

2025 MEMBER SURVEY DEBRIEF

LOWCOUNTRY
LOCAL FIRST



Who We Are

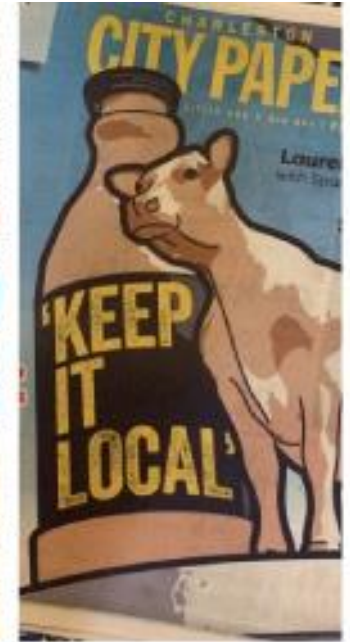
MISSION

Lowcountry Local First is a 501(c)3 nonprofit advances economic prosperity and local ownership through innovative and inclusive initiatives that build our community's wealth and wellbeing.

WHAT WE DO

1. Work with elected officials, decision-makers and opinion leaders to foster a better environment to start and grow local businesses.
2. Educate the community on why it's important to choose local and influence them to do so.
3. Deliver resources, expertise and a supportive network to local business owners, from local business owners.

We're proud to be the engine behind a generous "give and take" system of shared knowledge, cultivating meaningful connections between experienced local business owners who are eager to lend support, and those who are just getting started who can benefit immensely from the lessons-learned by their peers.



Who We Serve

CERTIFIED LOCAL MEMBER CRITERIA

The following criteria are necessary for businesses joining Lowcountry Local First and constitute Lowcountry Local First's definition of a local independent business:

- 1) The business is privately held and not publicly traded.
- 2) The business is based locally and has no corporate or national headquarters outside the Lowcountry.
- 3) The business owners who have a controlling interest of more than 50% live in the Lowcountry.
- 4) The business can make independent decisions regarding the name and look of the business, business purchasing, practices and distribution, as well as pays all its own marketing, rent, and other business expenses.



Survey Details

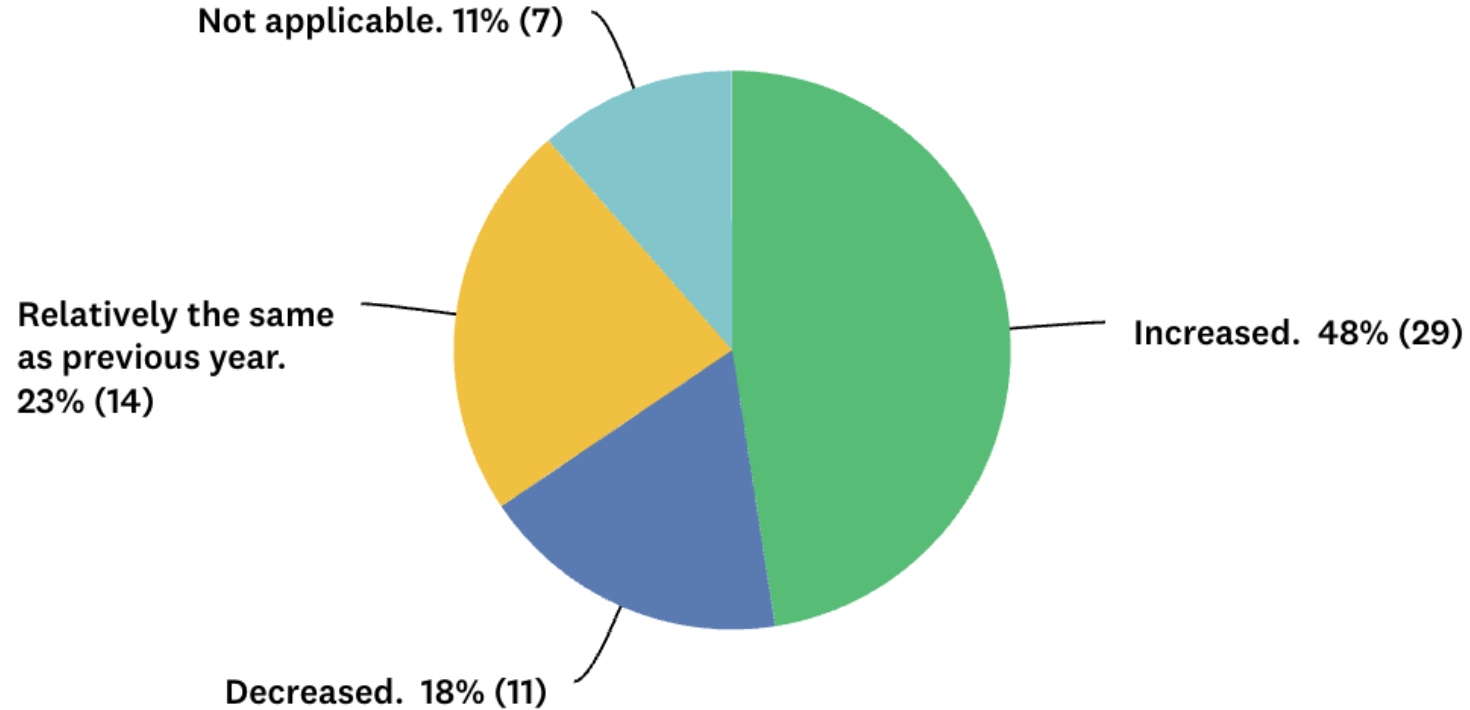
- Total members invited to participate: 403
- Total survey responses: 61
- Median company age: 18 years in business
- Industries represented : Arts & Entertainment, Farm/Agriculture, Financial Services, Food & Beverage, Hospitality, Manufacturing, Medical, Nonprofit, Personal Services, Professional Services/B2B, Retail
- Methodology: Conducted in May-June 2025 with current business members only.



2024 Revenue

Compared to 2023, did your business's total gross revenue increase, decrease, or remain the same in 2024?

