



CARDSTON

Accommodation and Food Services

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Executive Summary

Cardston's accommodation and food services sector presents a mixed picture of growth, contraction, and internal change. The local resident labour force tied to the sector expanded strongly between 2016 and 2021, rising from 70 to 115 people, which points to a larger pool of residents working in hospitality-related activity. By 2021, the town sat in the middle of its nearby peers on this measure, above some smaller neighbours but below larger local centres. At the same time, the sector's labour market gap ratio of 1.13 suggests jobs slightly exceeded resident workers, indicating a modest net surplus of sector jobs rather than a large imbalance.

By 2025, however, the business and employment base looked softer than earlier in the period. Total sector employment stood at 96, down slightly from 2024 and below both 2020 and the 2021 peak of 130. The number of establishments had recovered to 19 after falling to 16 in 2024, but that rebound still left the sector below its earlier high of 25 in 2020. The structure of the sector remained narrow and small-scale, with very small businesses making up most of the local base. Restaurants continued to anchor employment, with 73 workers, yet they also accounted for the clearest decline, slipping both over the past year and over five years. In contrast, traveller accommodation remained much smaller but showed the strongest upward movement, with employment and specialization both rising from a lower base. Recreational vehicle parks and camps were present only marginally and moved unevenly.

The result is a sector that has not disappeared or broadly weakened across every segment, but has shifted within a smaller overall footprint. Cardston still has a visible accommodation and food services base, led by restaurants and supported by a recent rebound in business counts, yet the longer pattern is one of contraction from earlier highs rather than sustained expansion. Growth in traveller accommodation stands out as the main counterweight to softer restaurant activity, leaving a hospitality sector that is active but modest, uneven, and still below its earlier scale.

Resident Labour Force in Sector

Cardston’s resident labour force in the sector rose to 115 people in 2021, up from 70 in 2016. That represents a 64.3% increase over five years.

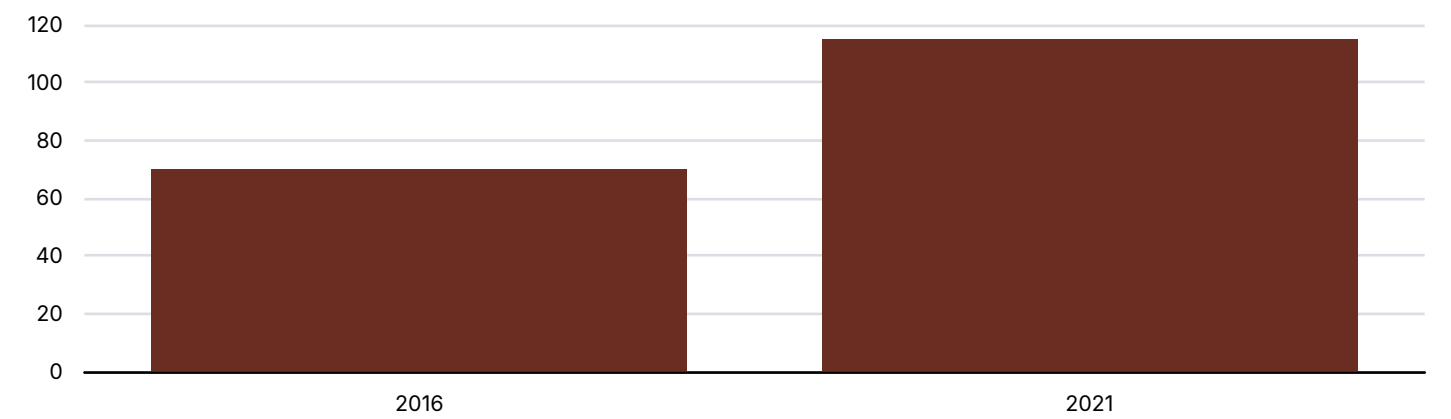


Figure 1.1: Shows the number of resident workers in a specific sector. It helps indicate how many local residents are employed in that part of the economy. (Cardston, 2016-2021)¹

Cardston’s resident labour force in accommodation and food services increased between 2016 and 2021. The number of local residents working in this sector rose from 70 people in 2016 to 115 in 2021, within the labour force aged 15 years and over. That change equals 64.3% over five years, showing a clear upward shift in the sector’s resident workforce. The data provides only these two time points, so the main pattern is recent growth rather than a broader long-term trend.

In accommodation and food services, Cardston had 115 resident workers in 2021, up from 70 in 2016. That 64.3% increase points to a notable rise in the local labour force tied to this sector. Among the nearby locations listed, Cardston’s 2021 total was below Claresholm’s 135 and Pincher Creek’s 145, but above Fort Macleod’s 70 and Cardston County’s 75. Several peers had smaller or flat totals, including Magrath at 15 and Hill Spring and Glenwood at 0. The pattern places Cardston in the middle of the group, with stronger recent growth than many neighbours.

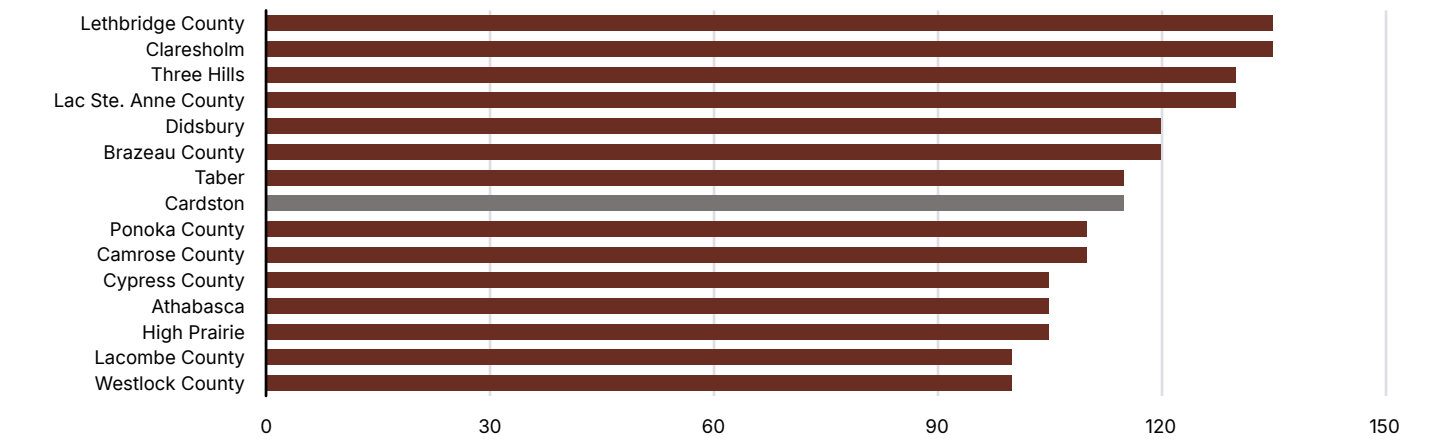


Figure 1.2: Comparison of Resident Labour Force in Sector with other locations (Cardston, 2021)¹

Largest Industries in Sector

Cardston’s largest sector employer is full-service and limited-service eating places with 73 people, down 2.7% from a year earlier and 28.4% over five years. Traveller accom-
modation follows at 22 people, while RV parks and camps employ 1.

