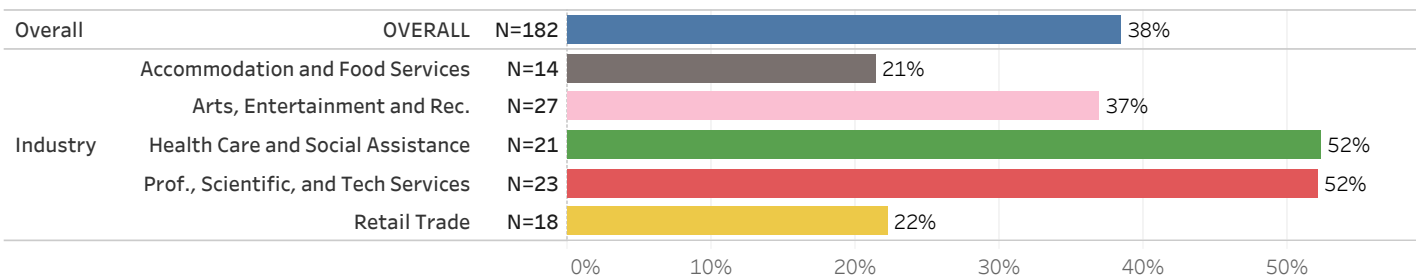
If their business were to expand to a new location, 38% of respondents think that new location would be in Portsmouth, 37% think it would be somewhere else, and 25% don't know or are unsure.

**Figure 19a: If your business were to expand to a new location, do you think that new location would be in Portsmouth or somewhere else? - 2022**



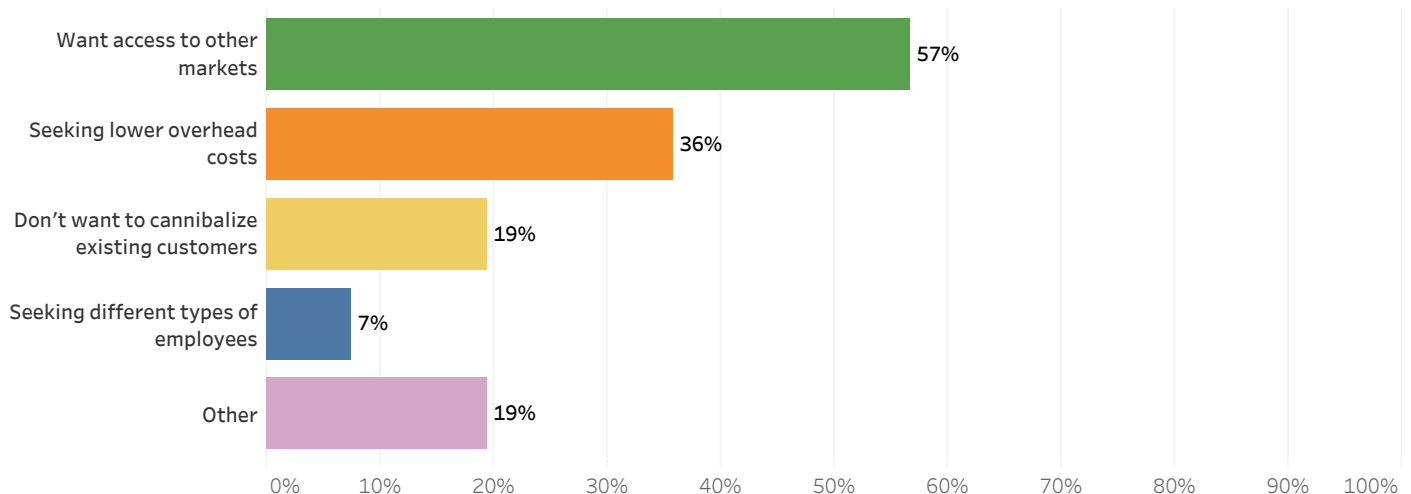
Respondents in the health care and social assistance and the professional, scientific, and technical services industries are more likely than others to say that their business would expand to a new location in Portsmouth if it were to expand, while those in the accommodation and food services and the retail trade industries are less likely to say so.

**Figure 19b: If your business were to expand to a new location, do you think that new location would be in Portsmouth or somewhere else? - by Demographics - 2022**



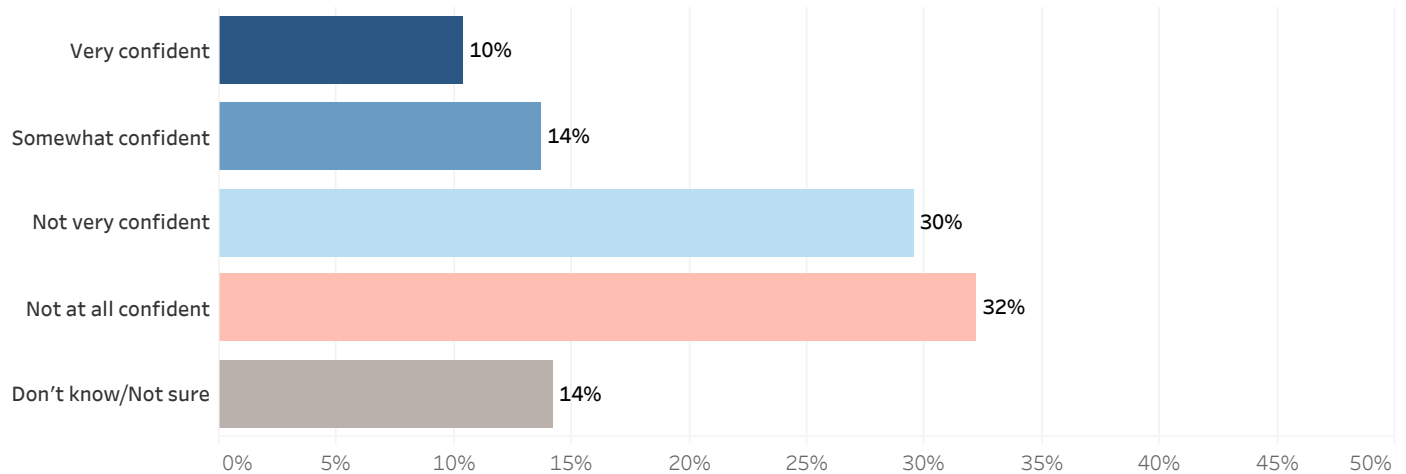
Among those who think their business would expand outside of Portsmouth if their business were to expand (N=67), respondents most frequently say they would likely expand outside Portsmouth because they want to access other markets (57%) while 36% say they would because they would be seeking lower overhead costs. Fewer respondents say their business would be likely to move outside Portsmouth because they don't want to cannibalize existing customers (19%), because they are seeking different types of employees (7%), or for another reason (19%).

