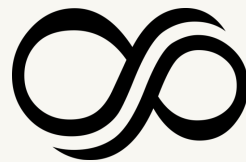


# 2026 REGIONAL WORKFORCE SURVEY



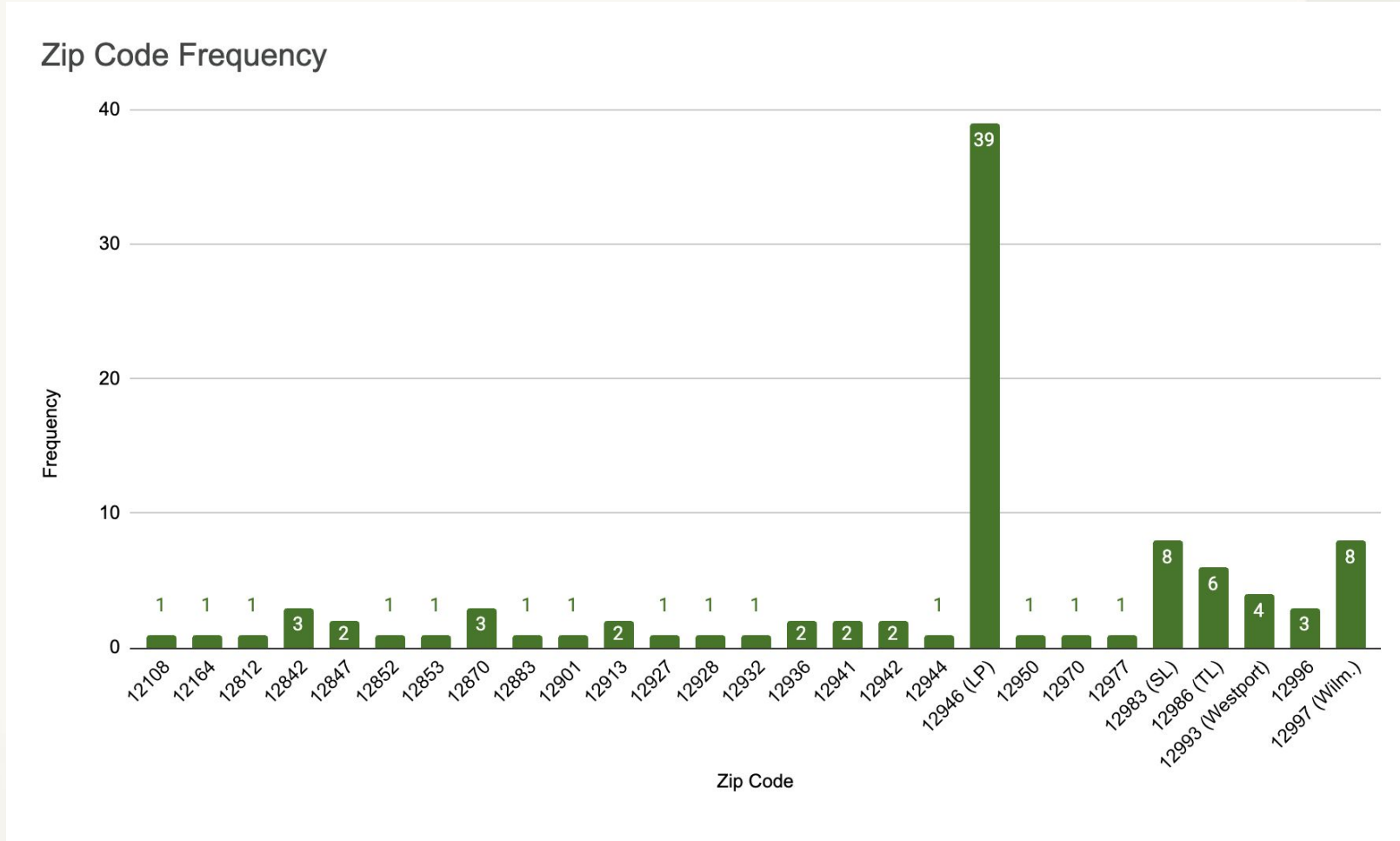
REGIONAL OFFICE *of*  
SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Published May 2026

# Overview

- **Scale:** 100 regional businesses participated across diverse sectors.
- **Distribution:** Survey was promoted via local ads, Regional Manager Updates, and a dedicated email to our ROOST Marketing Partner list.
- **Dates:** The survey was open for all of April 2026

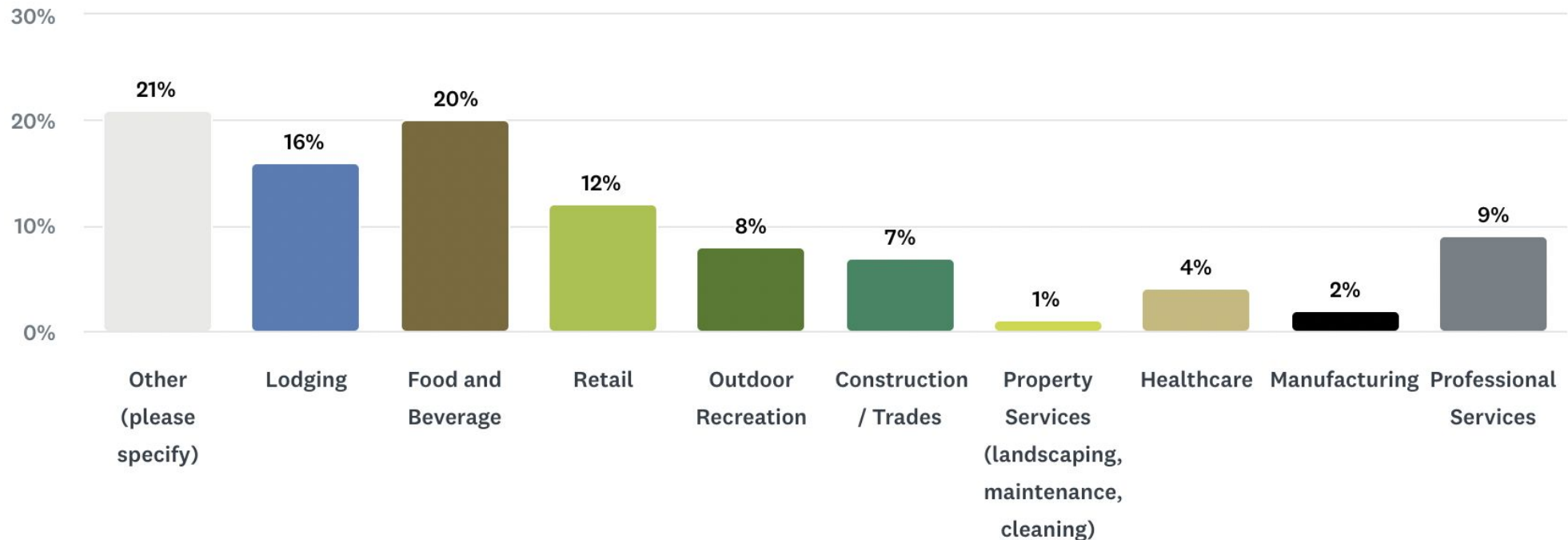
# Participation by Region



- The survey reflects strong engagement from the Tri-Lakes area, particularly Lake Placid (12946)
  - 100 responses received, 99 of which were in the Adirondacks

