



COLUMBIA
ECONOMIC
TEAM

THE COLUMBIA COUNTY BUSINESS COMMUNITY CONNECTION PROJECT

SEPTEMBER 18, 2024 PRESENTATION

About

The Columbia County *Business Community Connection* Project combines a proven model, direct interviews, data analysis, and collaboration to create an informed, shared vision for future economic development in the county.

Goals

- 1 Support, retain, & grow local businesses
- 2 Strengthen partnerships & collaboration within the ecosystem
- 3 Establish & implement a shared countywide strategic plan (*and repeat the process every 3-5 years!*)



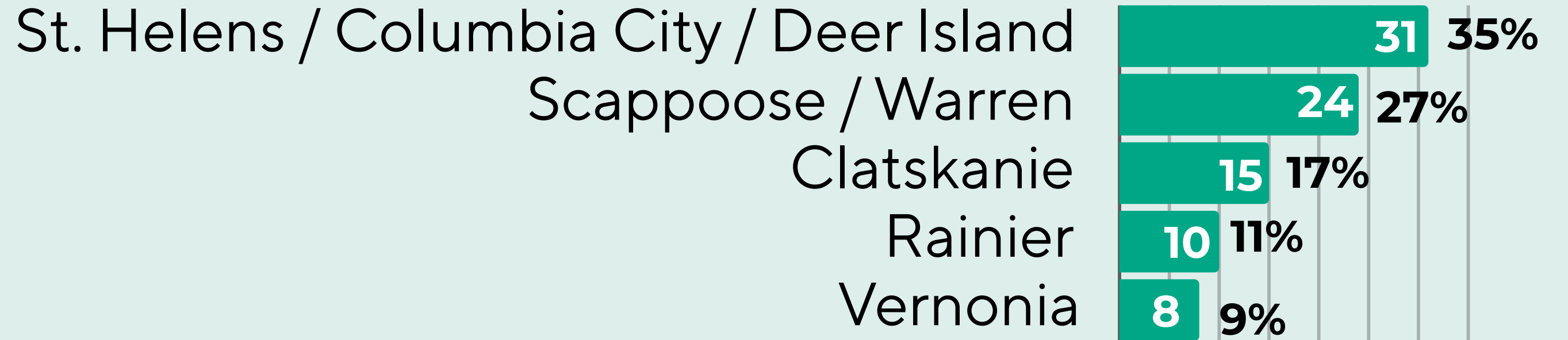
25+ Partners / 55+ Volunteers

- Business Oregon
- City of Clatskanie
- City of Columbia City
- City of Rainier
- City of Scappoose
- City of St. Helens
- City of Vernonia
- Clatskanie Chamber of Commerce
- Clatskanie Farmer Collective
- Clatskanie PUD
- Colpac EDD
- Columbia County Board of Commissioners
- Columbia Health Services
- Columbia River PUD
- I Communicate You
- InRoads Credit Union
- NW Workforce Investment Board
- OnPoint Credit Union
- PCC OMIC Training Center
- PGE
- Port of Columbia County
- Rainier Chamber of Commerce
- South Columbia County Chamber of Commerce
- St. Helens Main Street Alliance
- US Bank
- United Way Columbia County
- Vernonia Voice
- Wauna Credit Union

Participation

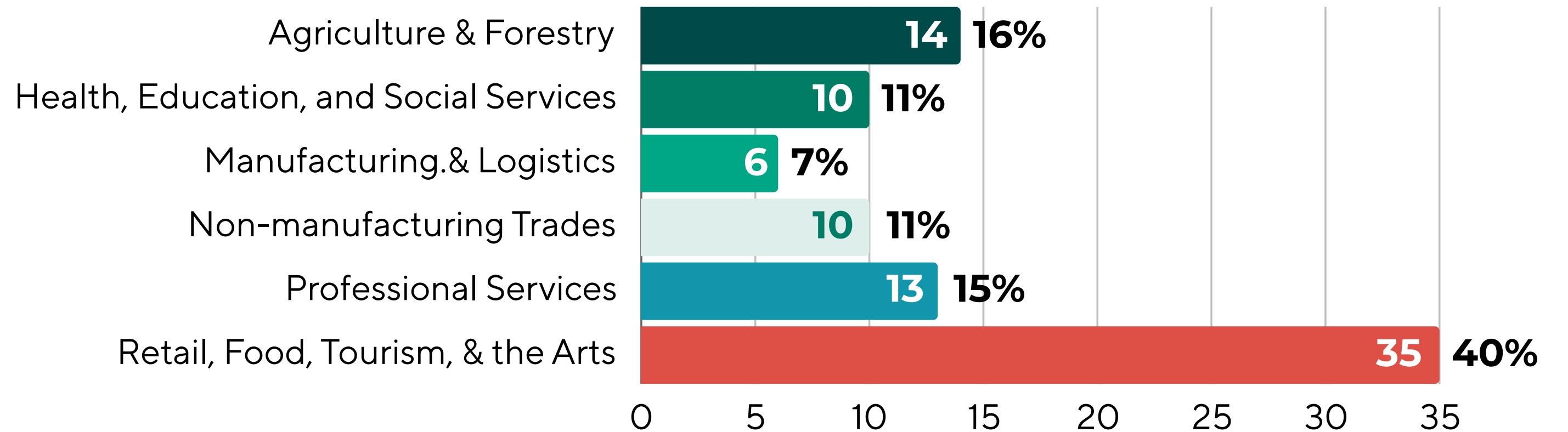
Business Locations

S.Q2 N=88

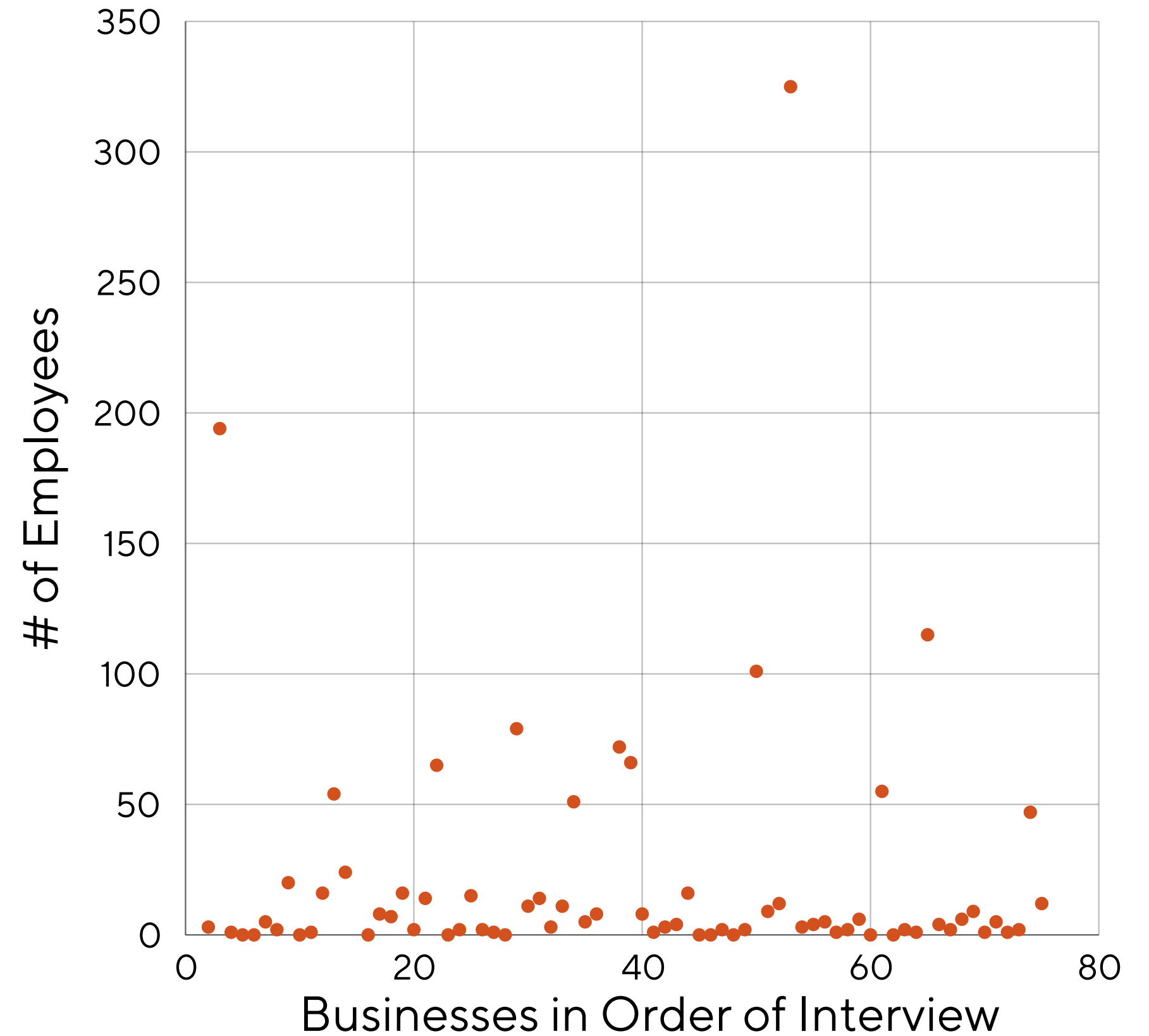
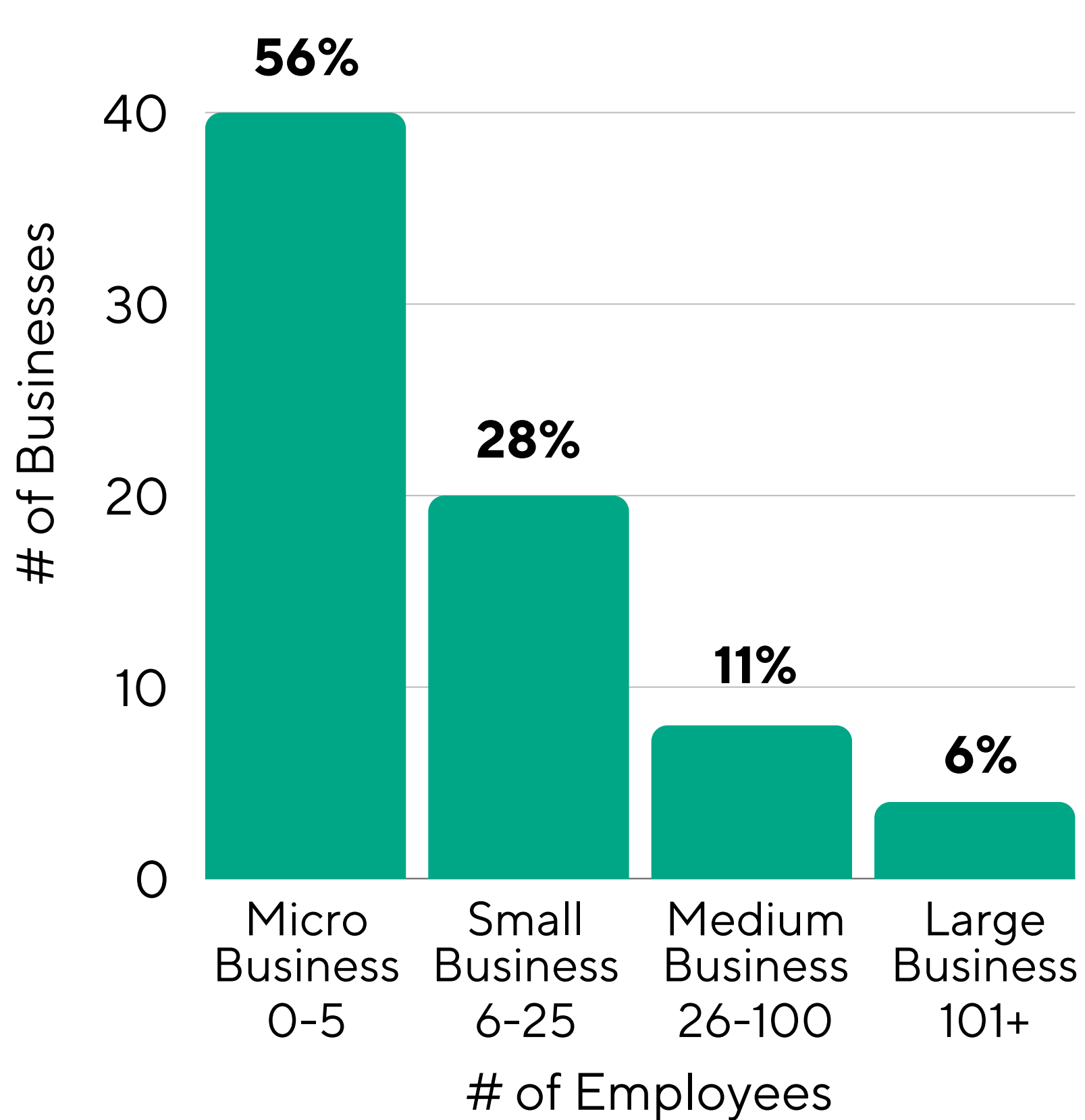