**Figure 20: Why do you think your business would expand outside of Portsmouth? (Please select all that apply) - 2022**



Only 10% of respondents are very confident that their business would be able to find an affordable location in Portsmouth if their business were to physically expand. Fourteen percent say they are somewhat confident in being able to find an affordable location, 30% are not very confident, 32% are not at all confident, and 14% don't know or are unsure.

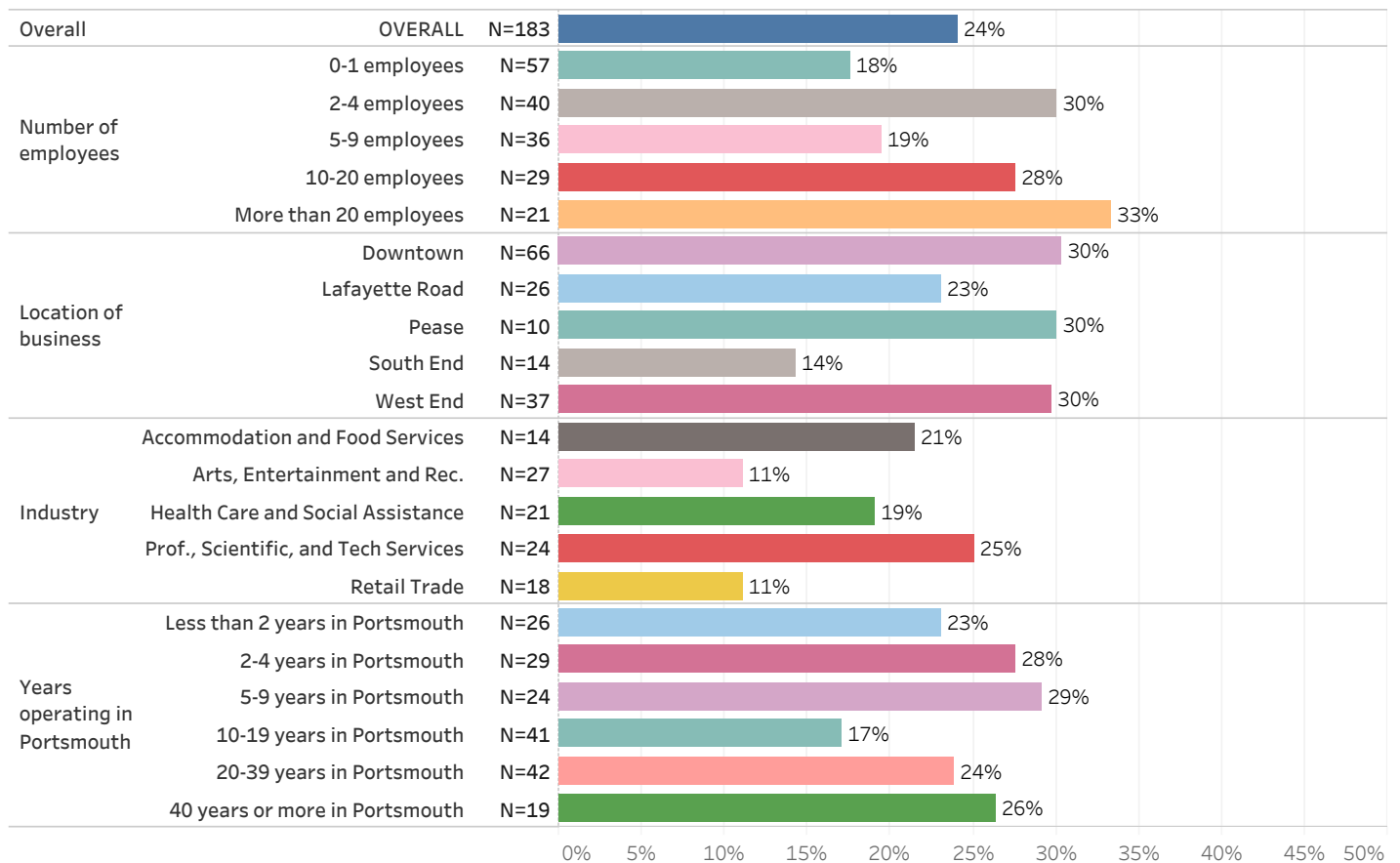
**Figure 21a: If your business were to physically expand in Portsmouth, how confident are you that your business could find an affordable location to suit your business's needs? - 2022**



Respondents whose business is located in the South End and those in the arts, entertainment, and recreation or the retail trade industries are less likely than others to be very or somewhat confident that their business could find an affordable additional location in Portsmouth.

