



# Wyandot County, OH Business Retention and Expansion Program

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*An overview of local employer perceptions*

2015 Final Report

December 2015

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# ***Wyandot County, OH Business Retention & Expansion Program Final Report***

**December 2015**

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## Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Program Goals .....	5
Implementation .....	5
Program Benefits and Outcomes.....	6
<b>Wyandot County, OH Demographic Overview .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Economy in Wyandot County, OH .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Cost of Living in Wyandot County, OH.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>BR&amp;E Survey Results.....</b>	<b>11</b>
Participant Information.....	11
Future Plans .....	12
Labor Force & Training.....	13
View of Wyandot County.....	134
<b>Action Plan.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Appendix A: 2015 BR&amp;E Sample Survey Results.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>GENERAL INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>LOCAL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>STATE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>LOCAL WORKFORCE.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>SUPPLY CHAIN .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>FUTURE PLANS .....</b>	<b>41</b>

## Introduction

Since 2008 local public, business, and community leaders have made an effort to ensure the annual implementation of a Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) program in Wyandot County. The retention of existing business has been and remains a primary goal of these leaders. Enhancing the ability of area businesses to profitably grow and expand is vital to sustaining and improving local economic viability.

Prior to 2008, a BR&E program was facilitated sporadically in Wyandot County, but the program became an annual occurrence and a staple for municipal, county, regional, and statewide economic development organizations across the United States. As stated in the 2006 Wyandot County BR&E Final Report, the best “barometers” of how well the community functions as a place to do business and a place to live and work are existing businesses and the existing workforce. Research shows that in Ohio, an average net job growth of 70% comes from existing businesses, and that number increases to as high as 86% in rural areas.<sup>1</sup>

Not only does the success of existing businesses allow for a larger tax base,

increased local spending, enhanced public services, and an overall better quality of life, but strong local businesses also play a major role in the attraction of new business to an area. Satisfied existing businesses can serve as a community's best ambassadors when recruiting new firms as well as being a source of leads when seeking new firms to recruit.<sup>2</sup>

In Wyandot County BR&E programs were completed in 1996, 2006, and annually since 2008. After completion of the 2008 BR&E program, a group of public and business leaders realized that Wyandot County needed a local presence to address the issues as well as take advantage of the strengths reported by local businesses. Those discussions spurred a partnership with Ohio State University Extension, and that year a full-time Extension Educator member was hired to run the local economic development effort. In 2009 the Wyandot County Office of Economic Development (WCOED), a 501(c)(6) nonprofit public / private partnership was formed, and led by the same OSU Extension Educator who served as its director, and in turn carried out the responsibility of implementing the

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<sup>1</sup> Kraybill, D. 1995. Retention and Expansion First. *Ohio's Challenge* 8(2):4-7 [Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH].

<sup>2</sup> Morse, G. 2004. *The Retention and Expansion of Existing Businesses*. CARDI-Cornell, Ithaca, NY.  
[http://www.cdtoolbox.net/economic\\_development/000195.html](http://www.cdtoolbox.net/economic_development/000195.html).

county's BR&E program.

The Wyandot County BR&E program was led by the Extension Educator/WCOED from 2009 – 2014. Beginning in 2015, the WCOED separated from the relationship with OSU Extension as the local economic development organization had grown to the point where staff members could be wholly funded through local resources. Therefore, beginning in 2015, the Wyandot County BR&E program became entirely implemented by the Wyandot County Office of Economic Development. The 2015 Wyandot County BR&E effort received additional financial support from the Wyandot County Commissioners and the Regional Growth Partnership.

## Program Goals

The overarching or long term goals of the Wyandot County BR&E program continue to remain similar to those started in the initial 1996 BR&E program offering:

- **To formalize and implement a concerted effort that assists in the retention and expansion of existing businesses and the workforce**
- **To increase the competitiveness of local businesses**

- **To create a narration of the local economy**
- **To enhance local business climate and image for potential business**

## Implementation

As was the practice in the previous year, a combination of methods was used to collect data that supported the Wyandot County Business Retention and Expansion program. The Wyandot County Office of Economic Development Executive Director served as the local BR&E practitioner; developing the survey tool, scheduling retention calls, and conducting on-site visits. The BR&E questionnaire was made continuously available on the WCOED website and could be emailed or mailed to participating employers.

Since the Wyandot County BR&E program is conducted by leadership from the WCOED, the organization's executive committee and top-level members served as the local BR&E Task Force. This group of public and private sector leaders set the parameters for local businesses that would be targeted throughout the year. As in 2015, the task force determined that the top-15 employers (in terms of total employment) should be visited, and a remaining 15 employers would be visited based on need; for a total of at

least 30 local businesses visited per year. In 2015 well over 30 local business visits were conducted by the WCOED Executive Director although only 30 completed the survey information.

The BR&E practitioner either directly called or emailed potential participants to schedule BR&E visits. Those identified to participate in the program were offered the option to take the annual BR&E questionnaire online prior to the visit, or to complete the questionnaire verbally during the visit.

This method of invitation was used due to the fact that in recent years, response rates of less than 10% were seen from the businesses mailed letters to participate. This method of invitation to take part in the program therefore negated much of the costs and time used in the past to first mail a notification and try following up by phone or email.

Following a practice that has begun since 2013, the Wyandot County Commissioners joined the BR&E practitioner on a visit roughly once a month, and other members of the WCOED were invited to join retention calls as well. The inclusion of the commissioners enhanced one of the primary facets of the BR&E program, which is to open direct lines of communication between local business, policy, and community leaders.

## Program Benefits and Outcomes

Outside of the implementation of the 2015 Wyandot County BR&E program by the Wyandot County Office of Economic Development, there was some outside support to see the program carried out. The Regional Growth Partnership, the Northwest Ohio region JobsOhio partner, also provided funding to the local program in exchange for the collection of specific information for the state-level BR&E effort.

Therefore, data from the local BR&E effort was also used to assess the economy and provide a detailed understanding to state-wide community leaders, public leaders, and economic developers. The data provided evidence-based information that these individuals and entities can use to develop efforts to address areas seen as opportunities or threats on the wider state-level.

The 2015 Wyandot County BR&E program led to the identification of multiple potential expansion projects by local employers. These projects were in the planning phases and may or may not come to fruition in the near future, but through the retention calls placed this year, the economic development office is far better equipped to assist with any challenges these projects might face when moving forward. The advanced notice also allows the WCOED to help expedite requested assistance at the

time these projects might be implemented.

Early identification of local expansion projects is a key advantage of the Wyandot County BR&E program. Projects identified through the program and successfully implemented in Wyandot County since 2012 have resulted in the creation of roughly 101 new fulltime jobs, capital investment of over \$26 million, and the retention of over 1,200 existing jobs.

Aside from being distributed to local public, community, and business leaders, information collected by the Wyandot

County BR&E program is used among other community groups to aid in their efforts as well. The Wyandot County Health Alliance is one example that benefited from the data collected. The Health Alliance is using baseline data gathered through BR&E surveys to identify the local workplace wellness programs in place. This data will then be used to assess how those businesses lacking wellness programs could implement an effort already being successfully used by another local business.

## Wyandot County, OH Demographic Overview<sup>3</sup>

- In 2014, Wyandot County had a population of [22,535](#). Since the year 2000, the population of Wyandot County has decreased by 1.6 percent ([22,908](#) in 2000).
- The median value of a home in Wyandot County in 2014 was [\\$105,600](#). [94.3%](#) of the total [9,890](#) housing units were occupied, and [71.4%](#) of those households were owner-occupied.
- Wyandot County's median age was [41.6](#). The U.S. median age was [37.4](#).
- The average county household size was [2.38 people](#). [53.8%](#) of households are occupied by married couple of which [38.1%](#) have a child under 18 years. [12.7%](#) of households are occupied by single parents of which [56.2%](#) have a child under 18 years.
- The unemployment rate in Wyandot County was [3.0%](#), the state of Ohio was [4.2%](#), and the U.S. average was [4.8%](#) (October 2015).
- Of the population, [89.5%](#) had a high school diploma or higher degree ([86.3%](#) across the U.S.), and [13%](#) had a bachelor's degree or higher ([29.3%](#) across the U.S.).
- The average commute time for those living in Wyandot County was [23.2 minutes](#). The national average was [25.7 minutes](#).

	Wyandot County	Ohio	United States
<b>Total population</b>	22,535	11,560,380	314,107,084
<b>Male population</b>	49.4%	48.9%	49.2%
<b>Female population</b>	50.6%	51.1%	50.8%
<b>Median age (years)</b>	41.6	39.1	37.4
<b>Total households</b>	9,327	4,570,015	116,211,092
<b>Average household size</b>	2.38	2.46	2.63
<b>Percent high school graduate or higher</b>	89.5%	88.8%	86.3%
<b>Percent bachelor's degree or higher</b>	13.0%	25.6%	29.3%

<sup>3</sup> Information obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates <http://factfinder2.census.gov> and Ohio Labor Market Information, Civilian Labor Force Estimates <http://ohiolmi.com/asp/laus/vbLAUS.htm>, which reflect the most current information on Wyandot County, OH.



## Economy in Wyandot County, OH<sup>4</sup>

ECONOMY	Wyandot County	Ohio	United States
<b>Civilian labor force (Oct. 2015)</b>	12,500	5,737,000	157,313,000
<b>Unemployment Rate (Oct. 2015)</b>	3.0%	4.2%	4.8%
<b>Mean travel time to work (minutes)</b>	23.2	23.1	25.7
<b>Per capita income (dollars)</b>	22,812	25,967	27,884

POPULATION BY OCCUPATION	Wyandot County	Ohio	United States
<b>Management, business, science, and arts occupations</b>	25.8%	34.7%	36.4%
<b>Service occupations</b>	15.7%	17.8%	18.2%
<b>Sales and office occupations</b>	17.1%	24.3%	24.4%
<b>Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations</b>	13.1%	7.7%	9.0%
<b>Production, transportation, and material moving occupations</b>	28.4%	15.6%	12.1%

ESTIMATED HOUSEHOLDS BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME	Wyandot County	Ohio	United States
<b>Less than \$10,000</b>	5.7%	8.1%	7.2%
<b>\$10,000 to \$14,999</b>	6.1%	5.7%	5.3%
<b>\$15,000 to \$24,999</b>	11.9%	11.7%	10.7%
<b>\$25,000 to \$34,999</b>	11.3%	11.0%	10.2%
<b>\$35,000 to \$49,999</b>	17.5%	14.5%	13.5%
<b>\$50,000 to \$74,999</b>	22.3%	18.5%	17.8%
<b>\$75,000 to \$99,999</b>	14.0%	12.0%	12.2%
<b>\$100,000 to \$149,999</b>	7.9%	11.5%	13.0%
<b>\$150,000 to \$199,999</b>	1.8%	3.8%	5.0%
<b>\$200,000 or more</b>	1.5%	3.2%	5.0%
<b>Median household income (dollars)</b>	46,904	48,849	53,482

<sup>4</sup> Information obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates <http://factfinder2.census.gov> and Ohio Labor Market Information, Civilian Labor Force Estimates <http://ohiolmi.com/asp/laus/vbLAUS.htm>, which reflect the most current information on Wyandot County, OH.

## Cost of Living in Wyandot County, OH<sup>5</sup>

COST OF LIVING	Wyandot County	Ohio	United States
<b>Overall</b>	86	88	100
<b>Grocery</b>	99.3	99.2	100
<b>Health</b>	95	98	100
<b>Housing</b>	62	66	100
<b>Utilities</b>	100	99	100
<b>Transportation</b>	100	100	100
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	95	98	100

- Cost of living indices are based on a U.S. average of 100. If Wyandot County scored above the cost of living index in any category it would indicate that local residents experience a cost of living above that of the U.S. average. Likewise, a cost of living index less than 100 in a category would indicate a cost of living below the U.S. average. The same applies to the figures representing cost of living for the State of Ohio.
- Overall, the cost of living index for Wyandot County is 86.4. Comparatively, the overall cost of living index for the State of Ohio is 88.2.
- The Wyandot County, OH cost of living does not exceed that of the national average in any category, and only nearly exceeded the cost of living versus the entire State of Ohio in the Grocery and Utilities categories.
- The overall cost of living in Wyandot County is 13.6% below that of the U.S. average and 1.8% below that of the State of Ohio average.

