

ALBERTA
SOUTHWEST

CLARESHOLM

Industry Report

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Executive Summary

Claresholm's economy is defined by a clear employment anchor in health care and social assistance, supported by a business base that is broad but much smaller than it was before the sharp disruption recorded in 2022. By 2025, the town had 739 active business establishments, showing slight improvement from the previous year but still well below earlier levels. Employment and workforce patterns point to a local economy with a strong service orientation, while agriculture and public administration remain important parts of the town's economic structure. The overall picture is of a place with a distinct sectoral profile, a sizable local business base, and uneven movement across recent and longer-term measures.

Health care and social assistance stands far ahead of every other sector in Claresholm's employment mix and is also its strongest area of specialization. The resident labour force reflects that same service base, with health care the largest source of workers and retail trade, accommodation and food services, and construction forming a secondary tier. Public administration has also gained ground in the local labour force and employment base, while agriculture remains prominent both in establishments and in sector specialization. At the same time, the business structure is heavily weighted toward very small firms. Establishments without employees account for the majority of businesses, and micro establishments dominate across most sectors, especially agriculture, real estate, construction, and transportation. Recent changes are mixed rather than uniformly positive. Some sectors, including manufacturing, health care establishments, public administration, and agriculture, posted short-term gains, while retail trade and finance and insurance weakened. The labour market gap data also shows that local jobs exceed resident workers across all tracked sectors, with the widest gaps in agriculture, wholesale trade, and health care, indicating demand that is spread across the economy rather than concentrated in only one area.

Claresholm's strongest defining feature is the scale and concentration of its care economy, reinforced by notable roles for agriculture and public administration. Its business community has regained much of the ground lost in 2022 but has not returned to its earlier size, and it remains dominated by very small operations. This leaves a local economy that is specialized in a few key areas, diverse in its workforce, and marked by stabilization after disruption rather than a full recovery to previous business levels.

Business Establishments

Claresholm had 739 business establishments in 2025, up 0.8% from 2024 but 16.9% below 2020. The count rebounded from 242 in 2022 to 746 in 2023, then eased slightly.

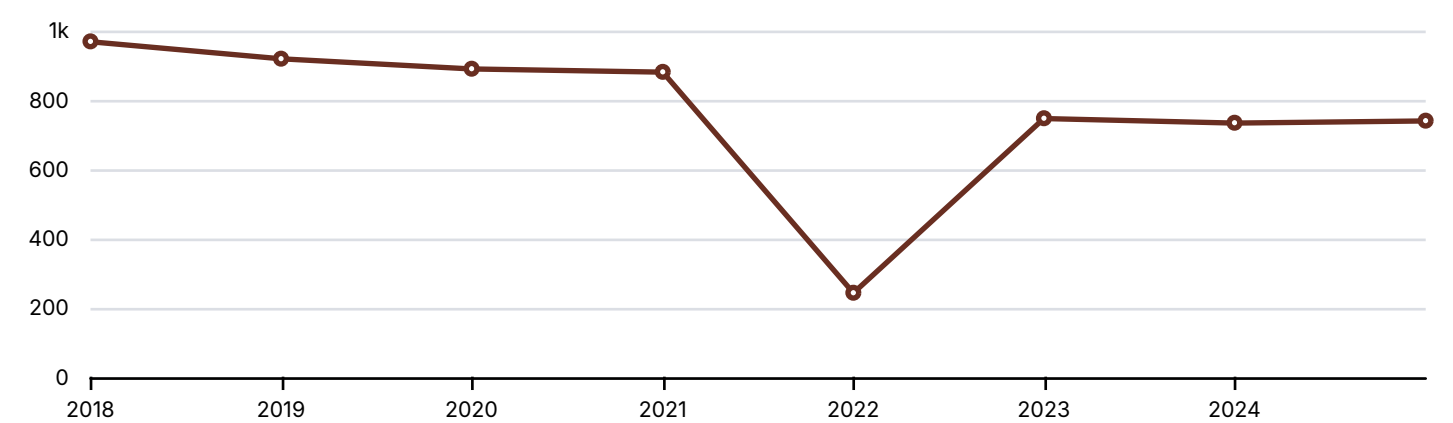


Figure 1.1: Shows the total number of active business establishments in the area, including those without employees. It helps indicate the scale and diversity of the local business base. (Claresholm, 2018-2025)¹

Claresholm had 739 active business establishments in 2025, showing a smaller business base than in the late 2010s. The count fell from 968 in 2018 to 880 in 2021, then dropped sharply to 242 in 2022 before rebounding to 746 in 2023. Since that rebound, the total has edged lower, to 733 in 2024 and 739 in 2025. The 1-year change was 0.8%, while the 5-year change remained negative at -16.9%. The pattern points to a recent stabilization after a pronounced interruption in 2022.

Claresholm had 739 active business establishments in 2025, placing it among the larger local bases in this set. The count was below its 2018 level of 968 and still short of 2021's 880, but it was close to Fort Macleod's 726 and above Nanton's 644 and Cardston County's 411. The series also shows a sharp break in 2022, when the total fell to 242, followed by a rebound to 746 in 2023. Since then, the level has edged down slightly, suggesting a business base that remains sizable but has not fully returned to earlier totals.

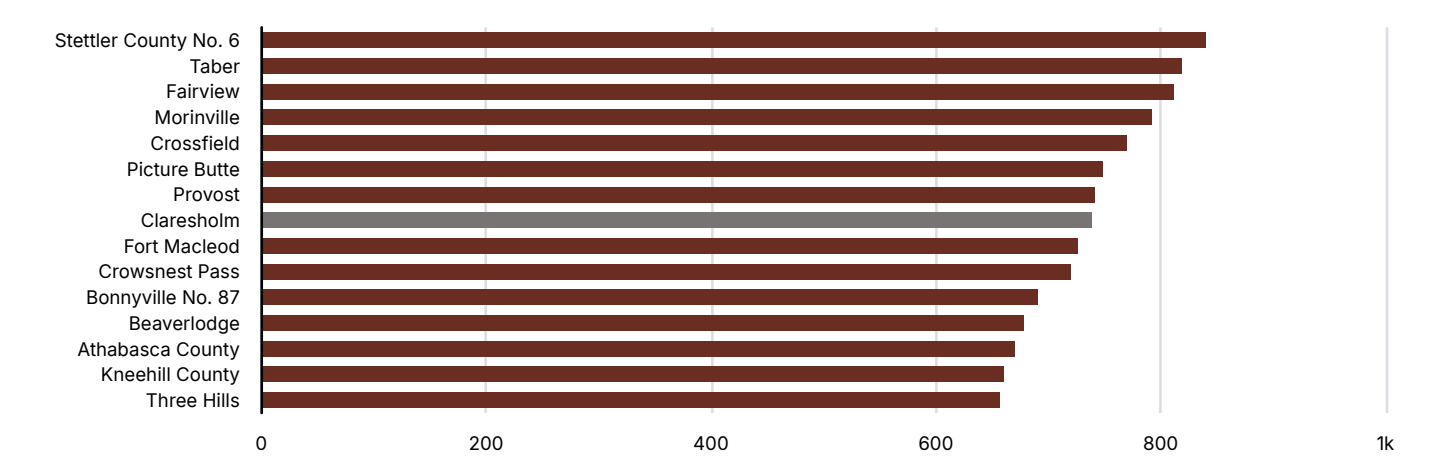


Figure 1.2: Comparison of Business Establishments with other locations (Claresholm, 2025)¹

Resident Labour Force

Claresholm’s resident labour force in 2021 was led by health care and social assistance with 385 people, slightly below 2016’s 390. Retail trade rose to 240, while public administration increased to 95 from 55.