# Primary Business Sectors

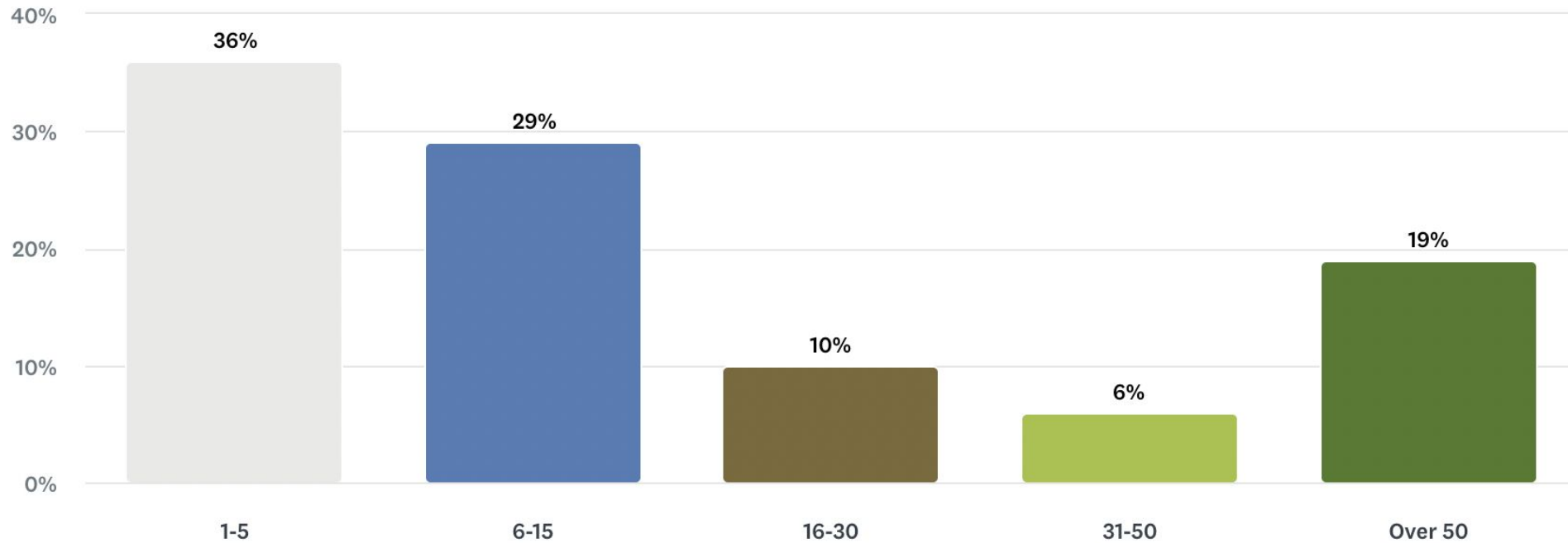
What is the primary industry/sector of your business?



- Other category included Government (6%), Arts & Entertainment (2%), Fitness & Wellness (3%), Education/Youth Camps (3%), Trades (3%), Finance (1%), Tourism (1%), and Non-Profit (1%)

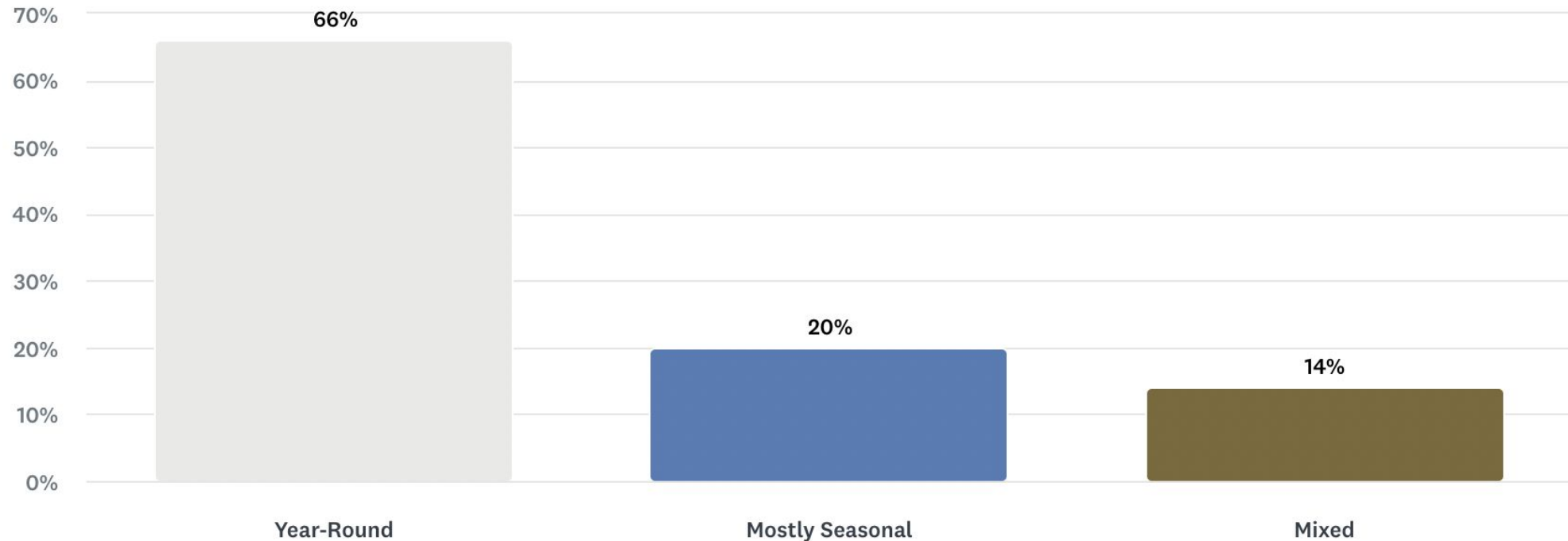
# Employee Metrics

Approximately how many employees does your business have during peak season?



