

ALBERTA
SOUTHWEST

FORT MACLEOD

Industry Report

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Executive Summary

Fort Macleod's 2025 profile shows a small-town economy with a distinctive employment structure and a business base that has not fully regained earlier ground. Business establishments edged up to 726 after a sharper drop in 2024, but the total remains below both its 2022 peak and its level five years earlier. The local business landscape is dominated by very small firms, especially businesses without employees, while the broader employment picture is shaped by a few sectors that stand well above the rest. Educational services is the clearest example, far larger than any other employer and also the town's strongest area of specialization.

That concentration in education gives Fort Macleod an unusually defined economic centre, with elementary and secondary schools accounting for much of local employment and educational services showing by far the highest specialization. Health care and social assistance has also strengthened sharply and now stands out as the town's main area of recent large-scale growth, adding momentum to a service-oriented side of the economy that also includes gains in professional services. At the same time, the picture is uneven rather than broadly expansionary. Manufacturing remains important as both an employer and an anchor sector, but recent losses were steep, and other goods-moving activities such as wholesale trade and transportation also weakened. Agriculture continues to lead the business base by establishment count and remains a specialized sector, yet its longer-term trend is less steady than education's. The labour force itself is spread across construction, health care, retail, manufacturing, and other services, suggesting a broader resident employment base than the town's headline sector mix alone might imply.

Fort Macleod therefore combines a highly concentrated employment core with a more mixed pattern of business activity and recent change. Education remains the defining strength and appears to draw workers from beyond the local resident labour pool, while health care is growing into a larger supporting pillar. Around those strengths, the economy shows both resilience and strain: small service industries are expanding from modest bases, but the establishment count is still below earlier levels and some established sectors have lost momentum. The result is a local economy that remains active and specialized, but also more uneven than its largest employment figures might first suggest.

Business Establishments

Fort Macleod had 726 business establishments in 2025, up 1.4% from 2024. The count remained below 2023's 814 and 2022's 855, and was 8.0% lower than five years earlier.

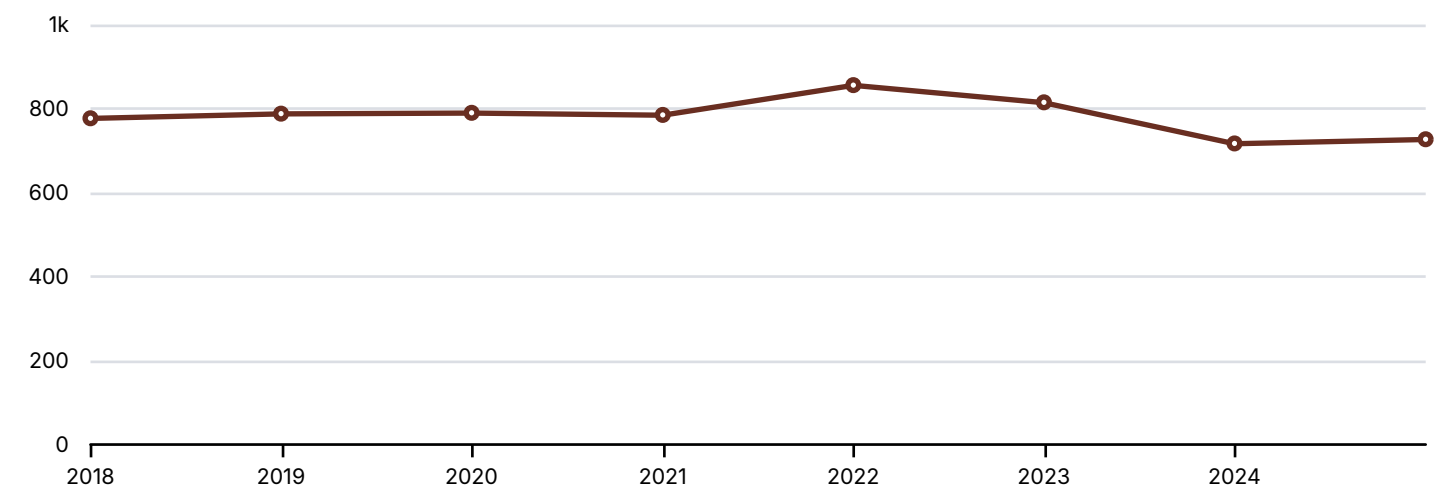
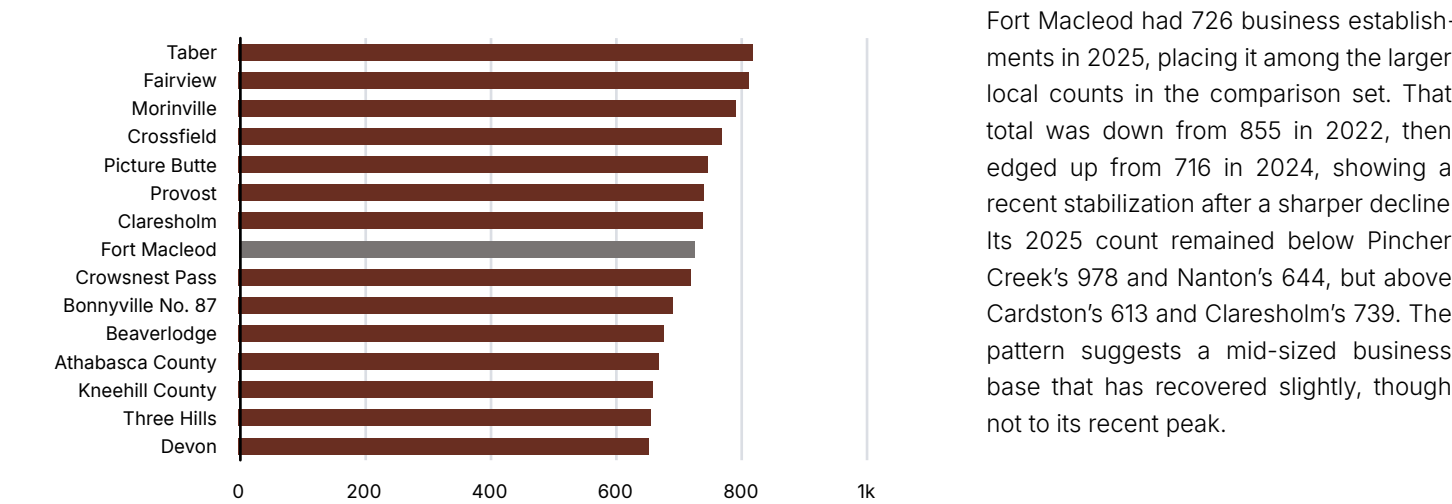


Figure 1.1: Shows the total number of active business establishments in the area, including those without employees. It helps indicate the scale and diversity of the local business base. (Fort Macleod, 2018-2025)¹

Fort Macleod had 726 active business establishments in 2025, reflecting a local business base that has shifted noticeably in recent years. The series rose from 776 in 2018 to a peak of 855 in 2022, then fell to 814 in 2023 and 716 in 2024 before edging up again in 2025. The short-term pattern is mixed but points to recent weakness after earlier growth. The 2025 total was up 1.4% from 2024, yet still 8.0% below 2020 and 10.8% below the 2022 peak. That leaves the latest count lower than most years in the period, suggesting a smaller establishment base than earlier in the series.



Fort Macleod had 726 business establishments in 2025, placing it among the larger local counts in the comparison set. That total was down from 855 in 2022, then edged up from 716 in 2024, showing a recent stabilization after a sharper decline. Its 2025 count remained below Pincher Creek's 978 and Nanton's 644, but above Cardston's 613 and Claresholm's 739. The pattern suggests a mid-sized business base that has recovered slightly, though not to its recent peak.

Figure 1.2: Comparison of Business Establishments with other locations (Fort Macleod, 2025)¹

Resident Labour Force

Fort Macleod’s resident labour force remained concentrated in construction and health care and social assistance, at 210 people each in 2021. Other services grew fastest, rising 111.1% to 95 people since 2016.