Industries

I.Q8 N=88



Number of Employees Per Business Surveyed



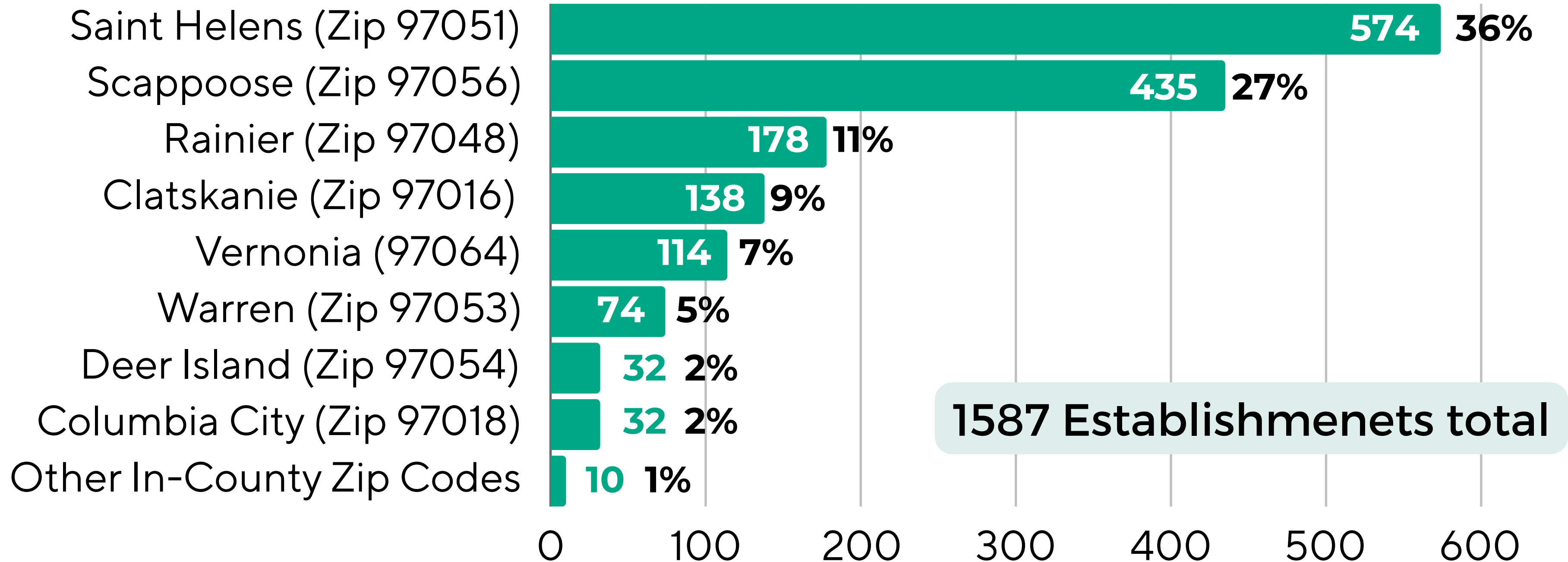
An aerial photograph of a dense forest, likely in the Columbia River Gorge. The forest is a mix of evergreen and deciduous trees, with some trees showing autumn colors. A road, likely Highway 30, is visible winding through the forest. The text is overlaid on a dark green, rounded rectangular background.

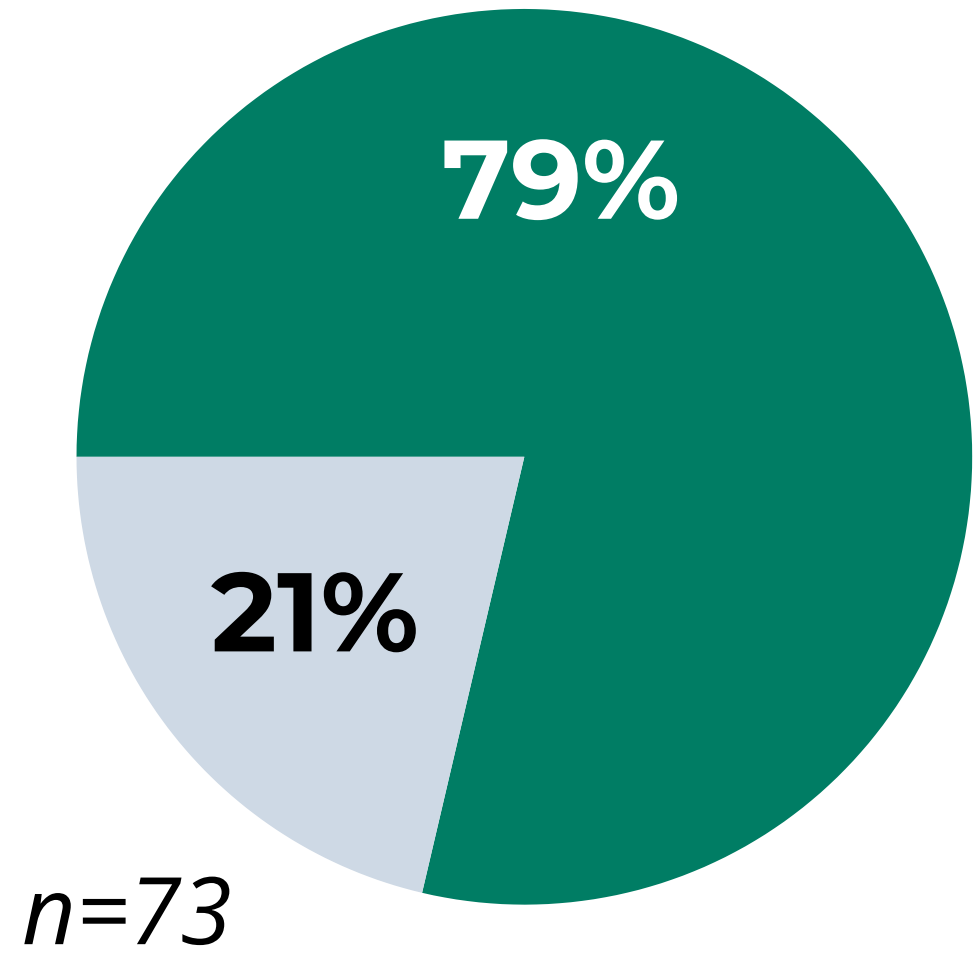
Understanding Columbia County's Business Landscape

Photo credit: Anothony Krueger / HWY 30

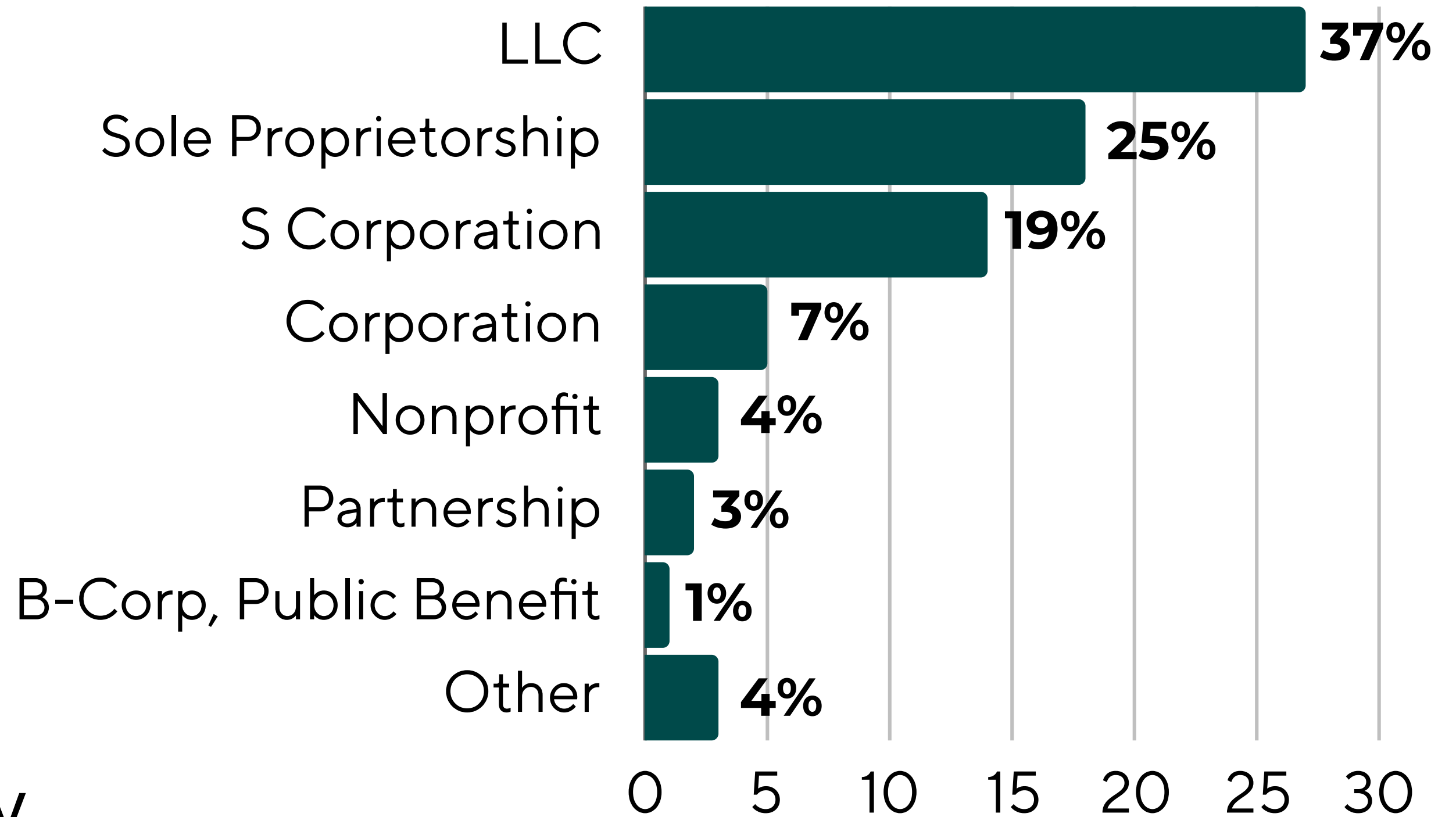
Business Establishment Counts by Zip Code