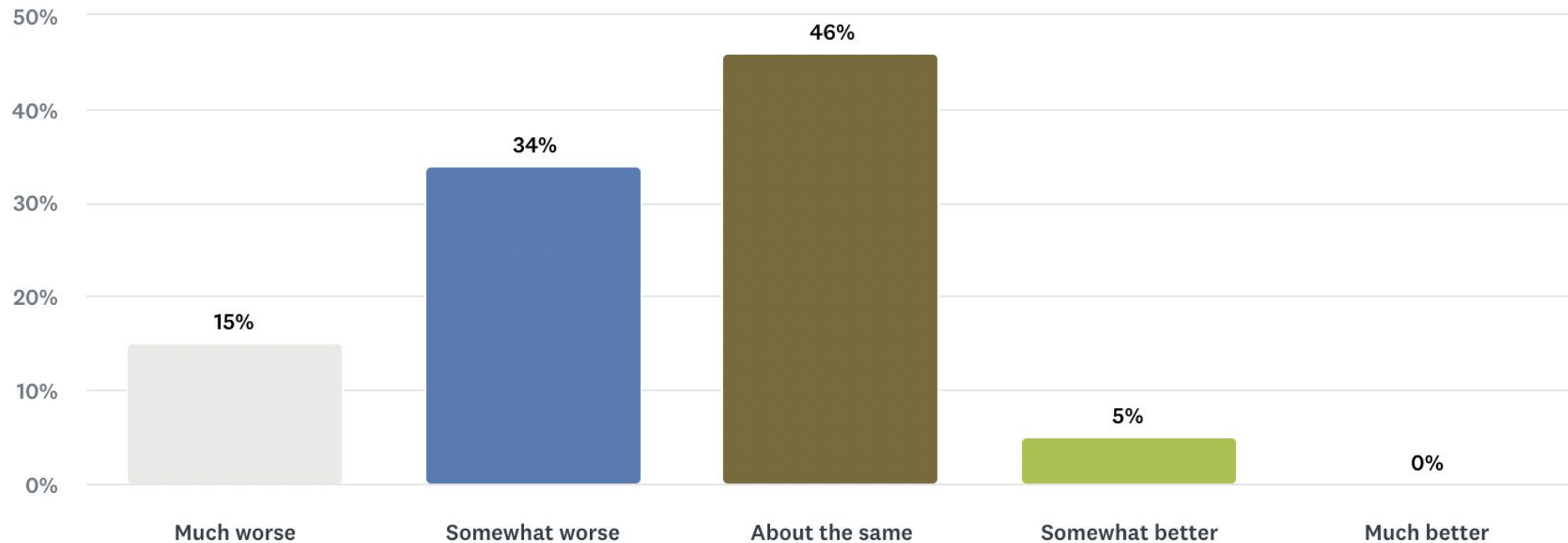
# Business Seasonality

How would you describe the seasonality of your business?



# Workforce Availability

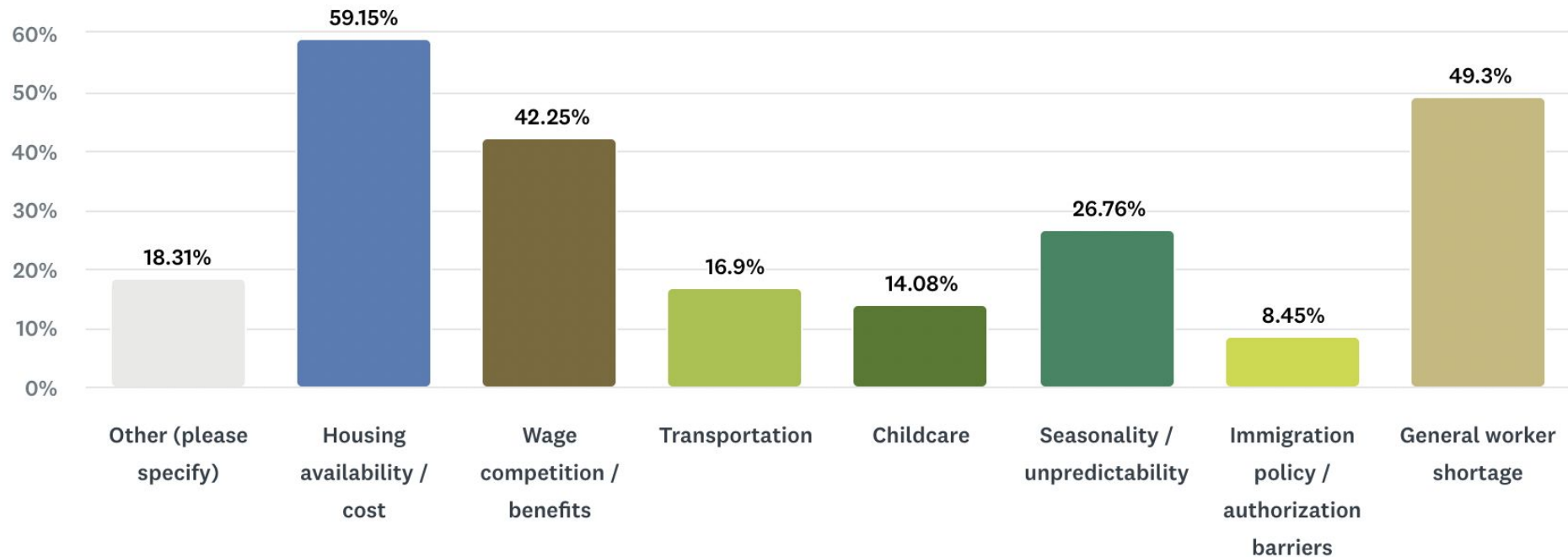
Compared to last year, how has your workforce availability changed?



- 49% of businesses say their workforce availability is worse than last year, compared with 5% saying it is better

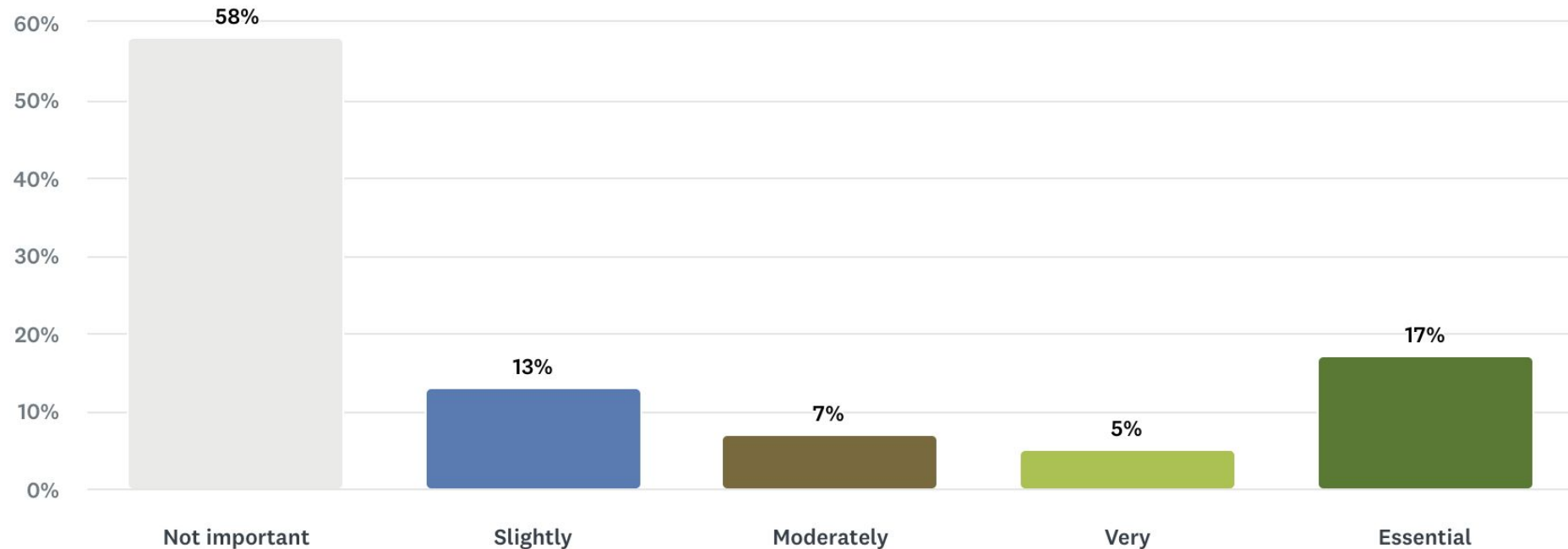
# Workforce Availability - The Reasons

If workforce availability is worse, what are the main reasons? (Select up to 3)