Cardston’s accommodation and food services sector is concen-
trated in a few industries, with restaurants the largest employer
and traveller accommodation showing the strongest recent
growth. The data cover employees aged 15 years and over in
2025. Full-service restaurants and limited-service eating places
employed 73 people, making it the clear lead within the sector.
Traveller accommodation ranked second with 22 people, while
recreational vehicle parks and recreational camps had just 1.
Together, these three industries account for the sector’s visible

employment base in Cardston. The recent trend is mixed. Trav-
eller accommodation increased by 10 people over 1 year and
was up 100% over 5 years. By contrast, restaurants edged
down by 2.7% in the past year and fell 28.4% over 5 years. RV
parks and camps dropped by 50% over 1 year, although the 5-
year change was flat. The pattern points to a small sector that
is still anchored by food service, even as accommodation has
expanded from a smaller base.

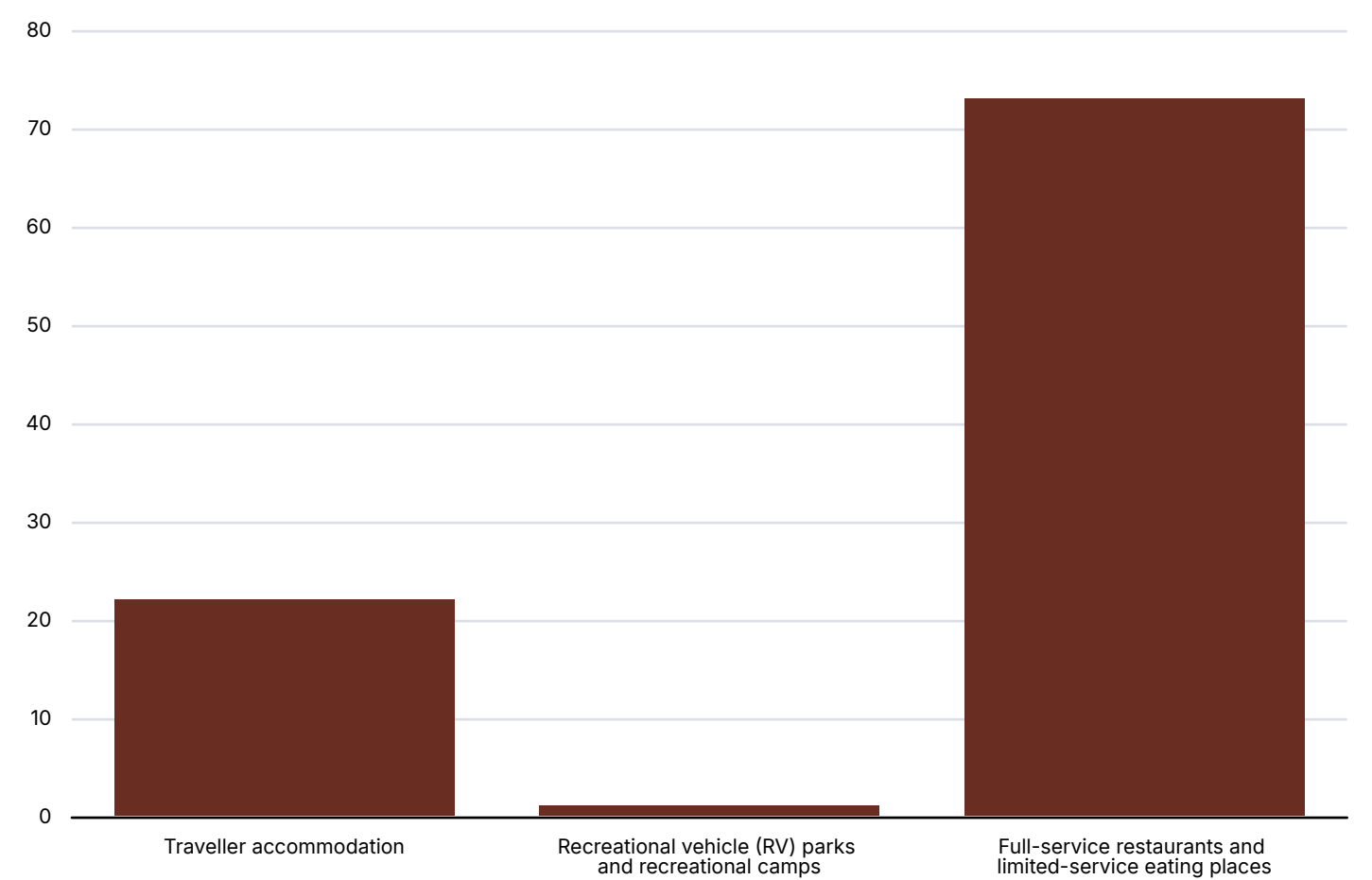


Figure 2.1: Shows the industries within this sector with the highest employment. It helps identify the biggest components of the sector. (Cardston, 2025)²

Declining Industries in Sector

Cardston’s largest declining industry was full-service restaurants and limited-service eating places, with 73 employees, down 2.7% from a year earlier and 28.4% over five years. RV parks and camps had 1 employee, down 50.0% year over year.

Cardston’s accommodation and food services employment shows a mixed pattern in 2025, with one large industry declining while another smaller one expanded. The clearest drop is in full-service restaurants and limited-service eating places, which remain the largest segment but have weakened over the period. That industry employed 73 people, down 2.7% over the past year and 28.4% over five years. Recreational vehicle parks and recreational camps employed just 1 person, after a 50.0% one-year decline, though the five-year change was flat. Trav-

eller accommodation employed 22 people and posted gains of 10.0% over one year and 100.0% over five years. The sector’s recent weakness is therefore concentrated in restaurants, while accommodation is growing from a smaller base. That combination suggests the sector’s internal balance has shifted, even if the largest employer still dominates local activity. In Cardston, the main decline is not broad-based across all hospitality industries, but centered on restaurants.