**Figure 21b: Confidence business could find affordable location if were to physically expand in Portsmouth - by Demographics - 2022**

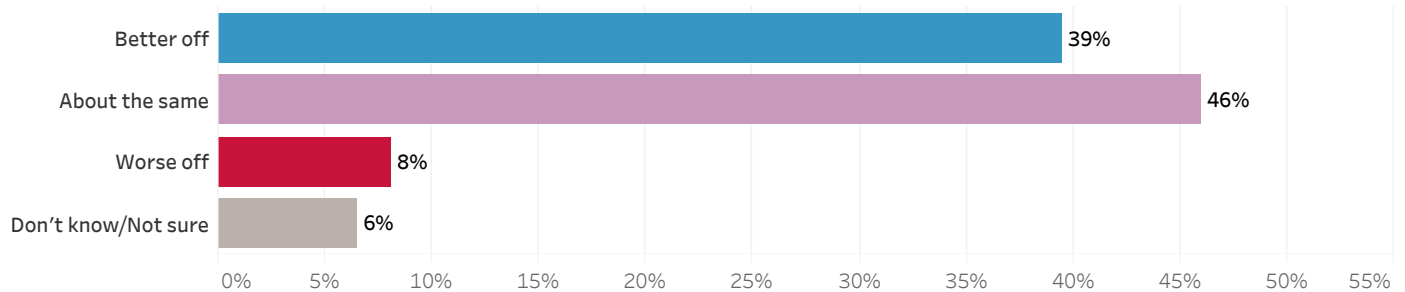
Very or somewhat confident



## Overall Financial Health

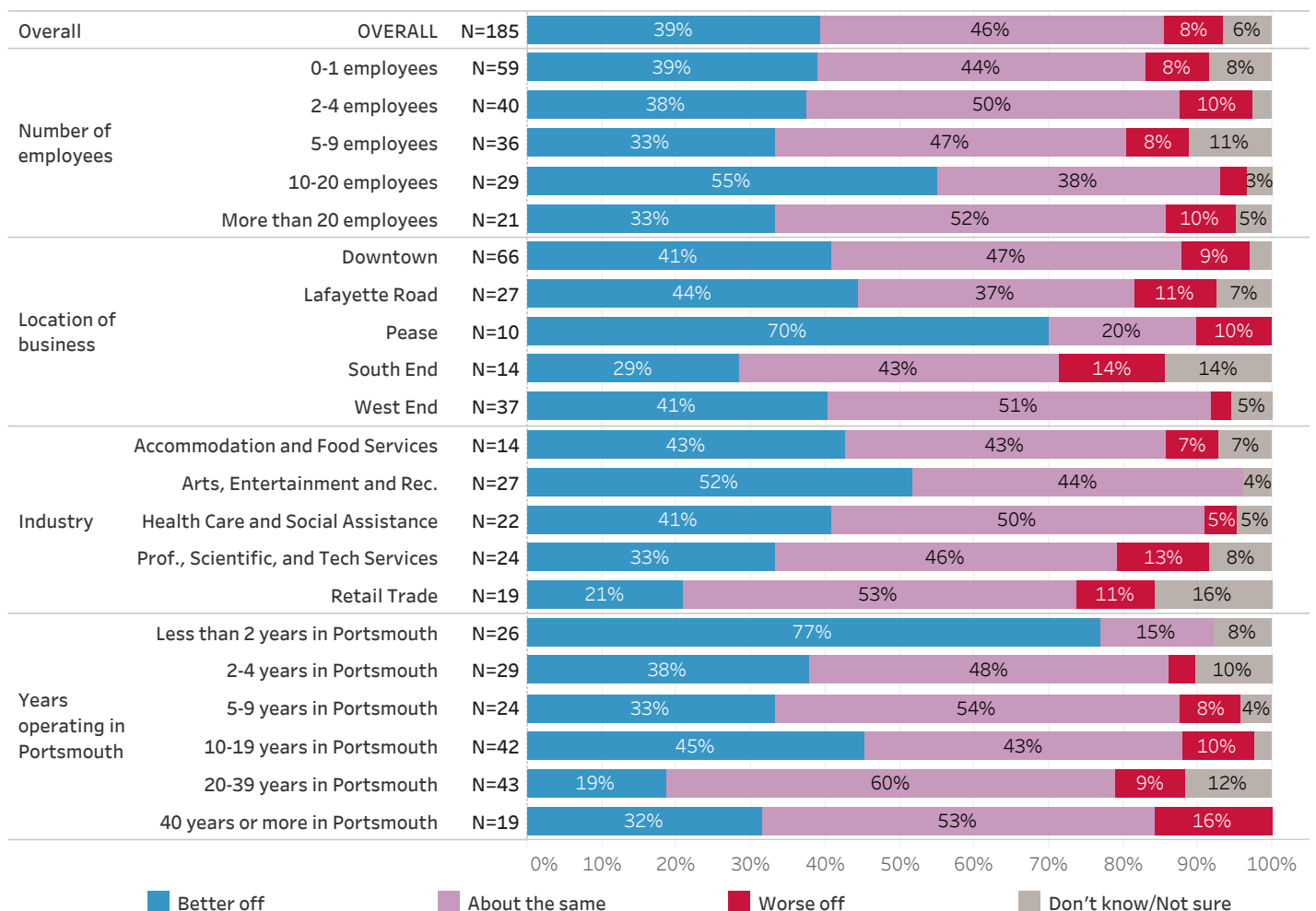
Four in ten respondents (39%) expect their business to be better off in a year, 46% expect to be doing about the same, 8% expect to be worse off, and 6% don't know or are unsure.