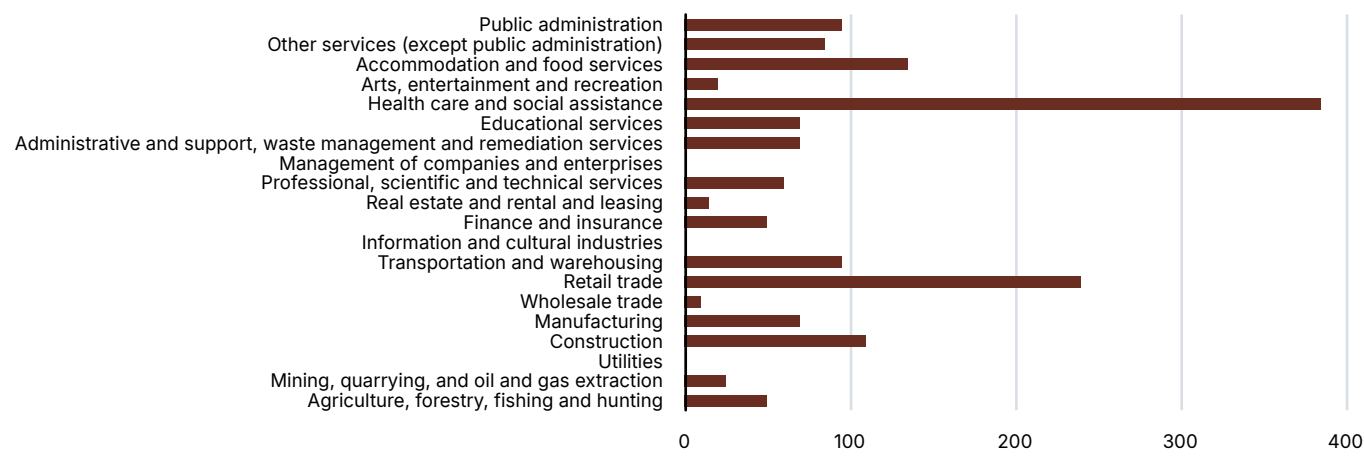
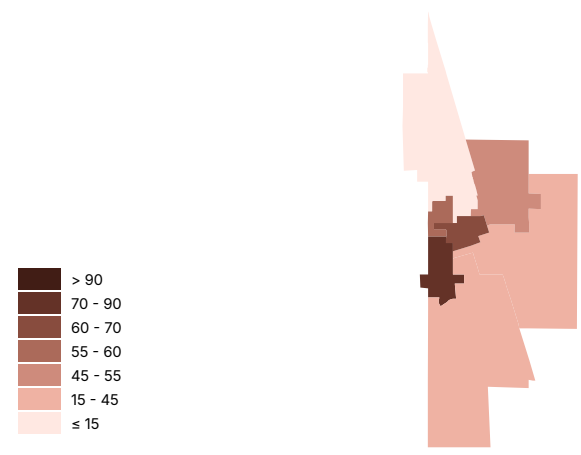


Figure 2.1: Shows the number of residents who are in the labour force. It helps indicate the size of the locally available workforce. (Claresholm, 2021)²

In 2021, Claresholm’s resident labour force was spread across a wide mix of sectors, with health care and social assistance the largest at 385 people. Retail trade followed at 240, while accommodation and food services accounted for 135 and construction for 110. Several sectors were stable or flat over five years, including transportation and warehousing, professional services, and administrative support. The strongest growth appeared in public administration, up 72.7%, and real estate and rental and leasing, up 50%. By contrast, wholesale trade and utilities were much smaller and declined sharply.



Claresholm’s resident labour force in 2021 was spread across a mix of sectors, with health care and social assistance the largest at 385 people. Retail trade followed with 240, then accommodation and food services at 135 and construction at 110. Public administration reached 95 people and other services 85. The pattern suggests a broad local workforce with a clear service-sector base, alongside some slower or negative five-year shifts in resource and manufacturing-related sectors.

Figure 2.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Industry Sector - Health care and social assistance (Claresholm)²

Star Sectors

Claresholm’s largest star sector in 2025 was agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 2.8104 LQ, while public administration followed at 1.6735. Agriculture rose 22.39% in a year, but both sectors were down about 54% over five years.

Claresholm’s star sectors show strong specialization in two parts of the local employment base for employees aged 15 and over in 2025. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting stands out with a location quotient of 2.8, while public administration is also elevated at 1.7. Both sectors combine above-average concentration with recent momentum, which is the defining pattern in the data. The recent changes point in different directions over time. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting rose 22.4% over

1 year but remains 54.2% below its level 5 years earlier. Public administration grew 36.7% in the past year, yet it is also down 54.6% over 5 years. Taken together, the figures show sectors that are currently concentrated in Claresholm, even though their longer-term trajectories have been weaker. Source: Statistics Canada, Business Register; Localintel, Employment Location Quotient by Industry Estimates of Census Areas

