Reducing Construction Impacts to Business – Phase 2

What We Heard Report

September 29, 2026

Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

We humbly acknowledge that the land on which we live, learn, work and play is Treaty 8 Territory, the traditional lands of the Cree, Dene, and the unceded territory of the Métis.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From May 7 to Aug. 21, the Project Management Office completed two phases of engagement to better understand how municipal construction affects local businesses and what could help reduce those impacts.

Phase 1 engaged contractors, consultants and RMWB project managers through a workshop and survey. Findings from this phase were previously shared in a Phase 1 What We Heard Report.

Phase 2 began with a Council-appointed Boards and Committees meeting, followed by business engagement from June 15 to Aug. 21 through surveys, and a quick poll.

Across both phases, engagement included 49 workshop/meeting participants, 18 survey responses, 8 quick poll responses and 244 Dotmocracy votes.

Feedback will help inform potential policy updates and how municipal construction projects are planned and delivered.

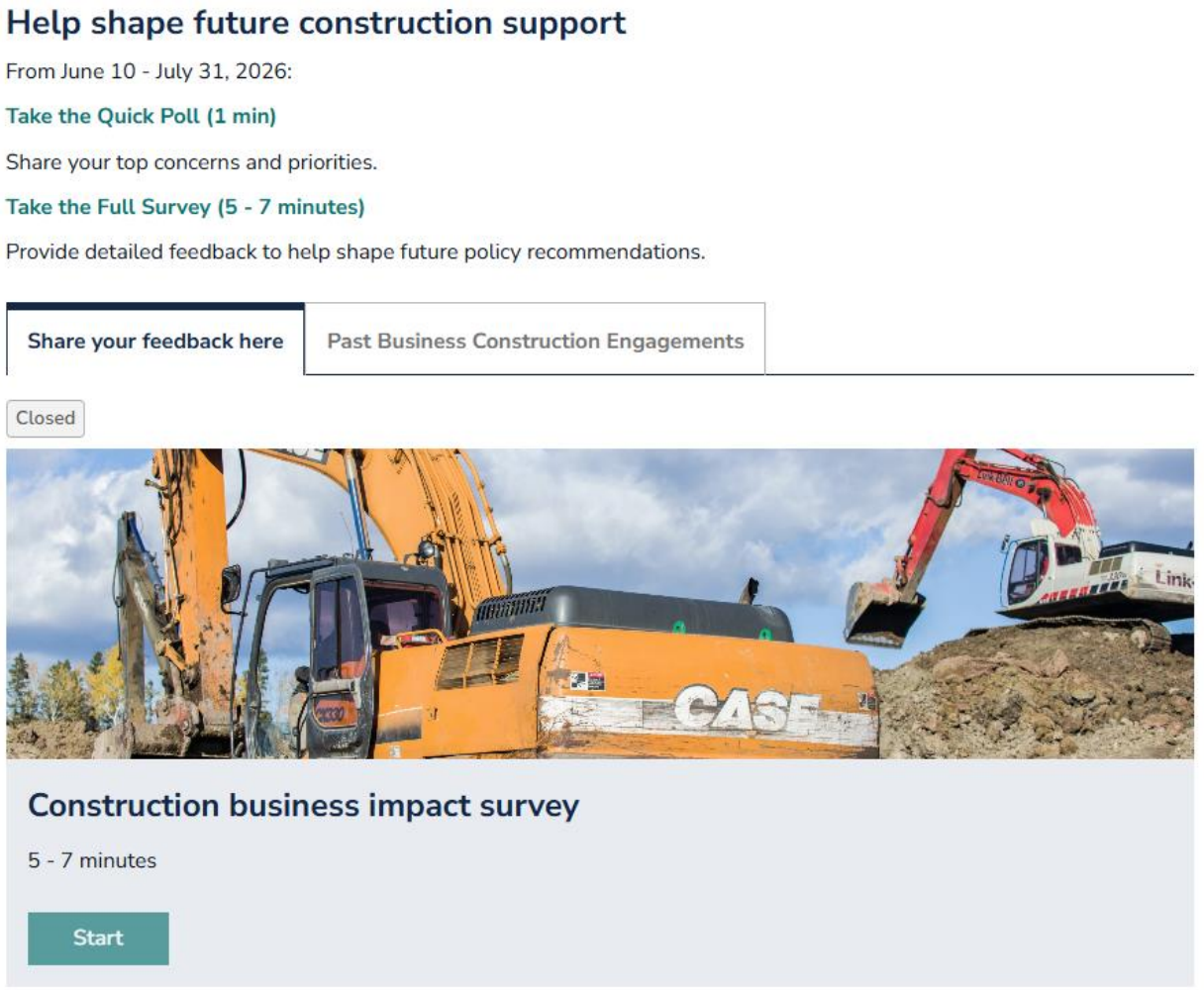


PARTICIPANTS

Who did we talk to?

Over the second phase of engagement, feedback was gathered from Council appointed Boards and Committees and businesses that experience the impacts.

- Pro-Business Advisory Committee
- Wood Buffalo Development Advisory Committee
- Downtown Revitalization Advisory Committee
- Urban business owners
- Rural business owners



ENGAGEMENT IN NUMBERS

PHASE 2 ENGAGEMENT: COUNCIL APPOINTED BOARDS AND COMMITTEES AND BUSINESSES

aware

ways people saw communications and advertisements.

- Radio
- Rural Municipal Offices bulletin boards
- Rural newsletters
- Hand delivered invitation to all registered business in the region
- Chamber of Commerce newsletter
- Social media
- Paid ads

ENGAGEMENT IN NUMBERS

PHASE 2 ENGAGEMENT: COUNCIL APPOINTED BOARDS AND COMMITTEES AND BUSINESSES

engaged

Times people took action to provide feedback

12	Workshop participants
9	Survey responses
6	Quick poll responses
46	Dotmocracy votes

Hand-delivered invitations to participate in the engagement were distributed to 1,034 commercial storefront businesses across the region. Of those businesses, 14 participated in either the quick poll or survey, representing a participation rate of **1.35%**.

OVERALL KEY FINDINGS/THEMES



1. Access to business is a significant concern during construction

- Of the 7 survey respondents who reported experiencing construction impacts, 6 identified reduced customer access, 5 identified parking challenges and 5 identified traffic detours.
- When asked in the survey what would make the biggest difference, 5 of 9 respondents chose maintaining parking and customer access.
- Of the 6 quick poll respondents, 5 identified traffic and detours as an impact, while 4 identified parking challenges.
- In open-ended survey responses, businesses repeatedly identified reduced access, parking and traffic disruptions among the most difficult construction impacts to manage.