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<sup>5</sup> Information obtained from Sperling's Best Places <http://www.bestplaces.net/>, which reflects the most relevant cost of living data for Wyandot County, OH.

## BR&E Survey Results

### Participant Information

The Wyandot County Business Retention and Expansion program was implemented throughout 2015 with retention calls beginning as early as January and as late as December. Survey data was formally gathered from 30 local businesses, of which the aggregated data is included in Appendix A. All of these participating employers were visited by the BR&E practitioner to discuss further the responses provided in the survey. As mentioned earlier, a number of other businesses were also visited by the BR&E practitioner throughout 2015 but survey data was not collected.

Those participants who did provide survey responses included a sampling of various types of businesses located in Wyandot County and represented a variety of other various aspects as well. Geographically, roughly 73% of respondents were located in the City of Upper Sandusky, 10% were located in the Village of Carey, 7% were not located in an incorporated area, and the remaining 10% were split between the villages of Sycamore, Nevada, and Wharton.

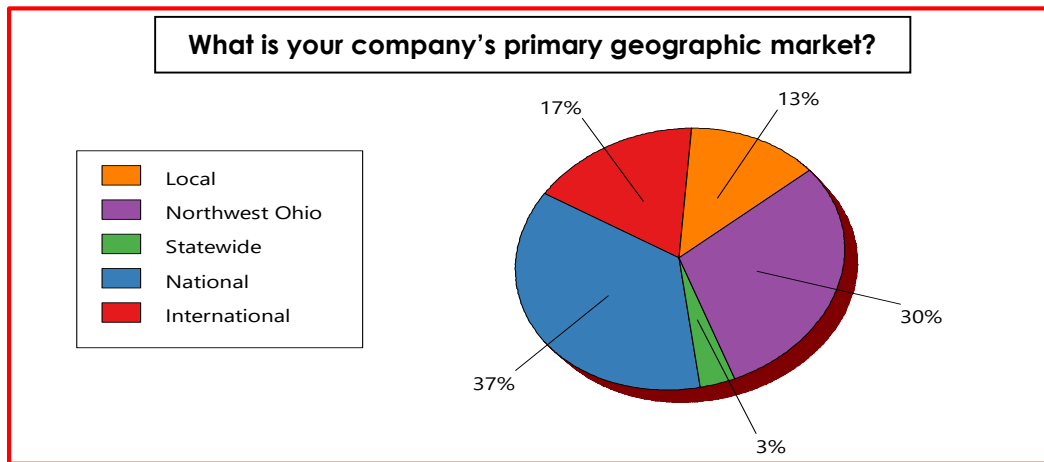
The age of local participating operations also varied widely. A vast majority (over 60%) had operated in Wyandot County for

over 20 years; 14% for 11 – 20 years; 14% for 6 – 10 years; and the remainder less than 5 years. Out of the respondents, 56% were manufacturing operations, 20% were service operations, 10% were agricultural/forest/mining related businesses, 7% were retail operations, and the remaining 7% construction related operations.

Representatively, the primary type of space occupied by survey respondents included the majority (70%) located in an industrial/manufacturing facility, followed by 20% in an office space, and 10% in a retail setting. 83% of respondents indicated they owned the space where their business was located.

The scope of respondents' primary geographic market, or areas where their goods and services were sold or delivered, also widely varied. The majority of businesses (37%) reported having a primary geographic market that spanned the county, and close behind were respondents (30%) who indicated the Northwest Ohio region as their primary market. These groups were followed by 17% of respondents with an international primary market, 13% with a localized market, and 13% state-wide.

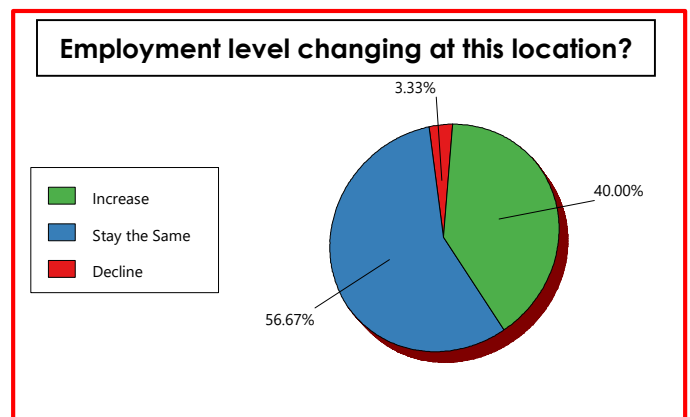
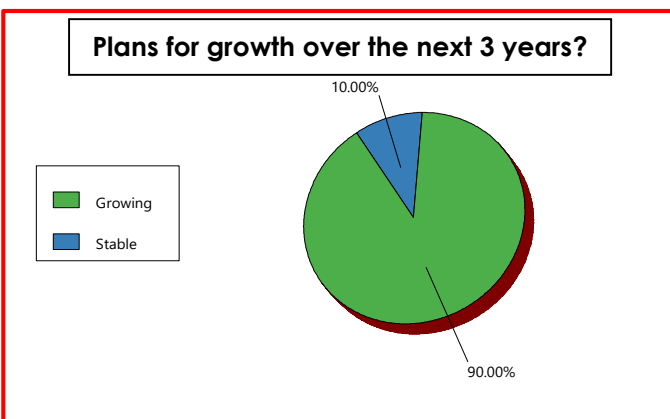
Varying industries and customer bases among local businesses help to enhance sustainability in the local economy, and provide stability when fluctuations may arise in certain business sectors.



## Future Plans

Data collected by the 2015 Business Retention & Expansion effort again paints a positive picture for likely profitable growth among local businesses. Exactly the same as 2014, 90% of program participants reported they had plans for growth over the next 3 years, while the remaining respondents reported their businesses were stable. Compared to BR&E efforts of years prior, no respondents reported their business would decline over the next 3 years.

Of the respondents who reported their company was growing; 100% projected growth in their sales/total revenue, 93% projected growth in their profits, 85% projected growth in their number customers, and 44% projected growth in their employment levels. Those growing companies also reported no projected declines across these categories. Out of all the survey respondents, the only decline across any of these categories was in employment; reported by 3% of respondents.



Also similar to data collected in the 2014 BR&E surveys, nearly all of the businesses who indicated they were growing also reported they had plans to modernize, renovate, or expand their operation, or they had recently completed a related project. All of this planning data suggests that local employers are experiencing market growth, increased demand from customers, or are increasing operational efficiency that is allowing them the opportunity to profitably grow their operations in Wyandot County.

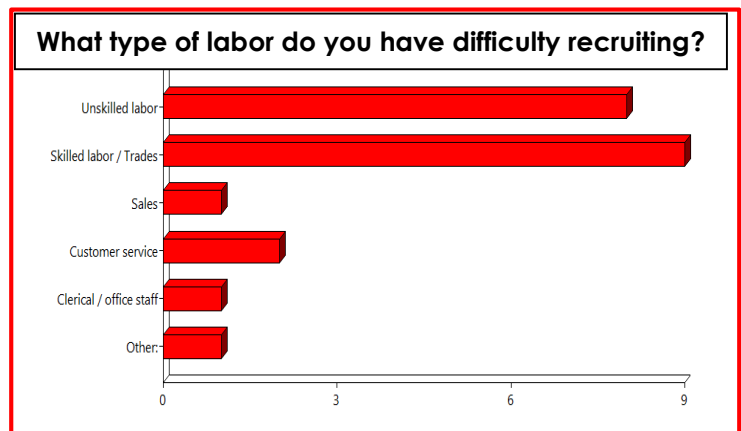
## Labor Force & Training

Since Wyandot County is primarily comprised of small businesses (50 or less employees), the sampling of 2015 BR&E participants was also somewhat representative. The majority (41.37%) of respondents had 10 or less employees working at their business location, 0.03% of respondents had 11-20 employees, 24.14% had 21 – 50 employees, 17.24% had 51 – 100 employees, and 17.24% had over 100 employees.

The average length of employment for the majority of respondents indicated that turnover, while still present, was not a primary concern for problem for many Wyandot County employers. 37% of respondents said the average length of employment at their location was 10 years or more, 43% reported an average length

of employment of 5-10 years, and the 17% as 1-5 years.

As had been an ongoing trend in Wyandot County as seen through BR&E program data, and on a national level, the availability of workforce was noted as a top concern. Over the past few years, the BR&E program has varied between a greater need for skilled and unskilled employees, but overall 62% of respondents in 2015 still indicated they have difficulty in recruiting employees. Of those respondents 41% had difficulty recruiting skilled labor/trades positions, and 36% had difficulty recruiting unskilled labor. The primary job requirement for the majority of unskilled labor positions was for applicants to hold a high school diploma or GED.



General competency skills (basic math, reading/writing, problem solving, etc.) were identified as the primary skills seen lacking in potential employees interviewed by all 2015 BR&E program respondents. Following general competency skills were (in order): Customer service skills

(interpersonal communications), other technical skills, Equipment operation skills, Professional skills (sales, marketing, accounting, etc.), Specialized skills (medical, legal, etc.), and Managerial and Mechanical skills were tied for the lowest spot.

When asked what type of training is needed for respondents' current employees, roughly only one-quarter (26%) indicated their employees needed any type of training. For those that did provide a response, the two highest ranked areas of needed training were in Managerial and Equipment Operation skill sets.

About one-quarter (26%) of all the respondents indicated a current relationship with a college, university, or vocational school to help find and train talent.

## View of Wyandot County

The business leaders in and around Wyandot County play a pivotal role in the overall attractiveness of the area to potential businesses looking at expansion. If existing businesses are performing well and have positive interaction with local public and private leadership, it is a good indicator of what potential businesses can expect if they were to locate operations close by. Suppliers and customers dependent on existing local businesses may also wish to be in closer proximity to

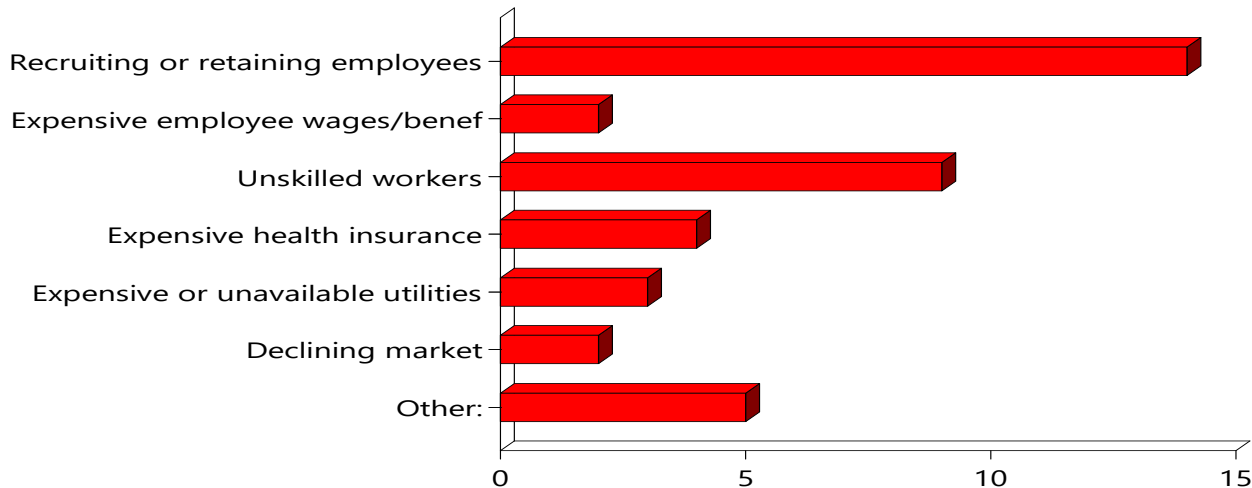
that business if it is thriving and can offer cost advantages, which can lead to attraction of that outside industry as well. The BR&E program aims to identify characteristics of Wyandot County that can aid or hinder business growth as well as potential business attraction efforts in the immediate area.

When asked from a business perspective about general views of Wyandot County, 87% of survey participants indicated a quality of life in Wyandot County that was excellent, 10% rated it as good, and 3% as average. When asked for their general opinion of Wyandot County as a place to do business; 83% responded it was good, 13% ranked Wyandot County as average, and 3% indicated a poor response.

