



Iredell Business Pulse

2021 SURVEY RESULTS & REPORT

Providing our community leaders with insights on the challenges, opportunities, and priorities at the forefront of our local businesses.

Success

Through 6 Key Pillars



Our Work, Our Organization

The Whole County Benefits When Existing Iredell Businesses Succeed

Iredell County Economic Development Corporation (Iredell EDC) promotes economic growth and stability in our community by supporting the creation of new jobs and encouraging investment. We accomplish this through our six Key Pillars: Existing Industry & Retention, Workforce & Talent, Business Development, Product Development, Marketing & Communications, and Community Development & Collaboration.

Iredell EDC supports our existing industries by conducting one-on-one meetings with businesses to identify their needs, share relevant information, and connect them to resources and partners. We engage with our existing industries by hosting quarterly Industry Leaders Councils and Workforce Councils. We also provide assistance to our local businesses through our small business ombudsmen program, the development of our Business Resource Guide, and technical assistance efforts like ReVamp.

During fiscal year 2020-2021, we supported 25 existing industry expansions, creating 1,080 new jobs and \$409 M of capital investment. Iredell EDC served 24 small business clients, had 156 engagements with local industry, and made 230 referrals to resource partners.

Existing Industry

Supporting Growth Through Our Existing Industry Services

The annual Business Pulse Survey is one of two ways that Iredell EDC identifies the needs and challenges of local businesses. Throughout the year, we conduct company visits, touring facilities, and meeting with business leaders to identify trends and address challenges. We focus on companies within key industry sectors (Agriculture, Financial Service, Health, Information Technology, Manufacturing, Health Care, and Logistics & Transportation).

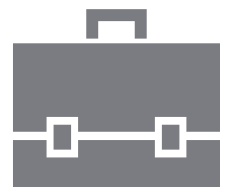
Iredell EDC conducted the first Annual Business Pulse Survey in August 2021, resulting in 121 responses, representing a range of industries from across Iredell County. The survey provides Iredell EDC, our local governments, and business leaders a pulse on the local business community and the business climate. Providing us with a view of the strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats that are facing our local businesses and our community.



Business Pulse Survey
121 respondents



Industry
156 Engagements



Iredell EDC Councils
100 Attendees



Our Industry & Community

\$409 M

Existing Industry
Announcements

JULY 2020 - JUNE 2021

17%
Population
Growth

COUNTY
2010 TO 2020

2.2 M
New SF

CREATED
JULY 2020 - JUNE 2021

1,080
New Jobs

ANNOUNCED
JULY 2020 - JUNE 2021

	2010	2020	Diff	Percentage
North Carolina	9,535,483	10,439,483	904,000	9.5%
Alexander	37,198	36,444	-754	-2.0%
Cabarrus	178,011	225,804	47,793	26.8%
Catawba	154,358	160,610	6,252	4.1%
Davie	41,240	42,712	1,472	3.6%
Iredell	159,437	186,693	27,256	17.1%
Lincoln	78,265	86,810	8,545	10.9%
Mecklenburg	919,628	1,115,482	195,854	21.3%
Rowan	138,428	146,875	8,447	6.1%
Wilkes	69,340	65,969	-3,371	-4.9%
Yadkin	38,406	37,214	-1,192	-3.1%
Iredell + Surrounding	1,814,311	2,104,613	290,302	16.0%

2020 Census

The 2020 Census results revealed significant growth in Iredell County and our region.

Between 2010 – 2020, NC grew by **over 900,000 people**, growing from 9.5 M to 10.4 M.

Iredell County grew by over 27,000 people, a **17.1% increase** over the 2010 population.

Many of our adjacent counties grew as well—Mecklenburg County grew by 21.3% and Cabarrus County by 26.8%. Iredell and its surrounding counties grew by over 290,000 people, a **16.0% increase** over the decade.



