



CARDSTON COUNTY

Industry Report

Table of Contents

Business Establishments	4
Resident Labour Force	5
Star Sectors	6
Fastest Growing Industries	7
Employment by Sector	8
Establishments by Sector	9
Establishments by Size	10
Labour Market Gap	11
Largest Sectors	12
Anchor Sectors	13
Micro Establishments Share	14
Specialist Sectors (LQ)	15
Declining Industries	16
Largest Industries	17

Executive Summary

Cardston County presents a distinctly agriculture-centred local economy, with recent business growth layered onto a small-scale and uneven employment structure. The county's business establishment count rose sharply after a low point in 2023, reaching 411 in 2025, and the local business base remains heavily concentrated in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting. That same sector also dominates employment and specialization, standing far ahead of every other part of the economy and giving the county a strongly rural profile. Across the broader labour force, agriculture remains the largest field for residents, while health care, education, construction, and professional services form a secondary tier that adds some diversity without altering the overall balance.

The strongest theme running through the data is concentration rather than breadth. Agriculture accounts for the largest share of establishments, the largest employment total, and by far the highest level of specialization, with oilseed and grain farming and cattle ranching and farming standing out among the county's biggest industries. At the same time, the business landscape is dominated by very small firms, especially establishments with no employees, and micro establishments make up nearly all businesses in many sectors. This gives the county a business structure that is locally rooted but narrow in scale. Beyond agriculture, the picture is mixed. Accommodation and food services has gained ground over time and shows rising concentration, while retail trade has weakened in both employment and specialization. Recent growth in a few industries, including restaurants and dental offices, came from very small employment bases, so those gains sit alongside a broader pattern in which most non-agricultural sectors remain modest in size.

The result is a county economy with a clear centre of gravity and limited dispersion around it. Business activity has expanded quickly in the last two years, but that expansion has occurred within a structure still defined by owner-operated firms, small employment counts, and a dominant primary sector. Labour market gaps are generally modest, though they are more pronounced in retail and agriculture than in several service fields. Cardston County's overall profile is therefore one of renewed business momentum anchored in a long-standing agricultural base, with a smaller service economy that is present, shifting, and uneven rather than broad-based.

Business Establishments

Cardston County had 411 business establishments in 2025, up 6.2% from 2024 and 57.5% over five years. The count fell to 223 in 2023 before rebounding to 387 in 2024.

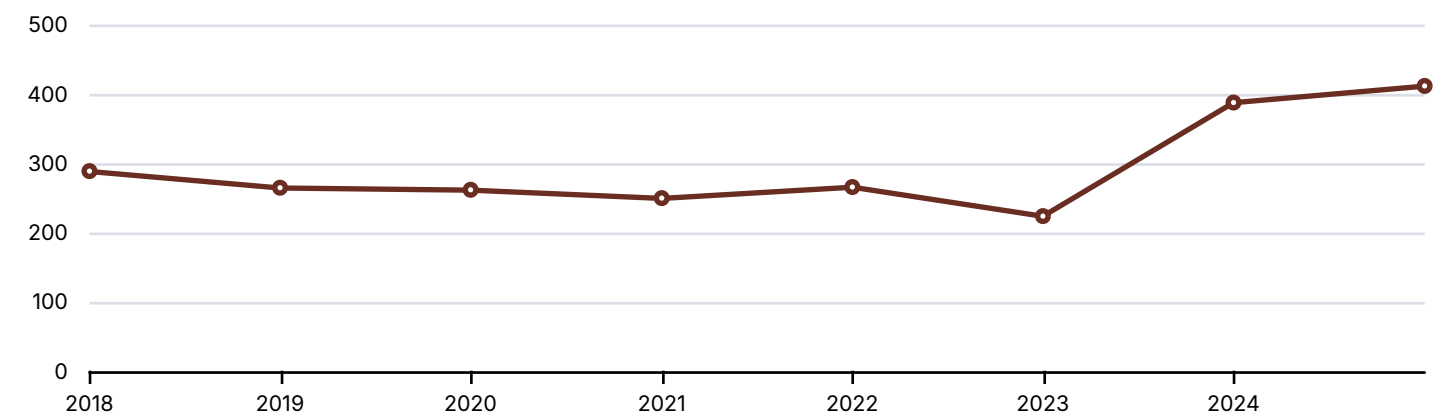


Figure 1.1: Shows the total number of active business establishments in the area, including those without employees. It helps indicate the scale and diversity of the local business base. (Cardston County, 2018-2025)¹

Cardston County's active business establishment count moved unevenly over time, then rose sharply. It started at 288 in 2018 and drifted down to 249 in 2021, before recovering to 265 in 2022 and dropping to 223 in 2023. The series then turned upward, reaching 387 in 2024 and 411 in 2025. That leaves 2025 about 57.5% above 2023 and 6.2% above 2024, suggesting a recent expansion in the local business base within the county.

Cardston County's business base expanded sharply in 2024 and 2025 after a 2023 low. The county had 411 active business establishments in 2025, up from 387 in 2024 and 223 in 2023. That 2025 total was higher than most nearby comparators, including Cardston (613), Magrath (356), and Pincher Creek No. 9 (204), but below larger centres such as Claresholm (739), Fort Macleod (726), and Nanton (644). The pattern suggests a county business base that rebounded strongly after a short slump.

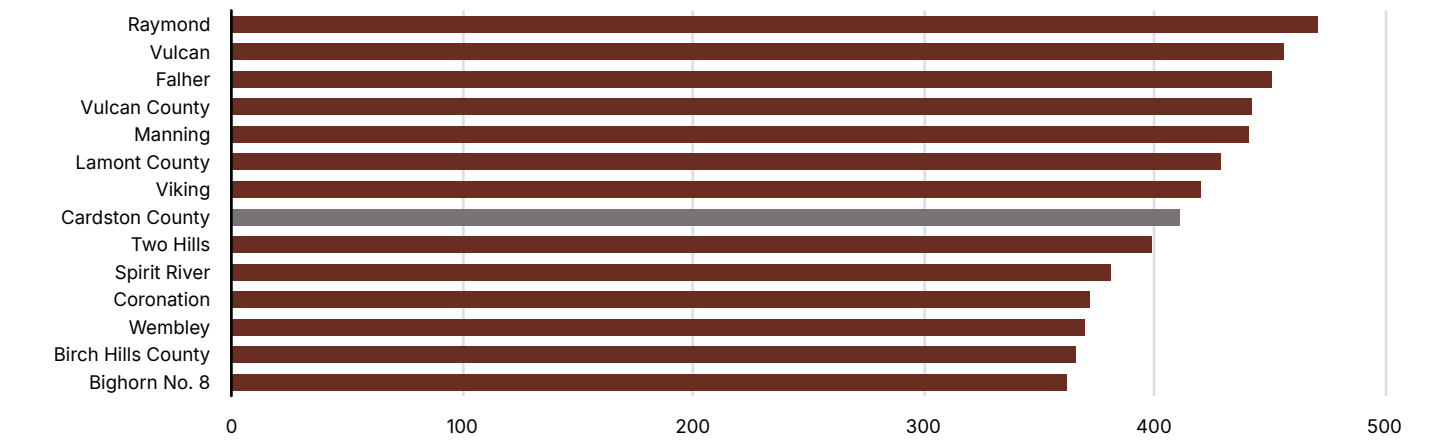


Figure 1.2: Comparison of Business Establishments with other locations (Cardston County, 2025)¹

Resident Labour Force

Cardston County's labour force remained led by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, rising to 455 people in 2021, up 12.35% from 2016. Health care reached 230, while finance and insurance doubled to 50.



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

In 2021, Cardston County's resident labour force was led by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 455 people, while health care and social assistance had 230 and educational services 135. The labour force mix also included 100 each in construction and professional services. Five-year change was mixed: mining rose 66.7%, finance and insurance doubled, and health care grew 31.4%, while wholesale trade fell 77.8% and construction dropped 35.5%. This points to a shifting but still agriculture-heavy workforce.