Participants were asked for their top 3 reasons for locating or keeping their business in Wyandot County. The top 3 responses were (in order): location, access to customers, and access to suppliers. The access that Wyandot County's location provides to local businesses continues to be a major location factor for the county and has remained a consistent strength as when asked this question these 3 factors have been ranked as the top three for the past three years of BR&E data.

Among services and amenities in Wyandot County that local businesses are most satisfied with; roads, highways and freeways received the top ranking by a long shot, and has been consistently the

**What are the top three challenges you face as a business owner/operator in Wyandot County?**



top ranked service for the past three years. The 2, 4-lane freeways, 9 state routes, and 3 rail lines intersecting Wyandot County are heavily relied upon and make it attractive to area businesses. Shopping and conference facilities were tied for the top local service or amenity that businesses were dissatisfied with.

Some new questions were included in the 2015 BR&E survey to gauge overall challenges for local business and their communications with local public agencies when required. When asked for their top 3 challenges they are faced with doing business in Wyandot County, participants indicated (in order): Recruiting or retaining employees, finding unskilled workers, and the 'other' category that included the response of primarily a tight local market.

Overall, BR&E data collected showed that business interactions and communications with local public entities was overall positive. 96% of respondents said that local public agencies had been responsive to their needs when asked. 94% said they were able to find and understand information regarding local rules and regulations (zoning, permitting, etc.) when needed.

When asked if local rules and regulations have been a hindrance to local business operations or expansion efforts, only 7% reported that those rules had been a hindrance. Local zoning ordinances were indicated as the primary difficulty.



## Action Plan

A primary objective of any Business Retention & Expansion program, outside of creating a narrative of the strengths and weaknesses in a local economy, is to assist in crafting a course of action for local community, public, and business leaders as well as economic development professionals. This action plan should work to address concerns and build on the strengths identified in the collected BR&E data. Changing negative trends in the local economy usually do not take place in the short-term, and therefore the action plan must also lay the groundwork for sustaining local economic prosperity.

The BR&E assessments done for Wyandot County in 1996, 2006, 2012, 2013, 2014 and now in 2015 all expressed similarly trending data in many areas, which has been noted throughout this report. The data has maintained the importance past action plan objectives, which were derived after the initial implementation of the Wyandot County BR&E program. The differentiating trends between data from year-to-year also highlight new areas that should be targeted moving into the future. The changes in data derived over the past four-plus years has led to the creation of new objectives for this updated action plan as well:

***Objective One: Enhance and encourage cooperation between business leaders, government leaders, and education leaders to further the goals and purposes of the BR&E initiative.***

Collaboration and cooperation among local leaders remains the number one factor that can either enhance and/or limit the success and effectiveness of the BR&E program. This aspect becomes even more prevalent in a rural community such as Wyandot County. A gathering of resources and efforts from many individuals are necessary to disseminate and collect survey information as well as make company visits. Over the past two years the county commissioners and various WCOED board members took part in BR&E visits, which should remain a common practice in the future.

This cooperation also extends outside of actual data collection into carrying out the objectives defined by the BR&E program. Local policy and decision changes are made by a number of individuals. The more closely these individuals are exposed to the BR&E program and collected data, the more informed their decision making can become and ultimately the better they can serve their local businesses and residents.



**Objective Two: Improve the quality and quantity of the local workforce to satisfy the current and anticipated future needs of local businesses.**

This objective was stated in the original Wyandot County BR&E study conducted in 1996, and current collected BR&E data makes this objective more relevant today than ever. As previously noted, workforce, and particularly the availability of needed workforce, remains to be one of the largest issues facing local employers. Although it is expressed year-after-year by Wyandot County employers, this issue is widespread. Organizations in many areas of Ohio and the nation face problems finding skilled and trained talent. Many labor market experts through examining available government data estimate as many as 25 million, or 47%, of all new job openings from 2010 to 2020 will fall into the 'middle-skills' range, which the U.S. is already seeing a shortage of qualified workers in.<sup>6</sup>

As can be seen in the data reported this year, local business continue to have difficulty recruiting skilled talent, but the majority also lack any relationship with local educational institutions that train the type of talent they seek. The garnering of new relationships between local industry and education as a direct means to

convey the need for certain types of skilled talent, or exposing local students and school administrators to the types of positions in high demand by local employers, are a few instances of how the local skills gap can begin to be addressed. Outside of skilled labor, unskilled labor positions are in almost as great of a demand by local employers. Again, the need for employers to coordinate more closely with local education appears to be apparent as much of the needed aptitudes for unskilled labor positions includes problem solving, team work, and interpersonal communication skills.

**Objective Three: Connect local business leaders to programs, services, and other resources available through local, State, and Federal agencies.**

What could be argued as one of the primary benefits of a local Business Retention & Expansion program is the fact that it many times leads to the early identification of growth and expansion plans considered by local employers. In Wyandot County the BR&E program has led to the identification of these potential projects and in many cases applicable resources were identified and successfully used to help make those projects a reality.

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<sup>6</sup> Kochan, T., Finegold, D., & Osterman, P. (2012). WHO CAN FIX THE "MIDDLE-SKILLS" GAP?. Harvard Business Review, 90(12), 81-90.

Local community leaders and economic development professionals have knowledge of these resources and programs from which local businesses can benefit. The direct line of communication that the BR&E program creates between business leaders and local leadership allows for the identification of programs to satisfy local needs. Many forms of assistance are available and have been garnered to help remove roadblocks to local business expansion.

A strong BR&E program creates a direct outlet of communication to community and policy leaders, which results in a more business- and growth-friendly environment for local industry.

***Objective Four: Connect the needs of local business to policymakers at the state and federal levels by participating in opportunities to relay collected informational from the local BR&E effort.***

As previously stated, a local BR&E program serves as a direct line of communication between industry and local policy and decision makers. Although, that communication and the BR&E response data should not be limited to the local level. It is the responsibility of local BR&E practitioners to also relay this information to greater levels outside the local jurisdiction making the larger region and state more business-friendly wherever possible.

Much of the information collected in the Wyandot County BR&E program assesses opinions of working not only in the county, but within the state of Ohio. The concerns expressed by local companies should be directed to those individuals who can possibly have a positive effect on those issues from a more macro-level.

In 2014, the state's privatized economic development organization, JobsOhio, began an effort to collect BR&E-related data from companies operating in the state's nine targeted industry sectors. For the past two years, Wyandot County took part sharing its collected BR&E information with the state-level effort. Better input into and analysis of BR&E data on a state-wide level will lead to a better understanding of Ohio business needs and a better chance of growth within the state.

## Summary

Data collected through the Wyandot County Business Retention & Expansion program will assist local economic development officials, community leaders, and stakeholders in planning future strategies that best aid local business growth. Therefore, the data will also be used to guide future policy decisions in directions that will not inhibit the profitable growth of existing firms.

Information collected in the 2015 BR&E effort gave an overall positive narrative of the local economy when looking at the potential growth planned by local firms. This is a continuing trend from 2014 and exemplifies signs of an economic recovery in the region. The identification of rapidly growing local firms also provides local economic development officials with the ability to proactively assist with the growth of area businesses.

While overall the local economic narrative continues to lean on many strengths, there are still ongoing concerns faced by local businesses that will help to guide ongoing efforts for local leaders.

The geographic location, infrastructure, and access provided by Wyandot County continue to be identified as the top decision-making factors for companies to both locate and remain in Wyandot

County. Ensuring continued transportation access and other heightened public services continues to remain a large driver keeping existing businesses in the area.

In 2015, the difficulty to recruit and retain both skilled and unskilled labor was seen one of the greatest hardships local firms are faced with. Although a labor pool of over 460,000 is located within 45-miles of Wyandot County, this challenge has been a continuing trend in recent years. Although it is a local issue, the lack of needed labor is a problem plaguing firms across the country.

In Wyandot County, local leaders must continue to find ways to combat the negative trends identified by the BR&E program, and build upon those items identified as most valued to the profitable growth of local industry.

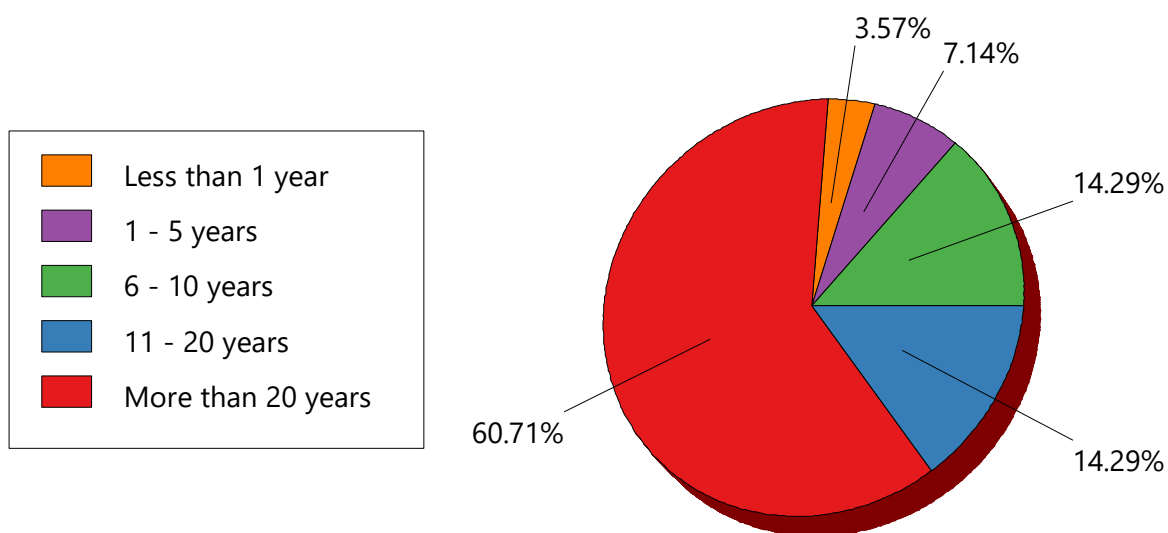
## Appendix A: 2014 BR&E Sample Survey Results

### Survey Results

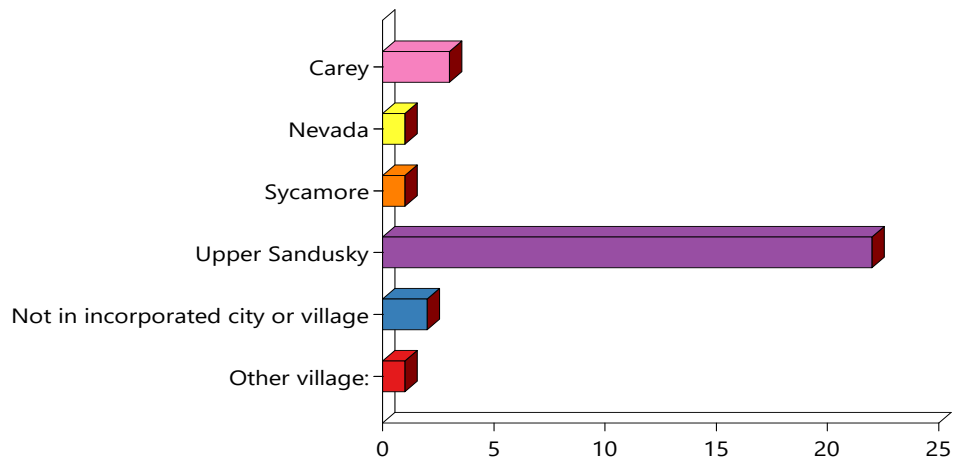
The following is a graphical depiction of the responses to each survey question. Additional comments provided by respondents, if any, are included after each graph.