More information visit www.census.nc.gov



Our Survey Highlights

The 2021 Business Pulse Survey covers the second half of 2020 and the first half of 2021, a period of rebuilding and growth for many businesses from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

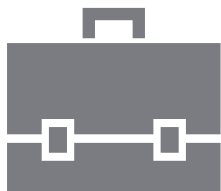
- Iredell County and its municipalities saw significant growth and unprecedented activity in terms of permits and sales tax revenue over the last year.
- Overall businesses are optimistic about their operations with 60% of businesses anticipating growth in employment or sales over the next year. Supply chain disruptions, rising wage rates, and filling open positions remain the top concerns and potential impediments for their growth.
- COVID-19, with the rise in cases as a result of the Delta variant, inflation, the US economy, and the global economy are top national concerns for businesses.
- Businesses are overall pleased with the business climate in Iredell County, noting high remarks for quality of life and the business climate.
- Businesses were generally pleased with the public services and utilities in Iredell County, providing high marks for water, wastewater, electricity, telecommunications, and public safety.
- Concerns noted among some businesses are focused on two areas: 1) permits, zoning, and regulations, and 2) roads, highways, and traffic.
- Nearly one third of businesses plan to expand their workforce or current facilities over the next year.
- Workforce ranked high as a top concern from employers related to talent attraction, retention, the skills gap, and rising cost of wages and healthcare.



60% of Businesses
Anticipate Growth



60% Increased Sales



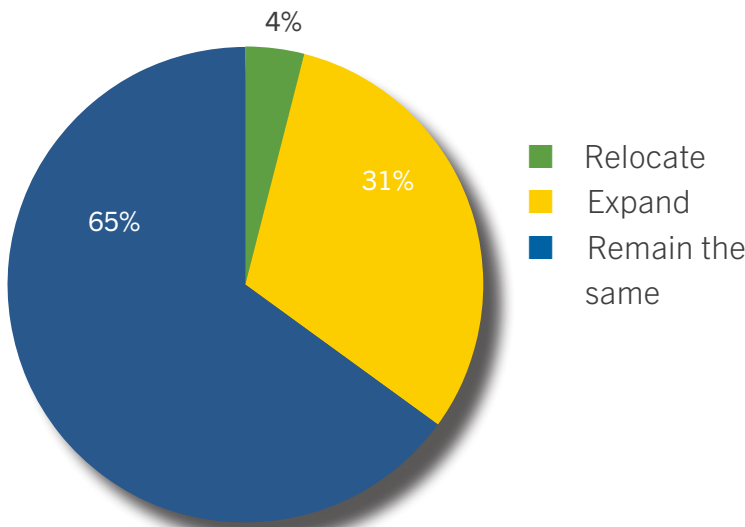
36% Increased
Employees

Our Growth

Businesses are optimistic about growth over the next year, with 60% of businesses anticipating growth in employment or sales. Roughly a third of businesses anticipate employment (39%) or sales (36%) remaining the same. Less than 2% of businesses anticipate declines in employment or sales. Iredell County saw strong growth among existing industries over the past year, resulting in 1,080 new jobs, \$409 M in capital investment, and the addition of 2.2M SF. Notable announcements include Carolina Beverage, Cheney Brothers, Doosan Bobcat North America, Gaylor Electric, Lowe’s Companies, Niagara Bottling, Pactiv EverGreen, and Roush Yates Engines.