OVERALL KEY FINDINGS/THEMES



2. Businesses want earlier, ongoing and more responsive communication and engagement.

- In the survey, 7 of 9 respondents gave the highest rating to the importance of having a dedicated point of contact during construction.
- In open-ended survey responses, businesses called for meaningful engagement, better communication and opportunities to provide input before decisions are made.
- During the Boards and Committee meeting, members identified earlier and ongoing involvement and clearer information about timelines and changes as important ways to better support businesses.
- When Boards and Committee members prioritized potential tools, communication before, during and after construction received 5 votes, and understanding project scope, timelines and impacts received 5 votes.

OVERALL KEY FINDINGS/THEMES



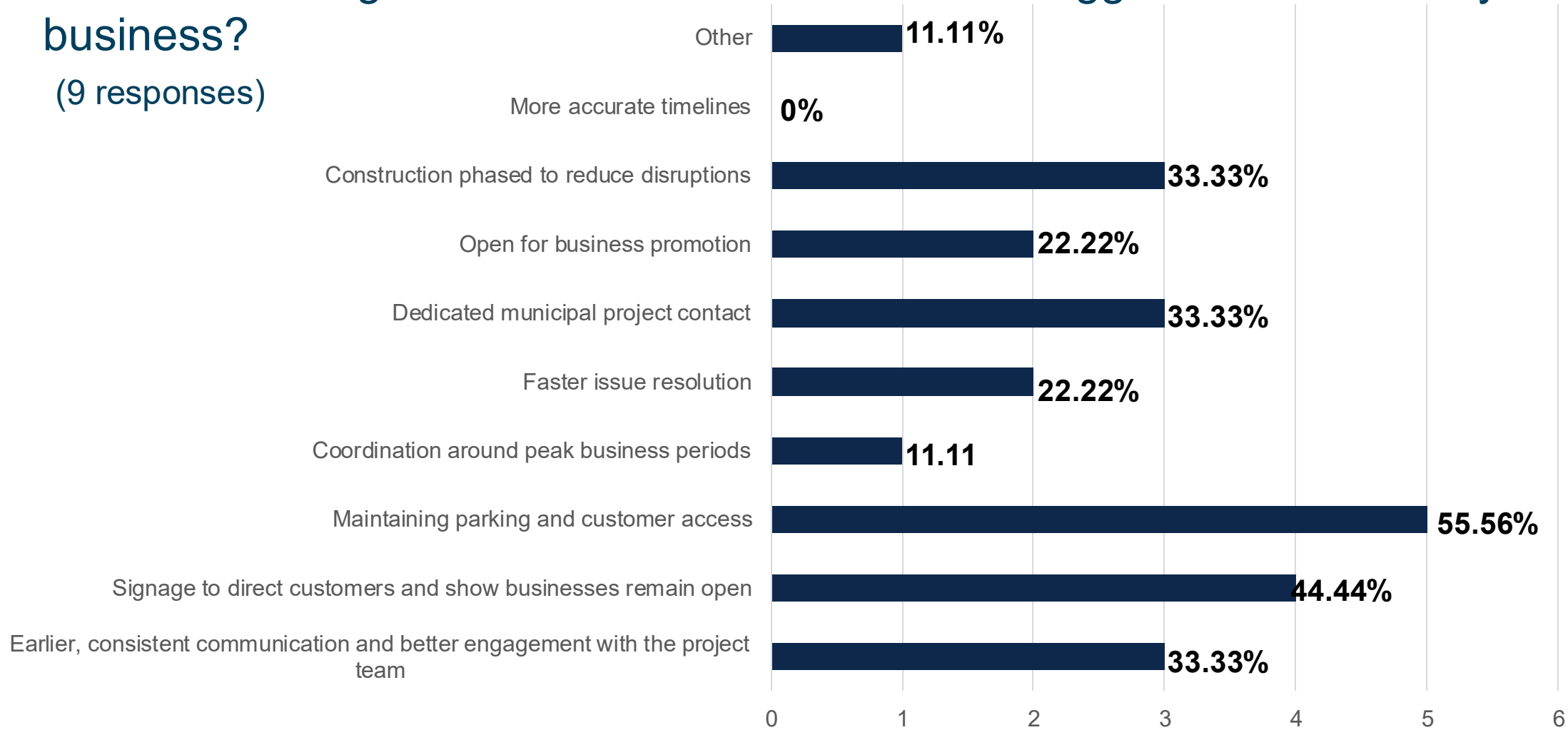
3. Support should help businesses stay visible and respond to their individual circumstances

- In the survey, 6 of 7 respondents who experienced construction reported a loss of customers or reduced revenue.
- In the quick poll, 4 of 6 respondents identified reduced customers or revenue as an impact.
- In the survey, 4 of 9 respondents selected signage directing customers and showing businesses remain open as something that would help.
- During the Boards and Committee meeting, marketing support received 15 votes, making it the most-supported tool by a significant margin.
- Boards and Committee members also identified an empathetic/personal approach with 6 votes and concierge/custom support with 4 votes, supporting a more tailored approach for affected businesses.

SURVEY

Q9 – What mitigation measures would make the biggest difference for your business?

(9 responses)



NEXT STEPS

Feedback from both phases of engagement has been reviewed and is shaping the options Administration will present to Council.

Council will consider these options and provide direction on how the Municipality supports businesses impacted by construction.

Following Council's direction, the approved approach will be built into how future construction projects are planned and delivered.

Timeline

- **Contractor and RMWB Project Management Workshop**
  May 7, 2026
- **Consultant/Contractor and Internal teams: Online Engagement**
  May 7 - May 25, 2026
- **Internal and Partner - What We Heard Report**
- **Business Engagement**
  June 10 - July 31
- **Business Engagement - What We Heard Report**
  August 2026
- **Presentation to Council**
  Fall 2026

