NANTON

Industry Report

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Nanton's economy in 2025 shows a business base that is sizeable for a small town but still smaller than it was a few years ago, alongside an employment profile that is being reshaped by a narrower set of stronger sectors. The number of business establishments edged up to 644 after a sharp drop in 2023, but remained below 2020 levels, and the local business mix stayed heavily concentrated in very small firms, especially establishments without employees. Agriculture continued to anchor the town's business structure by establishment count and remained one of its strongest areas of specialization, even as its recent direction weakened.

The clearest shift in Nanton's current economic picture is the rise of manufacturing. It was the town's largest employment sector in 2025 and also its strongest star sector, with sharp gains over both one year and five years. That growth was concentrated enough to stand out against a more uneven broader pattern. Health care and social assistance also became a major source of employment and showed strong longer term growth, while retail remained important but less consistent, with shorter term gains set against a lower level than five years earlier. Agriculture still held a prominent place in the local economy, both as a large employer and as the leading source of establishments, but its employment and specialization both moved downward over the longer term. Recent growth elsewhere appeared more selective than broad based, with a few industries such as health and personal care retail posting strong gains, while some of the steepest declines were confined to very small industry niches.

The result is a local economy with two different rhythms. Nanton retains a rural and highly specialized base, reflected in the weight of agriculture and the dominance of micro businesses, yet the strongest momentum now sits in manufacturing, supported by gains in parts of health care and selected service activities. At the same time, the business base has not fully recovered to earlier levels, and several established sectors show mixed or declining trends. Nanton therefore appears less defined by broad expansion than by a concentrated reshaping of employment within a still small scale, unevenly performing business community.

Business Establishments

Nanton had 644 business establishments in 2025, up 0.9% from 2024. That remains 7.6% below 2020 levels, after falling from 800 in 2022 to 614 in 2023 and then recovering slightly.

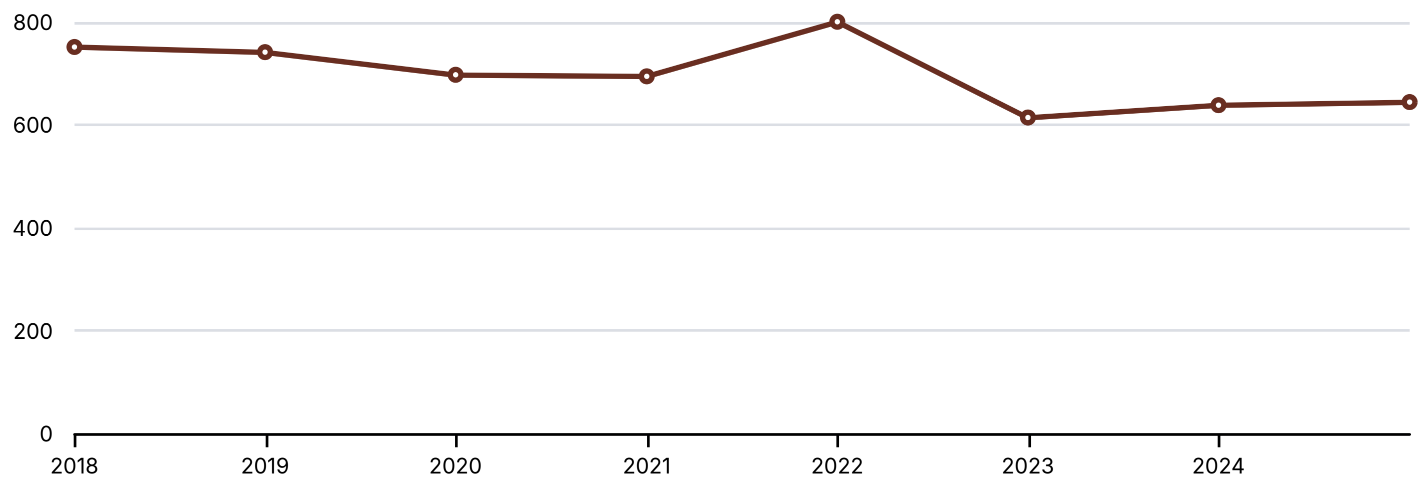

Figure 1.1: *Shows the total number of active business establishments in the area, including those without employees. It helps indicate the scale and diversity of the local business base. (Nanton, 2018-2025)*[1]

Nanton's business establishment count has been volatile in recent years, with the local business base shrinking after a brief rebound. The town had 751 active establishments in 2018, falling to 694 by 2021 before rising to 800 in 2022. That gain did not hold: the total dropped to 614 in 2023, then edged back up to 638 in 2024 and 644 in 2025. The latest reading is still 7.6% below five years earlier, suggesting a smaller business base than in 2020.

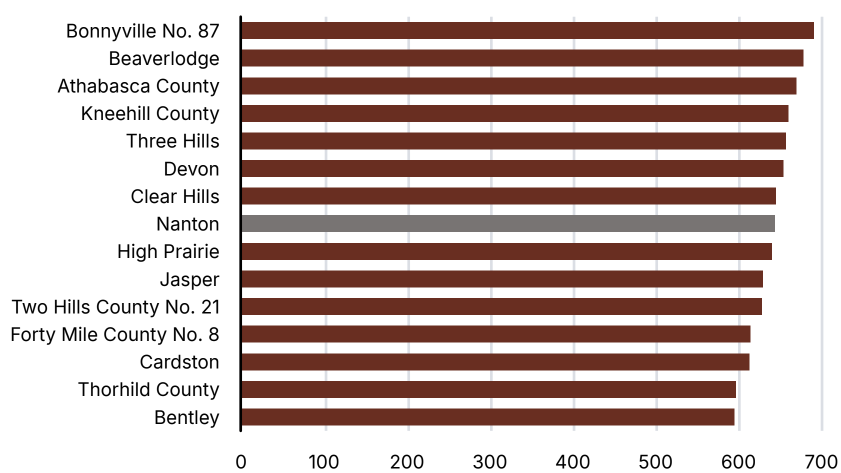

Figure 1.2: *Comparison of Business Establishments with other locations (Nanton, 2025)*[1]

Nanton had 644 active business establishments in 2025, placing it among the larger local business bases in the comparison set. The series shows a drop from 751 in 2018 to 694 in 2021, a jump to 800 in 2022, then a sharp fall to 614 in 2023 before a modest recovery. That 2025 total was below Claresholm, Pincher Creek and Fort Macleod, but well above most smaller nearby places such as Hill Spring, Cowley and Glenwood. Source: Statistics Canada, Business Register.

Resident Labour Force

Nanton's resident labour force was largest in construction at 125 people in 2021, up 4.2% from 2016. Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services rose 100% to 110, while retail fell to 105.

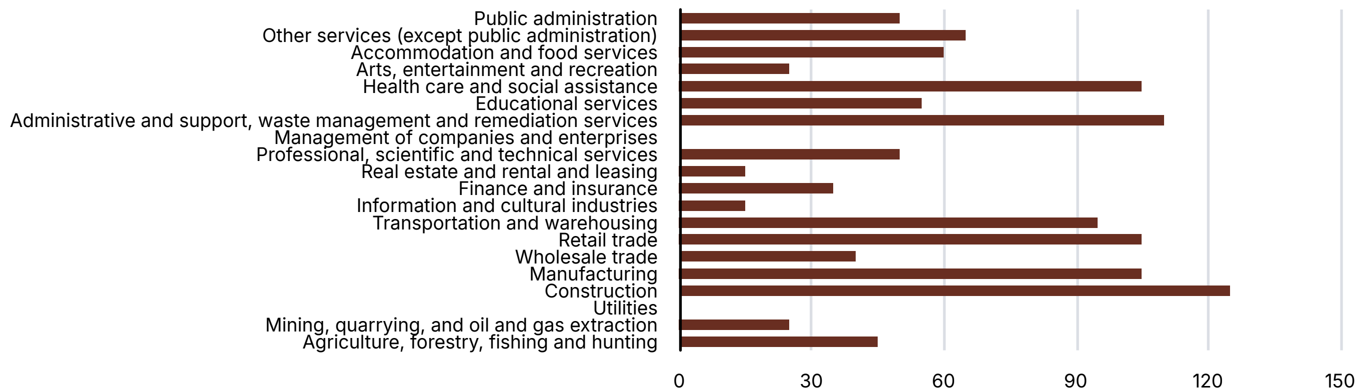

Figure 2.1: *Shows the number of residents who are in the labour force. It helps indicate the size of the locally available workforce. (Nanton, 2021)*[2]

In 2021, Nanton's resident labour force aged 15 and over was concentrated in a few sectors, with construction at 125 people, administrative and support services at 110, and manufacturing and retail trade at 105 each. Several areas grew over five years, led by administrative and support services and accommodation and food services, both up 100%. Utilities and management of companies were at zero, both down 100%.