**Figure 22a: Do you think that your business's overall financial health will be better or worse off twelve months from now? - 2022**



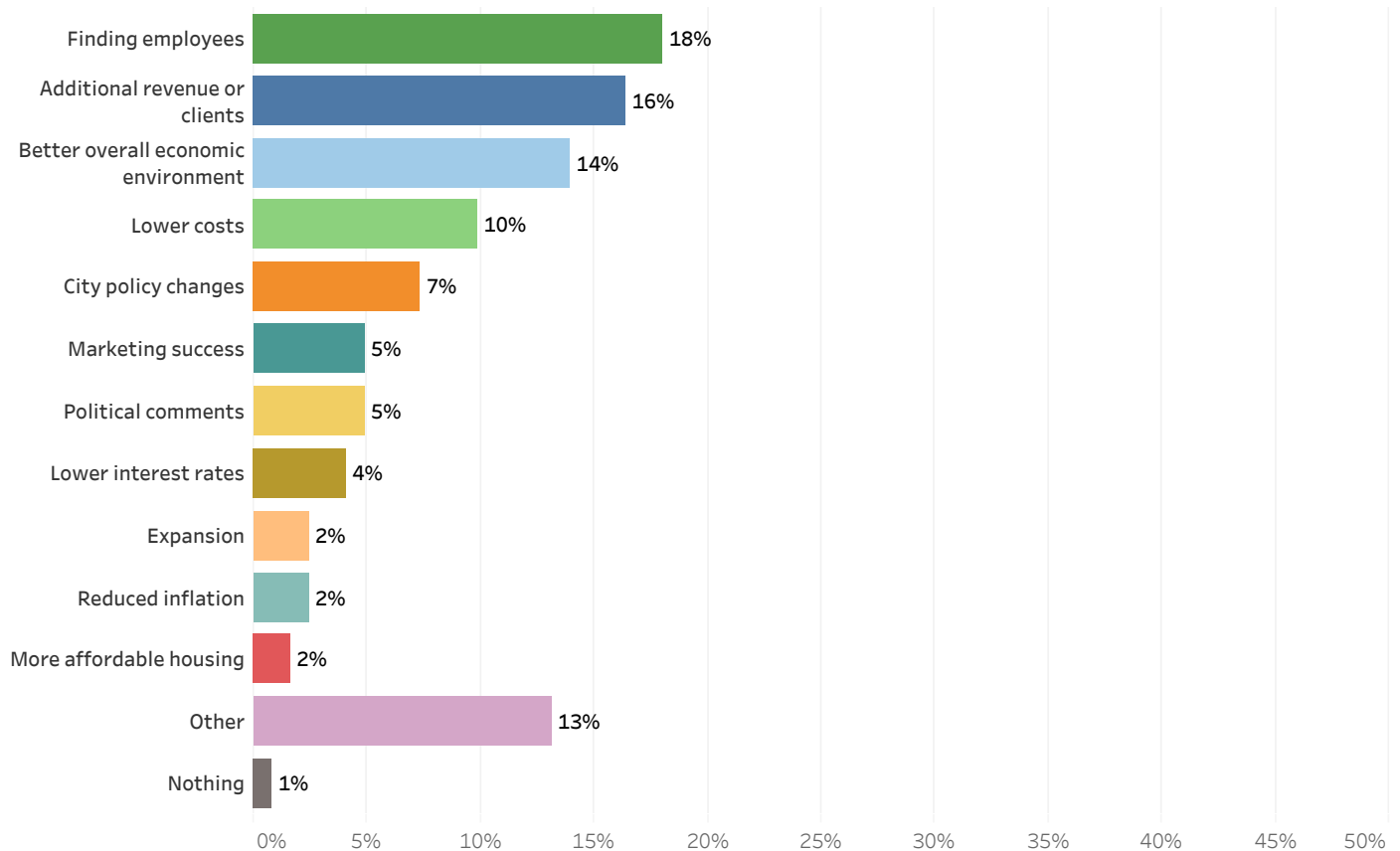
Respondents whose business has 10-20 employees, those located near Pease or on Lafayette Road, those in the arts, entertainment, and recreation industry, and those whose business has operated in Portsmouth for less than two years are more likely than others to believe that their business's overall financial health will be better off twelve months from now. Those whose business is located in the South End, those in the retail trade industry, and those whose business has been operating in Portsmouth for 20-39 years are less likely to say this.

**Figure 22b: Do you think that your business's overall financial health will be better or worse off twelve months from now? - by Demographics - 2022**



When asked what would be most helpful in making their business be in better overall financial health in twelve months, respondents most frequently mention finding employees (18%), attaining additional revenue or clients (16%), having a better overall economic environment (14%), or generally lower costs (10%). Less than 10% mention city policy changes (7%), successful marketing (5%), various political comments (5%), lower interest rates (4%), expanding their business (2%), reduced inflation (2%), or more affordable housing (2%). Thirteen percent cite something else that would help improve their financial health while 1% say nothing.

**Figure 23a: What one thing would be most helpful to make your business be in better overall financial health twelve months from now? (coded) - 2022**



**Figure 23b: Most helpful to making your business in better overall financial health twelve months from now? - 2022 - Selected quotations**

*"A positive response to our marketing efforts."*

*"Ability to expand our space at an affordable cost."*

*"Attract more business"*

*"Having all the staff we need to be able to open more days per week, especially Line cooks as hard to find!"*