Answered: 61 Skipped: 0



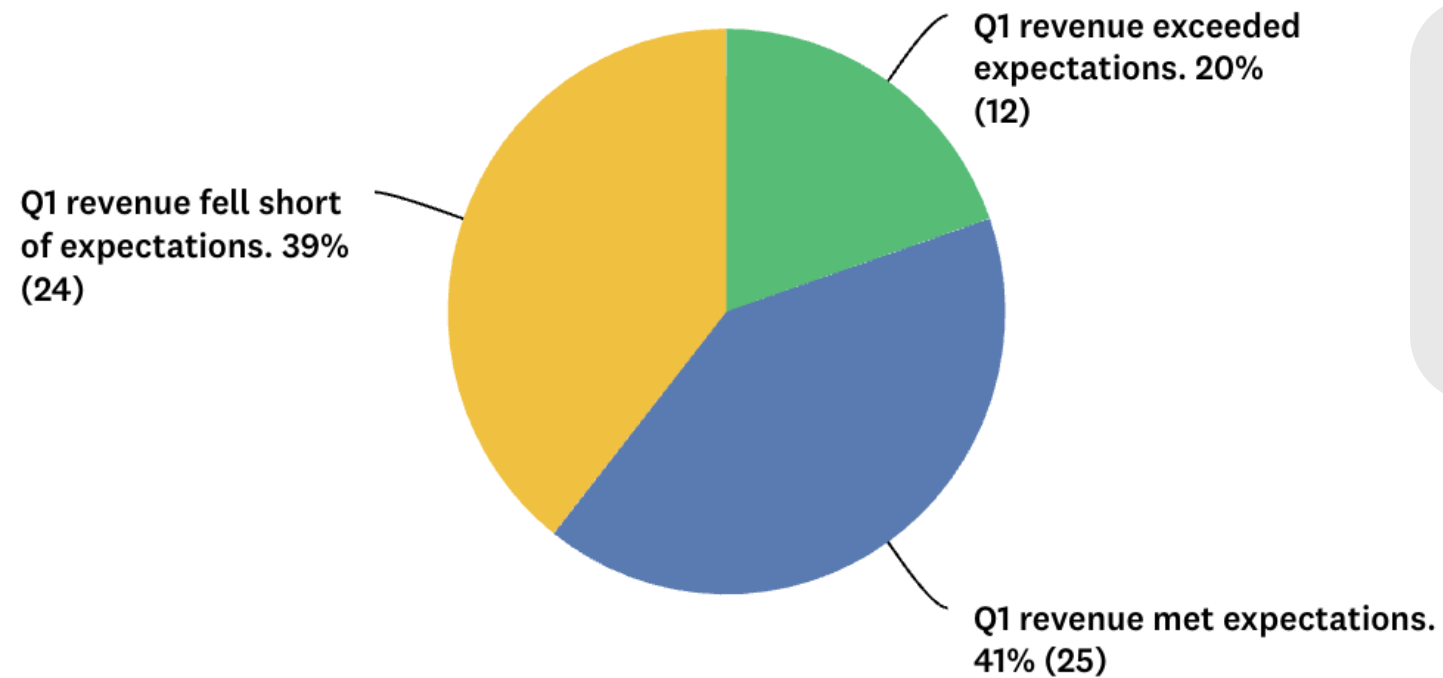
2024 was a year of revenue growth or stability for a majority of members (71%).

Compare: 58% of last year's survey respondents reported revenue growth for 2023.

2025 Q1 Revenue

Did your total gross revenue in Q1 of 2025 exceed, meet, or fall short of your projections?

Answered: 61 Skipped: 0

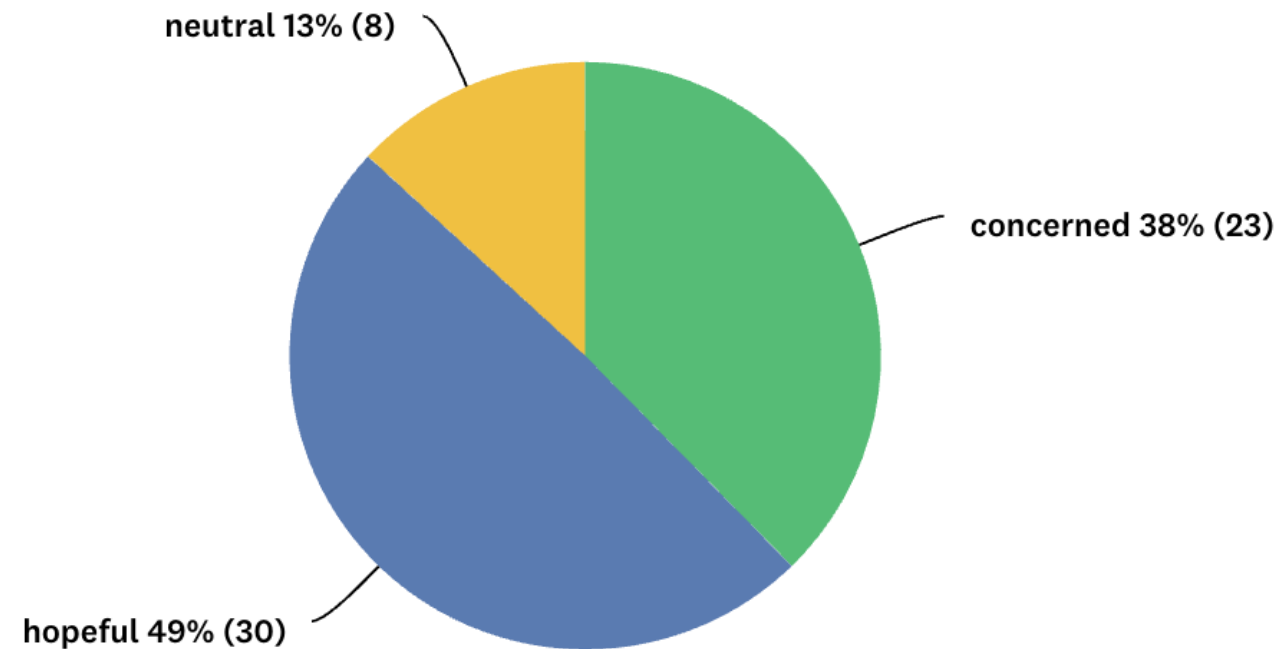


A majority of members (61%) said their revenue projections for Q1 2025 were met or exceeded.

2025 Revenue Projections

Do you feel primarily hopeful, primarily concerned, or largely neutral about meeting your total gross revenue year-end projection in 2025?

Answered: 61 Skipped: 0



38% are concerned about meeting their revenue projections for the year – more than double the rate of concern from the last 2 years.

