

2019 Vernon Business Walks Survey

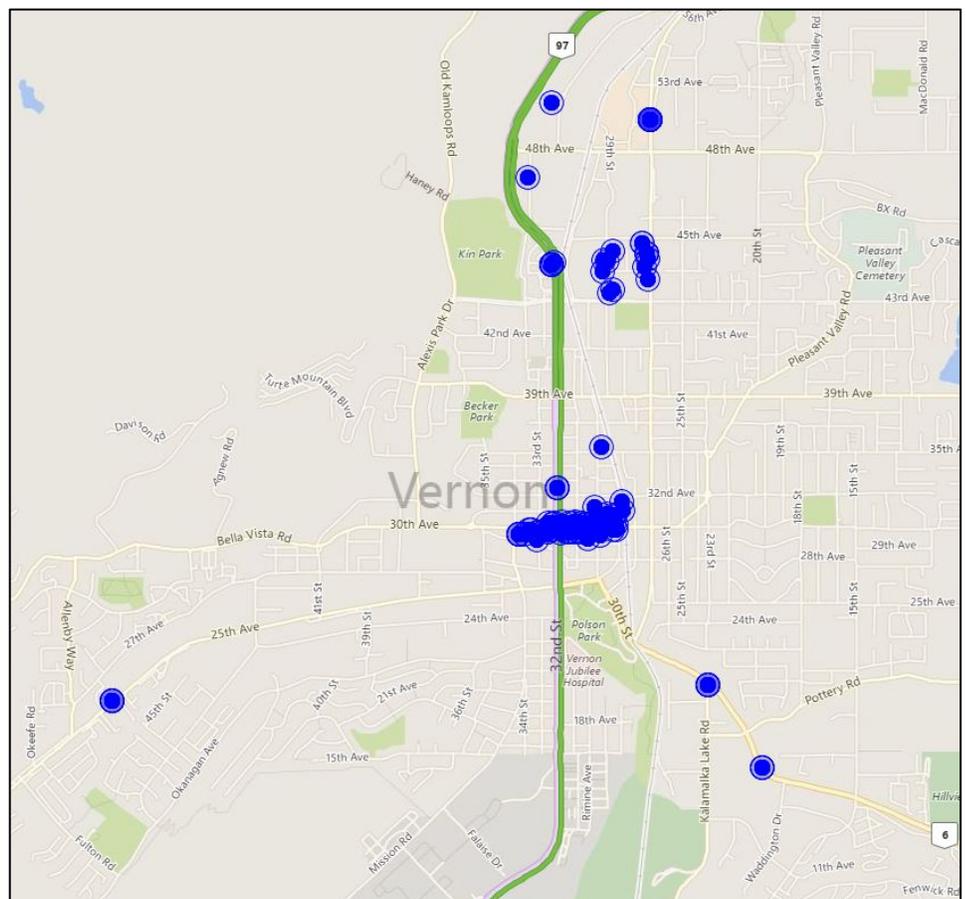
General Results

Within a two hour period, a total of 30 volunteers split into 15 teams and met with 164 businesses across Vernon. The volunteers included representatives from Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures North Okanagan, Downtown Vernon Association, Okanagan College, City of Vernon and other professionals.

Most of the locations within the community were the same as in the previous surveys in order to provide comparable year over year data.

Businesses that were interviewed were located in the following areas:

- Downtown – 30th Avenue, 31st Avenue, 32nd Avenue and 29th Street
- Fruit Union Plaza and Highway 6
- The Shops at Polson Park and Kalamalka Lake Road
- Vernon Square
- Village Green Centre
- Anderson Way
- 4300-4420 27th Street
- 4300-4607 29th Street
- Okanagan Landing Plaza and 25th Avenue



Map 1: Business Walks Survey Location Map

Survey Results

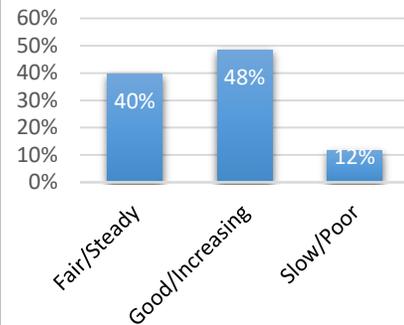
88% OF THE BUSINESSES IN THE 2019 BUSINESS WALKS SURVEY ARE EITHER STEADY OR INCREASING