*"Loosening restrictions on how late at night live music is permitted"*

*"Lower interest rates"*

*"Lower rents / housing / cost of living"*

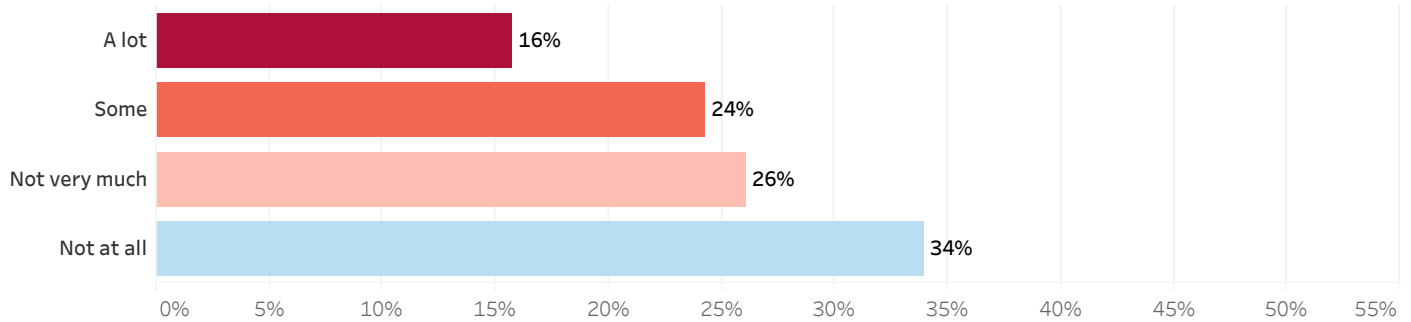
*"More stable economic conditions"*

*"Reduce inflation"*

## Problems Facing Business

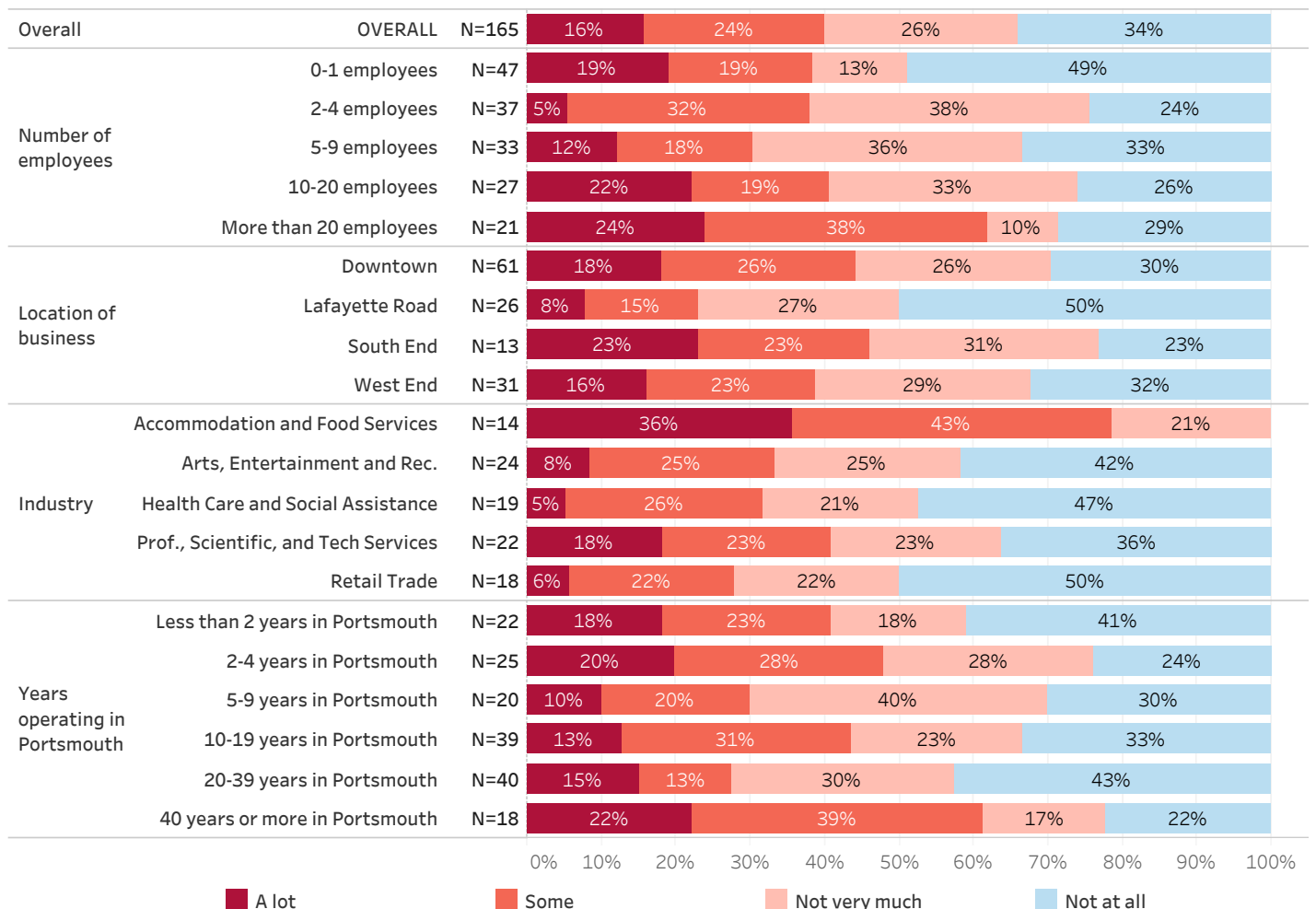
Sixteen percent of respondents say that their business is affected a lot by zoning or permitting restrictions in Portsmouth, 24% say their business is affected some, 26% are not very affected, and 34% are not affected at all.

**Figure 24a: How much, if at all, is your business affected by zoning or permitting restrictions in Portsmouth? - 2022**



Those whose business is located in the South End, those in the accommodation and food services industry, and those whose business has been operating in Portsmouth for more than forty years tend to say that their business is more affected by zoning or permitting restrictions in Portsmouth. Those located on Lafayette Road and those in the retail trade industry tend to say that their business is less affected by these things.