Compare:
*In 2024, 18% expressed concern.
In 2023, 14% of members.*

Workforce Challenges

Businesses with employees who reported workforce issues

Answered: 61 Skipped: 0

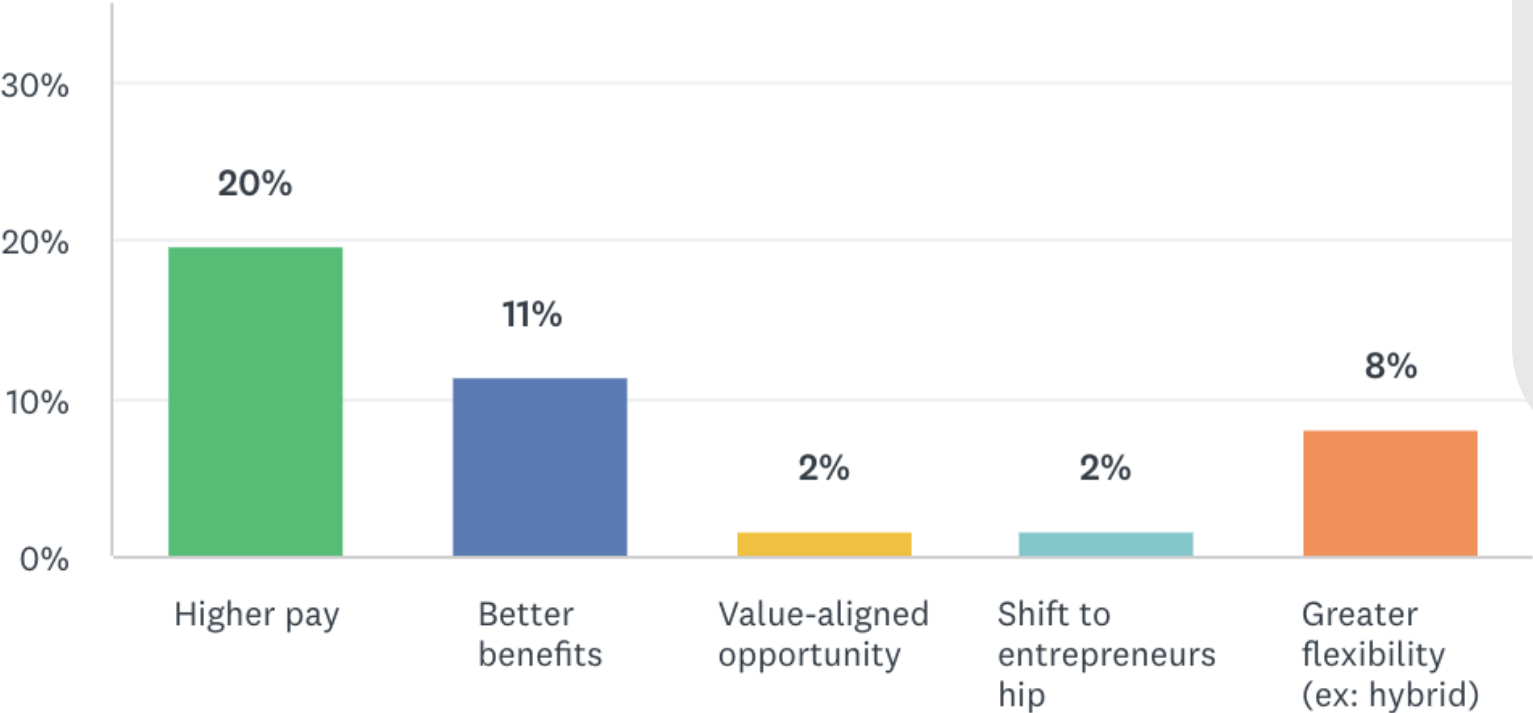


Hiring continues to be the top workforce challenge for members.

2025 Workforce Challenges

Please select any factors which contributed to hiring/retention challenges for your company over the past 12 months.

Answered: 61 Skipped: 0

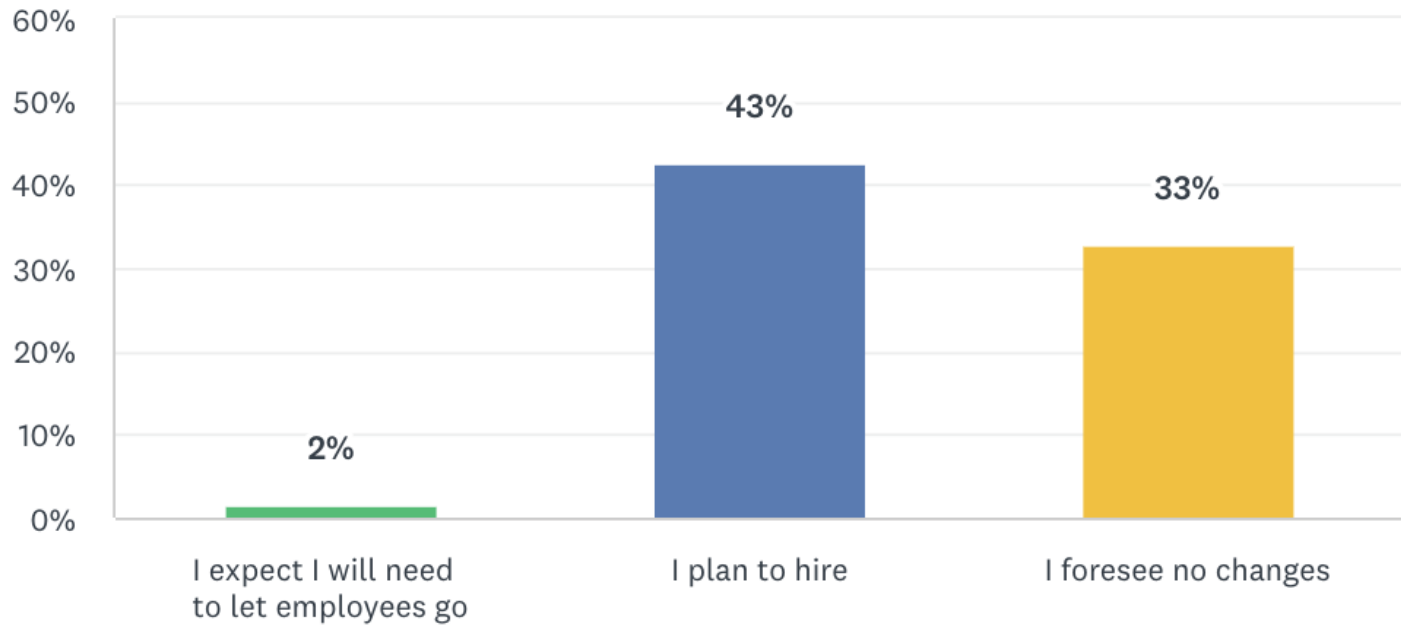


Among respondents, most employee resignations are attributable to employees seeking higher pay, better benefits or flexibility.

2025 Workforce Challenges

For businesses with employees, how they forecast any changes in team size in the next 6-12 months

Answered: 61 Skipped: 0

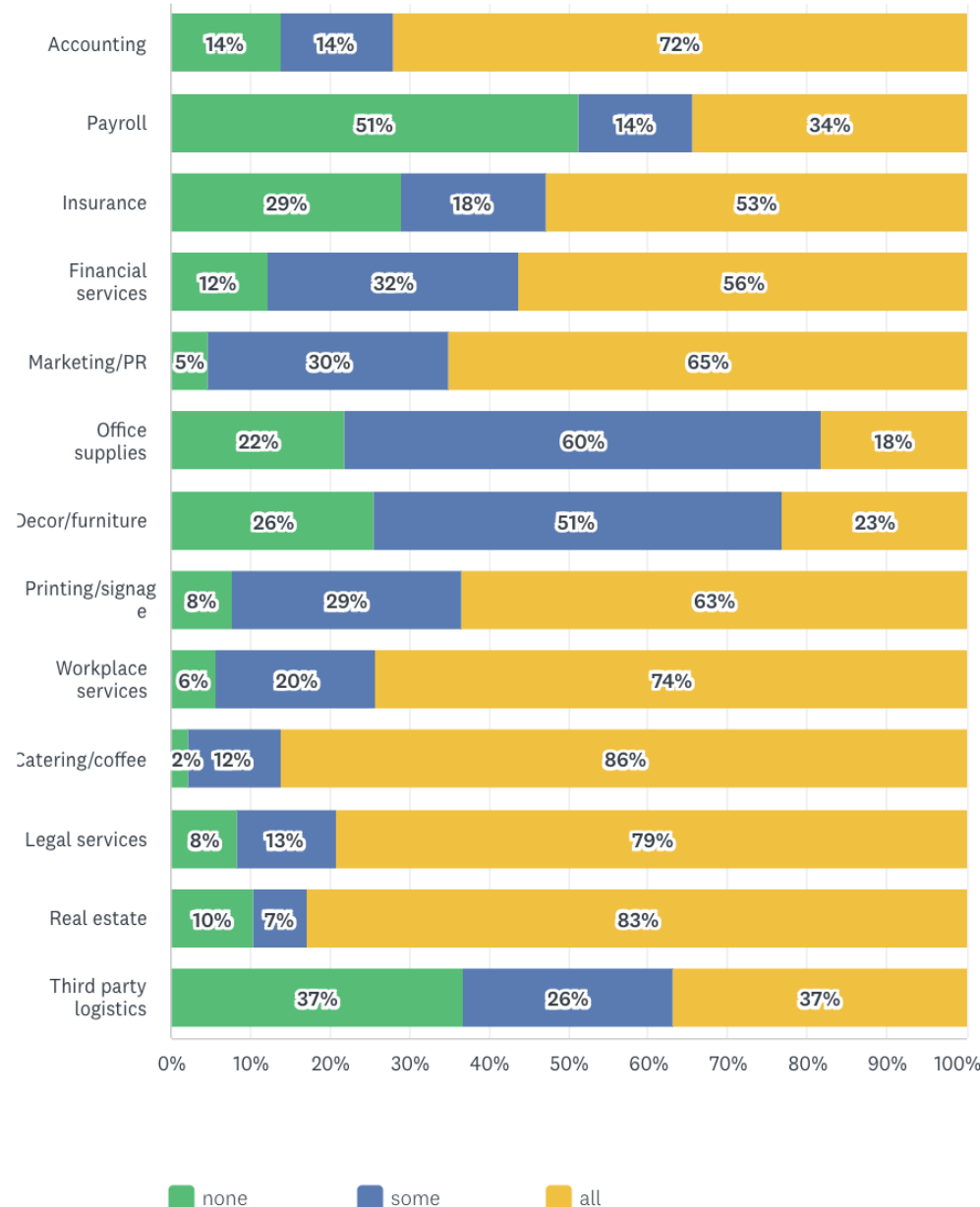


Despite lower positive response for revenue forecasts, nearly all still plan to hire or remain at current employment levels.