EXPAND, RELOCATE, OR CLOSE

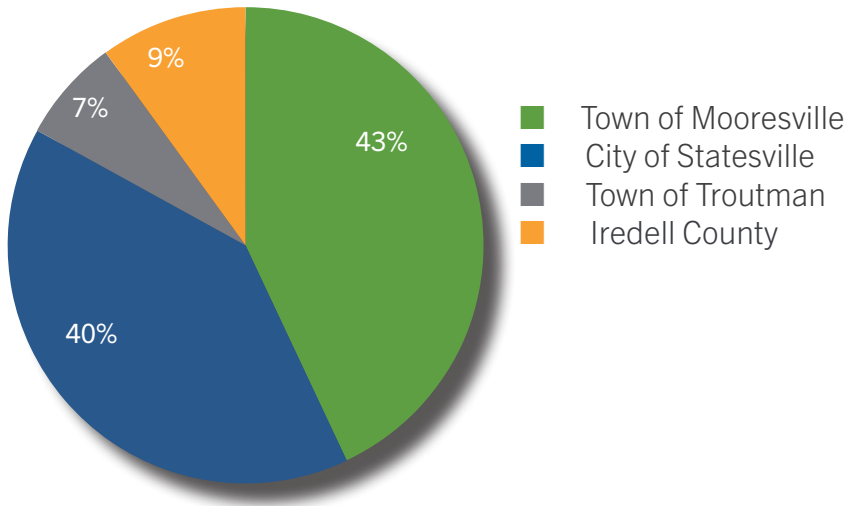
Businesses are optimism about sales and employment growth. This sentiment appears in the number of businesses planning to expand and relocate over the next year. Nearly one-third (31%) of respondents plan to expand their workforce or current facilities over the next year. Of the 4% of companies planning to relocate are looking for facilities *within* Iredell County.



Our Respondents Geography & Size

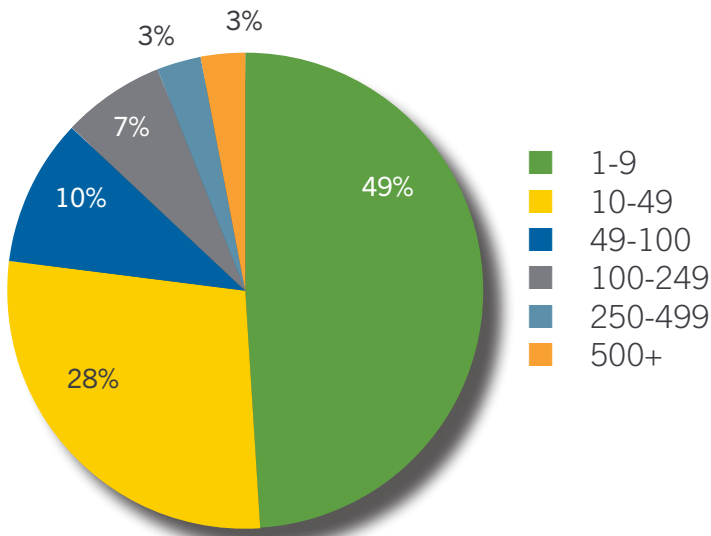
By Jurisdiction

We received the strongest response from businesses located in Mooresville (43%) and Statesville (40%). The remaining 17% of responses came from the Town of Troutman (9%) and from companies located in other parts of the County.



Employment Size by Respondent

Companies of all sizes responded to the 2021 survey. With nearly half of the responses coming from businesses with fewer than 10 employees. The other half of the responses came from businesses with 10-49 employees (28%) and from businesses with over 50 employees (23%).



How does this compare?

In NC, 95% of all businesses have fewer than 49 employees. Business with over 100 employees make up only 4% of all businesses statewide.

	Iredell Respondents		North Carolina	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1-9	59	48.8%	226,947	77%
10-49	34	28.1%	55,242	18.7%
50-99	12	9.9%	7,333	2.5%
100-249	9	7.4%	3,842	1.3%
250-499	4	3.3%	976	0.3%
500+	3	2.5%	508	0.2%
Total	121	100%	249,848	100%




What kind of businesses responded?

Responses from three sectors make up 80% of this year’s responses.

- “Retail, Accommodations, and Food Services” can include retailers, hotels, and restaurants. This sector makes up 32% of the survey responses.
- “Professional Services” include finance, insurance, and real estate as well as law offices and architecture firms. Roughly one-fifth of respondents owned, operated, or managed the firm.
- Manufacturing firms represented 27% of responses to the survey. Manufacturing is the largest industry in Iredell County, representing over 300 firms and 19% of employment.

