

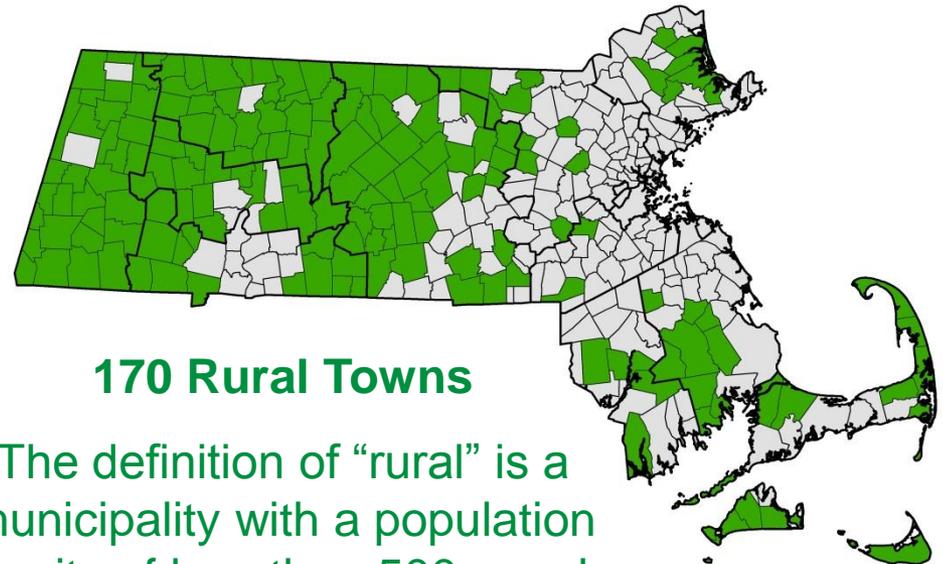
SURVEY OF THE RURAL POLICY ADVISORY COMMISSION

Results of a survey conducted by the Rural Policy Advisory Commission (RAPC) with support from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments.

September 8, 2017

Rural Town Survey

- This year, the RAPC is focused on the following areas:
 - Sewer/Water and Title 5
 - Rural Service Delivery
 - Small Business Support and Job Creation
- A survey was distributed to gain a better understanding of how these focus areas impact the quality of life and economic vitality in rural, Massachusetts.

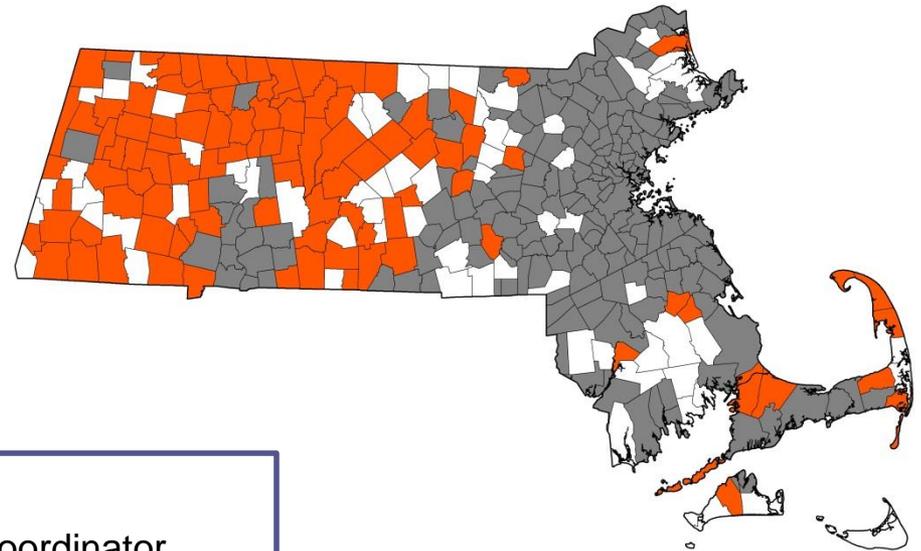


170 Rural Towns

The definition of "rural" is a municipality with a population density of less than 500 people per sq. mile.

Rural Town Survey

- The survey was released on July 17, 2017 and forwarded to Rural Towns by Regional Planning Agencies.
- By August 30, 2017, data was submitted for 101 Rural Towns.
- Survey response rate of 59%.
- Note: Some Rural Towns had more than one respondent. For these survey findings, only one response per town was included.