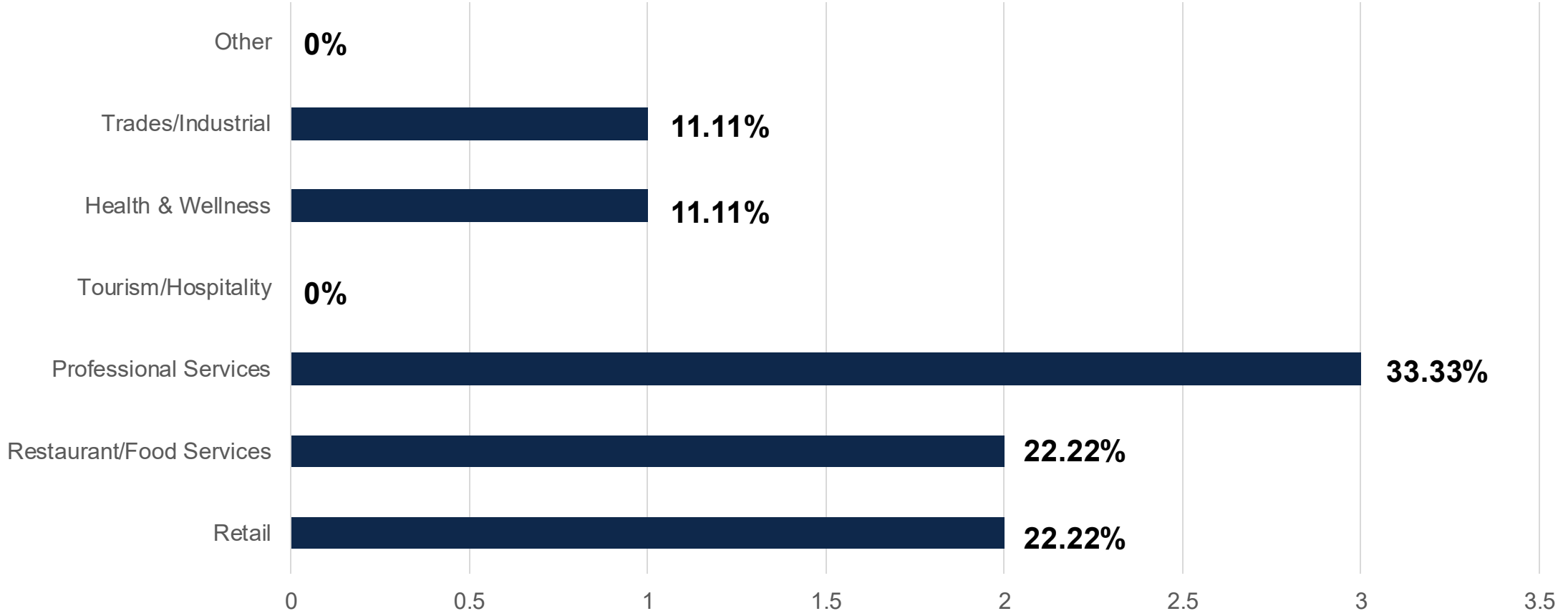
Appendix A
SURVEY
(9 responses)

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SURVEY

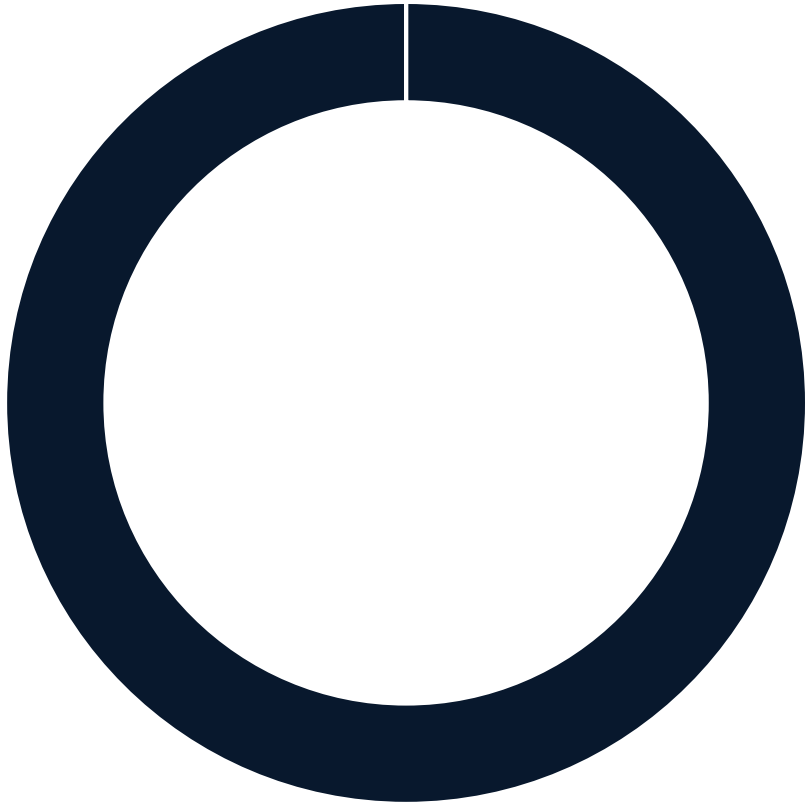
Q1 – What type of business do you operate?

(9 responses)



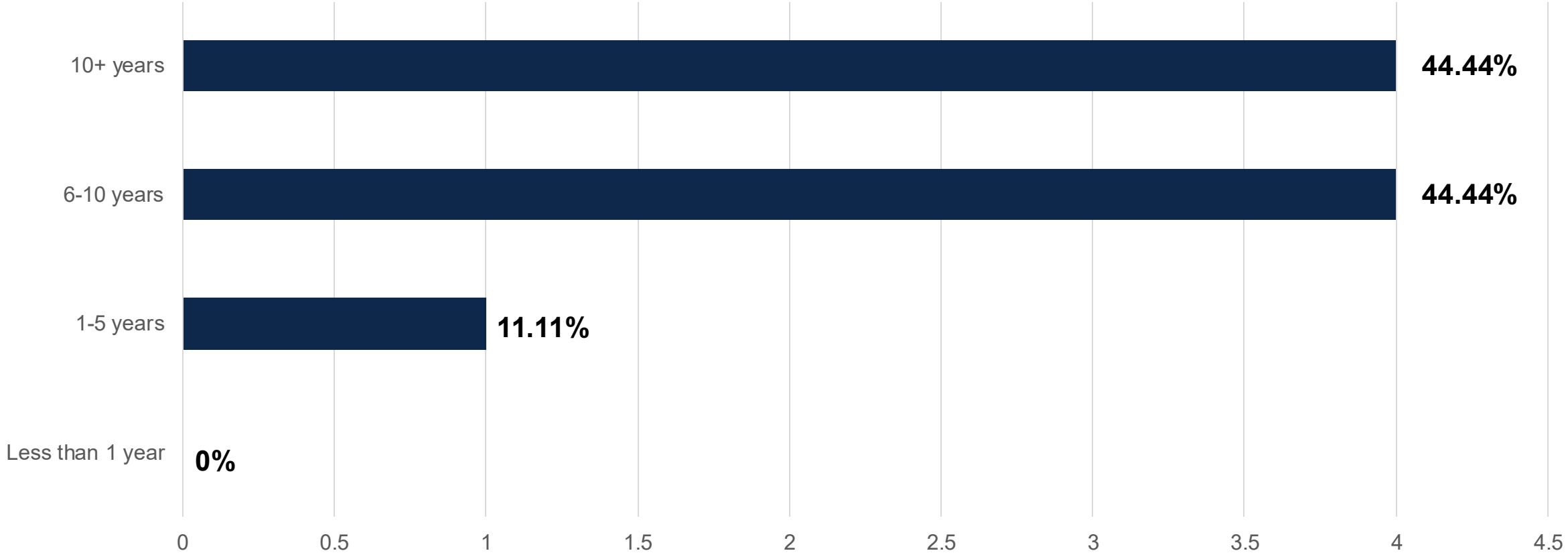
Q2 – Which community does your business operate in?