The remaining 20% came from a range of business types, including agriculture and farming (2%), energy/utilities (1%), healthcare (2%), information technology (1%), transportation & logistics (1%), as well as a range of other businesses classified as “Other” (13%).



Responses by Sector	
Sector	Percentage
Agriculture & Farming	2%
Energy & Utilities	1%
Health Care	2%
Information Technology	1%
Manufacturing	27%
Professional Services (Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Law)	21%
Retail, Accommodations, and Food Services	32%
Transportation & Logistics	1%
Other	13%
Total	100%

What sectors do they serve?

Respondents reflect the diversity of industries served by Iredell businesses

Respondents who chose “Manufacturing” or “Other” could specify which industries their company served. A plastics manufacturer, for example, might produce components for “Computers and Electronics” as well as “Automotive/Motor Vehicles.” Another manufacturer might specialize in “Construction” equipment or “Boating and Marine” applications. In some circumstances, manufacturers produce goods such as “Automotive/Motor Vehicles” for the Department of Defense (“Defense/Military”), thus serving two industries.

Companies that responded to the survey from Iredell County demonstrated a focus in “Automotive/Motor Vehicles” (19): “Construction” (17), “Food, Beverage, and Agriculture” (15); and “Machinery and Equipment” (13).

Survey Sectors Served	
Types	Number
Automotive / Motor Vehicles	19
Construction	17
Food, Beverage, and Agriculture	15
Machinery and Equipment	13
Defense / Military	11
Furniture and Home Furnishing	9
Biotechnology, Pharmaceuticals, and Life Sciences	8
Computers and Electronics	8
Chemicals, Plastic, and Rubber	7
Aerospace / Aviation	6
Boating and Marine	5
Medical Equipment	5
Textiles, Apparel, and Sporting Goods	3
Other	30

Iredell Top Sector by Employees			
Rank	Industry Sector	Number of Establishments	Number of Employees
1	Manufacturing	321	11,575
2	Retail Trade	691	10,121
3	Health Care and Social Assistance	529	8,768
4	Accommodation and Food Services	399	6,893
5	Educational Services	94	5,066
6	Construction	637	5,036
7	Administrative and Support and Waste Management	450	4,453
8	Wholesale Trade	452	3,468
9	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Service	696	2,765
10	Public Administration	31	2,718

Why do the industries served matter?

Communities can define “industry clusters” by identifying groups of unique or related industries that share and benefit from products, services, suppliers, and workforce. By understanding the unique attributes, strengths and needs of our existing clusters, we can advance the economic opportunities related to business investment and expansion, exports, and recruitment.

Clusters are critical ingredients in the success of modern local, regional, and national economies, and their makeup and profile can indicate strengths and opportunities in workforce skills, innovation, and productivity.

For example, over 40% of North Carolina’s motorsports teams and manufacturers are located in Iredell County. The particular skills needed by motorsports teams and manufacturers—including metal fabrication, CNC machining, and engineering—have created a rich pool of talent in our community for motorsports as well as other industries that employ those skills. NASCAR Tech and the NC Motorsports and Automotive Research Center at UNC Charlotte are two of the specialized institutions that serve this local “cluster.”