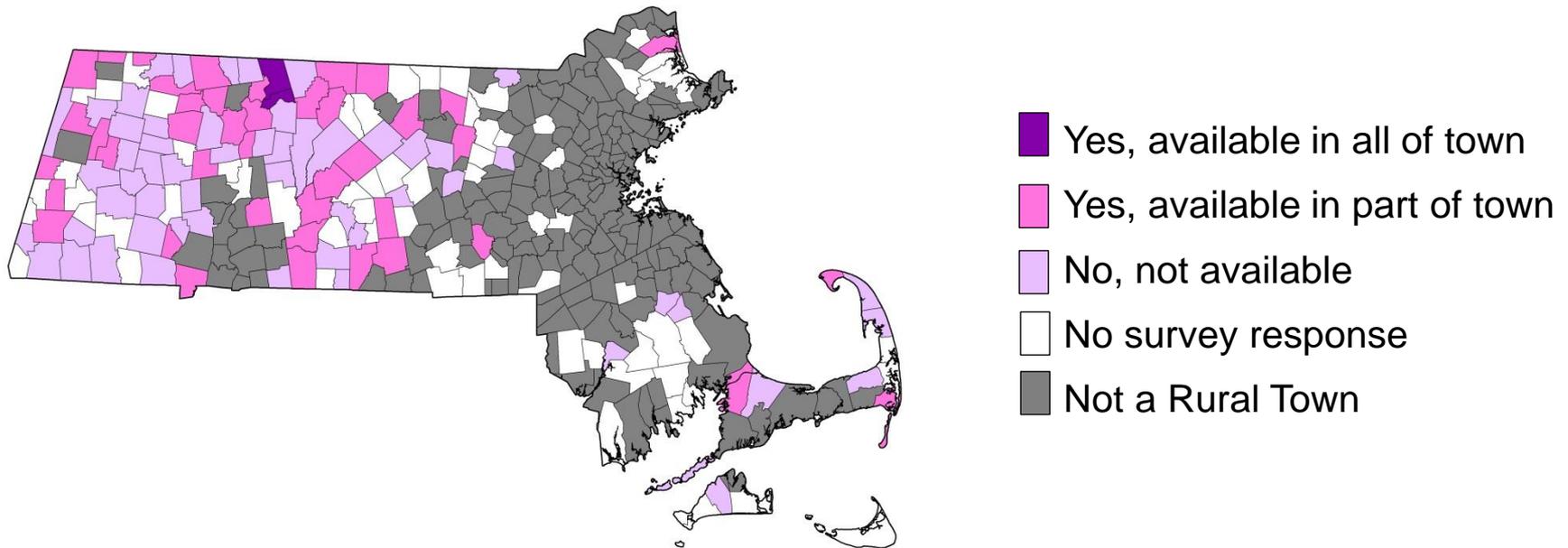


Title of Respondents:

- 53% Town Manager/Town Administrator/Town Coordinator
- 16% Administrative Assistant/Executive Assistant
- 8% Board of Selectmen
- 7% Other (such as Planning Board, Board of Health, Planner)
- 16% No response

- Survey response
- No survey response
- Not a Rural Town

Availability of Public Sewer Service



Question

Does your town have public sewer in all or part of the town?

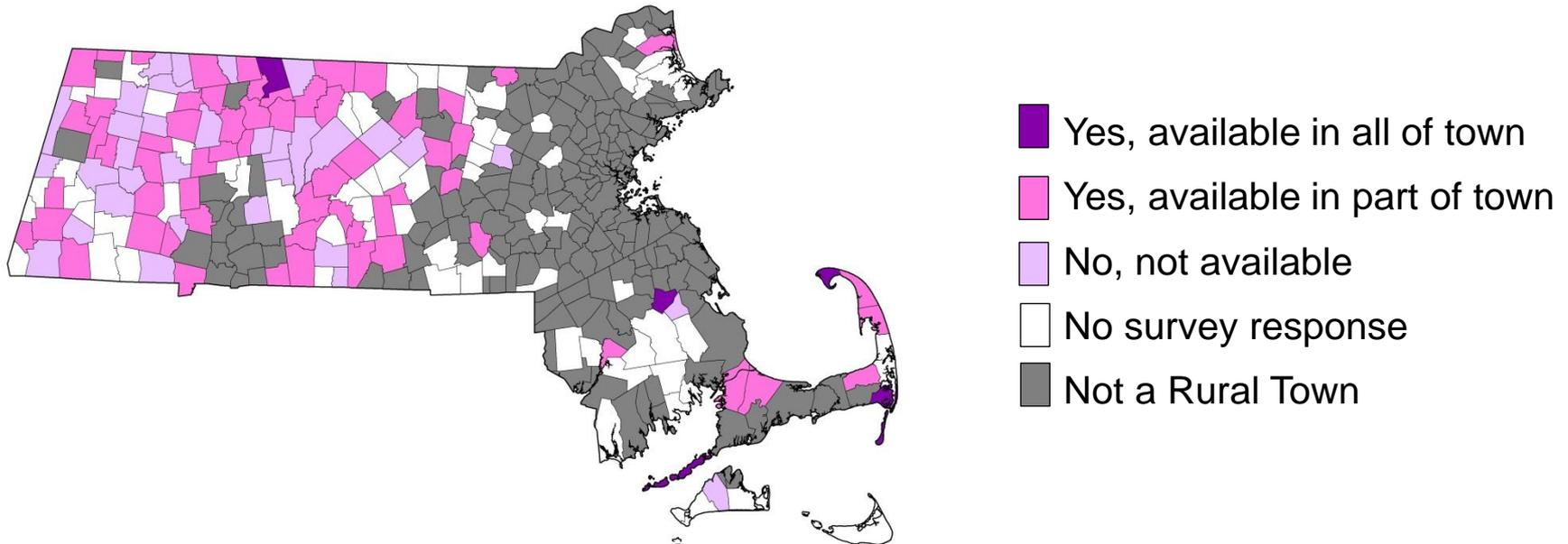
(select one)

Responses*

2% = Yes, available in all of town
 42% = Yes, available in part of town
 56% = No, not available

* Of the 101 responses submitted

Availability of Public Water Service



Question

Does your town have public water in all or part of the town?