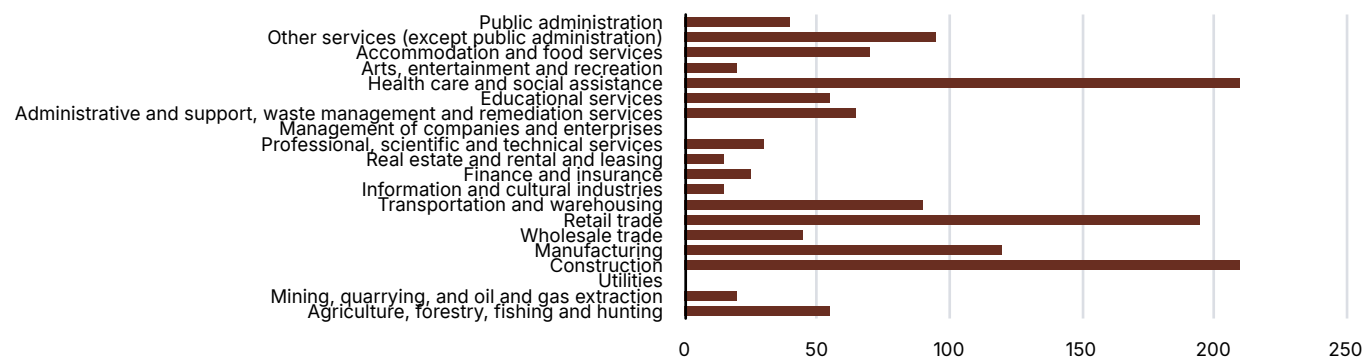


Figure 2.1: Shows the number of residents who are in the labour force. It helps indicate the size of the locally available workforce. (Fort Macleod, 2021)²

Fort Macleod’s resident labour force in 2021 was spread across a mix of sectors, with construction and health care and social assistance tied as the largest at 210 people each. Retail trade followed at 195, while manufacturing had 120 and transportation and warehousing 90. Recent change was uneven: professional services doubled, other services rose 111.1%, and administrative support gained 85.7%, while information, real estate, and several others declined.

In Fort Macleod, the resident labour force aged 15 and over is spread across a fairly broad mix of industries, with construction and health care and social assistance each at 210 people in 2021. Retail trade follows at 195, while manufacturing has 120 and other services 95. This points to a labour force anchored in local services and trades. Recent change is uneven. Other services more than doubled over five years, construction rose 16.7%, and retail trade increased 25.8%. By contrast, manufacturing fell 14.3%, accommodation and food services declined 36.4%, and public administration dropped 33.3%.



Figure 2.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Industry Sector - Construction (Fort Macleod)²

Star Sectors

Fort Macleod’s largest star sector in 2025 was educational services at 5.4419, up 7.3% in a year and 2.6% over five years. Agriculture followed at 1.7893, rising 6.3% annually but down 5.1% over five years.

Fort Macleod’s star sectors in 2025 point to two areas of specialization among employees aged 15 years and over: agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and educational services. Both sectors show local concentration above 1, with location quotients of 1.8 and 5.4 respectively, indicating that they are more prominent in the town than in a broad average setting. The recent pattern is mixed. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting posted a 1-year increase of 6.3%, but its 5-year change

was down 5.1%, suggesting a rebound after a longer period of weaker concentration. Educational services shows the stronger and more sustained position, with a 1-year increase of 7.3% and a 5-year rise of 2.6%. Taken together, the data show a small set of specialized sectors rather than a wide-ranging pattern of growth. Educational services stands out as the clearest current strength, while agriculture shows more volatility over time.

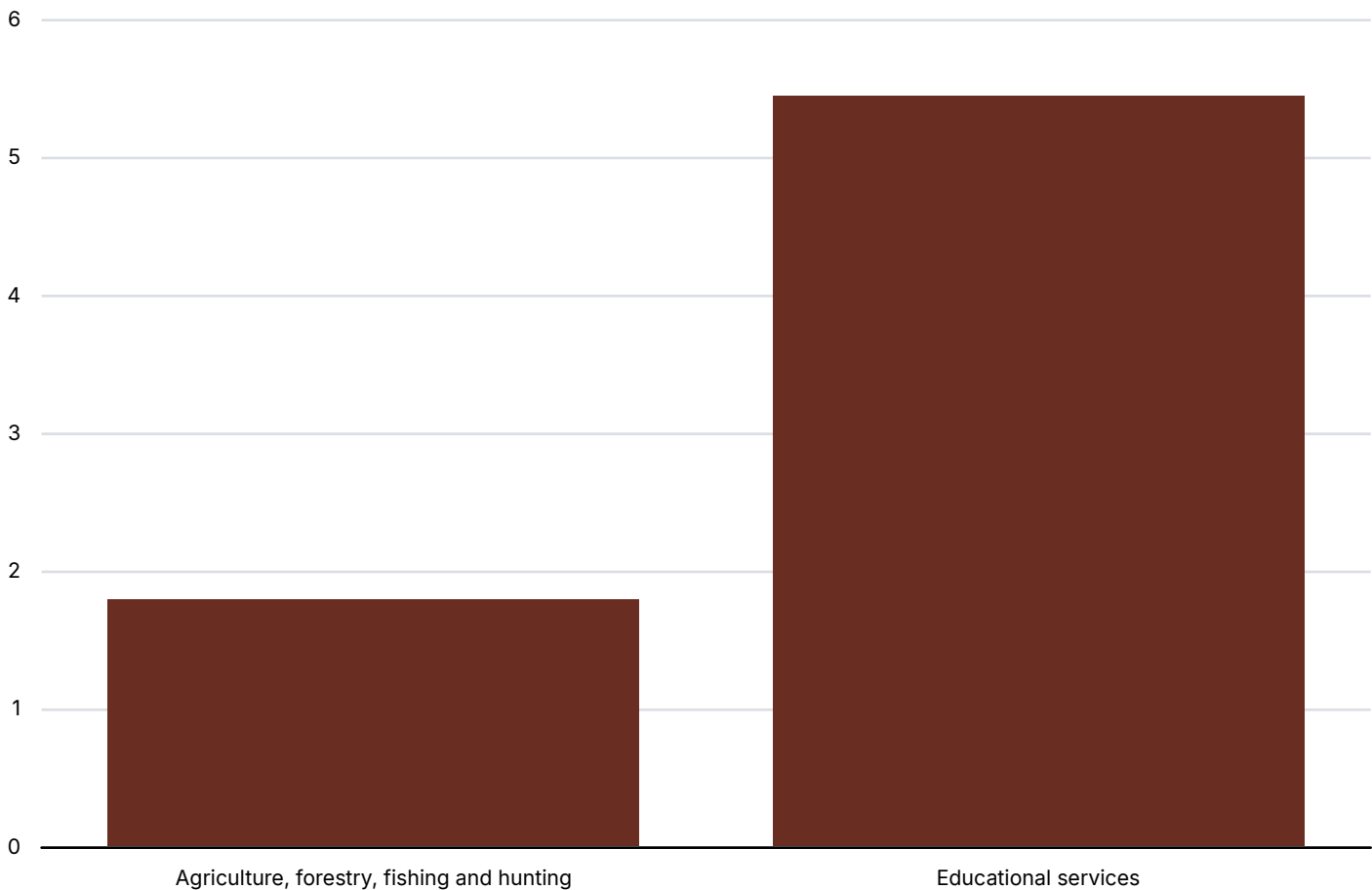


Figure 3.1: Shows major industry sectors where the local economy has strong specialization and increasing concentration or strong growth. Sectors are categorized based on specialization (location quotient) and recent employment growth or change in concentration. (Fort Macleod, 2025)³

Fastest Growing Industries

Accounting, tax preparation, bookkeeping and payroll services led Fort Macleod's fastest-growing industries in 2025 with 24 people, up 380.0% year over year and 242.9% over five years.

In 2025, Fort Macleod's fastest growing industries were concentrated in a small set of service activities, with employment measured among people aged 15 years and over. The strongest gains were in accounting, tax preparation, bookkeeping and payroll services, which reached 24 people and posted a 380% increase over one year and a 242.9% increase over five years. Recyclable material merchant wholesalers employed 5 people, up 400% in the latest year and 66.7% over five years. Management, scientific and technical consulting services had

6 people and a 500% one-year increase, though no five-year change was provided. Personal care services also employed 5 people, but the pattern was different: employment was down 37.5% over five years, even as it remained among the listed industries. The picture is one of small base industries producing large percentage swings. The largest gains are recent and service-oriented, while one category shows longer-term decline despite still appearing in the growth list.