#### SECTION - GENERAL INFORMATION

##### *1. How long has your business been operating in Wyandot County?*



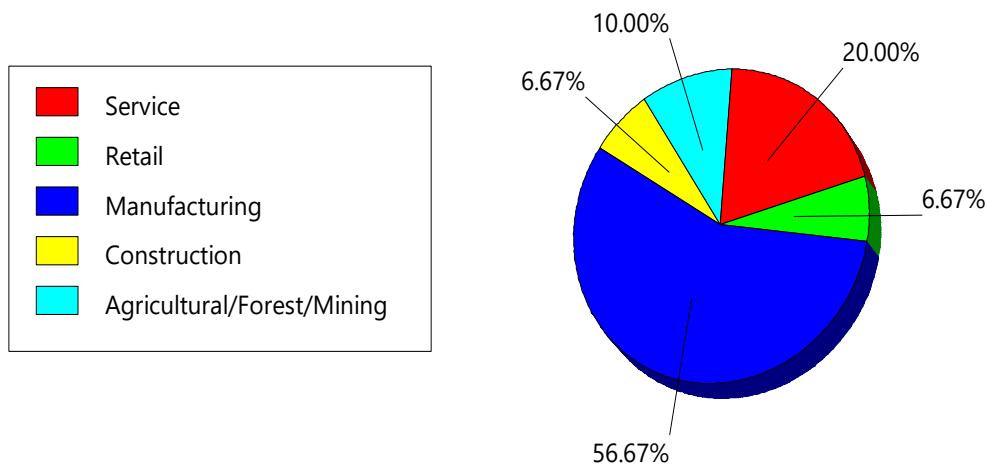
*2. In which of the following areas is your business located?*



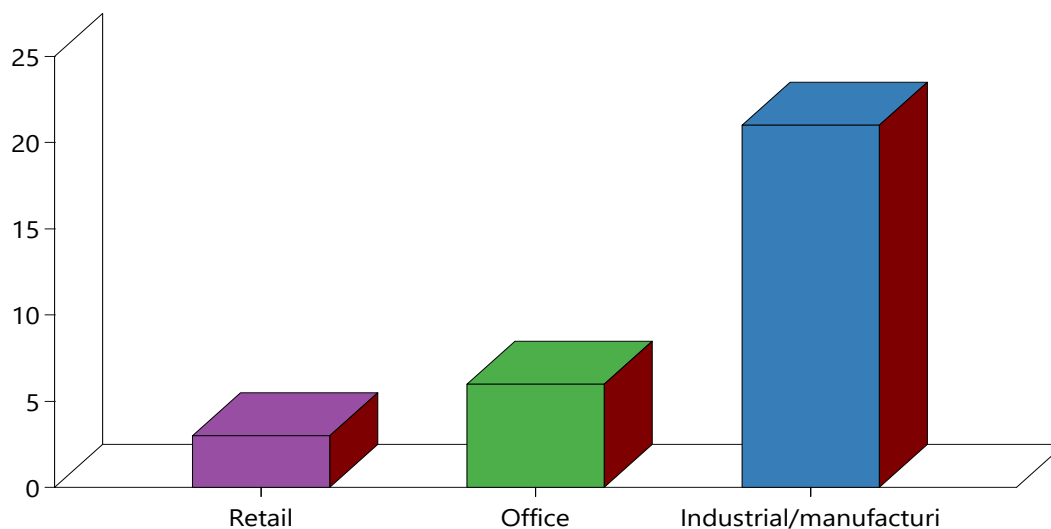
**Comments/Notes for "Other village:"**

Also located in Harpster and Carey

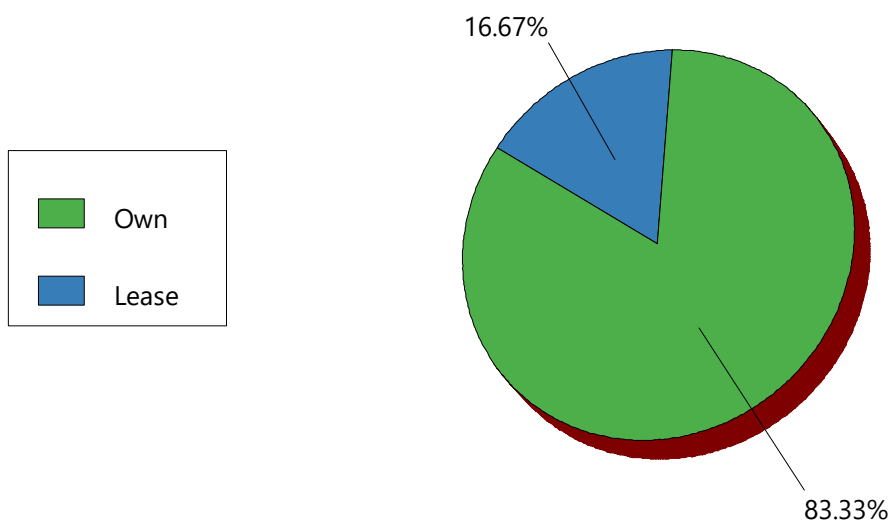
*3. Please check the primary industry sector that best describes your business:*



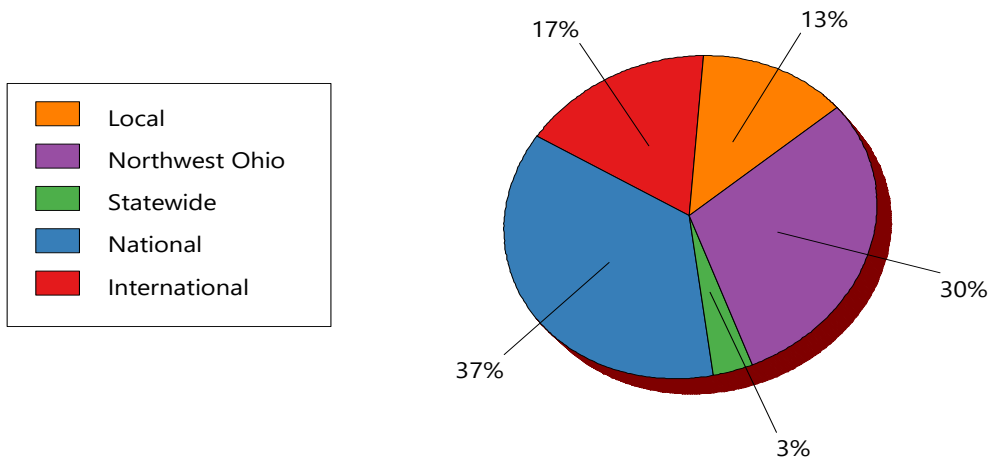
4. What is the primary type of space your business occupies?



5. Do you own or lease your space?

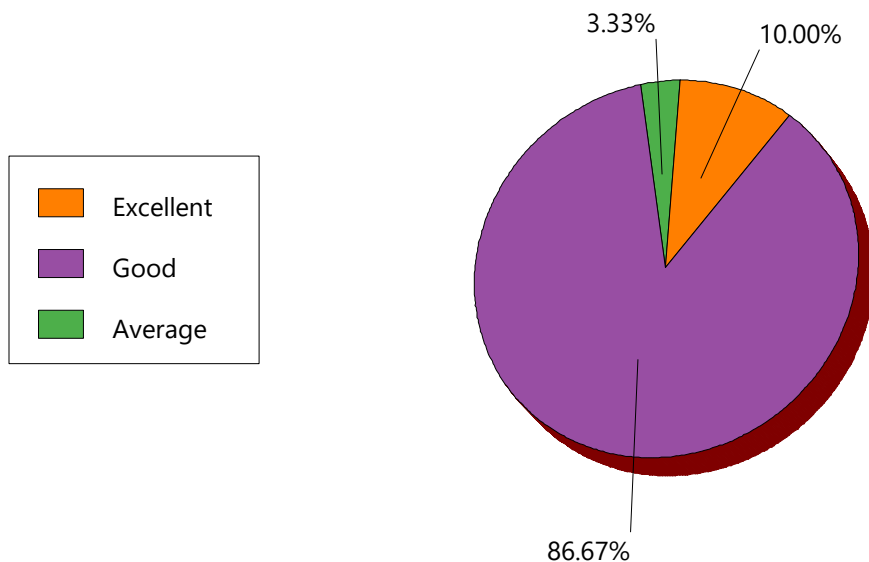


6. What is your company's primary geographic market?

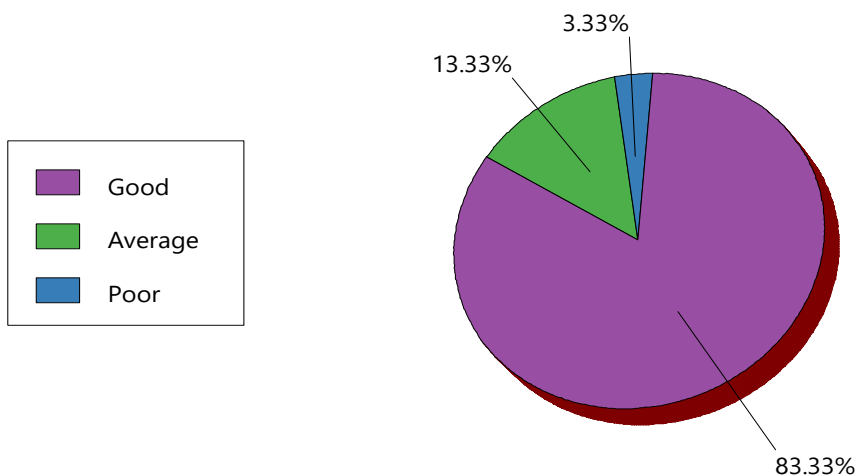


**SECTION - LOCAL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT**

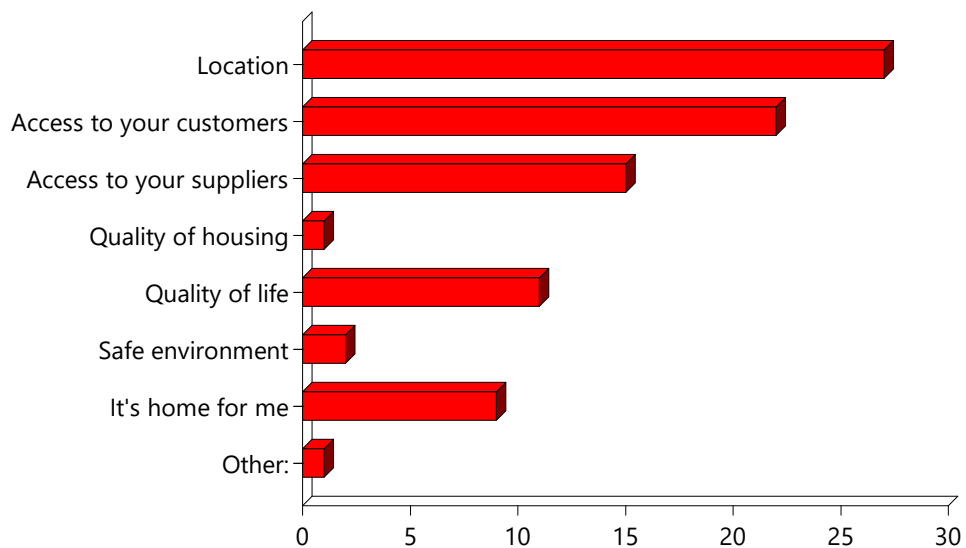
7. From your perspective as a businessperson, please rate the overall quality of life in Wyandot County.



8. What is your overall opinion of Wyandot County as a place to do business?



9. What are the top three (3) reasons you chose to locate and keep your business in Wyandot County?

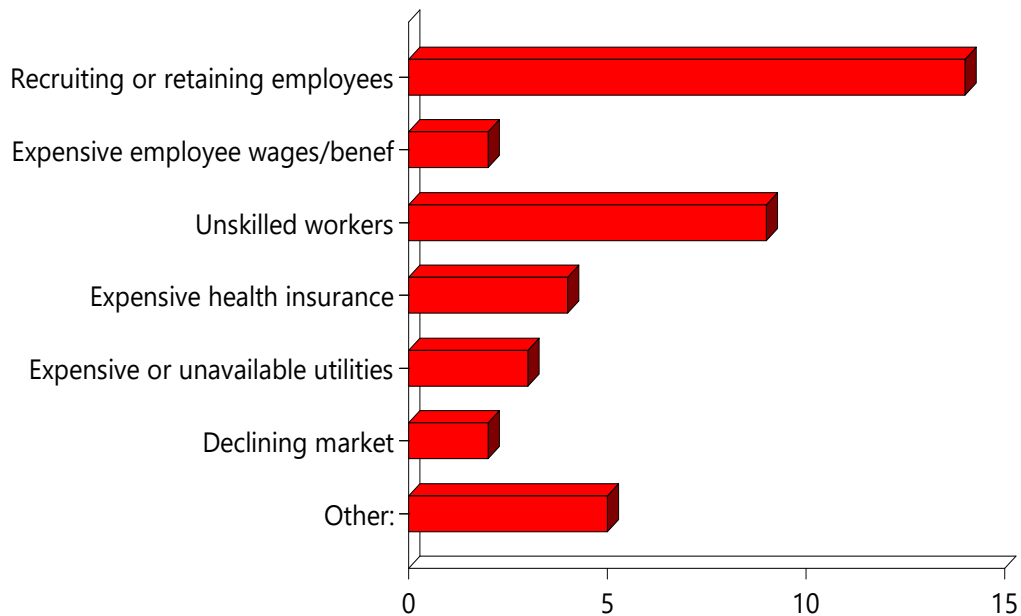


**Comments/Notes:**

Location originally owned by previous partner. (3 comments tallied)



*10. What are the top three (3) challenges you face as a business owner/operator in Wyandot County?*



**Comments/Notes:**

Do not do a lot of sales locally.