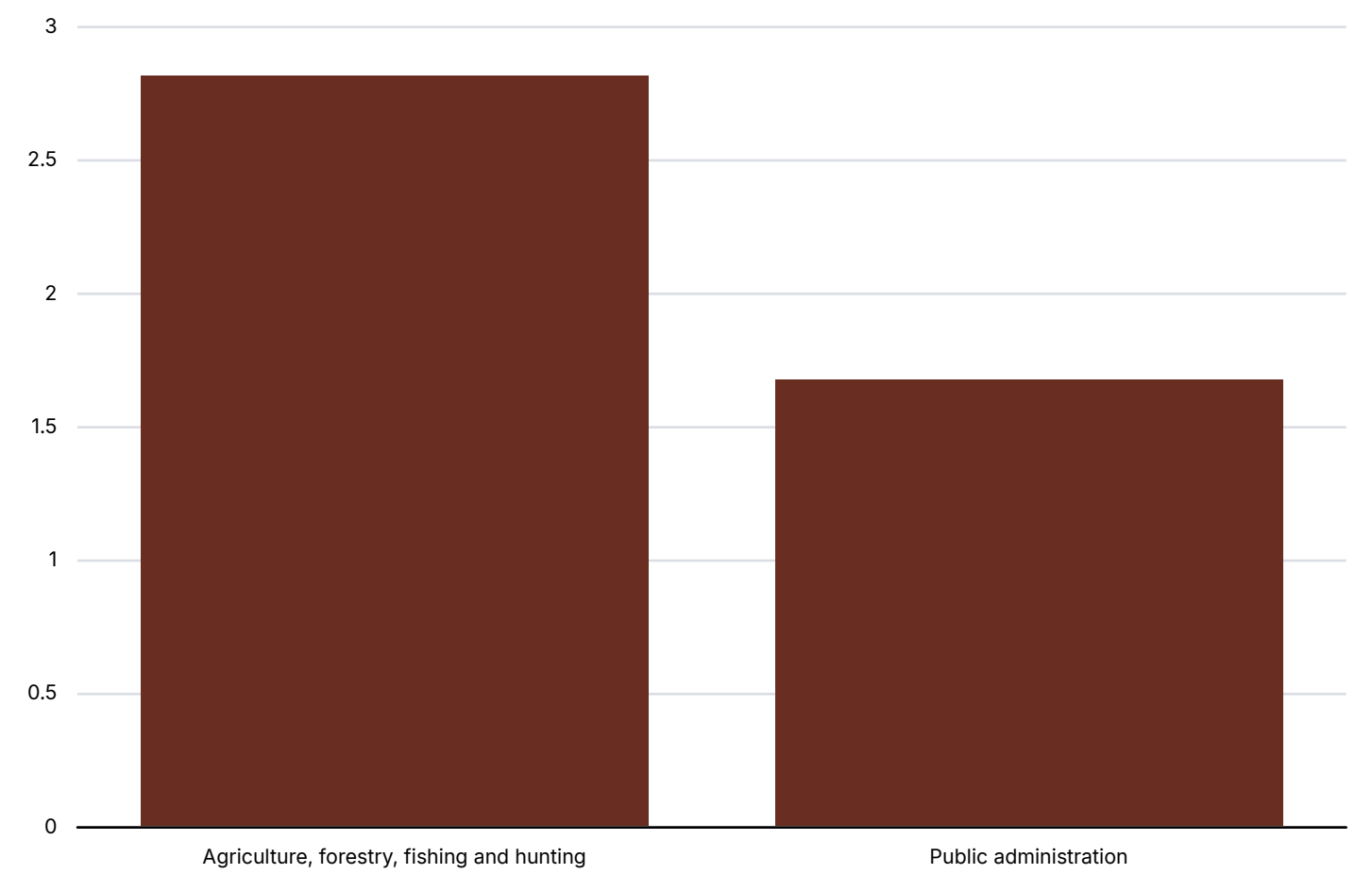


Figure 3.1: Shows major industry sectors where the local economy has strong specialization and increasing concentration or strong growth. Sectors are categorized based on specialization (location quotient) and recent employment growth or change in concentration. (Claresholm, 2025)³

Employment by Sector

Health care and social assistance remained Claresholm’s largest sector in 2025 with 1,780 people, despite a 1.6% annual decline. It still far exceeded retail trade at 282 and public administration at 240.

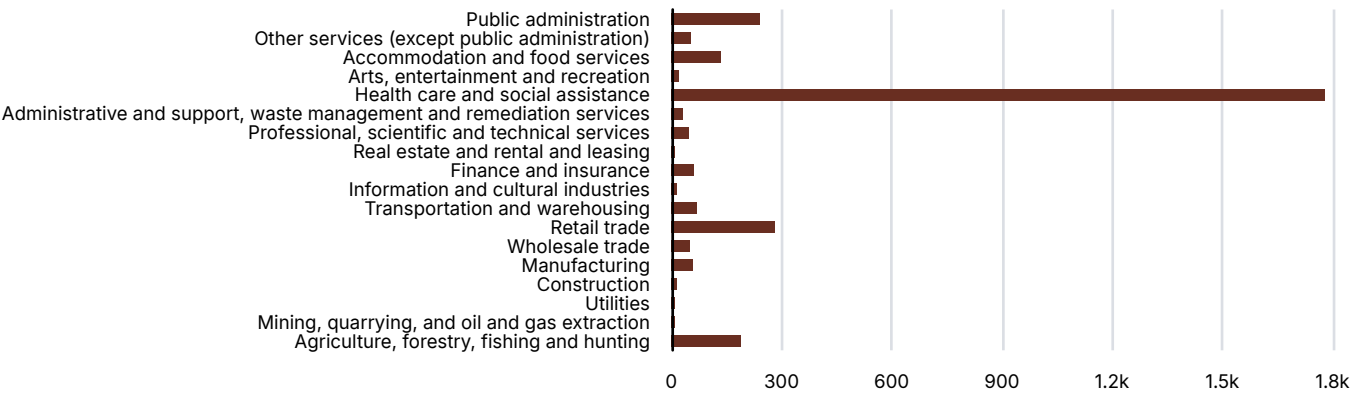


Figure 4.1: Shows how employment is distributed across industry sectors. It helps indicate which sectors account for the largest share of local jobs. (Claresholm, 2025)⁴

In 2025, Claresholm’s employment was concentrated in health care and social assistance, with 1,780 workers, far ahead of retail trade at 282 and public administration at 240. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting also remained important at 190. Recent movement was mixed: health care was little changed over the year, while public administration rose 45.5% and agriculture grew 22.6%. Several smaller sectors, including mining and wholesale trade, declined sharply over five years.

Claresholm’s employment mix in 2025 is led by health care and social assistance, with 1,780 employees, far ahead of any other sector. Retail trade is next at 282, followed by public administration at 240 and agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 190. Most other sectors are smaller, generally under 150 workers. The pattern suggests a workforce anchored by care services and a handful of supporting sectors, while some industries remain limited in size.



Figure 4.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Naics - Health care and social assistance (Claresholm)⁴

Establishments by Sector

Claresholm’s business base is led by agriculture, with 218 establishments in 2025, up 5.8% from 2024 but down 33.7% from 2020. Real estate and rental and leasing followed at 110 establishments.

