



Slapton Line Economic Impact Survey 2026

By Dartmouth & District Chamber of Commerce

Methodology & Sample



329 SURVEY INVITATIONS SENT
OUT VIA EMAIL
ALSO SHARED BY OTHER GROUPS



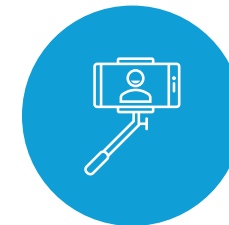
37 RESPONSES RECEIVED
C.11% RESPONSE RATE



35% KINGSBRIDGE
30% DARTMOUTH
24% SLAPTON AREA
11% TOTNES



GOOD MIX OF RETAIL /
HOSPITALITY / SERVICE



4/5 VISITOR FACING



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Key Headlines

- **Business Vulnerability**
 - The small enterprise nature of businesses in this area means that economy is vulnerable to shocks such as the loss of a key transport link
 - The A379 is not just an iconic stretch of road that attracts visitors, it is considered vitally important by businesses across all sectors: retail, hospitality, farming, service etc.
- **Financial Impact**
 - Whilst the financial impact has been hardest in the immediate area of the road, the shock waves have reached the local towns to a significant level
 - That impact goes beyond income to include the costs of doing business in the first place
 - The choice of suppliers has also diminished with over 1/3 of businesses reporting suppliers refuse to deliver to them because of the road closure
- **Productivity / Logistics (The Back Lane effect)**
 - It has become harder to do business in the area: 38% of businesses report losing staff due to the travel complications; the same percentage report losing contracts or job opportunities
 - Average travel times have increased by 39 minutes
 - Delivery routes or vehicles have had to change, and travel is considered significantly more problematic – all this is before the pressures of peak summer season traffic
- **Social Value**
 - Investment in the economy has been impacted, with 38% saying they have cancelled capital investment plans due to the situation with the road, In addition 28% of businesses are not confident they can sustain their business in the next 12 months
 - As a result many of those businesses are considering re-locating out of the South Hams area – a potential loss of 1 in 4 businesses surveyed
 - This sense of vulnerability is further evidenced in concerns over footfall, the stress of working in the area now, and the feeling of being cut off



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What can be done?

- This survey was prompted by Caroline Voaden's call for an understanding of the economic impact of the A379 closure, information that is a key part of the Devon County Council's bid to central government for funding – DCC now have this data
- Local authorities in the immediate area have also received this data, and are reviewing it in order to look at what they can do to push for a long-term solution
- The Chamber is in touch with all these groups, as well as the businesses and groups in the area of the Slapton Line, and will advocate on behalf of all businesses affected
- The Chamber is also submitting an article in By The Dart to share these results with the wider community in order to encourage support for businesses locally
- Our business sector is a key part of our community because communities derive considerable strength and resilience from a strong local economy. We owe it to ourselves as members of the community to look at how we can support each other, whilst pushing for decision makers to provide the much needed longer term plan

Business Profiling & Vulnerability

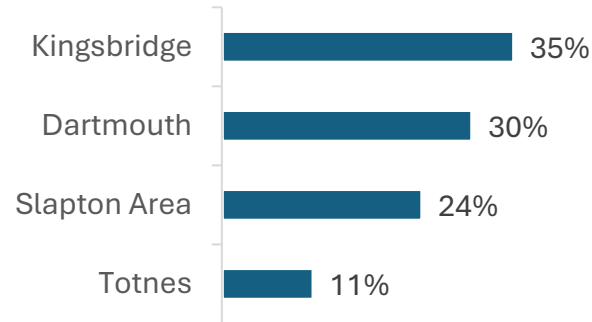




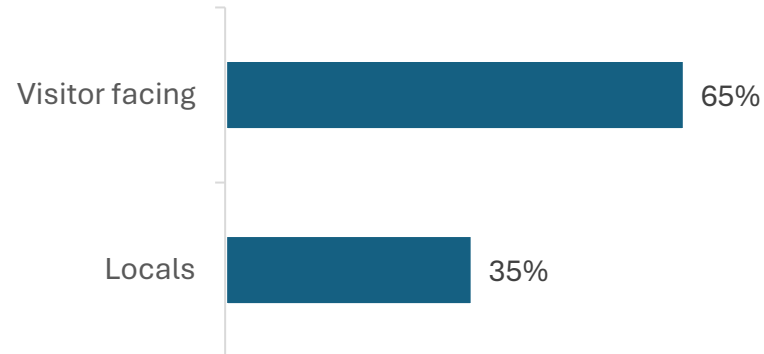
Business Details

The sample covers the key area impacted by the road closure, and a variety of different business sectors. The overall the sample is a fair representation of the business sector in this area, with a strong tourism base but not exclusively visitor facing.