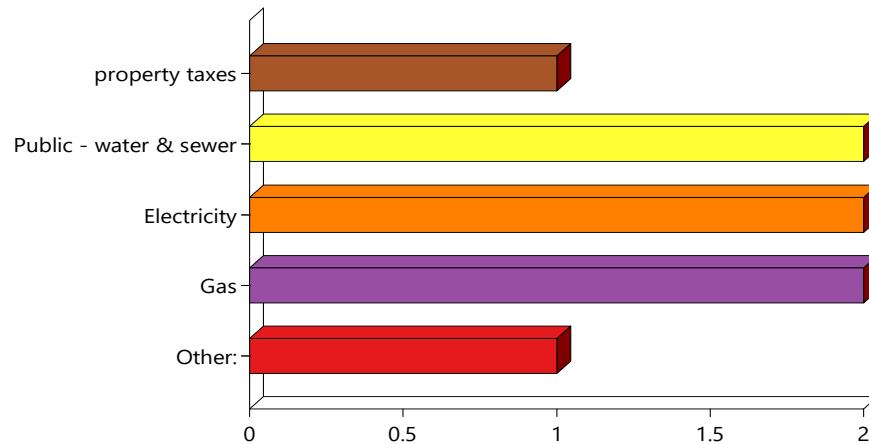
Limited local market

No new business start ups

Slim local market

Warehouse space

*11. Please indicate the business costs in Wyandot County that you believe are more expensive than they ordinarily should be.*



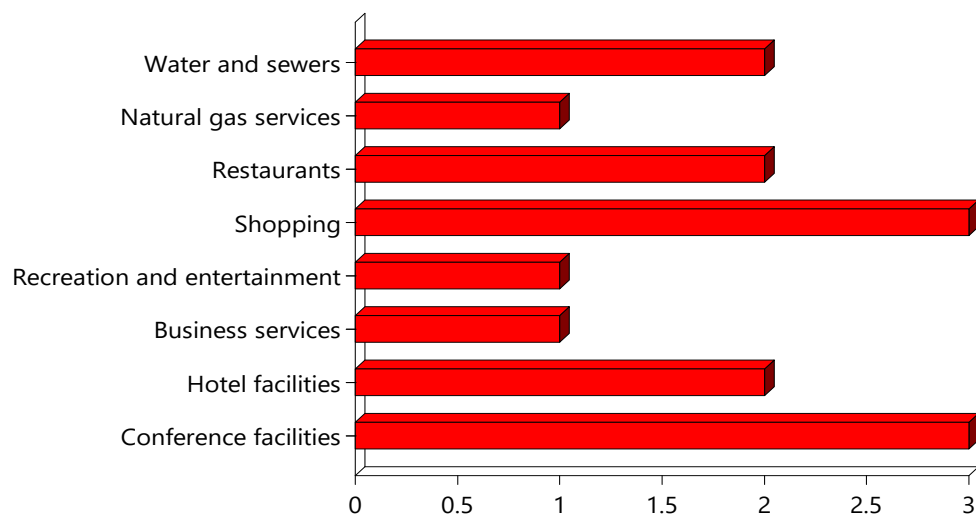
**Comments/Notes:**

Wyandot is one of our cheaper facilities to operate.

*12. If you indicated a significantly expensive local business cost, please explain why:*

- Difficulties in acquiring needed gas supply and service at reasonable costs.
- Muni rates are high
- Water ad sewer are a large part of our operation, and the facility and infrastructure is aging.

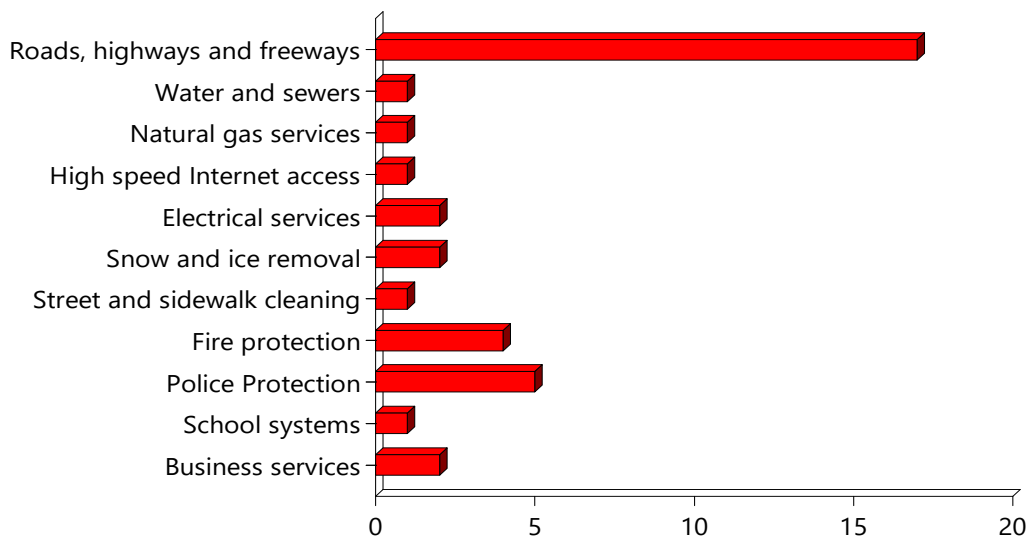
*13. From your perspective as a businessperson, please select the SERVICES and AMENITIES in Wyandot County that you are most DISSATISFIED with.*



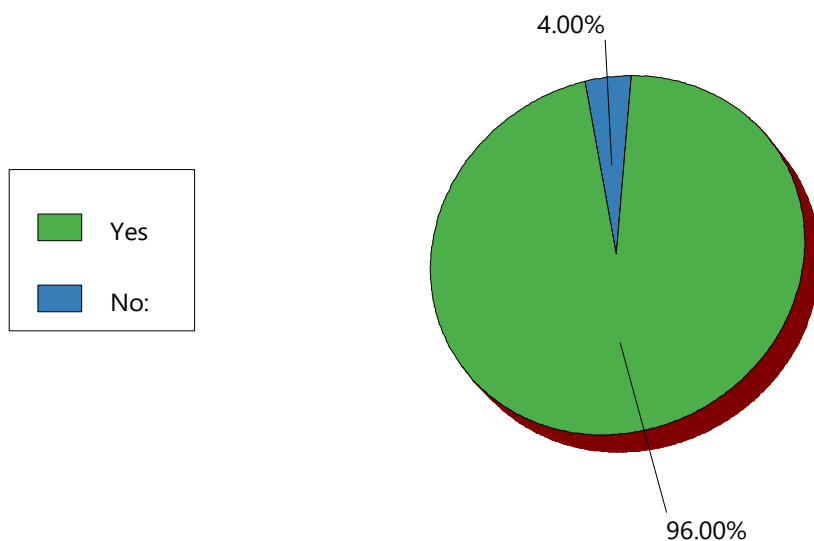
*14. If you indicated services or amenities for which you are dissatisfied, please explain why:*

- Better restaurants and shopping could help to attract more customers.
- Continuing problems with sanitary sewer.
- Limited availability (2 responses tallied)
- Limited in smaller area
- Not very many options in rural area.

15. Please select the SERVICES and AMENITIES with which you are most SATISFIED.



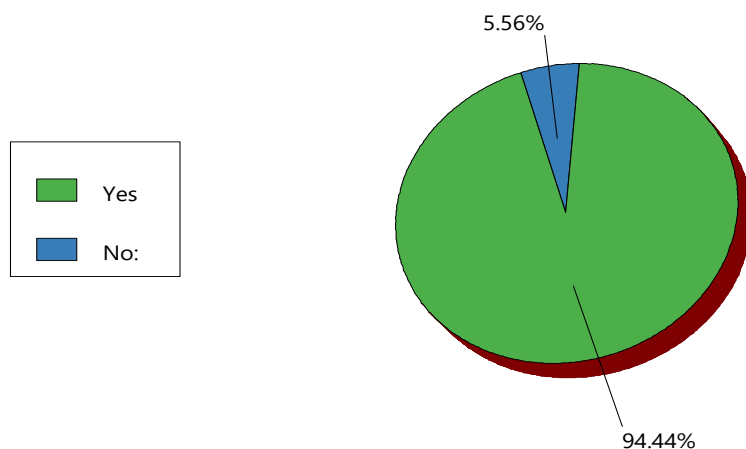
16. Have local public agencies been responsive to your needs when asked?



Comments/Notes for "No:"

Zoning regs patched together and inconsistent

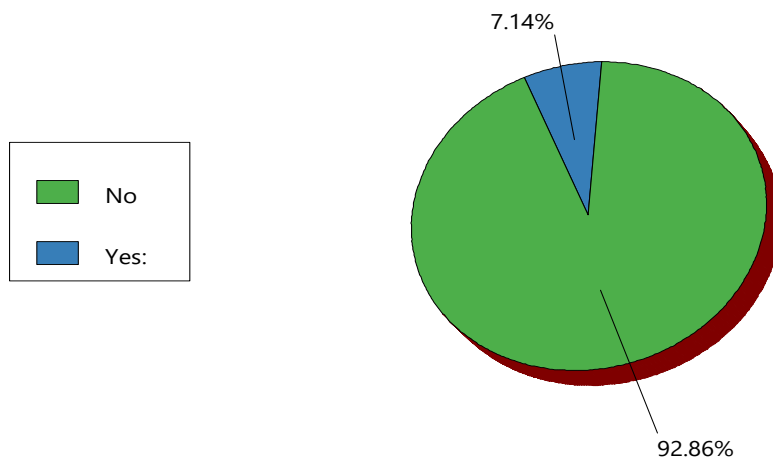
*17. Have you been able to find and understand local rules and regulations (zoning, permitting, etc.) when needed?*



**Comments/Notes for "No:":**

Haven't needed to yet

*18. Have any local rules and regulations (zoning, permitting, etc.) been a hindrance to your business operations or expansion efforts?*

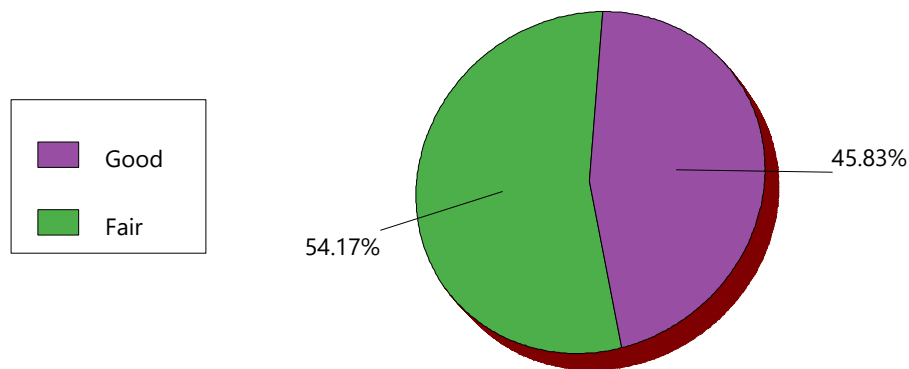


**Comments/Notes for "Yes:":**

Zoning

## SECTION - STATE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

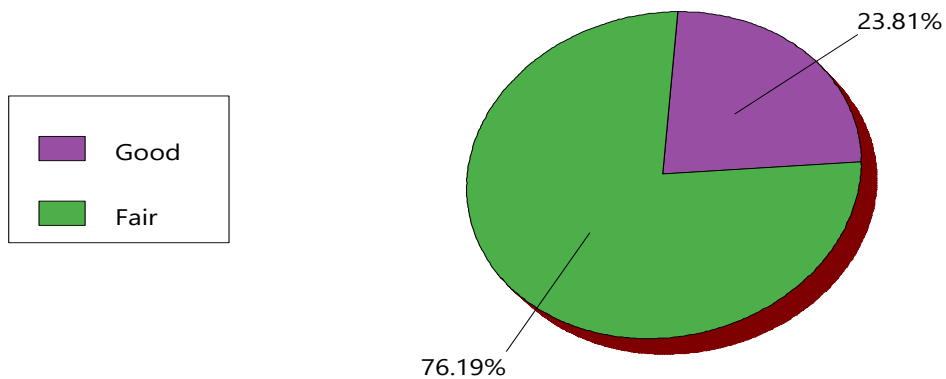
### 19. Please rate the overall State Business Climate:



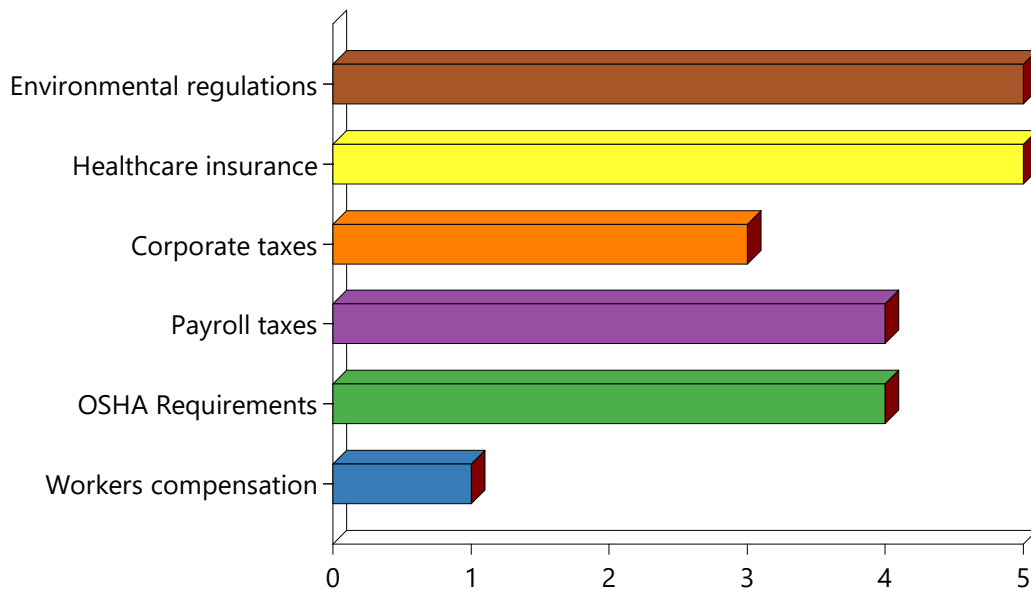
### 20. What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages to doing business in Ohio.

- Big agricultural base
- Geographic location and transportation
- Geographic location. (3 responses tallied)
- Good geographic location, and has been a good source of talent for many years.
- Heavy agricultural state.
- Industries in and around the state are primary customers.
- Location (2 responses tallied)
- Location in midwest is good for business
- Location is an advantage
- Location is an advantage for us.
- Location, dependable workforce (up to now)

21. Please rate the cost of doing business in Ohio:



22. Please select the areas where you believe the cost of doing business in the State of Ohio is high.

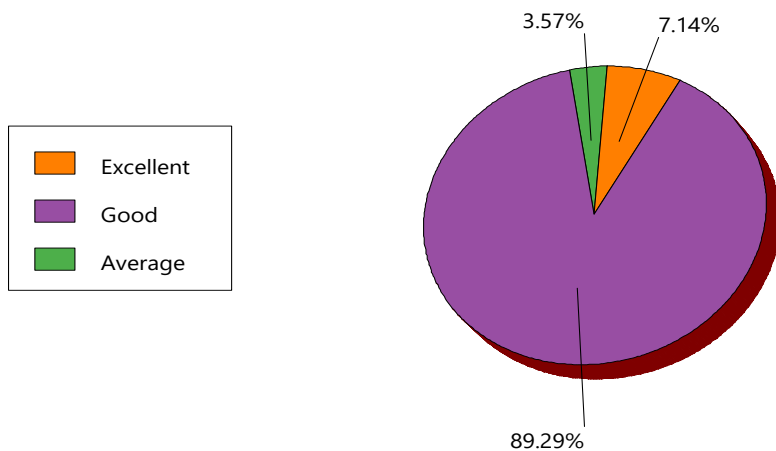


## SECTION - LOCAL WORKFORCE

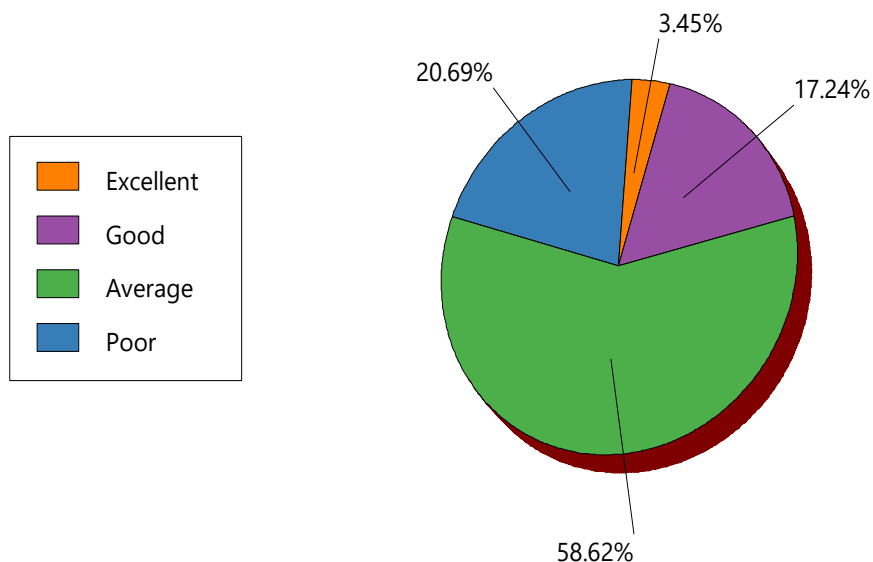
### Instructions Provided To Respondents

Please rate the following aspects of the Hourly and Salaried labor force in Wyandot County:

23. How would you rate the *QUALITY* of the local management and staff (SALARIED) labor force?

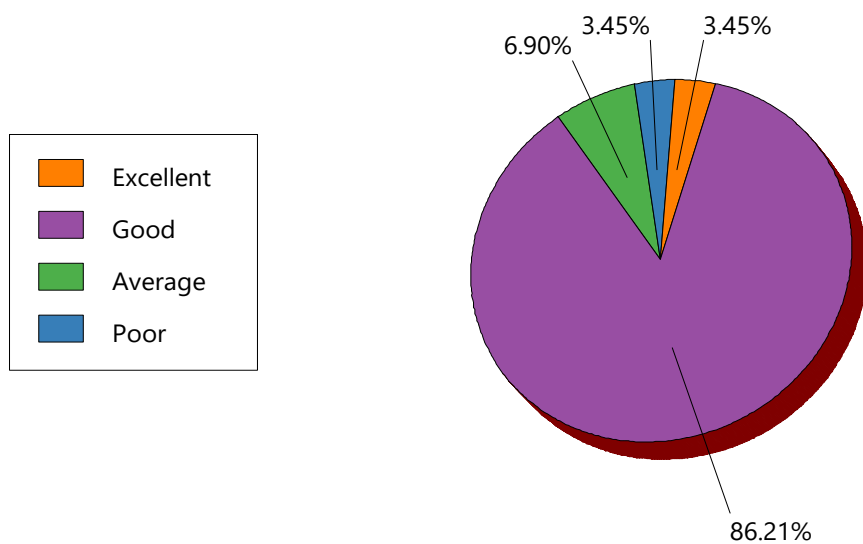


24. How would you rate the *AVAILABILITY* of the local management and staff (SALARIED) labor force?

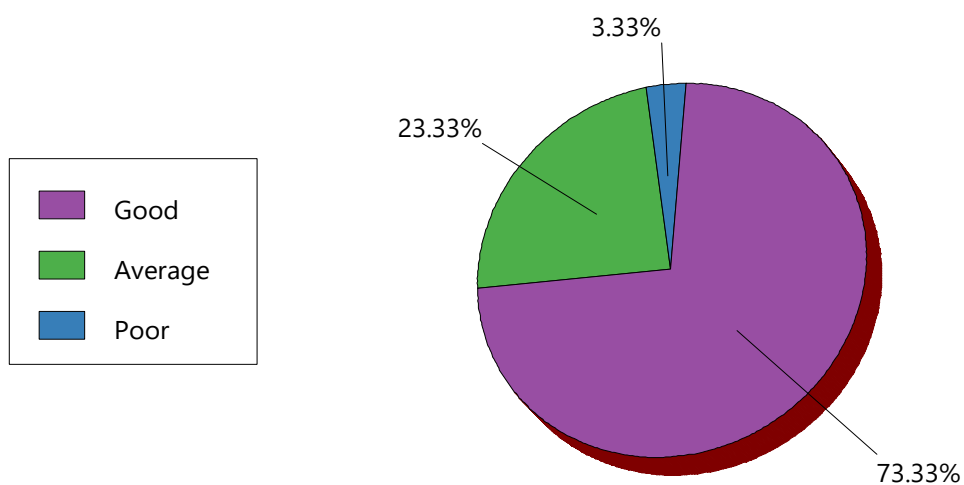




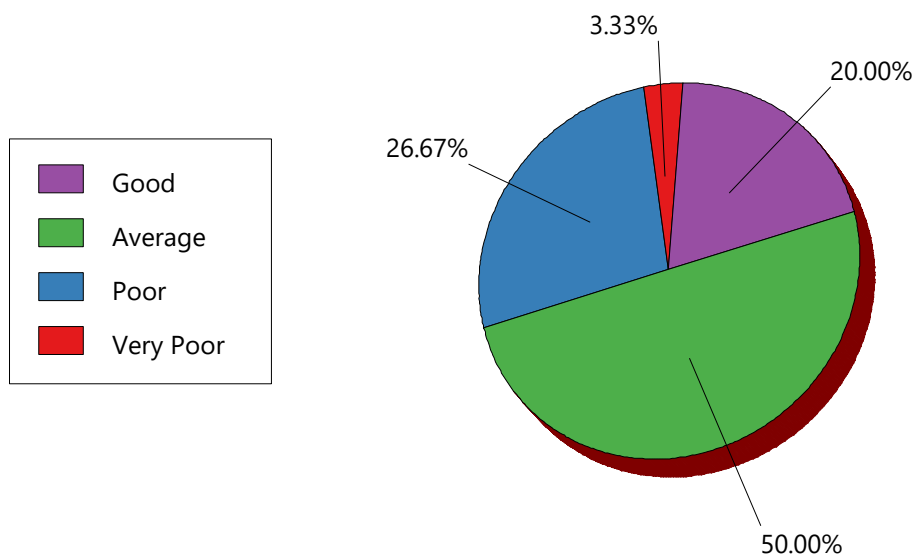
25. How would you rate the STABILITY of the local management and staff (SALARIED) labor force?



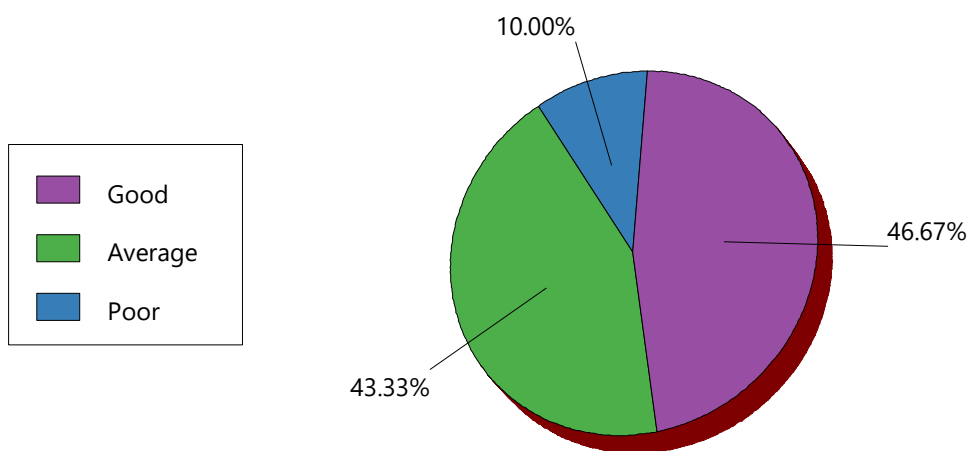
26. How would you rate the QUALITY of the local HOURLY labor force?