Your Economy 2024 data as of 9/9/24





**79% of
Businesses**
started in
Columbia County



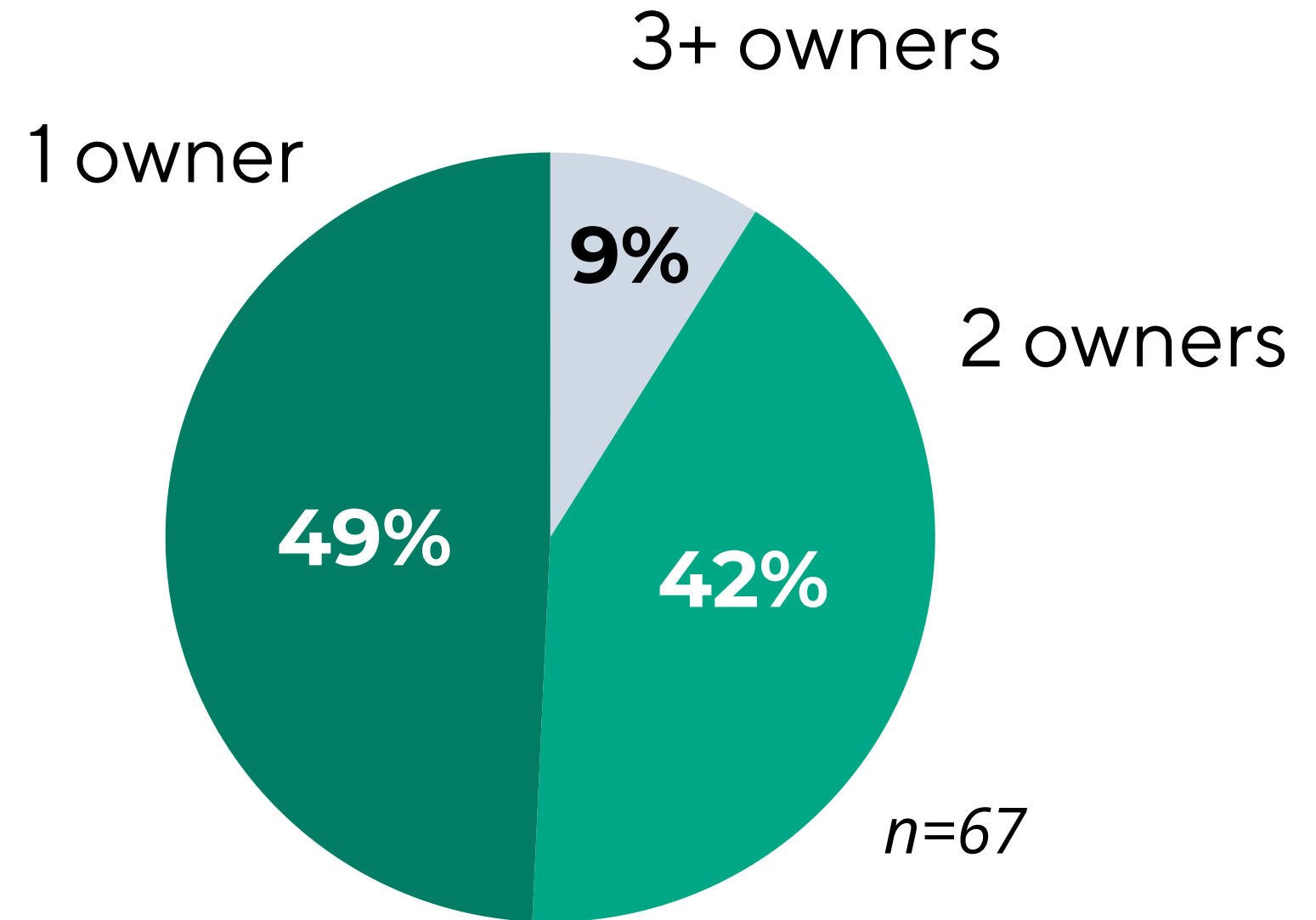
n=73

Ownership



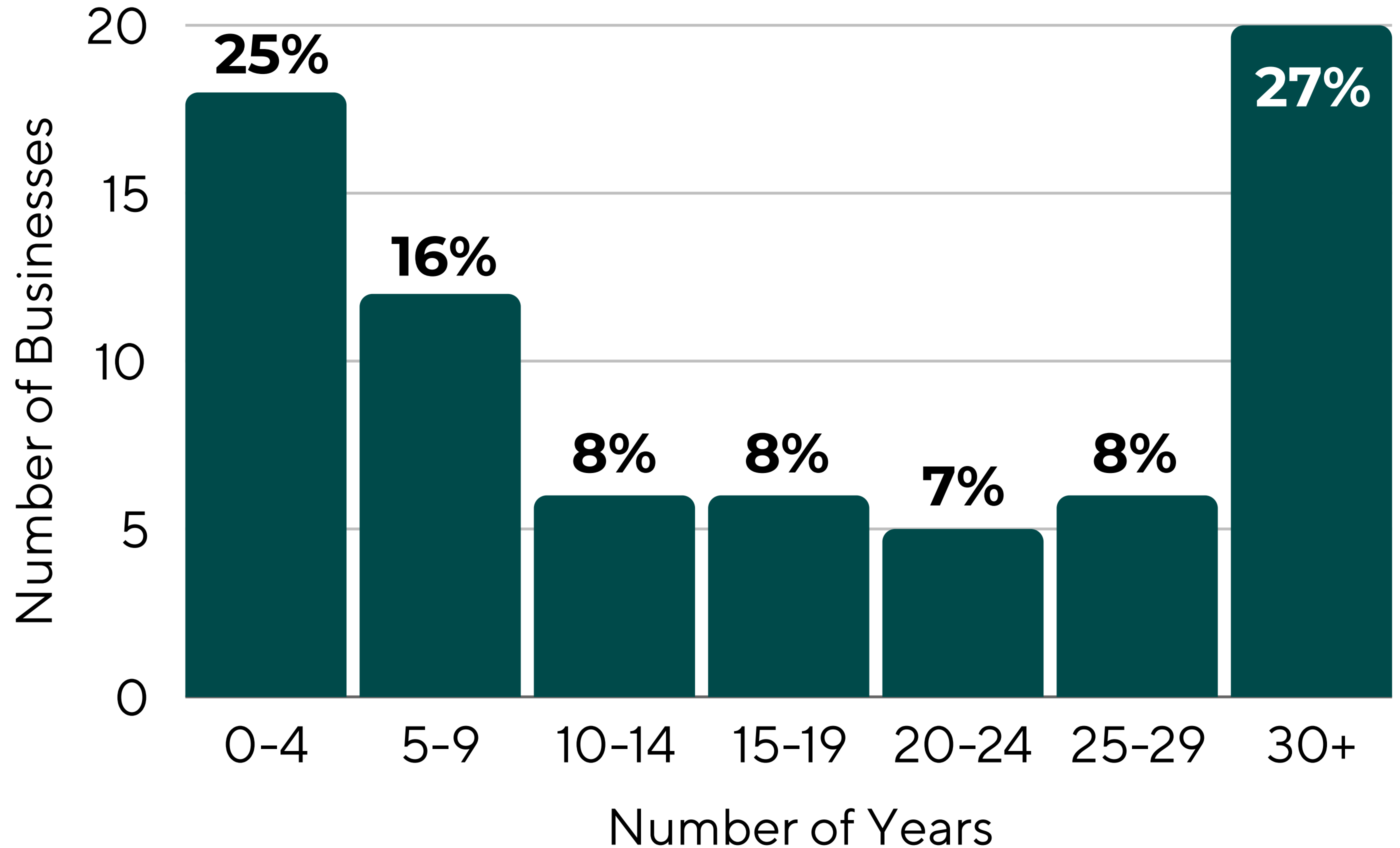
**Average =
1.6 owners**

**Average years
managing = 13 years**



n=73

**Average
age of
business
= 25 years**



Demographics

of business owners / Managers

Average Age= 48 yrs



58% Women
39% Men
4% Other

n=69



Owners/Managers that identify as

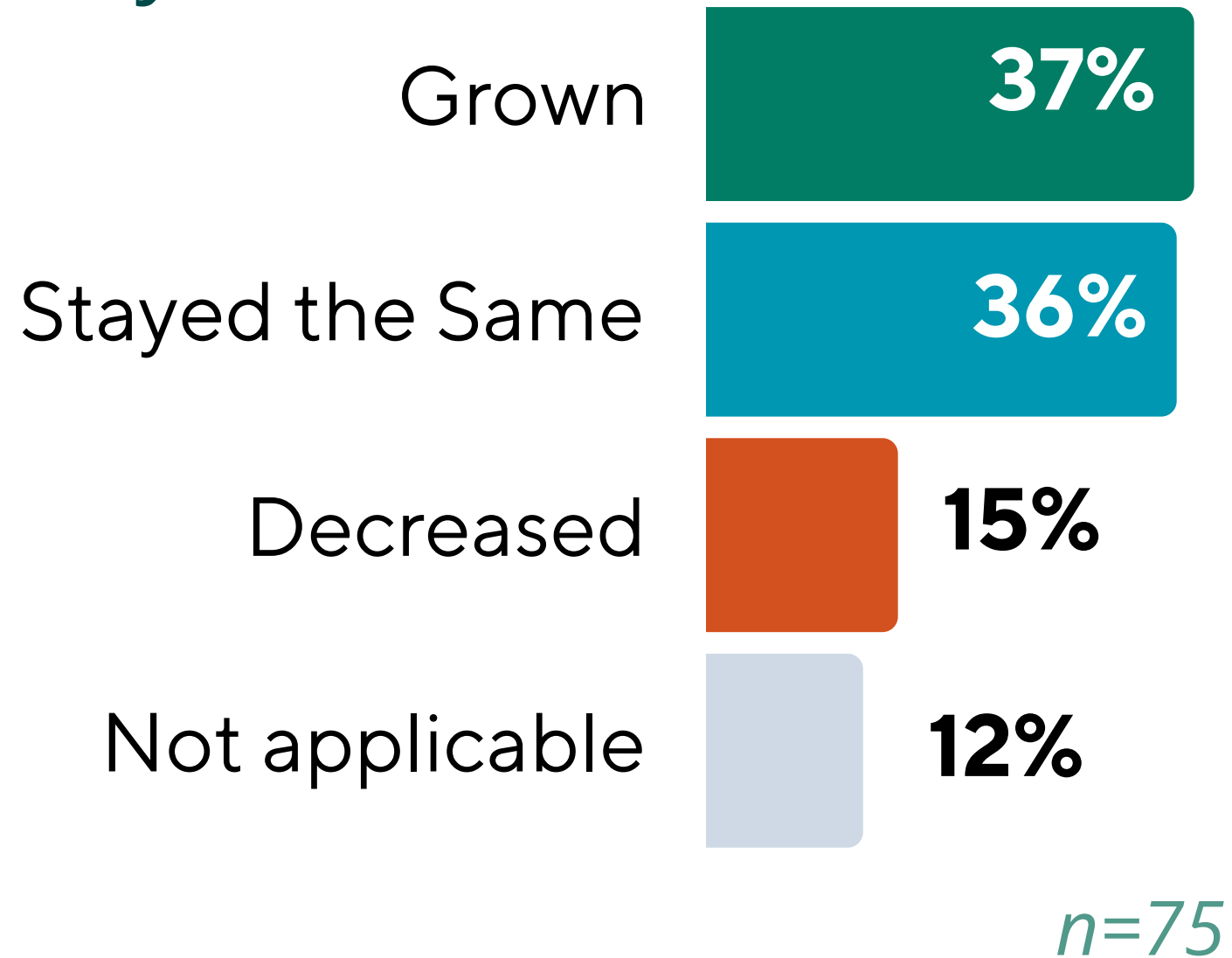
Minority
6%

Veteran
3%

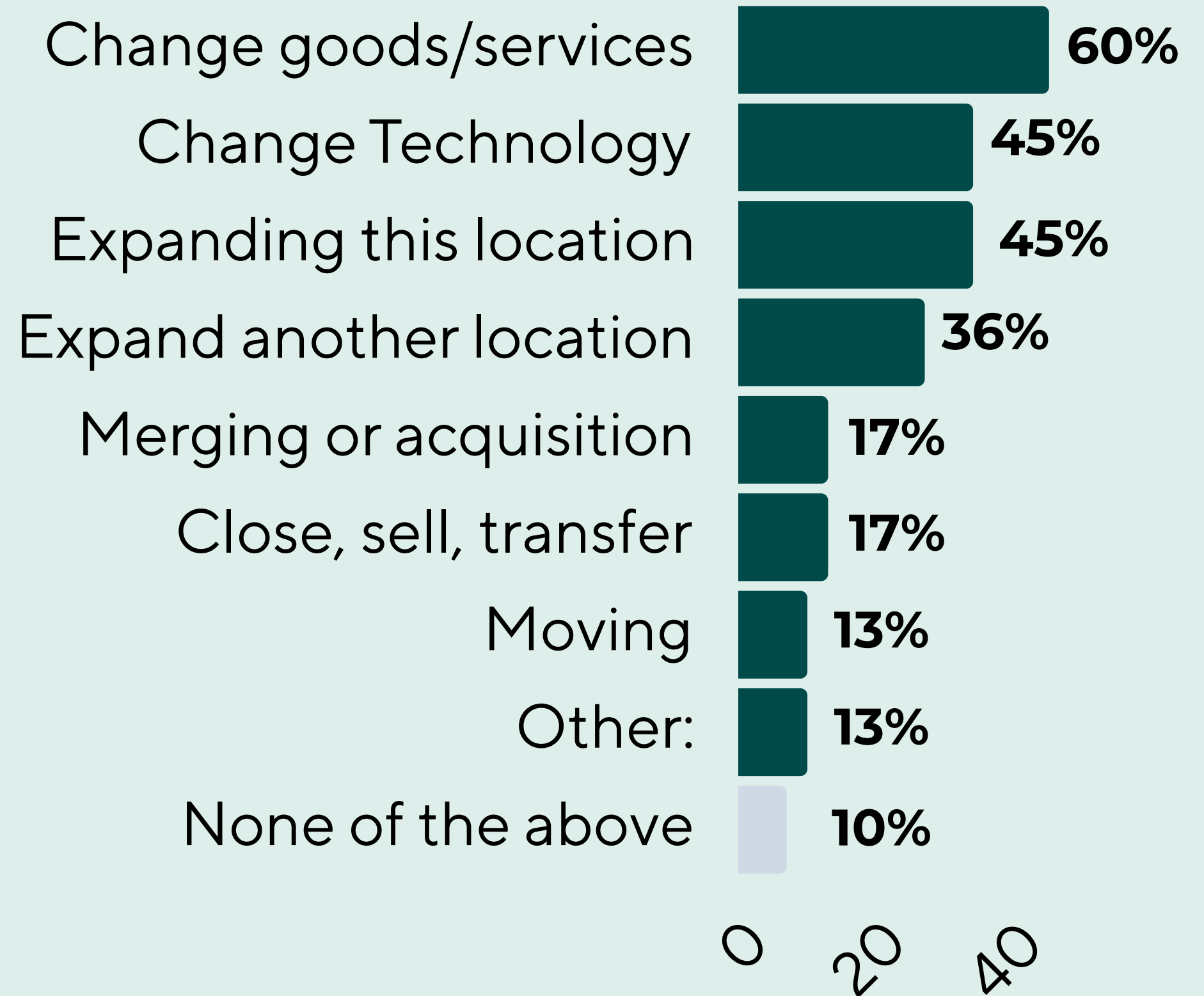