(select one)

Responses*

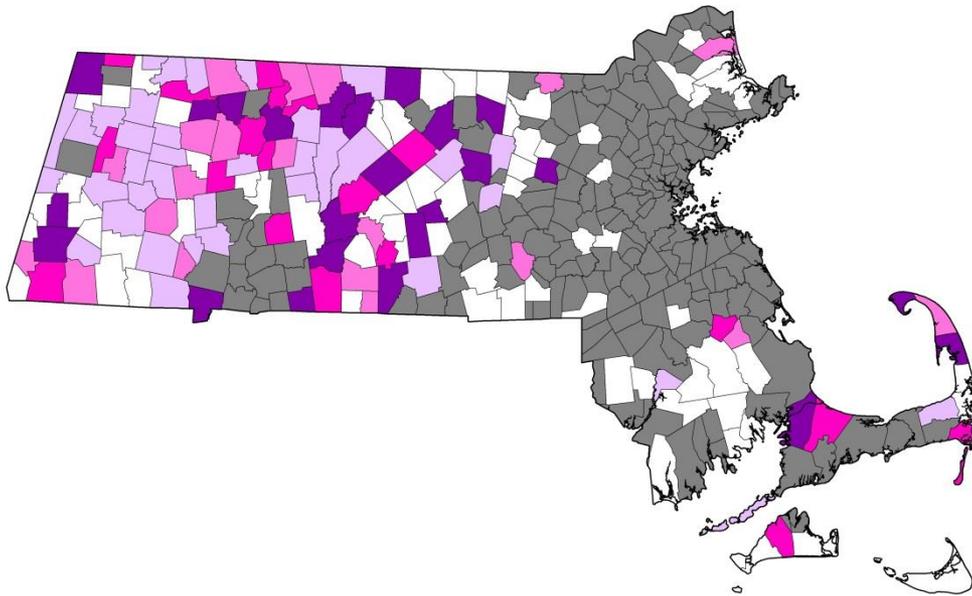
5% = Yes, available in all of town

62% = Yes, available in part of town

33% = No, not available

* Of the 100 responses submitted

Presence of a Commercial Center



Responses*

- Yes, one or more commercial centers with 10 or more businesses [**24%**]
- Yes, a commercial center with 5-10 businesses [**19%**]
- Yes, a commercial center with less than 5 businesses [**20%**]
- No commercial center to speak of [**37%**]
- No survey response
- Not a Rural Town

Question

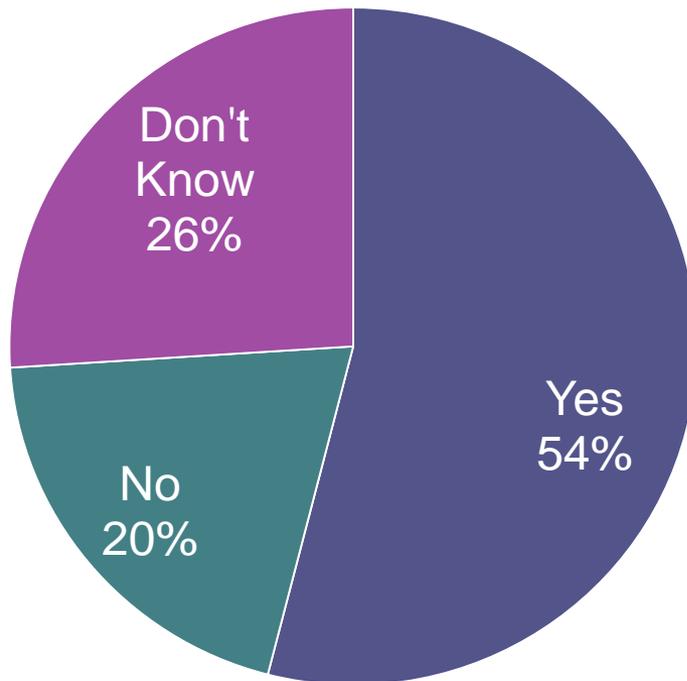
Does your town have a downtown, village center or area of concentrated development that acts as a commercial center?

(select one)

* Of the 100 responses submitted

Public Sewer/Water Expansion Impact

Responses*



Question

Would expansion or creation of public sewer and water systems aid in economic development and housing production?

(select one)

Has your town's BOH enacted local health regulations that exceed MassDEP Title 5 Regulations? (select one)