27. How would you rate the AVAILABILITY of the local HOURLY labor force?



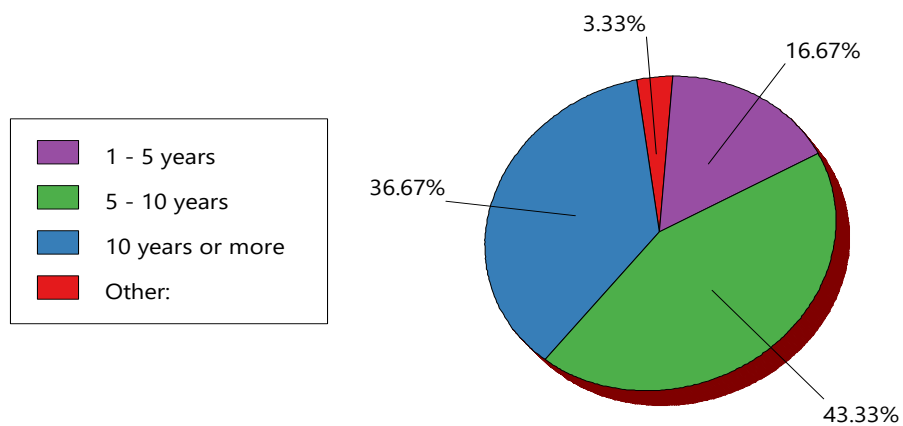
28. How would you rate the STABILITY of the local HOURLY labor force?



*29. How many employees work at your Wyandot County business location? Please break out the number of part-time vs. full-time employees if applicable.*

- 1
- 1 FT; 7 PT
- 100
- 150
- 2 FT; 1 PT
- 20
- 21 FT & 1 PT
- 25
- 3
- 3 FTE; 4 PTE
- 30 FTE
- 300
- 35 FT 5 PT
- 4 FT, but daily count working in Wyandot fluctuates.
- 45
- 5 (3 FT; 2 PT)
- 52 FT
- 550 FTEs; 150 temps
- 56
- 7
- 7 FT, 1 PT
- 7 FT; 1 PT
- 70
- 70 FT, 30 PT
- 700
- 75 (2 responses tallied)
- 800+
- 9 FT
- Full time 2 part time 3

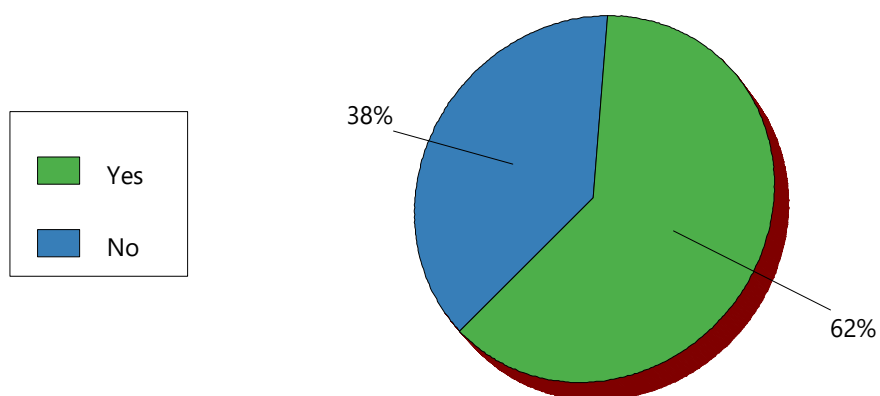
30. What is the average length of employment?



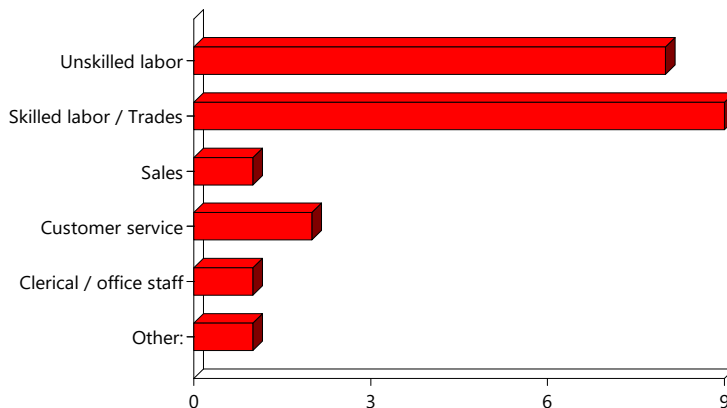
Comments/Notes for "Other:"

Just started business

31. Does your business have difficulty recruiting employees?



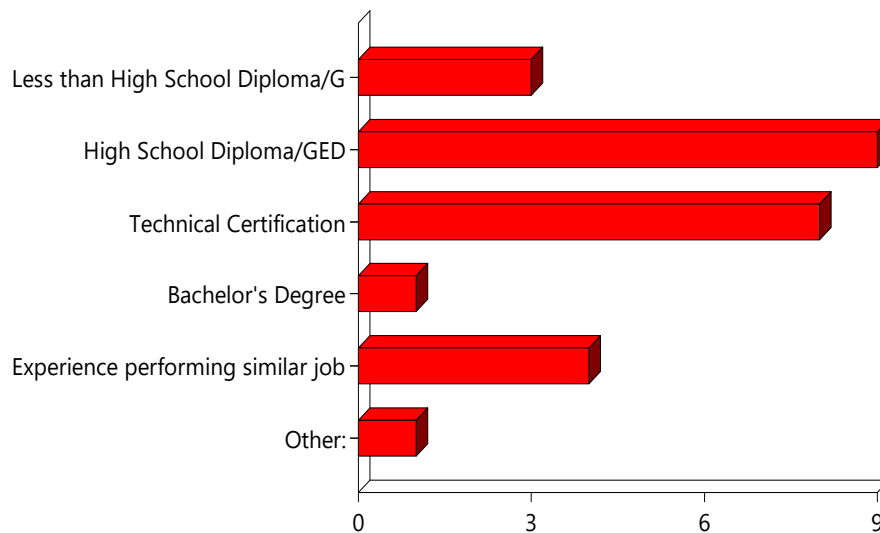
32. If so, with which types of labor categories are you experiencing recruiting problems?



**Comments/Notes:**

CDL drivers

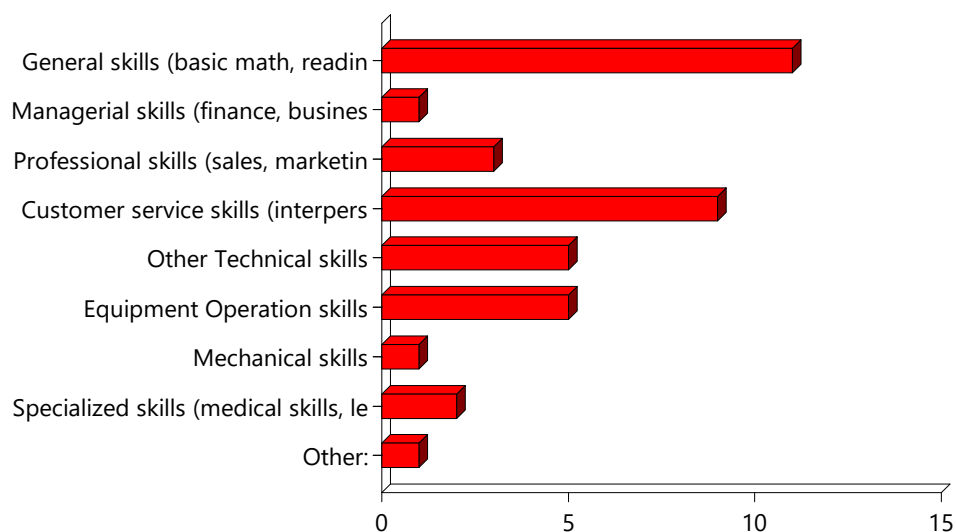
33. What are the minimum requirements needed for these positions (select all that apply)?



**Comments/Notes:**

Certification

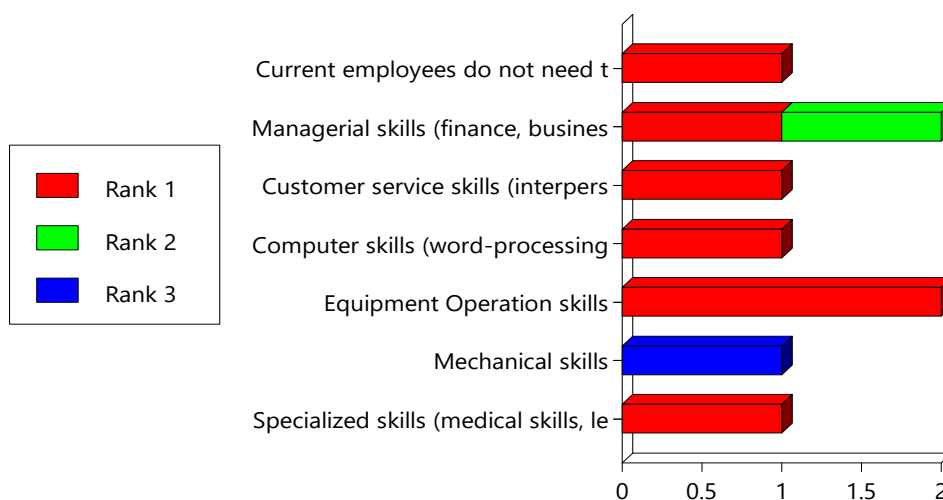
34. Please select the skills your find are lacking in potential employees you have interviewed (select all that apply):



**Comments/Notes:**

Interpersonal skills, acting professionally

35. Please rank in order the top four (4) areas in which your CURRENT employees need training (most needed area first).



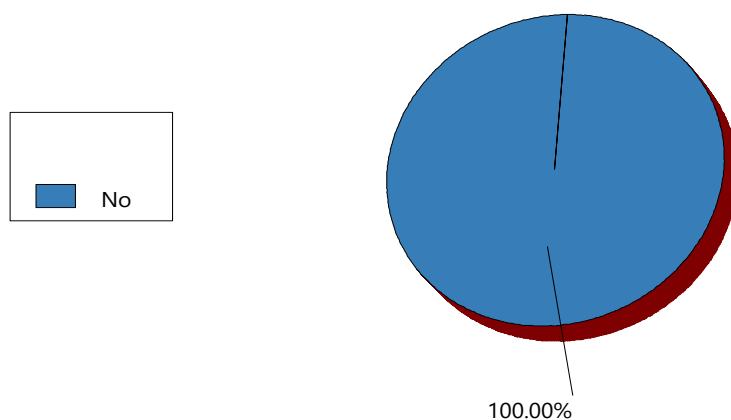
*36. Does your company currently have any relationships with area colleges/universities/vocational schools, and if so, who?*

- Alber Enterprise Center
- Apprenticeship program with Marion Tech
- Marion Tech
- No (2 responses tallied)
- No. Formerly Sentinel.
- None currently, but we do post job openings with the surrounding schools.
- Owens CC
- Owens State CC & Marion Technical College
- Tri-Rivers
- We do reach out to local schools when filling positions.
- Yes, Marion Technical College.