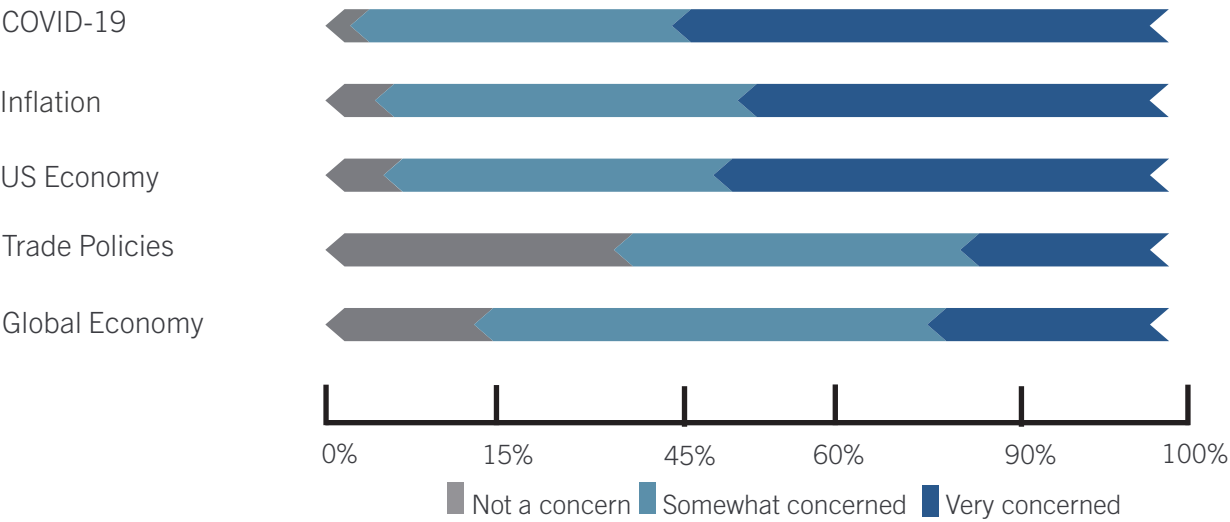
Our Business Climate

The 2021 Business Pulse Survey asked business leaders to weigh in on the local and national business climate and insights on their business.

During Existing Industry interviews over the past few years and prior to the pandemic, businesses who noted regulatory concerns focused on the impacts of tariffs on the cost and availability of goods. The pandemic worsened both problems, causing economic shutdown and spiking demands for certain goods and materials.

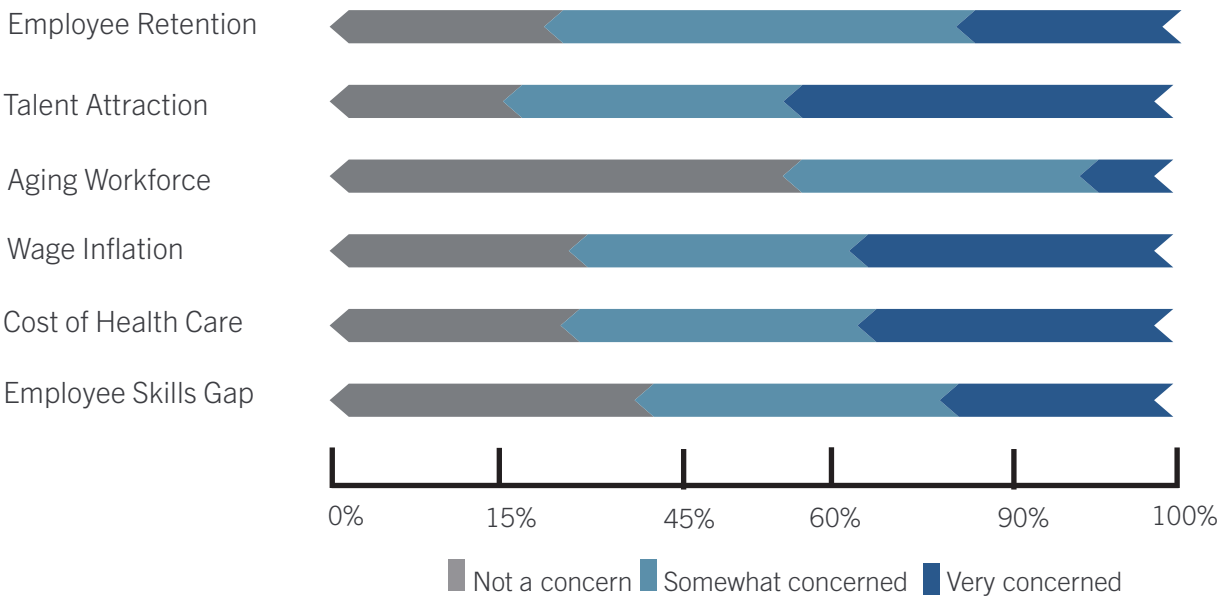
The on-going effects of COVID-19 stand out as the primary concern facing businesses (97%). This could be correlated directly to a spike in cases, locally and nationally, from the Delta variant during the survey period of August 1 - 31. During interviews with companies over the past year, local employers noted the pandemic had a direct impact on the increased cost and availability of goods and labor. Concerns expressed by businesses on the national economy (93%) and inflation (94%) could also be attributed to the pandemic.