Cardston County's resident labour force in 2021 was spread across a few clear employment fields, with agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting the largest at 455 people. Health care and social assistance followed with 230, while educational services accounted for 135. Construction and professional, scientific and technical services each employed 100 residents. Several other sectors were smaller but still notable, including retail trade at 95, public administration at 80, accommodation and food services at 75, and administrative and support services at 60. Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction totalled 50, and finance and insurance also had 50. This pattern suggests a labour force shaped by a strong primary sector base, alongside smaller service and public-sector roles.

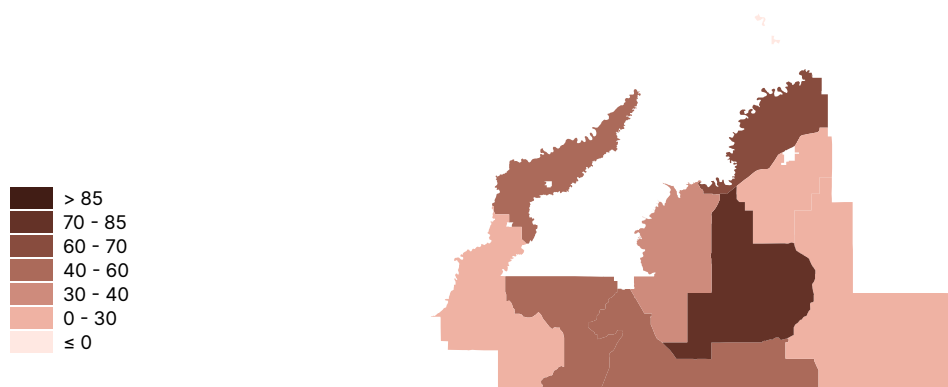


Figure 2.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Industry Sector - Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (Cardston County)²

Star Sectors

Cardston County's largest specialization is agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 30.9 LQ in 2025, up 4.9% from 2024 and 27.2% over five years. Accommodation and food services reached 1.0 LQ, rising 54.3% over five years.

Cardston County's star sectors are concentrated in two very different parts of the economy, with specialization strongest in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and a much smaller but fast-rising presence in accommodation and food services. In 2025, both sectors show increasing concentration or growth, though from very different starting points. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting records a location quotient of 30.9, with a 1-year change of 4.9 and a 5-year change of 27.2. Accommodation and food services has a location quotient of 1.0, but its

1-year change is 6.4 and its 5-year change is 54.3. The contrast is clear: one sector is highly specialized already, while the other sits near parity with broader patterns but has expanded sharply in recent years. That makes the county's star-sector profile a mix of entrenched specialization and emerging momentum. Taken together, the data suggest a local employment structure shaped by a dominant primary-sector base and a smaller service sector that has been gaining concentration quickly.

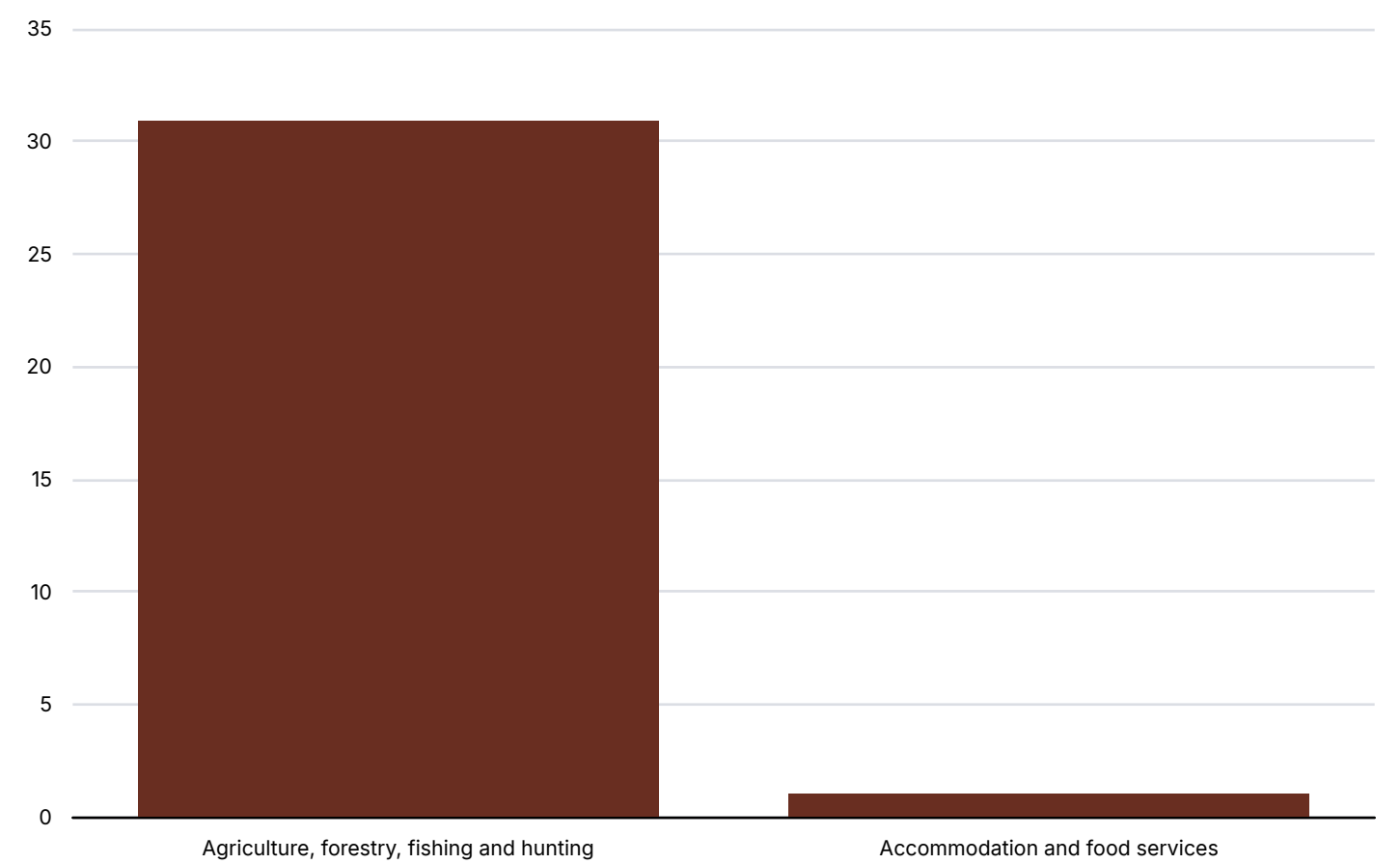


Figure 3.1: Shows major industry sectors where the local economy has strong specialization and increasing concentration or strong growth. Sectors are categorized based on specialization (location quotient) and recent employment growth or change in concentration. (Cardston County, 2025)³

Fastest Growing Industries

Cardston County’s fastest-growing industries were led by oilseed and grain farming with 74 employees and cattle ranching and farming with 70. Full-service restaurants and limited-service eating places had 11 employees, up 83.3% from a year earlier.

Cardston County’s fastest growing industries in 2025 were concentrated in a small set of service and manufacturing activities. The strongest short-term gains were recorded in architectural and structural metals manufacturing and offices of dentists, both of which employed 2 people and were up 100% over the previous year. Full-service restaurants and limited-service eating places was the largest of the three, with 11 employees and 83.3% one-year growth. The longer view is more mixed. Offices of dentists still shows a 33.3% decline over five years, even with

the recent rebound. For the other two industries, no five-year change is provided, so the dataset only supports a near-term reading of their growth. Taken together, the pattern suggests that recent job growth in the county is being led by very small employment bases rather than by large-scale expansion. That makes the ranking useful for identifying momentum, but it also means the changes should be read cautiously. The clearest signal is recent acceleration in a few small industries, especially restaurants and dental offices.