17% Yes

48% No

34% Don't Know

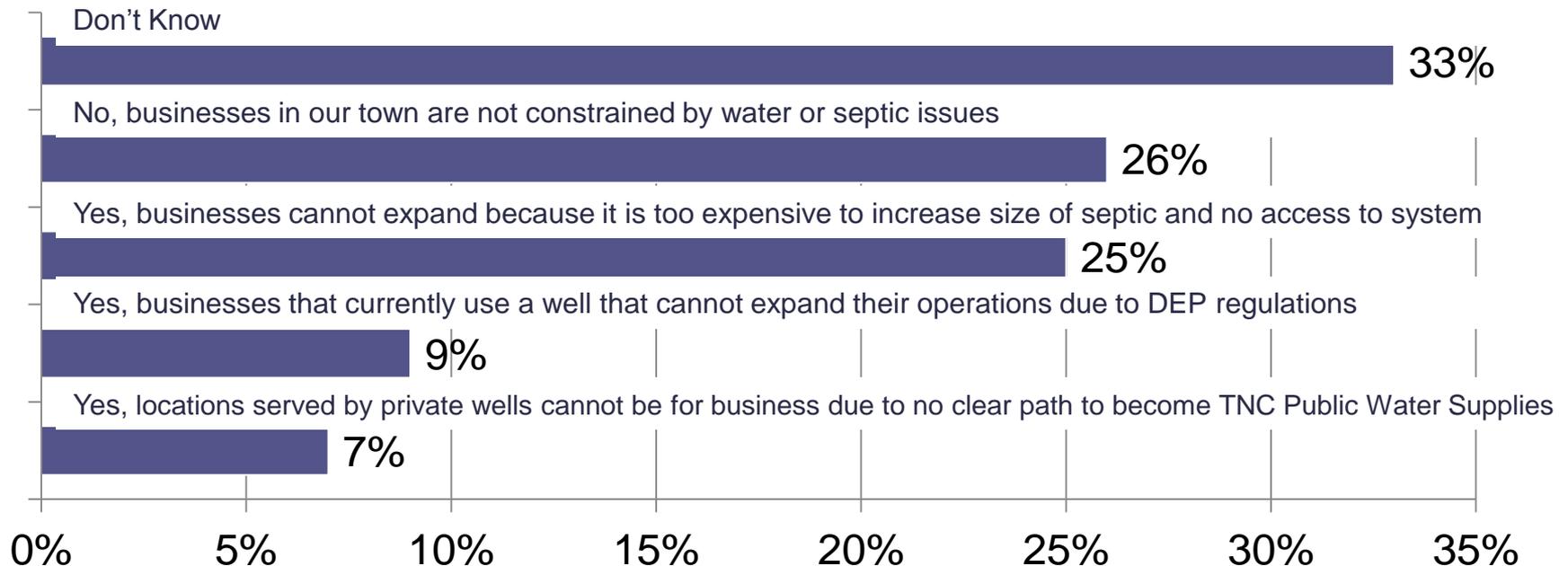
* Of the 99 responses submitted

Expansion Limited by Public Sewer/Water

Question

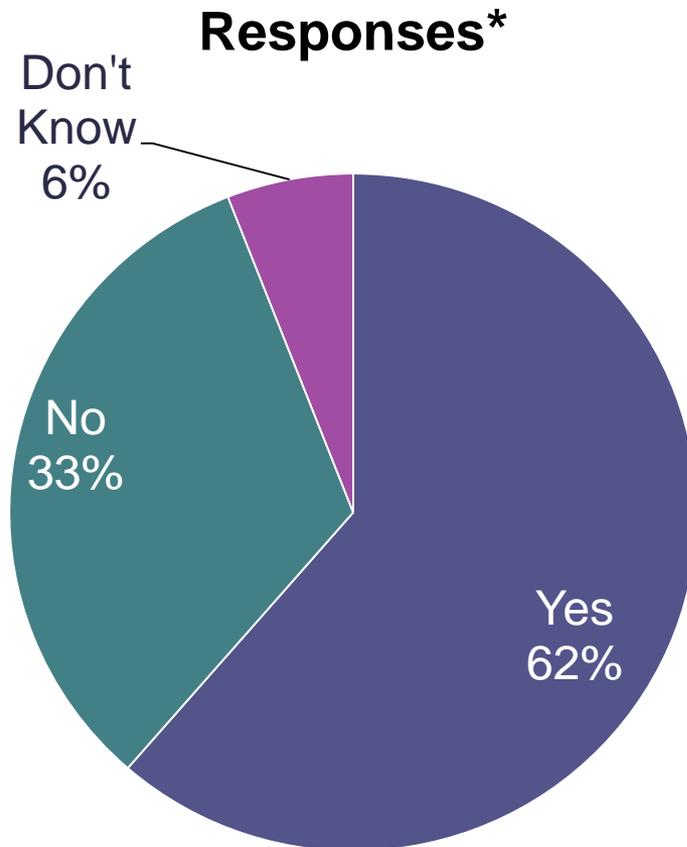
Do you have businesses in your town that cannot expand because they are limited by well or septic issues? (select one)

Responses*



* Of the 97 responses submitted

Local Government Resources & Capacity



Question

Does your municipal government struggle to provide adequate services to your residents and to comply with state regulations and reporting?
(select one)

* Of the 89 responses submitted

Local Government Resources & Capacity

Question

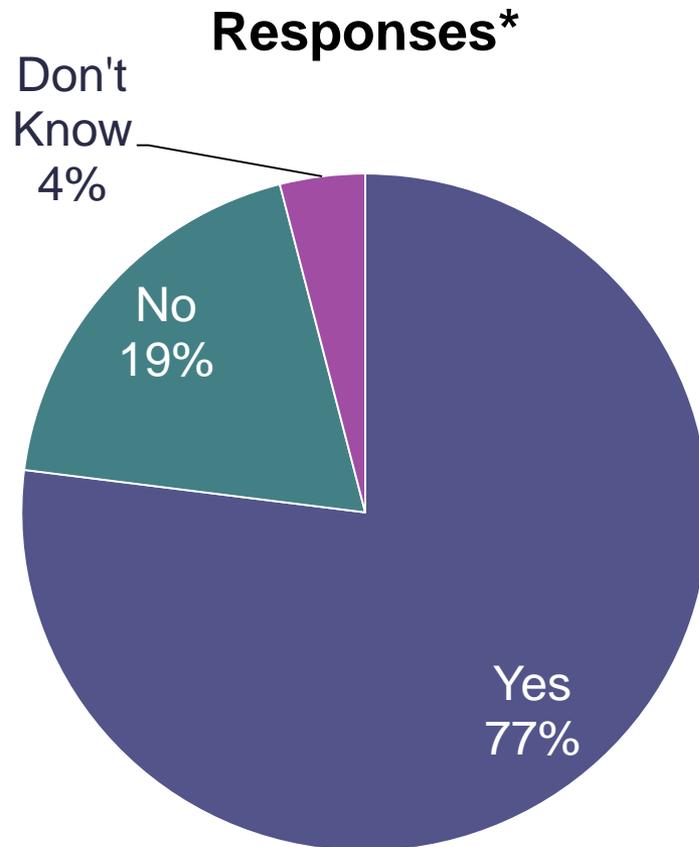
How many full-time equivalents (FTEs) does your town employ, not including school personnel and not including volunteers?