THE 164 BUSINESSES INTERVIEWED EMPLOY A TOTAL OF 1,783 PEOPLE

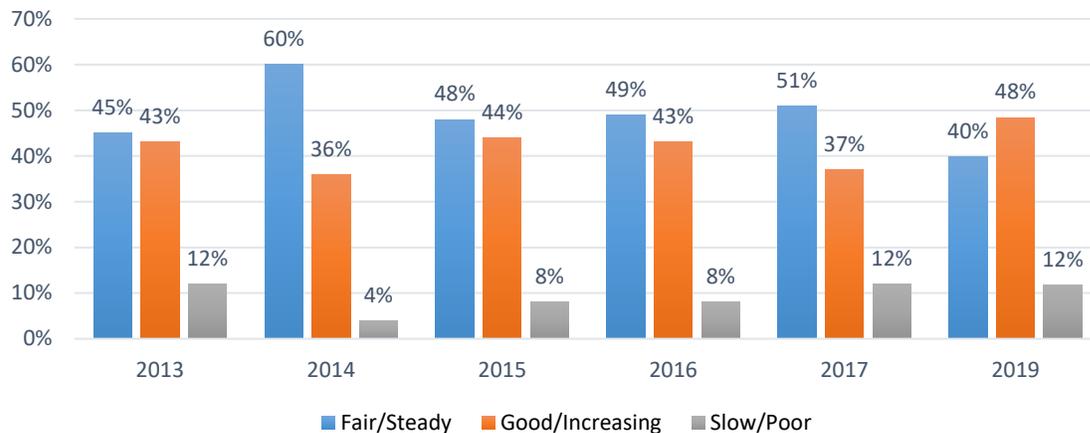
Question 1: Please rate the current state of your business?

In 2019, a total of 48% of businesses surveyed responded that business was **good/increasing**, slightly lower than the 2017 survey (51%). In 2018, a new method was explored for completion of the business walk and data collection was not possible as a result. In 2019 and 2017 88% of the businesses surveyed were either **fair and steady** or **good and increasing** compared to 92% in 2016 and 2015, 96% in 2014 and 88% in 2013. In 2019 and 2017 12% of respondents rated their business state as **slow/poor**, which is similar to 2013 and higher than 2015 and 2016 (8%), and 2014 (4%).

Graph 1a: 2019 Business Rating



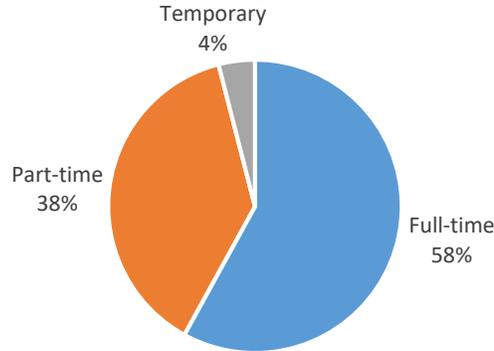
Graph 1b: Rating of state of business over time



Question 2: What is the average number of employees including yourself?

The 164 businesses interviewed employ a total of 1,783 people. 58% are in a full-time position and 42% are part time. The number of employees in each business ranged from 1 to 100 and the average number of employees per business was 11. 78% of the businesses interviewed employ 10 people or less.