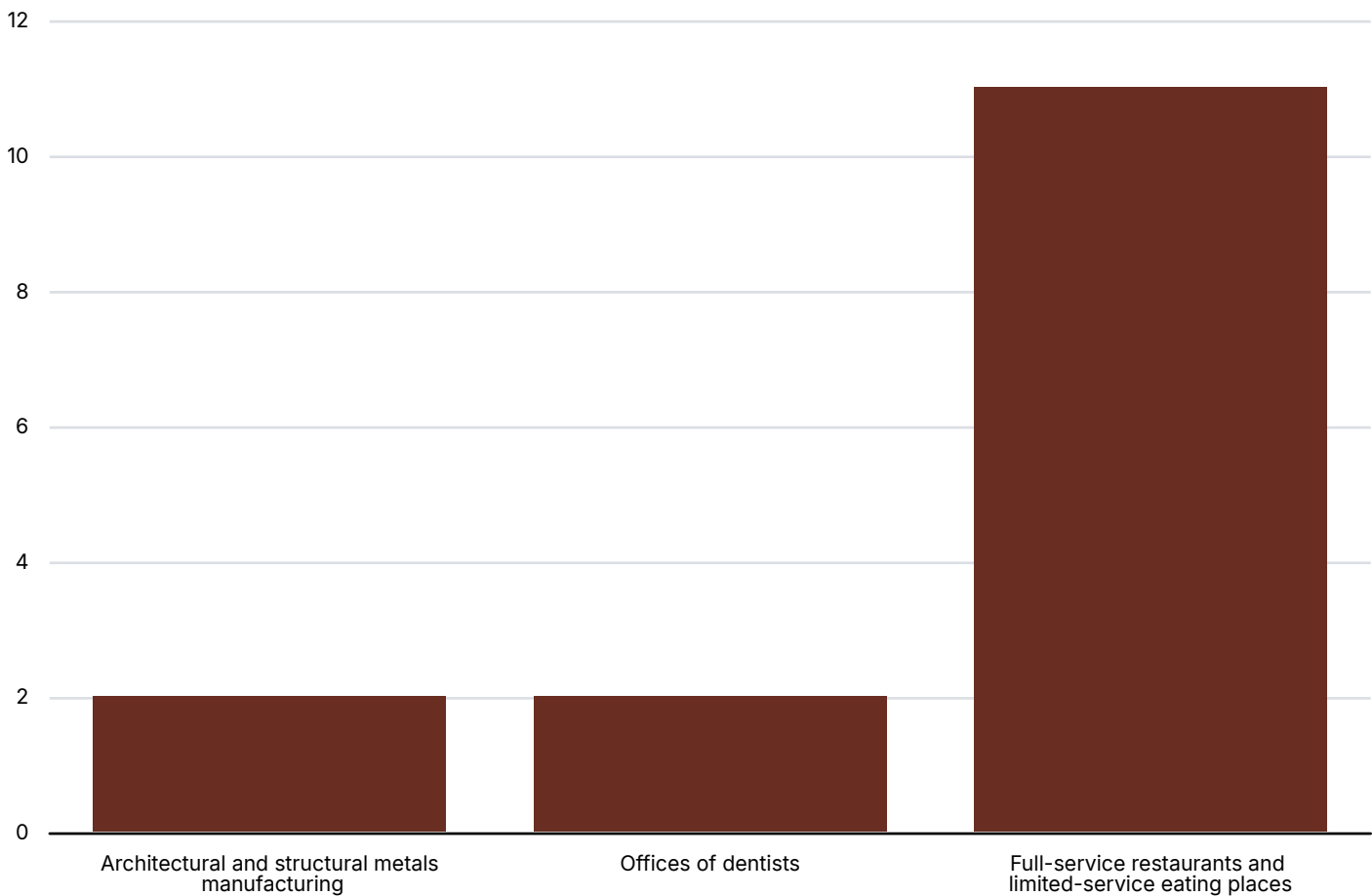


Figure 4.1: Shows industries where employment has increased the most over the selected time period. It helps identify where job growth is strongest in the local economy. (Cardston County, 2025)⁴

Employment by Sector

Cardston County’s largest sector in 2025 was agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting with 173 jobs, down 2.3% from 2024 but up 130.7% over five years. Retail trade followed at 23, while accommodation and food services reached 19.

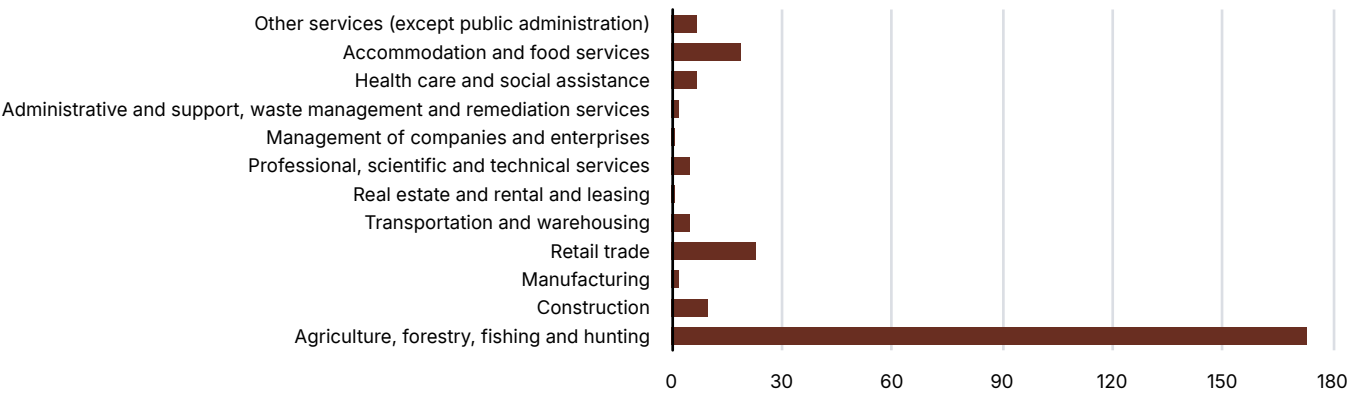


Figure 5.1: Shows how employment is distributed across industry sectors. It helps indicate which sectors account for the largest share of local jobs. (Cardston County, 2025)⁴

In 2025, employment in Cardston County was concentrated in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, which accounted for 173 jobs and remained far ahead of other sectors. Retail trade had 23 jobs, while accommodation and food services had 19. The clearest trend is mixed: agriculture was slightly lower than a year earlier, but far above its five-year level, while retail fell over both periods and accommodation and food services grew strongly over five years.

In 2025, Cardston County’s employment was concentrated in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, with 173 workers. Retail trade had 23, and accommodation and food services had 19. Smaller sectors included construction at 10, health care and social assistance at 7, and other services at 7. Manufacturing, real estate, and management each had 1 to 2 jobs.

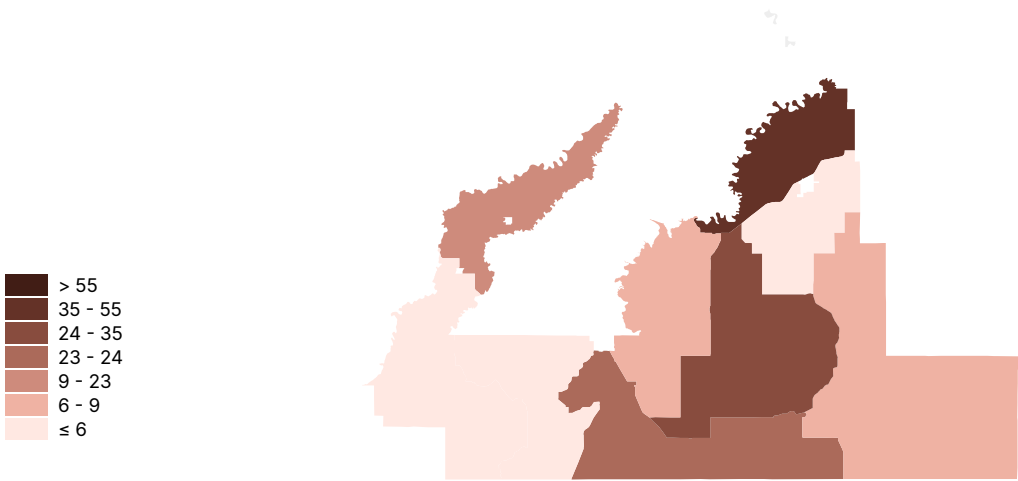


Figure 5.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Naics - Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (Cardston County)⁴

Establishments by Sector

Cardston County's largest sector is agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, with 256 businesses in 2025. That was up 4.9% from 2024 and 39.1% above 2023, while real estate reached 36 and construction 17.