# Foreign Workers

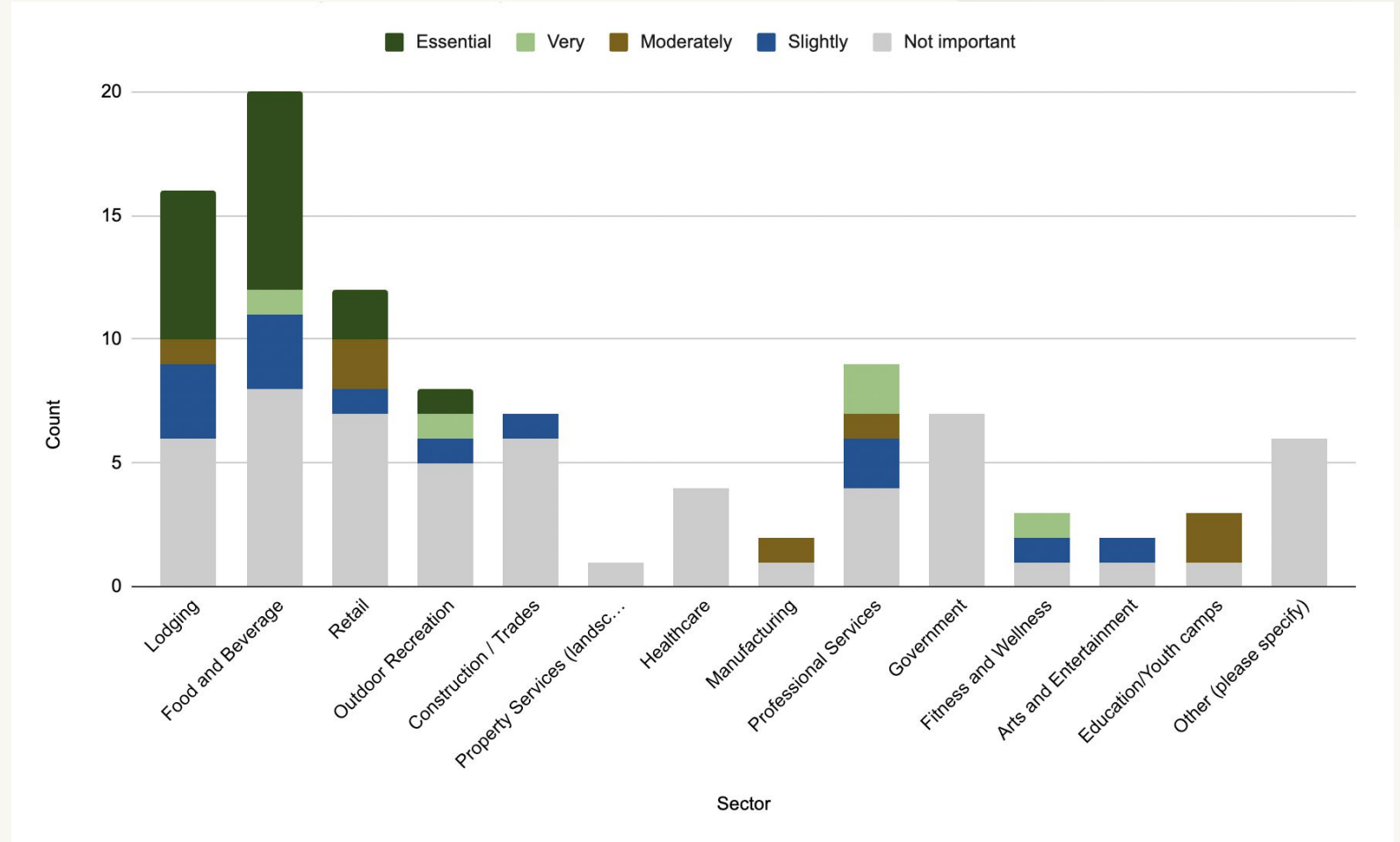
Overall, how important are work-authorized foreign workers to your ability to operate at full capacity?



# Foreign Workers - Importance By Sector

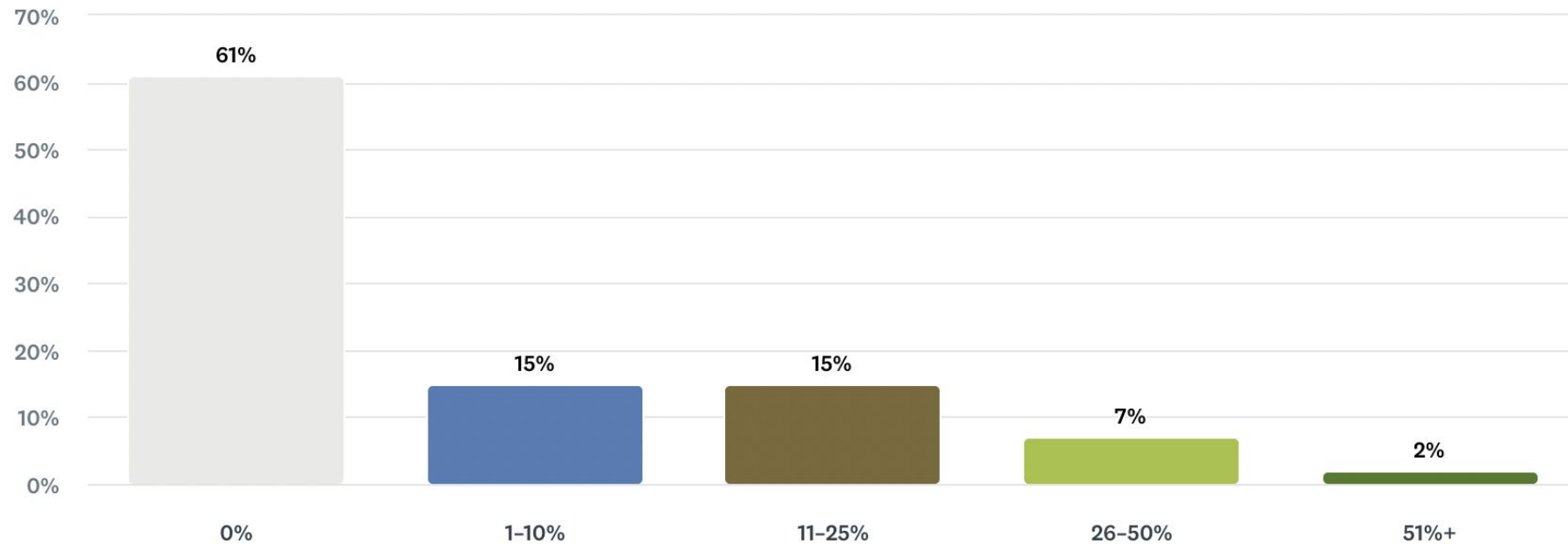
- Lodging and Food & Beverage show the strongest reliance on work-authorized foreign workers among major respondent sectors
- Retail and Outdoor Recreation sectors also include businesses that rated foreign workers as *Essential*, *Very*, or *Moderately* important to their success.