LBGTQIA+
3%

Business Activity

Employment in the Last 3 yrs has...



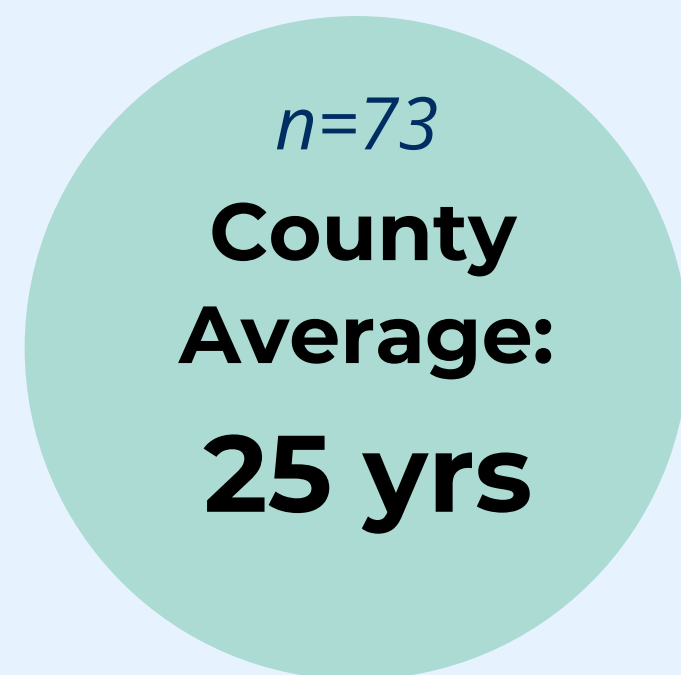
Anticipated Changes



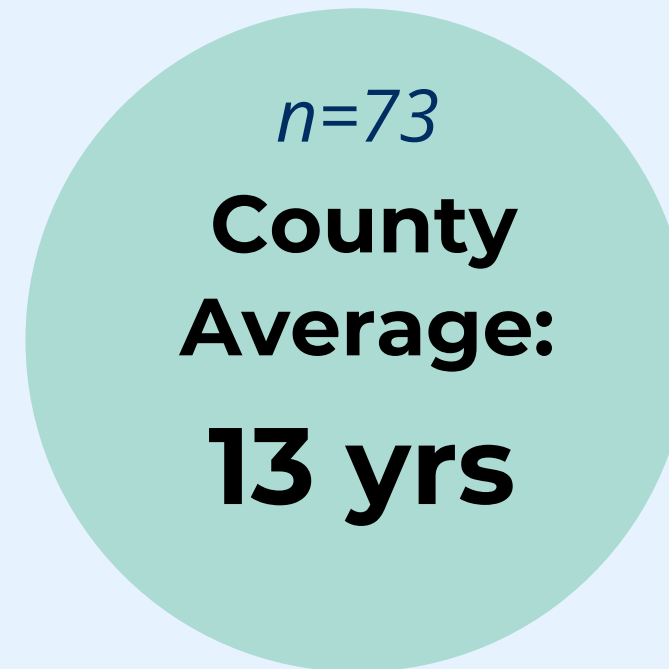
St. Helens

22 interviews, 85% of those interviewed are businesses 1-25 employees in size

Average Business Age



Years Managing Business



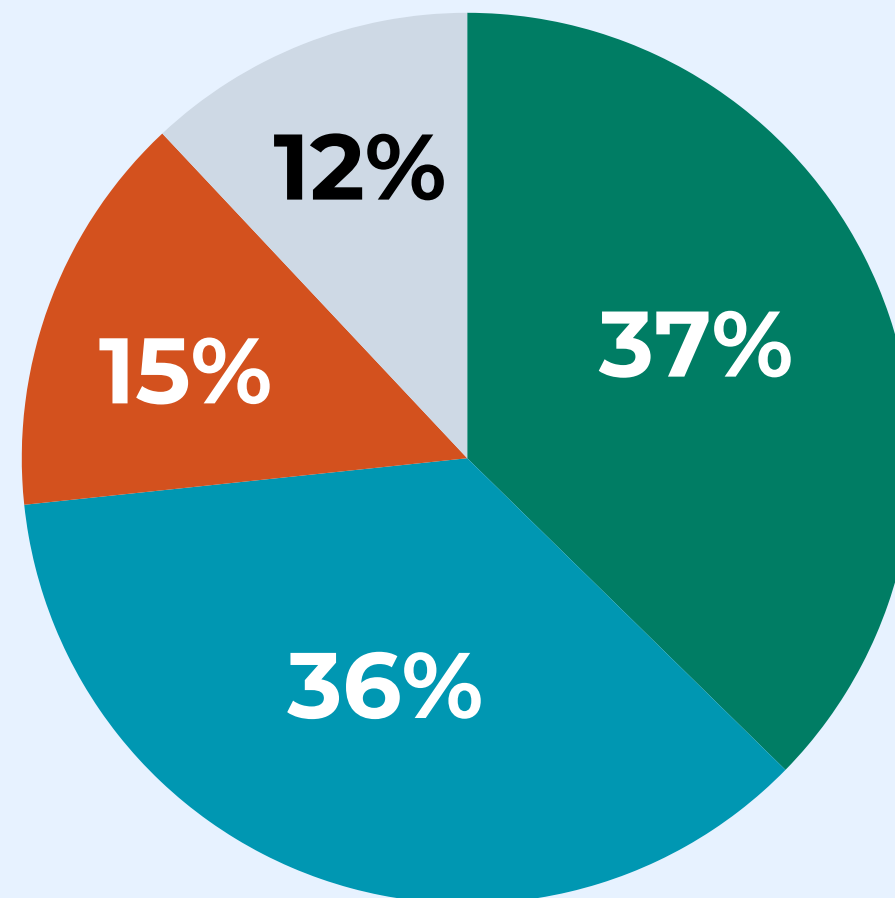
St. Helens

Employee Base Change in the Last 3 Years

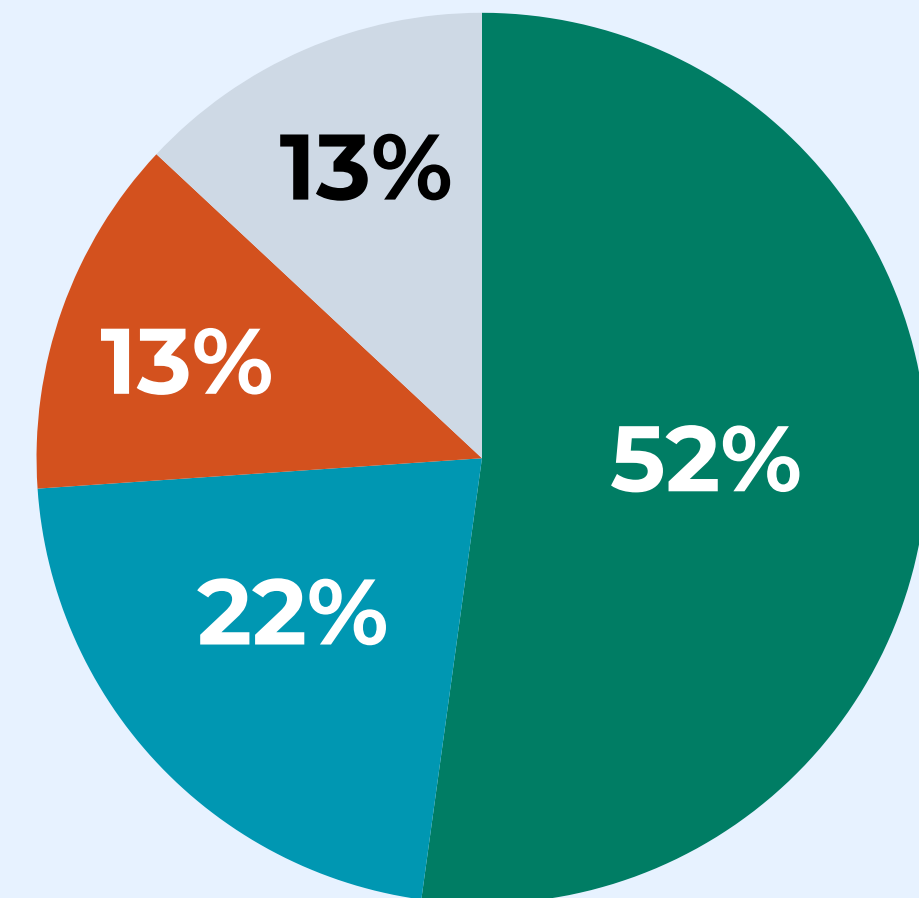
I.Q18. In the last 3 years, has your average employee base grown, decreased, or stayed the same?