NATIONAL CLIMATE



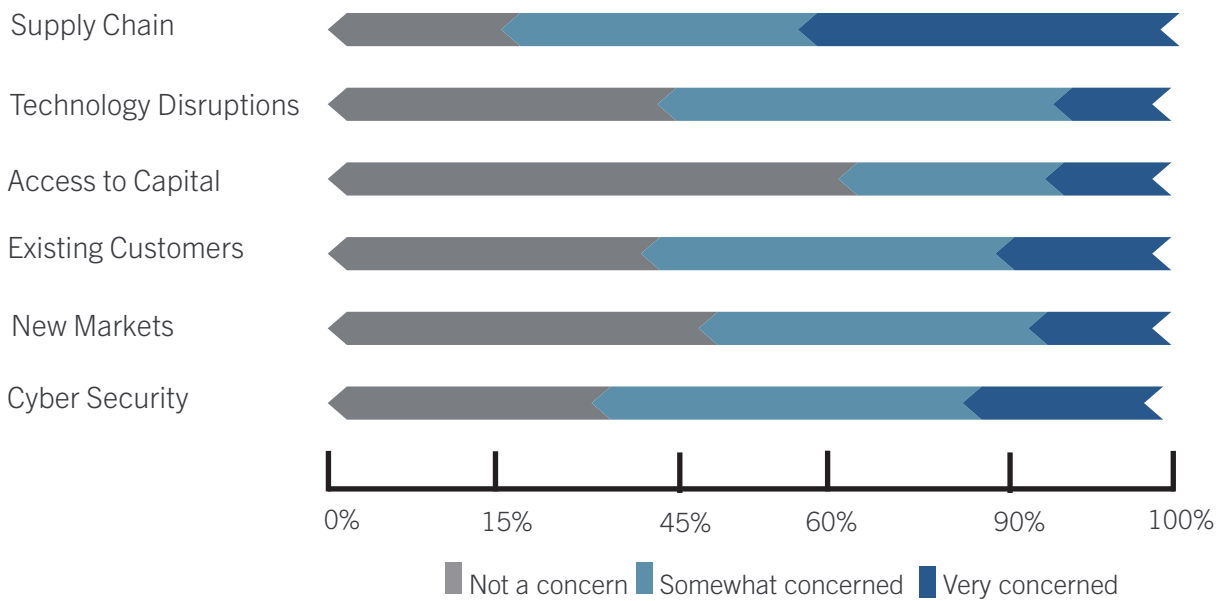
Possibly, no concern has been more consistent as the concerns pertaining to workforce. Prior to the pandemic, a remarkably low unemployment rate (3.2%, February 2020) led local businesses to begin raising wages. More recently, employers had to “compete” against federal and state unemployment benefits and a workforce hesitant to return to work. Our survey results indicated the top workforce concerns were attracting new employees (79%), retaining current employees (75%), wage inflation (71%), and the cost of health insurance (72%).

WORKFORCE CLIMATE



Our survey results indicated the top Operational concern related to supply chain distribution (80%). Less than 40% of businesses, noted Access to Capital as a concern, perhaps due to the result of strong credit availability within the market, company earnings, and federal programs like the Paycheck Protection Program. About half of businesses indicated some concern related to Cyber Security, Entering New Markets, Retraining Existing Customers, and Disruptions Due to Technology.