\*Other category includes responses that couldn't be lumped into a cohesive grouping



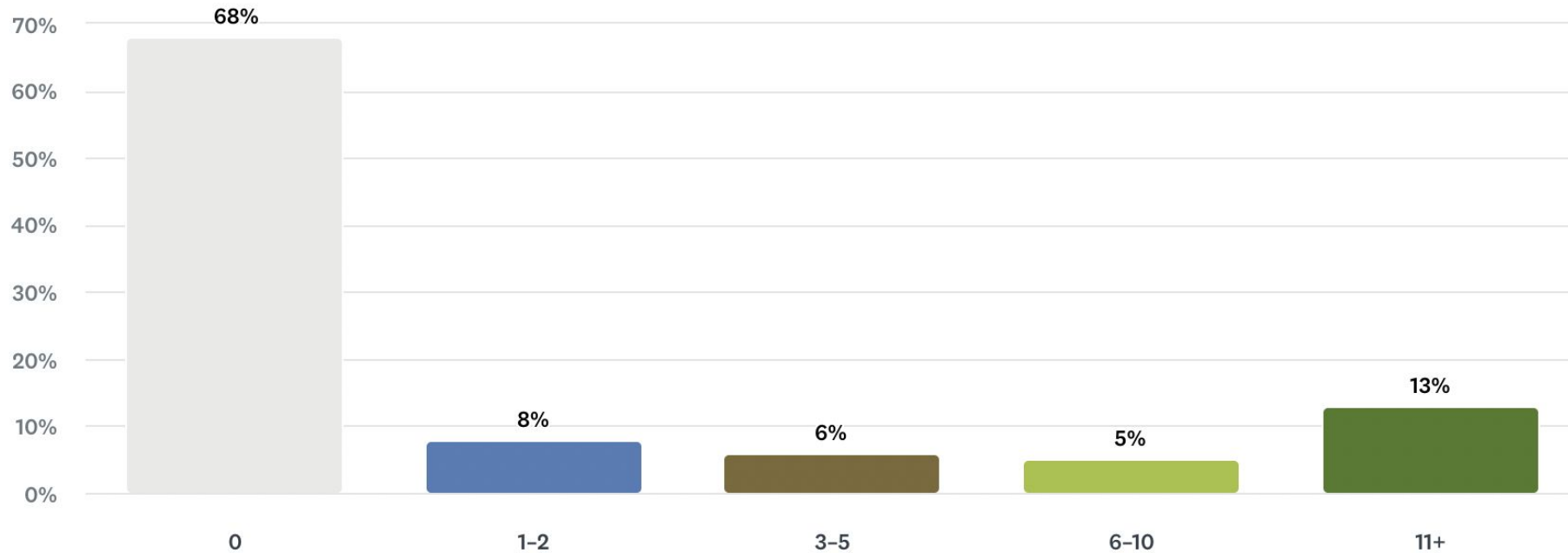
# Foreign Workers

Approximately what share of your workforce is non-U.S.-born or uses a work authorization tied to immigration status?



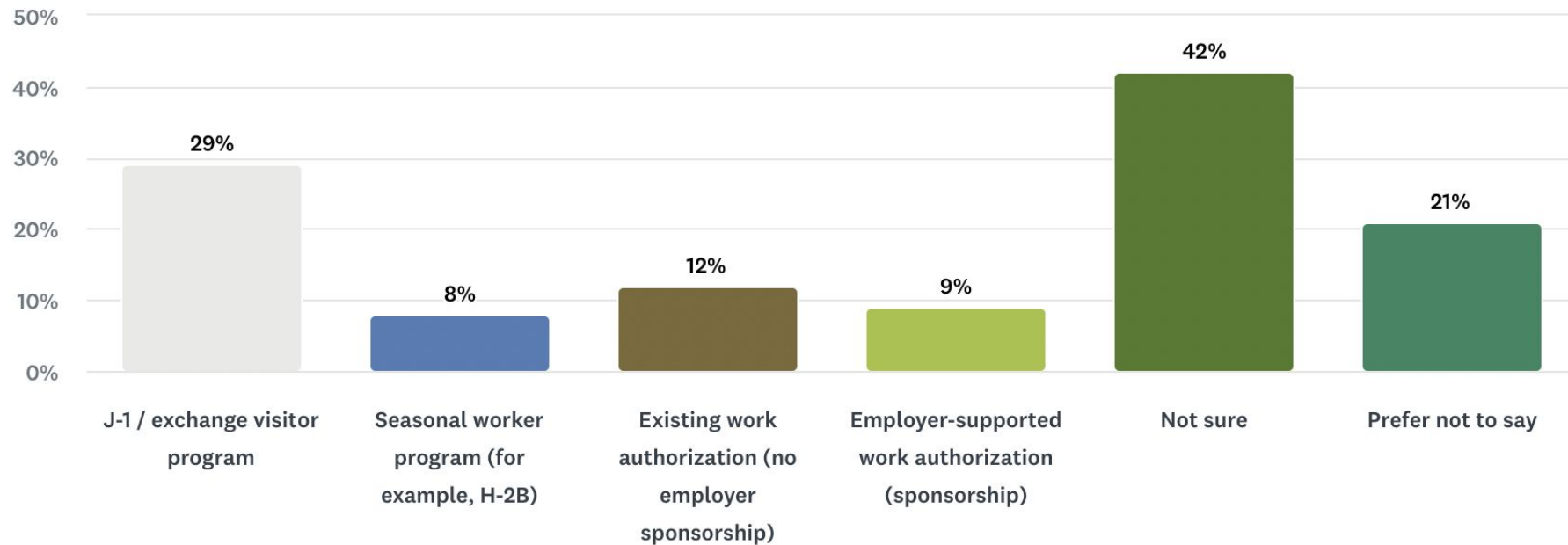
# Foreign Workers

In the last 12 months, how many positions in your business were filled by workers who required work authorization sponsorship or a visa program?