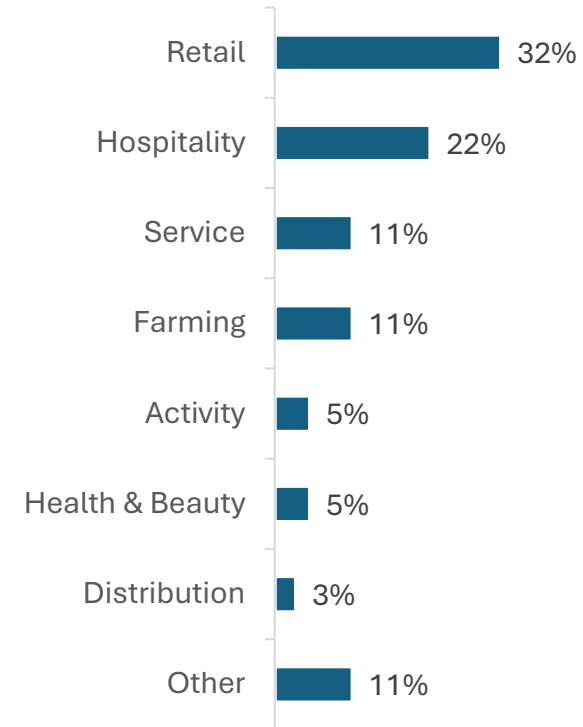
Location



Customer Base



Sector

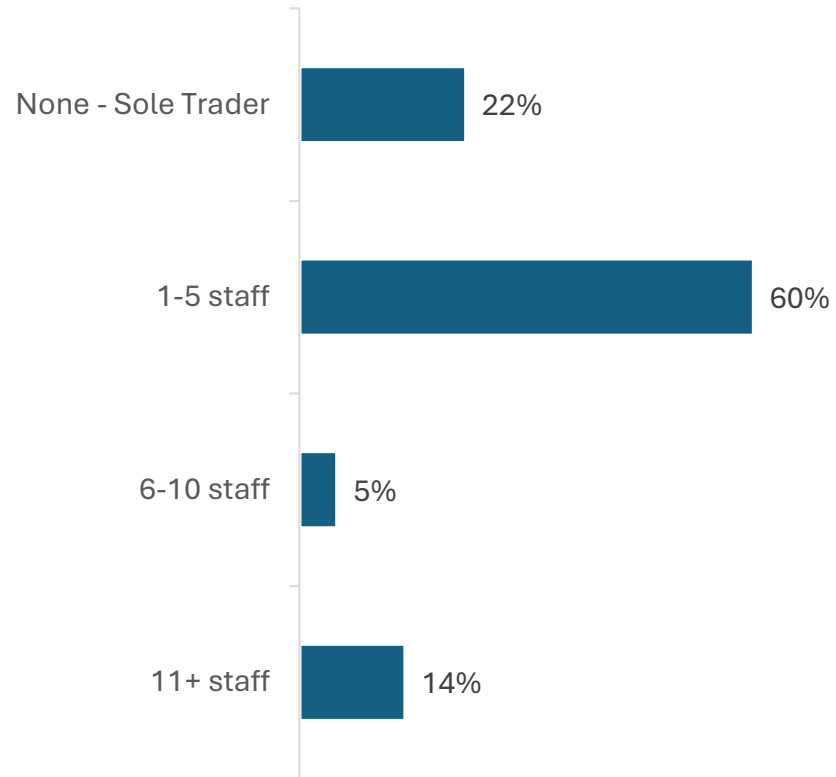




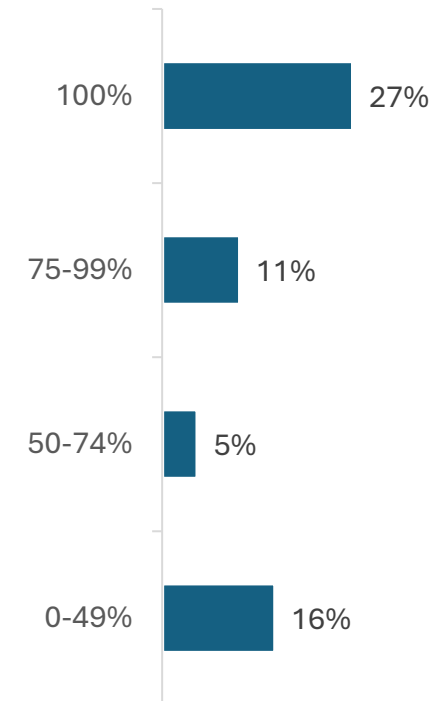
Employment

The small enterprise nature of business in this area is reflected in the sample, with a fair proportion employing staff living locally. Both of these features mean there is a considerable vulnerability to any impact on the local transport infrastructure – in terms of ease of business and loss of trade.