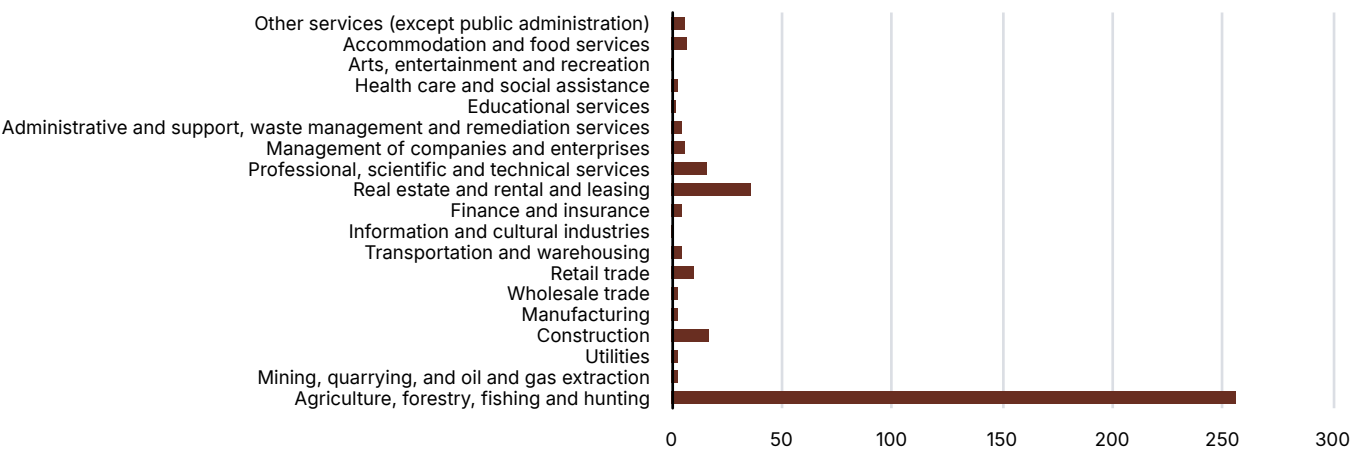


Figure 6.1: Shows how business establishments are distributed across sectors. It helps indicate the sector mix of the local business base. (Cardston County, 2025)¹

Cardston County's business base in 2025 is led by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, with 256 establishments. That sector is far larger than any other and shapes the local mix. Real estate and rental and leasing follows at 36 establishments, while construction has 17 and professional, scientific and technical services has 16. Retail trade stands at 10, and accommodation and food services at 7. Recent movement is mixed: agriculture rose 4.9% over one year and 39.1% over five, while real estate grew 16.1% and professional services 23.1% in the last year.



Cardston County's business base in 2025 is led by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, with 256 establishments. Real estate and rental and leasing is the next largest sector at 36, followed by construction at 17 and professional, scientific and technical services at 16. Retail trade has 10 establishments, while accommodation and food services has 7. Several smaller sectors were flat or mixed year over year, while agriculture grew 4.9% and real estate rose 16.1%.

Figure 6.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Naics - Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (Cardston County)¹

Establishments by Size

Cardston County’s establishments remain concentrated among businesses without employees, which rose to 347 in 2025. Firms with 1 to 4 employees totaled 47, while 10 to 19 employee establishments increased to 7.

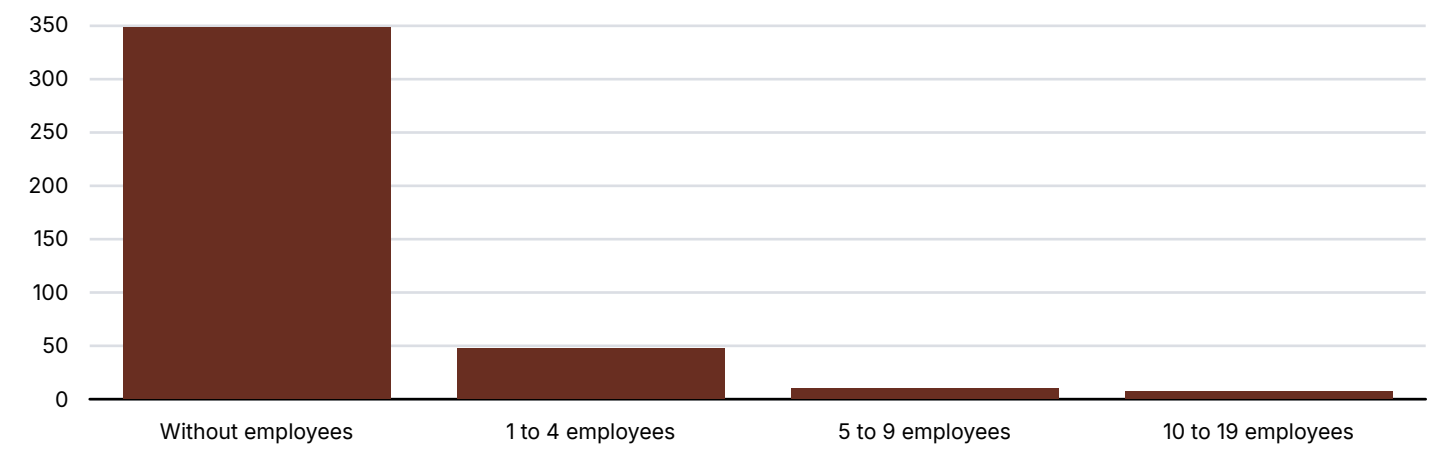


Figure 7.1: Shows how businesses are distributed by number of employees. It helps indicate whether the local economy is dominated by very small, small, or larger firms. (Cardston County, 2025)¹

Cardston County’s business base in 2025 is heavily weighted toward very small establishments, especially those with no employees. That pattern has strengthened over time, with the county showing growth across most size classes. There were 347 establishments without employees, up 8.4% from a year earlier and 50.9% over five years. The 1 to 4 employee group totaled 47 businesses, down 6.0% in the past year but still 95.8% higher than five years ago. Smaller but staffed firms remained limited: 10 businesses with 5 to 9 employees and 7 with 10 to 19 employees. The recent mix suggests a local business landscape dominated by owner-operated firms and a relatively small pool of larger small businesses.



Figure 7.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Business Establishment Size - Without employees (Cardston County)¹

Labour Market Gap

Cardston County's largest labour market gap was in retail trade at 0.24, followed by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 0.18. Professional, scientific and technical services and accommodation and food services were lowest at 0.03 each.