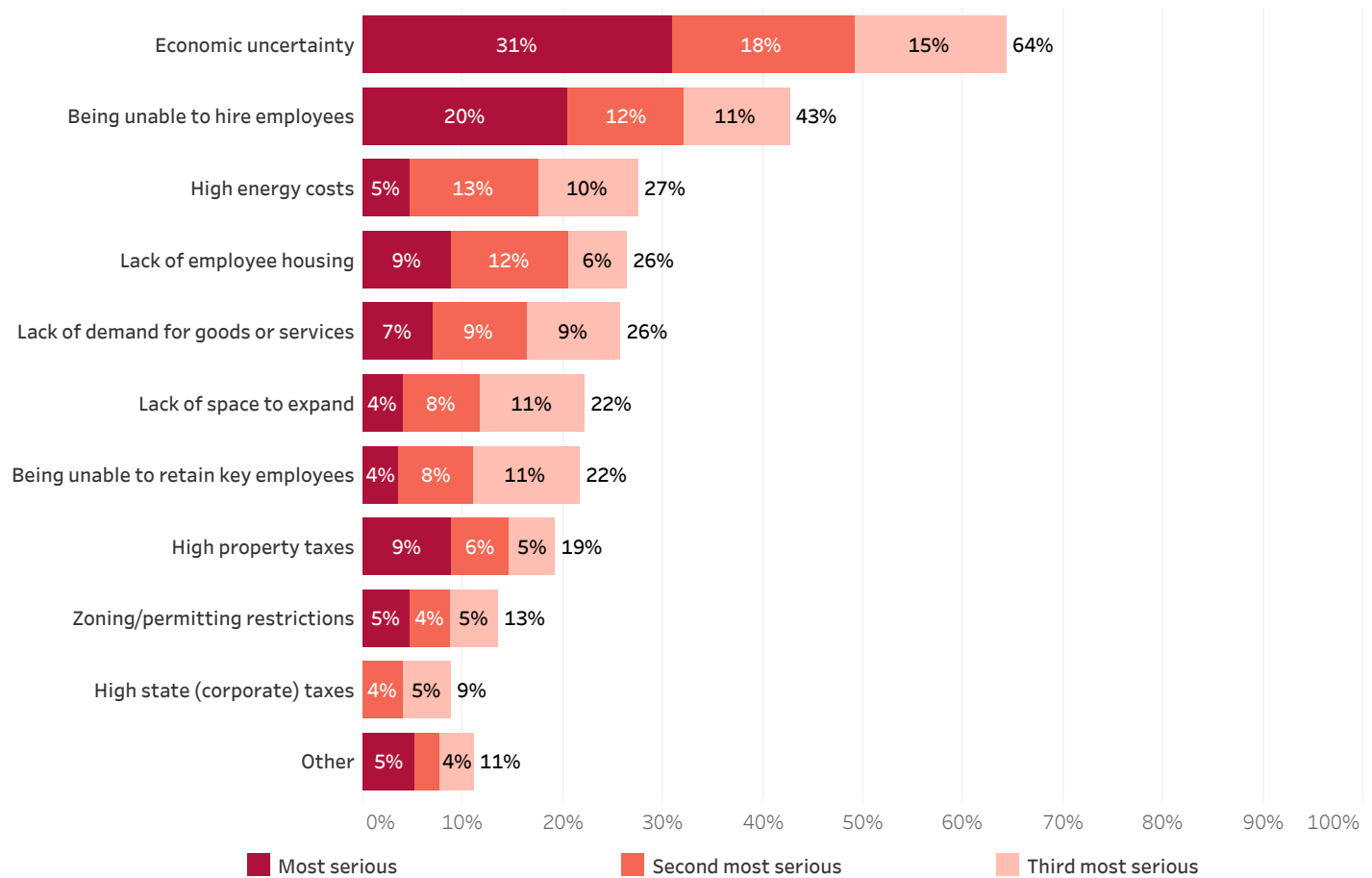
**Figure 24b: How much business affected by zoning or permitting restrictions in Portsmouth - by Demographics - 2022**



Nearly two-thirds of respondents (64%) rank economic uncertainty as the most (31%), second most (18%), or third most (15%) serious concern for their business. Forty-three percent rank being unable to hire employees among their top three concerns, while about a quarter include high energy costs (27%), a lack of employee housing (26%), lack of demand for their goods or services (26%), a lack of space to expand (22%), or being unable to retain key employees (22%) among their top three concerns. Less than one-fifth include high property taxes (19%), zoning or permitting restrictions (13%), high state corporate taxes (9%), or something else (11%) among the top three concerns for their business.

Larger companies are more likely than others to be rank being unable to hire employees among their top three concerns. Those in the accommodation and food services industry are more likely than others to cite being unable to hire employees but are less likely to cite economic uncertainty among their top three concerns. Those in the arts, entertainment, and recreation industry are more likely to cite a lack of demand for their goods or services among their top three concerns.

**Figure 25a: Which of the following do you consider to be the three most serious concerns for your business going forward? - 2022**