Responses* by Town Population	Pop . <1,000	Pop. 1,000- 1,999	Pop. 2,000- 3,999	Pop. 4,000- 9,999	Pop. 10,000 and over
# of Submitted Responses	17	24	17	15	8
Median FTE	5	11	25	52	76.5
Low number of FTEs	2 [Monroe, Montgomery, Savoy]	3.8 [Chester-field]	6.5 [Hinsdale]	15 [Newbury]	57.8 [Lunenburg]
High number of FTEs	12 [Heath]	28 [Becket]	122 [Province-town]	85 [Sterling]	227 [Bourne]

Includes FTEs for:
Town Hall, Police, Fire, DPW, Library, and Other (such as Senior Center/COA, Parks, Planning, Transfer Station, Building Maintenance or Custodial)

* Of the 89 responses submitted

Shared Municipal Services



Question

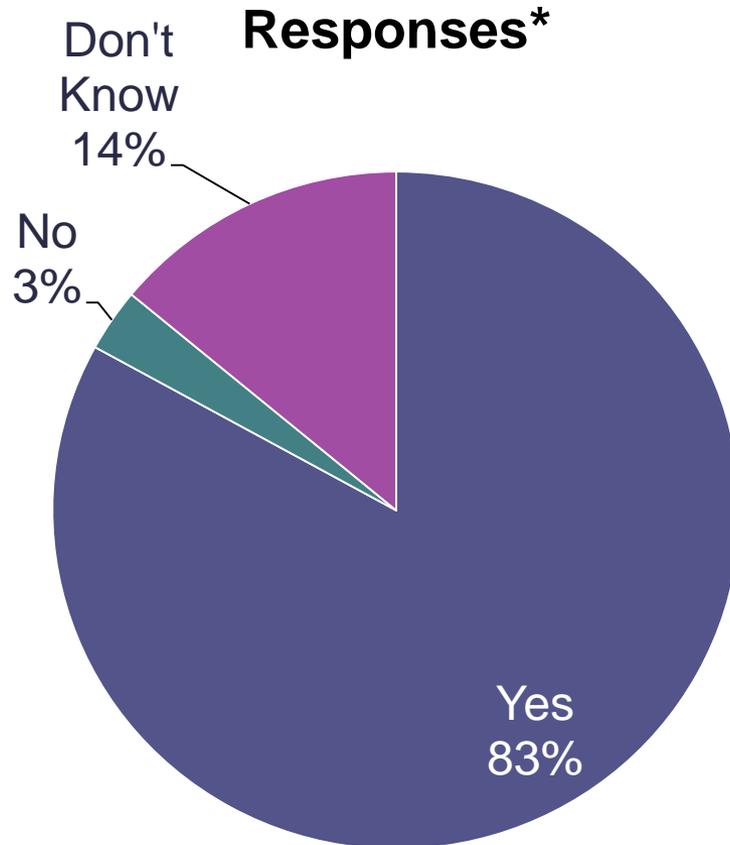
Does your town share services with another town or receive municipal operation services from a regional organization?
(select one)

Top shared municipal services:

- Veteran's Services
- Public Health Agent
- Inspection Services
- Animal Control
- Collective Purchasing/Procurement
- Ambulance/EMS

* Of the 90 responses submitted

Potential Shared Municipal Services



Question

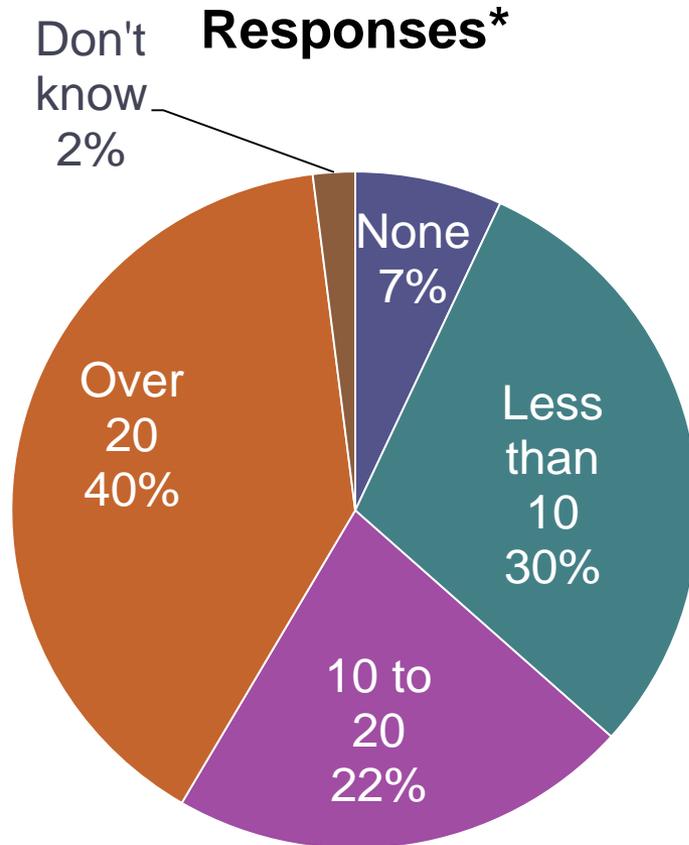
Are there municipal services that you could envision your town sharing with another town or procuring from a regional organization? (select one)