Columbia County, $n=75$



St. Helens, $n=23$



An aerial photograph of a large body of water, likely a bay or estuary, with a city built on a peninsula to the right and a forested island in the center. The water is a deep blue, and the land is covered in green trees. The sky is a pale, hazy blue. A dark blue rounded rectangle is overlaid on the center of the image, containing white text.

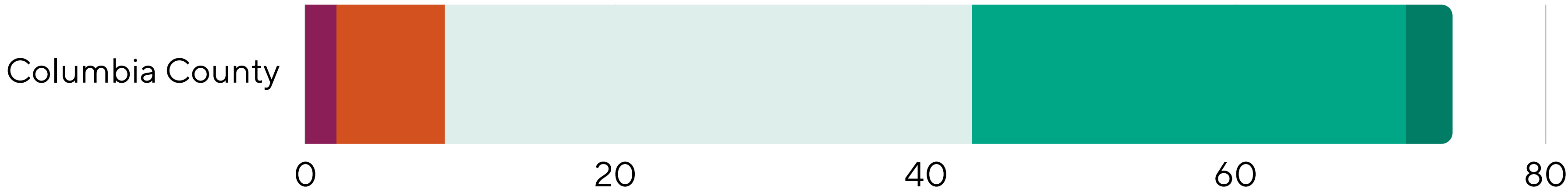
Doing Business in Columbia County & St. Helens

Photo credit: Ascending Optics / Sand Island

I.Q24. What is your overall opinion of Columbia County as a place to do business?

County Average:
3.31

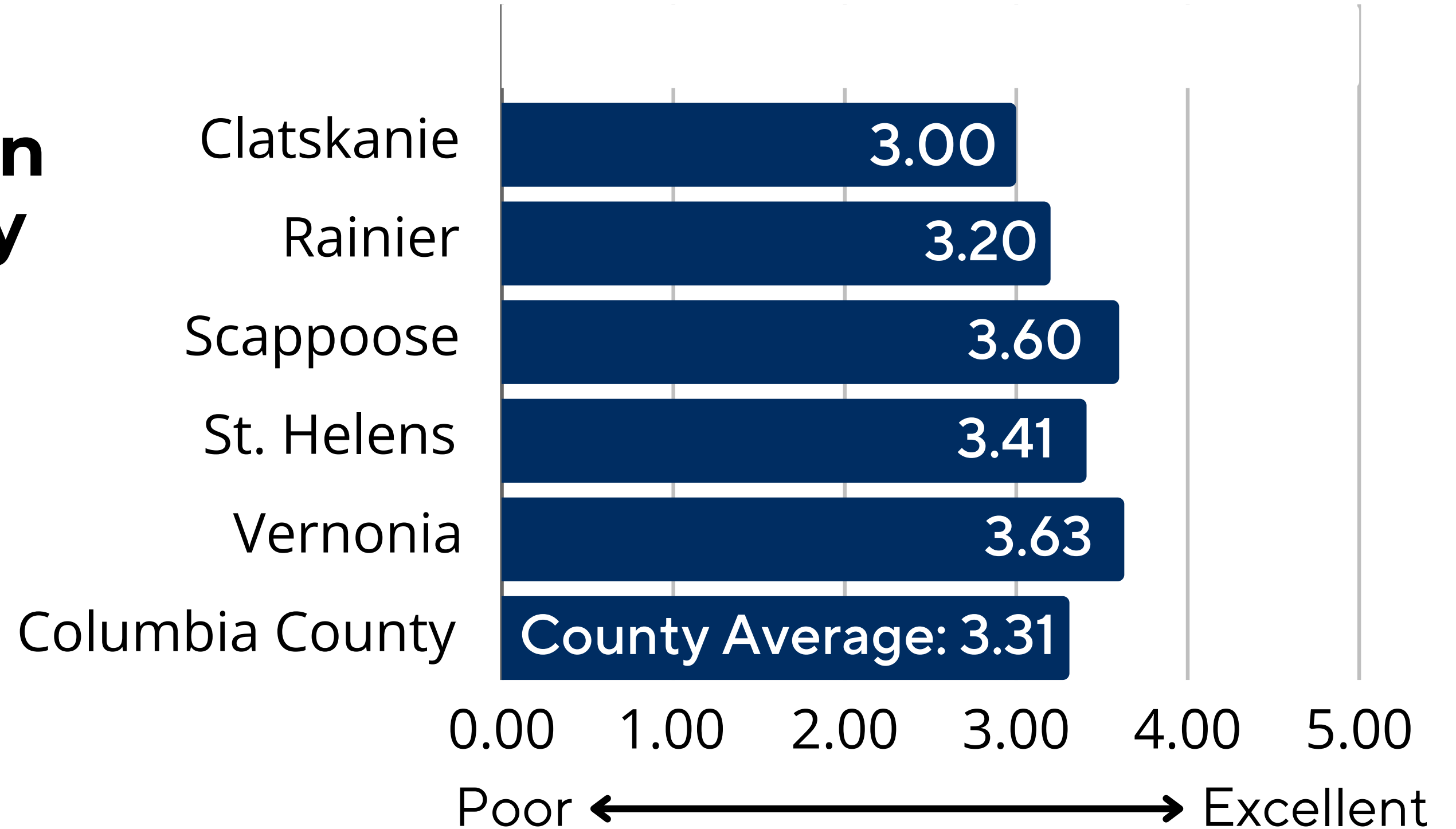
- 1 - Poor
- 2 - Below Average
- 3 - Average
- 4 - Above Average
- 5 - Excellent



n=74

Opinions on Doing Business in Columbia County Cities - Average Rankings

I.Q23-24. What is your overall opinion of [Q23. chosen city; Q24. Columbia County] as a place to do business?:



n=55

Best Things about Business in Columbia County *n=75*

S.Q26. In your opinion, what are the best things about doing business in Columbia County?

Community support
Friendly relationships

Small-town feel

Proximity to home

Community loyalty Growth opportunities Supportive business environment

Proximity to cities Local economic benefits

agricultural land recreational access

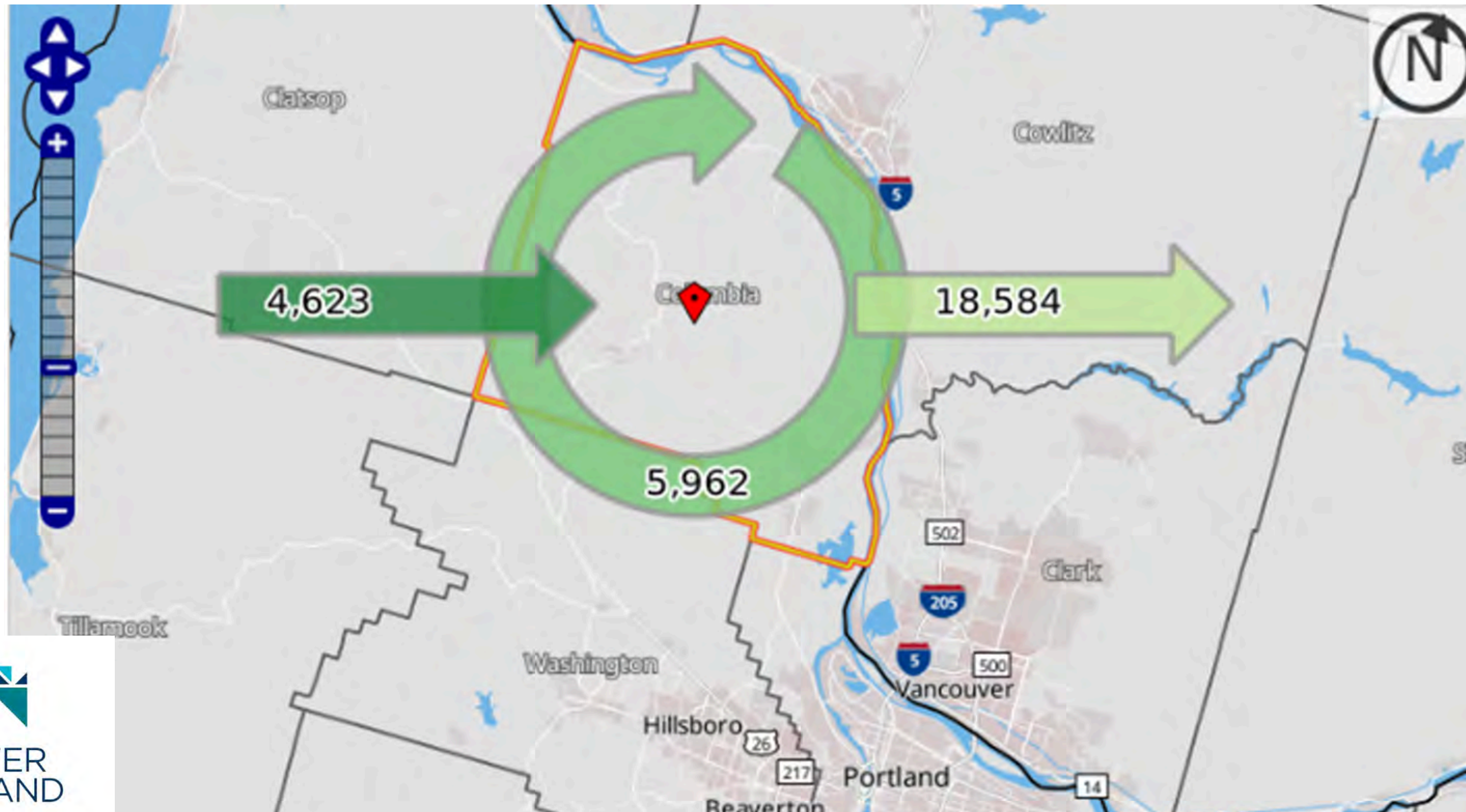
Business Challenges in Columbia County

S.Q27. In your opinion, what are the most challenging things about doing business in Columbia County?

n=75

Customer base
Skilled labor
Business costs
Government coordination
Marketing visibility
Regulations
Competition
Infrastructure Affordable resources
business support and collaborations
economic constraints local adaptations

Commuting in Columbia County



Greatest Business Challenges - Open

I.Q6. What is the greatest challenge your business is facing right now?

