



Township of Wellington North

**Business Retention and Expansion
Downtown and Retail Survey Summary
2025**



What is a BR&E Project?

The Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) program is an internationally recognized process undertaken to enhance the business environment by eliminating barriers to economic growth.

Undertaking a BR&E helps communities understand local business needs and respond - so that businesses stay, grow, and become more competitive in the community.

The BR&E program involves visiting businesses to conduct confidential interviews with senior level management, owners or managers. Data analysis and action planning is then undertaken to address issues and opportunities.



43 Businesses were interviewed.

23 in Mount Forest, 18 in Arthur and 2 in Kenilworth.

These businesses described themselves as:

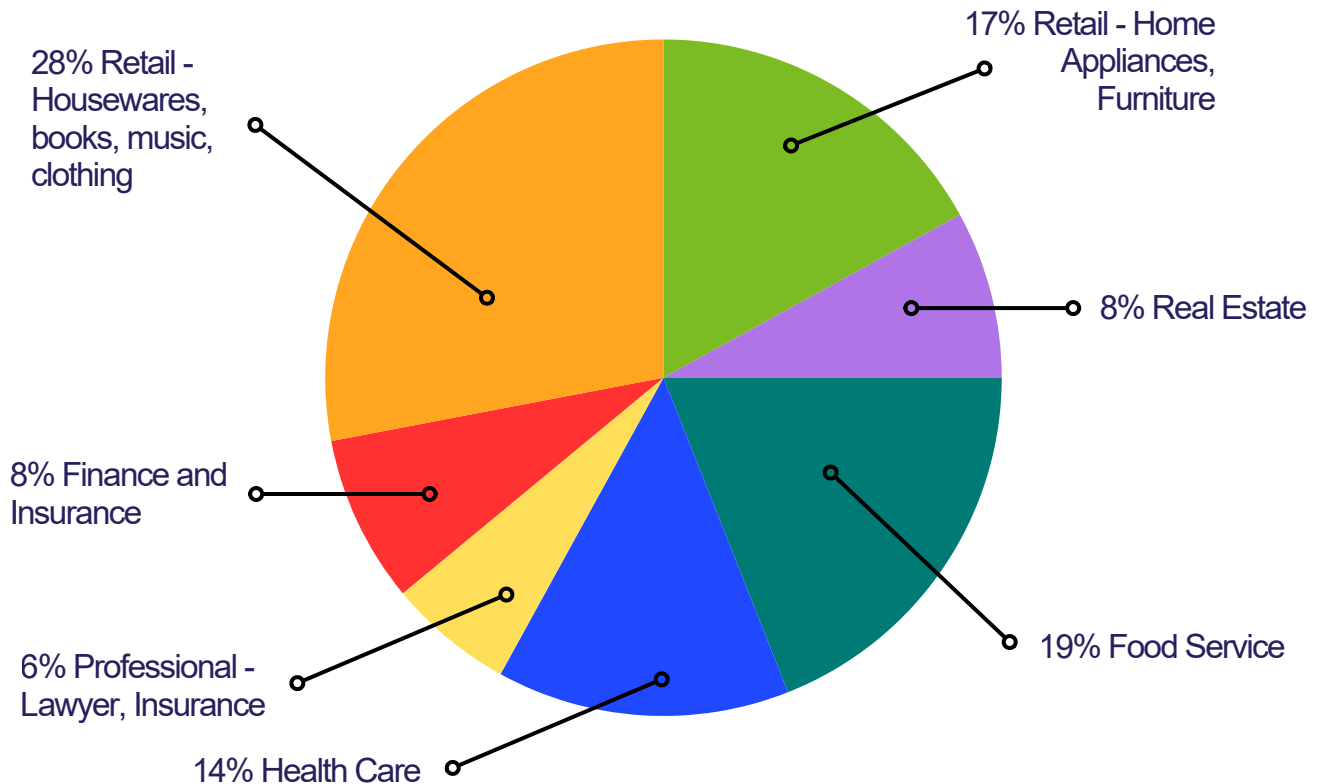
27 Locally owned and operated, one location