Top services identified:

- Police
- Fire
- Accountant
- DPW
- Human Resources
- Inspection Services

* Of the 88 responses submitted

Current Business Community – Commercial



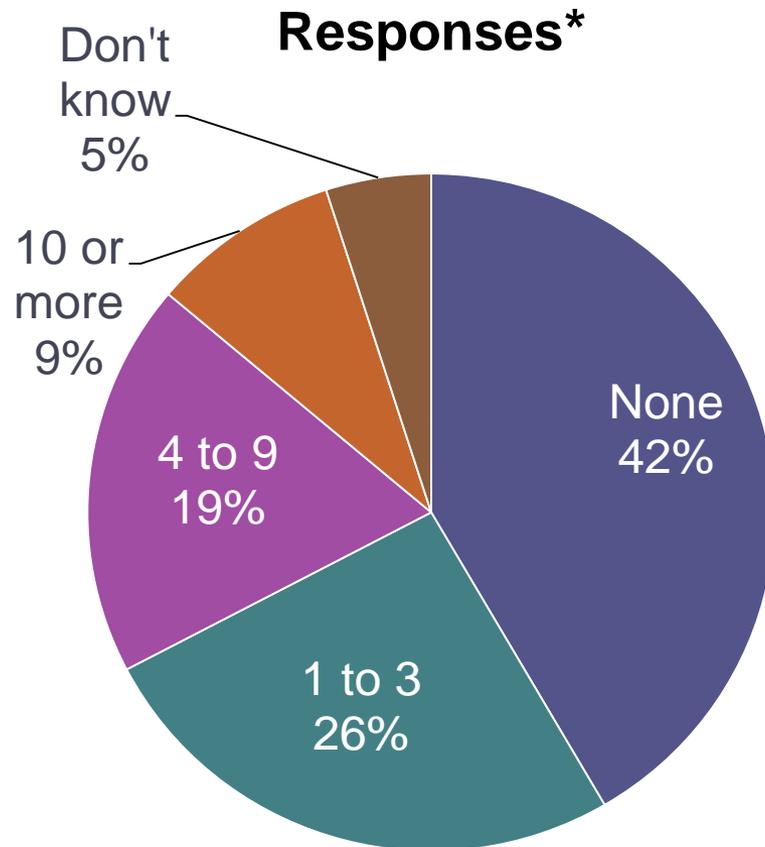
Question

How many commercial/retail/service establishments are in your town? Including businesses open only seasonally, and excluding home-based businesses.

(select one)

* Of the 88 responses submitted

Current Business Community - Industrial



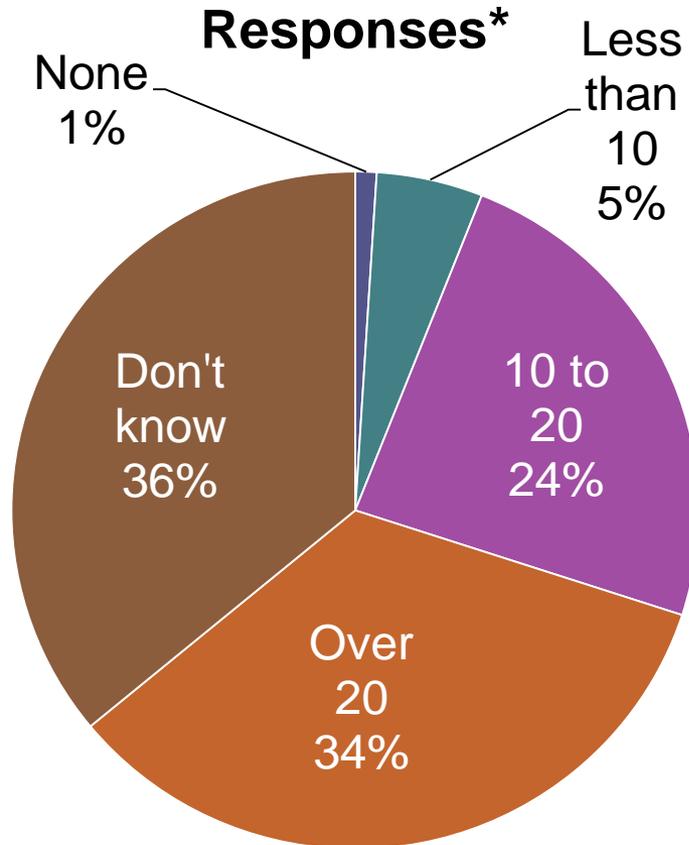
Question

How many industrial/factory/manufacturing facilities are in your town?