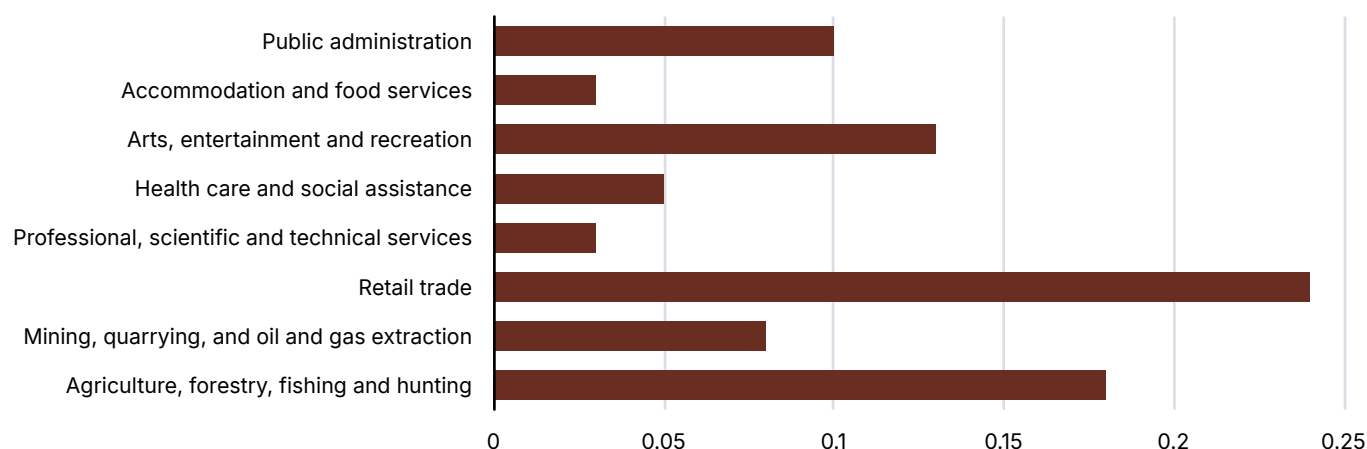
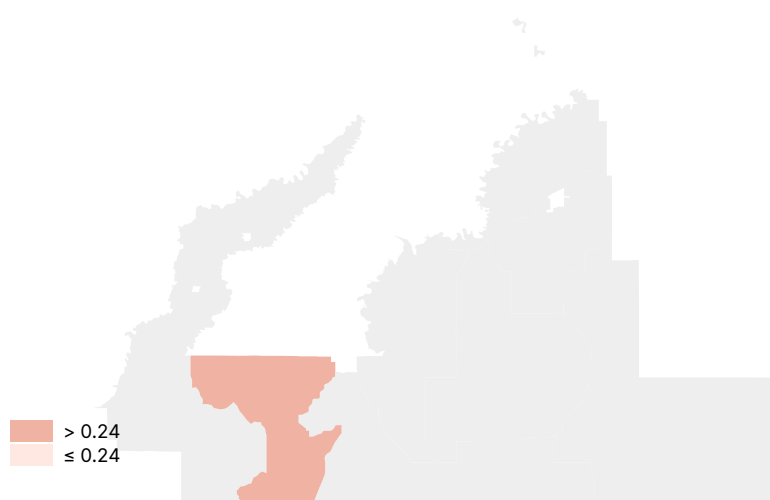


Figure 8.1: Shows the gap between the number of local jobs and the number of resident workers across all sectors. It helps indicate whether the area attracts workers in or sends workers out. (Cardston County, 2021)⁵

In 2021, Cardston County's labour market gap varied across sectors, but the ratios were generally modest. The largest gap was in retail trade at 0.24, followed by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 0.18 and arts, entertainment and recreation at 0.13. Public administration stood at 0.10, while mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction was 0.08. Smaller gaps appeared in health care and social assistance at 0.05, and both professional, scientific and technical services and accommodation and food services at 0.03. The pattern suggests a mixed local labour market with the widest gaps in retail and agriculture.



Cardston County's labour market gap in 2021 varied by sector, with retail trade at 0.24 and agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 0.18 among the larger ratios. Arts, entertainment and recreation was 0.13, while public administration was 0.10. Smaller gaps appeared in professional services, health care, and accommodation and food services.

Figure 8.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Industry Sector - Retail trade (Cardston County)⁵

Largest Sectors

Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting is the largest sector in Cardston County with 173 employees, down 2.3% from a year earlier but up 130.7% over five years. Retail trade has 23 employees.

In 2025, employment in Cardston County was concentrated in a small number of sectors, with agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting clearly the largest employer. Within employment among people aged 15 years and over, this sector accounted for 173 people, far ahead of retail trade, accommodation and food services, and construction. The next largest sectors were retail trade at 23 people, accommodation and food services at 19, and construction at 10. Recent movement was mixed. Agriculture was down 2.3% from a year earlier, retail trade fell 46.5%, and

accommodation and food services were unchanged. Construction rose 11.1% over the same period. The longer view is stronger in agriculture and accommodation. Agriculture employment was up 130.7% over five years, while accommodation and food services increased 216.7%. Retail trade moved the other way, declining 20.7% over five years. The pattern suggests a local employment base dominated by agriculture, with smaller service sectors showing uneven momentum.

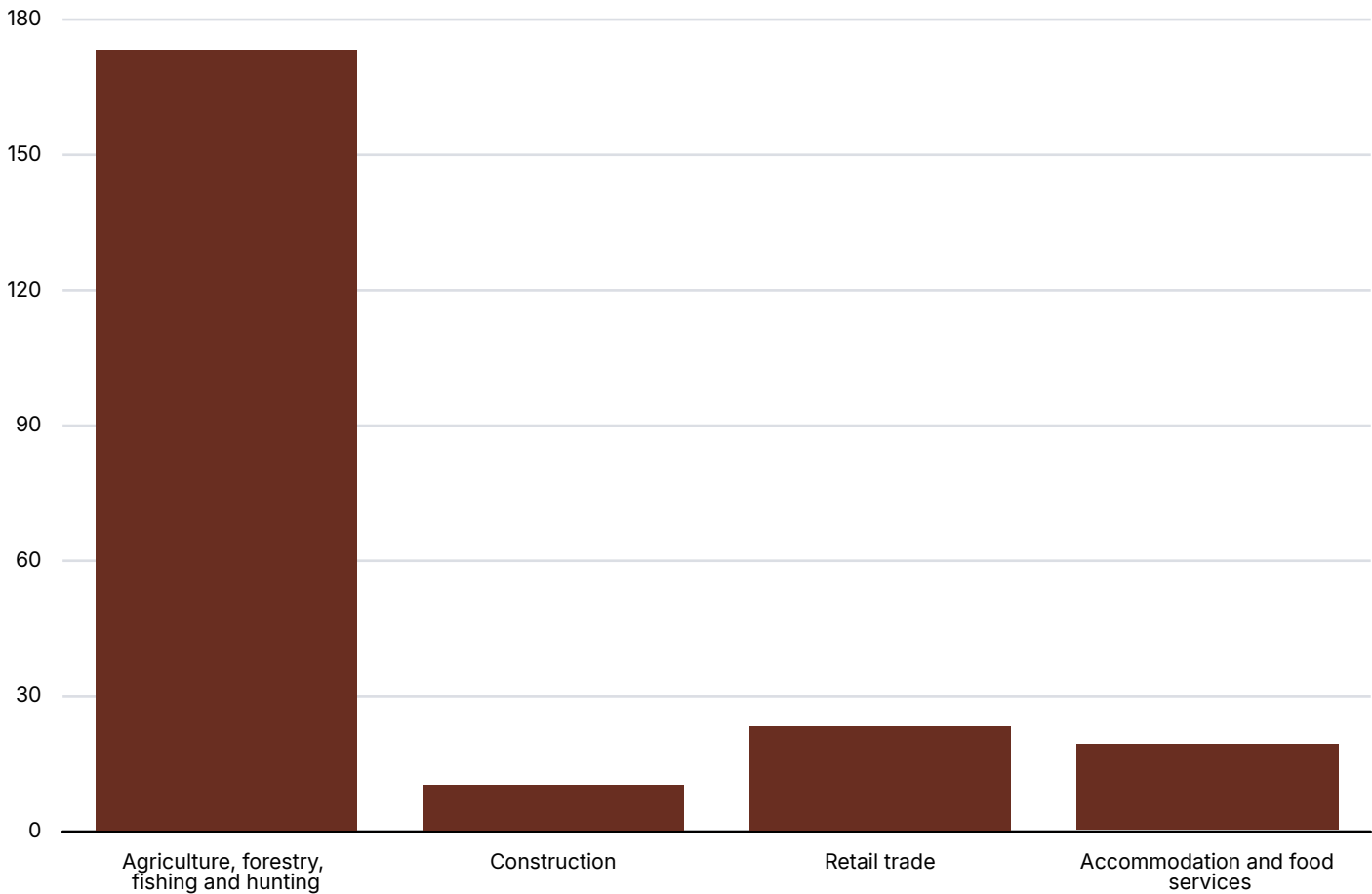


Figure 9.1: Shows the sectors employing the most people. It helps identify the largest pillars of the local economy. (Cardston County, 2025)⁴

Anchor Sectors

Cardston County's largest anchor sector is retail trade, with a location quotient of 1.3663 in 2024, down 31.24% from a year earlier. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting remains far higher at 15.3628, though it fell 42.56%.