2025 Business Spending: Local vs. Non-local

How locally do you source and procure the following services and products for your business?

Answered: 61 Skipped: 0



Many members work **exclusively** with **local** businesses to procure particular services and products.

- 86% work exclusively with local caterers
- 83% with local realtors
- 79% with local lawyers
- 74% with local workplace services
- 72% with local accountants

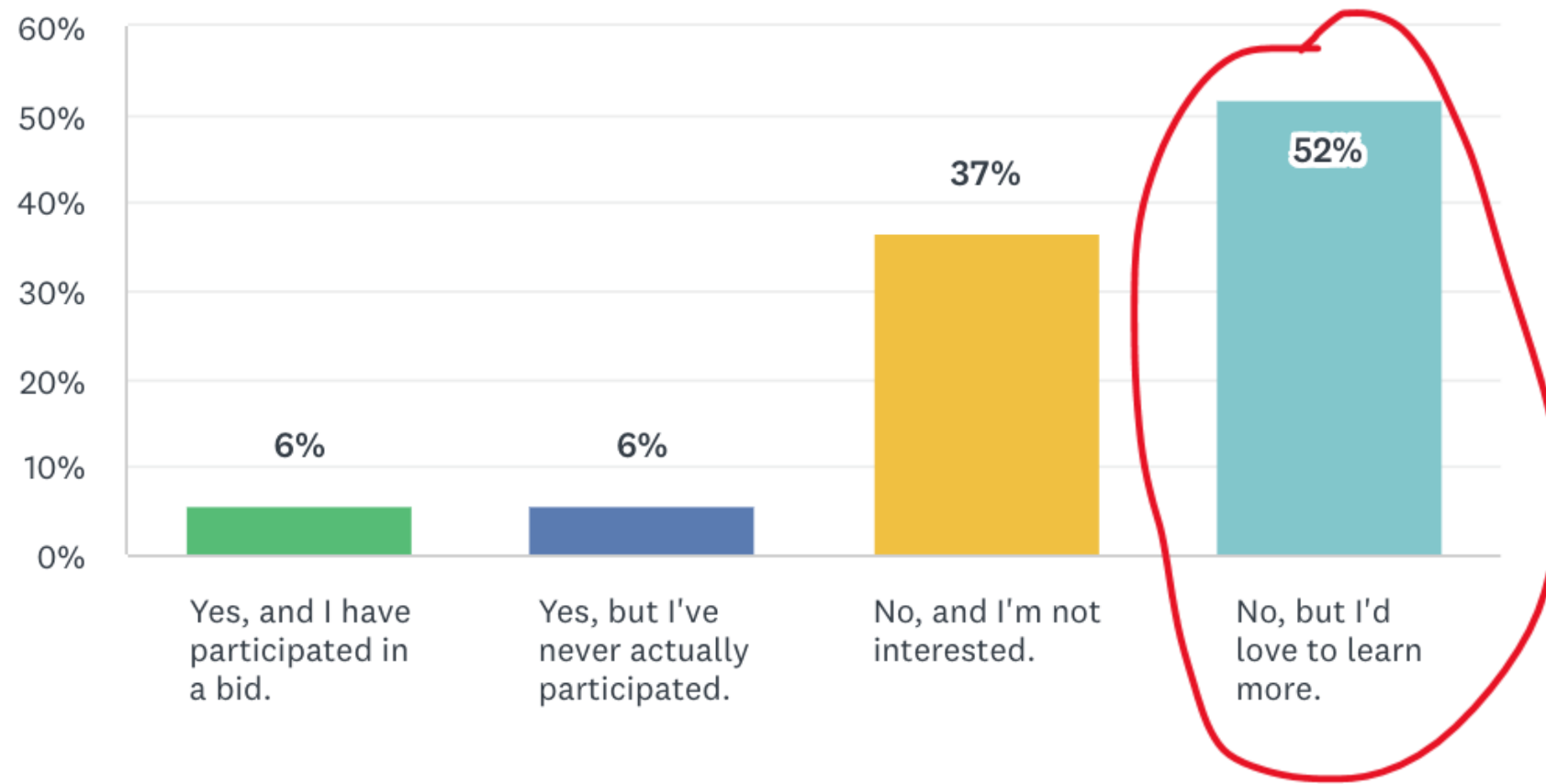
Some members also work **exclusively** with **non-local** businesses to procure other services and products.

- 51% of members work exclusively with non-local payroll companies
- 37% with non-local 3PL companies
- 29% with non-local insurance companies
- 26% of members with non-local office furniture/decor companies

Procurement

Is your company currently signed up to participate in any local municipality's procurement efforts (bids)?