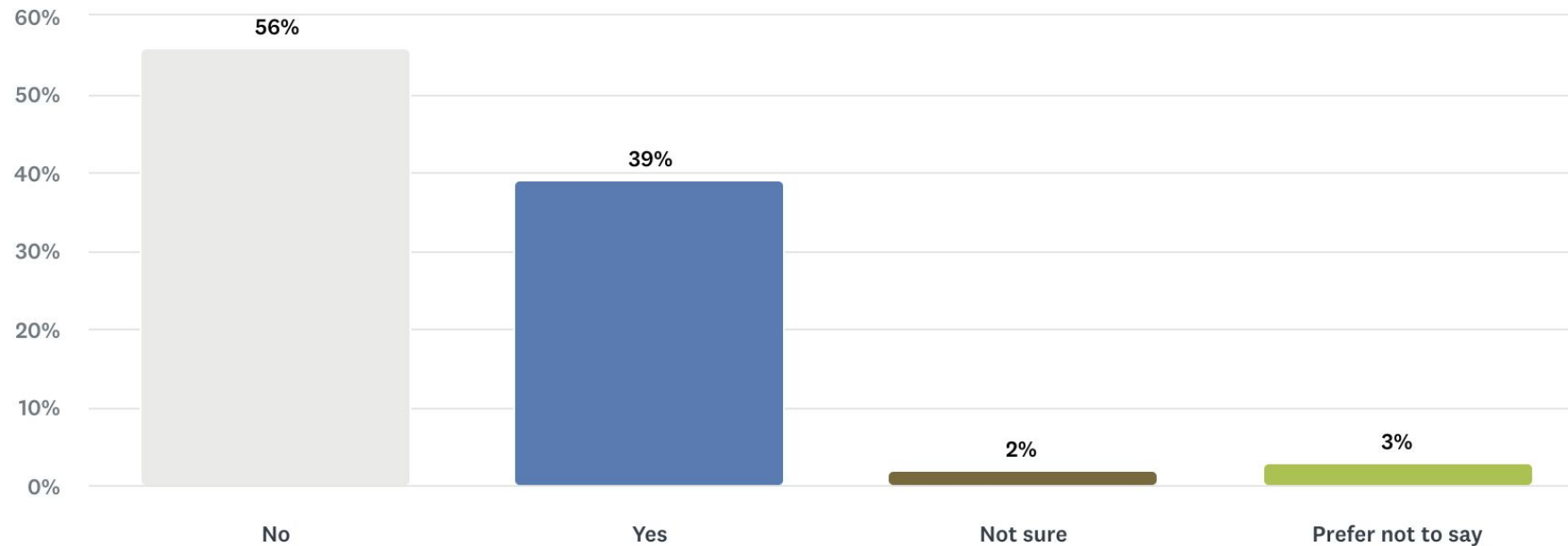
# Foreign Workers – Work Authorization

How are positions that require work authorization or visa programs typically staffed in your business? (select all that apply)



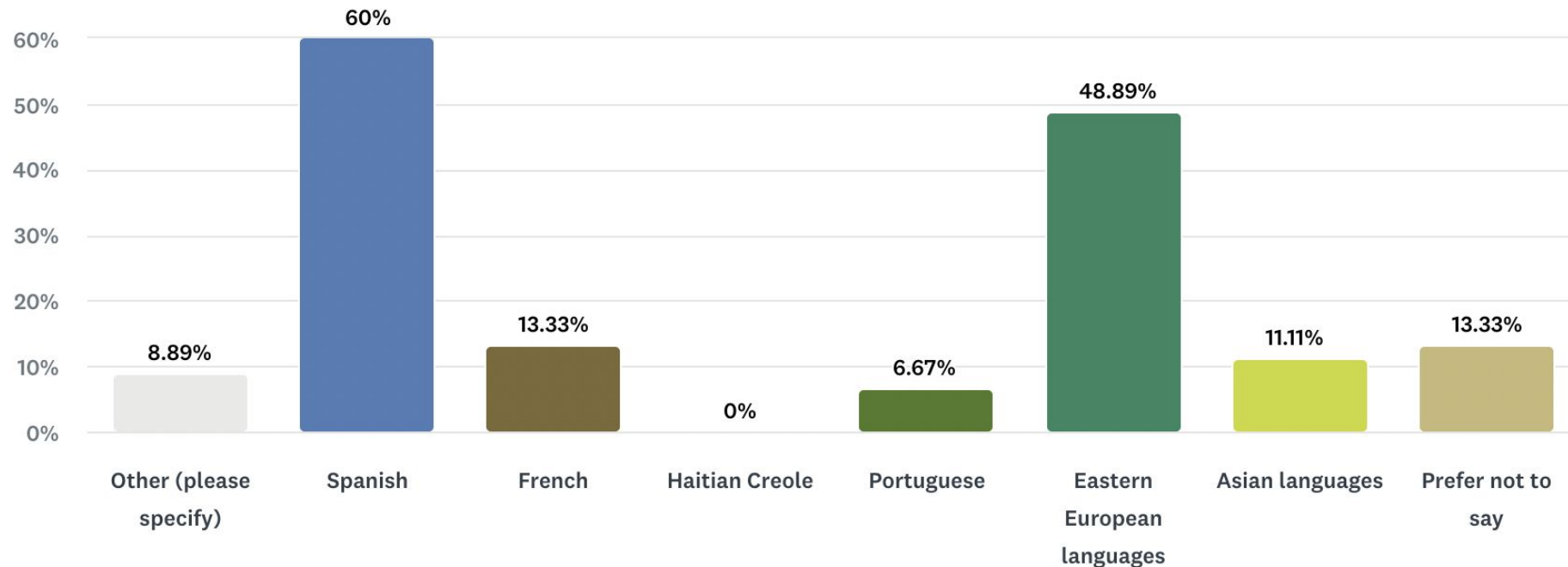
# Foreign Workers – Language

Do any employees in your workforce have a primary language other than English?



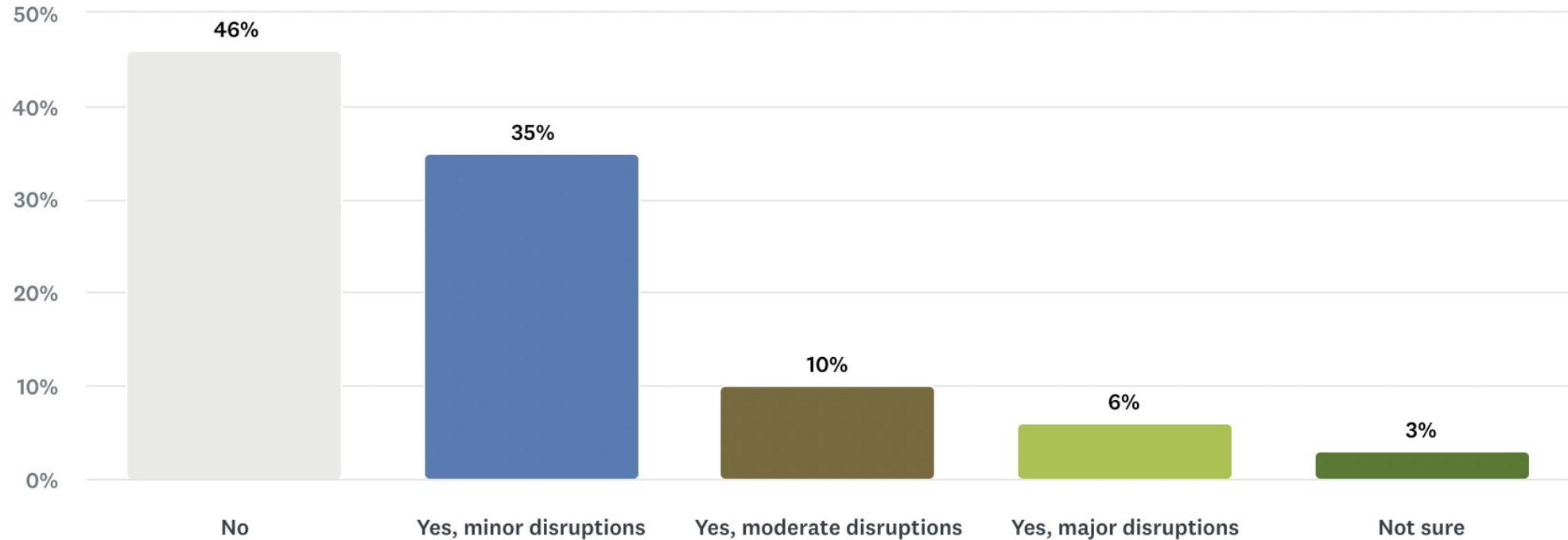
# Foreign Workers – Language

If yes, which languages are represented? (Select all that apply)



