



Region of Waterloo

## Planning Information Bulletin

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**Date:** February 11, 2025

**Subject:** 2024 Rural Business Survey

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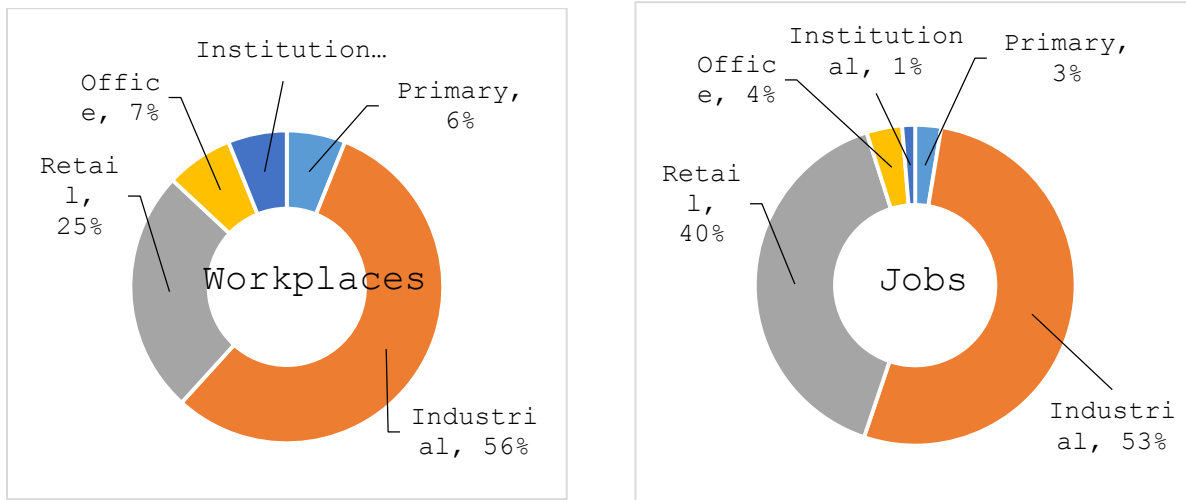
Historically, the Workplace Count only focused on collecting data from the cities, and urbanized areas in the townships such as New Hamburg, Elmira, and St. Clements. Data was still collected in these geographies, and the results for these businesses can be found in Appendix A of report PDL-GDS-25-002. The 2024 survey was expanded to collect information from businesses located in rural areas, outside of the aforementioned settlement areas. Data from the census of agriculture is available for businesses that solely participate in agricultural activities, but this data does not include information on rural businesses that have distinct operations unrelated to agriculture. This prompted the rural survey to focus on surveying businesses where there is little or no information available. The Rural Survey targeted businesses that are not primarily engaged in agricultural activities such as growing crops or raising animals. Some examples of the rural businesses surveyed include furniture manufacturers, sheet metal fabricators, or carpentry shops. Many of these businesses exist as ancillary uses on farm properties, often referred to as on-farm diversified uses.

### **Survey Results:**

Responses were received from 118 establishments that fit the category of businesses located in rural areas, not primarily engaged in growing crops or raising animals. These 118 businesses employ more than 900 individuals across the townships.

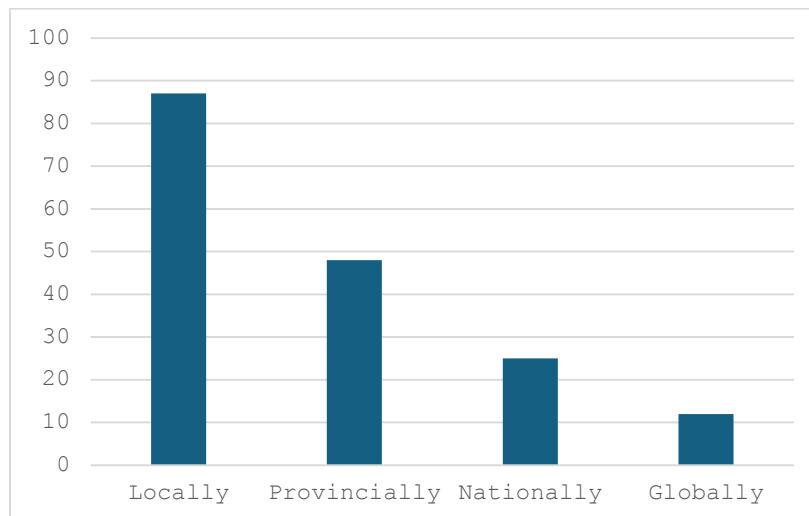
Of the 118 businesses, the majority are industrial (56%), followed by retail (25%), office (7%), and institutional and primary, both at (6%). In terms of employment, more than 90% of jobs are in the industrial and retail sectors (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Workplaces and Jobs by Sector**



Additional questions were added to the rural survey to get an understanding of the extent that rural businesses contribute to the local economy, and more broadly the provincial, national and global markets. The majority of rural businesses sell their products and services in local markets (within Waterloo Region). Nearly 50 businesses sell their products within Ontario (provincially), 25 sell their products nationally (within Canada), and 12 sell their products globally (Figure 2). A number of businesses sell their products across a combination of the four sales areas.