OPERATIONAL CLIMATE



Our Local Services & Utilities

Understanding business requires a look at local services and utilities in the community.

Local utilities received high marks from businesses with response of satisfied, Water (69%), Wastewater (68%), Electricity (70%), Telecommunications (64%), and Parks (66%). Among top concerns with responses of somewhat dissatisfied and very dissatisfied were Local Streets and Roads (31%), Highways (23%), Zoning, Permitting and Inspections (30%).

The NC Department of Transportation, which oversees highway construction in NC, has experienced budgetary shortfalls delaying multiple road projects throughout the county. Within Existing Industry interviews, local traffic remains a persistent concern.

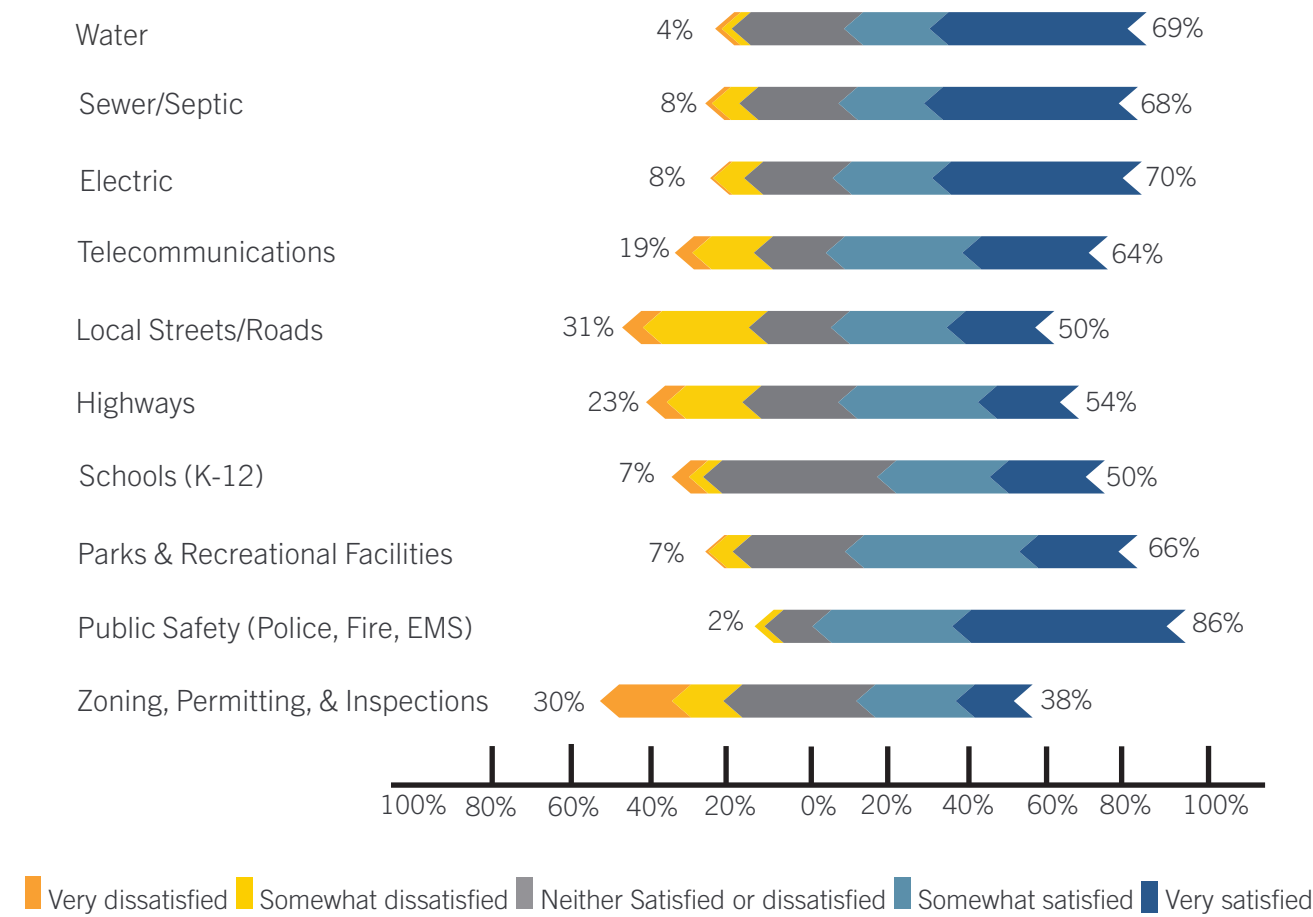
Others have expressed frustration with highway construction along I-77 and I-40 related to the new