Number of Employees



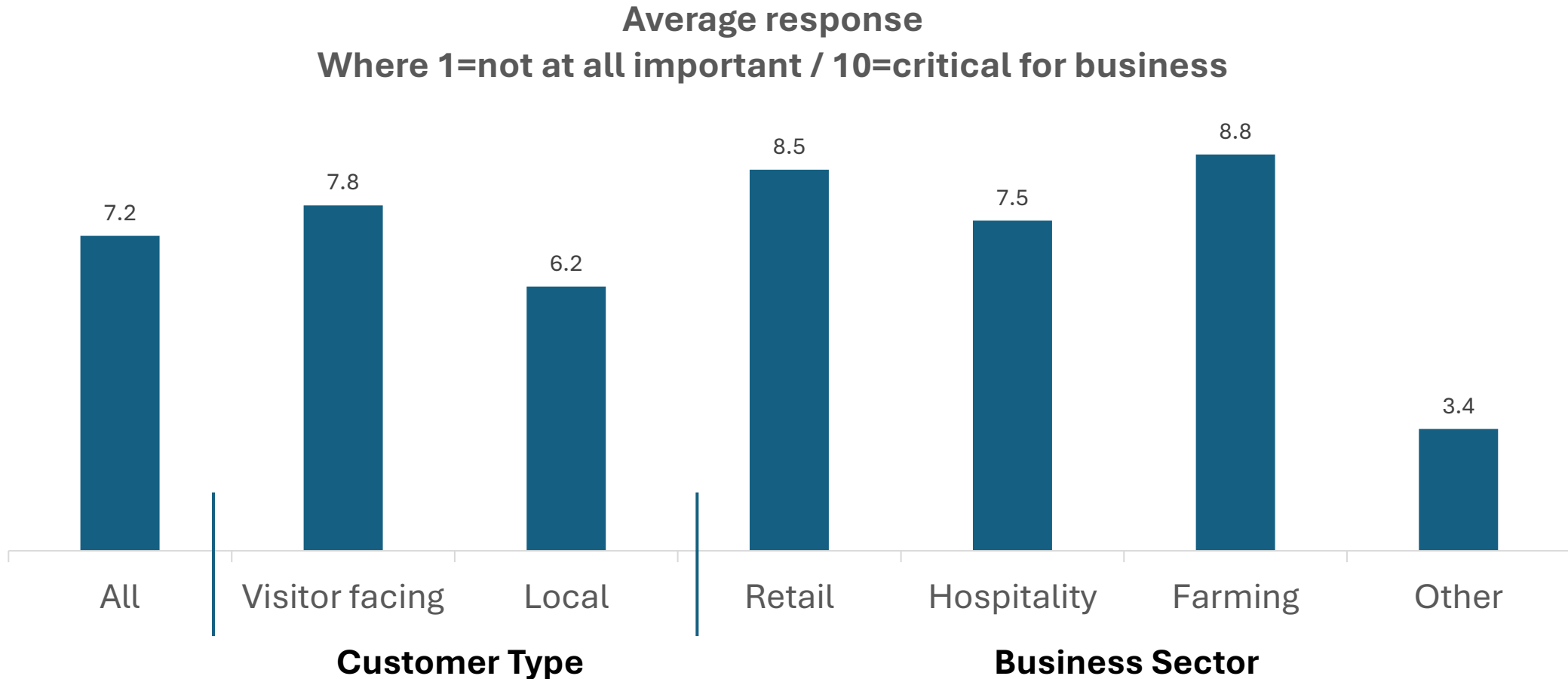
Share of Staff Living Within 10 miles





Dependency on A379 Slapton Line

Whilst perceived dependency on the A379 does differ quite considerably by sector, the overall picture is of an economic community likely to be significantly impacted. The fact that both retail and farming record higher dependency figures demonstrates that this is not simply about footfall, but also about the logistics of day-to-day business in this rural area.