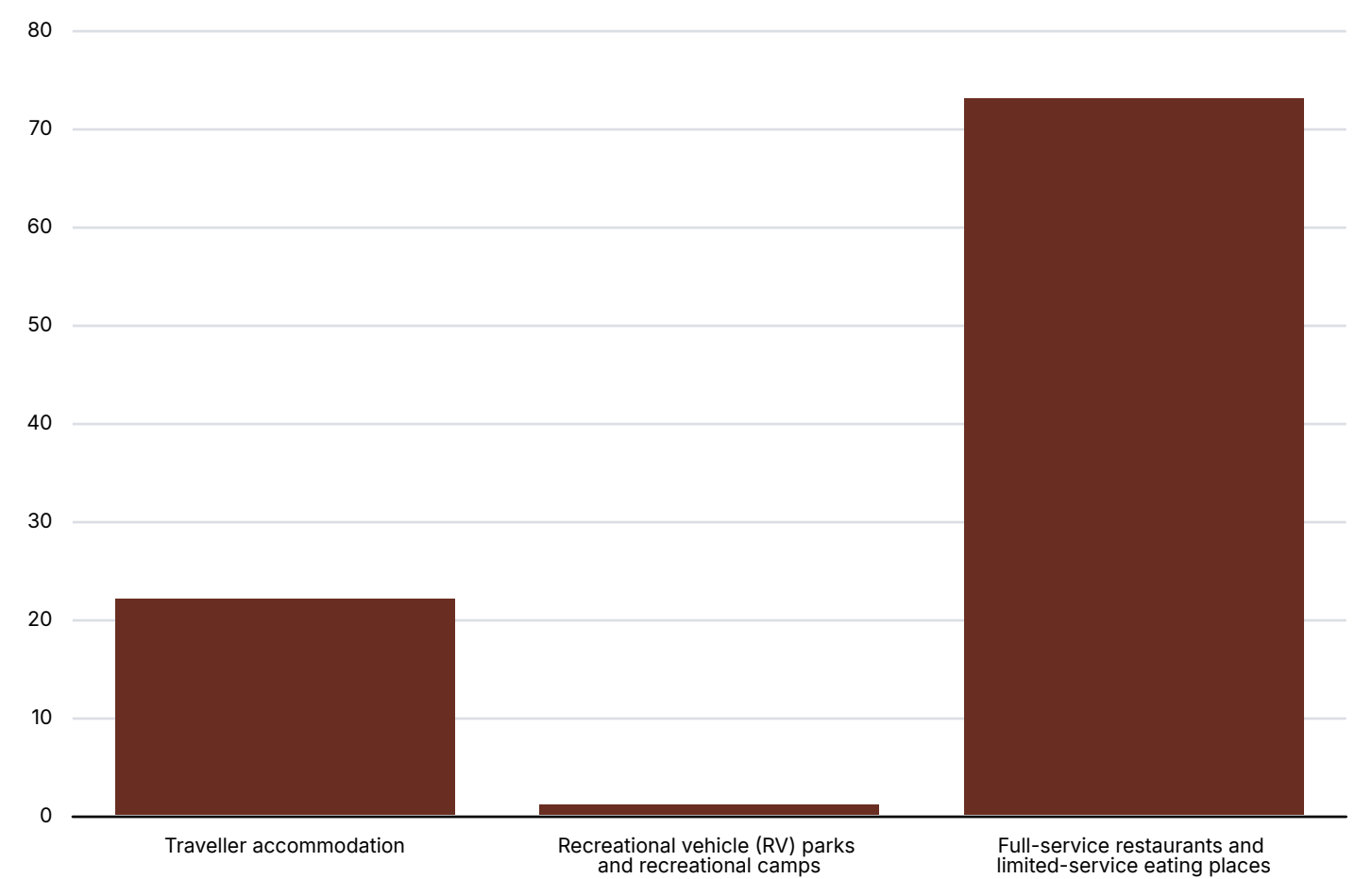


Figure 3.1: Shows industries within this sector where employment has decreased the most over the selected time period. It helps identify segments of the sector that are losing jobs. (Cardston, 2025)²

Establishments in Sector

Cardston had 19 business establishments in 2025, up 18.8% from 2024. That followed a 24.0% decline over five years, with the count falling from 25 in 2020 to 16 in 2024.