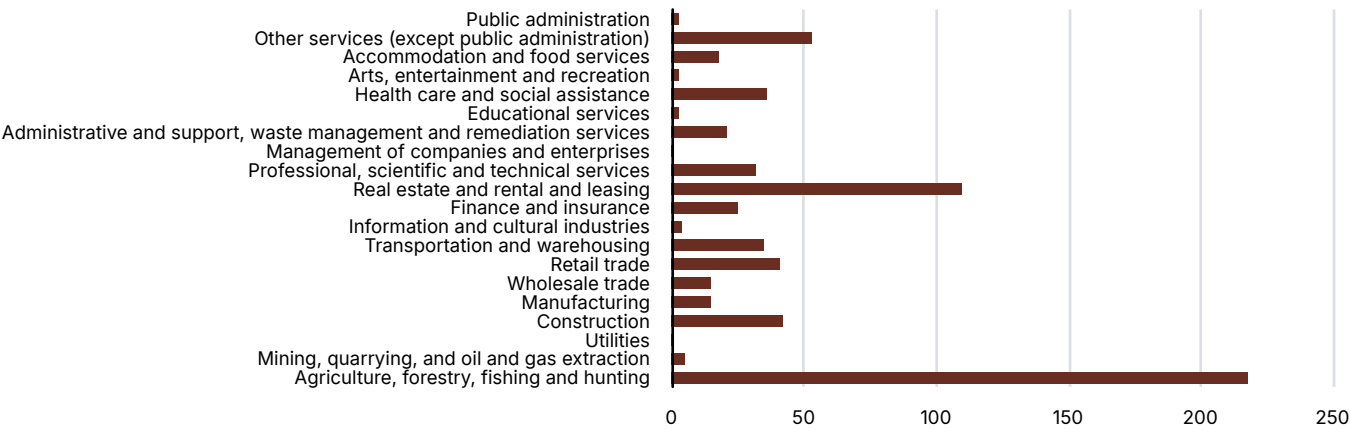
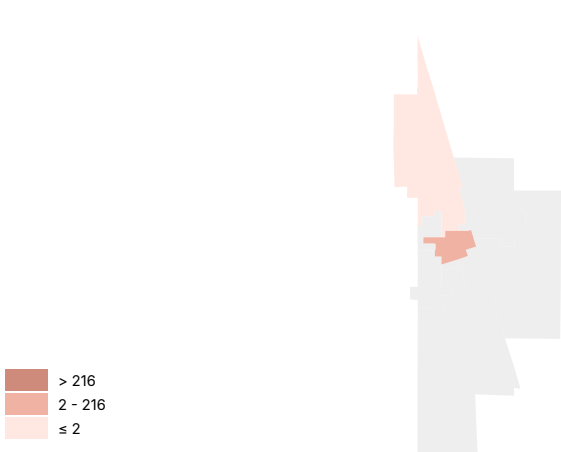


Figure 5.1: Shows how business establishments are distributed across sectors. It helps indicate the sector mix of the local business base. (Claresholm, 2025)¹

Claresholm’s business base in 2025 is concentrated in a few sectors, with agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting standing out as the largest group at 218 establishments. Real estate and rental and leasing follows at 110, while other services and public administration are much smaller at 53 and 3 establishments respectively. Several mid-sized sectors also shape the mix: health care and social assistance has 36 establishments, transportation and warehousing 35, and construction 42. By contrast, utilities and management of companies and enterprises each have just 1 establishment. Recent changes are mixed. Manufacturing rose 36.4% over the past year, health care increased 12.5%, and real estate grew 11.1%, while retail trade fell 14.6% and finance and insurance declined 28.6%.



Claresholm’s business base in 2025 is heavily concentrated in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, with 218 establishments, far ahead of real estate and rental and leasing at 110. Other sizable groups include other services at 53, construction at 42 and retail trade at 41. Recent change is mixed, with agriculture up 5.8% but several service sectors down.

Figure 5.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Naics - Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (Claresholm)¹

Establishments by Size

Claresholm’s establishments are still dominated by businesses without employees, with 557 in 2025. That group rose 2.8% from 2024 but remained 16.9% below 2020. The 100 to 199 employee group doubled to 2.

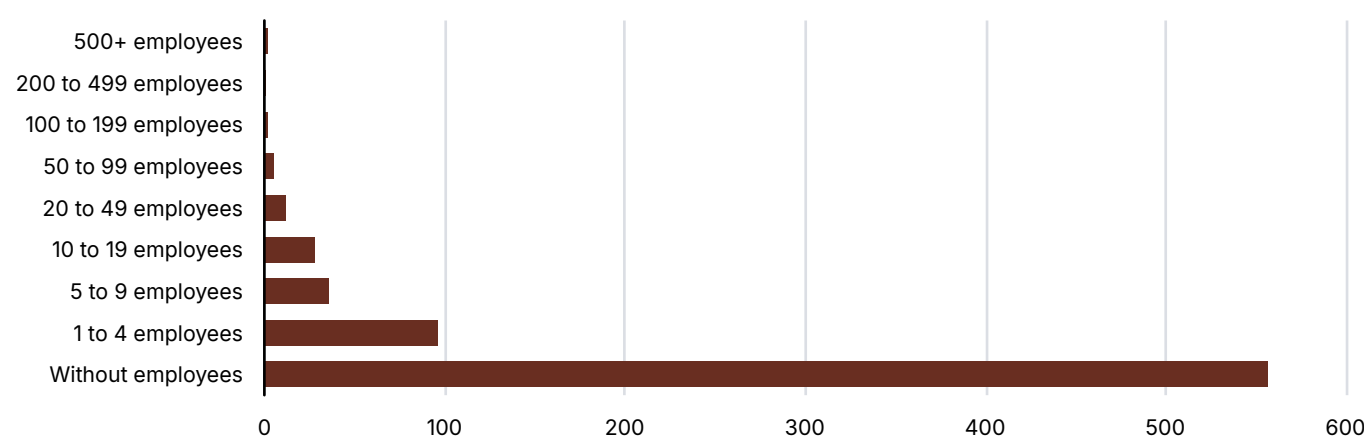
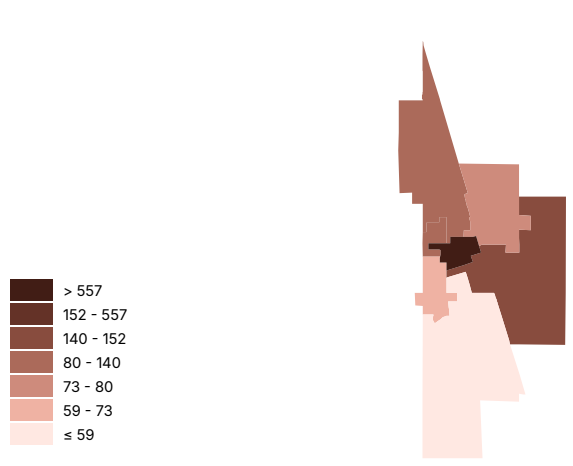


Figure 6.1: Shows how businesses are distributed by number of employees. It helps indicate whether the local economy is dominated by very small, small, or larger firms. (Claresholm, 2025)¹

Claresholm’s business base in 2025 is heavily weighted toward establishments without employees, with 557 such businesses. Smaller firms also matter, but they are far fewer: 96 with 1 to 4 employees and 36 with 5 to 9 employees. Among larger establishments, the counts drop quickly. There are 28 businesses with 10 to 19 employees, 12 with 20 to 49, and only 5 with 50 to 99. The largest classes are rare: 2 with 100 to 199 employees, 1 with 200 to 499, and 2 with 500+. The recent trend is mixed. No-employee firms rose 2.8% in one year, while 1 to 4 employee firms fell 8.6%. This points to a local business structure dominated by very small establishments.



In 2025, Claresholm’s business base was heavily weighted toward very small establishments. Businesses without employees accounted for 557 locations, far more than any other size class, while firms with 1 to 4 employees numbered 96 and those with 5 to 9 employees totaled 36. Larger employers were rare, with 28 establishments in the 10 to 19 range and only 12, 5, 2, 1, and 2 in the remaining size bands.