(9 responses)

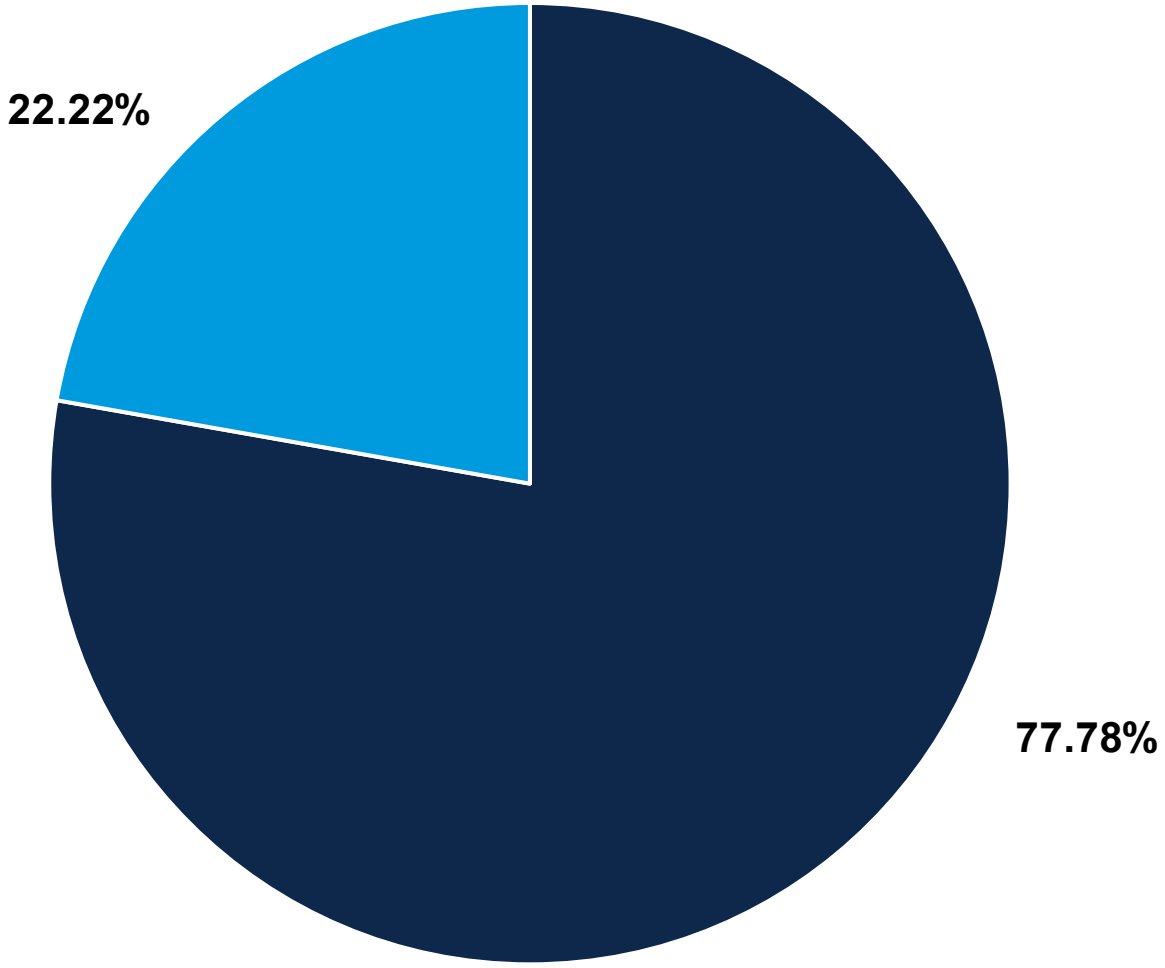


- Anzac
- Conklin
- Draper
- Fort Chipewyan
- Fort Fitzgerald
- Fort McKay
- Fort McMurray
- Gregoire Lake Estates
- Janvier
- Saprae Creek Estates
- Other

Q3 – How long has your business operated in the region?
(9 responses)