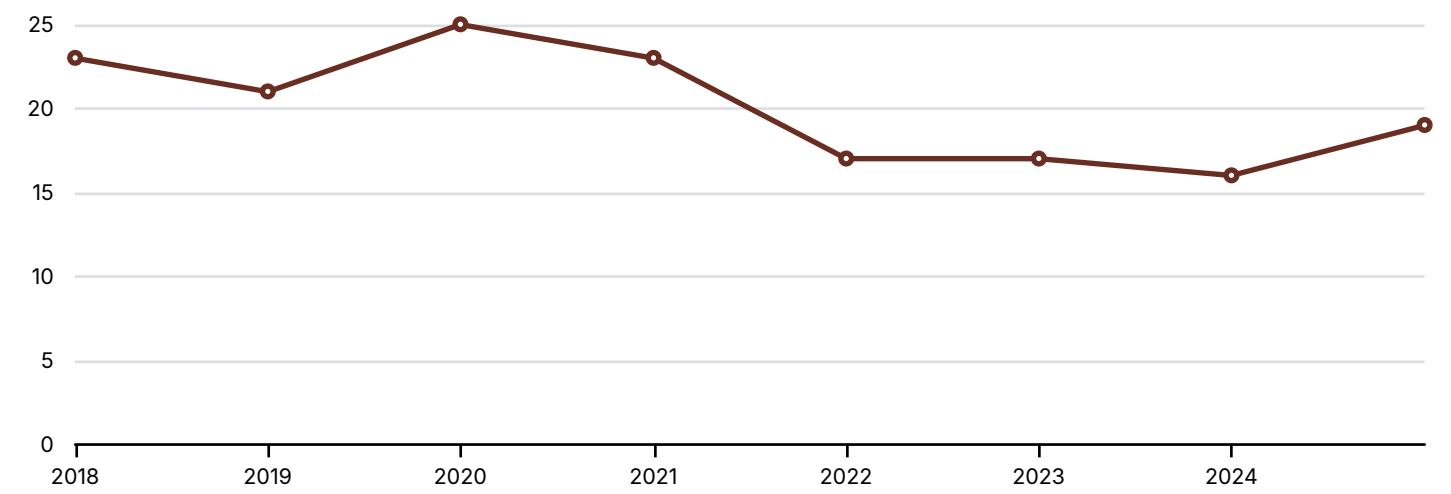
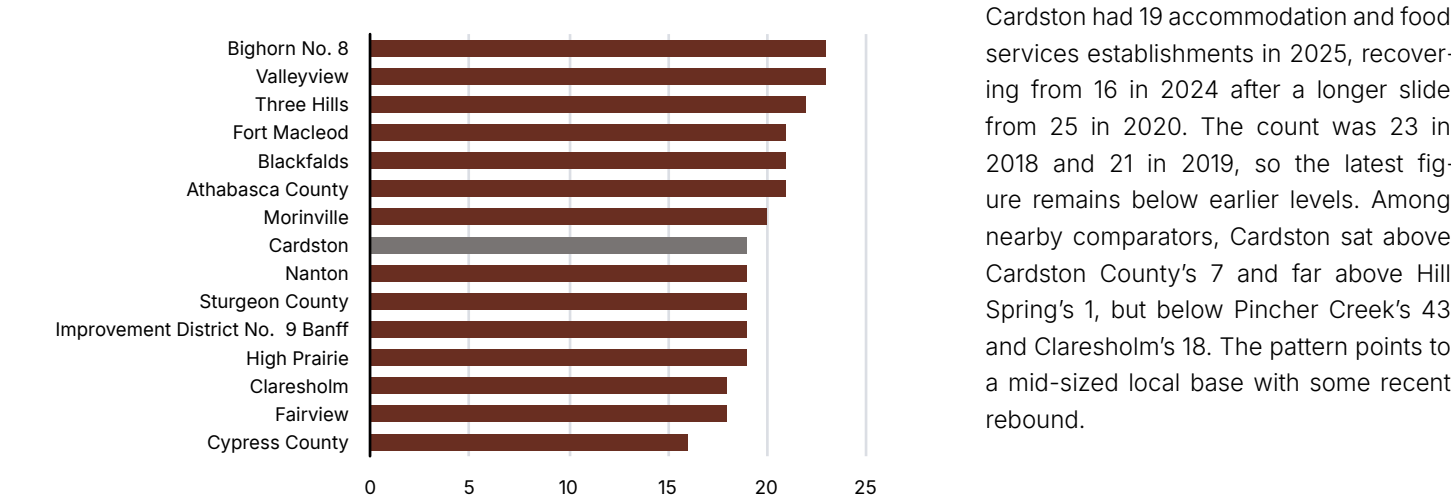


Figure 4.1: Shows the number of business establishments in a specific sector. It helps indicate the scale of business activity in that sector. (Cardston, 2018-2025)³

Cardston's accommodation and food services sector had 19 business establishments in 2025. The count has moved unevenly in recent years, showing a short-term rebound after a lower point in 2024. The series peaked at 25 establishments in 2020, then fell to 23 in 2021 and 17 in both 2022 and 2023. It slipped again to 16 in 2024 before rising by 18.8% to 19 in 2025. That 2025 increase followed a 5.9% decline in 2024 and left the sector below its 2023 level by 24%. Compared with the 2020 peak, the current count is still lower. The pattern suggests a sector that has not yet returned to its earlier size, even with the latest improvement.



Cardston had 19 accommodation and food services establishments in 2025, recovering from 16 in 2024 after a longer slide from 25 in 2020. The count was 23 in 2018 and 21 in 2019, so the latest figure remains below earlier levels. Among nearby comparators, Cardston sat above Cardston County's 7 and far above Hill Spring's 1, but below Pincher Creek's 43 and Claresholm's 18. The pattern points to a mid-sized local base with some recent rebound.

Figure 4.2: Comparison of Establishments in Sector with other locations (Cardston, 2025)³

Specialist Industries in Sector

Cardston’s most specialized industry is traveller accommodation at 0.7944, up 14.1% over one year and 83.9% over five years. RV parks rank second at 0.2341, while restaurants are 0.4469, with a 29.5% five-year decline.

Cardston’s accommodation and food services sector shows its strongest specialization in traveller accommodation in 2025. Within employees aged 15 years and over, this industry has the highest location quotient in the sector at 0.7944, ahead of full-service restaurants and limited-service eating places at 0.4469 and RV parks and recreational camps at 0.2341. The recent movement is mixed. Traveller accommodation rose 14.1% over the past year and 83.8% over five years, suggesting a clear upward trend in concentration. RV parks and recreational camps

fell 51.2% over one year, though it remained 7.5% higher than five years earlier. Restaurants were nearly flat in the short term, up 0.5% over one year, but down 29.5% over five years. The pattern points to a sector where specialization is concentrated in one industry, while the other two are less specialized and have followed weaker or more uneven paths. In Cardston, the sector’s recent momentum is led by traveller accommodation, not by the broader food-service mix.