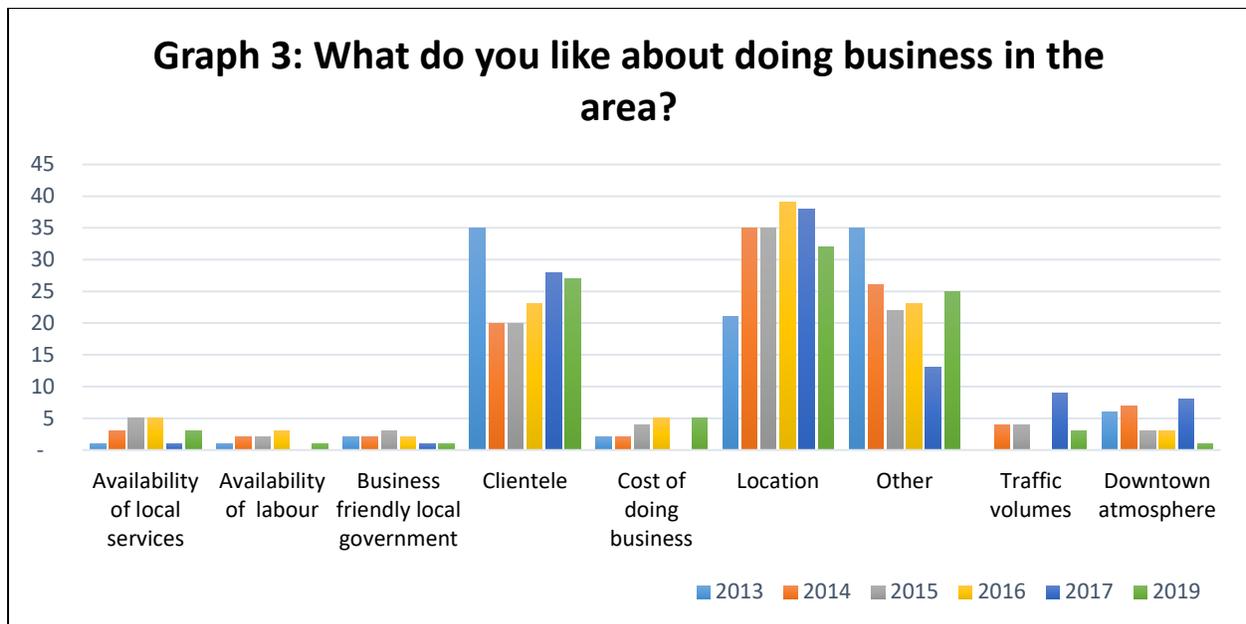
Graph 2: Full-Time and Part-Time Employment



Question 3: What do you like about doing business in the area?

The third question was asked to gain a better understanding of why businesses chose a particular area of the community, or Vernon in general, as a place to do business. In 2019, 32% of businesses highlighted that **location** was the key factor, while 27% highlighted **clientele** as the main factor. 25% of respondents choose **other** factors, such as availability of free parking, size of community, sense of place, affordability and the city demographic.

Graph 3: What do you like about doing business in the area?



Question 4: What are the biggest challenges facing your business?

Question 4 provides insight into the main challenges facing local businesses. **Finding employees** (35%), **other** (28%), and **lack of customers** (11%) were among the most common challenges in 2019. In 2017 Other challenges (41%), finding employees (18%) and parking availability (18%) were among the most common challenges.

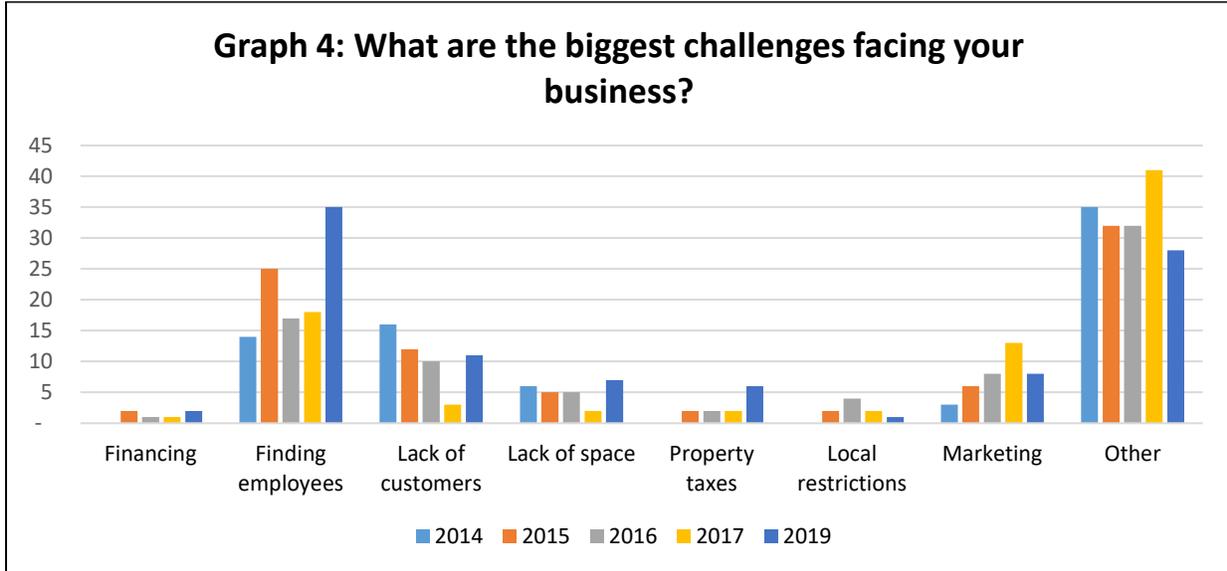


Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the concerns reported under **Other** in 2019 compared to the 2016 and 2017 survey. In 2019, 35% of the “Other” responses stated that **community safety and homelessness** was the main challenge compare to 27% in 2017 and 43% in 2016. The challenge of an **Aging community** increased from 5% in 2017 to 18% this year, and **road access and parking issues** was also cited frequently in this response.