In 2021, Nanton's resident labour force aged 15 and over was spread across many sectors, with construction the largest at 125 people. Manufacturing and retail trade each accounted for 105, followed by administrative and support services at 110. Several sectors were smaller or flat, including utilities and management of companies and enterprises at zero. Five-year change was mixed: manufacturing rose 40%, while retail trade fell 27.6% and accommodation and food services doubled to 60 people.

Figure 2.2: *Distribution of Largest Group: Industry Sector - Construction (Nanton)*[2]

Star Sectors

Nanton's most specialized and most changed sector is manufacturing, with a location quotient of 2.2516 in 2025, up 76.3% in one year and 181.7% over five years.

In 2025, Nanton's strongest star sectors were manufacturing and retail trade, both measured among employees aged 15 years and over. The clearest standout was manufacturing, which had a Location Quotient of 2.3 and showed sharp gains in concentration over both the short and longer term. Manufacturing recorded a 1-year change of 76.3% and a 5-year change of 181.7%. Retail trade was also specialized, with an LQ of 1.2, but its trend was more mixed: a 1-year increase of 3.1% followed a 5-year decline of 15.5%. The contrast between the two sectors suggests different momentum profiles within Nanton's economy. Manufacturing combines high specialization with strong recent and longer-term growth in concentration, while retail trade remains above the baseline but has not expanded steadily over five years. Taken together, the data point to manufacturing as the more dynamic star sector in Nanton, with retail trade playing a smaller and less consistent role.

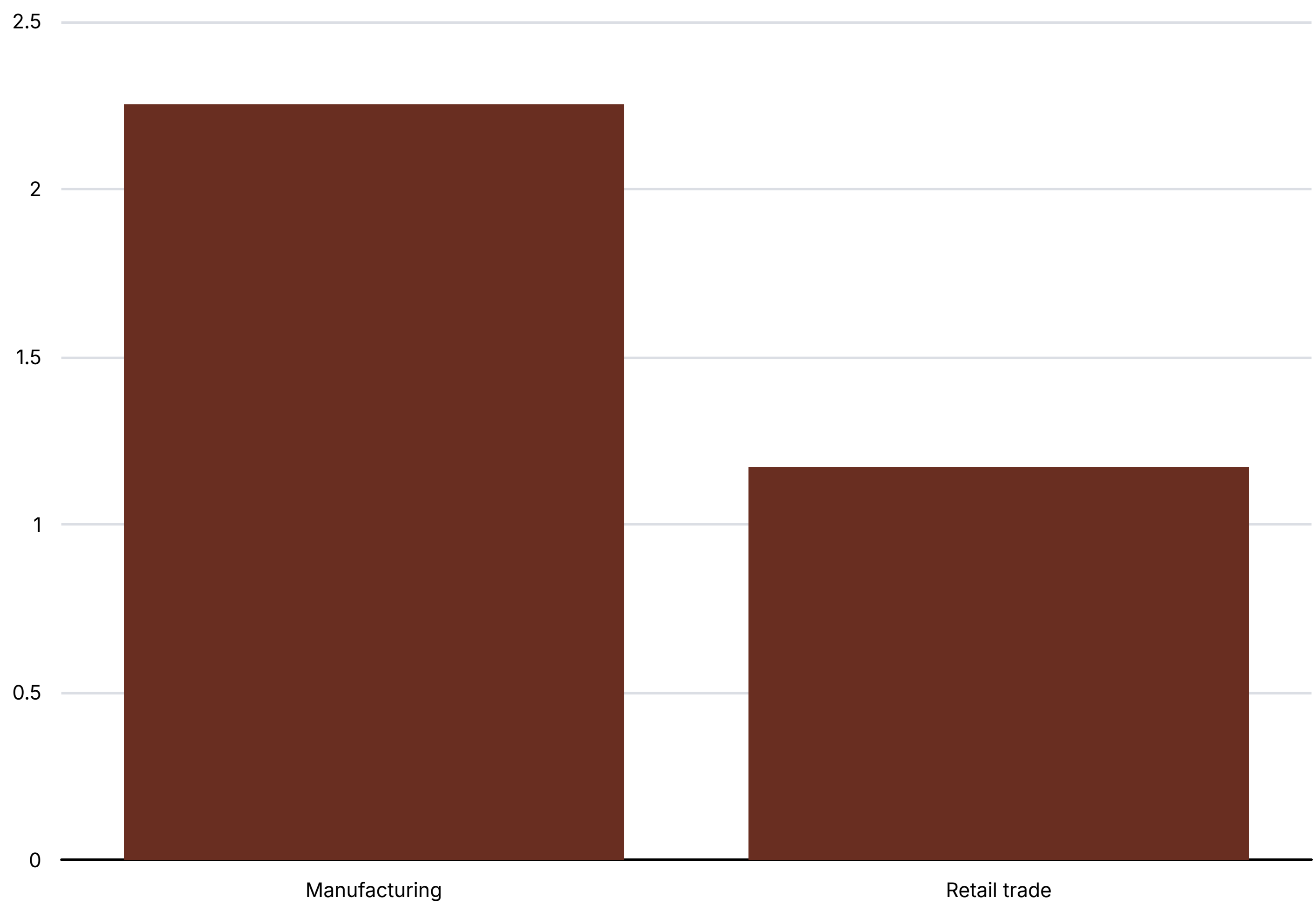

Figure 3.1: *Shows major industry sectors where the local economy has strong specialization and increasing concentration or strong growth. Sectors are categorized based on specialization (location quotient) and recent employment growth or change in concentration. (Nanton, 2025)*[3]

Fastest Growing Industries

Health and personal care retailers led Nanton's fastest growing industries in 2025, with 29 employees after a 625.0% one-year increase. Drinking places employed 5 and farm product merchant wholesalers 4, both also posting gains.

In Nanton, the fastest growing industries in 2025 are concentrated in a small set of local service and trade activities. The largest of these is health and personal care retailers, with 29 people employed, followed by general freight trucking at 7, drinking places at 5, and farm product merchant wholesalers at 4. The strongest recent gains are visible in the 1-year change figures. Farm product merchant wholesalers rose by 300%, while health and personal care retailers increased by 625%. General freight trucking also grew, but more modestly, at 250%. Drinking places had no change figure reported. The pattern suggests that growth is not spread evenly across industries. Instead, a few categories account for the visible momentum, with health and personal care retailers standing out both for size and growth, and trucking remaining a smaller but expanding part of the mix. Taken together, the data points to a local employment profile where recent gains are concentrated in a limited number of industries rather than broadly distributed across the economy.