Financial Impact





Revenue Loss

With so much impacting on business at the moment (cost of living / fuel prices / rates etc) it is hard for businesses to isolate one single issue, but the majority of businesses have reported a negative impact – regardless of location. Not surprisingly the most marked response is from the villages immediately around the Slapton Line

Villages around Slapton Line

"Down 58% £10,000 in the last quarter" Retail

"100% on the side of the business that runs on the other side of A379" Activity

"None yet but a dramatic drop will be seen by end of the year" Hospitality

"20-25%" Hospitality

"32%" Hospitality

"50%" Supplier to Torcross businesses

"57% reduction" Activity

Dartmouth

"It is difficult to tell but there has been a drop off in trade due to reduced visitor numbers." Retail

"5%" Health & Fitness

"25%" Activity

"30%" Activity

"30%" Retail

"75%" Health & Fitness

Kingsbridge

"Service work -30%. Would be worse but pushing collection and delivery of service work and new machinery" Service

"-32% in total business turnover, with shop down by over 50%
We are actively pushing our online business to take some of the shortfall. Footfall estimated to have failed by at least 50%"
Retail

"Down by 20%" Retail



Operational Costs (increase in mileage, fuel etc)

Operational costs have also increased for a fair proportion of businesses, creating a squeeze on margins. Again this is most likely in the villages immediately around the Slapton Line

Villages around Slapton Line

"Mileage doubled now 60 miles a day so double the cost" Retail

"100% - 30 miles to 60 per day"

"10%" Hospitality

"30%" Hospitality

"50%" Hospitality

"Fuel has doubled" Supplier to Torcross businesses

Dartmouth

"For us, the main issue is fuel for our staff and time taken to get to work. There are occasional issues with deliveries, adding on c. £15 per month in additional fuel" Farm

"one team member travels from West Charleton so route to work has changed." Health & Fitness

"We needed to pay for a parking space as the public transport options were negatively impacted for a member of staff" Retail

Kingsbridge

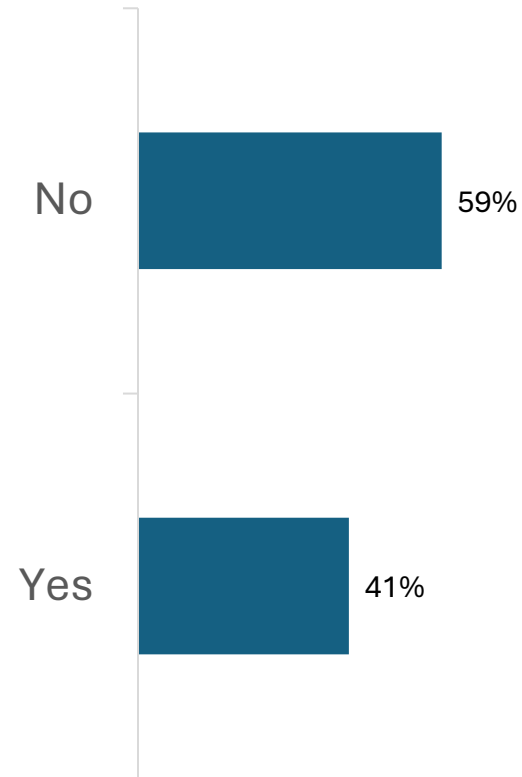
"100%" Service



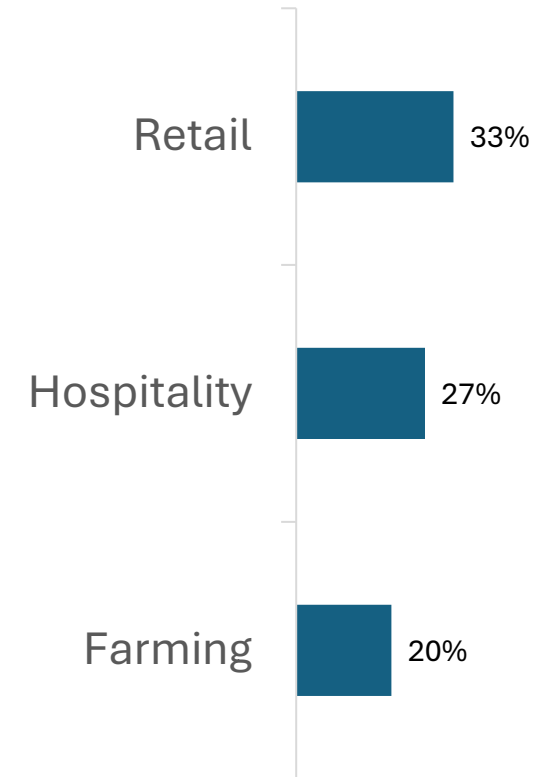
Supply Chain

Over 1/3 of businesses have had suppliers refuse to deliver since the closure of the road, which is a considerable supply chain problem for such a rural area where choice of suppliers is limited. The fact this has been observed across a number of sectors is also a concern. This highlights the significant challenge to the local economy that the 'Lanes' alternative route creates.

Suppliers Refusing to Deliver



All Saying Yes





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Cancellations (Hospitality)

It is also clear that the road closure is having an impact on plans to stay in the area – which given the holiday let / caravan parks close to the Line is another real concern if there is no proper solution to the road closure.