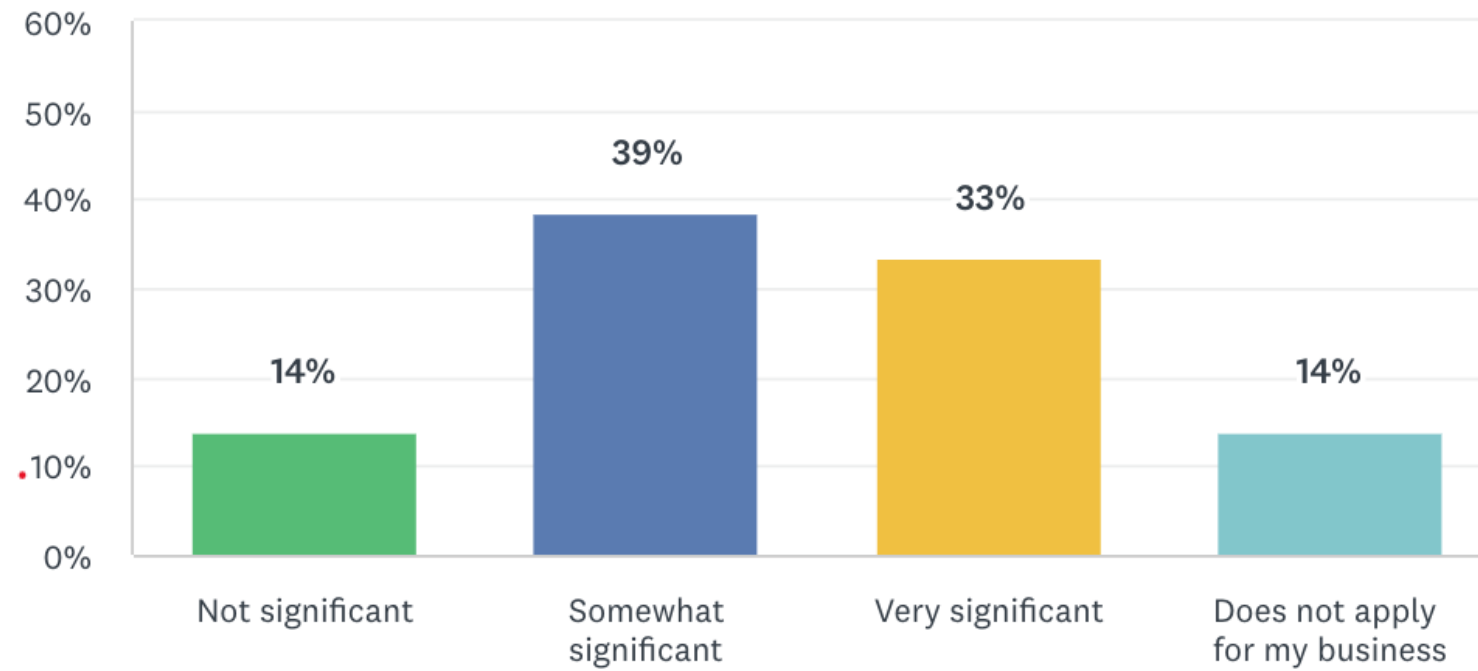
Answered: 52 Skipped: 9



External Challenges and Conditions

Impact of government regulations and red tape

Answered: 57 Skipped: 4



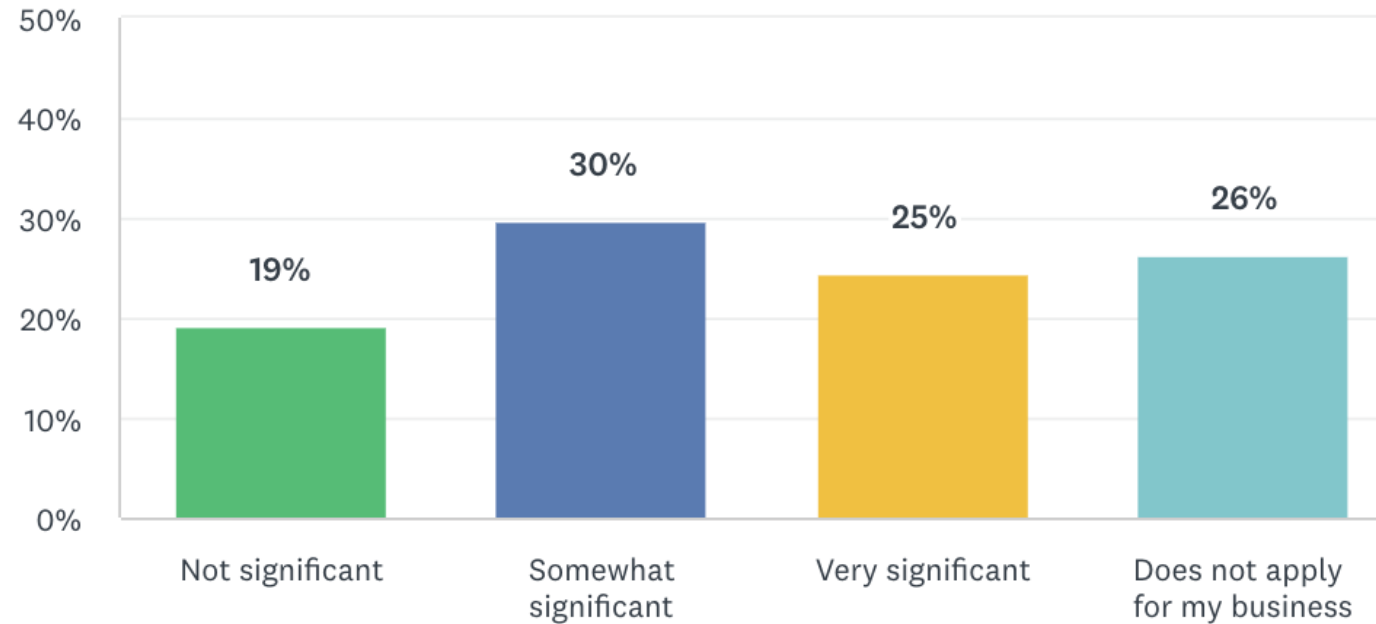
72% of members reported that they are impacted by red tape and regulations, an increase from previous years.

In 2024, 56% of members reported negative impacts. In 2023, 58% reported negative impacts.

External Challenges and Opportunities

Impact of large competitors receiving better access, pricing, and terms for products or services

Answered: 57 Skipped: 4

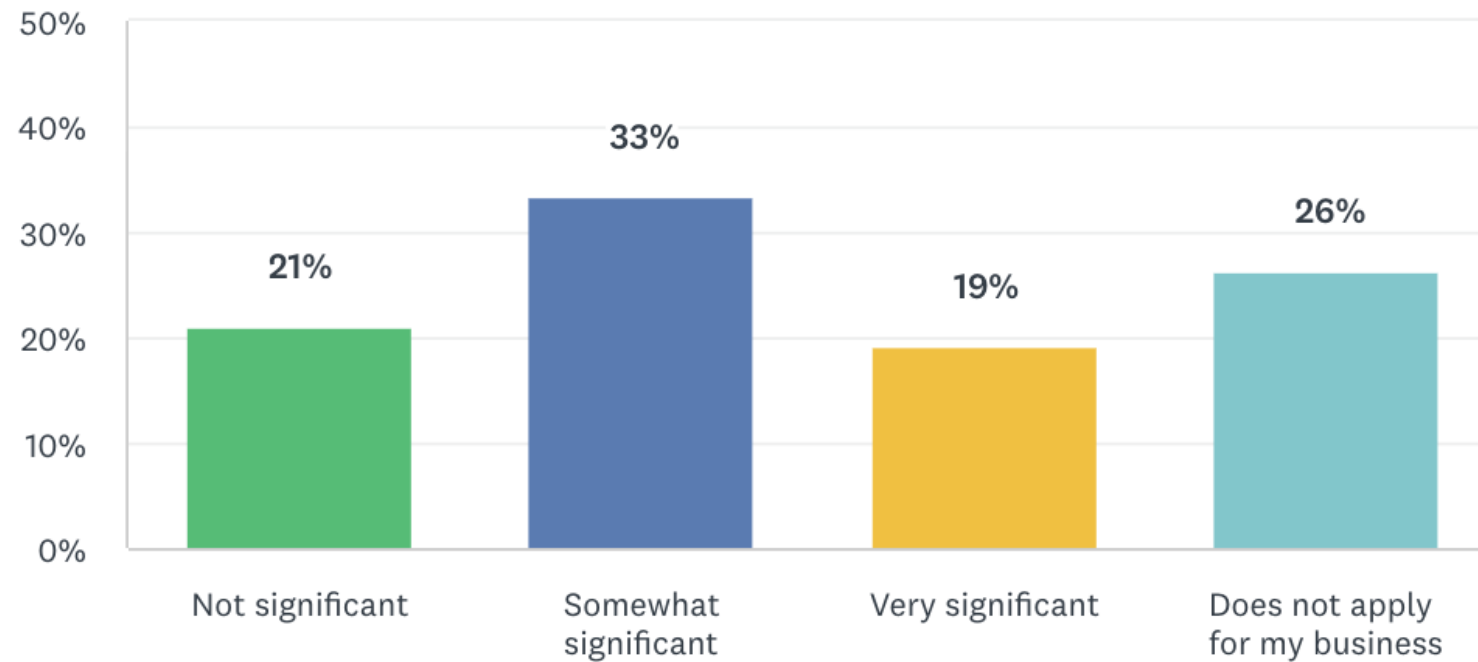


More than half of members (55%) report that they are somewhat or significantly impacted by their corporate competitors' access to superior pricing and terms for products and services.