Figure 6.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Business Establishment Size - Without employees (Claresholm)¹

Labour Market Gap

Claresholm’s largest labour market gap was in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 5.6. Wholesale trade followed at 5.3, while health care and social assistance reached 4.35, leaving these sectors with the widest gaps in 2021.

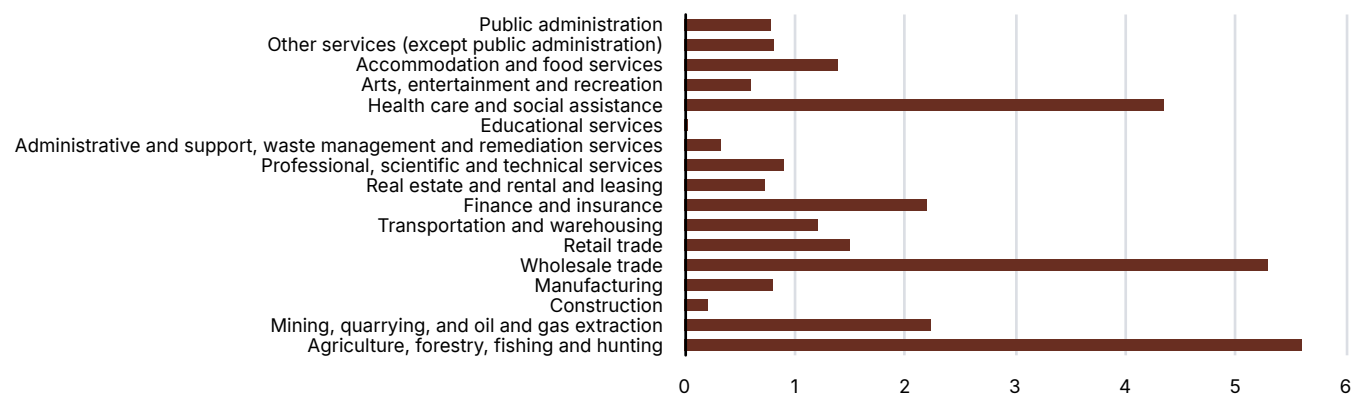


Figure 7.1: Shows the gap between the number of local jobs and the number of resident workers across all sectors. It helps indicate whether the area attracts workers in or sends workers out. (Claresholm, 2021)⁵

In 2021, Claresholm shows a positive labour market gap across every sector, meaning local jobs outnumber resident workers in each industry tracked. The largest gaps are in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 5.6, wholesale trade at 5.3, and health care and social assistance at 4.3. Smaller gaps appear in construction at 0.2, educational services at 0.0, and administrative and support services at 0.3. The pattern suggests a broad demand for workers rather than a single-sector imbalance.

In 2021, Claresholm’s labour market gap varied sharply by sector, measured as a ratio for the labour force aged 15 years and over. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting was highest at 5.6, followed by wholesale trade at 5.3 and health care and social assistance at 4.3. At the low end, construction stood at 0.2 and educational services at 0.0. The pattern suggests uneven local balance across industries.



Figure 7.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Industry Sector - Health care and social assistance (Claresholm)⁵

Largest Sectors

Health care and social assistance employed the most people in Claresholm at 1,780 in 2025, down 1.6% from a year earlier but up 808.2% over five years. Public administration followed at 240, rising 45.5%.

In 2025, Claresholm’s employment profile was led by health care and social assistance, which accounted for 1,780 employees aged 15 years and over. That sector was far larger than the others in the local mix, giving the town a clear employment anchor. Retail trade was next at 282 people, followed by public administration with 240 and agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting with 190. Accommodation and food services was smaller still, at 136 employees. These figures show a steep

drop after the leading sector. Recent change was mixed. Health care and social assistance edged down 1.6% over the past year but was up 808.2% over five years. Public administration rose 45.5% in one year and 6.7% over five years, while agriculture grew 22.6% over one year despite a 26.4% five-year decline. The pattern suggests a workforce concentrated in health care, with smaller but shifting roles in public administration, retail, and primary industries.