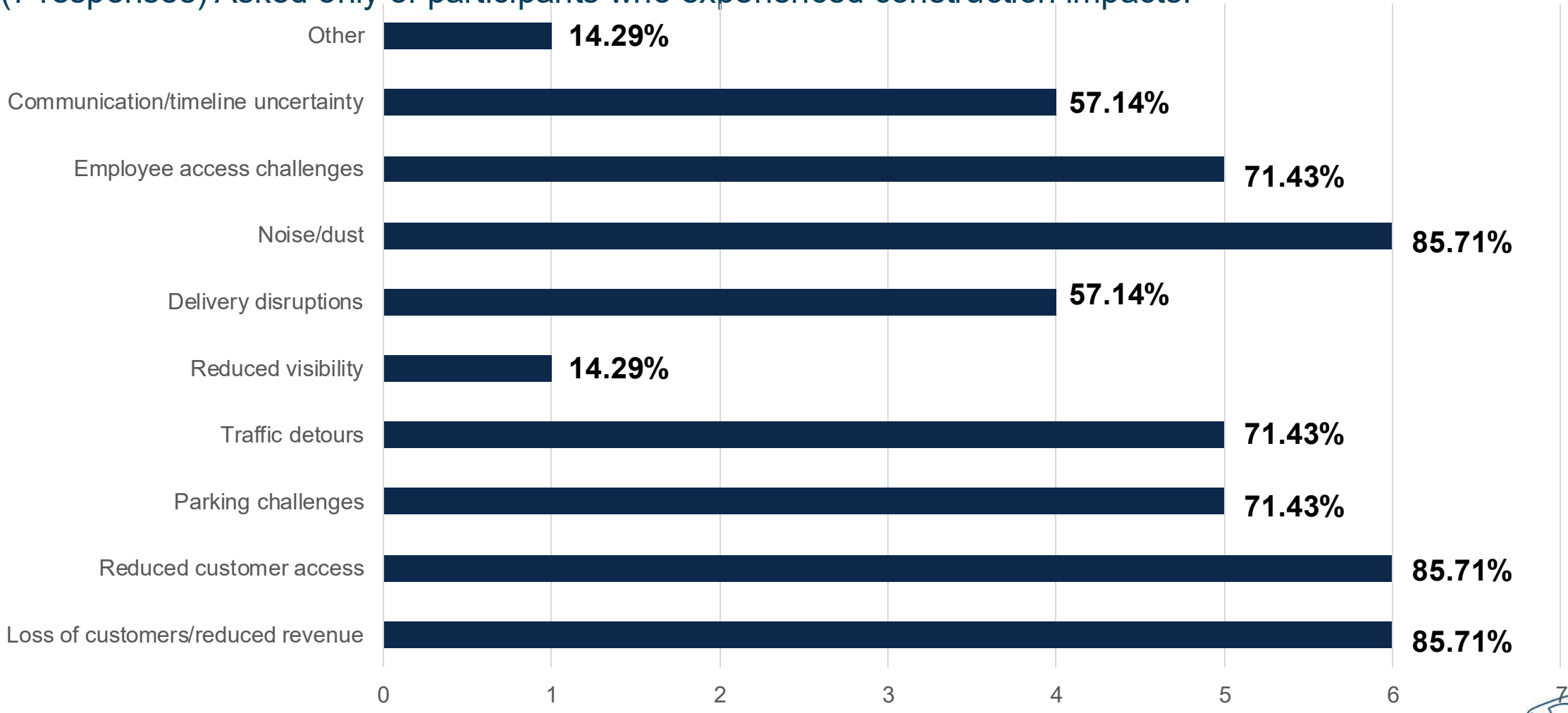


Q4 – Has your business been impacted by municipal construction in the past? (9 responses)

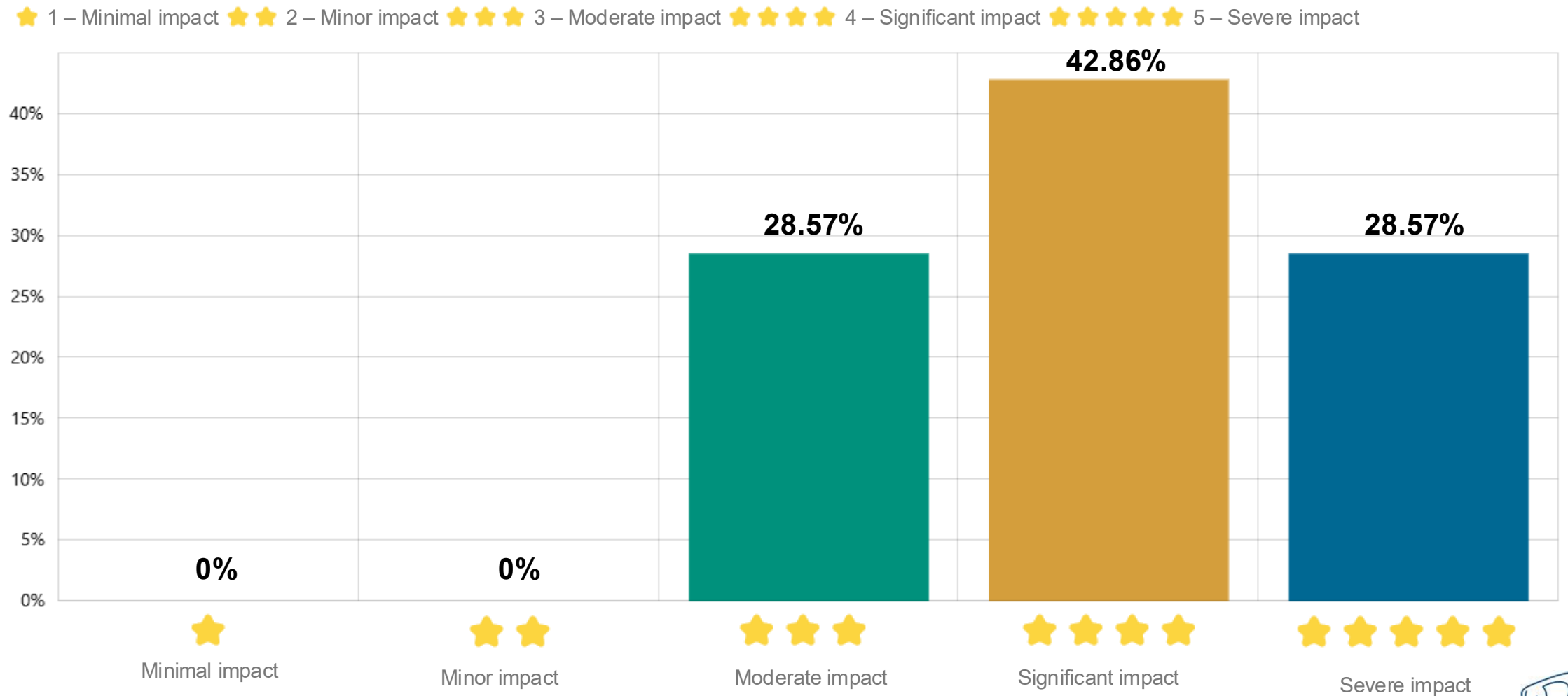


Q5 – What impacts has your business experienced during construction?

(7 responses) Asked only of participants who experienced construction impacts.



Q6 – How significant were these impacts? (7 responses) Asked only of participants who experienced construction impacts.



Q7 – Which impacts are most difficult for your business to manage?

(7 responses) Asked only of participants who experienced construction impacts.

Responses:

"Constant traffic disruptions."
"Traffic diversion through our parking lot during road construction and highway blockages"
"Reduced access; parking."
"Reduced access and reduced parking has most impact however the look of the area affects curb appeal and can result in loss of customers."
"All."
"Loss of revenue."

Q8 – Thinking about past construction projects, what worked well to reduce impacts on your business?