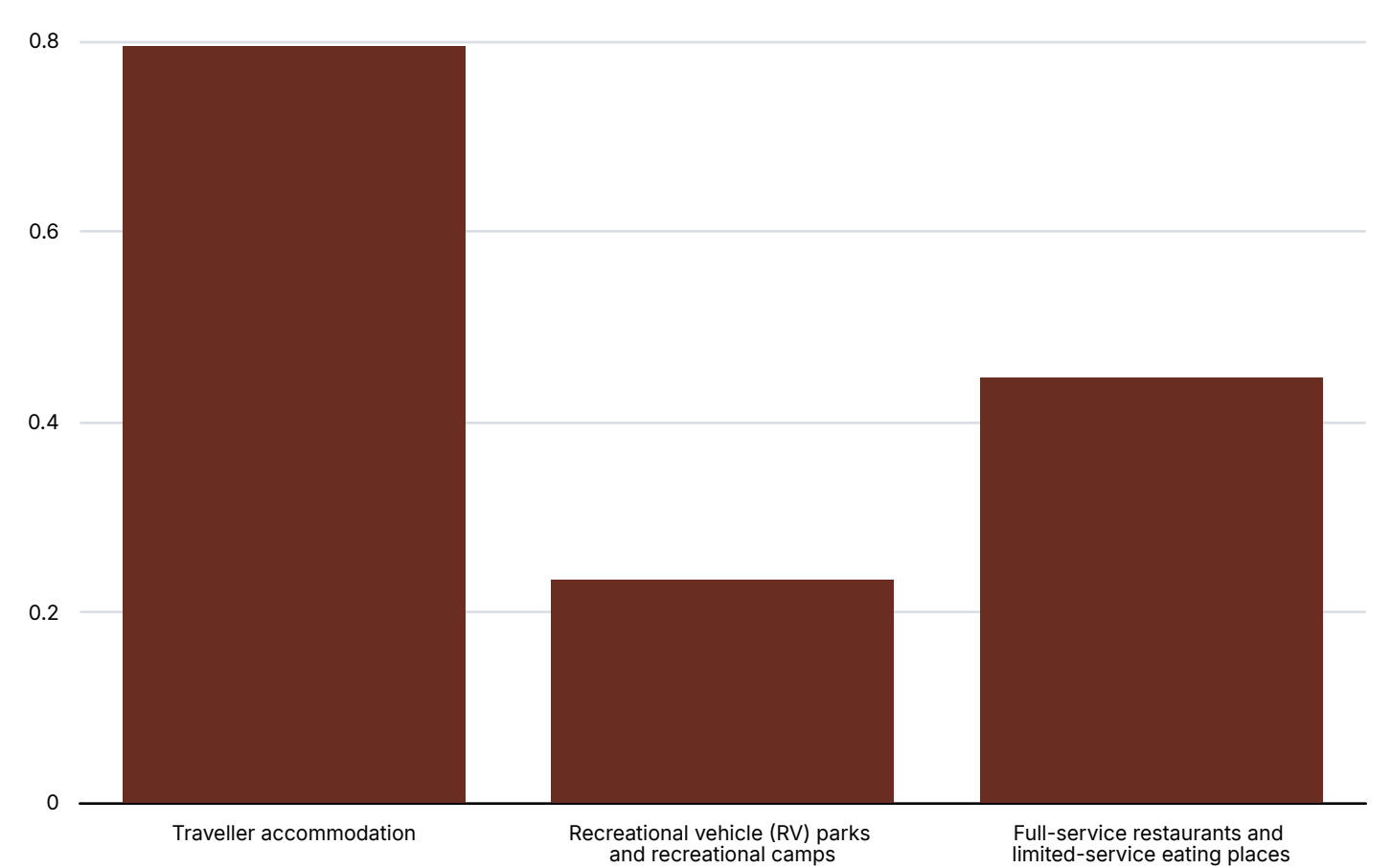


Figure 5.1: Shows industries within this sector where the local economy has the highest level of specialization based on employment concentration. Industries are categorized based on specialization (location quotient) and recent employment growth or change in concentration. (Cardston, 2025)⁴

Transitioning Industries in Sector

Cardston’s transitioning industries are led by recreational vehicle parks and recreational camps at 0.2341, down 51.2% in one year but up 7.5% over five years. Traveller accommodation and restaurants also remain below 1.0.

Cardston’s accommodation and food services sector shows a narrow transition point in recreational vehicle parks and recreational camps. In 2025, the industry posted a location quotient of 0.2341, indicating relatively low specialization in the local economy. The recent change is more striking than the current level. Employment in this industry was down 51.2% over the past year, while the five-year change was 7.5%. That combination points to a sharp recent decline after a modest longer-term

increase. Because no comparator is provided, the main story is the contrast between short-term weakness and longer-term stability. The industry remains present, but its concentration is limited and recent momentum has moved downward. For Cardston, this suggests a small and uneven role for this type of accommodation activity within the sector. The data do not show why the shift occurred, only that the latest year was much weaker than the five-year trend.

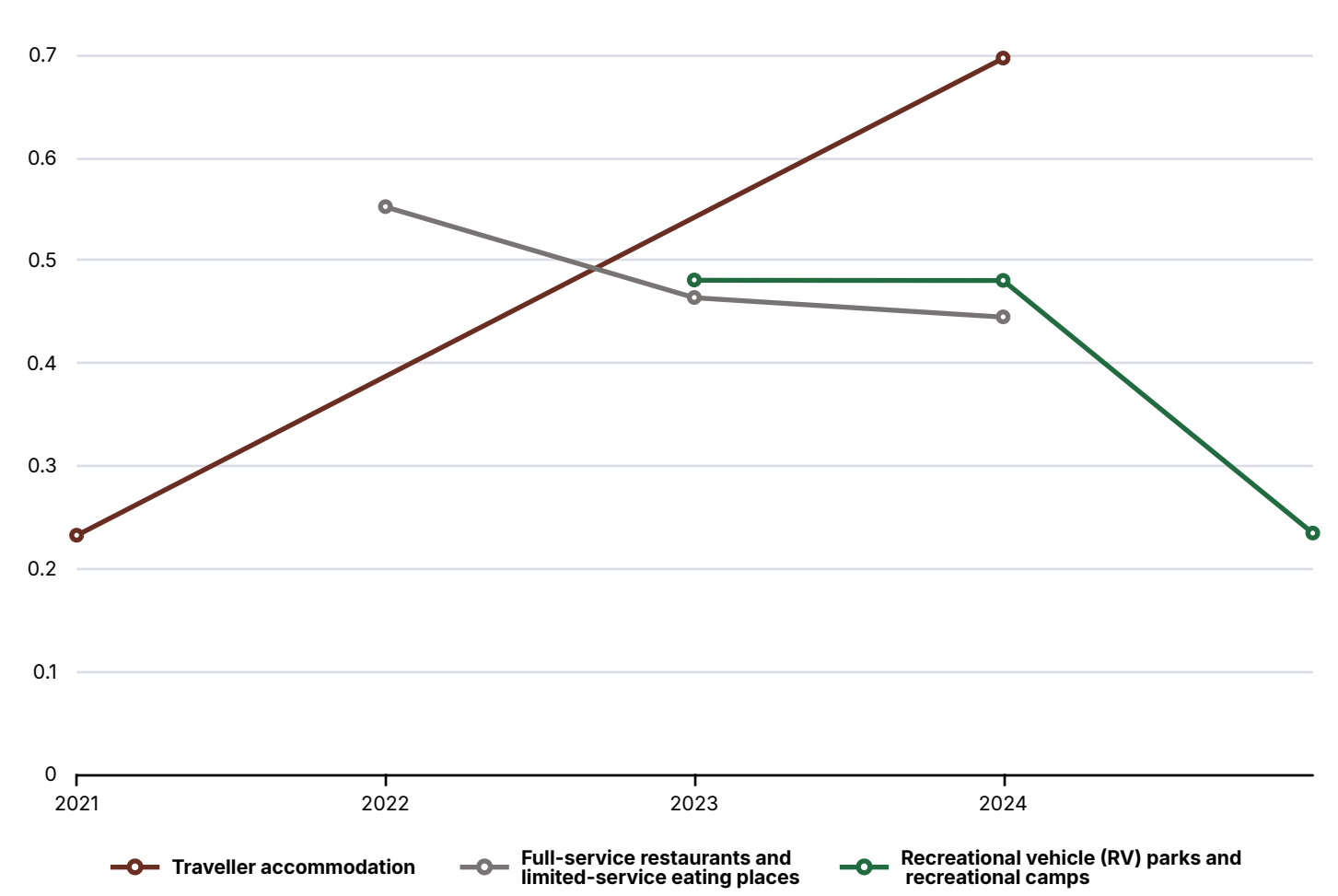


Figure 6.1: Shows industries within this sector that have relatively low specialization in the local economy and limited or declining concentration. Industries are categorized based on specialization (location quotient) and recent employment growth or change in concentration. (Cardston, 2021-2025)⁴