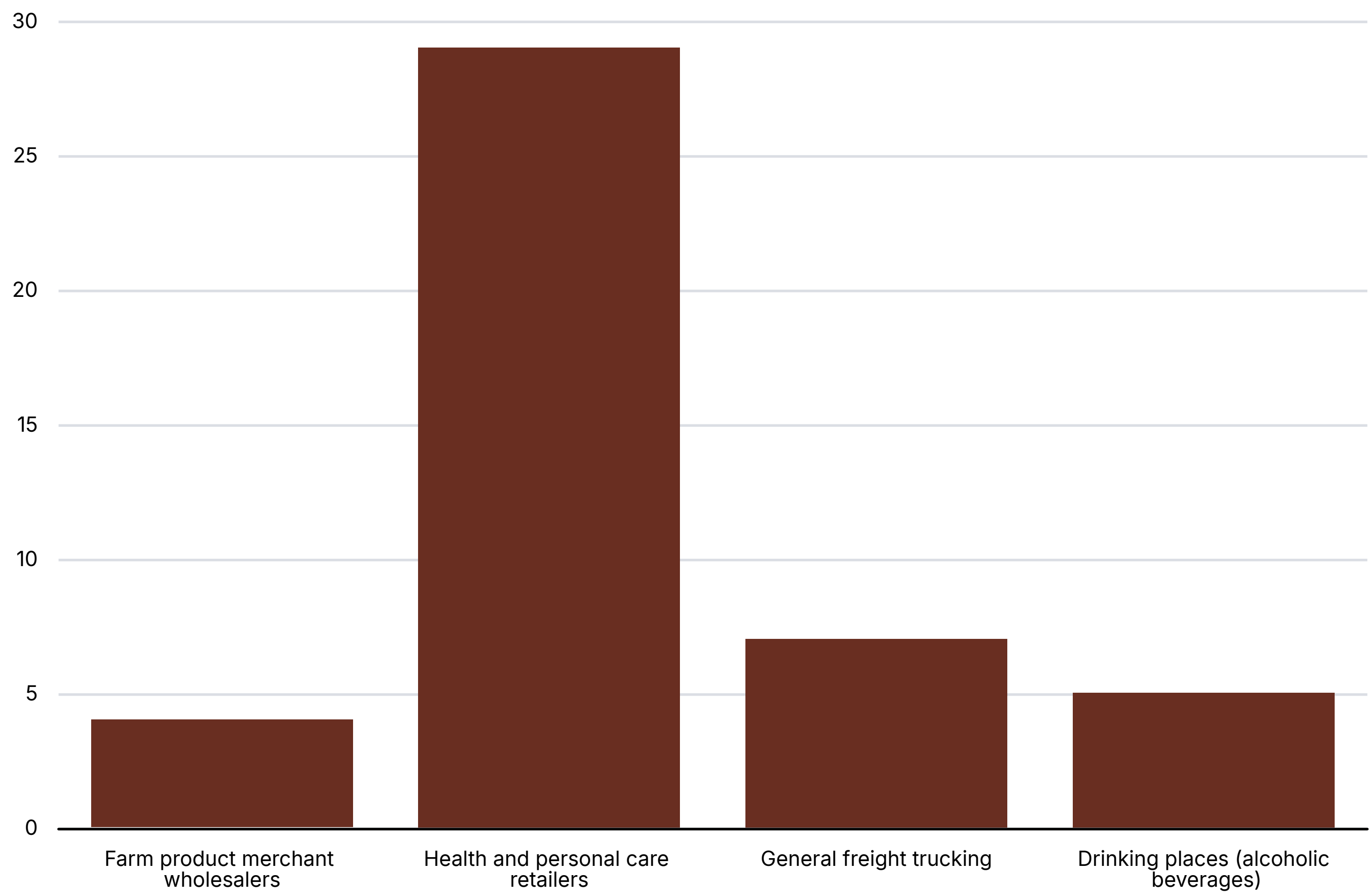

Figure 4.1: *Shows industries where employment has increased the most over the selected time period. It helps identify where job growth is strongest in the local economy. (Nanton, 2025)*[4]

Fastest Growing Sectors

Manufacturing led Nanton's fastest growing sectors in 2025 with 199 people, up 89.5% from a year earlier and 158.4% over five years. Transportation and warehousing ranked next at 10 people, doubling yearly but falling 44.4% over five years.

Nanton's fastest growing sectors in employment are concentrated in a small number of industries, with manufacturing standing out as the clearest source of growth. In 2025, the sector employed 199 people, far more than transportation and warehousing, which had 10 employees. Manufacturing posted a 1-year increase of 89.5% and a 5-year increase of 158.4%, pointing to strong recent and longer-term expansion. Transportation and warehousing moved differently: employment doubled over 1 year, rising 100%, but remained well below its earlier level over 5 years, with a decline of 44.4%. Taken together, the figures suggest that Nanton's recent employment gains are not spread evenly across sectors. Manufacturing carries most of the weight in this snapshot, while transportation and warehousing shows short-term recovery against a weaker longer-term trend. The local pattern is therefore one of concentrated sector growth rather than broad-based expansion.

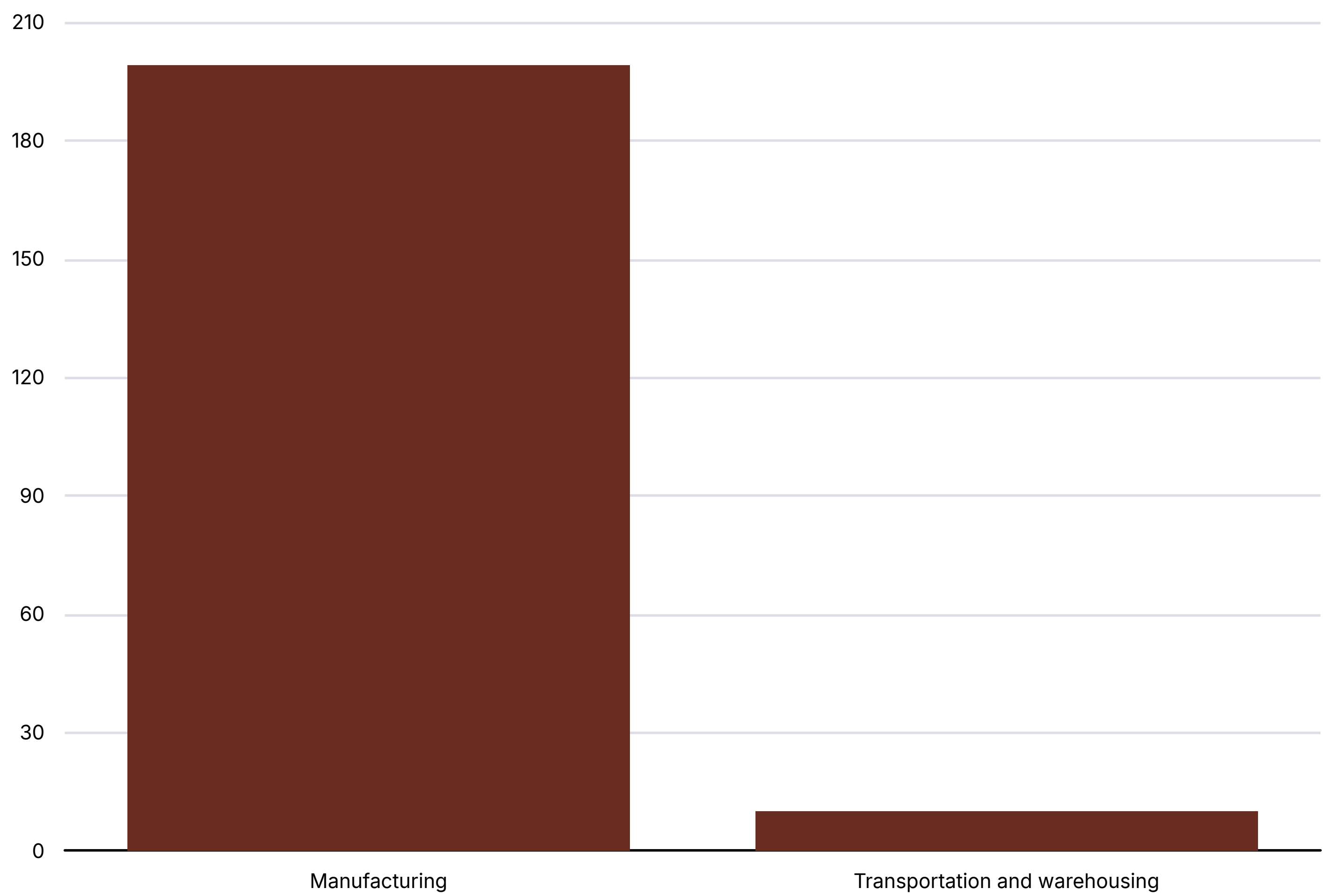

Figure 5.1: *Shows sectors where employment has increased the most over the selected time period. It helps identify the main drivers of job growth in the local economy. (Nanton, 2025)*[4]

Employment by Sector

Manufacturing led employment in Nanton in 2025 with 199 people, up 89.5% from 2024 and 158.4% from five years earlier. Health care and social assistance followed with 143 people.

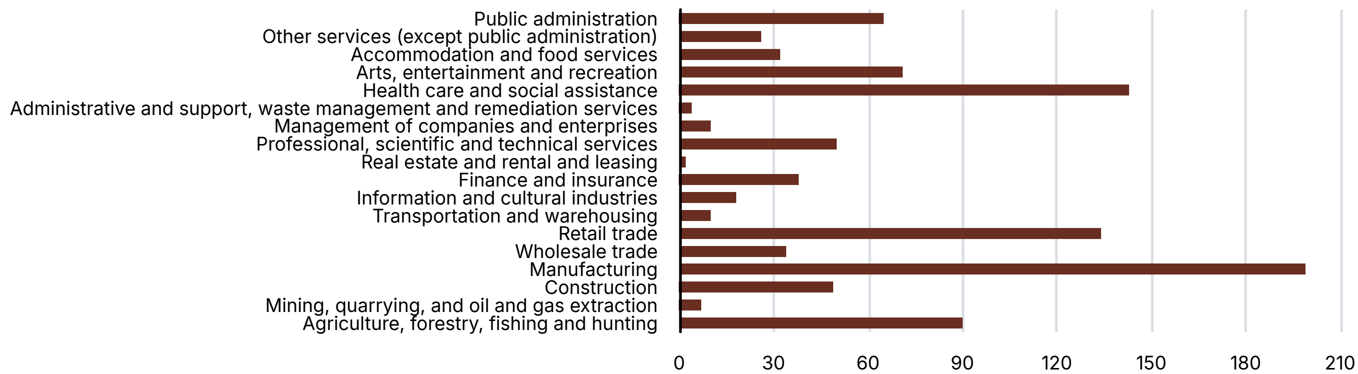

Figure 6.1: *Shows how employment is distributed across industry sectors. It helps indicate which sectors account for the largest share of local jobs. (Nanton, 2025)*[4]

In 2025, employment in Nanton was spread across a wide mix of sectors, with manufacturing the largest employer at 199 people. Health care and social assistance followed with 143, and retail trade with 134. Agriculture also remained important at 90, while arts, entertainment and recreation accounted for 71. The strongest recent gains were in manufacturing, up 89.5% in one year and 158.4% over five years. Health care also rose 95.9% over five years. By contrast, agriculture fell 48.0% over five years, and real estate dropped 95.1%.