4 Franchise

12 Locally owned and operated, more than one location

1 Branch or division of a regional, national or international company

Industry Breakdown of Surveyed Businesses



Doing Business in Wellington North

Top 5 Strengths

(Rated "Good/Excellent" most often)



Quality of Life



Regional and Provincial Roads and Highways



Support from Local Residents



Internet Service



Support from Other Businesses

Top 5 Weaknesses

(Rated "Poor/Fair" most often)



Availability of Adequate Housing



Mental Health Supports



Workforce



Municipal Property Taxes



Cellular Phone Service

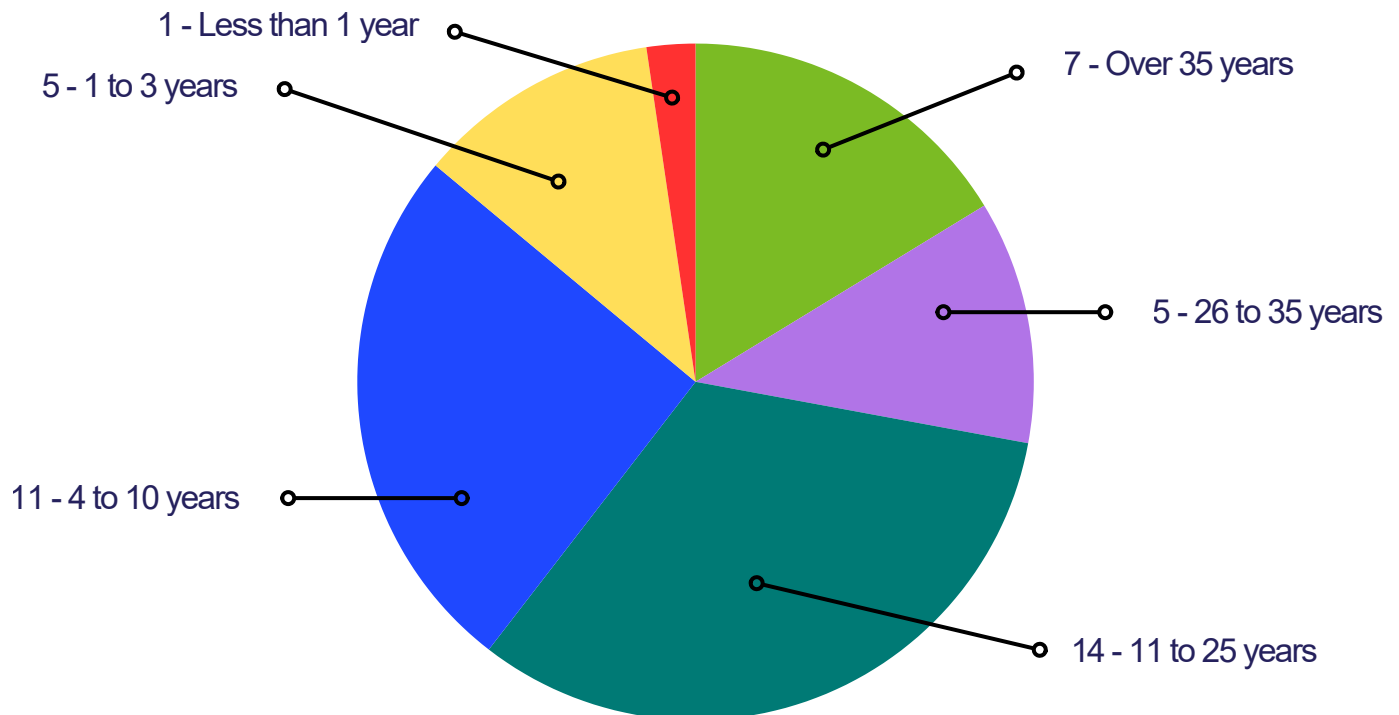


86%

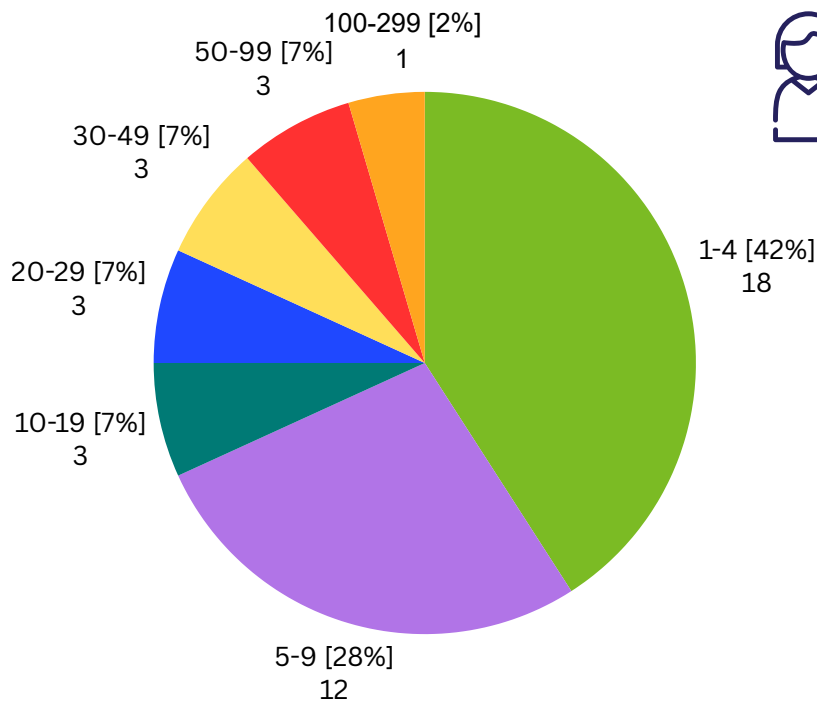
of businesses rated their impression of Wellington North as a place to do business as good or excellent

Business Information

How long has your business been in operation in the community?



Including owner/owners, how many employees work at your business?



70% of businesses have under 10 employees

Notable Patterns

- Many businesses operated with **small teams**, often fewer than 5 full-time employees.
- Several businesses rely heavily on **part-time staff**, with some having significantly more part-time than full-time workers.
- A few respondents included **temporary staff** or noted **seasonal flexibility**.



178 Number of full-time employees



234 Number of part-time employees

Business Conditions

What is going well in your business?

1. **Community Support** - Many businesses cited strong support from local residents and the broader community as a key positive factor
2. **Customer Loyalty** - A consistent and loyal customer base was frequently mentioned as a source of stability and success.
3. **Business Growth** - Several businesses reported expansion, increased sales, or plans to grow into new locations.
4. **Digital Presence** - Improvements in digital marketing and e-commerce have helped businesses reach more customers.
5. **Staffing Improvements** - Some businesses noted better staffing situations or successful recruitment efforts.

Biggest challenges

1. **Staffing Issues** - Difficulty finding and retaining qualified employees, especially experienced workers.
2. **Economic Uncertainty** - Businesses are struggling to cover operating expenses due to a volatile economy.
3. **Theft and Security** - Increasing incidents of theft, particularly at self-checkouts, were noted.
4. **Customer Expectations** - Managing rising or shifting customer demands is a challenge for some businesses.
5. **Community Size** - The small size of the community limits access to skilled labour and customer base.



51% of the businesses interviewed say they have difficulty hiring

What are the primary reasons for your businesses hiring difficulties?