Cardston County's anchor sectors data point to retail trade as a notable area of specialization in 2024. The sector's Location Quotient was 1.4, meaning local employment was more concentrated in retail trade than in the broader benchmark used for the measure. At the same time, the sector's recent trajectory was weaker, with a 1-year change of -31.2% in concentration. That combination makes retail trade a mature anchor rather than

a fast-growing one. The county still shows a stronger retail trade presence than average, but the sharp one-year decline suggests that this specialization has been losing ground recently. Because the dataset provides only one sector here, the picture is limited to this single industry. Even so, the pattern is clear: Cardston County has a retail trade anchor, but the latest change points to a substantial easing in that sector's relative strength.

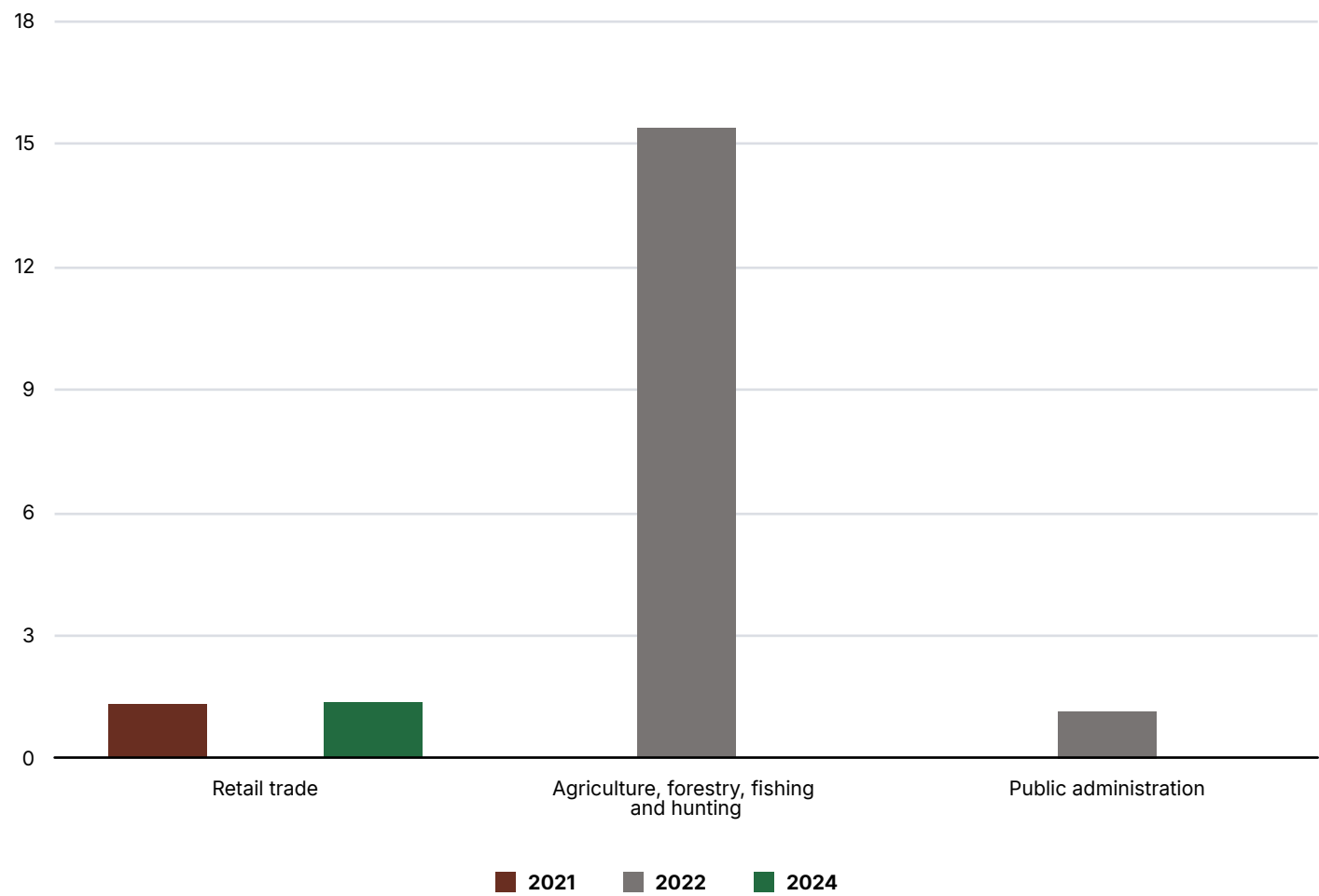


Figure 10.1: Shows major industry sectors where the local economy has strong specialization but relatively stable or declining concentration over time. Sectors are categorized based on specialization (location quotient) and recent employment growth or change in concentration. (Cardston County, 2021-2024)³

Micro Establishments Share

Cardston County’s micro-establishments share reached 100.0% in several sectors in 2025, including manufacturing, wholesale trade and finance. The biggest shift was accommodation and food services, rising to 71.4% after a 42.8% one-year increase.

In 2025, Cardston County’s business base was dominated by micro establishments, with shares at or near 100% in many sectors. That points to a local structure where very small firms are common across much of the economy. Several sectors were at the top end of the scale: mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction, utilities, manufacturing, wholesale trade, finance and insurance, real estate, professional services, educational services, arts and entertainment, and several others all reached 100%. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting was also very

high at 96.9%, while construction stood at 94.1%. A few sectors were lower. Health care and social assistance was 66.7%, accommodation and food services 71.4%, retail trade and transportation and warehousing 80.0%, and other services 83.3%. Recent movement was mixed. Retail trade rose 4.0 percentage points over one year, and accommodation and food services increased 42.8 points, while other services fell 16.7 points and transportation and warehousing fell 4.0 points.