Villages around Slapton Line

“3 so far”

“None cancelled, but 32% fewer bookings vs 2025”

“20%”

Dartmouth

"Don't know - people probably have just not booked because of it. It has certainly stopped myself and my staff visiting businesses past Slapton."

Kingsbridge

“10”

“2”

Productivity / Logistics (The Back Lane Effect)

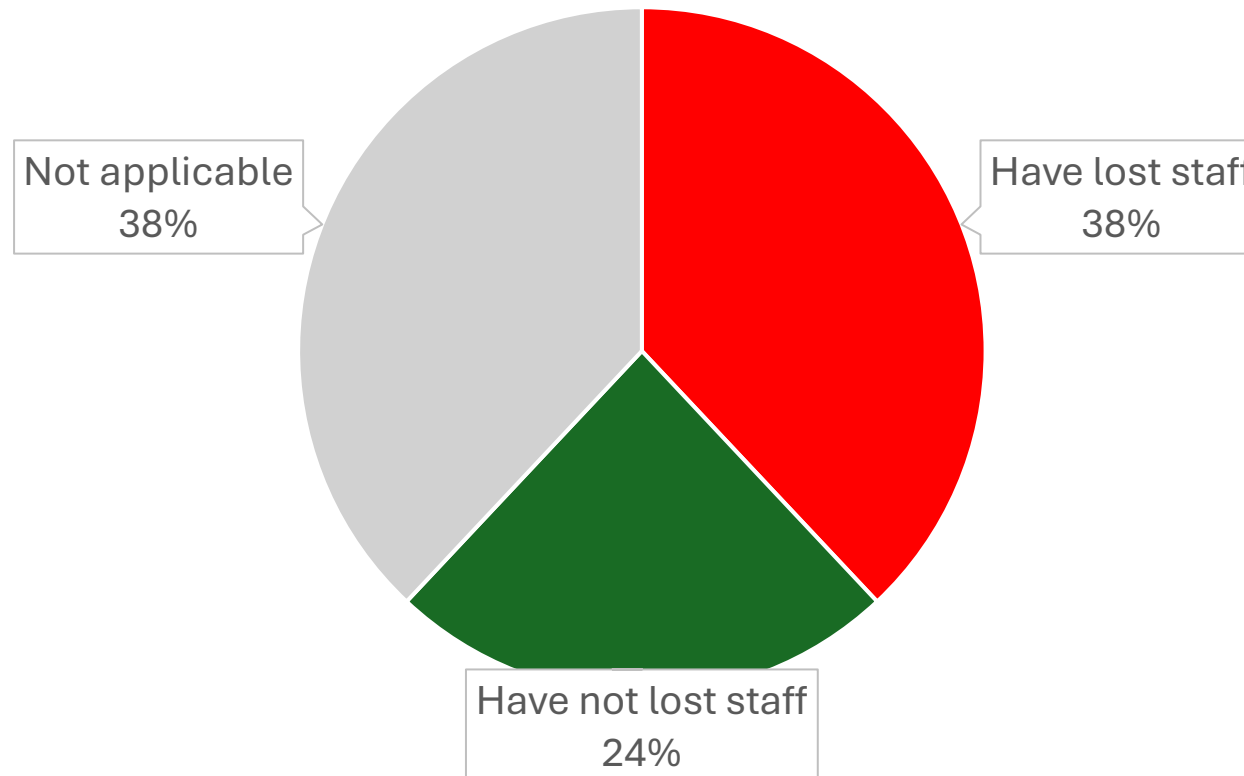




Staff Retention

At a point in the season when more staff are needed to deal with the summer influx of visitors, it is extremely worrying to note that over 1/3 of local businesses have lost staff since the road closure.