(select one)

* Of the 86 responses submitted

Current Business Community – Home-Based



Question

Any idea of how many at-home businesses are in your town?
(select one)

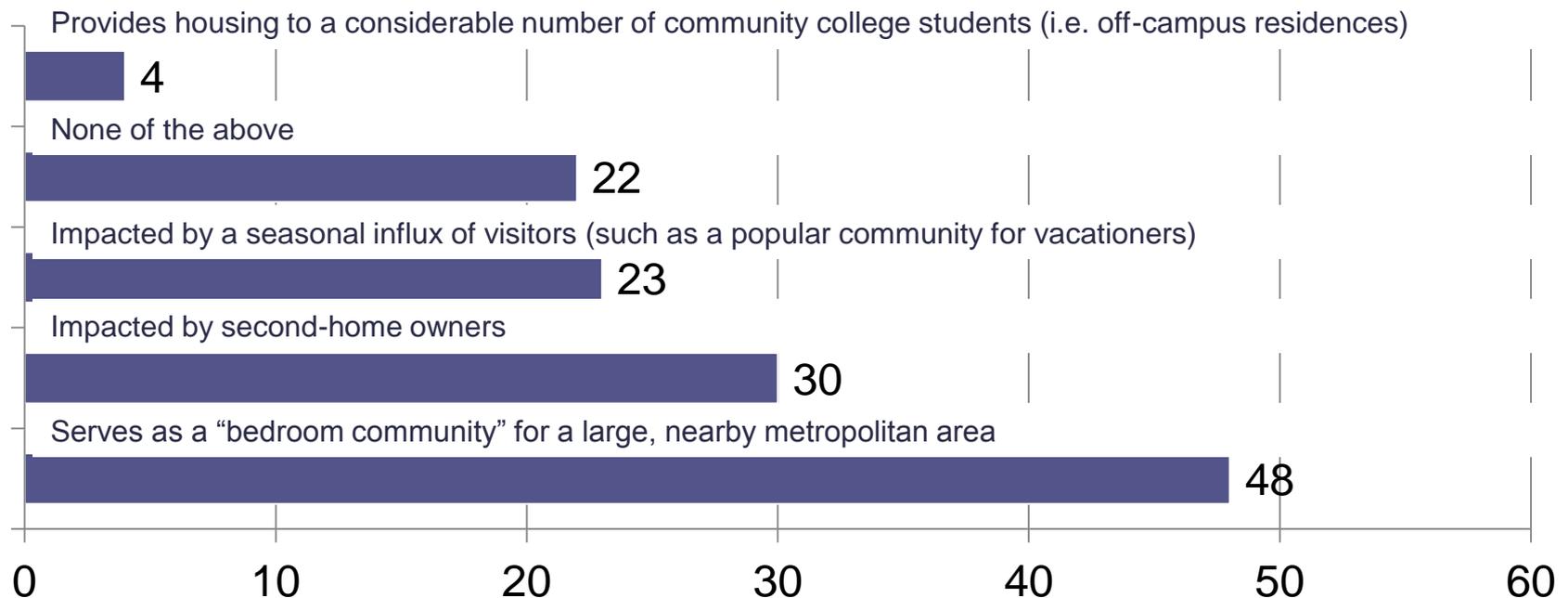
* Of the 88 responses submitted

Economic Influence on the Community

Question

Would you characterize the economy of your community as being significantly influenced by any of the following? (check all that apply)

Responses*



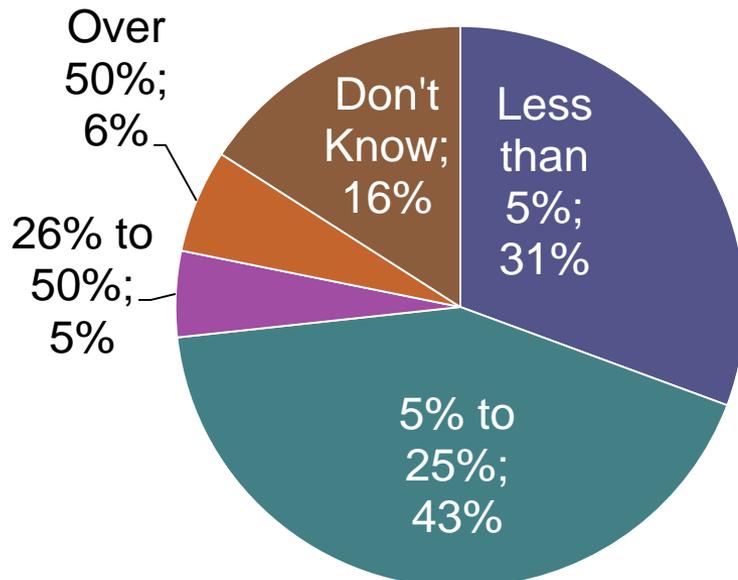
* Of the 127 responses submitted

Local Tax Revenue

Question

What percent of your local property tax revenue comes from non-residential sources? (select one)