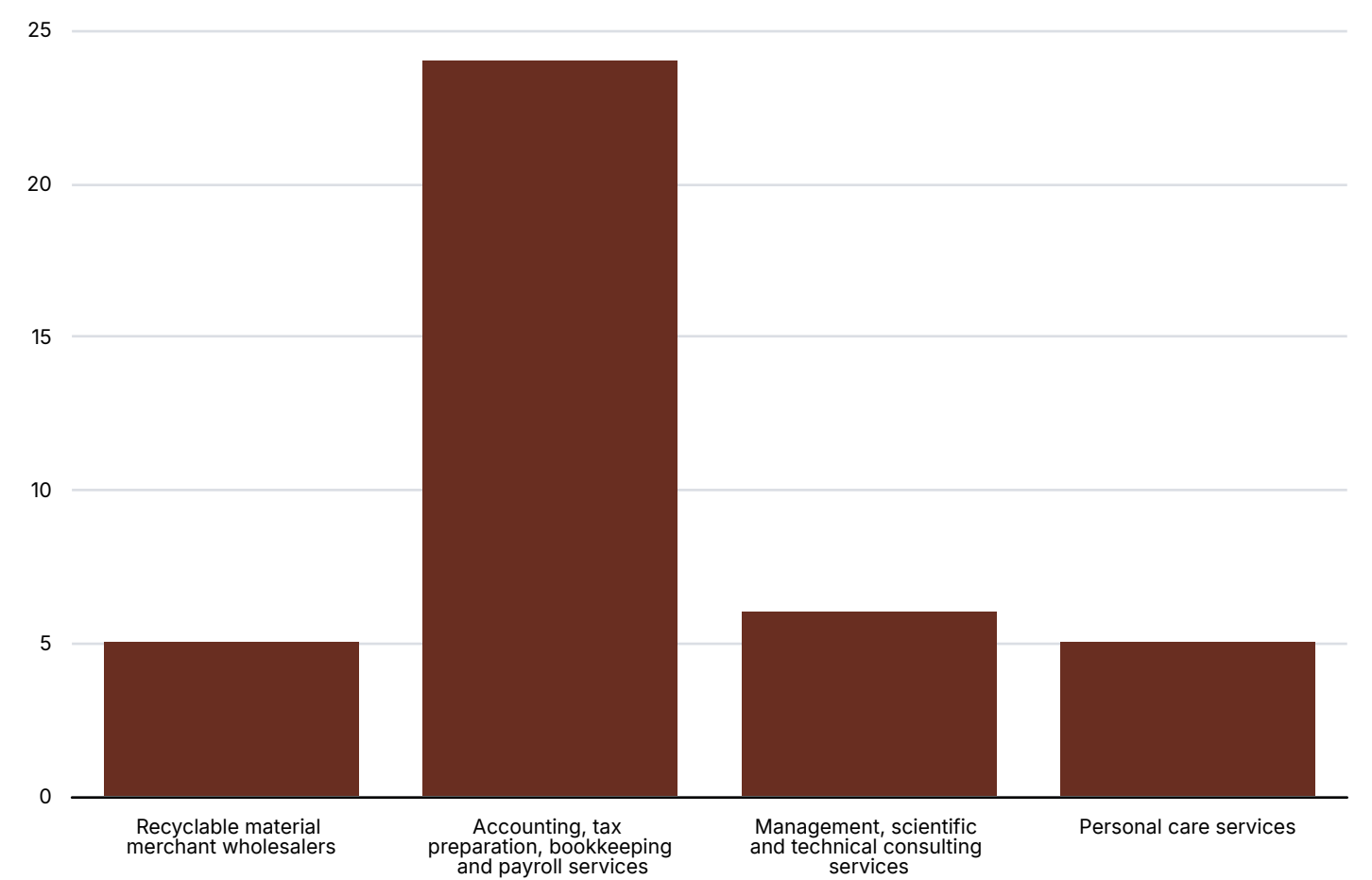


Figure 4.1: Shows industries where employment has increased the most over the selected time period. It helps identify where job growth is strongest in the local economy. (Fort Macleod, 2025)⁴

Fastest Growing Sectors

Health care and social assistance led Fort Macleod with 353 employees in 2025, up 41.2% in one year and 15.0% over five years. Professional, scientific and technical services grew to 62, rising 72.2% and 129.6%.

In Fort Macleod, the fastest employment growth in 2025 among employees aged 15 and over was concentrated in a small number of sectors. Professional, scientific and technical services and health care and social assistance both stood out as the main growth areas, though they differed in size and momentum. Professional, scientific and technical services employed 62 people and posted a 72.2% increase over the past year, alongside a 129.6% rise over five years. Health care and social assistance

was much larger at 353 employees, with a 41.2% one-year increase and a 15.0% gain over five years. The contrast suggests two different growth patterns. One sector is small but expanding very quickly, while the other is a larger employment base with steadier long-term growth. Taken together, they show that recent job gains in Fort Macleod were led by both an emerging niche and a more established service sector. The data points to broadening growth rather than reliance on a single industry.

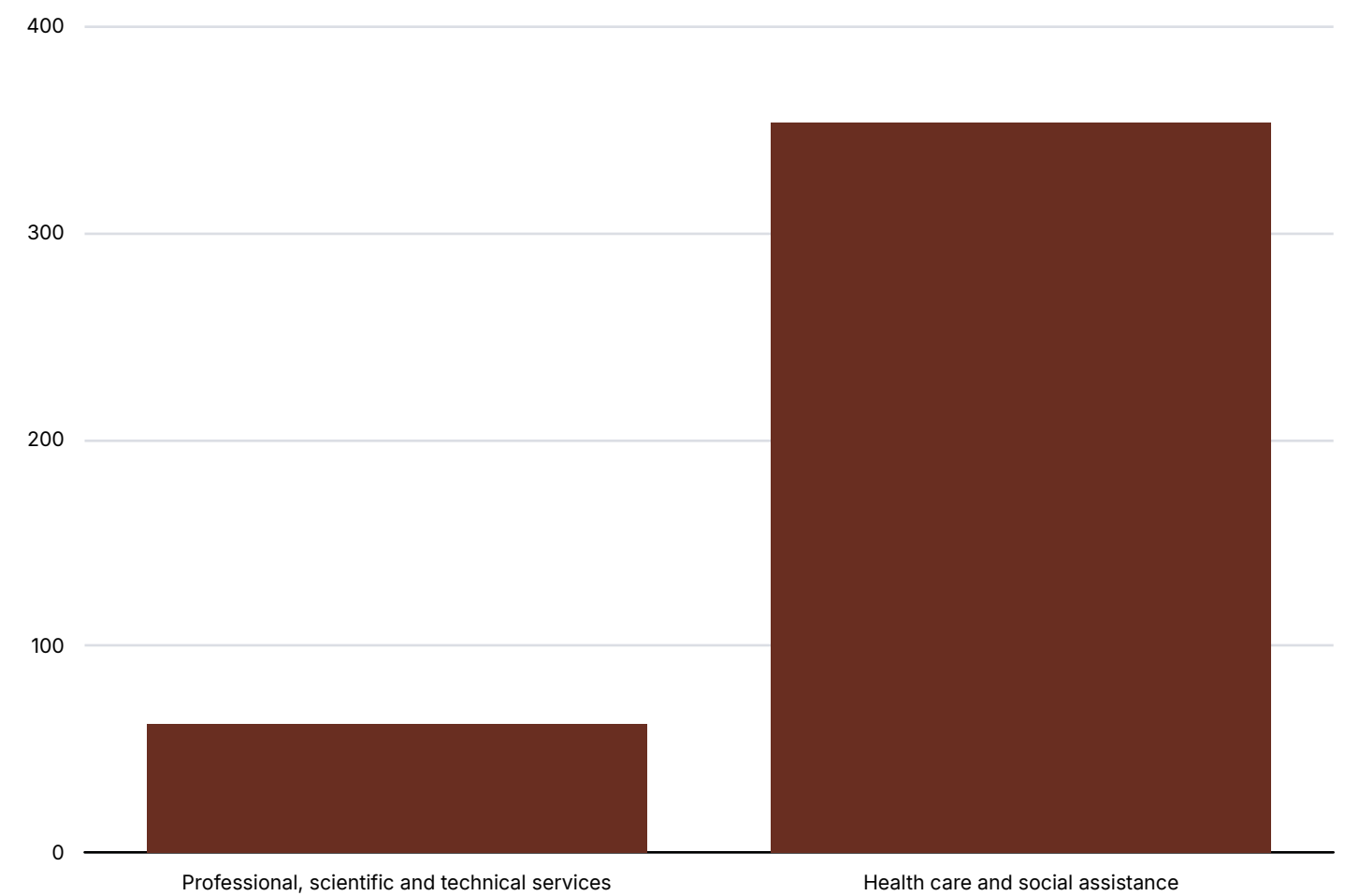


Figure 5.1: Shows sectors where employment has increased the most over the selected time period. It helps identify the main drivers of job growth in the local economy. (Fort Macleod, 2025)⁴

Employment by Sector

Educational services remained the largest employer in Fort Macleod in 2025 at 1,450 people, up 2.8% from 2024 but down 2.2% over five years. Health care reached 353, up 41.2%.