n=75

Labor challenges

Financial constraints

Construction and parking

Regulations and bureaucracy

Marketing awareness

Local economic conditions

Infrastructure

Growth challenges

Community support

Supply chain and resources

Health and personal

Insurance

Online market competition

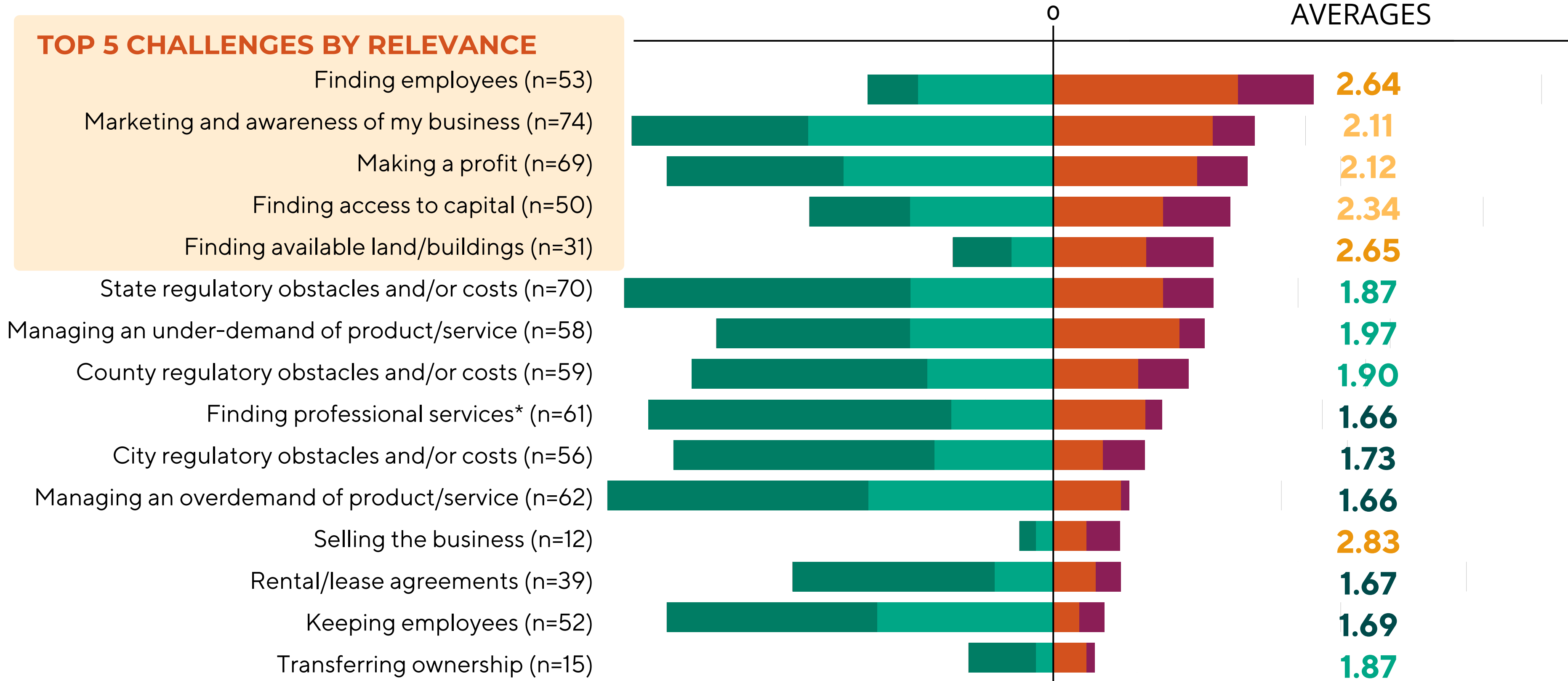
Ranked Challenges for Businesses in Columbia County by Relevance

■ 1 - Not difficult
 ■ 2 - Somewhat difficult
 ■ 3 - Very difficult
 ■ 4 - Nearly impossible to manage or do

n=75

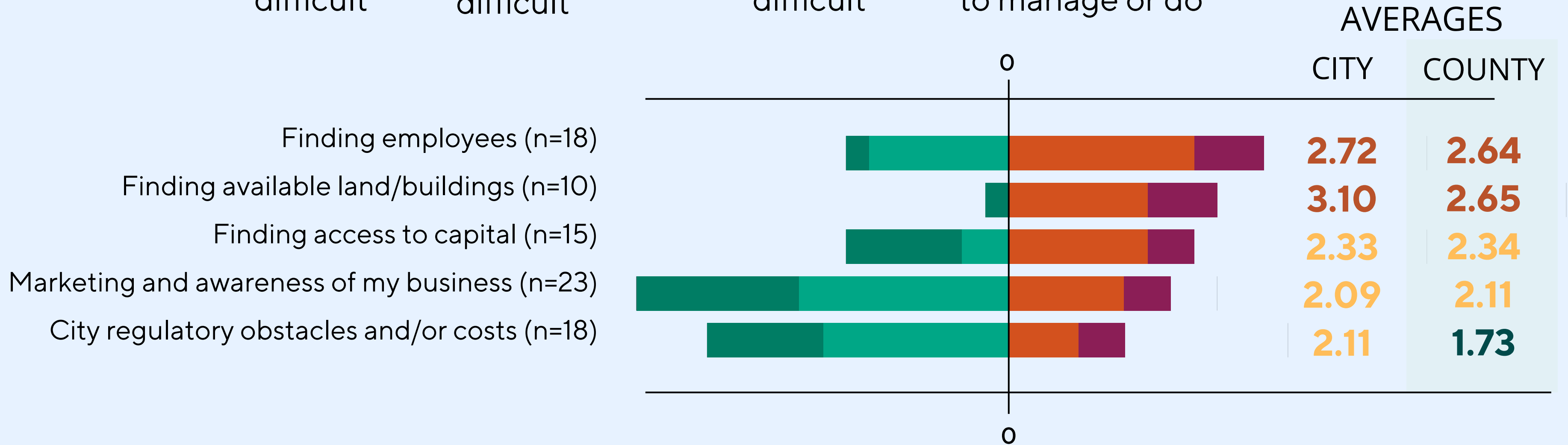
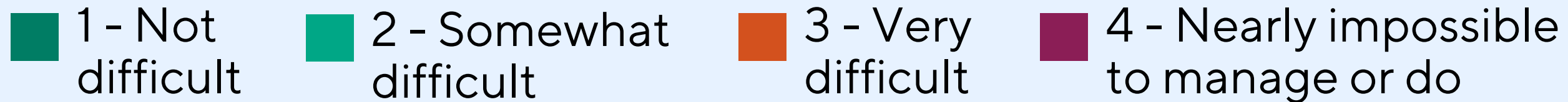
TOP 5 CHALLENGES BY RELEVANCE

- Finding employees (n=53)
- Marketing and awareness of my business (n=74)
- Making a profit (n=69)
- Finding access to capital (n=50)
- Finding available land/buildings (n=31)



St. Helens

TOP 5 CHALLENGES BY RELEVANCE

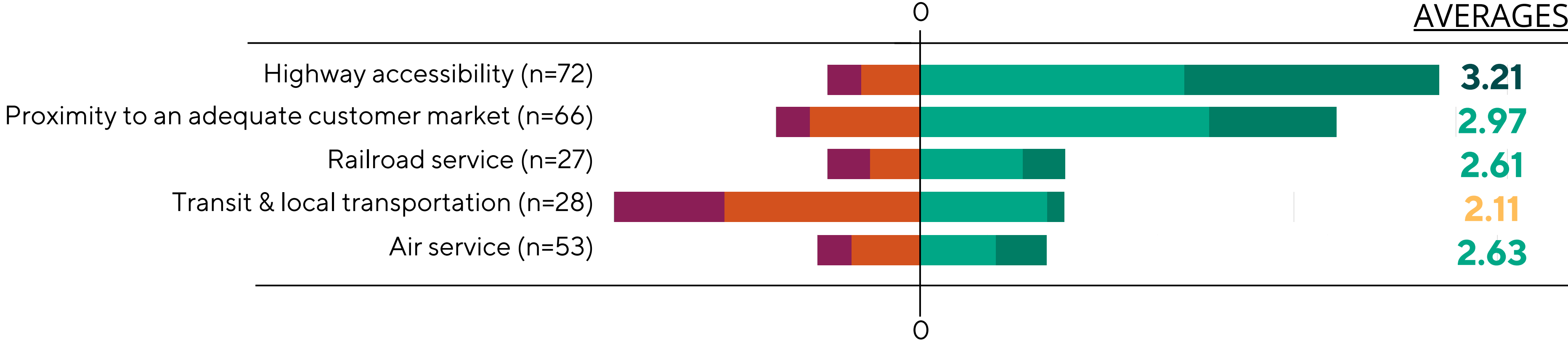


Quality of Transportation Accessibility

n=75

I.Q22C. How satisfied are you with the transportation accessibility in your chosen city?

1 - Very dissatisfied 2 - Dissatisfied 3 - Satisfied 4 - Very satisfied



Section Quotes

“ Highway signage is desperately needed

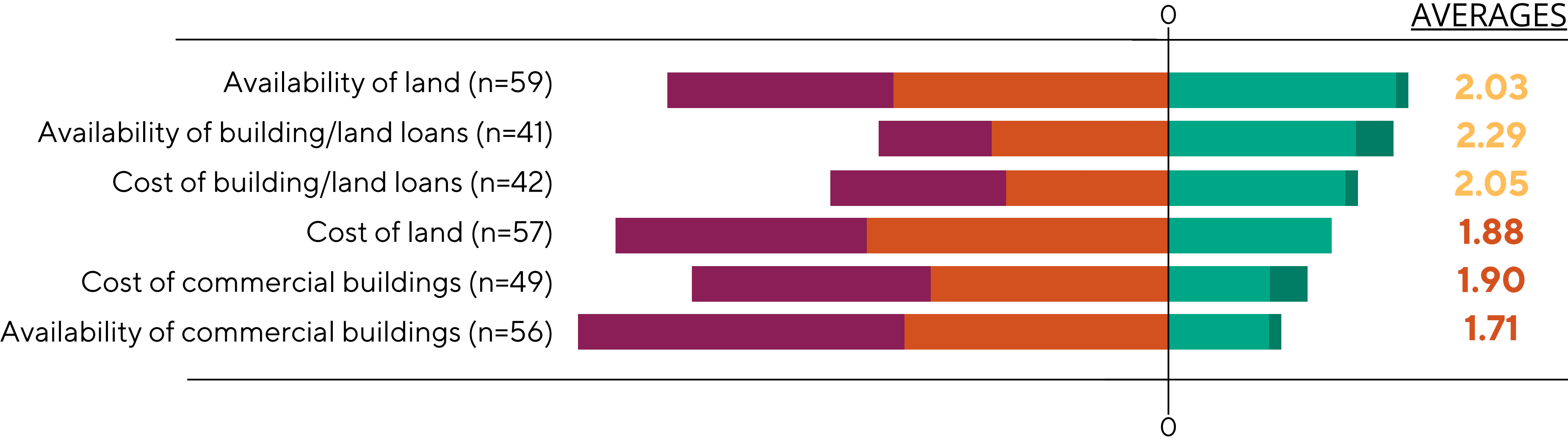
“ People are not getting the service they need. People are not using CC Rider. It's in part because of the availability of the number of routes. And our population is also unfamiliar with how to use it.

Quality of Land, Buildings, and Credit

n=75

I.Q22D. How satisfied are you with the land, buildings, and credit in your chosen city?

■ 1 - Very dissatisfied
 ■ 2 - Dissatisfied
 ■ 3 - Satisfied
 ■ 4 - Very satisfied



Section Quotes

“ = St. Helens Quotes

“ They're here but not available. There are commercial buildings they're just not utilized for commercial use.

“ We had to to go WAY outside of the county to get a loan for the purchase of the current building and land. We got an SBA 504 loan out of the region.