Emerging Industries in Sector

Cardston’s leading emerging industry is traveller accommodation, with a location quotient of 0.7944 in 2025, up 14.1% in one year and 83.9% over five years. Restaurants followed at 0.4469, after declining 29.5% over five years.

In Cardston’s accommodation and food services sector, the emerging industries profile in 2025 is mixed. One industry, traveller accommodation, shows a relatively stronger local presence and clear recent gains, while full-service restaurants and limited-service eating places remain less specialized and have moved unevenly over time. Traveller accommodation has a location quotient of 0.7944, with employment concentration up 14.1% over the past year and 83.8% over five years. By contrast, full-service restaurants and limited-service eating

places have a lower location quotient of 0.4469. Their one-year change is only 0.5%, and the five-year change is -29.5%. The contrast suggests that, within this sector, the accommodation side is gaining ground faster than food services. Both industries are still below a location quotient of 1.0, so neither is especially concentrated in Cardston, but the longer-term trend points in different directions. For 2025, Cardston’s emerging activity is stronger in traveller accommodation than in restaurants.

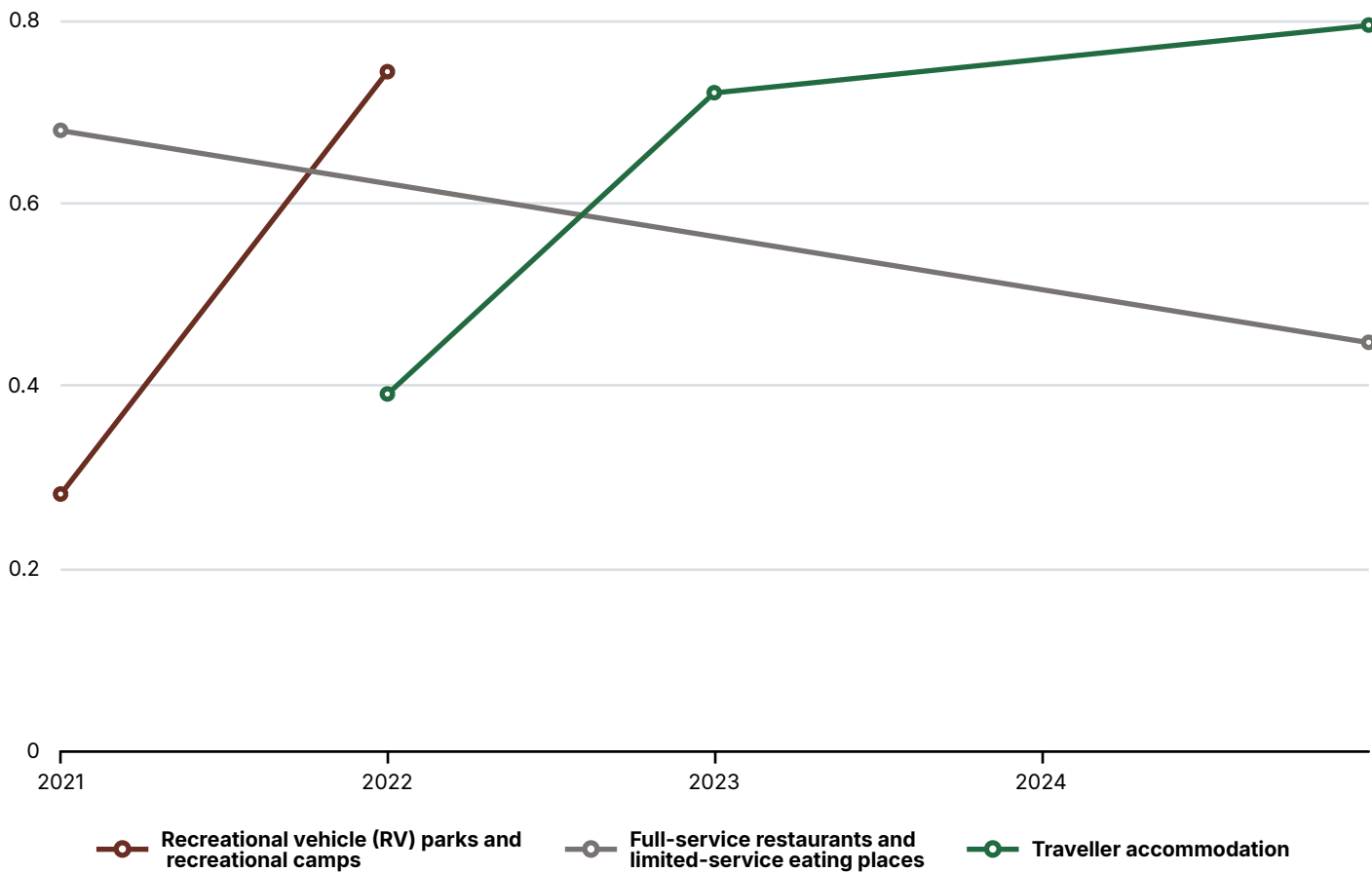


Figure 7.1: Shows industries within this sector that currently have low specialization in the local economy but are experiencing increasing concentration or strong growth. Industries are categorized based on specialization (location quotient) and recent employment growth or change in concentration. (Cardston, 2021-2025)⁴

Employment in Sector

Cardston’s total industry employment was 96 people in 2025, down 1.0% from 2024 and 15.8% below 2020. Employment peaked at 130 in 2021 before falling to 97 in 2024.