Staff Retention Issues





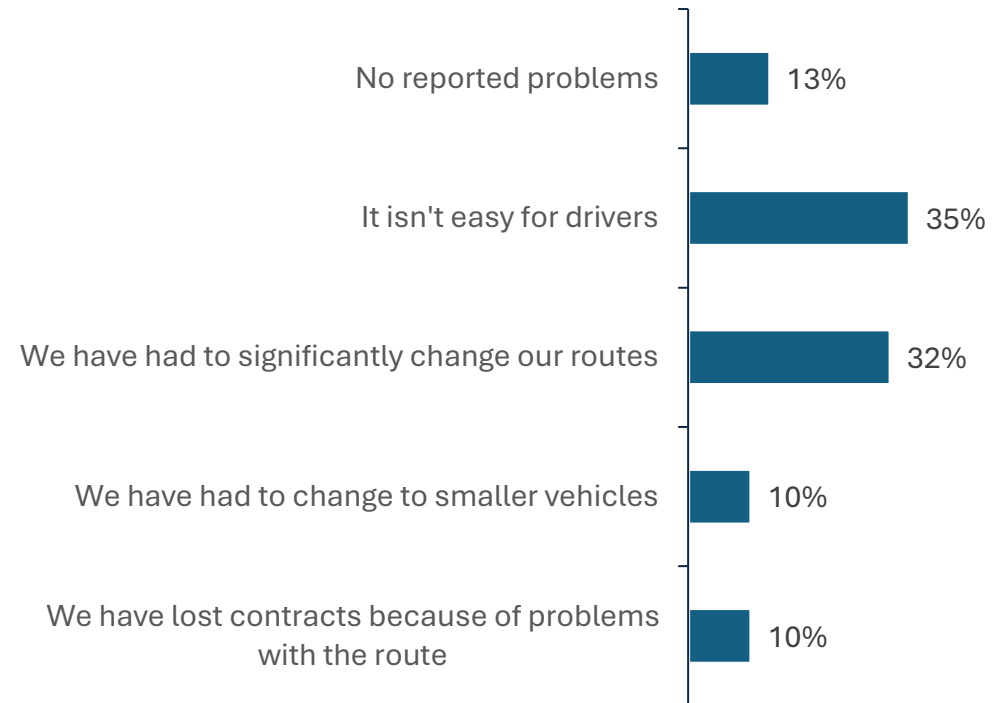
Efficiency

Business efficiency is another area in which the economic health of the area is being challenged, with significantly longer travel times, and problems with commercial vehicle suitability for the 'Lanes' alternative.

Average increase in
travel time

39 minutes

Commercial Vehicle Suitability

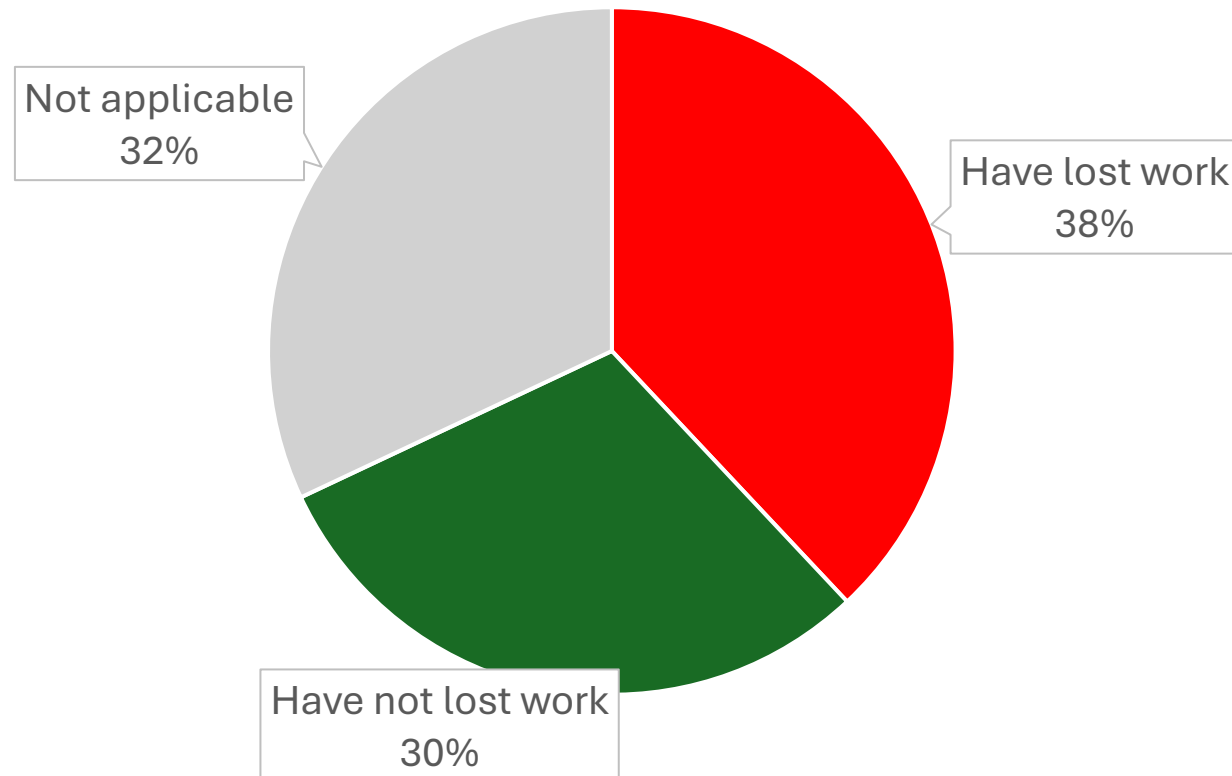




Missed Opportunities

Furthermore, nearly 40% of businesses have lost work opportunities due to the closure of the A379. This can clearly make a significant difference to the viability of businesses in the area.