In Nanton, employment in 2025 was concentrated in a few sectors, led by manufacturing with 199 workers, followed by health care and social assistance at 143 and retail trade at 134. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting remained sizable at 90, while public administration accounted for 65. Recent shifts were mixed: manufacturing rose 89.5% over one year and health care increased 8.3%, while agriculture fell 9.1% and accommodation and food services declined 36.0%.

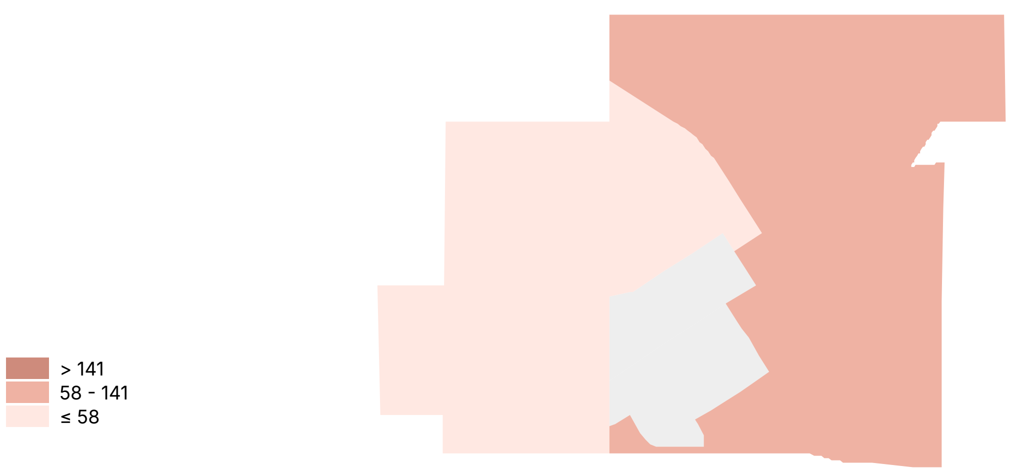

Figure 6.2: *Distribution of Largest Group: Naics - Manufacturing (Nanton)*[4]

Establishments by Sector

Nanton's largest sector remained agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 157 establishments in 2025, unchanged from 2024 but down 12.8% over five years. Construction rebounded to 59, while health care reached 20.

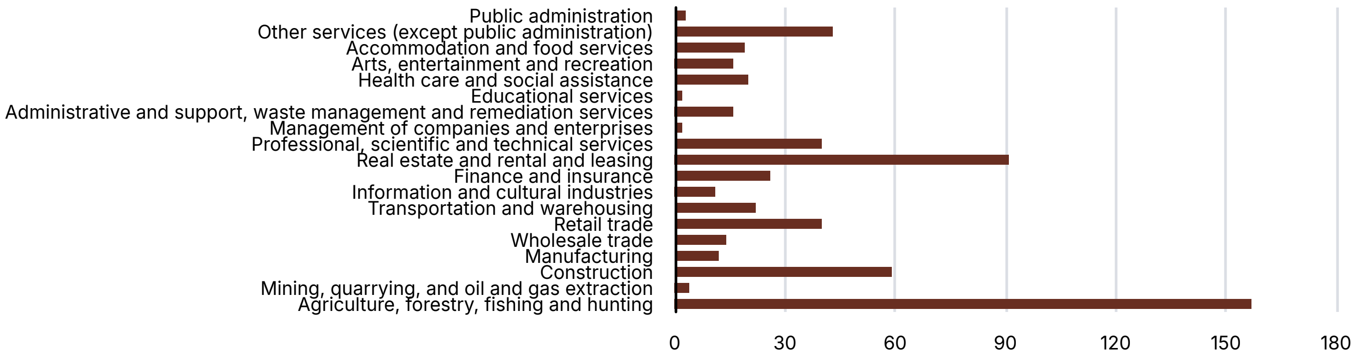

Figure 7.1: *Shows how business establishments are distributed across sectors. It helps indicate the sector mix of the local business base. (Nanton, 2025)*[1]

In 2025, Nanton's business establishments were concentrated in a few sectors, led by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting with 157 businesses. Real estate and rental and leasing followed with 91, while construction had 59 and other services had 43. Several sectors showed recent declines, including mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction, down 20 in one year, and transportation and warehousing, down 8.3%. The mix suggests a small-town business base that is unevenly distributed across sectors.

In 2025, Nanton's business base was led by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, with 157 establishments, far ahead of real estate and rental and leasing at 91 and construction at 59. Smaller but still notable clusters included other services at 43, retail trade and professional services at 40 each, and accommodation and food services at 19. Several sectors showed recent movement, with construction up 20.4% over one year and accommodation and food services up 11.8%, while mining and transportation declined. The mix points to a locally concentrated, service-linked economy.

Figure 7.2: *Distribution of Largest Group: Naics - Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (Nanton)*[1]

Establishments by Size

Nanton's business base remained concentrated in establishments without employees, at 497 in 2025, down 0.4% from 2024 and 7.1% from 2020. Firms with 1 to 4 employees totaled 88, while 50 to 99 employees numbered 3.

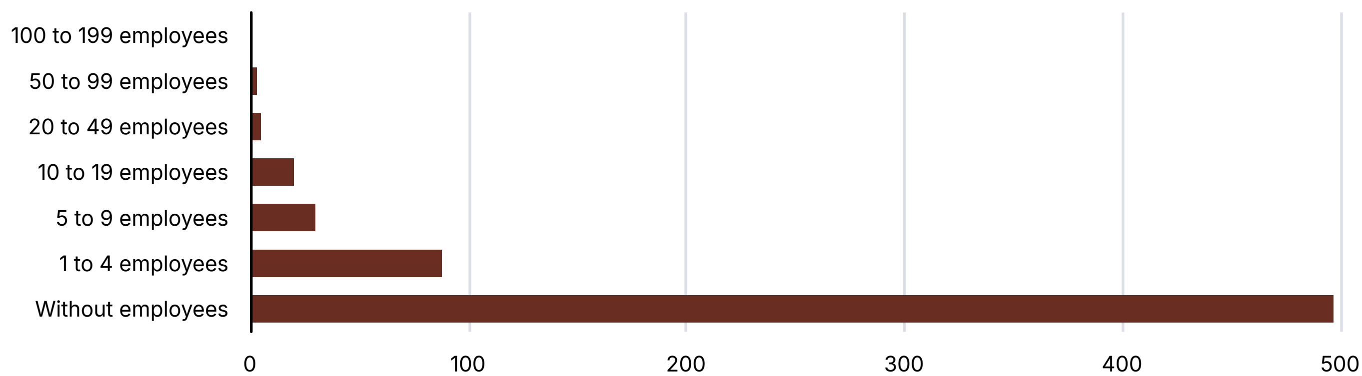

Figure 8.1: *Shows how businesses are distributed by number of employees. It helps indicate whether the local economy is dominated by very small, small, or larger firms. (Nanton, 2025)*[1]

Nanton's business base in 2025 was dominated by establishments without employees, with 497 out of 644 businesses. Smaller firms were the next largest group, while larger establishments were rare. The no-employee category edged down 0.4% over one year and 7.1% over five years. By contrast, 1 to 4 employee firms rose 14.3% in the past year, even after an 8.3% five-year decline.

Nanton's business base in 2025 is dominated by establishments without employees, with 497 such businesses. The next largest group is firms with 1 to 4 employees, at 88, while 5 to 9 employee businesses number 30 and 10 to 19 employee firms number 20. Larger establishments are scarce: there are 5 with 20 to 49 employees, 3 with 50 to 99, and 1 with 100 to 199. Recent movement is mixed, with the smallest firms down slightly over five years and the 1 to 4 employee group up 14.3% in the past year.