45% Labour Pool



19% Lack of appropriate skills



21% Housing



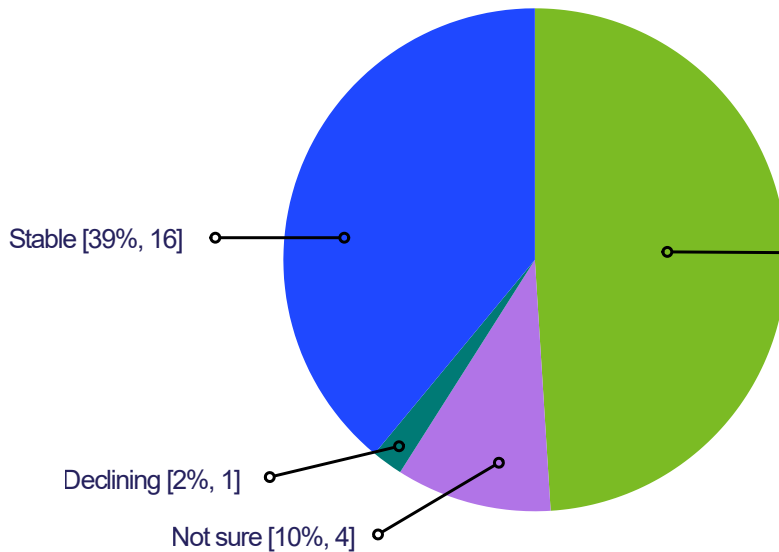
7% Transportation



8% Other

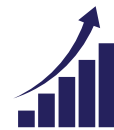
Business Outlook

What is the outlook for your industry?



53%

plan to remain at its current size



49%

of the businesses interviewed describe their industry as growing



32%

plan to expand in the next 18 months

Top five future plans, projects or aspirations?

1. Business Growth and Expansion

- Increasing physical space
- Adding new locations
- Exploring franchising opportunities
- Relocating to strategic sites

2. Product and Service Development

- Introducing new product lines
- Diversifying services
- Enhancing community-oriented offerings

3. Digital and Marketing Initiatives

- Expanding digital presence and e-commerce
- Improving online platforms
- Launching promotional campaigns and delivery services

4. Infrastructure and Facility Improvements

- Renovations and upgrades
- Signage and building enhancements

5. Strategic Positioning and Stability

- Maintaining current operations
- Attracting tourism (e.g. gin classes)
- Strengthening local engagement and visibility

Programs viewed as most beneficial

- Networking events and business directories
- Cooperative advertising and joint marketing
- Building/facade improvement grants
- Retail coordination and customer service training
- Improved telecommunications (reliable internet)

Many businesses were unaware of the resources that are available to them to help them grow and prosper.

The majority of businesses advised that email is the best way for local government to share business support information. The second best way is door-to-door outreach.

Immediate Actions and Key Take Aways

Action Steps Already Taken

- Shared Provincial and Federal grant information (ROD)
- Tourism Blade sign prices
- Added one business to the Driftscape app
- Completed four new CIP applications, with another four ready to go in 2026
- Shared CIP Design Guidelines
- Made introductions to resource contacts (Guelph Business Centre, Boundless Accelerator, Workforce Planning Board, Community Futures loan program, etc.)
- Delivered extra Wellington North Community Guides and Culture Days brochures
- Helped to explore larger business premises

Key Take Aways

- Downtown businesses thrive on foot traffic, tourism and events but need more diverse retail/services, better marketing, and consistent hours.
- Vacancies, housing/social issues, and infrastructure (internet, parking, signage, washrooms) are recurring concerns.
- Businesses want the Township/BIA to focus on revitalization, cooperative marketing, workforce support, and event programming to strengthen the downtown and retail environment.
- Businesses want the retail environment to feel vibrant, attractive, and convenient by tackling vacant buildings, expanding events, adding restaurants and niche shops, improving parking and signage, and investing in downtown revitalization strategies.

Connect with us if you are a business looking to invest, expand or relocate.



Township of Wellington North

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