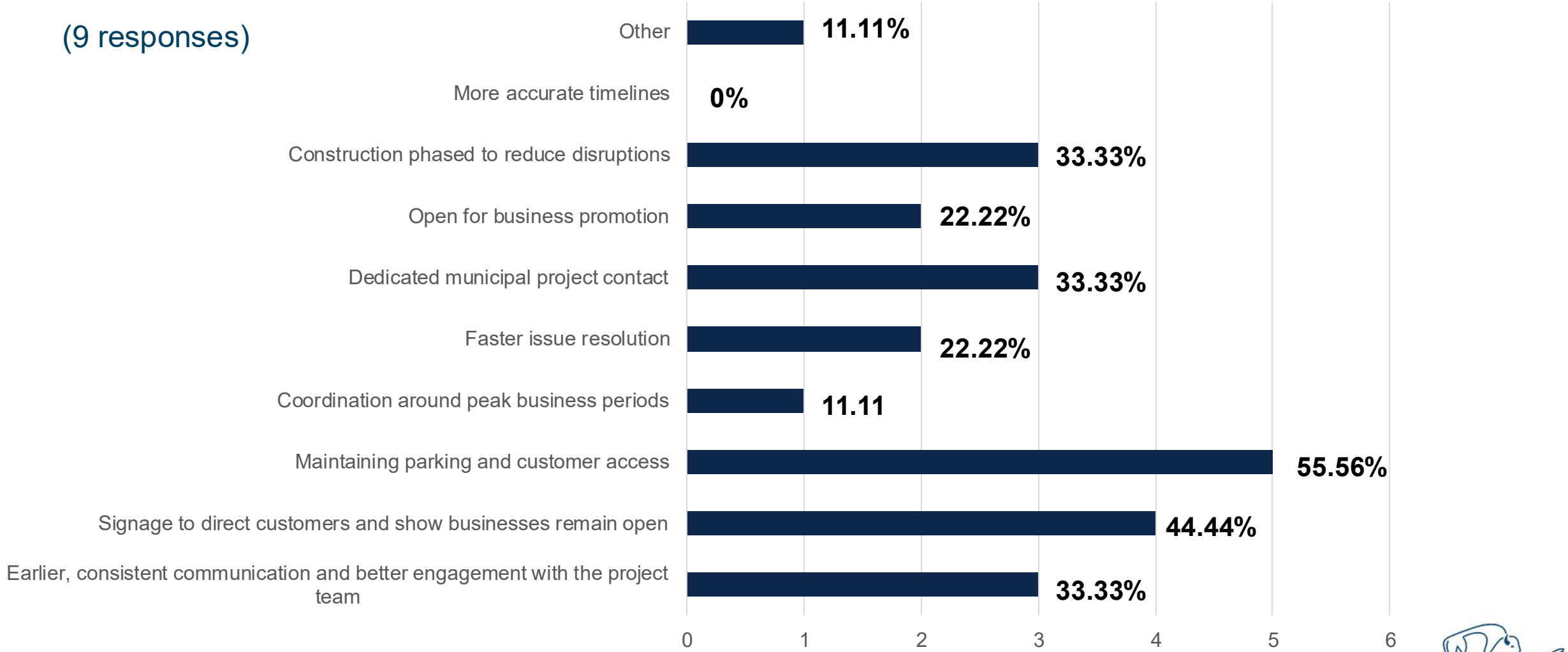
(7 responses) Asked only of participants who experienced construction impacts.

Responses:

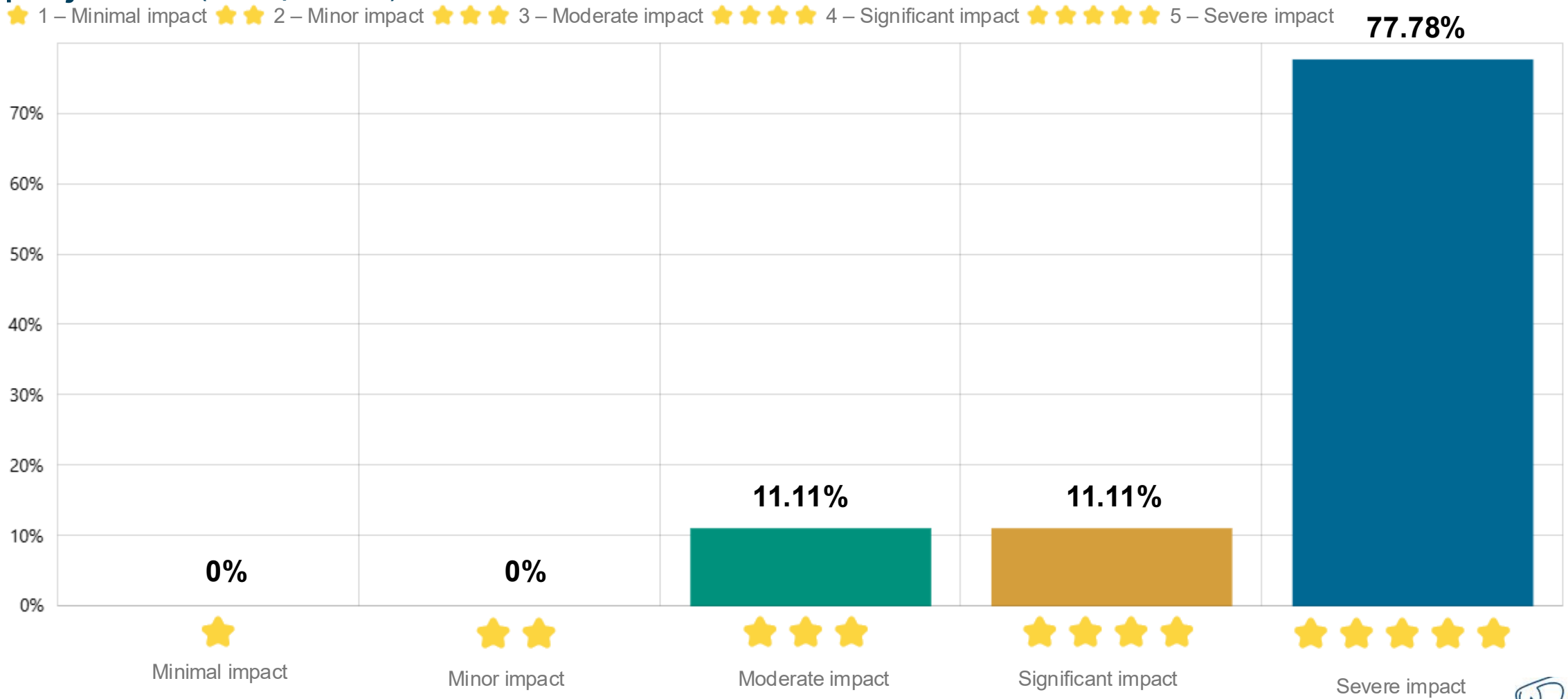
"None."
"Pre planned traffic control whereby traffic personnel limit and direct unnecessary traffic and maintain speed limits. Properly planned alternate routes with better quality routes and road conditions. IE no gravel, steel sheeting, massive potholes, bumps."
"Nothing. Absolutely nothing other than having the project it completed. The contractors don't get care and if the RMWB has a department that is supposed to monitor the construction site , they have failed miserably."
"It was beyond our control to mitigate."
"Not closing the whole road."