Responses*

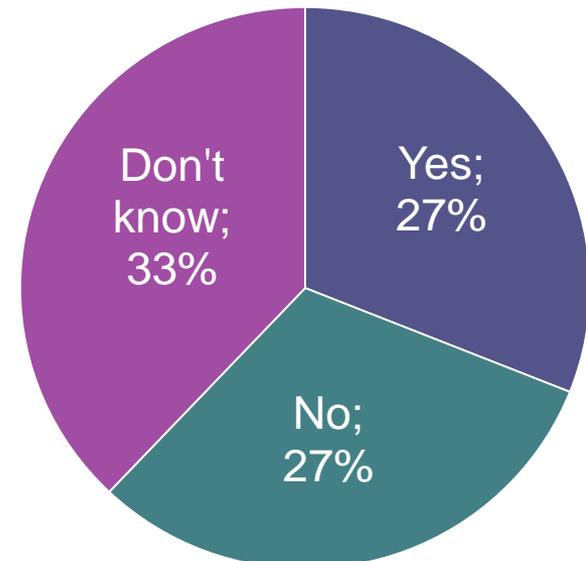


* Of the 87 responses submitted

Question

Have the number of businesses and/or percent of local tax revenue from registered businesses declined in the last 10 years? (select one)

Responses**

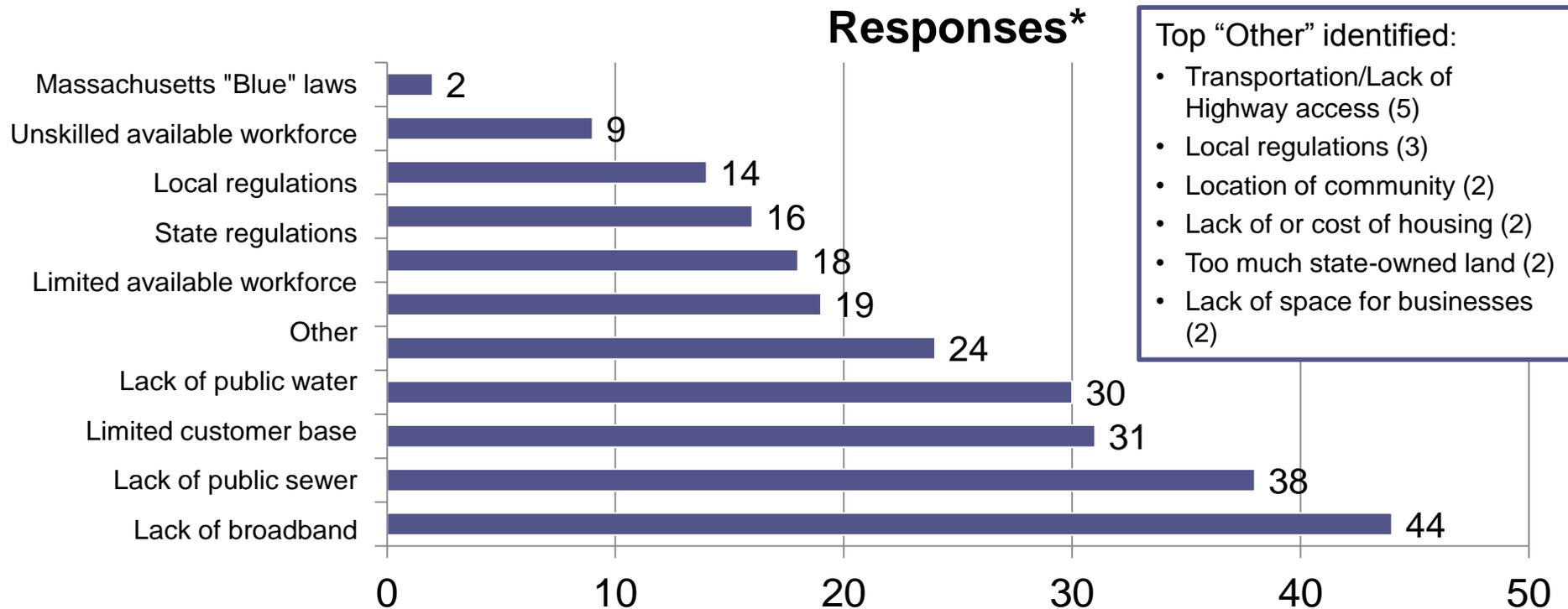


** Of the 101 responses submitted

Small Business Constraints

Question

What constrains small business growth and expansion in your town specifically or in Massachusetts generally? (check all that apply)



* Of the 226 responses submitted

Additional Comments or Questions

Question

If you have any additional comments or question you would like the RPAC to consider, please use the box below?

Responses

Of the 18 responses submitted, the top concerns mentioned:

- Aging population or lack of young families/young workforce
- Public education funding
- Broadband access
- Funding of transportation network and other infrastructure

Aging population, lack of affordable housing when coupled with lower than state average wages and seasonality of many jobs need also to be factored in.

While encouraging growth is important - it will not help to alleviate the financial burden that the current public education financing structure imposes on municipalities.

Lack of broadband has affected home construction and sales. Young people have moved away and young families have not been moving to town.

The main constraint is a relatively low population relative to land area, combined with lack of sewer and public water. This means a low budget with relatively high road, school, and school transport costs.

Fifty percent of the land in our town borders is state owned land. This has a direct impact on our inability to grow and limited tax revenue.

Rural Policy Advisory Commission

More information about the work of the RPAC is available at:

www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed/dhcd/rural-policy-advisory-commission.html