Whether Work Lost Because of Logistics



Social Value

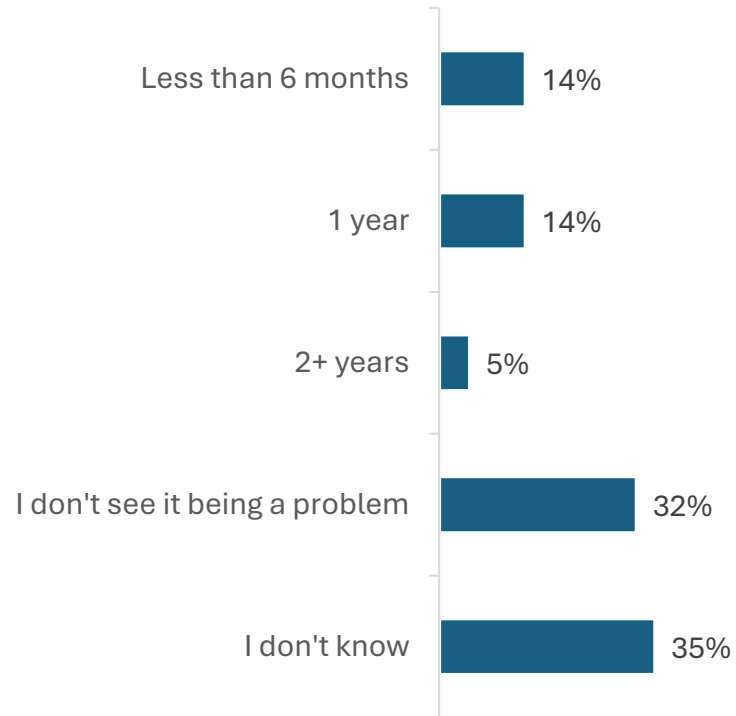




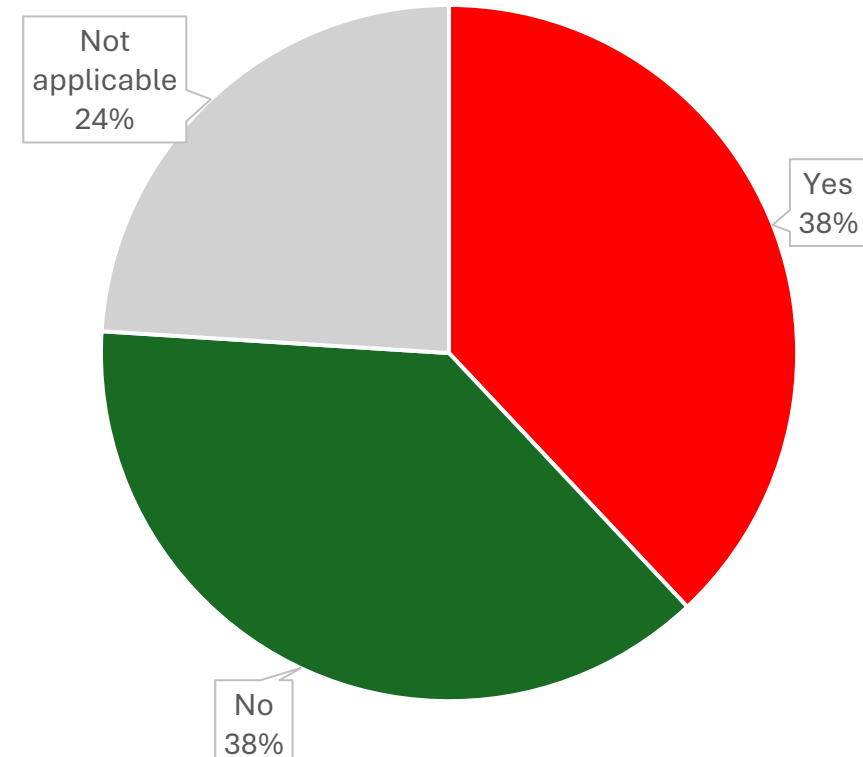
Confidence in the Future

Business confidence is key to the economic and social stability of this area, and so it is of real concern to note 1 in 4 businesses aren't sure they can stay solvent over the next 12 months, and 2 in 5 have cancelled potential investment because of the challenges the road closure represents to business.