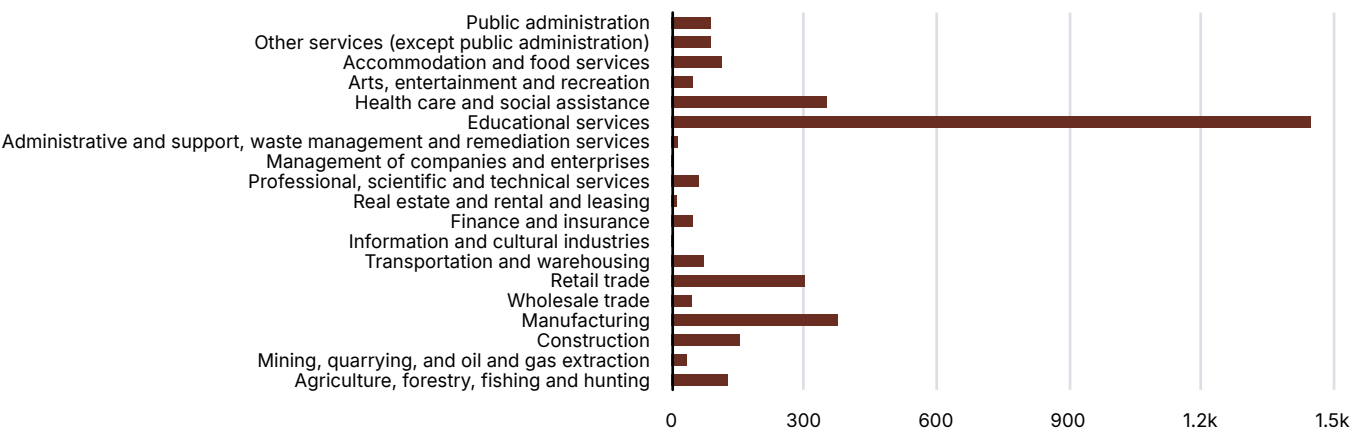


Figure 6.1: Shows how employment is distributed across industry sectors. It helps indicate which sectors account for the largest share of local jobs. (Fort Macleod, 2025)⁴

Fort Macleod’s employment mix in 2025 is led by educational services, with 1,450 workers, far ahead of health care and social assistance at 353 and manufacturing at 379. Retail trade also remains a major employer at 302 people, while construction accounts for 155. Recent change is mixed. Health care rose 41.2% over one year, and professional services jumped 72.2%. In contrast, manufacturing fell 39.1%, wholesale trade dropped 60.8%, and transportation and warehousing declined 24.5%. The pattern points to a workforce concentrated in a few core sectors, with growth strongest in service areas and weakness in several goods-moving industries.



In Fort Macleod, employment in 2025 was concentrated in a few sectors, led by educational services at 1,450 people. Manufacturing ranked second at 379, followed by health care and social assistance at 353 and retail trade at 302. Several other sectors were much smaller, including information and cultural industries at 5.

Figure 6.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Naics - Educational services (Fort Macleod)⁴

Establishments by Sector

Fort Macleod’s business base remained led by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, with 177 establishments in 2025. Construction followed at 65, while real estate and rental and leasing reached 94, up 11.9% from 2024.

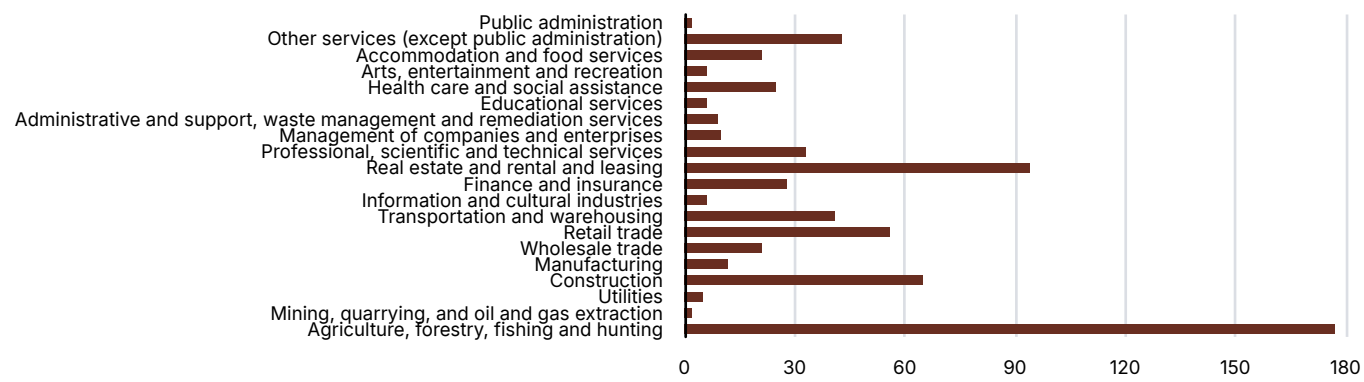


Figure 7.1: Shows how business establishments are distributed across sectors. It helps indicate the sector mix of the local business base. (Fort Macleod, 2025)¹

In 2025, Fort Macleod’s business base was led by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, with 177 establishments. Real estate and rental and leasing followed at 94, while construction had 65 and retail trade 56. These sectors define much of the local mix. Recent changes were mixed. Professional services rose 17.9% year over year, real estate increased 11.9%, and health care and social assistance grew 8.7%. By contrast, manufacturing fell 20.0% and administrative and support services dropped 25.0%, showing uneven momentum across sectors.

In 2025, Fort Macleod’s business base was led by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, with 177 establishments. Real estate and rental and leasing followed at 94, while construction accounted for 65 and retail trade for 56. This mix points to a small-town economy with a strong primary-sector presence alongside service and construction activity. Smaller counts in public administration and mining round out the picture.



Figure 7.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Naics - Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (Fort Macleod)¹

Establishments by Size

Fort Macleod’s establishments remained concentrated among firms without employees, at 515 in 2025, up 2.6% from 2024 but 9.7% below 2020. The 100 to 199 employee group rose to three, up 50% year over year.

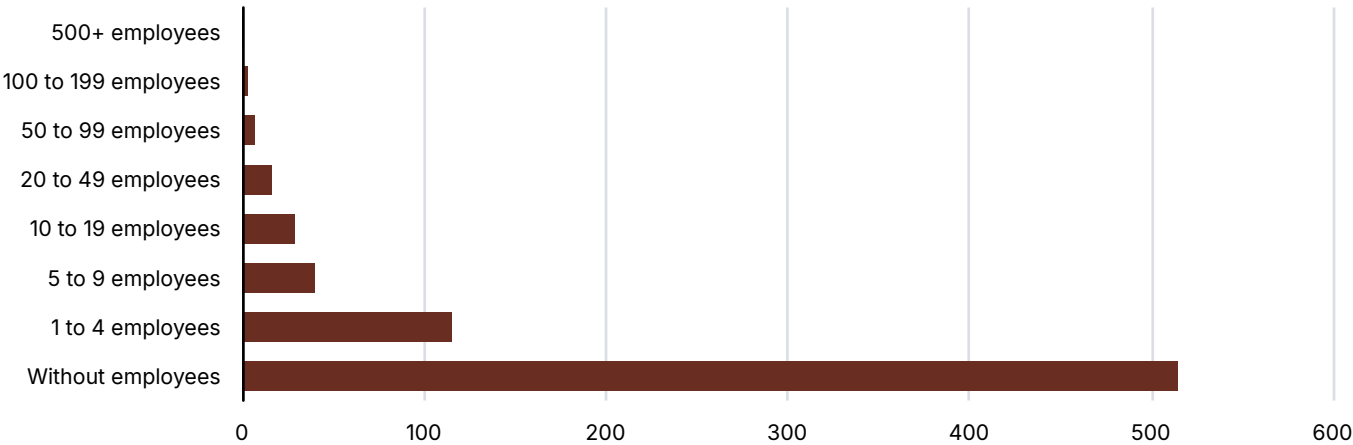
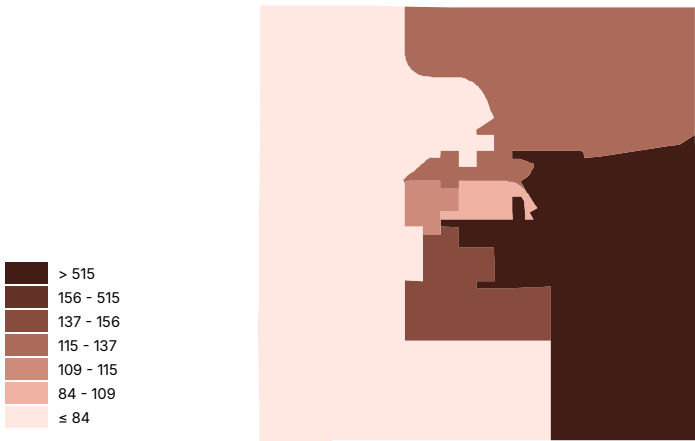


Figure 8.1: Shows how businesses are distributed by number of employees. It helps indicate whether the local economy is dominated by very small, small, or larger firms. (Fort Macleod, 2025)¹

Fort Macleod’s business base in 2025 is heavily weighted toward very small establishments. Among all business establishments, 515 had no employees, far more than any other size group. The next largest category was 1 to 4 employees, with 115 businesses, followed by 5 to 9 employees at 40 and 10 to 19 employees at 29. Larger firms were much less common. There were 16 establishments with 20 to 49 employees, 7 with 50 to 99, 3 with 100 to 199, and 1 with 500 or more. The recent pattern is mixed: no-employee firms rose 2.6% in the past year but were down 9.7% over five years. Some larger categories grew recently, though from small bases.