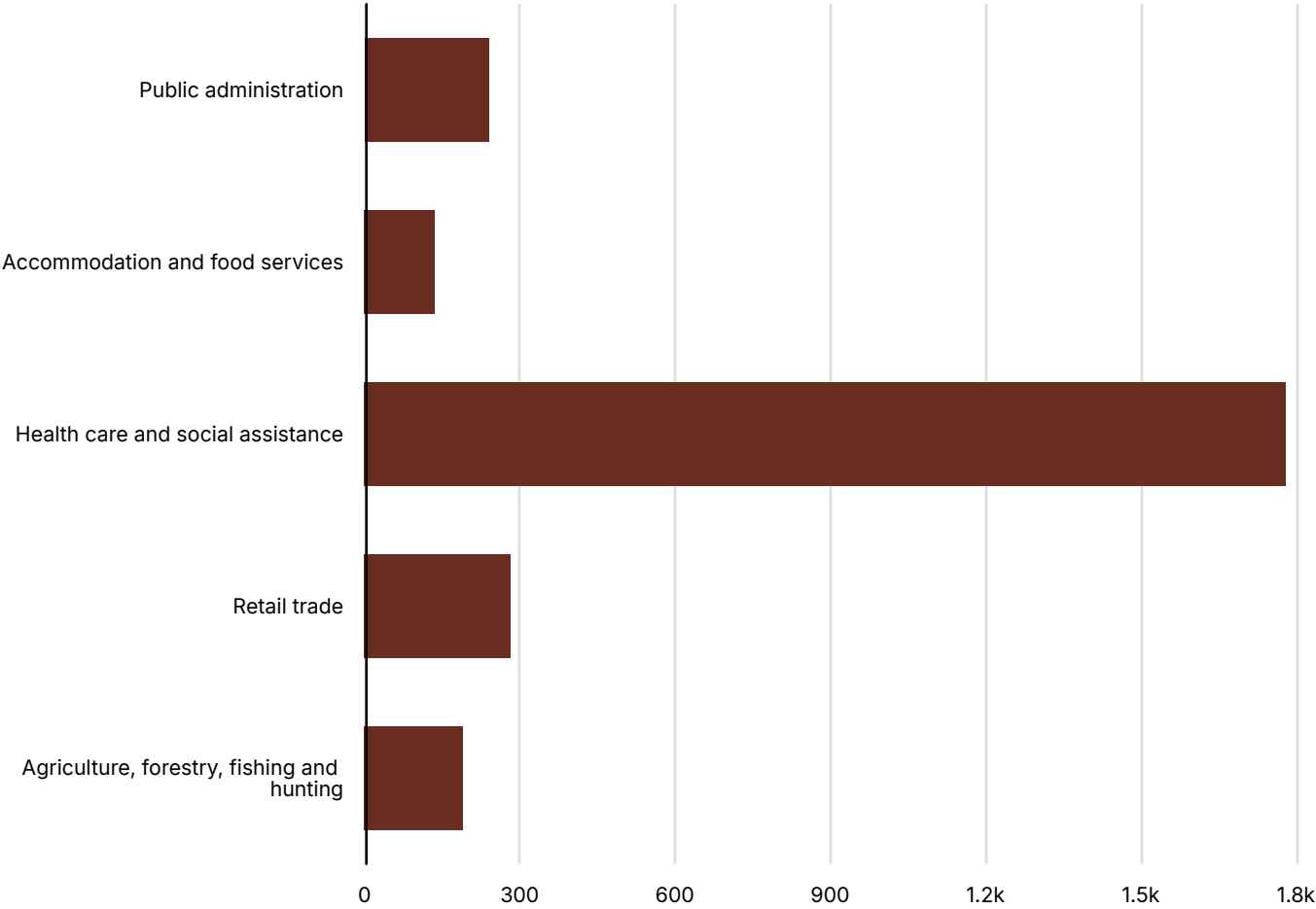


Figure 8.1: Shows the sectors employing the most people. It helps identify the largest pillars of the local economy. (Claresholm, 2025)⁴

Micro Establishments Share

Claresholm’s micro-establishment share in 2025 was 100.0% in the largest group and the most changed group. The overall share stayed unchanged from 2024 and matched the 2020 and 2021 level.

Claresholm’s business base in 2025 was heavily tilted toward micro establishments across most sectors. Shares of firms with 0 to 4 employees were especially high in management of companies and enterprises and educational services, both at 100%, while real estate and rental and leasing was also near that level at 99.1%. Several other sectors were similarly micro-heavy: agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 95.0%, construction at 95.2%, transportation and warehousing at 94.3%, and other services at 96.2%. Lower shares appeared in retail trade at

53.7%, accommodation and food services at 50.0%, and information and cultural industries at 50.0%. The recent movement is mixed. Accommodation and food services rose 28.5 percentage points over one year, while mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction gained 19.9 points. By contrast, retail trade fell 11.1 points and information and cultural industries dropped 16.7 points. The pattern points to a local business structure where very small firms dominate many sectors, though a few service industries show more room for larger establishments.

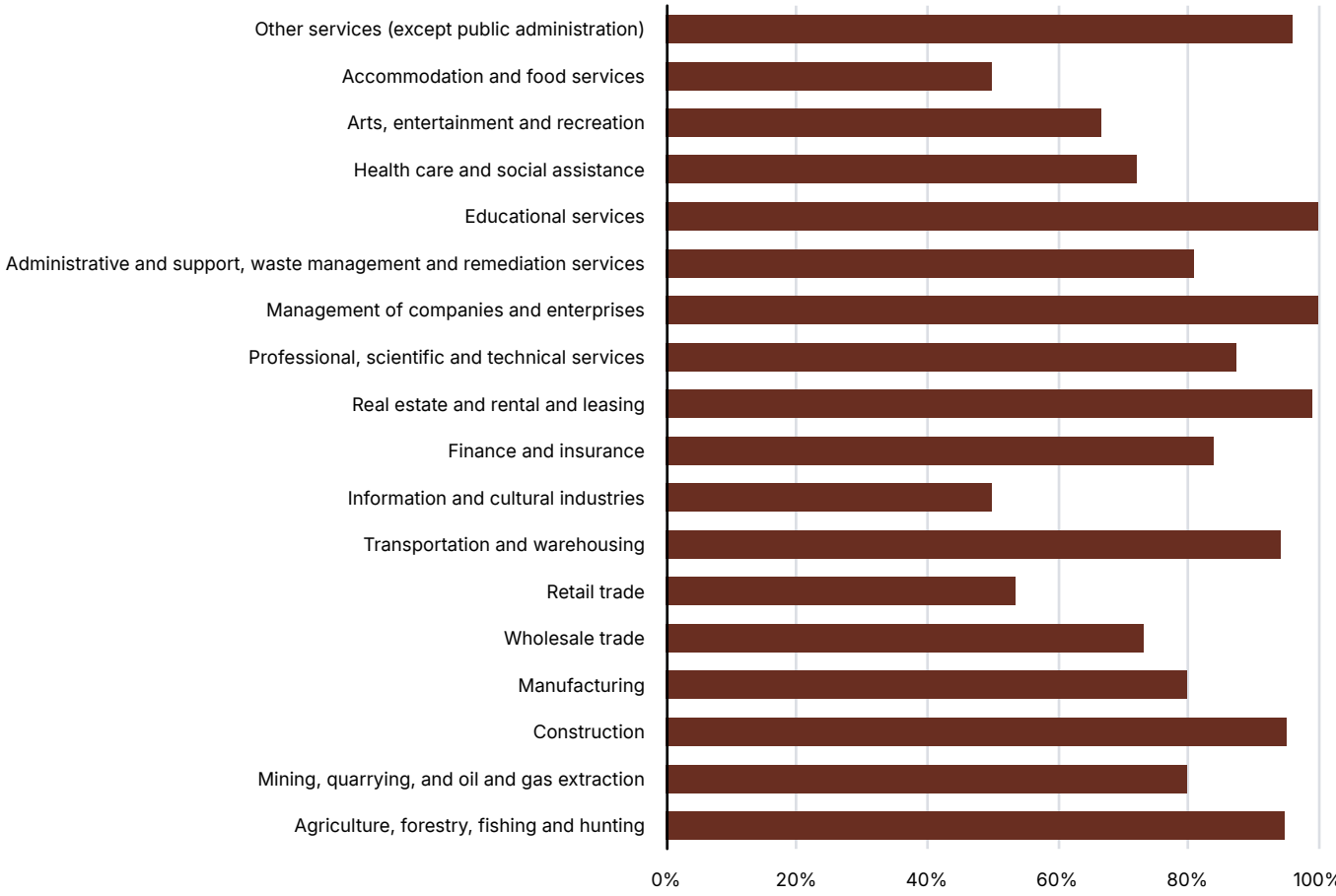


Figure 9.1: Shows the share of businesses with 0 to 4 employees. It helps indicate how much the local business base is made up of very small firms. (Claresholm, 2025)⁶

Specialist Sectors (LQ)

Claresholm’s most specialized sector is health care and social assistance at 4.4070, despite a 6.8% decline over one year. Public administration rose 36.7% to 1.6735, while agriculture remains elevated at 2.8104.

Claresholm’s most specialized employment sectors in 2025 are concentrated in a few clear areas, with health care and social assistance standing out most strongly. The town also shows above-average specialization in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, while public administration forms another notable pocket of concentration. Health care and social assistance has the highest location quotient at 4.407, followed by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 2.8104 and public administration at 1.6735. Retail trade sits below parity at 0.7989, and accommo-

dation and food services is lower still at 0.5936. The time trend is mixed. Health care and social assistance rose sharply over five years, up 415.3%, even as it slipped 6.8% in the latest year. Agriculture fell 54.2% over five years but gained 22.4% in the most recent year. Public administration also declined over five years, down 54.6%, while rising 36.7% year over year. Taken together, the pattern suggests a small set of specialized sectors, with recent movement strongest in health care and agriculture.