*37. Does your organization currently utilize a workplace wellness program and/or safety program that offers direct incentives to your employees or business? If so, please explain:*

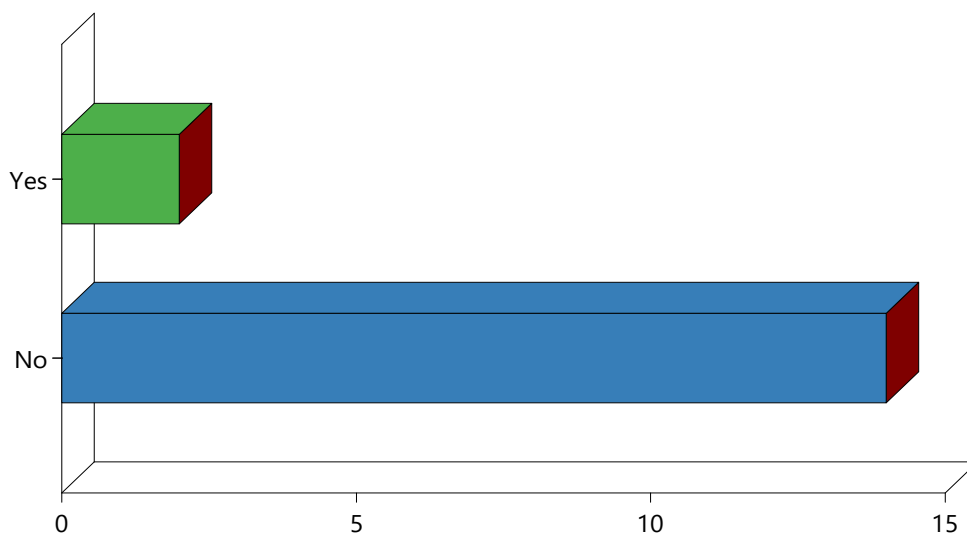
- Company-wide wellness and safety programs.
- No. (3 responses tallied)
- Safety program.
- We are FDA certified and must follow strict safety guidelines.
- We have annual wellness screenings.
- Yes, corporate wide wellness and safety training.
- Yes, we offer an informal wellness program to employees

*38. If your business does not have a similar program; are you interested in learning about wellness or safety programs that may provide benefits or incentives to your employees?*



## SECTION - SUPPLY CHAIN

*39. Your business likely buys some materials, supplies, and services from suppliers outside this area. In your opinion, could some of these items be produced profitably in this locality?*



*40. If yes, please help us identify materials, supplies, or services that could be produced profitably here rather than shipped into the area.*

- Local suppliers are used in our process as much as possible.
- Most of our materials do come from Wyandot County.
- Office supplies. Our central location is ideal for distributed service and material distribution.
- Various materials used in our products.

*41. What products or services is your company producing for which you would like to find a local buyer?*

- A lot of scrap foam that is being sent to a landfill.
- Real estate services



## **SECTION - FUTURE PLANS**

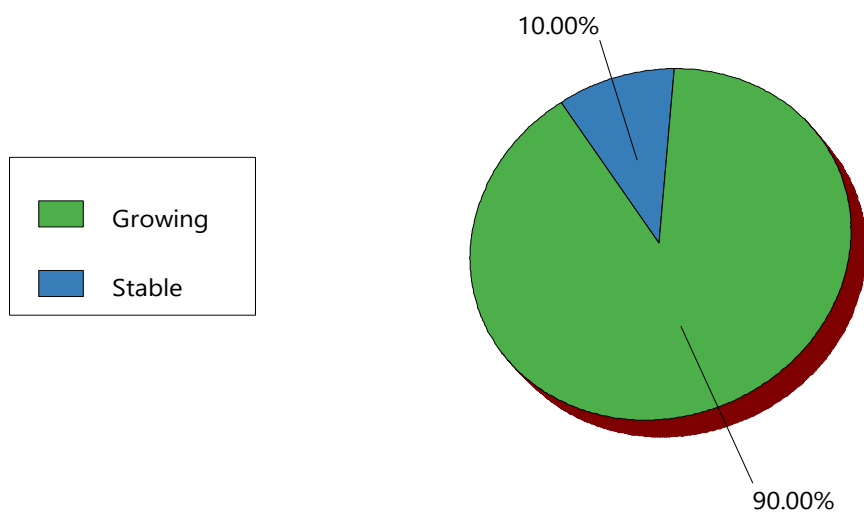
*42. If you have any plans to modernize, renovate, or expand your present building(s) or equipment in the near future; please describe the type of plans, time frame, and any constraints faced:*

- Adding new machinery.
- Continue to purchase equipment to build capacity at our facility.
- Continuous upgrades in equipment.
- Could use some extra production space, but we are landlocked.
- Current investments in service equipment and parking lot.
- Expansion of facility
- Just completed renovation of our show room.
- Looking at expansion over the next few years.
- N/A
- Need to build a 80' x 100' warehouse and office. In next 6-8 months.
- No plans at this time, but facility can support expansion if needed.
- No.
- Possible future expansions
- Possible new location in addition to current location.
- Potential new facility in the next few years.
- Purchased and renovated space within last 5 years.
- Recent M&E purchase and installation.
- Recently added a new location.
- Recently completed expansion
- Recently moved operation.

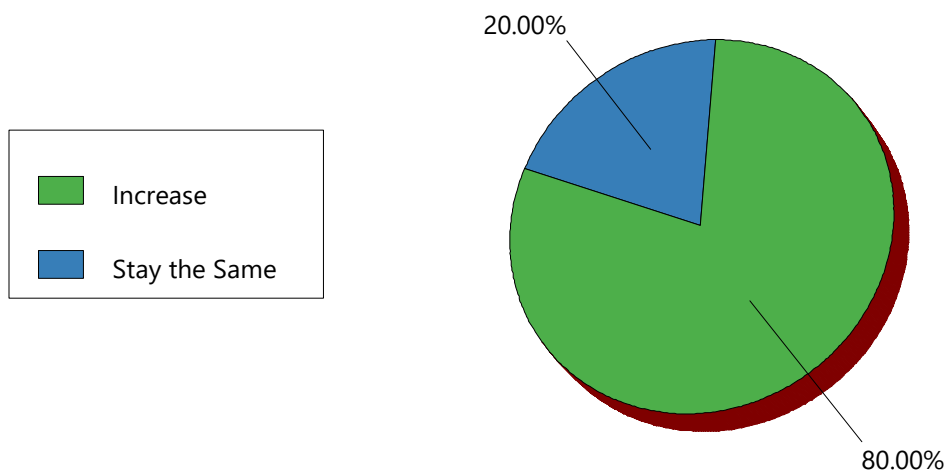
*43. If you are considering moving, closing, or selling this business; please describe where and when this would happen:*

- N/A (2 responses tallied)
- No. (2 responses tallied)
- Plans are to move operation to a location where our company already has available square footage and combine with our other business units in a centralized location. This will be advantageous to us from a cost perspective.

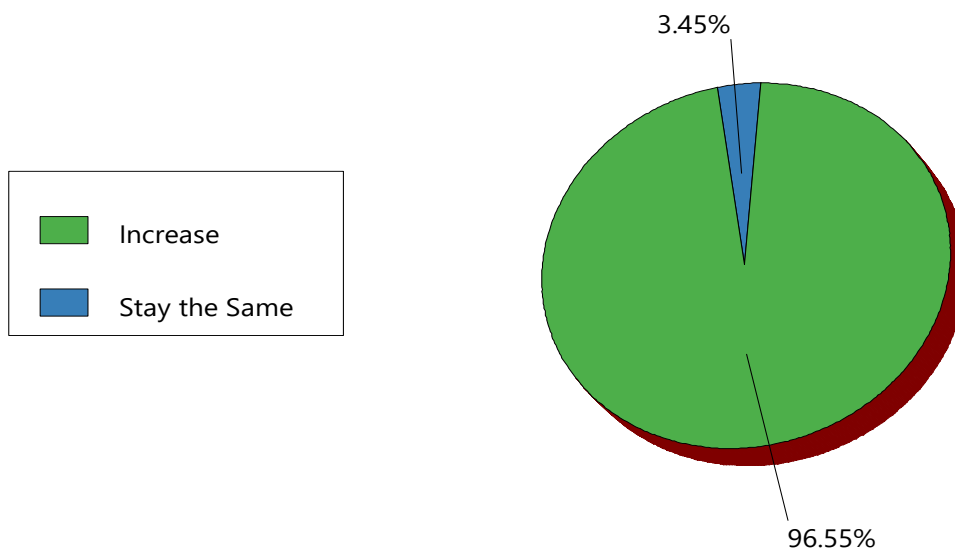
44. Does your company have plans for growth over the next 3 years?



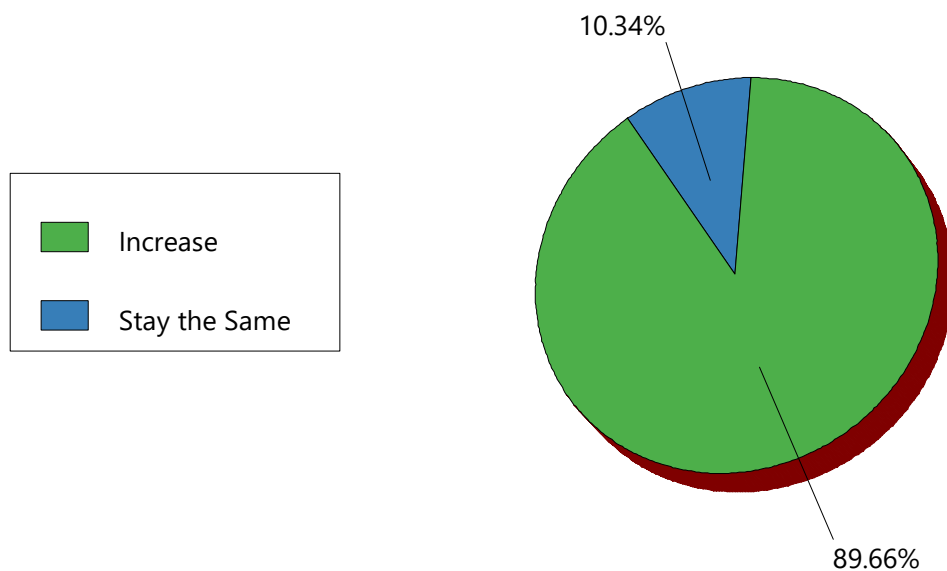
45. Will your number of customers be changing?



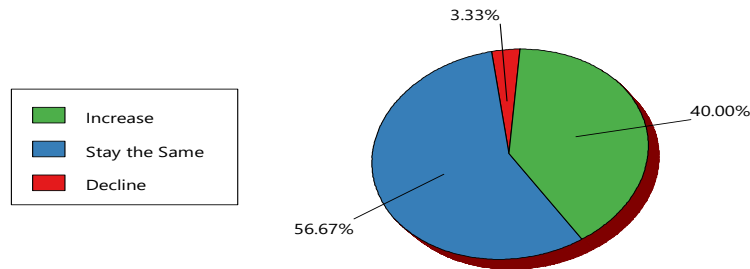
46. Will your Sales - Total revenue change?



47. Will your Profits change?



*48. Will the company's employment level be changing at this location?*



*49. If you expect any of these business factors to change over the next 3 years, what are the principal reasons for the changes?*

- As the economy has increased so has demand for our product and services.
- General growth in recent years and investment in upgraded machinery to better serve customer needs.
- Growth in customers.
- Increased demand in the industry
- Increased market demand in and around Wyandot County.
- Increased marketing and sales efforts.
- Increasing demand from current customers and new customers
- Increasing demand from current customers.
- Increasing market share locally and new location has allowed an expansion of services.
- Market growth
- Market growth and continuous historical growth year-to-year.
- Market growth and new products
- Market growth.
- More customers.
- New customers and market gains
- New location and increased spending in general.
- New products and growth with existing customers.
- New products to serve different market segments.
- Picking up business with new contractors, and a few competitors have left the market.
- Pickup in market
- Record contracts with customers.
- Reputation in local market.
- Sales continue to grow at 18-20% per year.
- Shifting contracts with customers.
- Trending demand.

*50. Is there anything the Wyandot County Office of Economic Development could do to help your business remain profitable and continue growing in the Wyandot County community?*

- Financial assistance with expansion
- Help secure financing for building projects.

### **SECTION - THANK YOU!**

#### **Instructions Provided To Respondents**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your responses are greatly valued. Please click the SUBMIT YOUR RESPONSES button below to complete the questionnaire. They will travel over a secure connection to our server. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at 419-294-4931, or visit our website at [www.wyandotcountyeconomicdevelopment.com](http://www.wyandotcountyeconomicdevelopment.com).



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URL [www.wyandotcountyeconomicdevelopment.com](http://www.wyandotcountyeconomicdevelopment.com)

The Wyandot County Office of Economic Development is a 501(c)(6) non-profit organization.  
The WCOED partners with the Wyandot County Board of Commissioners to fund a full-time  
Economic Development Director in Wyandot County. As such, the WCOED Executive Director also  
serves in a leadership capacity for the Wyandot County Regional Planning Commission.