Fort Macleod’s business base in 2025 was heavily concentrated in very small establishments, led by 515 firms without employees. The next largest group was 1 to 4 employees, at 115 businesses, while 5 to 9 employees accounted for 40 and 10 to 19 employees for 29. Larger firms were much less common, with just 16 establishments in the 20 to 49 range and 1 with 500 or more employees. The pattern points to a local economy dominated by microbusinesses.

Figure 8.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Business Establishment Size - Without employees (Fort Macleod)¹

Labour Market Gap

Fort Macleod’s largest labour market gap was in educational services at 29.6, far above manufacturing at 5.2 and agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 3.5. Most other sectors were below 2.1.

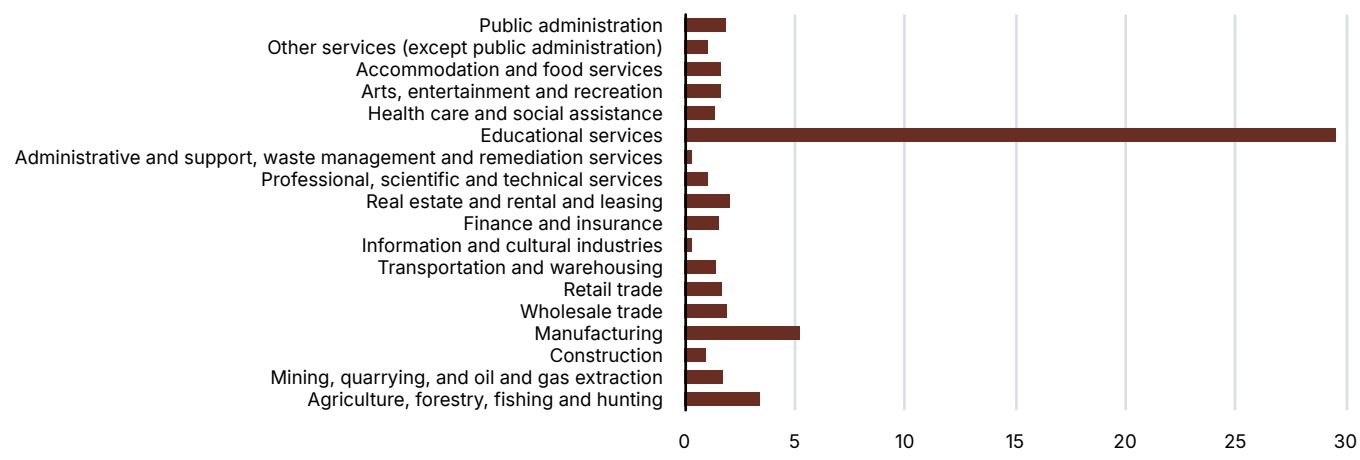
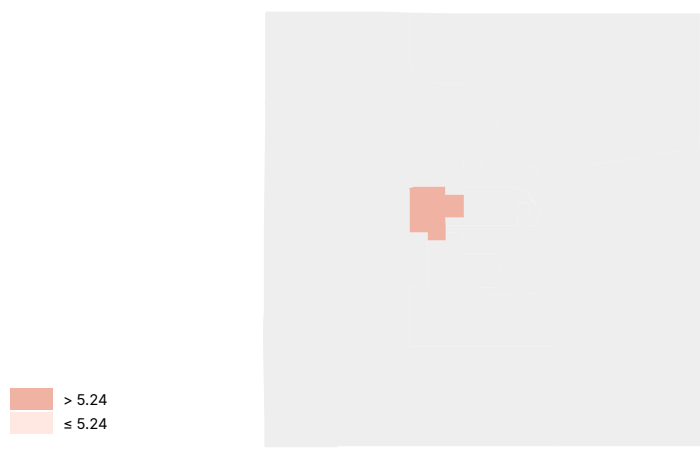


Figure 9.1: Shows the gap between the number of local jobs and the number of resident workers across all sectors. It helps indicate whether the area attracts workers in or sends workers out. (Fort Macleod, 2021)⁵

In 2021, Fort Macleod’s labour market gap was uneven across sectors, with most industries showing ratios close to 1, suggesting a relatively balanced local match between jobs and resident workers. Several sectors sat modestly above that level, including manufacturing at 5.2, agriculture at 3.5, and real estate at 2.1. The clear outlier was educational services, at 29.6, far above every other sector. Smaller gaps appeared in construction at 1.0 and information and cultural industries at 0.3. The pattern suggests that a few sectors, especially education, draw workers from outside the local resident workforce.



In 2021, Fort Macleod’s labour market gap was most pronounced in educational services, at 29.6, far above the other sectors. Manufacturing was a distant second at 5.2, followed by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 3.5 and real estate and rental and leasing at 2.1. Many other sectors were near or below 2.0, suggesting a mixed local balance between jobs and resident workers. The pattern is not uniform within the area. One nearby dissemination area shows especially large gaps in manufacturing, at 41.9, and construction, at 5.7.

Figure 9.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Industry Sector - Manufacturing (Fort Macleod)⁵

Largest Sectors

Educational services employed the most people in Fort Macleod in 2025 at 1,450, up 2.8% from a year earlier but down 2.2% over five years. Health care and social assistance rose 41.2% to 353.

Fort Macleod’s employment base in 2025 is led by educational services, which accounts for 1,450 people and stands well ahead of every other sector in the dataset. Health care and social assistance is the next largest at 353 people, followed by manufacturing at 379 and retail trade at 302, while construction employs 155. The recent pattern is mixed. Educational services grew modestly over the past year, up 2.8%, but is still 2.2%

below its level five years earlier. Health care and social assistance shows the strongest momentum, rising 41.2% in one year and 15.0% over five years. Construction also expanded, with 23.0% five-year growth, while manufacturing is nearly flat over five years despite a 39.1% one-year decline. Retail trade rose 10.6% in the past year and 5.2% over five years.

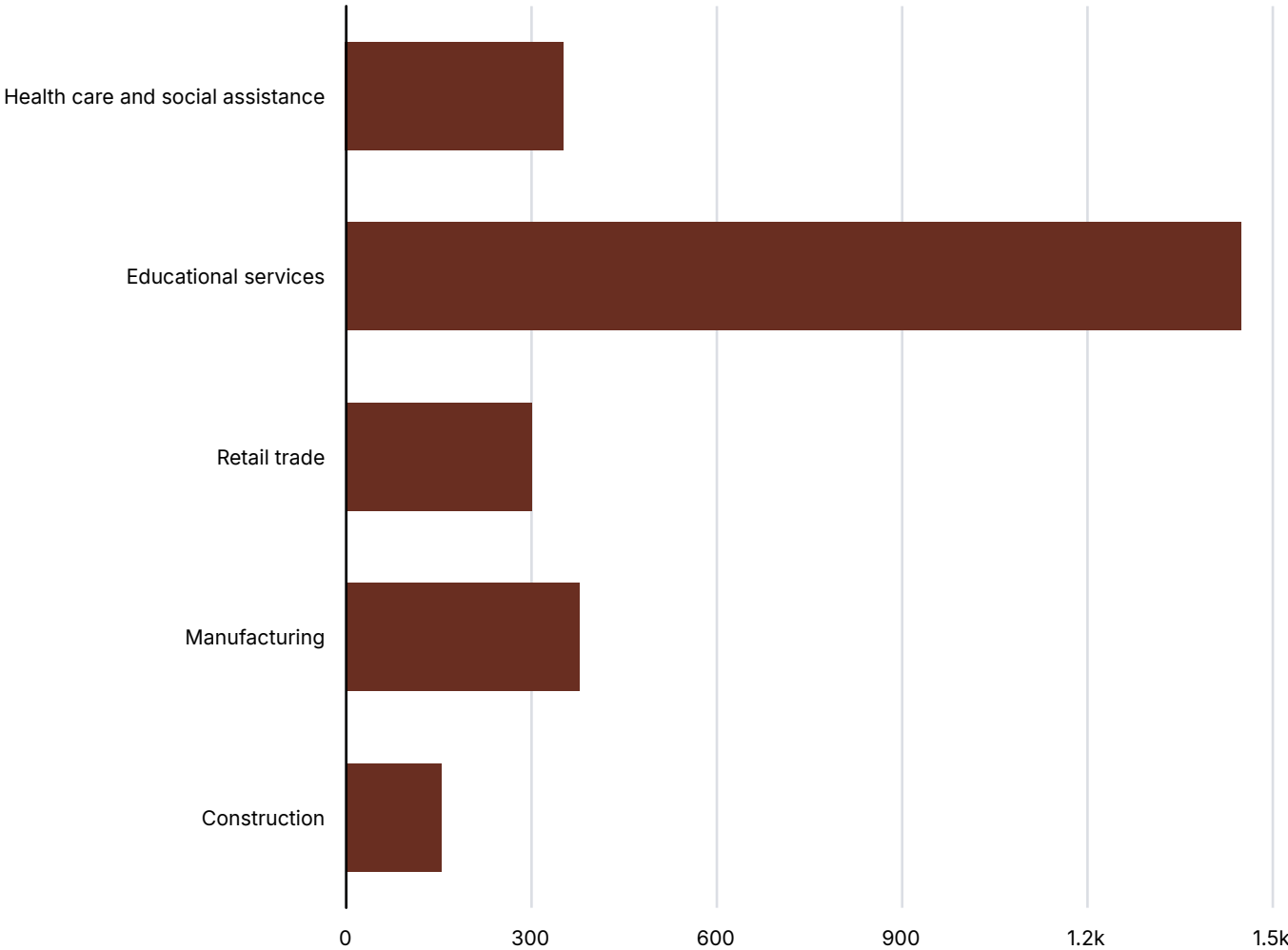


Figure 10.1: Shows the sectors employing the most people. It helps identify the largest pillars of the local economy. (Fort Macleod, 2025)⁴

Anchor Sectors

Fort Macleod’s largest anchor sector in 2025 was manufacturing, with a location quotient of 1.3135. It also had the largest five-year increase, up 14.21%, despite a 34.17% decline over the past year.