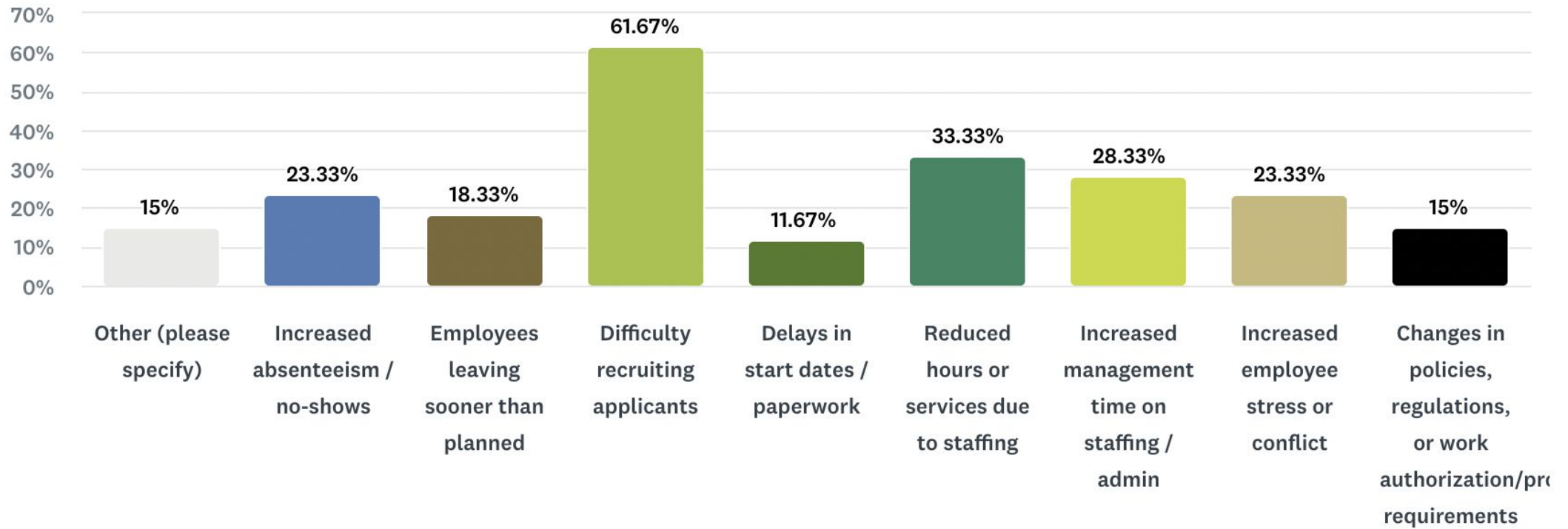
# Workforce Disruptions

Over the past 6 months, has your business experienced any workforce disruptions?



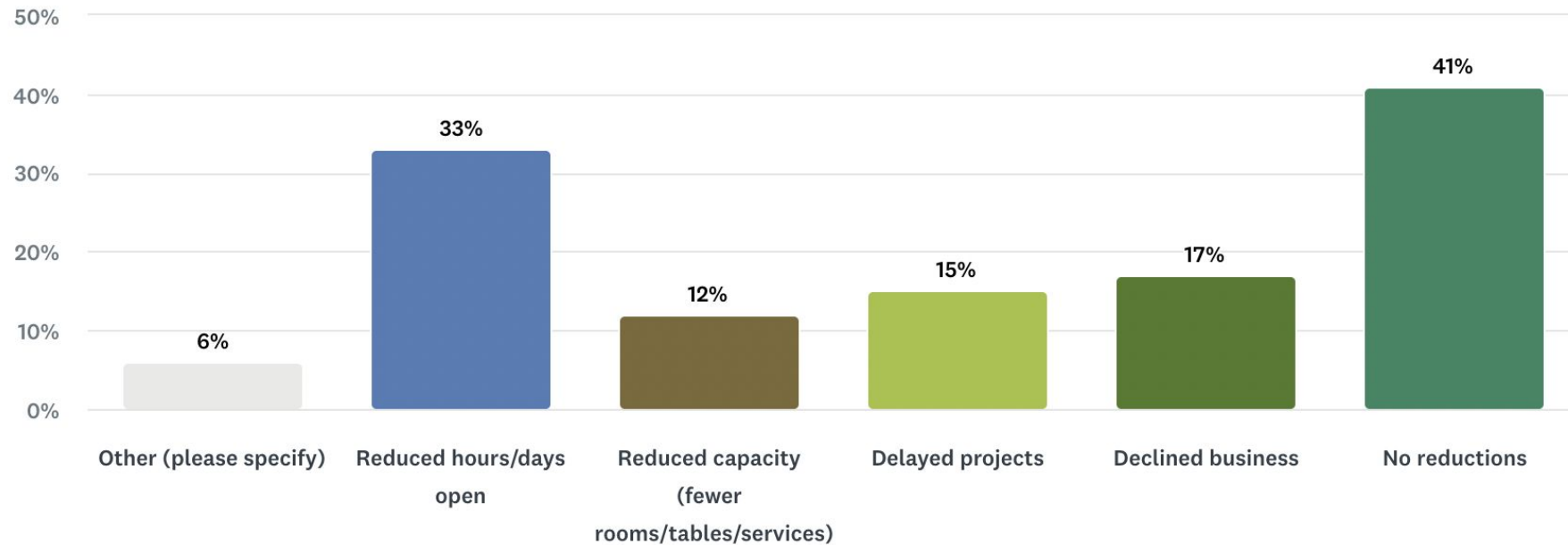
# Workforce Disruptions – Cont'd

If yes or not sure, what types of disruptions or contributing factors have affected your workforce? (select all that apply)