External Challenges and Opportunities

Supply chain shortages and/or disruptions

Answered: 57 Skipped: 4



Supply chain disruptions continue to affect members (52%).

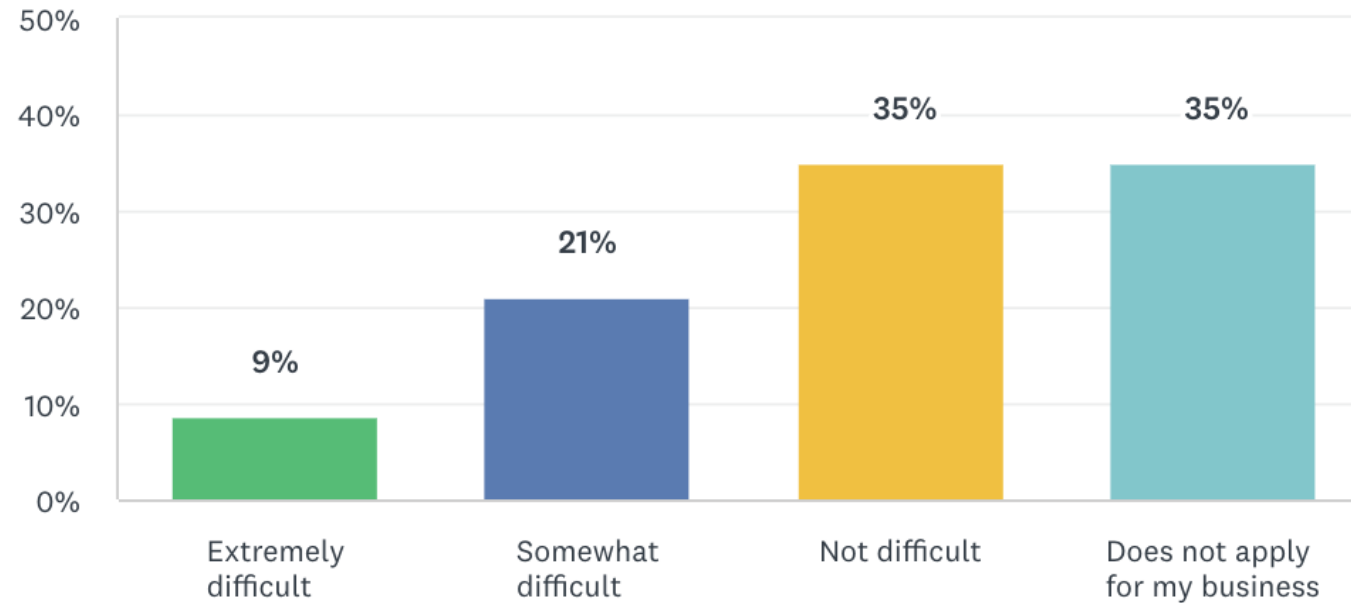
In 2024: 42% reported impacts.

In 2023: 65% reported impacts.

External Challenges and Opportunities

How difficult is it for you to secure funding (loans, financing, or grants) for your business?

Answered: 57 Skipped: 4

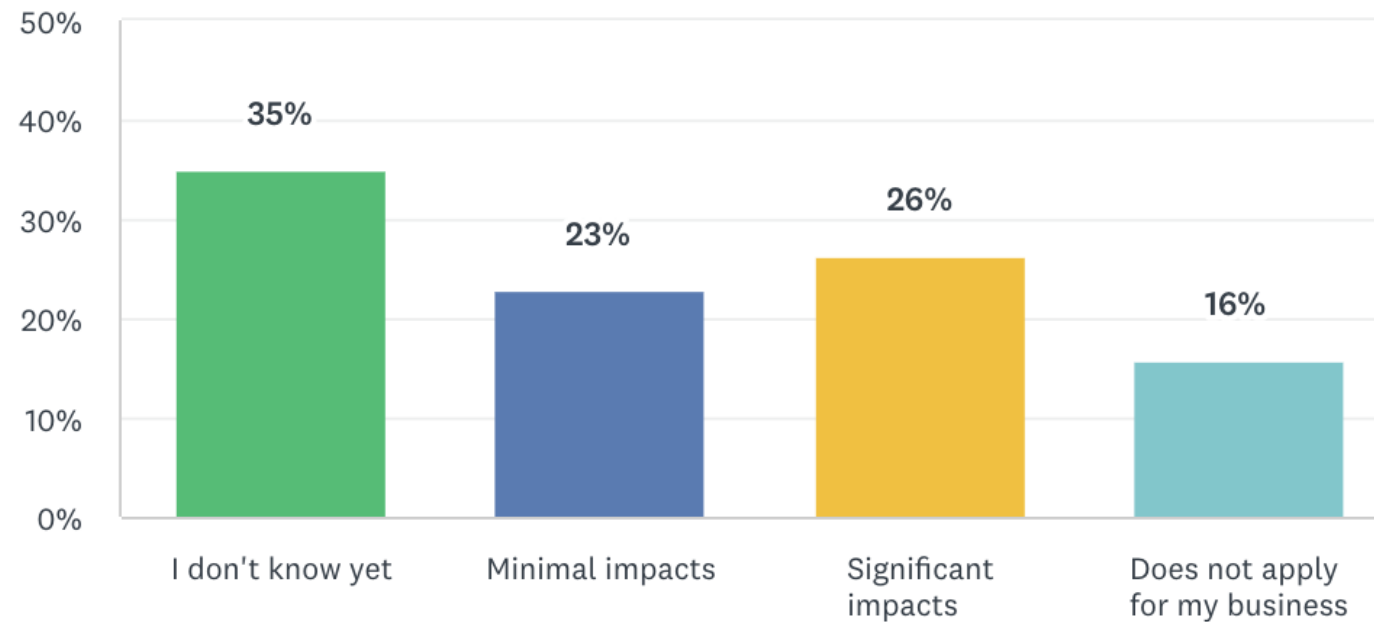


30% of members find it challenging to secure funding for their business — comparable to recent years.

External Challenges and Opportunities

How are tariffs impacting your business, now or in the coming weeks? Please include a comment with a description of any specific impacts.