Fort Macleod’s anchor sectors profile is led by Manufacturing, which in 2025 posted a location quotient of 1.3 among employees aged 15 years and over. That level points to a specialization above the benchmark implicit in the measure, while the change figures suggest a mixed trend in concentration. The sector’s 1-year change was -34.2%, indicating a sharp recent decline, but the 5-year change was 14.2%, showing that the longer run still ended above its earlier level. The pattern is therefore

less about rapid expansion than about a specialized sector whose strength has become less pronounced in the short term. Because no comparator location or broader benchmark is provided beyond the location quotient itself, the data support only a cautious reading: Manufacturing remains an anchor sector for Fort Macleod, but its recent momentum has weakened even as the five-year record remains positive.

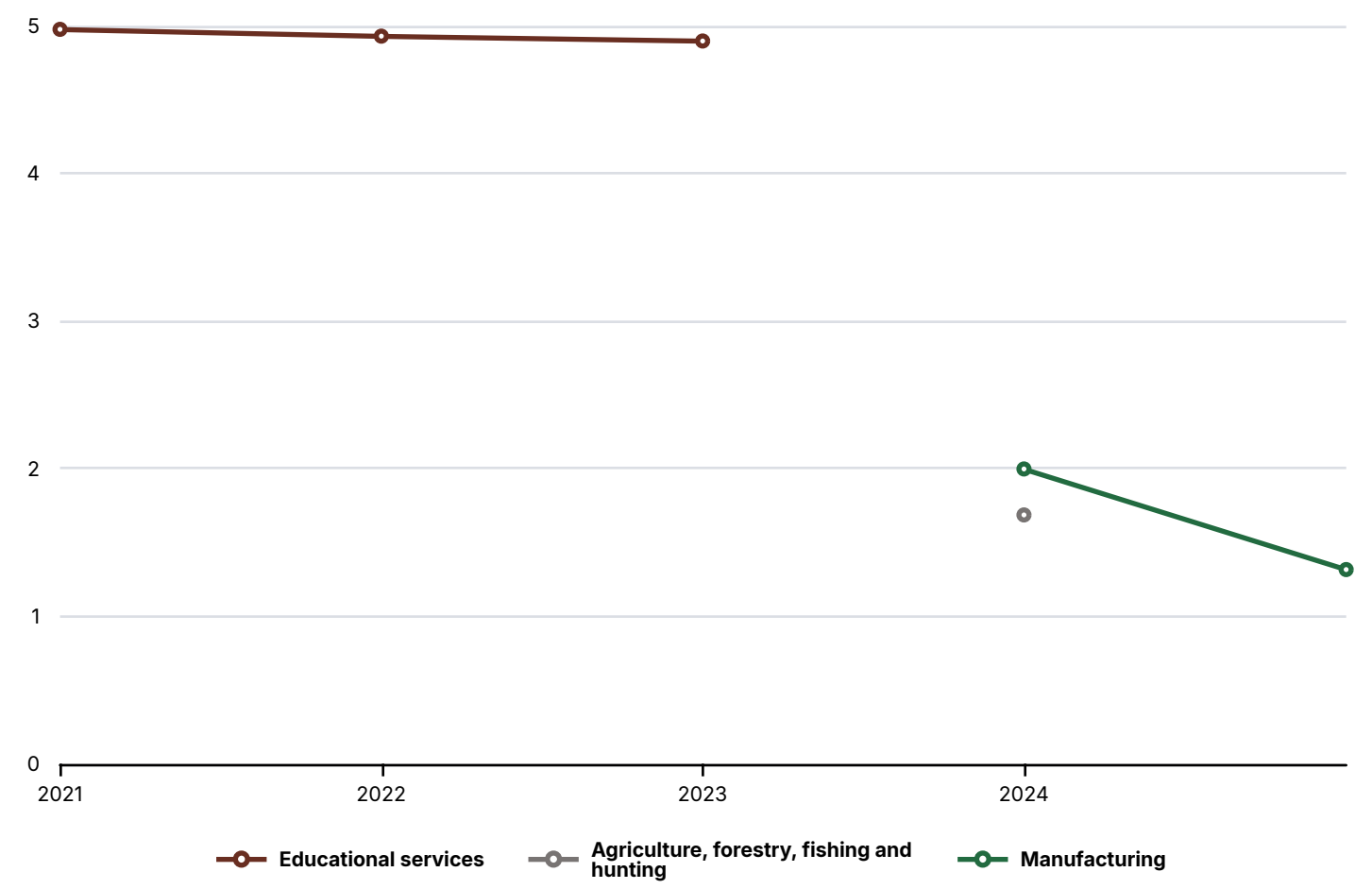


Figure 11.1: Shows major industry sectors where the local economy has strong specialization but relatively stable or declining concentration over time. Sectors are categorized based on specialization (location quotient) and recent employment growth or change in concentration. (Fort Macleod, 2021-2025)³

Micro Establishments Share

Fort Macleod’s manufacturing micro-establishments share fell to 33.3% in 2025, the lowest among sectors shown, after dropping 28.7% in one year and 20.9% over five years.

Fort Macleod’s business base is heavily tilted toward micro establishments in several sectors, with shares at or near 100% in utilities, information and cultural industries, and management of companies and enterprises in 2025. The pattern is more mixed in other parts of the local economy, where very small firms still dominate but leave more room for larger operations. Among the broader sectors, agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting stands at 96.0%, real estate and rental and leasing at 98.9%, and professional, scientific and technical services at 90.9%. At

the lower end, manufacturing is at 33.3%, while mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction is 50.0% and arts, entertainment and recreation is also 50.0%. The recent movement is uneven. Manufacturing fell 28.7% over the past year, while health care and social assistance rose 5.1% and educational services were up 66.6% over five years. The data points to a local business structure where very small firms are the norm in most sectors, but not across every industry.