Figure 8.2: *Distribution of Largest Group: Business Establishment Size - Without employees (Nanton)*[1]

Labour Market Gap

Nanton's largest labour market gap was in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 4.7. Real estate and rental and leasing followed at 3.2, while finance and insurance reached 2.4 and arts, entertainment and recreation 2.1.

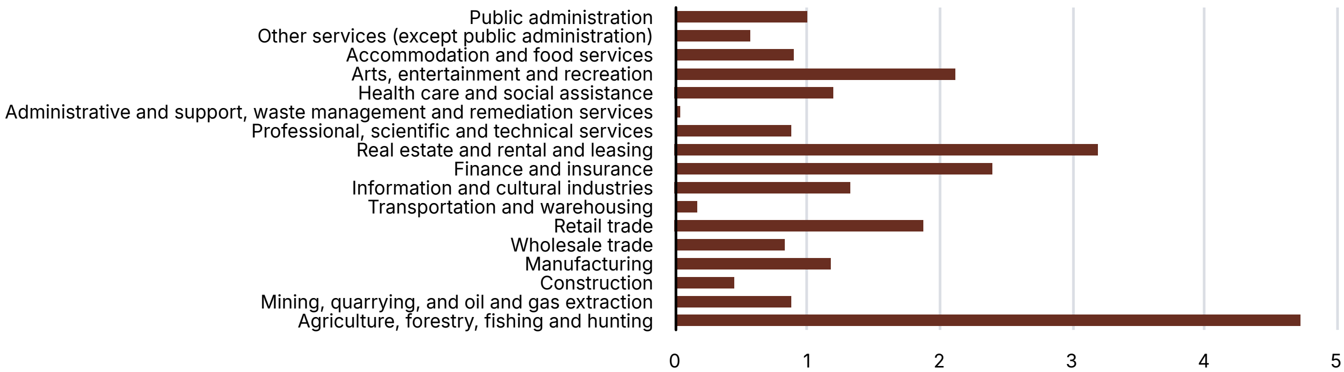

Figure 9.1: *Shows the gap between the number of local jobs and the number of resident workers across all sectors. It helps indicate whether the area attracts workers in or sends workers out. (Nanton, 2021)*[5]

In 2021, Nanton's labour market gap was uneven across sectors, with several areas showing much larger ratios than others. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting had the largest value at 4.7, followed by real estate and rental and leasing at 3.2 and finance and insurance at 2.4. By contrast, administrative and support services was near zero at 0.0, and transportation and warehousing was 0.2. The pattern suggests sector-specific imbalances rather than a uniform profile across the local economy.

In 2021, Nanton's labour market gap varied widely by sector, with the largest ratios in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 4.7, real estate and rental and leasing at 3.2, and finance and insurance at 2.4. Smaller gaps appeared in transportation and warehousing at 0.2, construction at 0.5, and administrative and support services at 0.0. A descendant dissemination area shows an even stronger agricultural gap at 21.3. The pattern suggests some sectors draw more local jobs than resident workers, while others are more closely matched.

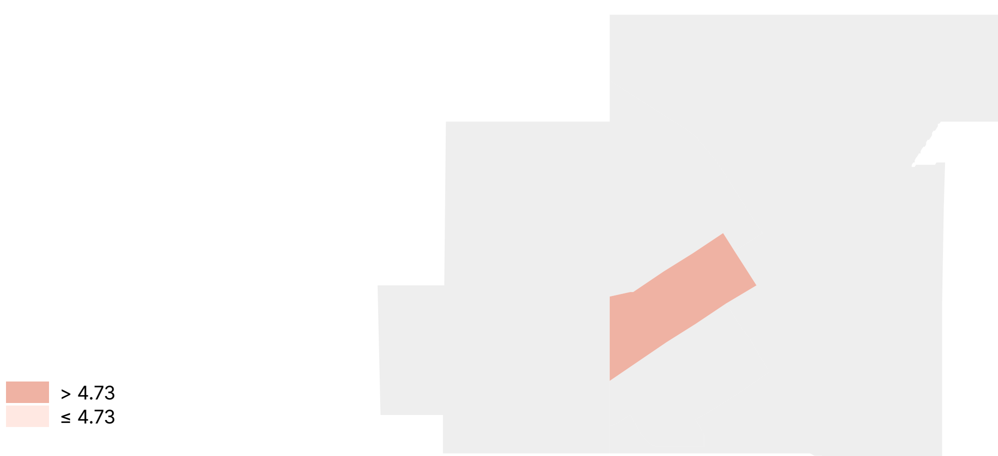

Figure 9.2: *Distribution of Largest Group: Industry Sector - Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (Nanton)*[5]

Largest Sectors

Manufacturing is Nanton's largest sector, employing 199 people, after rising 89.5% in one year and 158.4% over five years. Health care and social assistance follows with 143, while retail trade has 134.

In 2025, Nanton's employment base was led by manufacturing, which stood out as the largest sector with 199 workers. Health care and social assistance followed with 143, while retail trade accounted for 134. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting employed 90 people, and arts, entertainment and recreation had 71. The recent trend is strongest in manufacturing, where employment rose 89.5% over the past year and 158.4% over five years. Health care and social assistance also expanded, up 8.3% in the last year and 95.9% over five years. Retail trade grew 8.9% in the last year, though it remained 22.1% below its five-year level. Agriculture shows the sharpest long-term decline among the listed sectors, down 48.0% over five years and 9.1% in the last year. Arts, entertainment and recreation was also lower than a year earlier, despite a 44.9% five-year increase. Nanton's sector mix suggests a local economy that is being reshaped by strong manufacturing growth, while some established sectors remain more uneven.

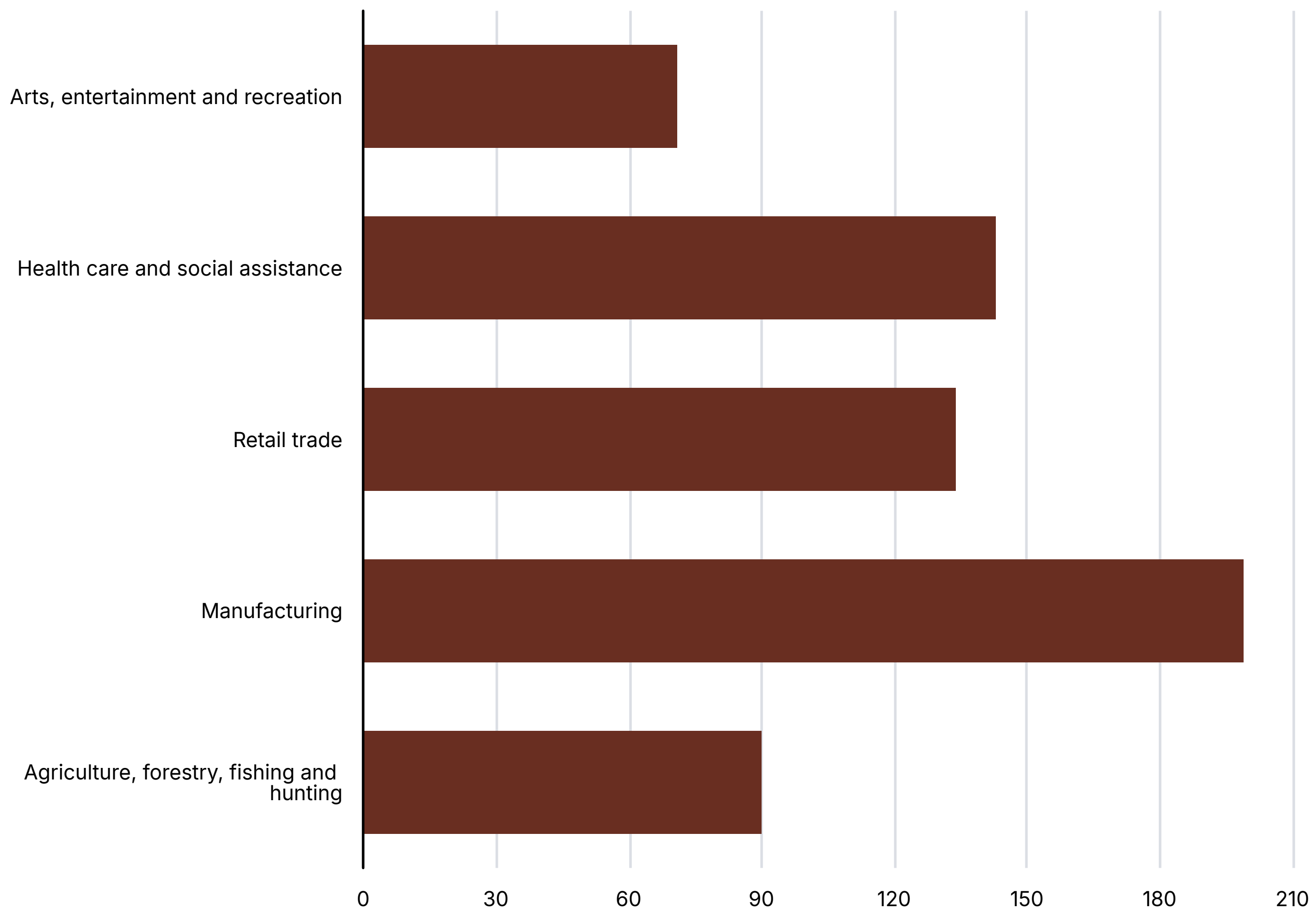

Figure 10.1: *Shows the sectors employing the most people. It helps identify the largest pillars of the local economy. (Nanton, 2025)*[4]

Anchor Sectors

Nanton’s largest anchor sector remains agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 4.1072, though concentration fell 14.2% in the past year and 44.4% over five years. Arts, entertainment and recreation reached 3.5596, down 16.6% year over year.