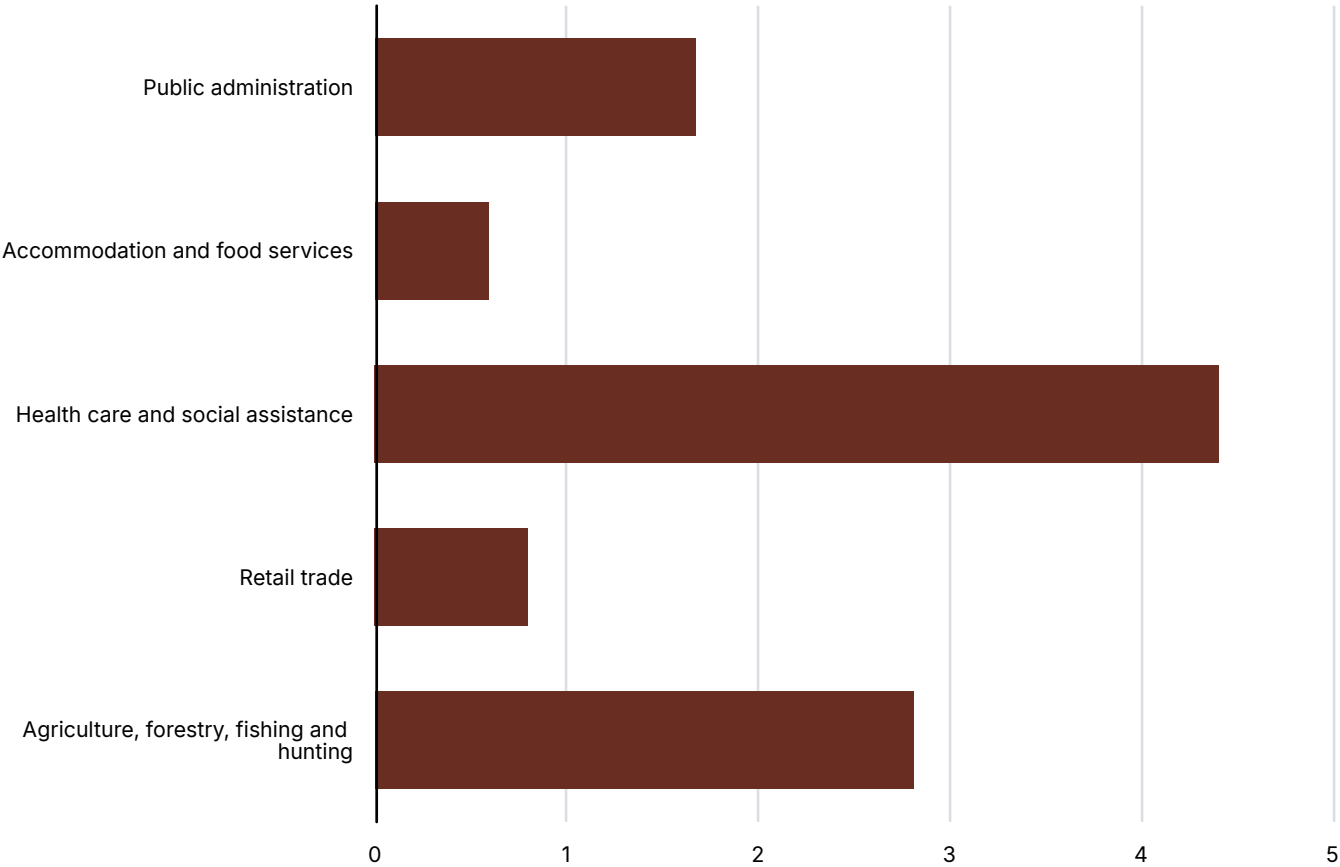


Figure 10.1: Shows sectors where the local economy has the highest level of specialization based on employment concentration compared with the national average. Sectors are categorized based on specialization (location quotient) and recent employment growth or change in concentration. (Claresholm, 2025)³

Declining Industries

Claresholm’s largest declining industry had 15 employees in 2025, down 79.5% from a year earlier and 78.6% over five years. Florists employed 1 person, while gasoline stations had 19 employees in 2022, down 67.2%.

In 2025, Claresholm’s declining industries were concentrated in a very small set of local jobs within employment among people aged 15 and over. The sharpest drop was in agricultural supplies merchant wholesalers, which employed 15 people after falling 79.5% over one year and 78.6% over five years. Florists were even smaller, with 1 job remaining, down 66.7% over the past year. The pattern points to weak staffing levels in both industries rather than broad-based job losses across many sectors. Agri-

cultural supplies merchant wholesalers still accounted for the larger remaining workforce, but its short-term and longer-term declines both signal a sustained contraction. Florists showed a similar recent drop, although the dataset does not provide a five-year change for that industry. Within the available data, Claresholm’s decline is defined by steep percentage losses from already limited employment bases.