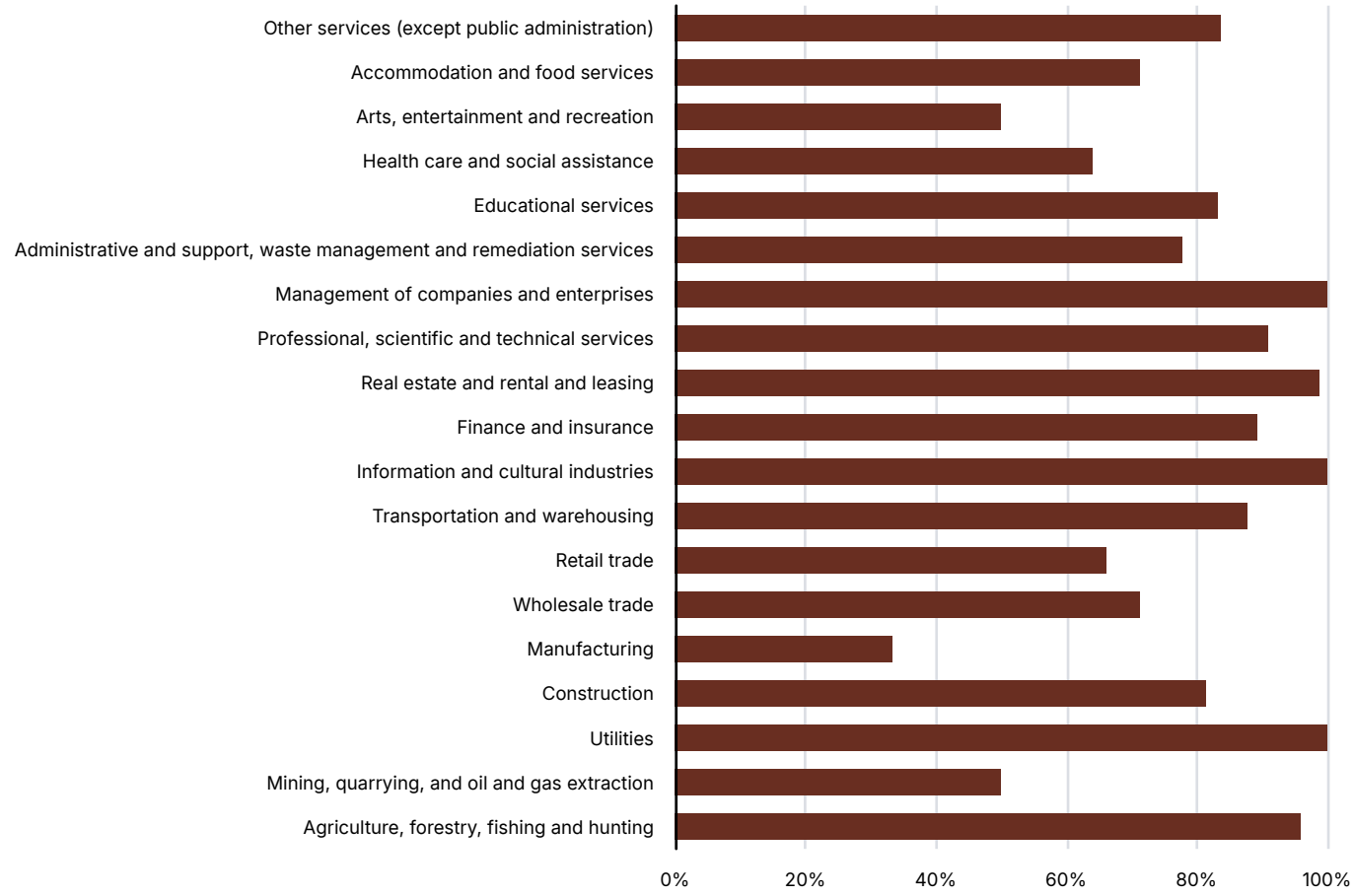


Figure 12.1: Shows the share of businesses with 0 to 4 employees. It helps indicate how much the local business base is made up of very small firms. (Fort Macleod, 2025)⁶

Specialist Sectors (LQ)

Fort Macleod’s most specialized sector is educational services at 5.4419 LQ, followed by agriculture at 1.7893 and manufacturing at 1.3135. Health care and social assistance, at 0.8259, posted the fastest recent increase, up 46.8% year over year.

Fort Macleod’s specialist sector profile in 2025 is led by educational services, which has the strongest employment concentration at a location quotient of 5.4. That is well above the other sectors listed, where agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting stands at 1.8, manufacturing at 1.3, mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction at 0.9, and health care and social assistance at 0.8. The recent change data show mixed momentum. Educational services rose 7.3% over the past year and 2.6% over five years, while agriculture increased 6.3% in the past year but de-

clined 5.1% over five years. Manufacturing shows the sharpest recent drop, down 34.2% in one year, despite a 14.2% rise over five years. Compared with the other sectors in the table, Fort Macleod’s specialization is clearly concentrated in education, with the remaining sectors clustered much lower. The time trend suggests that concentration is not static, with some sectors strengthening recently and others weakening after longer-term gains.

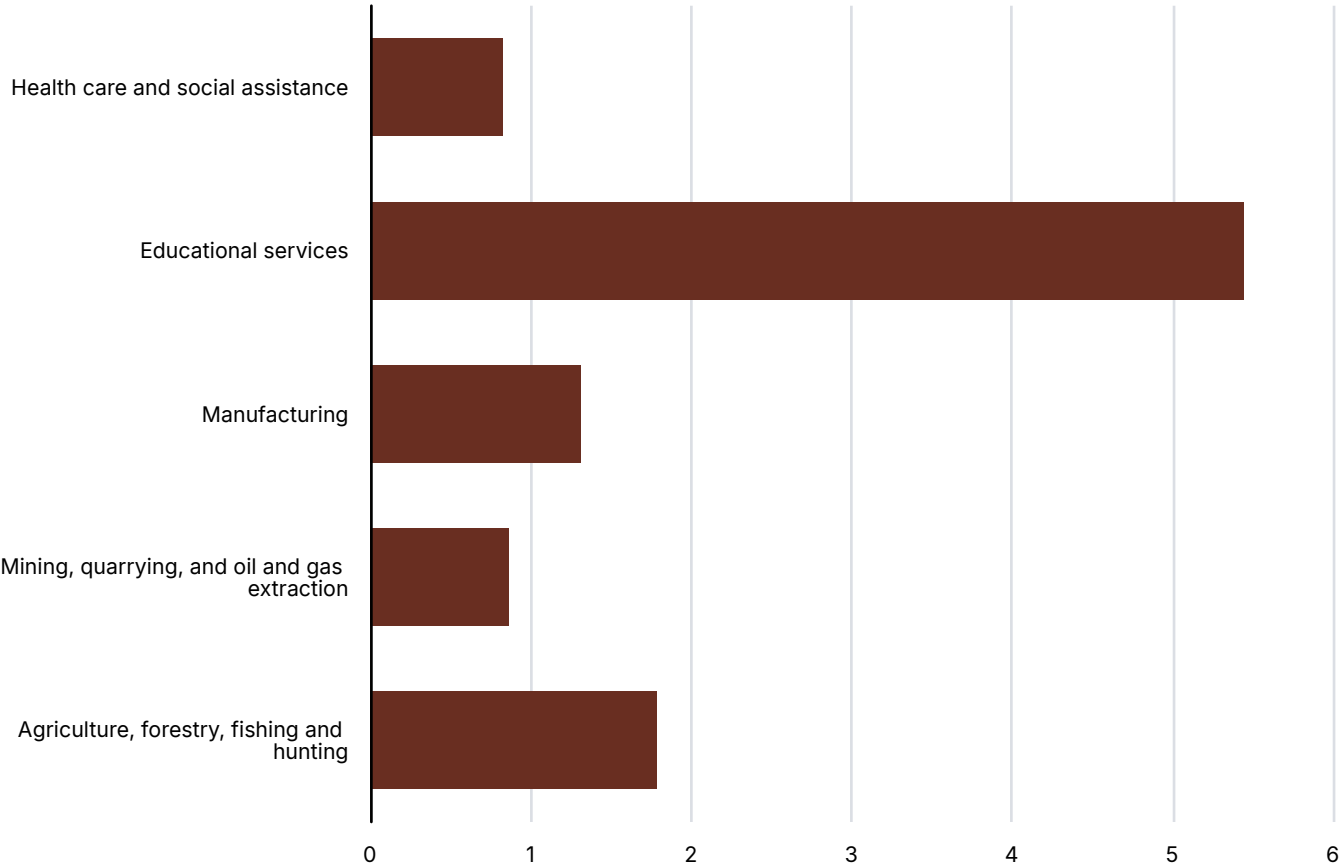


Figure 13.1: Shows sectors where the local economy has the highest level of specialization based on employment concentration compared with the national average. Sectors are categorized based on specialization (location quotient) and recent employment growth or change in concentration. (Fort Macleod, 2025)³

Declining Industries

Fort Macleod’s largest declining industry had 84 employees in 2025, down 77.3% from a year earlier and 50.0% over five years. Agricultural supplies merchant wholesalers fell to 6 employees, down 90.6% and 90.2%.

Fort Macleod’s declining industries in 2025 show a narrow set of local job losses concentrated in a few sectors. The largest decline was in meat product manufacturing, which employed 84 people and was down 77.3% from a year earlier and 50% over five years. Agricultural supplies merchant wholesalers were much smaller, with 6 employees, but the drop was steeper: down 90.6% in one year and 90.2% over five years. Florists had the smallest count, at 1 employee, and fell 66.7% over the past

year. Taken together, the pattern points to contractions across both a larger manufacturing activity and much smaller trade and retail niches. The declines are not limited to one time horizon, since two of the industries also show substantial five-year losses. For Fort Macleod, the data suggest that job losses are concentrated in a few declining industries rather than spread evenly across the local economy.