Q9 – What mitigation measures would make the biggest difference for your business?

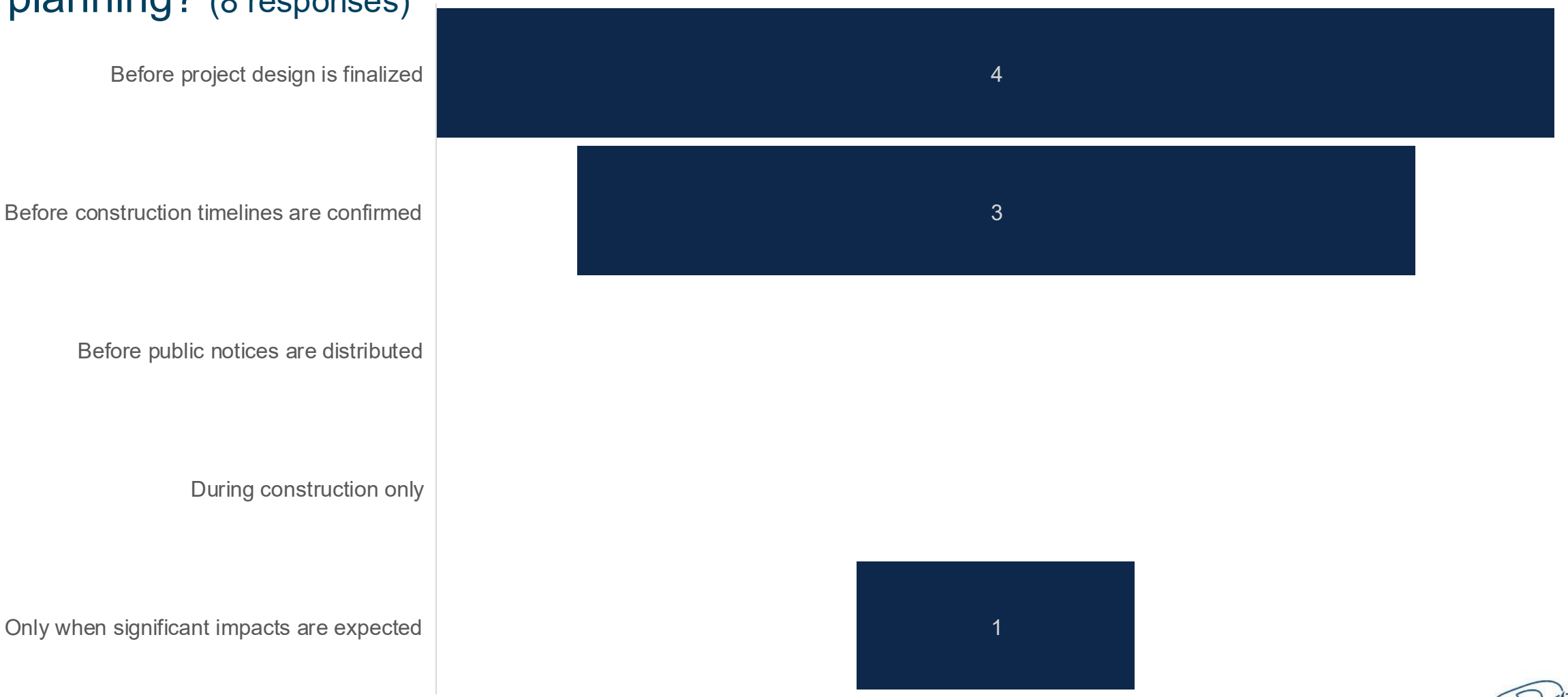
(9 responses)



Q10 – How important is having a dedicated point of contact during construction projects? (9 responses)



Q11 – When would you ideally like to be engaged during construction planning? (8 responses)



Q12 – Based on your experience, what is the most important thing the municipality should consider when planning construction projects near businesses? (7 responses)

Top themes from long answer responses:

- Plan projects to minimize and mitigate impacts on businesses
- Consider the financial and operational impacts on affected businesses
- Strengthen project coordination, timelines and contractor accountability
- Maintain safe, reasonable access to businesses during construction
- Improve communication and responsiveness throughout construction
- Ensure engagement is early, meaningful and demonstrably influences decisions

Examples: *"Having effective and meaningful engagement , prior engagements appear to be simply to checkoff the box because the decisions have already been made."*

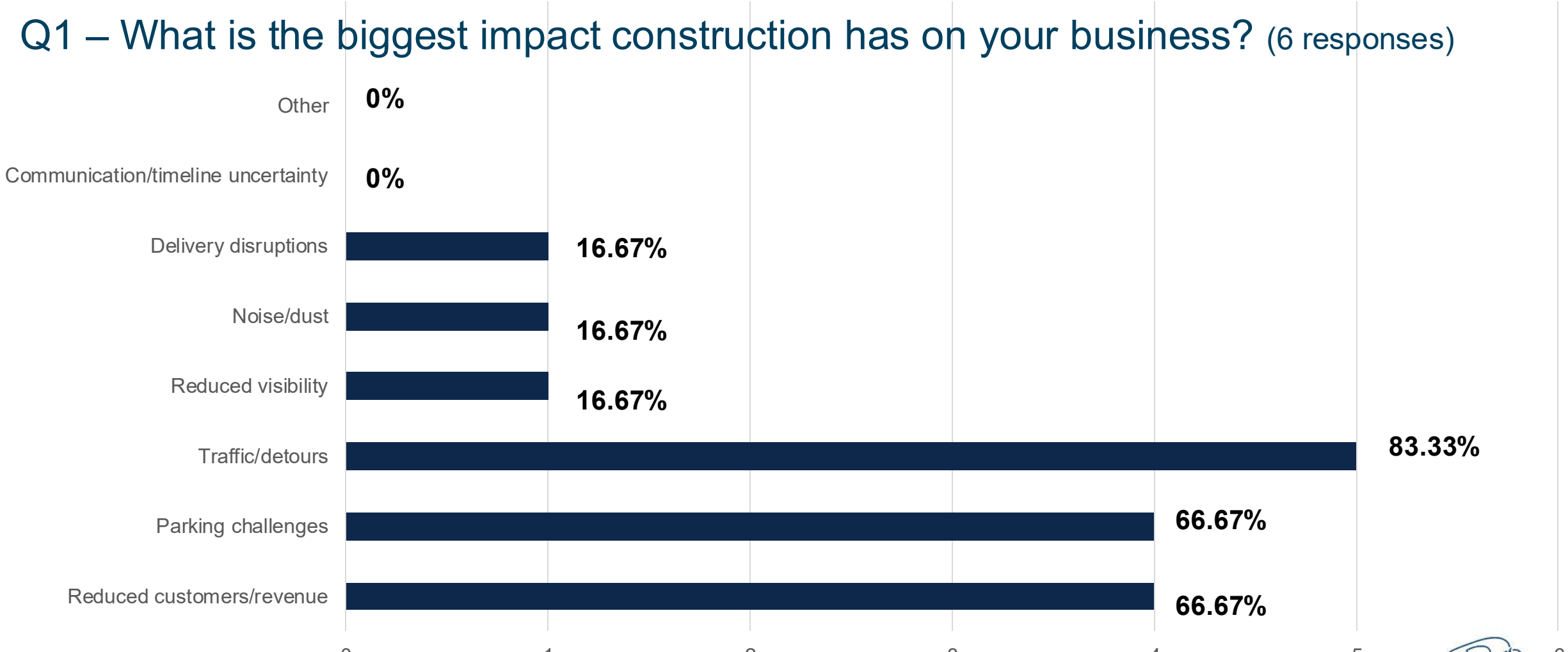
"Be aware of the impact to business when designing the project and ask the bidders to provide a mitigation plan when submitting their tenders. Complete work where possible in the evenings. Communicate and listen to the business's impacted."