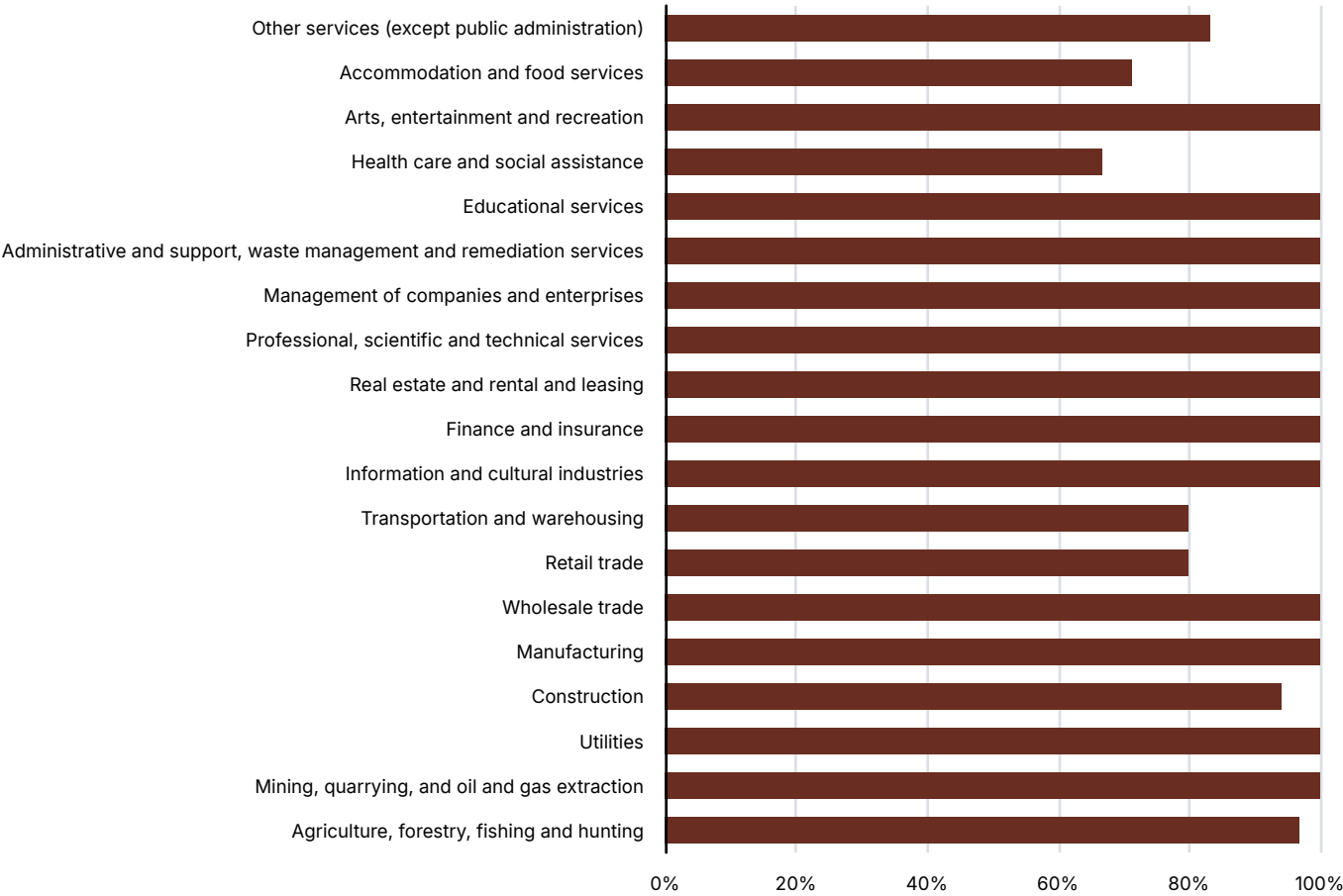


Figure 11.1: Shows the share of businesses with 0 to 4 employees. It helps indicate how much the local business base is made up of very small firms. (Cardston County, 2025)⁶

Specialist Sectors (LQ)

Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting is Cardston County's most concentrated sector at an LQ of 30.9, up 4.9% year over year and 27.2% over five years. Retail trade ranks lower at 0.8, down 42.4% and 55.6%.

Cardston County's specialist employment profile in 2025 is concentrated in a few sectors, with agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting standing far above the rest. Within the scope of employees aged 15 years and over, this sector has a location quotient of 30.9, making it the county's clearest area of specialization. The other highlighted sectors are much less concentrated. Retail trade has a location quotient of 0.8, while accommodation and food services sits at 1.0. The time trends show a sharp contrast:

agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting increased by 4.9% over one year and 27.2% over five years, and accommodation and food services rose by 6.4% and 54.3% over the same periods. Retail trade moved in the opposite direction, falling 42.4% in one year and 55.6% over five years. This pattern suggests a local economy where specialization is narrowly centered, while some smaller sectors have gained concentration over time and retail trade has weakened.

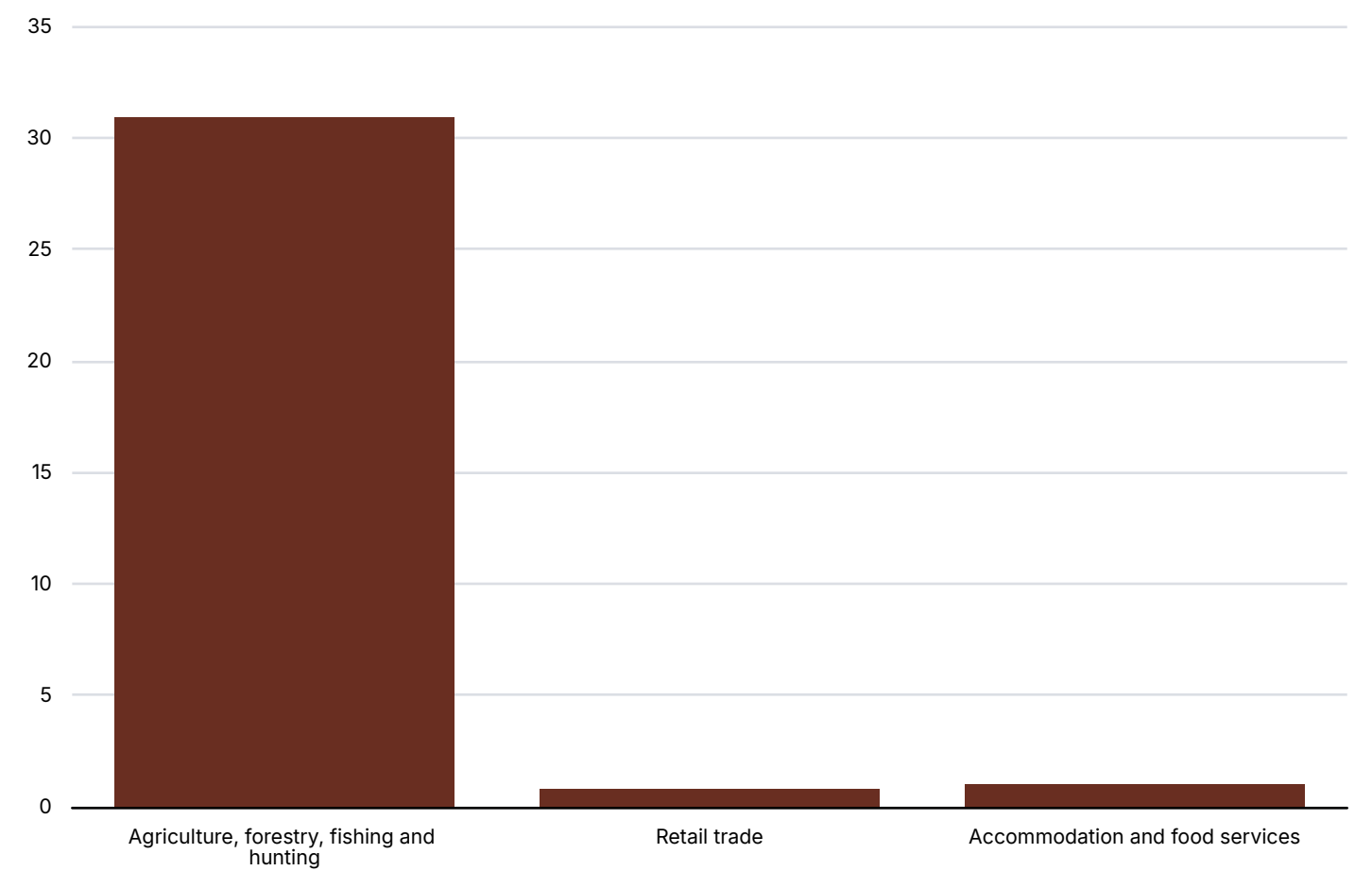


Figure 12.1: Shows sectors where the local economy has the highest level of specialization based on employment concentration compared with the national average. Sectors are categorized based on specialization (location quotient) and recent employment growth or change in concentration. (Cardston County, 2025)³

Declining Industries

In Cardston County, cattle ranching and farming had the most employment among declining industries at 63 people, down 10% over one year but up 40% over five years. Grocery and convenience retailers fell to 11 people, down 63.3%.

In 2025, Cardston County’s declining industries were concentrated in a few small employment bases, with different time trends pointing in different directions. The largest of the three was cattle ranching and farming, which employed 63 people. Grocery and convenience retailers had 11 workers, while recreational vehicle parks and recreational camps had 6. Recent change was uneven. Cattle ranching and farming fell by 10 workers over the past year, but it remained above its five-year level, with a gain of 40. Grocery and convenience retailers

saw the sharpest short-term drop, down 63.3% in one year and 21.4% over five years. RV parks and recreational camps also declined sharply over the past year, down 45.5%, though that industry was still 20 workers above its five-year level. The pattern suggests that decline in Cardston County is not uniform across industries. Some sectors show recent weakness after longer-term gains, while others have been shrinking across both time frames.