In 2025, Nanton’s anchor sectors were concentrated in a small set of industries with clearly different trajectories. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting remained the strongest specialization, with a location quotient of 4.1, while arts, entertainment and recreation also stood out at 3.6. Health care and social assistance and public administration were less concentrated, at 1.1 and 1.4 respectively. The recent change patterns were mixed. Agriculture posted a 1-year decline of 14.2% and a 5-year decline of 44.4%. Arts, entertainment and recreation also fell in the last year, down 16.6%, even though it was still above its five-year level by 24.1%. Health care and social assistance slipped 3.0% over one year but rose 90.9% over five years. Public administration declined 11.2% over one year and 4.9% over five years. The picture is of specialized sectors that remain prominent, but with uneven momentum. In Nanton, the strongest anchors appear to be losing concentration recently, while health care shows longer-term strengthening from a lower starting point.

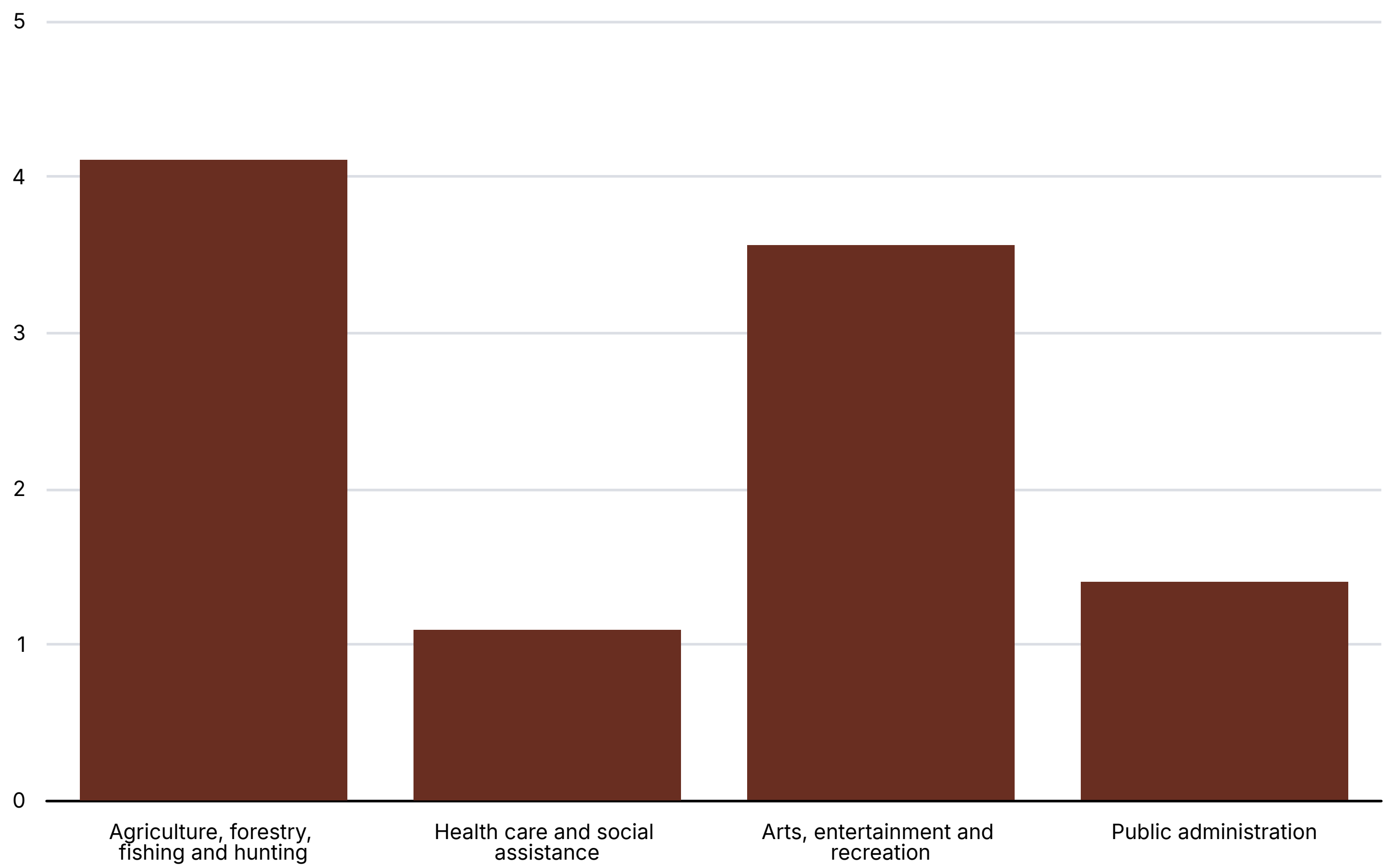

Figure 11.1: *Shows major industry sectors where the local economy has strong specialization but relatively stable or declining concentration over time. Sectors are categorized based on specialization (location quotient) and recent employment growth or change in concentration. (Nanton, 2025)*[3]

Micro Establishments Share

Micro establishments made up all businesses in Nanton in 2025, matching 100.0%. The share was 1.1% higher than 2024 and also 1.1% above five years earlier.

In Nanton, micro establishments made up a very large share of the business base in 2025 across most sectors, with several industries at or near 100%. The pattern is uneven, though, and the most recent changes show both gains and declines. Accommodation and food services posted 78.9%, up 22.0 percentage points over one year and 28.3 points over five years. Management of companies and enterprises was the lowest at 50.0%, down 25.0 points in the past year and 50.0 points over five years. Retail trade was also relatively low at 62.5%, while real estate and rental and leasing and administrative and support services were both at 100.0%. Several sectors were stable or nearly stable, including wholesale trade at 85.7%, professional services at 92.5%, and educational services at 100.0%. The broad range suggests a business base dominated by very small firms, but not uniformly so. The recent shifts point to growing concentration in some service sectors and weaker micro-firm presence in a few others.