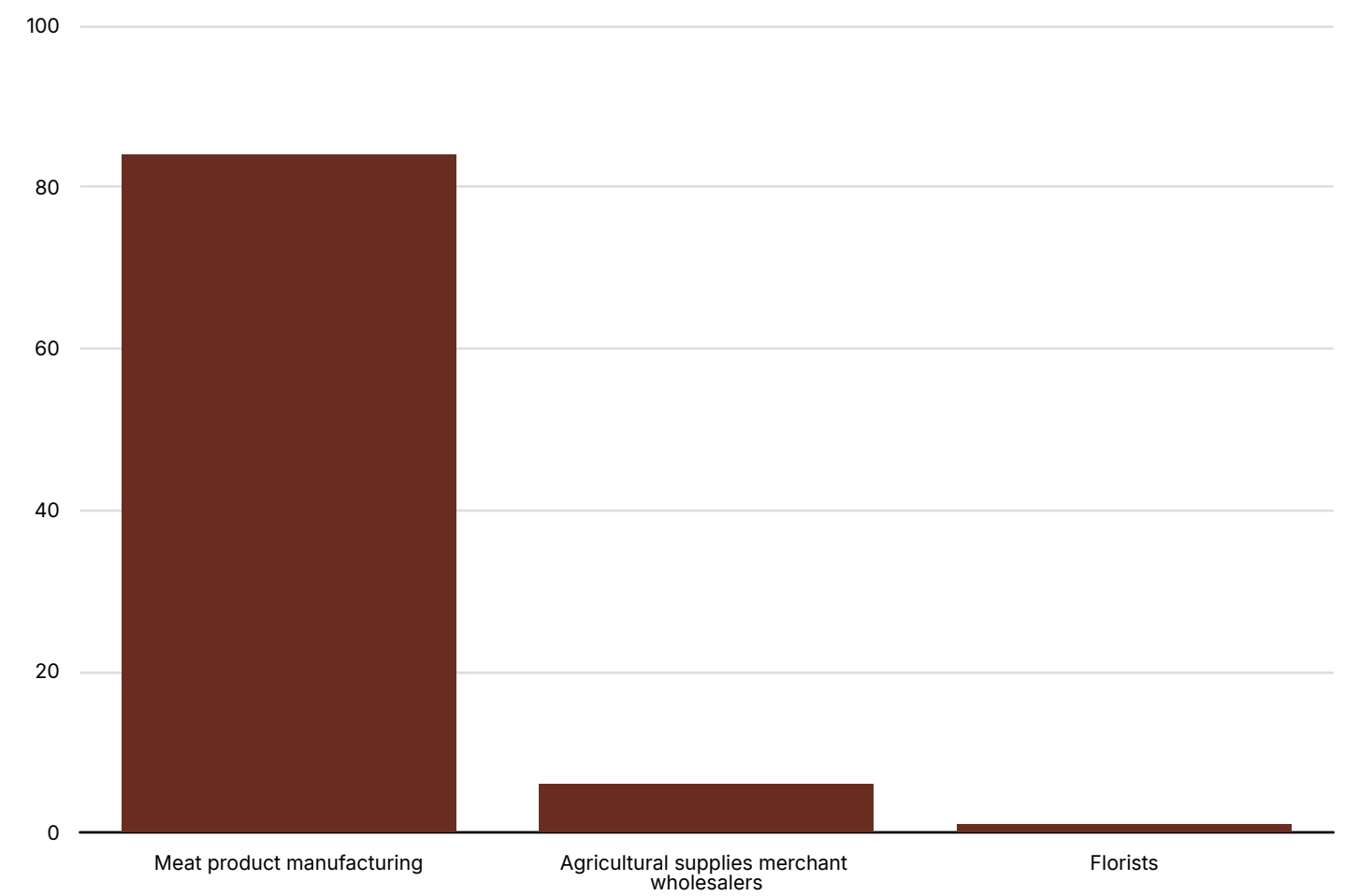


Figure 14.1: Shows industries where employment has decreased the most over the selected time period. It helps identify parts of the local economy that are losing jobs. (Fort Macleod, 2025)⁴

Largest Industries

Elementary and secondary schools employed the most people in Fort Macleod in 2025, at 1,448, up 2.9% from a year earlier and down 1.0% over five years. Automobile dealers grew fastest, rising 127.5% to 91.

In Fort Macleod, employment in 2025 was led by elementary and secondary schools, which accounted for 1,448 people and far exceeded every other industry in the table. The next largest employers were specialty hospitals at 150, veneer, plywood and engineered wood product manufacturing at 100, and nursing care facilities at 100. The industrial mix also shows smaller but notable job bases in automobile dealers with 91 workers, full-service restaurants and limited-service eating places with 87, meat product manufacturing with 84, and other local, municipal and regional public administration with 75. Grocery and conve-

nience retailers employed 64 people, while automotive repair and maintenance had 63. Recent change was uneven. Automobile dealers grew 127.5% over one year, nursing care facilities doubled, and public administration rose 114.3% over five years. By contrast, meat product manufacturing fell 77.3% in a year and 50% over five years. The pattern points to a local economy anchored by education and supported by health care, retail, and public services, with some manufacturing and service industries showing sharper shifts.

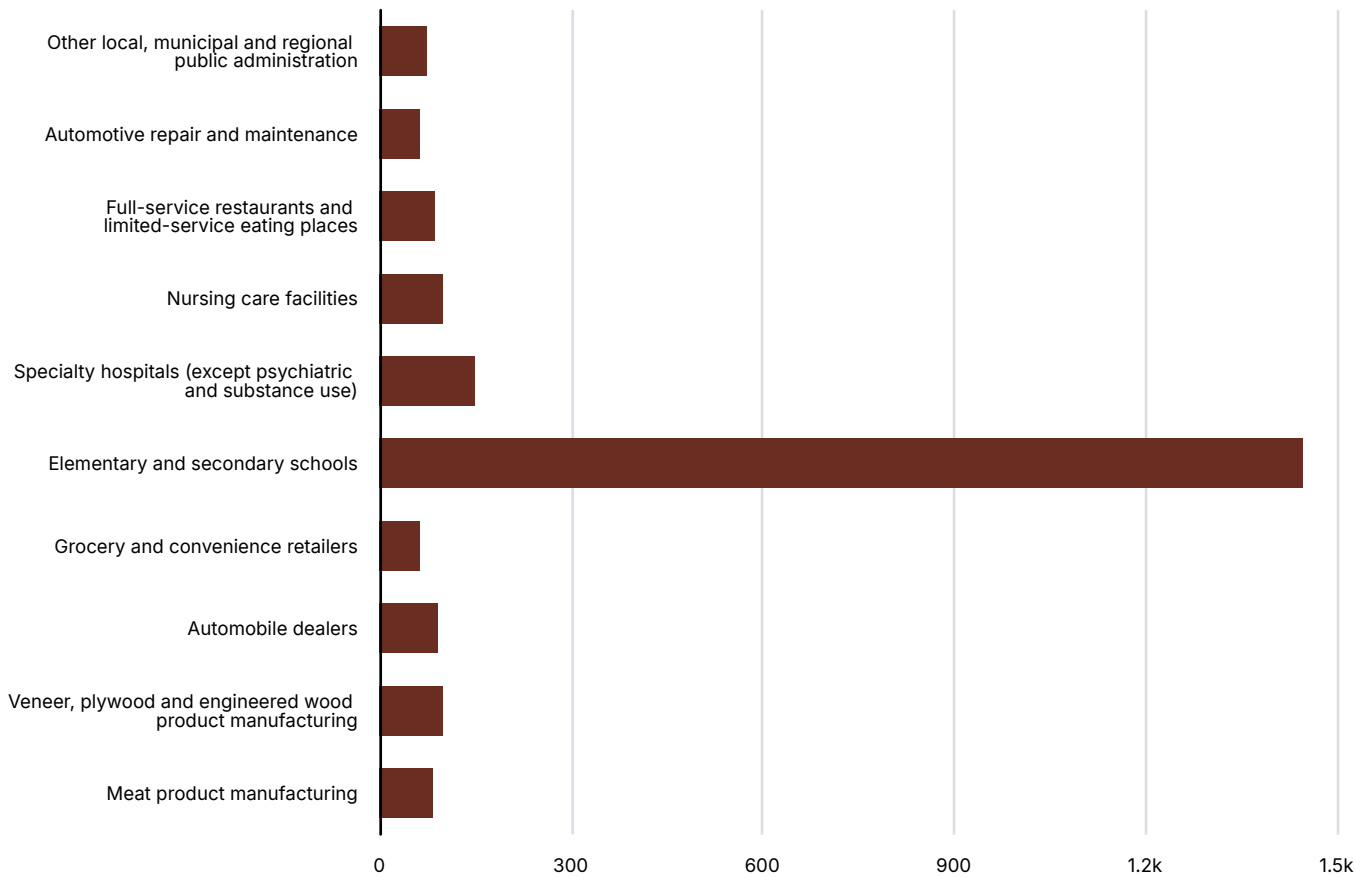


Figure 15.1: Shows the industries with the highest employment. It helps identify the biggest sources of jobs in the local economy. (Fort Macleod, 2025)⁴

Data Sources

1. Statistics Canada, Business Register. Published in Jun 1, 2025.
2. Statistics Canada, Census Profile. Published in Dec 15, 2022.
3. Statistics Canada, Business Register; Localintel, Employment Location Quotient by Industry Estimates of Census Areas. Published in Mar 13, 2026.
4. Statistics Canada, Business Register; Localintel, Employment by Industry Estimates of Census Areas. Published in Mar 13, 2026.
5. Statistics Canada, Business Register; Statistics Canada, Census Profile; Localintel, Labour Market Gap Estimates of Census Areas. Published in Mar 13, 2026.
6. Statistics Canada, Business Register; Localintel, Micro Establishments Share of Census Areas. Published in Mar 13, 2026.

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