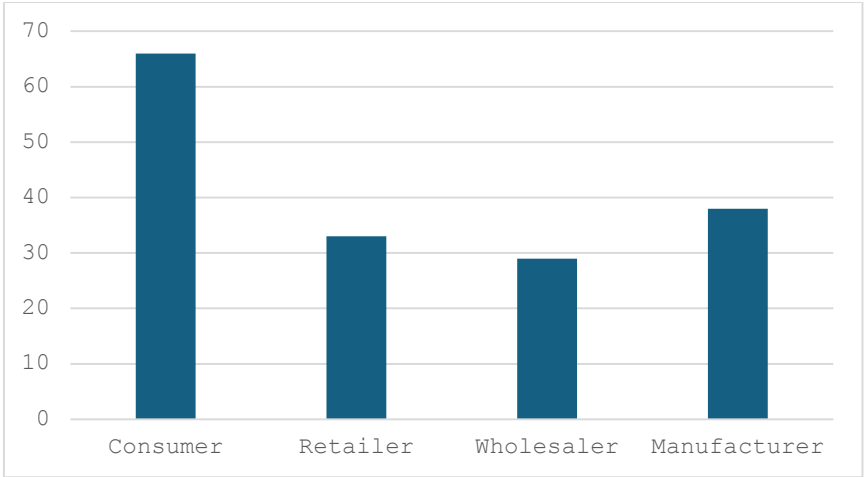
**Figure 2: Where Products and Services are Sold**



Knowing who businesses sell their products and services to, whether it is to the consumer, retailer, wholesaler, or manufacturer, can help to understand where these businesses exist in the supply chain. Most businesses sell their products directly to the consumer. The number of businesses that sell to retailers, wholesalers, and

manufacturers are relatively even (Figure 3). Some businesses sell their products or services to a combination of the four categories.

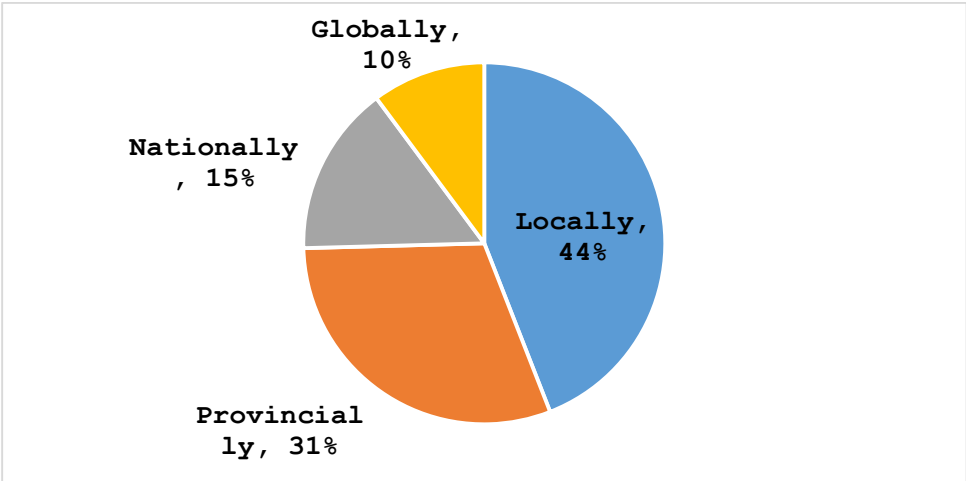
**Figure 3: Who are Products and Services Sold to?**



**Rural Business Contributions to the Manufacturing Sector**

Manufacturing is the single largest employment sector in Waterloo Region and rural businesses play an important role in the local manufacturing supply chain. Of the rural businesses that report to sell to manufacturers, the majority (44%) sell to local manufacturers. Provincial manufacturers make up the next highest share at 31%, followed by national at 15% and global at 10% (Figure 4).

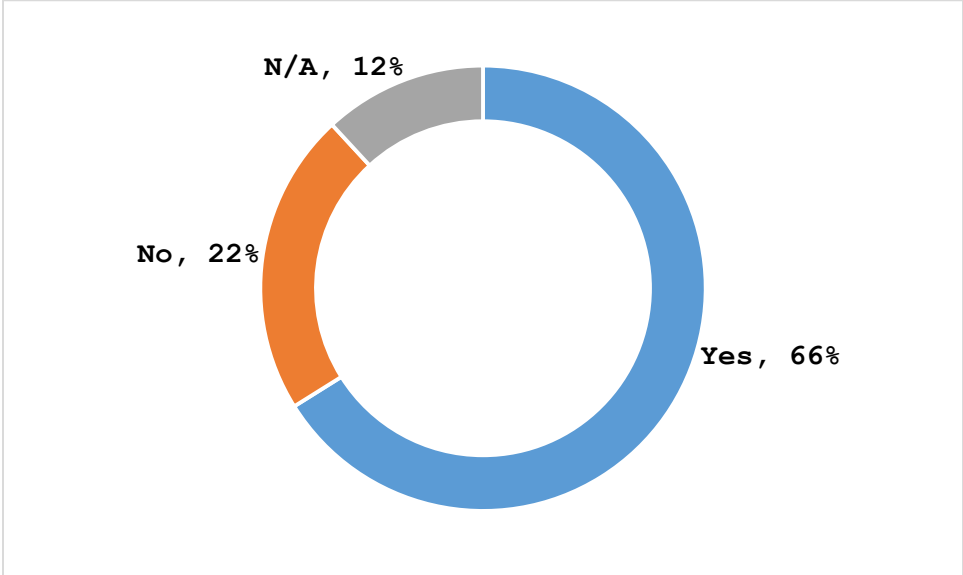
**Figure 4: Products Sold to Manufacturers**



Of the 118 rural businesses that responded, the majority anticipated their business to grow in the future (66%), 22% of respondents do not anticipate growth. The remaining

12% were unknown (Figure 5). Additionally, based on the responses provided, the average length of time a business remained at the same location was 19 years.

**Figure 5: Anticipate Growth**



# Map 1: Spatial Distribution of Rural Businesses