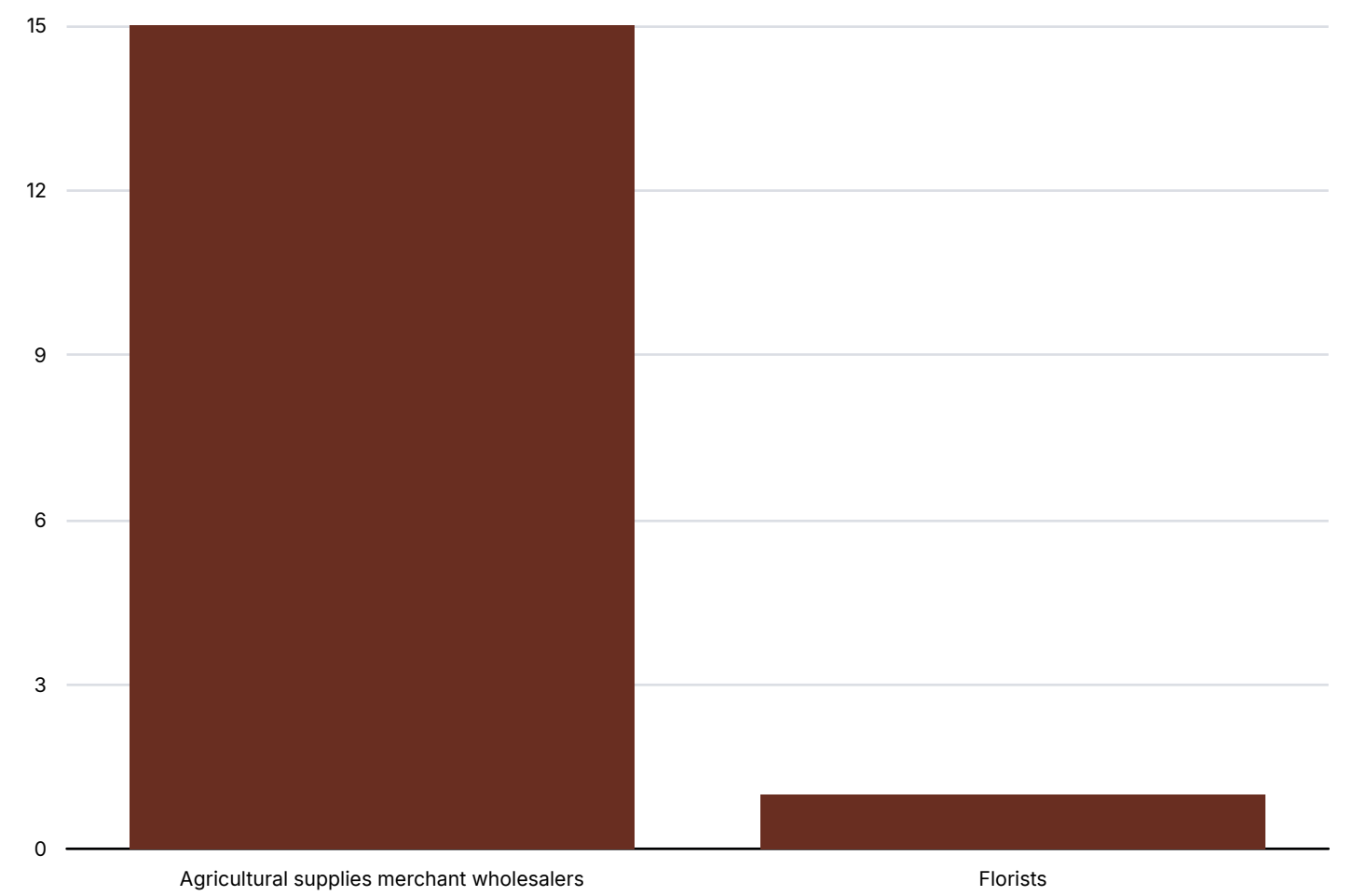


Figure 11.1: Shows industries where employment has decreased the most over the selected time period. It helps identify parts of the local economy that are losing jobs. (Claresholm, 2025)⁴

Largest Industries

Nursing care facilities employed the most people in Claresholm in 2025, with 633 workers, while outpatient care centres followed at 500. Other local, municipal and regional public administration grew 50% to 225 workers.

In Claresholm, employment is concentrated in a small set of industries, with health care and social assistance accounting for several of the largest job sources in 2025. Nursing care facilities is the biggest employer in the list, followed by outpatient care centres and other local, municipal and regional public administration. Cattle ranching and farming also appears among the leading industries, showing that the local job base is not limited to services. The largest counts are 633 people in

nursing care facilities, 500 in out-patient care centres, 289 in residential facilities for persons with an intellectual or developmental disability, a mental health or substance use condition, and 225 in public administration. General medical and surgical hospitals employ 150 people, while cattle ranching and farming employs 93. Recent change is mixed. Public administration rose 50.0% over one year, while residential facilities fell 13.5%.

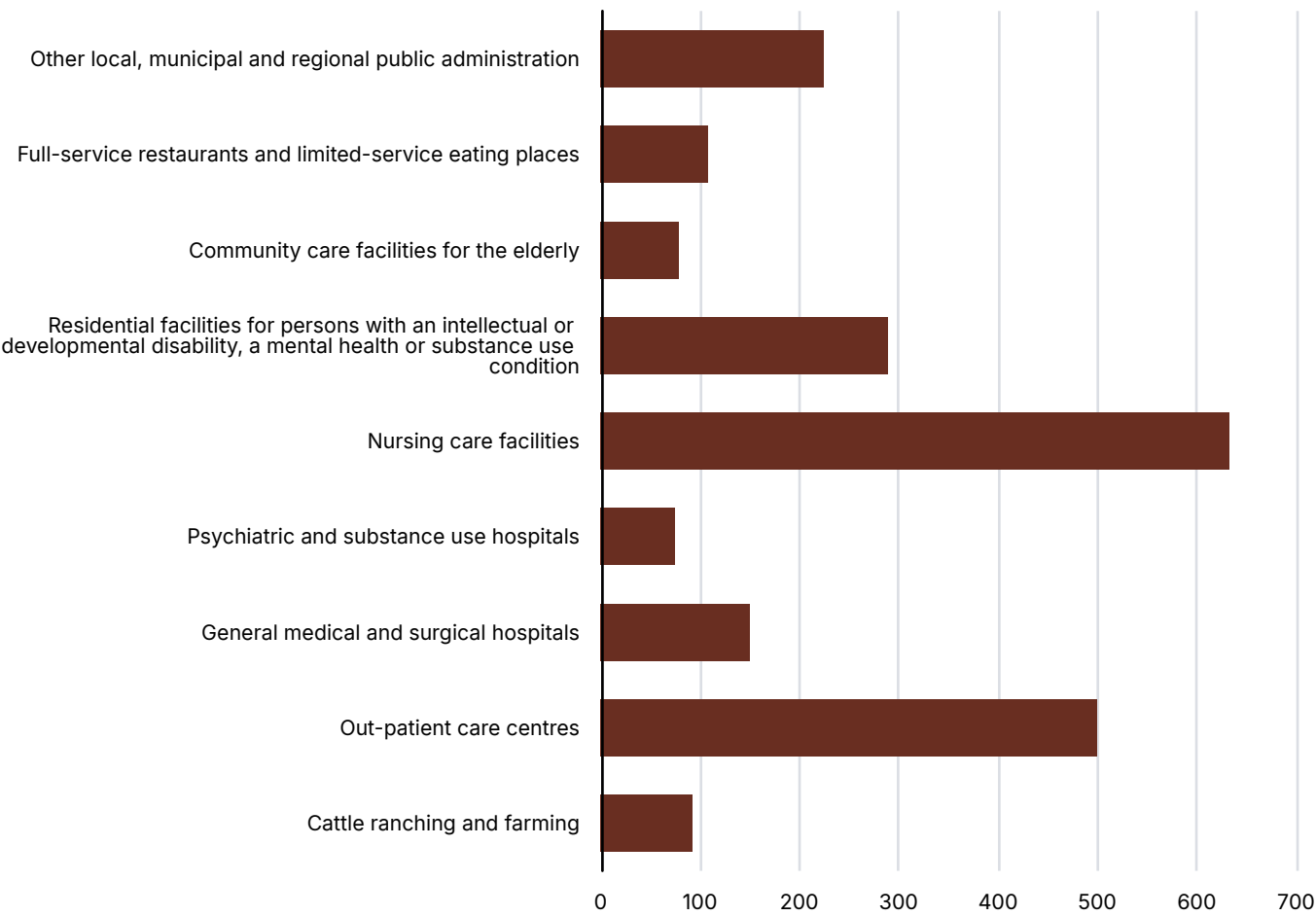


Figure 12.1: Shows the industries with the highest employment. It helps identify the biggest sources of jobs in the local economy. (Claresholm, 2025)⁴

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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