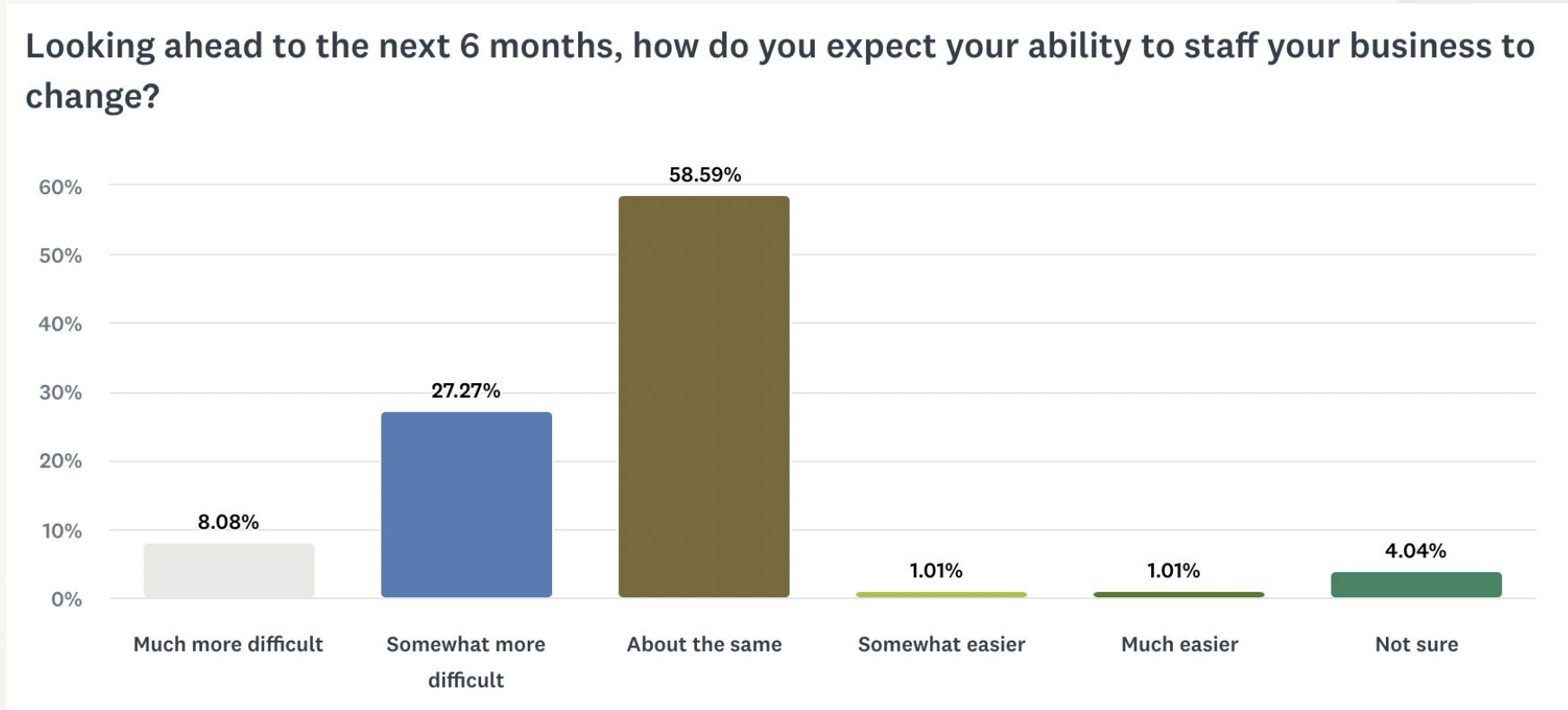


# Staffing Challenges

Have you reduced operations due to staffing challenges in the last 12 months? (Select all that apply)



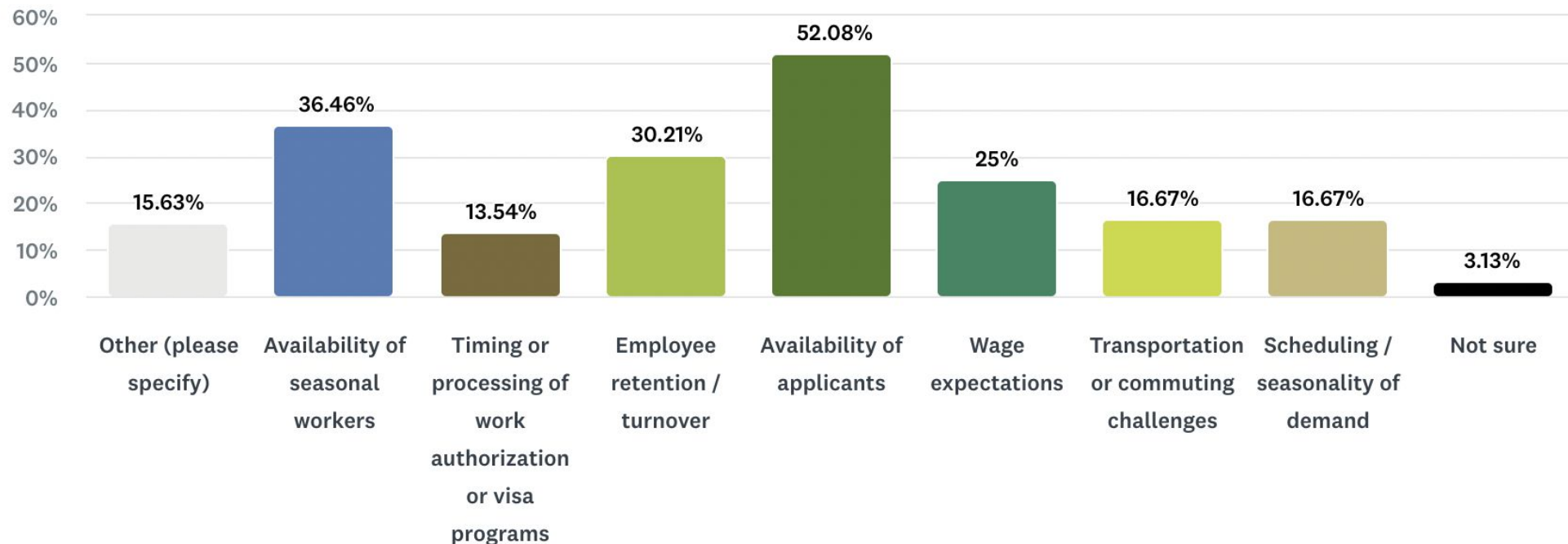
# Staffing Challenges - Cont'd



- 35% expect staffing to get more difficult over the next six months, while only 2% expect it to get easier.

# Staffing Challenges - Cont'd

What factors are most likely to affect your ability to staff your business over the next 6 months? (select up to 3)



- Short-term staffing concerns are led by applicant availability and seasonal labor supply, while earlier responses and open-ended comments point to housing as a broader structural constraint.

# Staffing Challenges - Open Response

Is there anything else you'd like to share about how work-authorized non-U.S.-born employees affect your business operations?

## Answer trends:

- Several respondents emphasized the essential role that work-authorized, non-U.S.-born employees play in their operations, with some stating their businesses would struggle without them.
- A few responses mention that while hiring non-U.S.-born employees helps fill immediate staffing gaps, it does not address underlying issues such as affordable housing shortages.

What types of support would be most helpful in addressing challenges related to employing work-authorized non-U.S.-born employees, including living in the community?

## Answer trends:

- The most common request is for more affordable and available workforce housing. Respondents stress that a lack of housing is a major barrier to hiring and retaining employees.
- There are calls for improved transportation access and community support to help integrate non-U.S.-born workers.

# Key Takeaways:

## Employee make-up & Seasonality

### Seasonality Model

**66%** of respondents operate year-round, suggesting a strong year-round business base, not only seasonal employers.

### Team Size

Small businesses dominate: **36%** employ 1-5 workers at peak, highlighting the vulnerability of boutique operations to staffing fluctuations.

# Key Takeaways:

## Immigration & Global Talent

# 29%

**J-1 / exchange  
visitor program**

### A Vital Pipeline

- Work-authorized foreign workers help fill peak-season staffing gaps for some businesses. While many respondents do not rely on this labor source, 17% consider these workers essential to operating at full capacity, and 13% of all respondents reported filling 11 or more positions through work authorization sponsorships or visa programs.
- Among named visa programs, J-1 was selected most often, followed by seasonal worker programs such as H-2B.

# Key Takeaways:

## Overall

### Housing & Workforce Availability

- Housing availability is the leading reported reason for workforce issues, while applicant availability is the top reported staffing concern for the next six months.
- Housing availability/cost, general worker shortage, and wage competition/benefits were the leading reported reasons for worsened workforce availability.

### Operational Impacts

- One-third of businesses reduced hours or days open. Other impacts included declined business, delayed projects, and reduced capacity.