interchange (expected to be completed by 2022). This suggests that traffic and road construction along with road conditions may contribute to dissatisfaction with local roads and highways.

An area of strength for our community is Public Safety (Police, Fire, and EMS) received 86% “Satisfied”, by far the most positive ratings. This rating comports with Existing Industry interviews, where local law enforcement, fire departments, and EMS are consistently noted for their professionalism and timeliness.

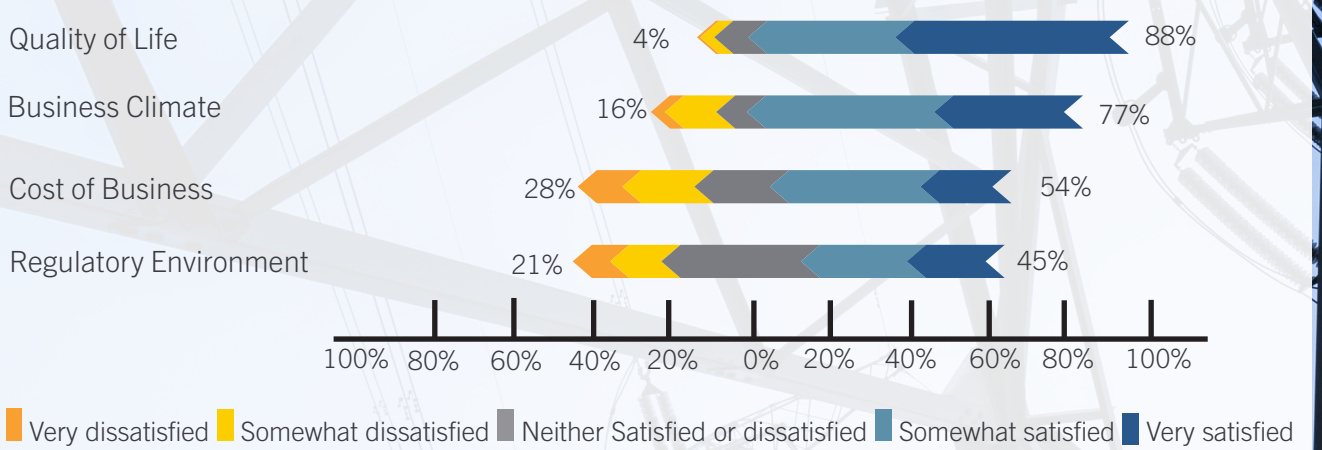
Local Streets and Road received the lowest dissatisfied rating at 31%.

LOCAL SERVICES



Respondents expressed they were “satisfied” with our community’s Quality of Life (88%) and the overall business climate (77%). More than a quarter (28%) of businesses were “dissatisfied” with the Cost of Doing Business, some of which can be attributed to the rising costs of goods, services, and wages noted above. Roughly 21% of respondents were “dissatisfied” with the Local Regulatory Environment, reflecting the responses of Permitting, Zoning, and Inspections.

ECONOMIC & PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT





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