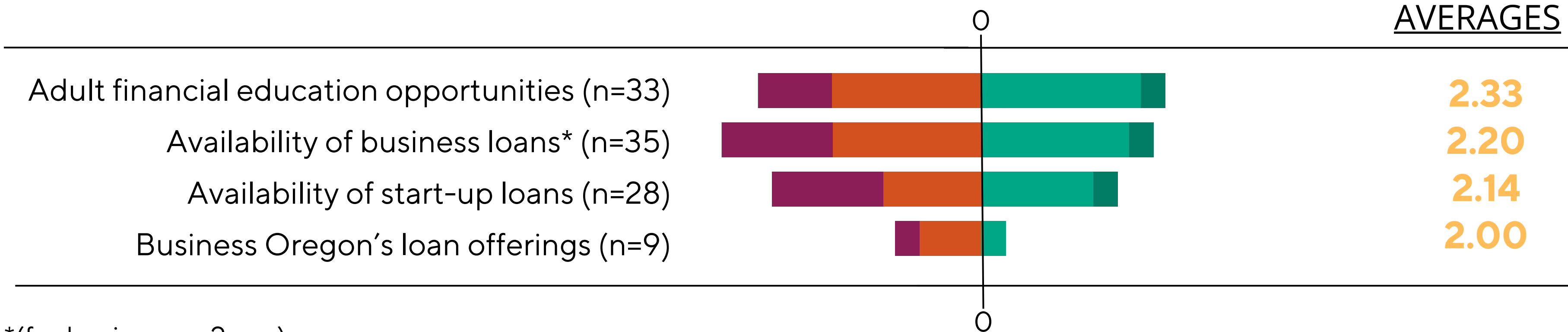
“ It's just hard to find any information on commercial buildings.

Quality of Capital Access

n=75

I.Q22E. How satisfied are you with the capital access in your chosen city?

■ 1 - Very dissatisfied
 ■ 2 - Dissatisfied
 ■ 3 - Satisfied
 ■ 4 - Very satisfied



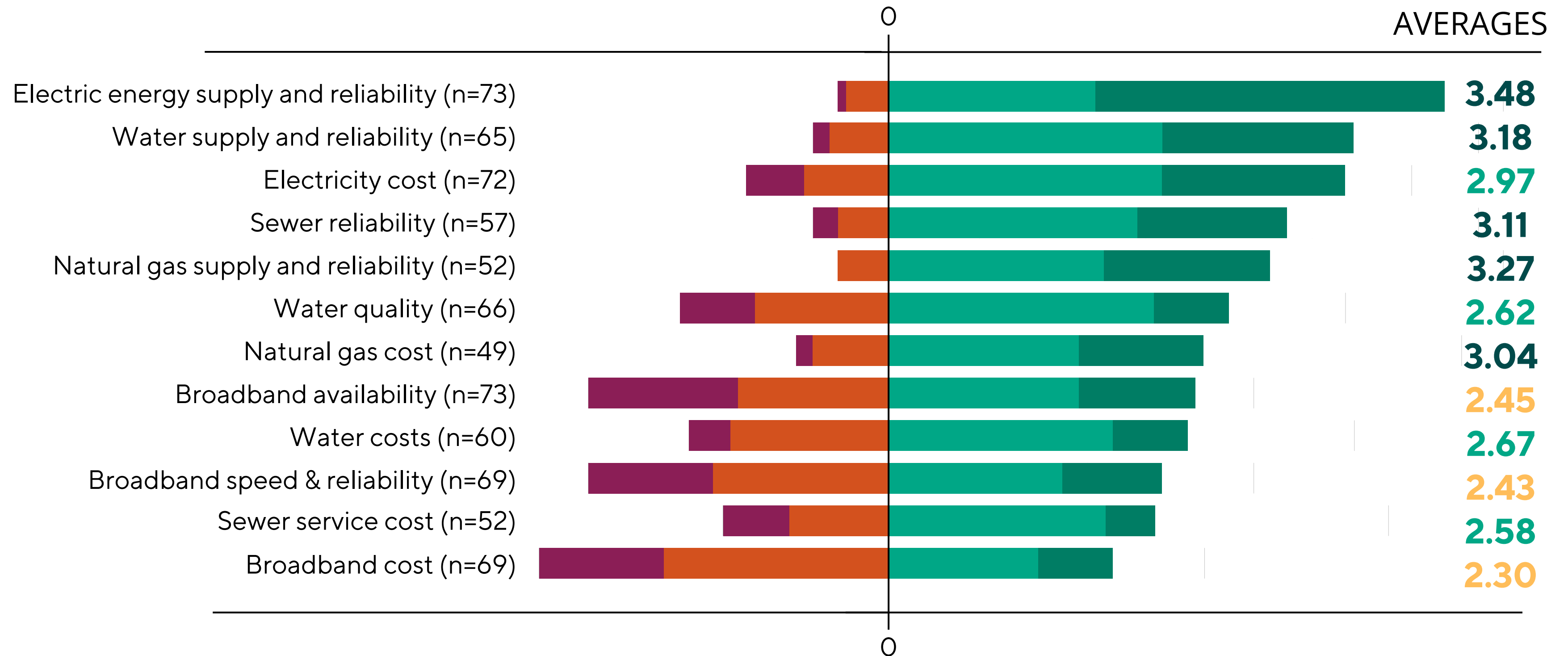
*(for businesses 2yrs+)

Quality of Utilities

n=75

I.Q22F. How satisfied are you with the utilities in your chosen city?

1 - Very dissatisfied 2 - Dissatisfied 3 - Satisfied 4 - Very satisfied



Section Quotes

“ = St. Helens Quotes

“ St. Helens & Scappoose water costs are high. St. Helens was worse. Price of run off/disposal was really expensive, based on square footage.

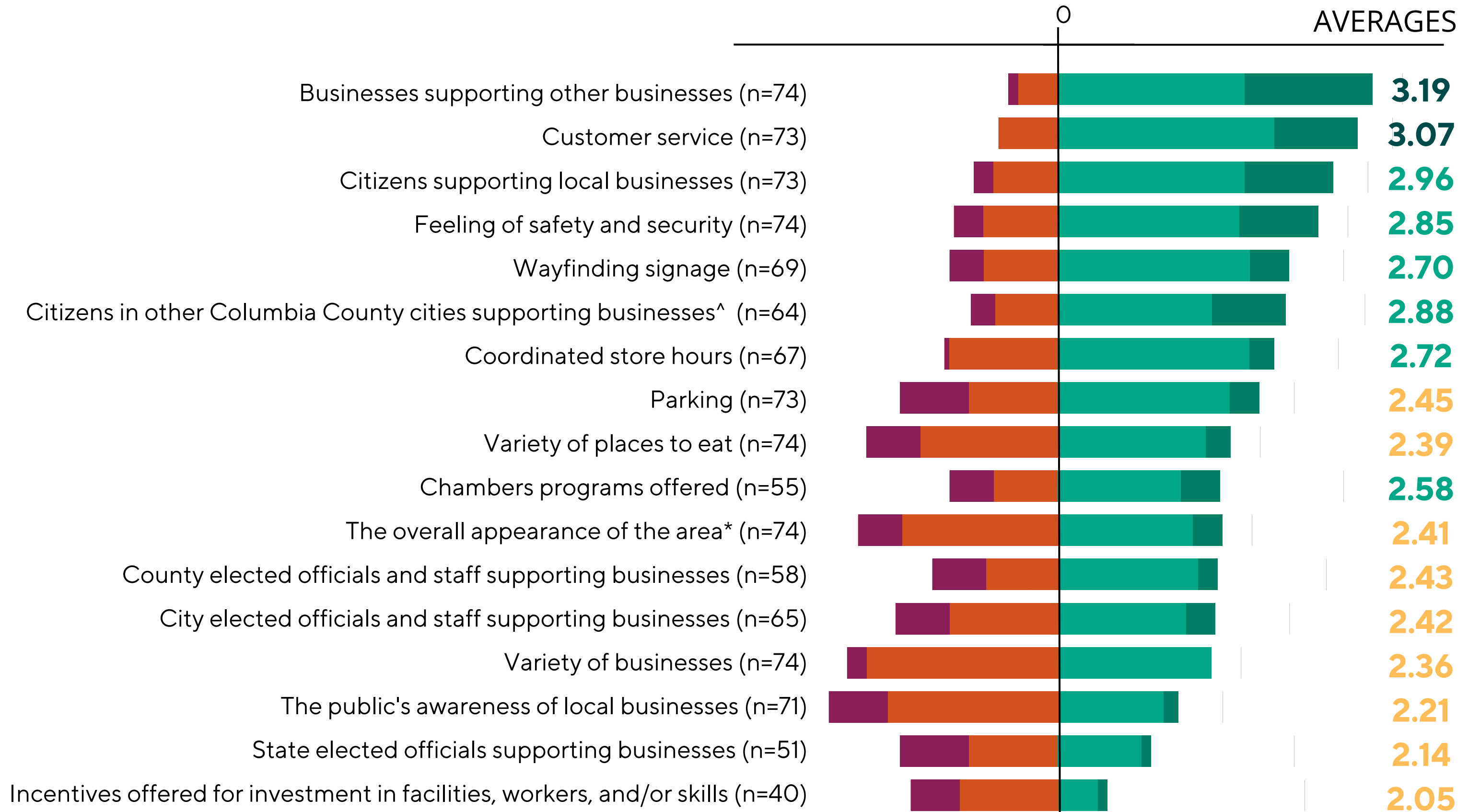
“ Runoff costs have gone up considerably, and are causing big impacts financially. Would like better explanations for why costs are so high.

“ City of St. Helens was very helpful with the sewer disaster we had a bit ago

Quality of Retail and Local Business Support

n=75

■ 1 - Very dissatisfied
 ■ 2 - Dissatisfied
 ■ 3 - Satisfied
 ■ 4 - Very satisfied



“ I would love downtown St. Helens to be more vibrant.

“ I just don't feel like it's super easy to do business with the city.

“ I don't feel like we are informed on anything at all. We have to read it through the newspaper. I don't know what they do. It would be nice to get a "Hey."

“ It's a welcoming business community with attitudes improving

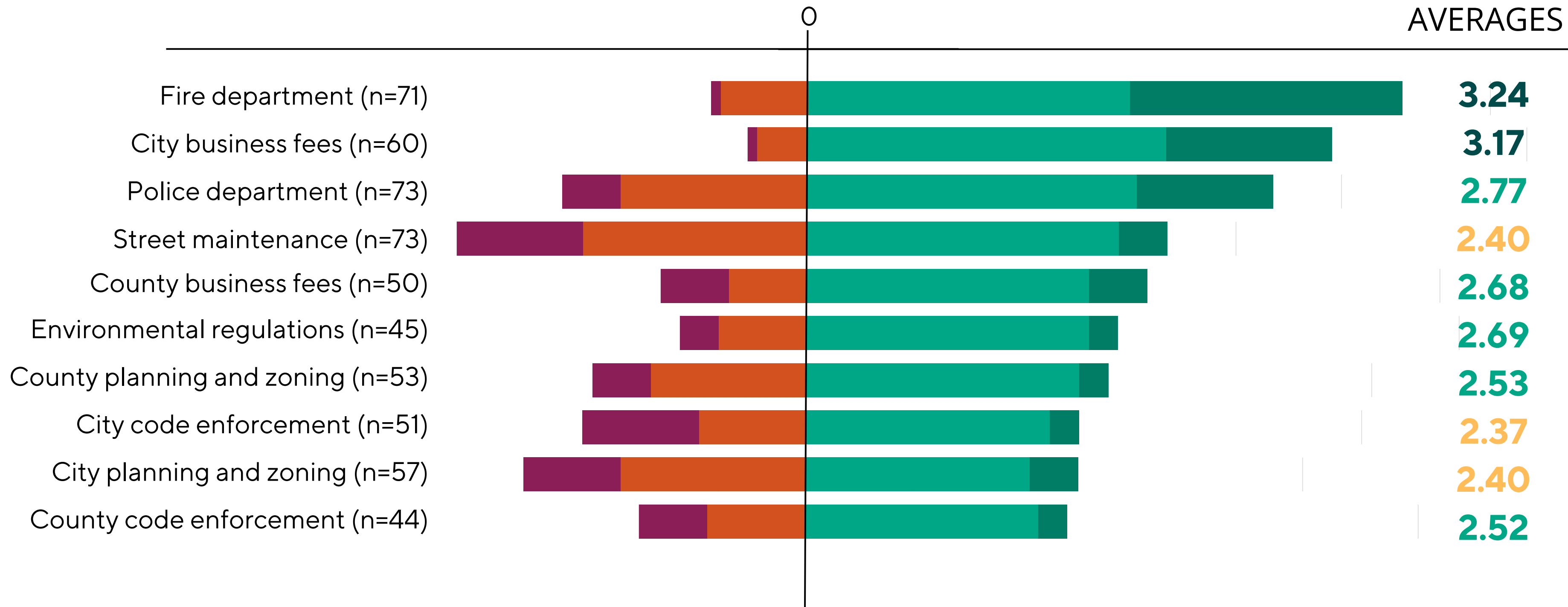
“ Everyone's got everyone's back. We just want stuff to work. We are all trying to just make it. All in the same boat.