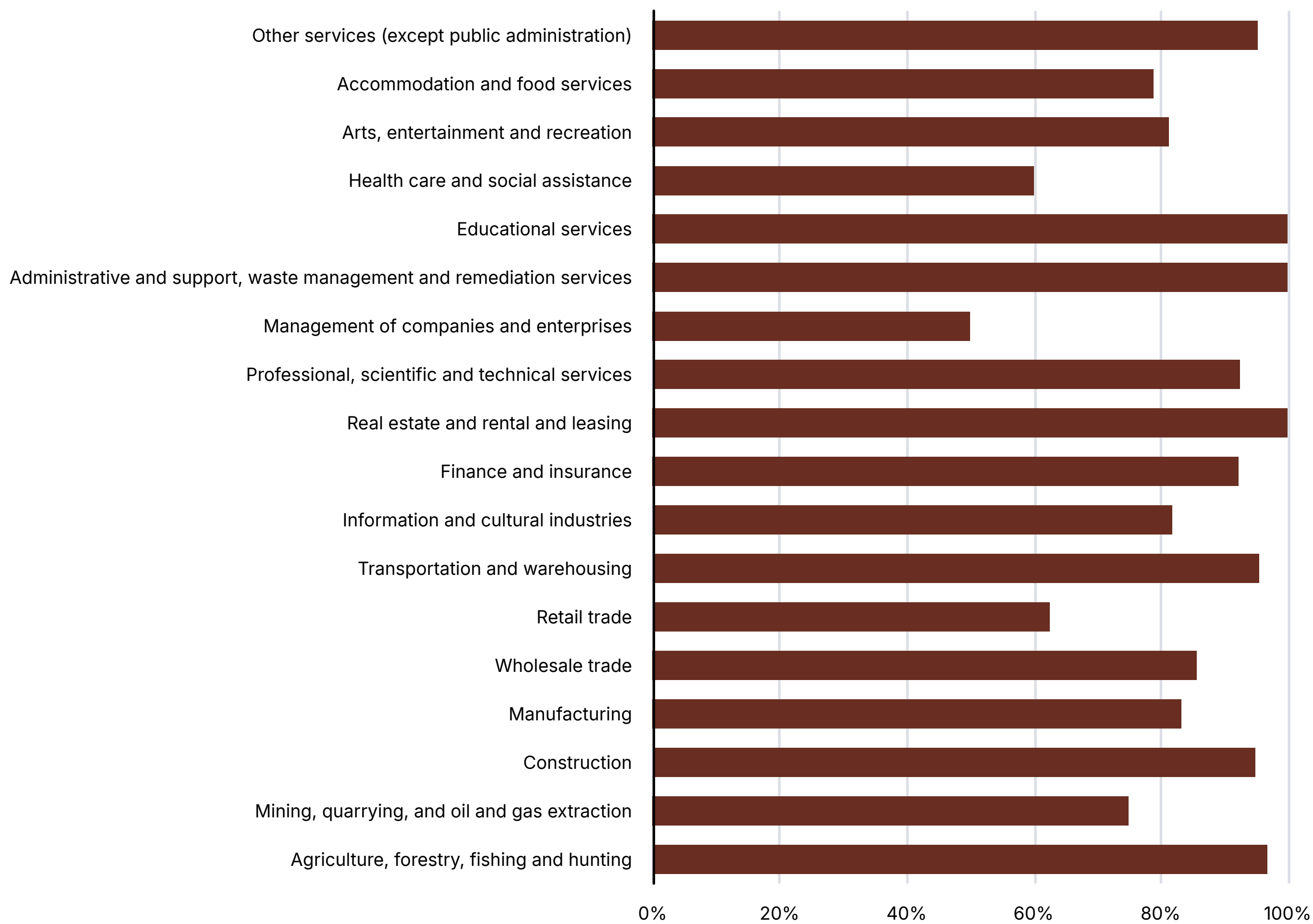

Figure 12.1: *Shows the share of businesses with 0 to 4 employees. It helps indicate how much the local business base is made up of very small firms. (Nanton, 2025)*[6]

Specialist Sectors (LQ)

Nanton's most specialized sector is agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 4.1, though it fell 14.2% in a year and 44.4% over five years. Manufacturing rose to 2.3, up 76.3% and 181.7%.

Nanton's strongest employment specializations in 2025 are concentrated in a small set of sectors, with agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting leading by a wide margin at a Location Quotient of 4.1. Arts, entertainment and recreation follows at 3.6, while manufacturing is also notably concentrated at 2.3. Public administration sits closer to the middle at 1.4, and retail trade is the least specialized of the listed sectors at 1.2. The recent trend is mixed. Manufacturing stands out for momentum, with a 76.3% increase over one year and a 181.7% rise over five years in concentration. By contrast, agriculture has weakened, down 14.2% in the past year and 44.4% over five years. Arts, entertainment and recreation also declined recently, though it remains above average in concentration, while retail trade and public administration show smaller shifts. The pattern suggests that Nanton's specialization is still anchored in traditional and local-serving sectors, but the balance within those specializations has changed over time.

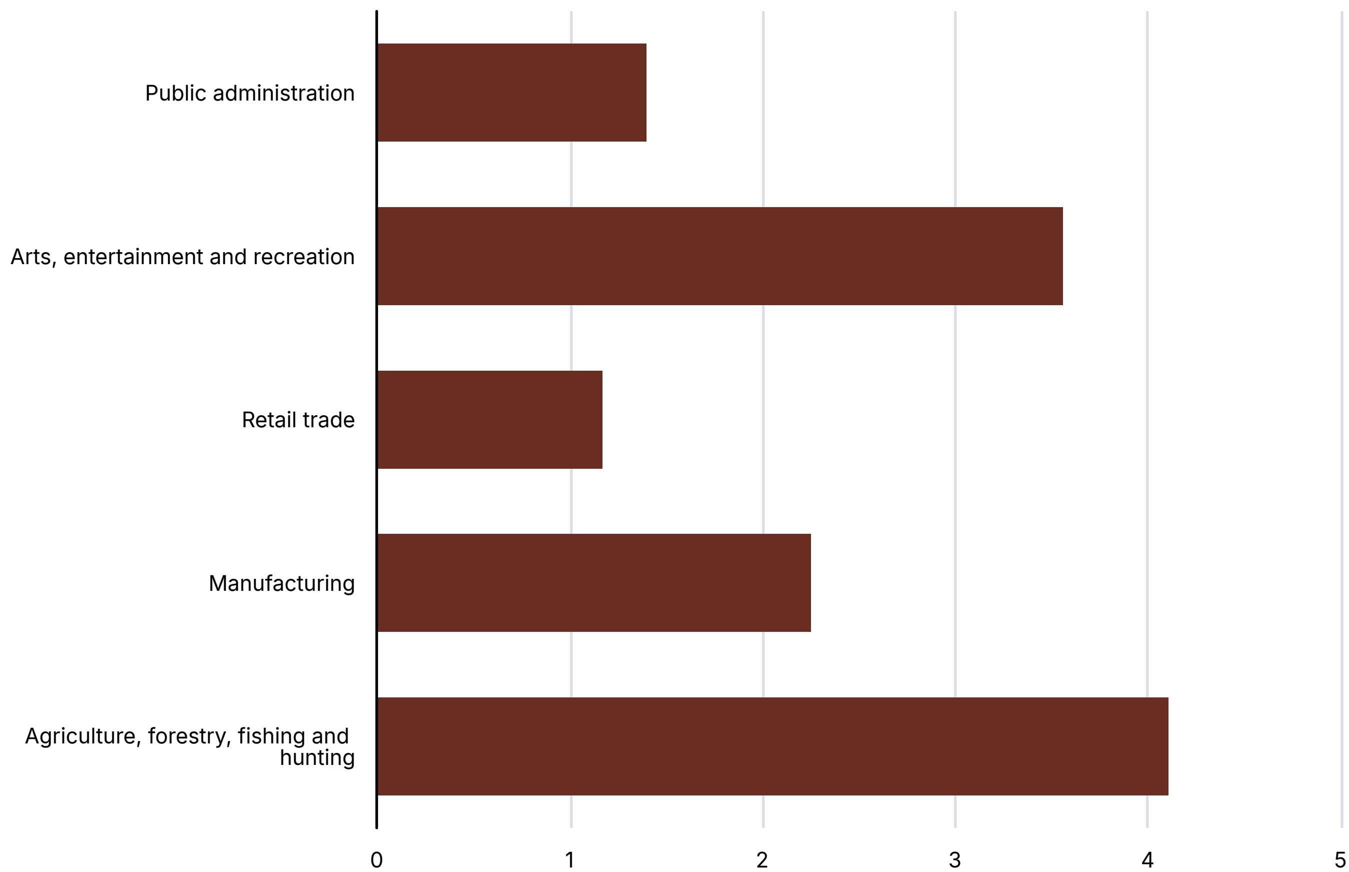

Figure 13.1: *Shows sectors where the local economy has the highest level of specialization based on employment concentration compared with the national average. Sectors are categorized based on specialization (location quotient) and recent employment growth or change in concentration. (Nanton, 2025)*[3]

Declining Industries

In Nanton, the largest declining industry employed 2 people, down 83.3% from a year earlier. The most changed group had 1 employee, falling 96.3% over one year and 97.2% over five years.

In 2025, Nanton's declining industries were concentrated in a few small employer groups, with very sharp drops over both one year and five years. The pattern points to job losses in niche sectors rather than broad-based decline across the whole local economy. Commercial and industrial machinery and equipment rental and leasing fell to 1 employee, down 96.3% over one year and 97.2% over five years. Foundation, structure, and building exterior contractors also had 1 employee, with declines of 83.3% over one year and 90.0% over five years. Building finishing contractors stood at 1 employee, down 80.0% in the past year and 50.0% over five years. Used merchandise retailers were slightly larger, at 2 employees, but still declined by 83.3% over one year. That makes it the only listed industry with a current count above one person. The data suggest that the most pronounced losses were in very small industry segments, where even a few departures produce large percentage changes.