How Long Business Can Stay Solvent Without a Permanent Repair to A379



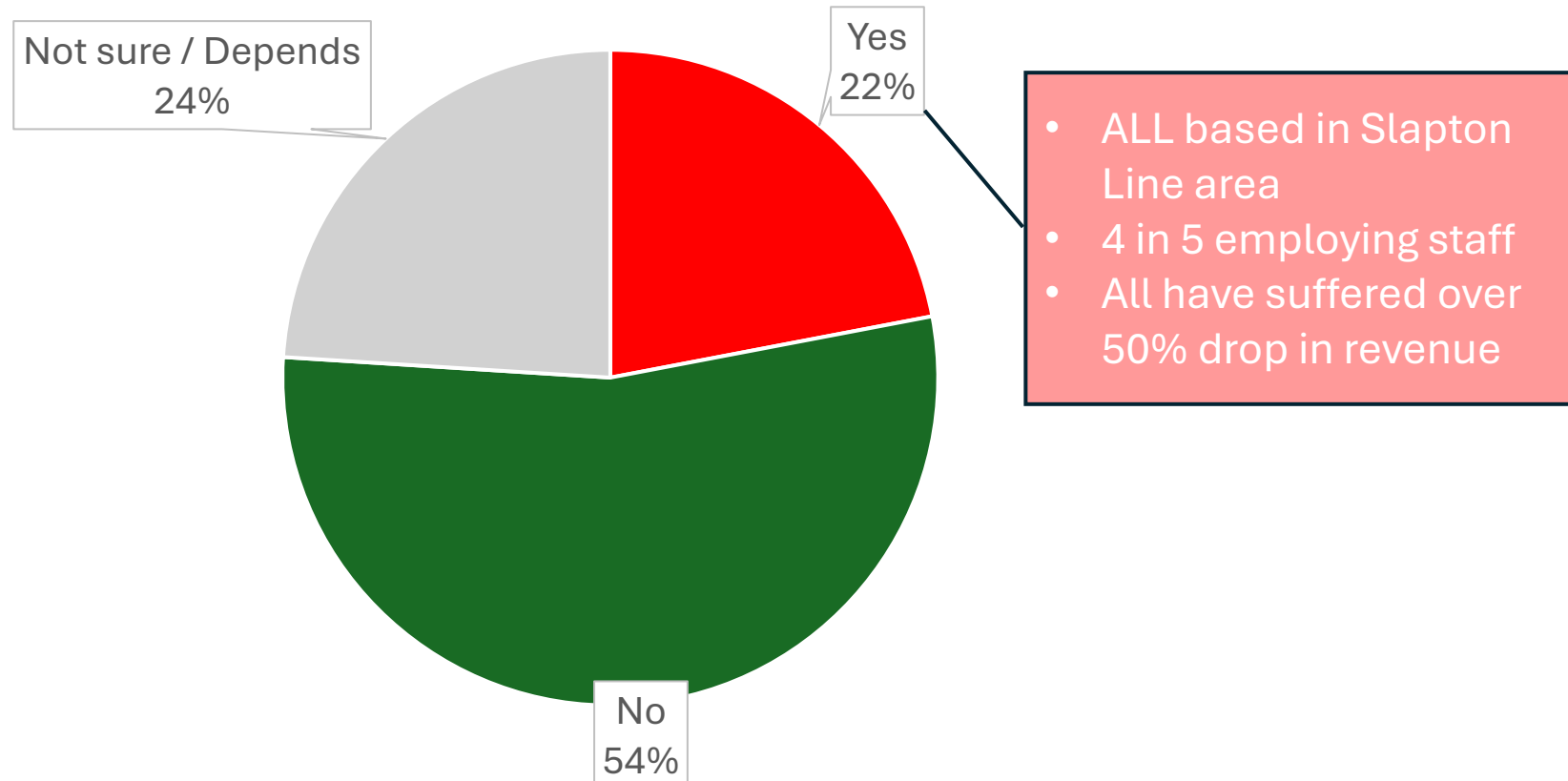
Whether Have Cancelled Capital Expenditure Because of Road



Relocation Considerations

Whilst in some respects it is encouraging that 1 in 2 businesses would not consider relocating. The 1 in 5 who would consider relocating are **all** those who are concerned they may not be solvent in the next 12 months.

Whether Would Consider Relocating if A379 NOT Repaired





Wellbeing

Business owners and their teams are a key part of the community in rural areas, so it is important to understand and acknowledge how vulnerable they now feel because of the loss of a key part of the infrastructure – in terms of the road itself as well as public transport and appeal to visitors

Statements Describing Impact of Road Closure on You and Your Staff