Table 1: Other challenges local businesses are facing	% of “Other” Responses		
	2016	2017	2019
Community safety and homelessness	43%	27%	35%
Aging community	4%	5%	18%
Road Access and parking issues	22%	27%	18%
Competition	22%	16%	13%
Affordability	6%	16%	6%
Bylaw enforcement and City development process	-	14%	8%
Seasonal market	2%	11%	2%
Mall’s high vacancy and low traffic	-	8%	-
Lack of space	-	3%	-

Question 5: What can be done to help your business thrive?

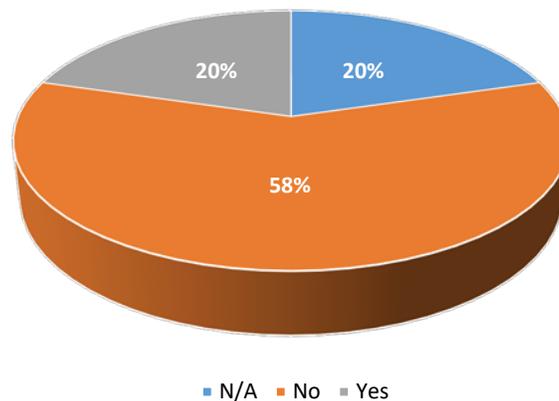
The responses for this question were the most diverse, ranging in comments about parking challenges, Bylaw enforcement, street safety, homelessness, crime prevention, marketing and advertising, City services and taxes, street maintenance, Downtown revitalization and community programs.

Table 2: What can be done to help your business thrive?	
Help with marketing and advertising	27%
Address safety concerns, homelessness and crime prevention	24%
Address parking issues (lack of supply, price, over-enforcement etc.) and improve road access	19%
Downtown revitalization	3%
Increased interaction with the Downtown Vernon Association	3%
Investment in private property (i.e. the mall)	1%
All other	23%

Question 6: Do you plan to retire or sell your business in the next 5 years?

Question 6 was added to the 2017 Business Walks Survey in order to gain insight into the future changes in the local business community. 20% of the businesses interviewed plan to retire or sell the business within the next 5 years. This is similar to the 2017 results for this question.

Graph 5: Do you plan to retire or sell your business in the next 5 years?

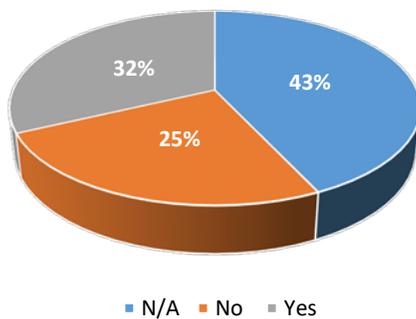


Question 7: Do you have a succession plan in place?

Question 7 was also added to the 2017 Business walks survey. In 2019, 32% of the businesses interviewed have a succession plan in place. 68% of the interviewed businesses stated a succession plan was not applicable. This is an increase from 2017 results that indicated 16% had a succession plan in place and 52% said no or not applicable.



Graph 6: Do you have a succession plan in place?



Question 8: What specific information would you like to have access to locally?

The final question was geared toward finding out what resources are required locally to better assist the business community. The most common assistance required was **hiring / human resources** (21%). 21% requested access to **marketing partnerships**.

21% of respondents requested **other** types of information, such as available incentives, local events and information on marketing, social media opportunities and campaigns.



Walkers' Question

Should this company be revisited to provide 1:1 assistance?

One of the primary objectives of the Business Walks is to find out if there are immediate concerns that businesses have that may need assistance from the City of Vernon or other business support organizations. This year 14% of businesses requested a follow up, a decrease from the 18% of the businesses which required some form of assistance in 2017. Staff have begun the follow up process and will have completed all of the follow up by the end of the year, based on the determined urgency level.

Graph 6: Should this company be revisited to provide 1:1 assistance?