**Figure 25b: Three most serious concerns for your business going forward - 2022 - Other - Selected quotations**

*"City budget allocation"*

*"Health Insurance Costs"*

*"Attract more business"*

*"Lack of inexpensive staff parking"*

*"NIMBY types"*

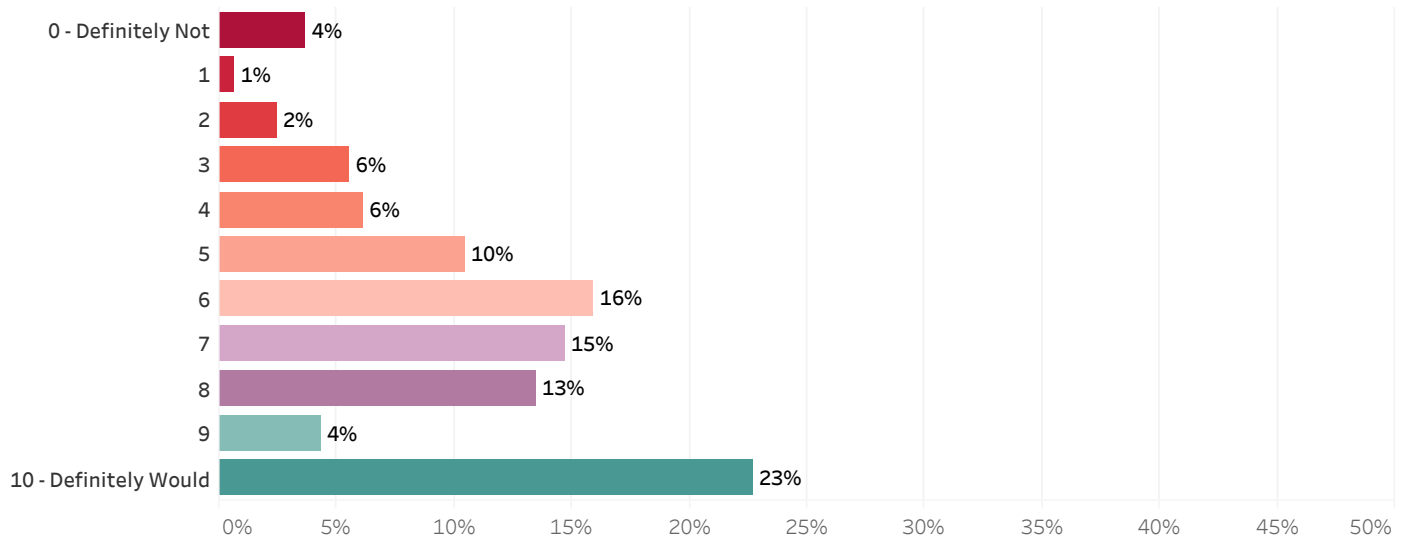
*"Political Climate"*



## Overall Impression of Portsmouth

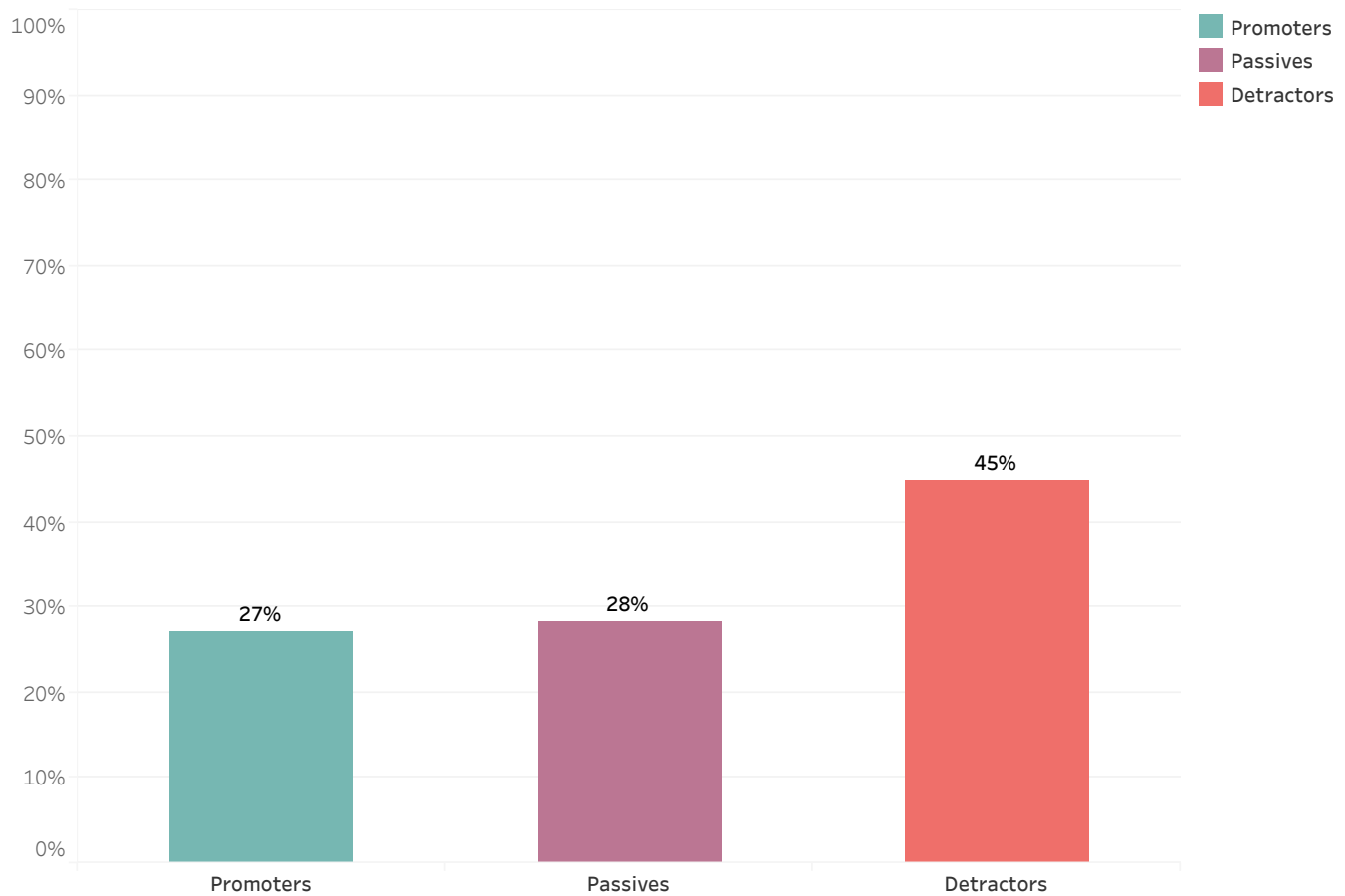
Respondents were asked to place themselves on a scale gauging their likelihood of recommending Portsmouth as a place to start or relocate a business where 10 equals "definitely would" and 0 equals "definitely not."