Quality of Government and Regulations

n=75

I.Q22H. How satisfied are you with government and regulations in your chosen city?

1 - Very dissatisfied 2 - Dissatisfied 3 - Satisfied 4 - Very satisfied



Section Quotes

“ = St. Helens Quotes

“ I think the city business fee is fair

“ Need to maintain the city garbage cans better. It's great to have them but they are overflowing constantly and are becoming a hindrance.

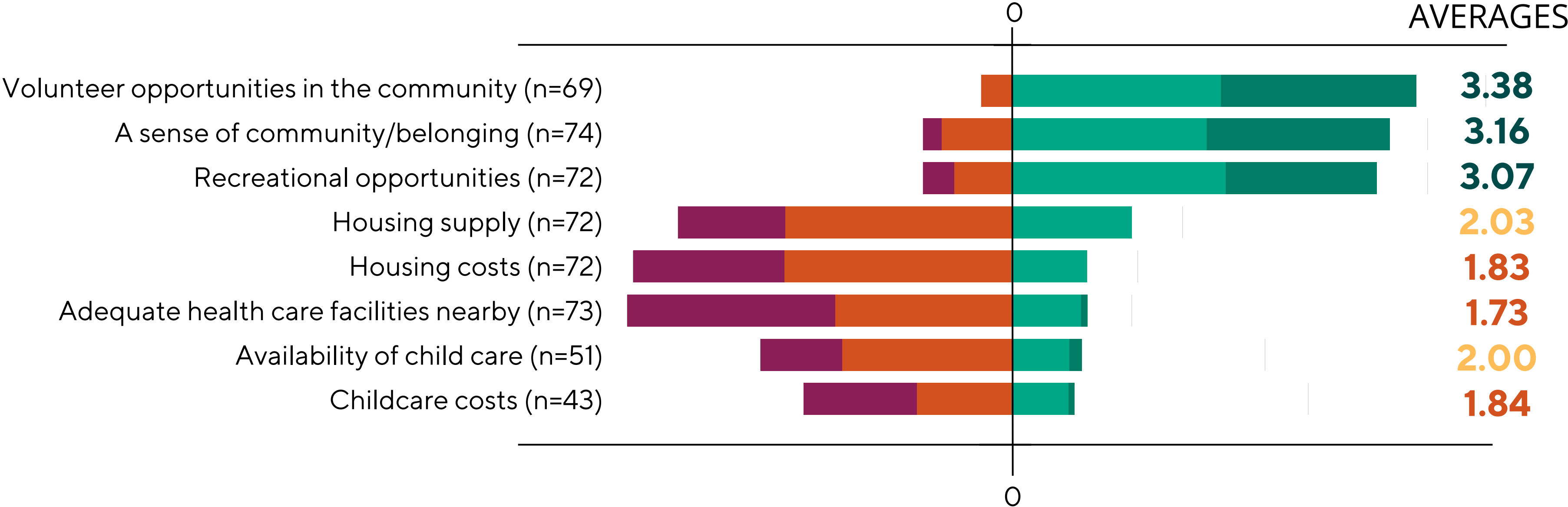
“ Obviously the city needs to charge fees but feels like there should be ways to incentivize development.

Quality of Life

n=75

I.Q22I. How satisfied are you with the quality of life in your chosen city?

■ 1 - Very dissatisfied
 ■ 2 - Dissatisfied
 ■ 3 - Satisfied
 ■ 4 - Very satisfied



Section Quotes

“ = St. Helens Quotes

“ Opening up the mill for people to walk on is great. Has enriched a lot of people's lives, getting access to the riverfront.

“ The Port is doing great stuff (*referencing tourism assets*)

“ We don't have enough living wage jobs and I think that impacts quality of life.

Ideas & Solutions



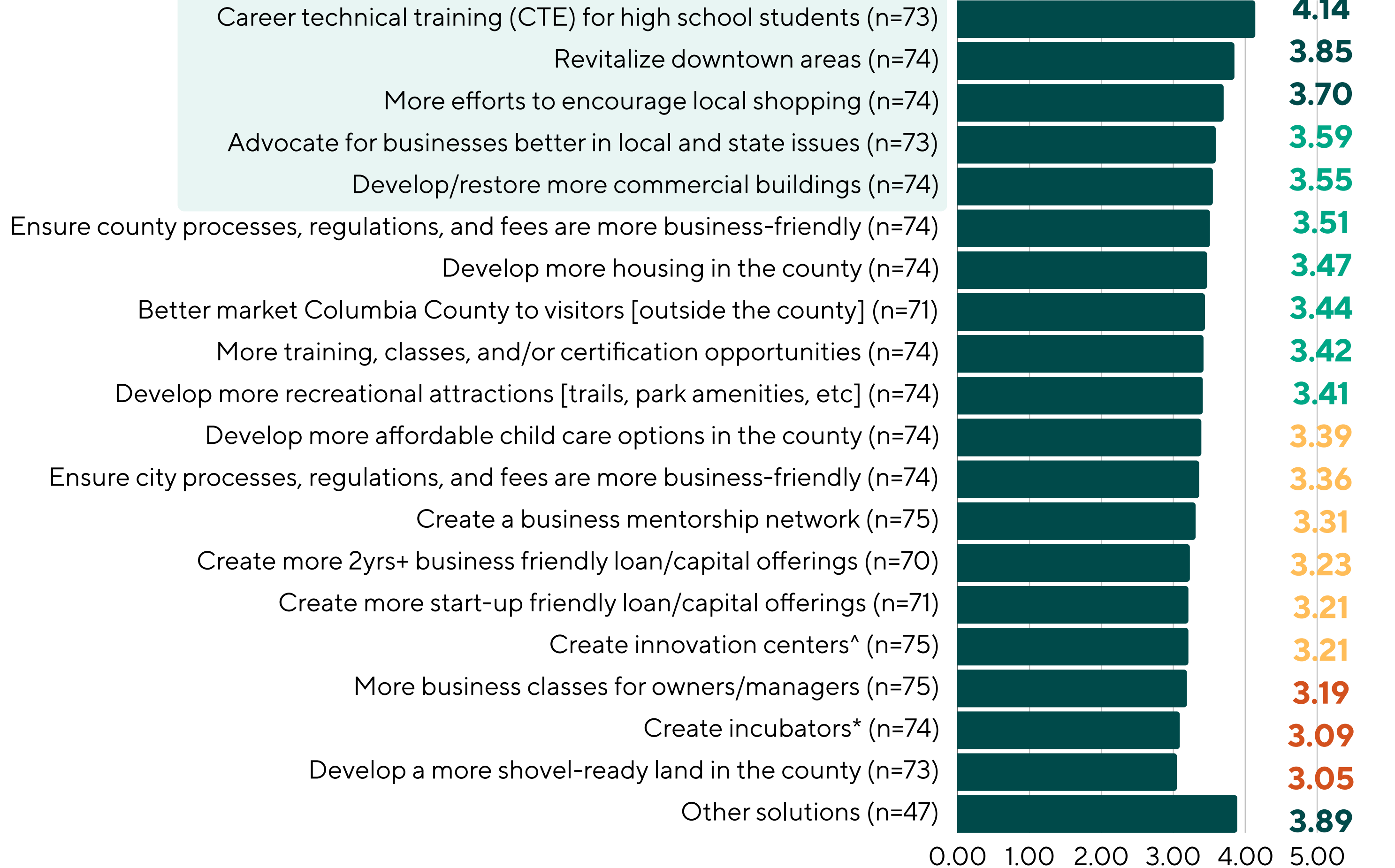
Photo credit: Lost Locals Media / St. Helens

Top Economic Solution Ideas in Columbia County

I.Q27. There are many ways to support and grow Columbia County's local economy. In your opinion, please rank how important each of these solutions could be for Columbia County's business community.

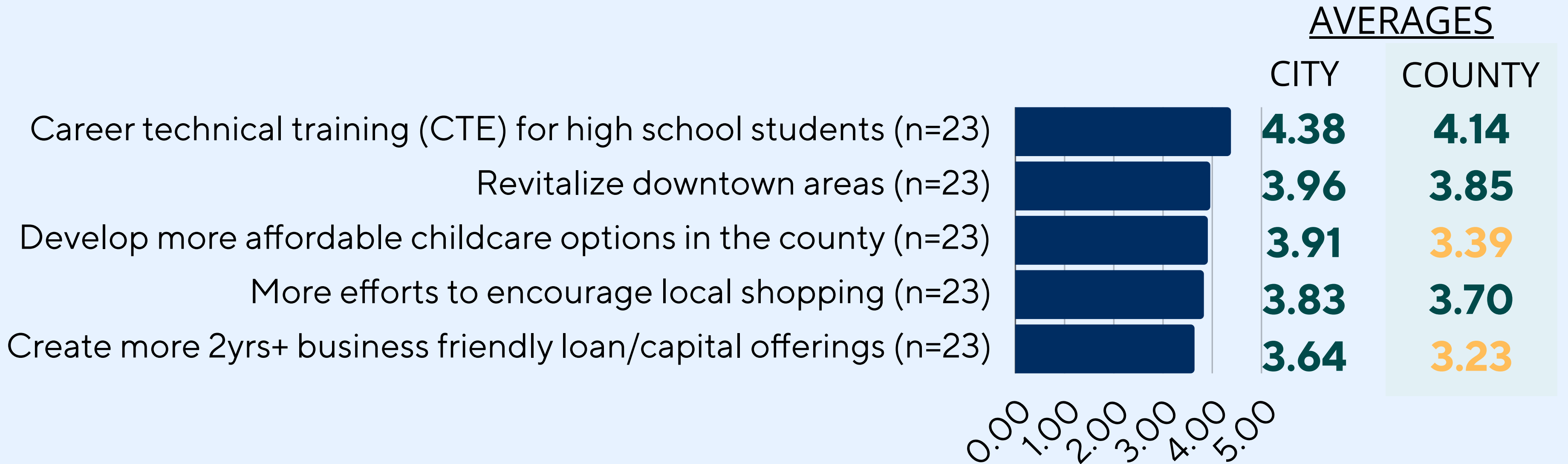
n=75

TOP 5 REQUESTED ECONOMIC SOLUTIONS



St. Helens

TOP 5 REQUESTED ECONOMIC SOLUTIONS





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Thank You

Have more questions? Contact Sierra Trass
at sierra@columbiacountyoregon.com