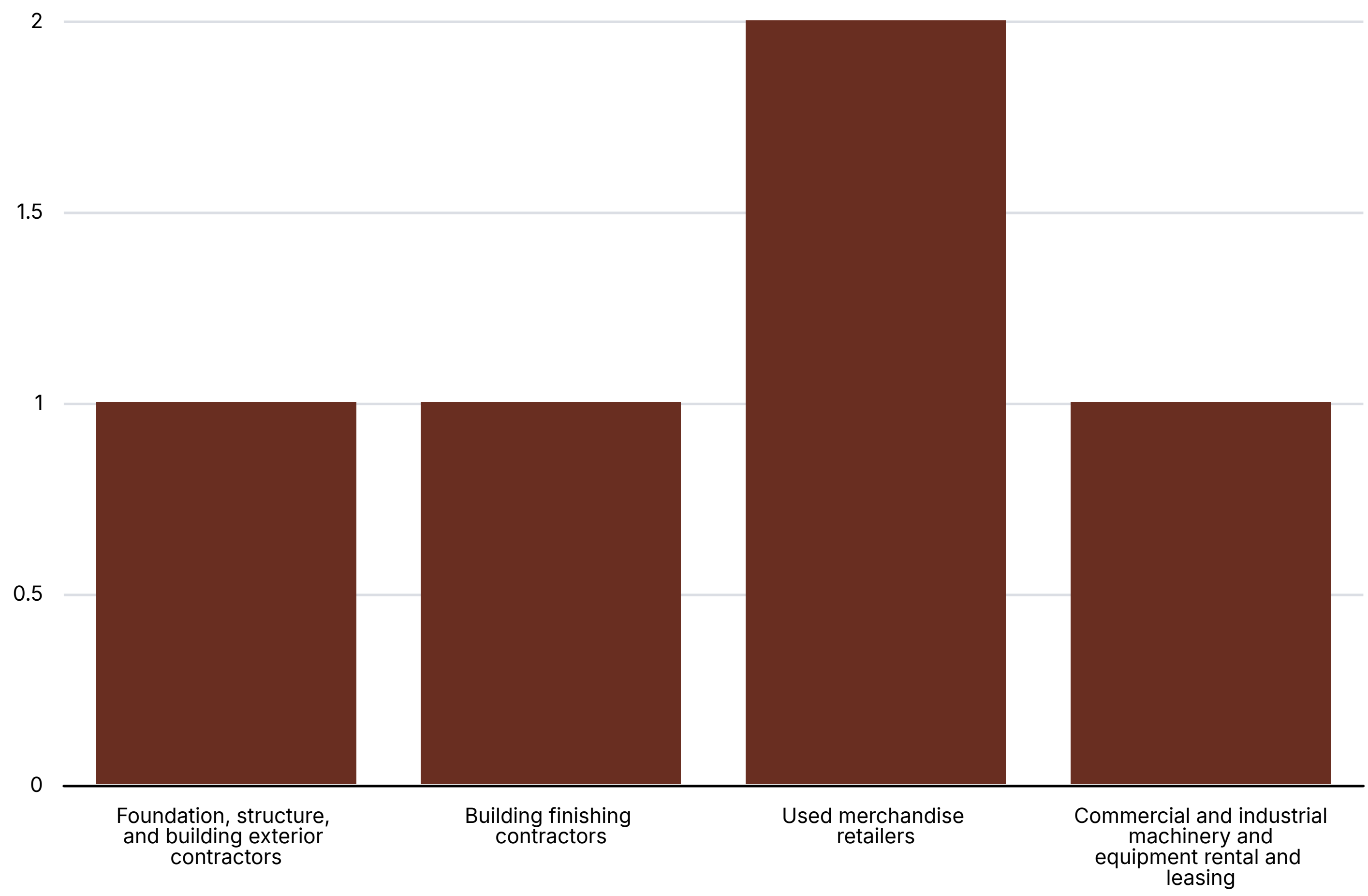

Figure 14.1: *Shows industries where employment has decreased the most over the selected time period. It helps identify parts of the local economy that are losing jobs. (Nanton, 2025)*[4]

Largest Industries

Fruit and vegetable preserving and specialty food manufacturing led Nanton with 141 employees in 2025, up 182.0% from a year earlier and 156.4% over five years, surpassing cattle ranching and farming at 75.

Nanton's employment profile in 2025 is led by a small set of industries rather than a single dominant employer category. The largest source of jobs is fruit and vegetable preserving and specialty food manufacturing, with 141 employees, followed by cattle ranching and farming at 75. A second tier includes architectural and structural metals manufacturing with 58 employees, and three industries tied at 50: out-patient care centres, other amusement and recreation industries, and other local, municipal and regional public administration. Recent change is mixed. Fruit and vegetable preserving and specialty food manufacturing grew sharply, up 182% over one year and 156.4% over five years. Child day-care services also expanded quickly, rising 52.4% in the past year and 3,100% over five years, though its base remains small at 32 employees. By contrast, cattle ranching and farming fell 13.8% in the past year and 46.0% over five years. The pattern suggests a local employment base that combines traditional rural activity with manufacturing, care, and public services.

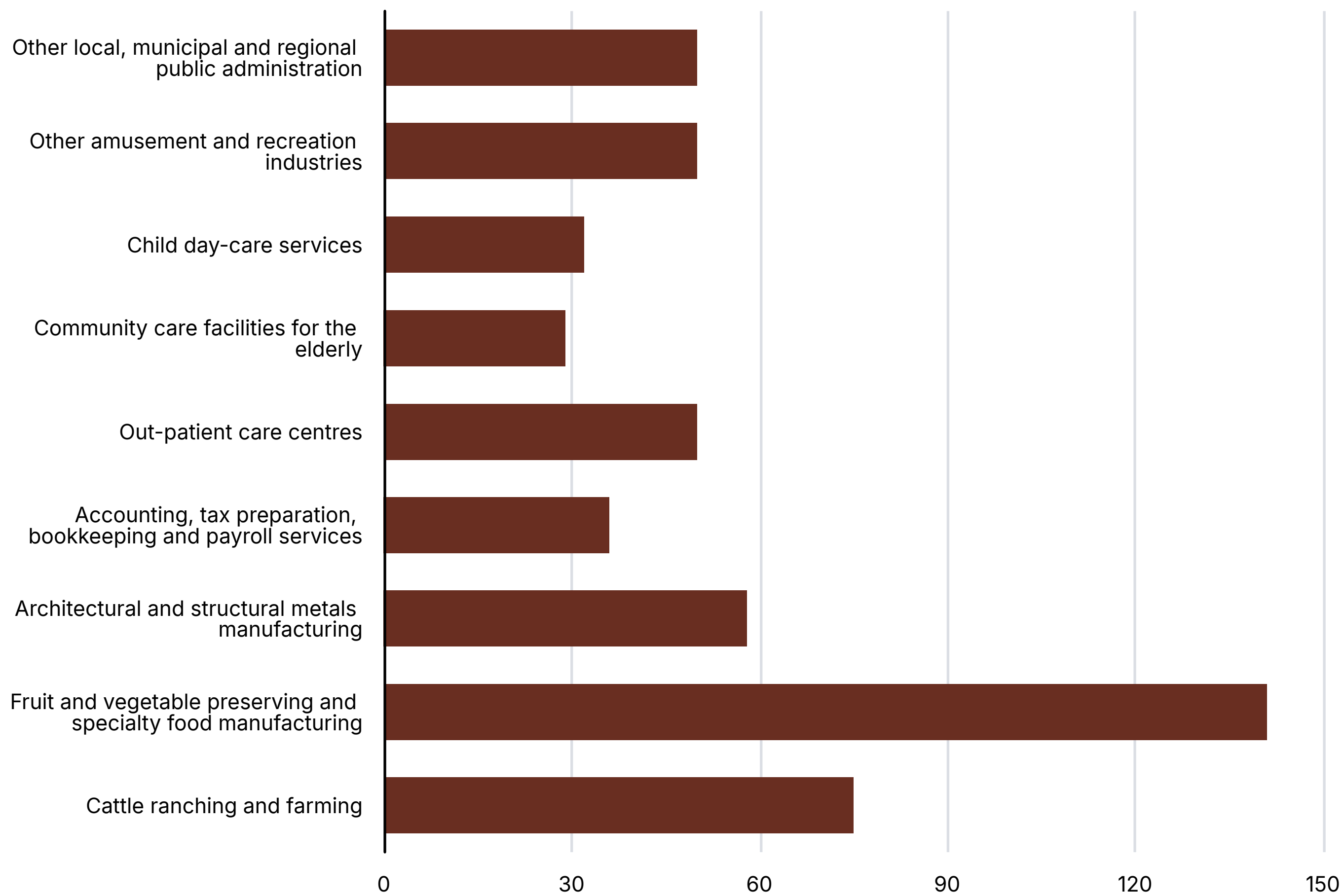

Figure 15.1: *Shows the industries with the highest employment. It helps identify the biggest sources of jobs in the local economy. (Nanton, 2025)*[4]

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.