Appendix B
QUICK POLL
(6 responses)

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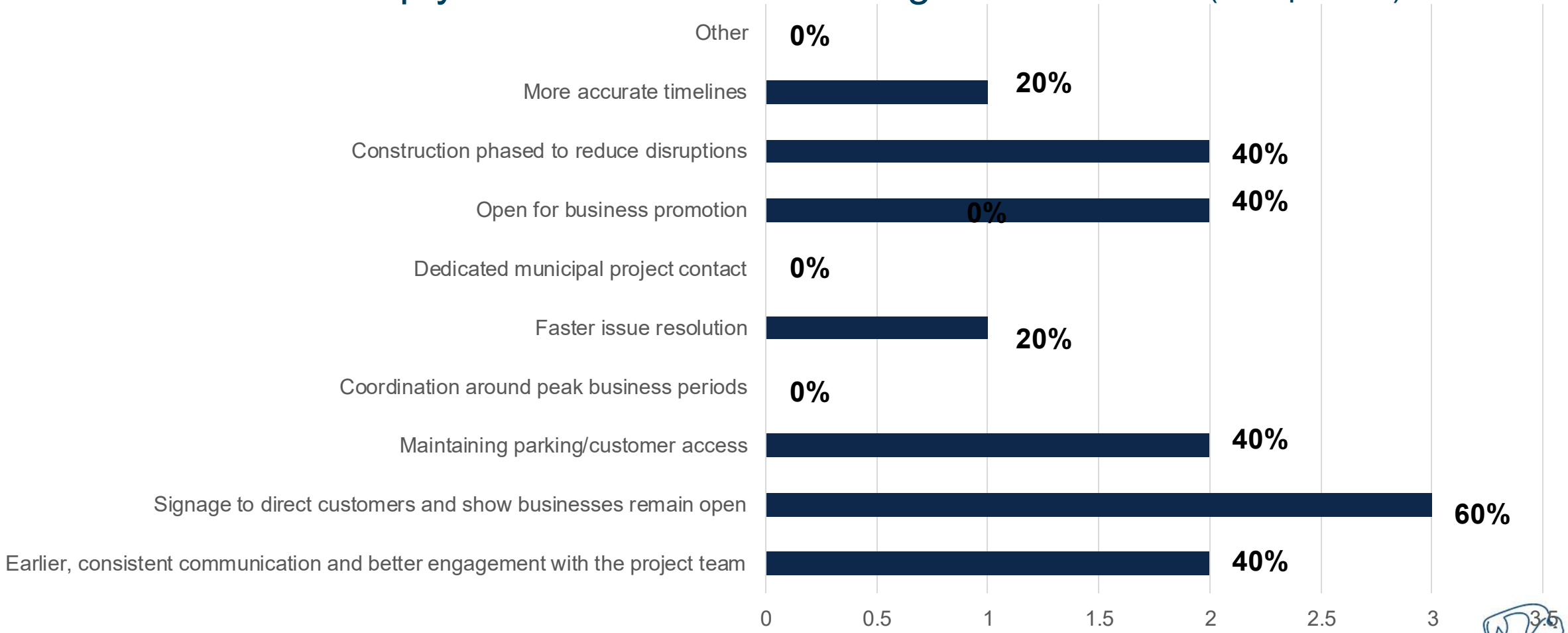
QUICK POLL

Q1 – What is the biggest impact construction has on your business? (6 responses)



QUICK POLL

Q2 – What would help your business most during construction? (5 responses)



Appendix C
BOARDS & COMMITTEE MEETING
(12 participants)

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COUNCIL APPOINTED BOARDS AND COMMITTEE MEETING

The workshop gathered strategic advice on how businesses can be better supported during municipal construction projects. Participants were asked to reflect on lessons from past construction impacts and identify principles that should guide future decisions.

Who we heard from:

- Wood Buffalo Pro-Business Advisory Committee
- Downtown Revitalization Advisory Committee
- Wood Buffalo Development Advisory Committee

What we heard:

Participants shared that construction impacts are not the same for every business. They want earlier and ongoing involvement, clearer information about timelines and changes, and approaches that recognize individual business circumstances. When asked to prioritize potential supports, participants placed the greatest emphasis on marketing support and an empathetic, personalized approach, rather than compensation.

Suggested tools for policy

During the workshop, the participants switched from developing principles to tools. The table below reflects their suggestions and priority voting, showing the top six results.

Suggested tools	Description	Votes
Marketing	Provide marketing support to help affected businesses maintain visibility and let customers know they remain open during construction.	15
Empathy / Personal Approach	Take an empathetic, individualized approach that recognizes each business may experience construction impacts differently.	6
Incentives for contractors	Consider incentives that encourage contractors to meet or exceed project timelines, helping reduce the duration of construction impacts on businesses.	5
Communicate before, during and after	Maintain communication and support before construction begins, throughout construction and after work is completed.	5
Understand Scope, Timelines and Impacts	Ensure businesses understand project scope, timelines and anticipated impacts, and communicate when impacts or conditions change.	5
Concierge Service / Custom Approach	Provide more customized, hands-on support to businesses based on their individual circumstances and needs.	4

Thank You

For more information on this report contact rmwb.ca/Pulse.

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