Answered: 57 Skipped: 4



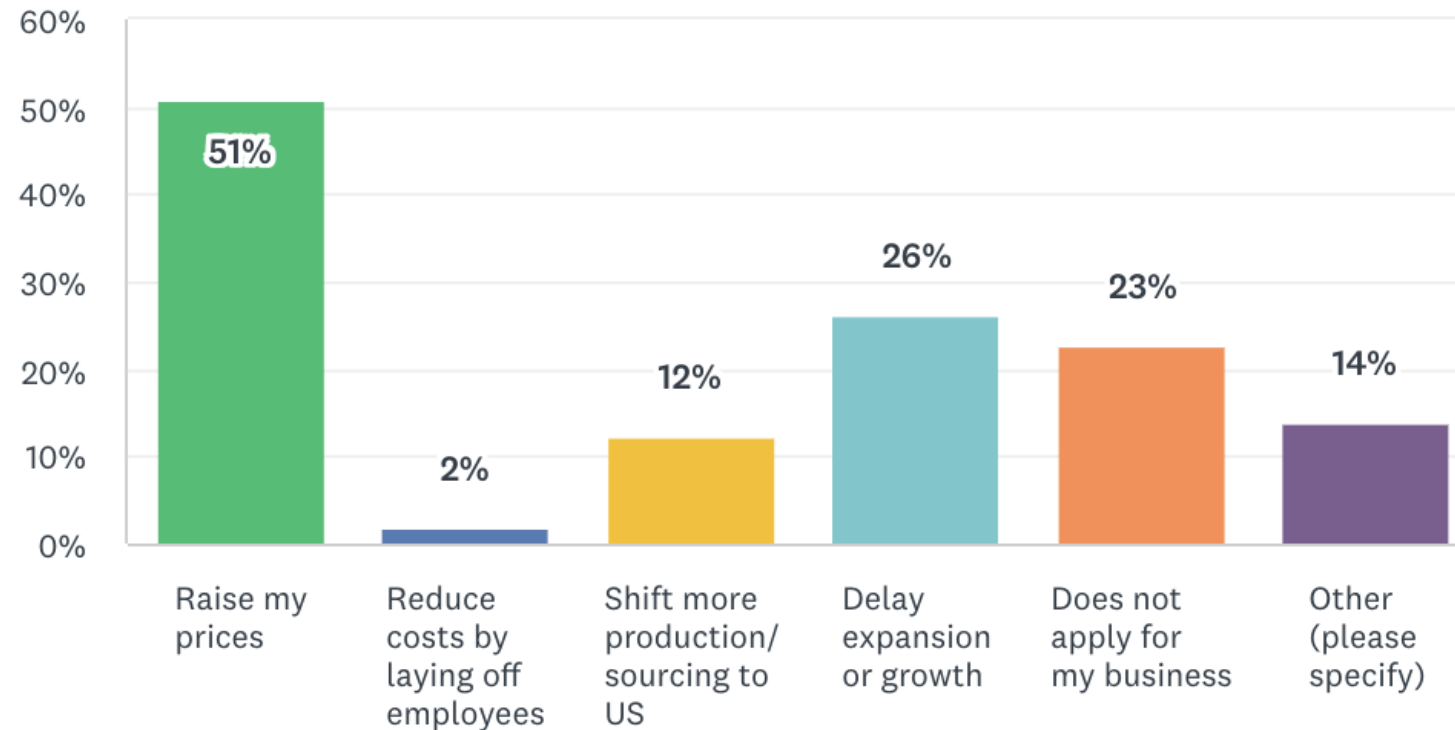
49% of members are already feeling impacts of tariffs.

35% are bracing for potential impacts.

External Challenges and Opportunities

If you do foresee tariffs impacting your business, which of the following are likely to happen as a result?

Answered: 57 Skipped: 4



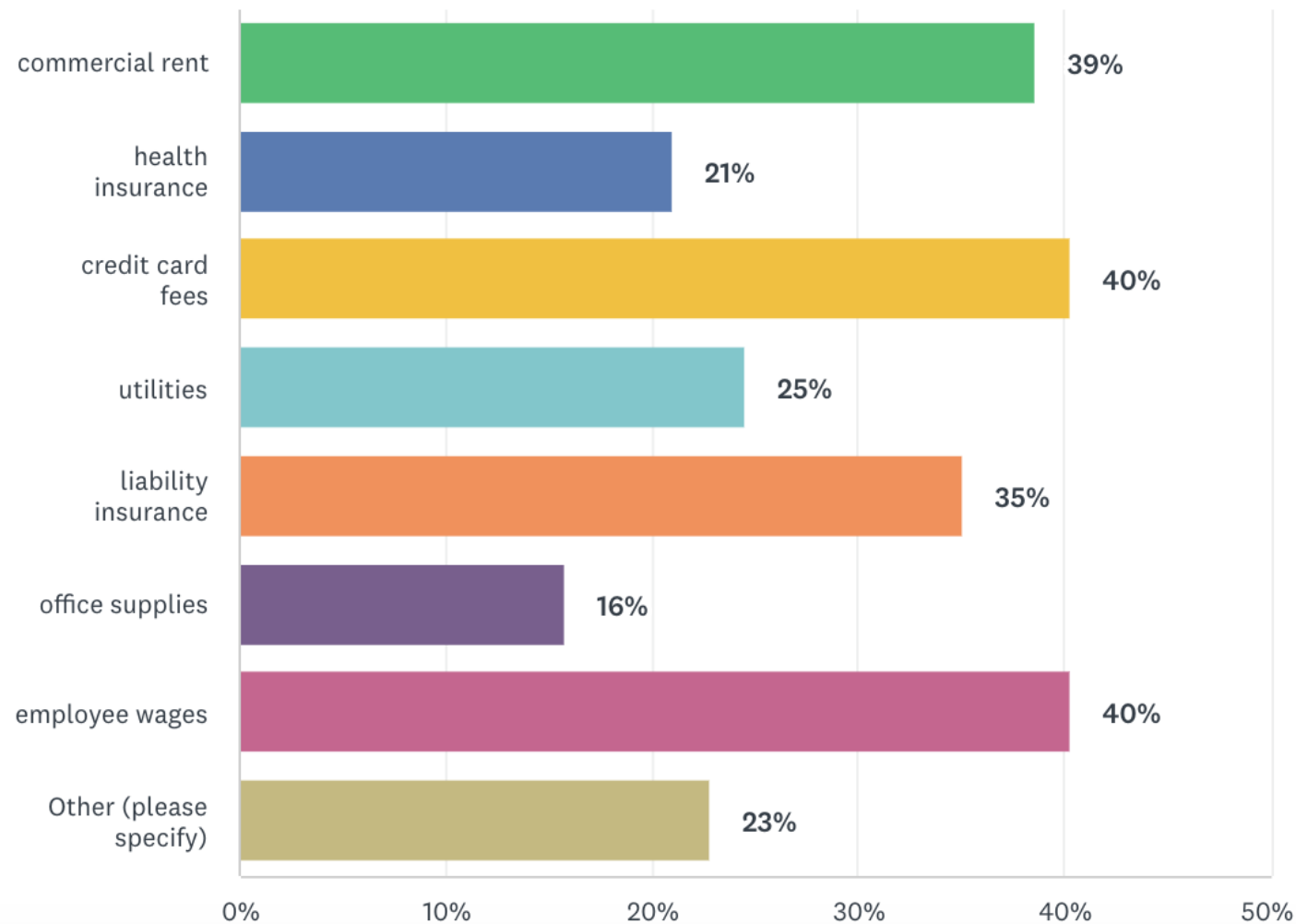
51% of those impacted by tariffs plan to raise their prices.

26% will delay growth.

Rising Costs

Select your top 3 pain points in terms of business expenses from the list below:

Answered: 57 Skipped: 4



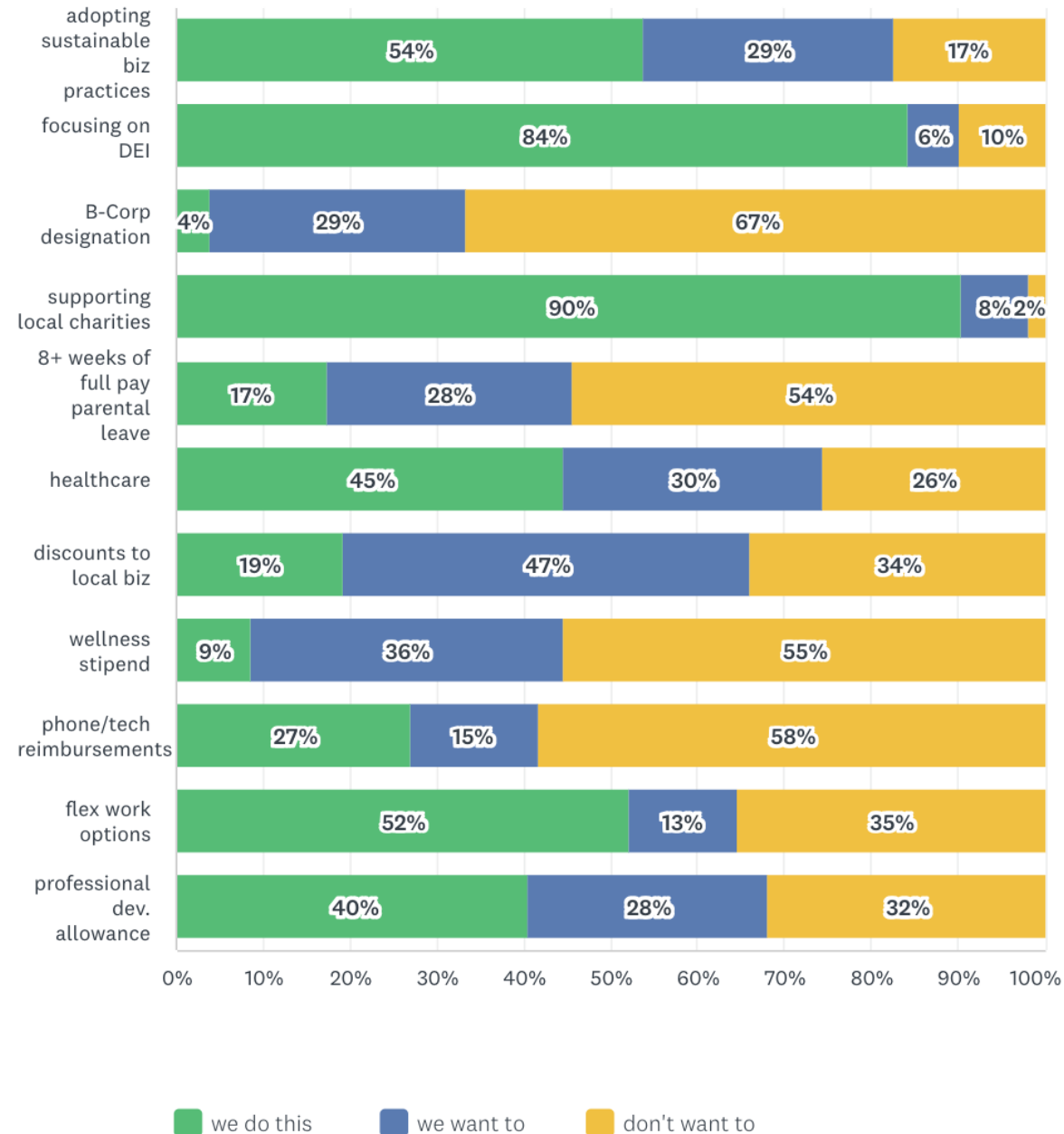
The top pain points, in terms of business expenses are credit card fees, employee wages and commercial rent.

Liability insurance costs are not far behind.

Triple Bottom Line

In which ways does your business think about being a "Force for Good?"

Answered: 52 Skipped: 9



84% of members currently integrate DEI into their operations in some capacity (up from 81% in 2024).

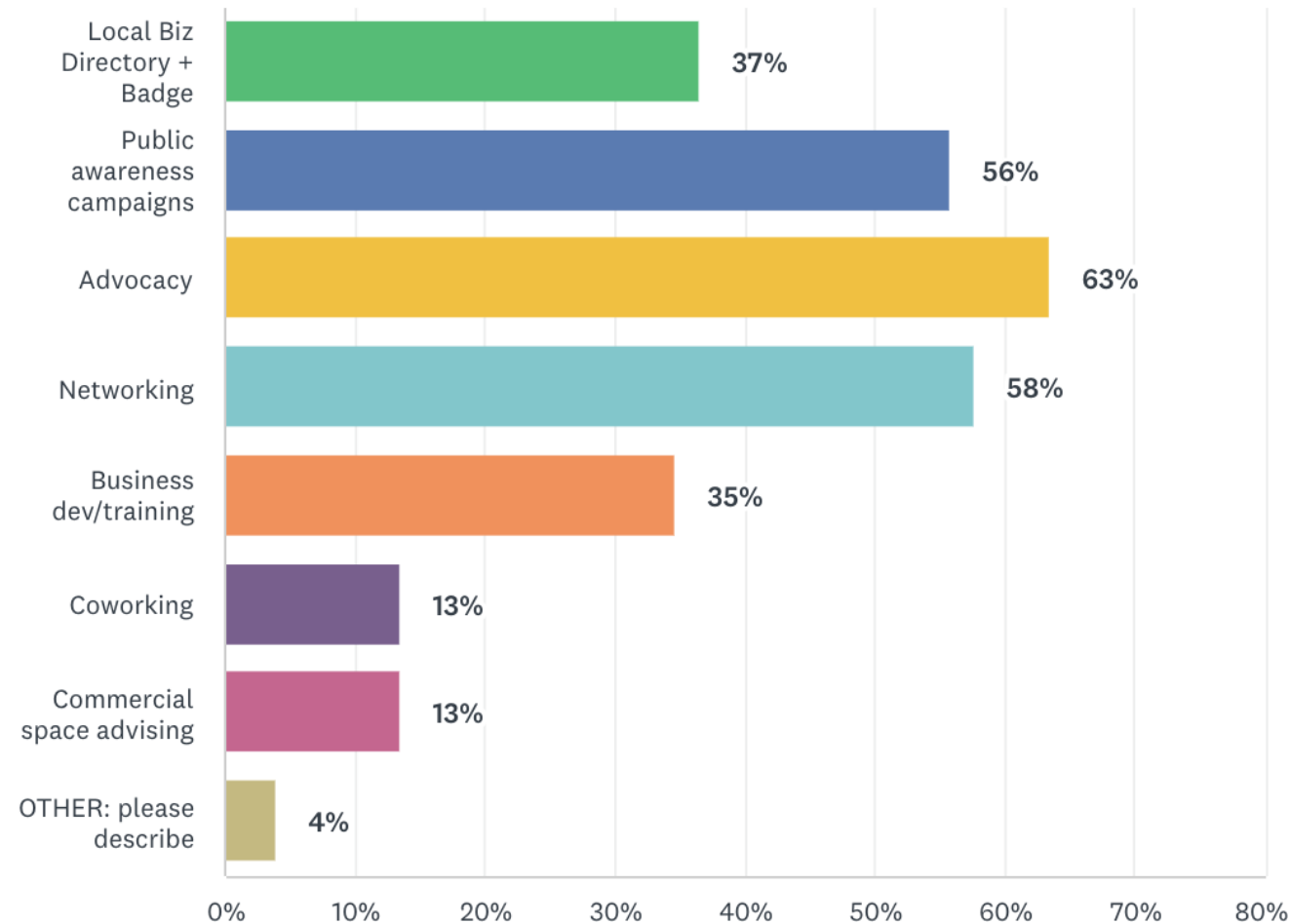
98% of members are or plan to be philanthropic and 83% of members focus on (or plan to) their impact on the environment.

More than a third of members expressed interest in implementing innovative benefits or providing a wellness stipend.

LLF's Services

What are the most important services LLF can provide your company going forward? (Please choose TOP THREE)

Answered: 52 Skipped: 9



The largest segment of respondents (63%) indicate that advocating for a level playing field is our most important role.

More than half also believe that connecting their business to other local businesses and our public awareness campaigns are also LLF's most valuable role.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT.

Lowcountry
LOCAL FIRST
— .ORG —



Lowcountry
LOCAL FIRST
— .ORG —