**Figure 26a: On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is "definitely not" and 10 is "definitely would," how likely are you to recommend Portsmouth as a place to start a business or relocate their business? - 2022**



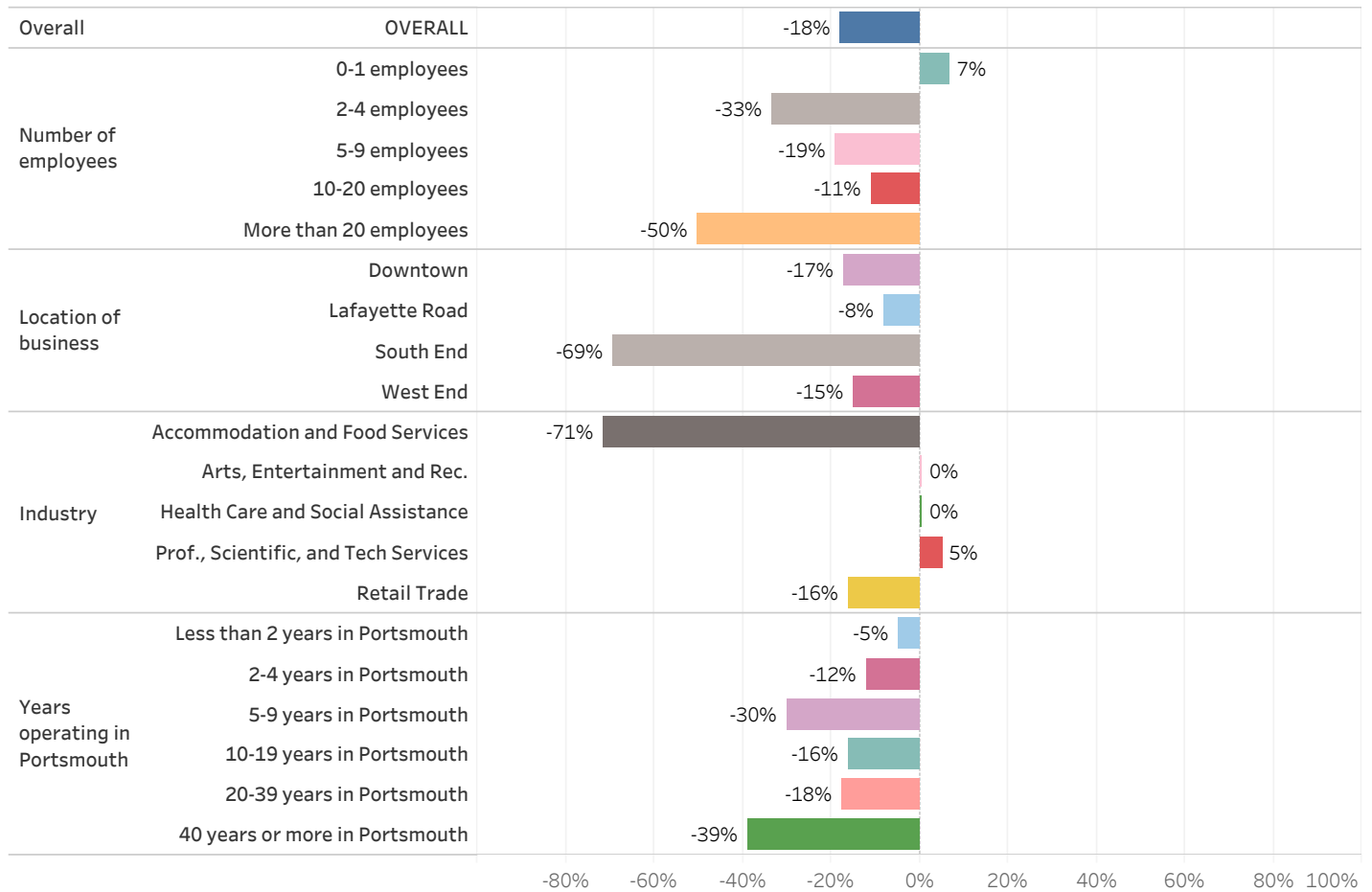
According to Net Promoter Score parameters, 27% of respondents are promoters of opening or relocating a business in Portsmouth, 28% are passives, and 45% are detractors, yielding a Net Promoter Score of -18.

**Figure 26b: Likelihood to recommend Portsmouth as a place to start a business or relocate their business - by Net Promoter Score Parameters - 2022**



Respondents whose business has 0-1 employees and those in the professional, scientific, and technical services industry tend to have a more positive assessment of Portsmouth for opening or relocating a business. Those whose business has 2-4 or more than twenty employees, those located in the South End, those in the accommodation and food services industry, and those which have been operating in Portsmouth for 5-9 years or for more than forty years tend to be less positive.

Figure 26c: Net Promoter Score - by Demographics - 2022



When asked why they feel they answered the way they did about recommending Portsmouth as a place to start or relocate a business, 27% of respondents say they feel that way because of the high cost of doing business, 15% cite a good quality of life, 14% cite a good business environment, 10% say they generally like Portsmouth, 8% cite difficulties with the city government, and 6% say it is hard to find employees. Less than 5% say that they feel that way about Portsmouth as a location to start or relocate a business because of cultural changes in the city (3%), it not being business friendly (3%), a lack of space (3%), or a lack of parking (2%). Three percent say it depends on the business while 6% mention something else.

Promoters (N=44) most frequently say they feel this way because of a perceived good business environment (33%), a good quality of life (30%), or because they generally like Portsmouth (25%). Passives (N=46) most frequently mention a high cost of doing business (26%), the good quality of life (21%), it being a good business environment (15%), or say that they generally like Portsmouth (13%). Detractors (N=73) most frequently mention the high cost of doing business (45%) and difficulties with the city government (14%).

**Figure 27: Why do you feel that way? [How likely are you to recommend Portsmouth as a place to start a business or relocate their business?] (coded) - 2022 - By likelihood to recommend Portsmouth**