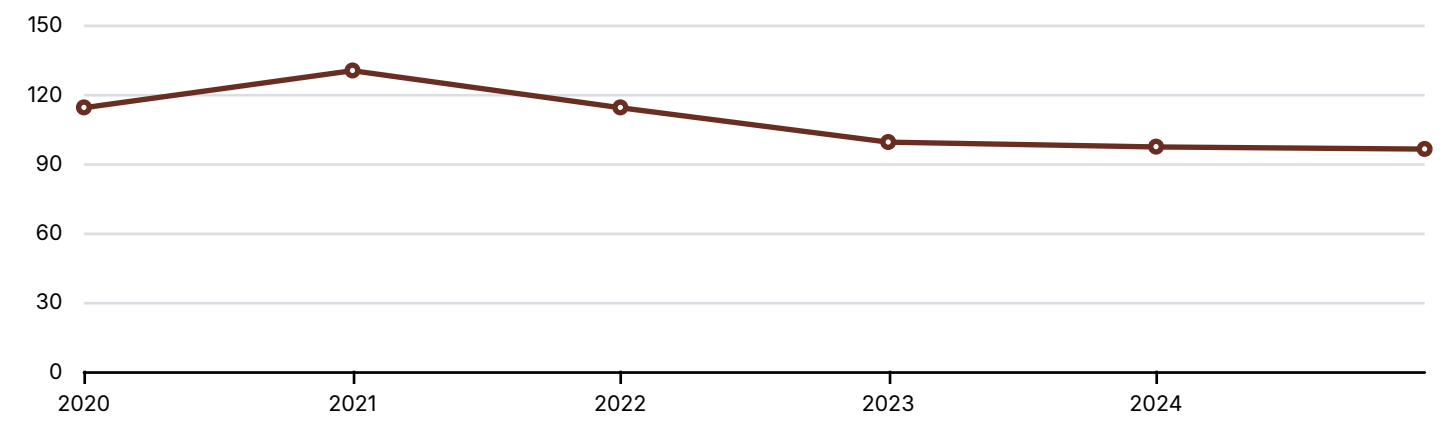


Figure 8.1: Shows the number of jobs in a specific industry sector. It helps indicate the scale of that sector within the local economy. (Cardston, 2020-2025)²

Cardston’s accommodation and food services sector employed 96 people in 2025, continuing a gradual slide in recent years. The series peaked at 130 in 2021, then fell to 114 in 2022, 99 in 2023, 97 in 2024, and 96 in 2025. The short-term movement has been modest since 2024, with employment down 1.0% in the latest year. The longer view shows a 15.8% decline from 2020 to 2025. This pattern suggests a sector that recovered sharply in 2021 but has since settled into a lower level. The 2025 figure sits well below the 2021 peak.

Cardston had 96 people employed in accommodation and food services in 2025, making it a modest part of the local job base for employees aged 15 and over. The sector has eased from 114 in 2020, with a 15.8% decline over five years. Compared with nearby places, Cardston was below Fort Macleod (114) and Claresholm (136), but far smaller than Pincher Creek (296) and above Nanton (32). That places Cardston in the middle of the local range, with recent movement pointing to gradual softening rather than sharp change.

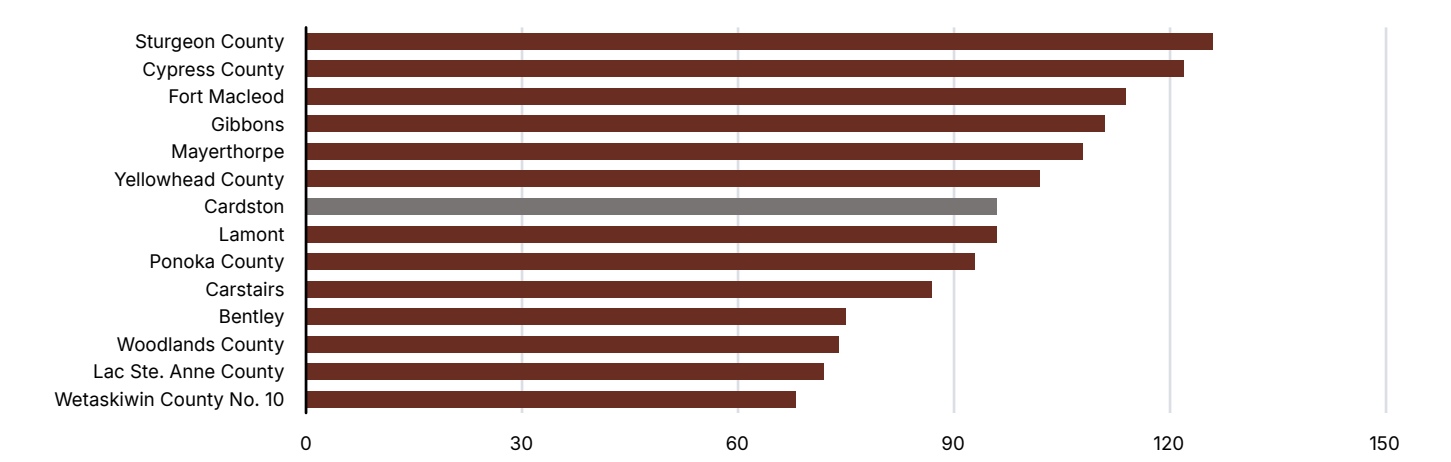


Figure 8.2: Comparison of Employment in Sector with other locations (Cardston, 2025)²

Establishments in Sector by Number of Employees

In 2025, Cardston’s largest group was businesses without employees at 7, down 46.2% from 2020. The fastest-growing group was 1 to 4 employees, rising to 5 businesses, up 150.0% year over year.

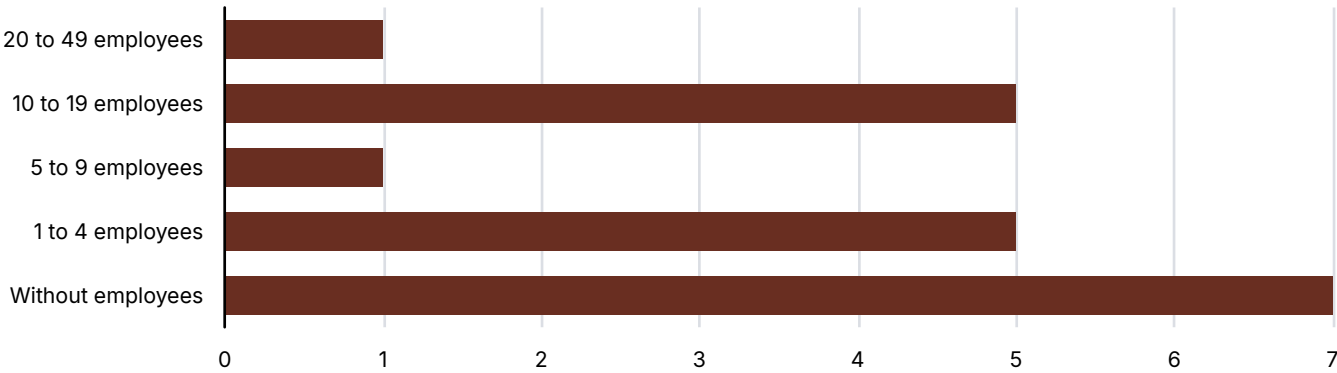


Figure 9.1: Shows the number of business establishments in a sector by employee size class. It helps indicate whether that sector is made up mostly of small or larger firms. (Cardston, 2025)³

In Cardston’s accommodation and food services sector in 2025, the business base is concentrated in very small establishments. Firms with no employees numbered 7, while those with 1 to 4 employees totaled 5. Larger size classes were much thinner, with 5 to 9 employees at 1 establishment, 10 to 19 employees at 5, and 20 to 49 employees at 1. Recent change was mixed. The no-employee group rose 16.7% over the past year but is still down 46.2% over five years. The 1 to 4 employee group grew 150% in a year and 66.7% over five years.

In Cardston’s accommodation and food services sector in 2025, small establishments made up most of the business base. There were 7 without employees and 5 with 1 to 4 employees, compared with 5 in the 10 to 19 employee class and just 1 each in the 5 to 9 and 20 to 49 employee groups. The pattern points to a sector dominated by microbusinesses.



Figure 9.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Business Establishment Size - Without employees (Cardston)³

Sector Labour Market Gap

Cardston’s accommodation and food services sector had a labour market gap ratio of 1.13 in 2021, meaning jobs exceeded resident workers by 13%. This was the only sector figure provided.

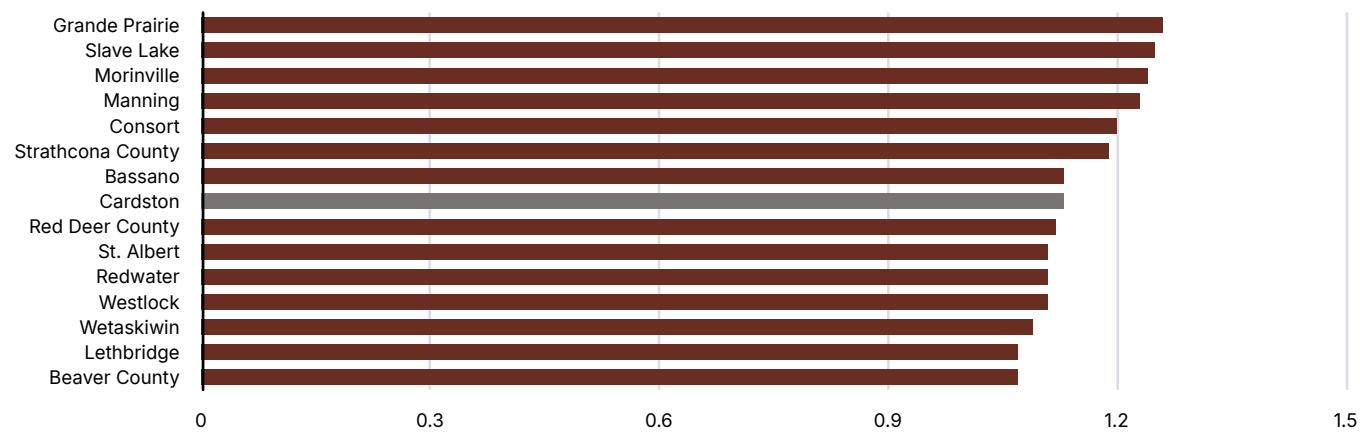


Figure 10.1: Comparison of Sector Labour Market Gap with other locations (Cardston, 2021)⁵

In 2021, Cardston showed a modest labour market gap in accommodation and food services, with a ratio of 1.1. That places the town above some nearby areas, including Nanton at 0.9 and Pincher Creek No. 9 at 0.3, but below Claresholm at 1.4, Fort Macleod at 1.7, and Pincher Creek at 2.2. Cardston County was far lower at 0.0. The pattern suggests Cardston had a small net surplus of jobs in this sector relative to resident workers, though not as pronounced as in some nearby communities.

Cardston’s accommodation and food services sector showed a small labour market gap in 2021, with a ratio of 1.13 for the labour force aged 15 and over. That points to a near-balance between jobs and resident workers in the town. Within the local area data, one descendant dissemination area recorded a much wider gap of 8.67. The contrast suggests the sector’s labour balance is not uniform across the census subdivision.

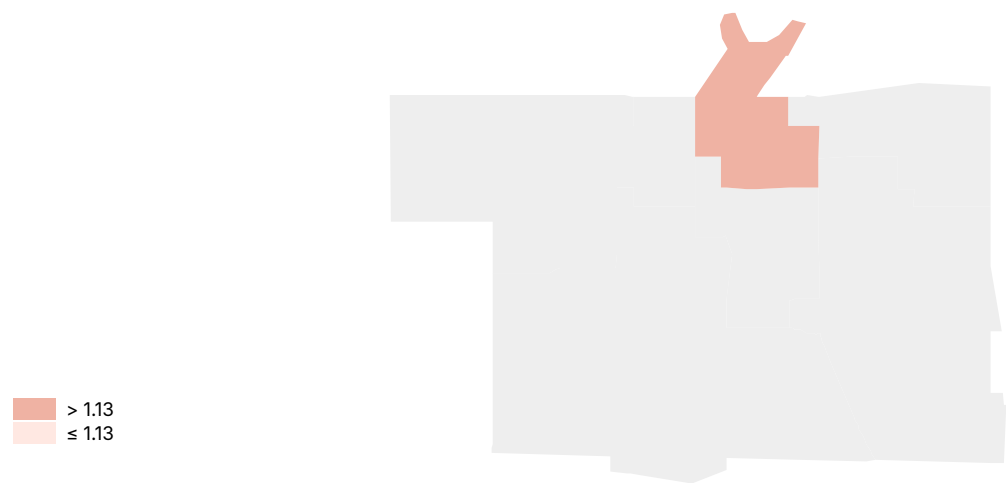


Figure 10.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Industry Sector - Accommodation and food services (Cardston)⁵

Data Sources

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

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