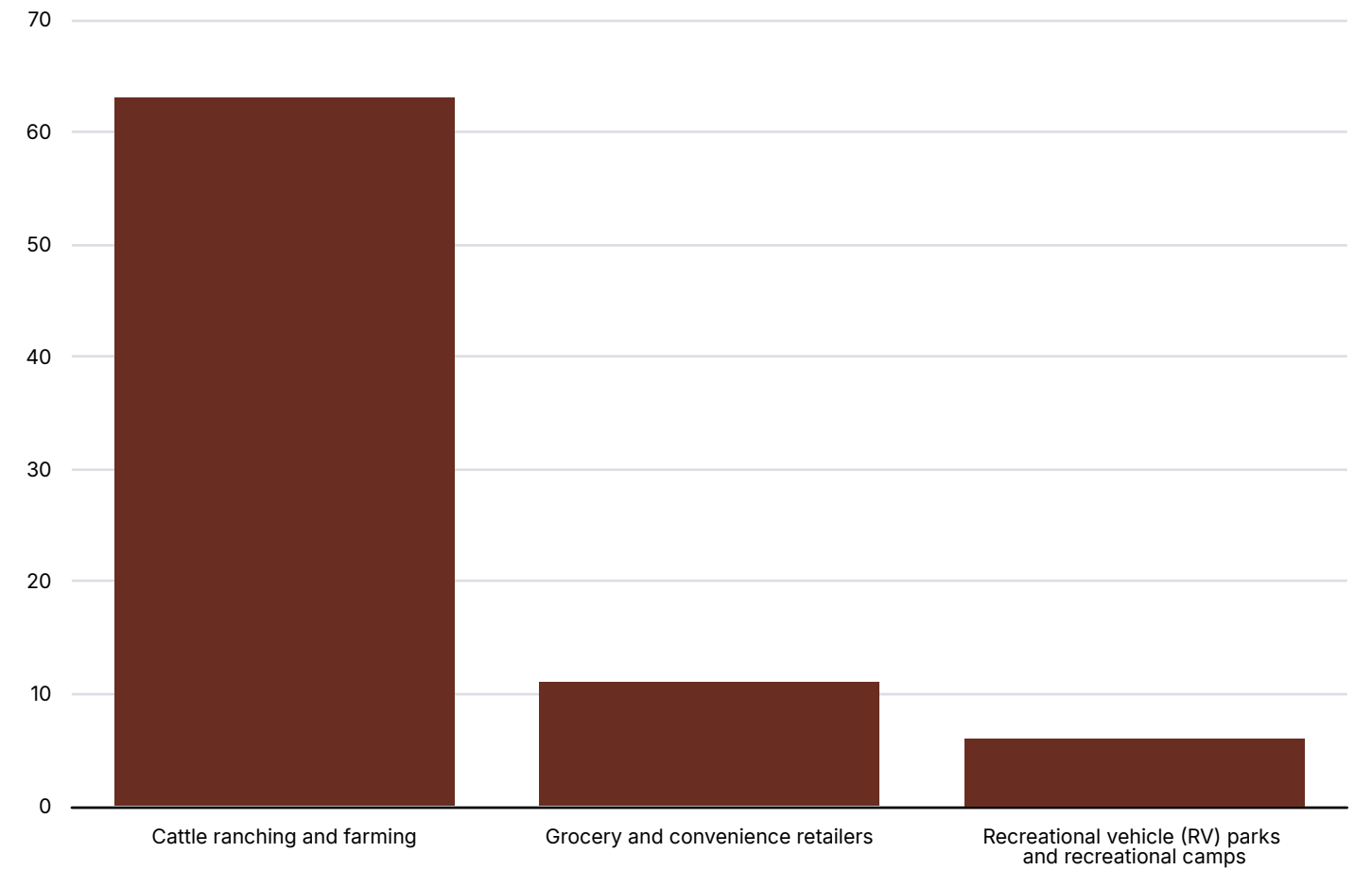


Figure 13.1: Shows industries where employment has decreased the most over the selected time period. It helps identify parts of the local economy that are losing jobs. (Cardston County, 2025)⁴

Largest Industries

Oilseed and grain farming is the largest industry in Cardston County, with 71 employees in 2025. Cattle ranching and farming follows with 63, while grocery and convenience retailers and restaurants each employ 11.

Cardston County's employment base in 2025 is concentrated in agriculture, with oilseed and grain farming and cattle ranching and farming standing out as the largest industries. The county's largest job sources are small in absolute terms, but they show a clear rural profile within the employed population aged 15 and over. Oilseed and grain farming employed 71 people, followed by cattle ranching and farming with 63. Other crop farming accounted for 15 jobs, while hog and pig farming also employed 15. Outside farming, gasoline stations had 12 jobs, and both grocery

and convenience retailers and full-service or limited-service restaurants had 11 each. Recent movement is mixed. Oilseed and grain farming was down 4.0% from a year earlier, and cattle ranching and farming fell 10.0%. By contrast, other crop farming rose 66.7%, and restaurants increased 83.3%. Grocery and convenience retail fell 63.3%. The pattern suggests a local economy led by primary agriculture, with small but shifting service employment alongside it.

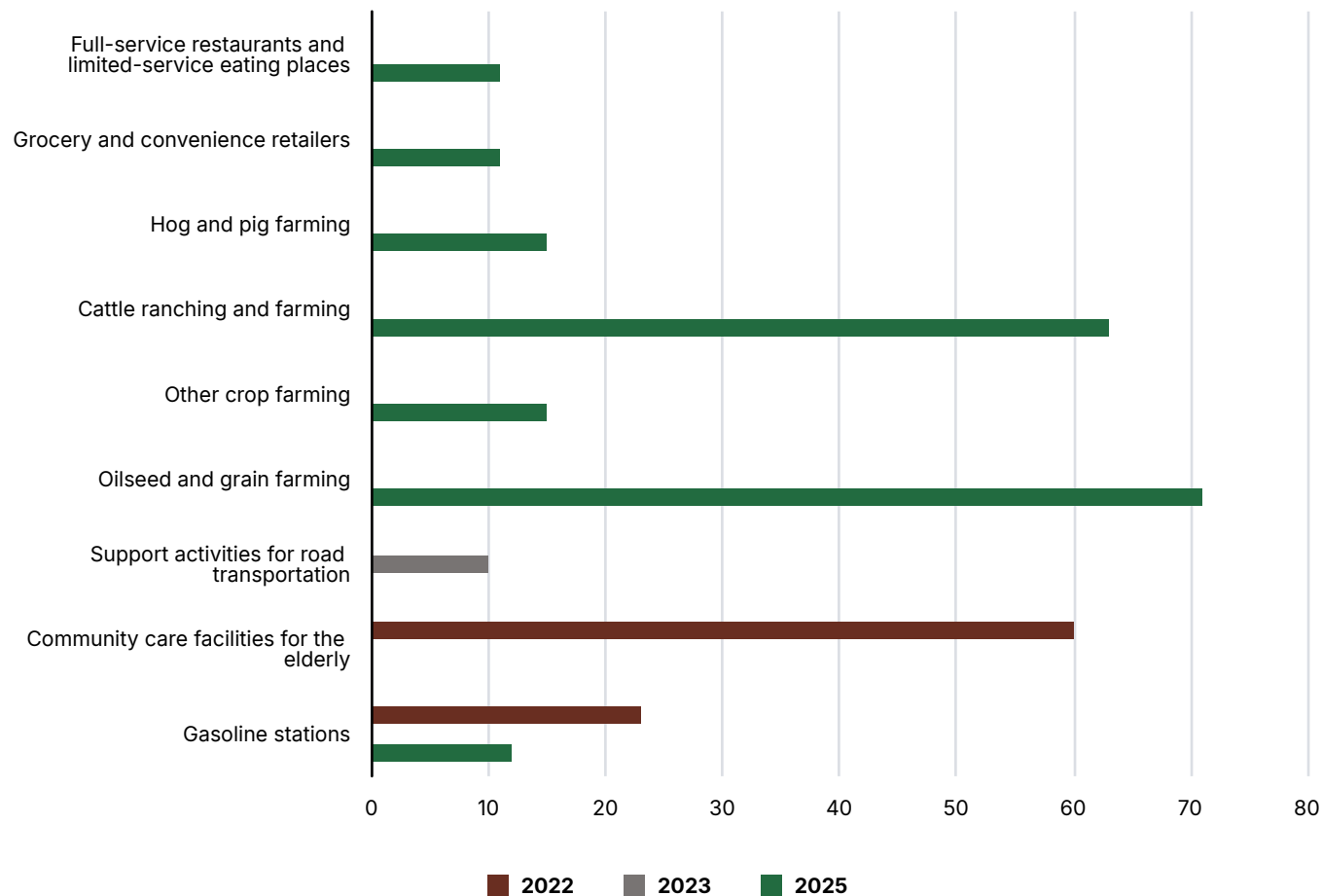


Figure 14.1: Shows the industries with the highest employment. It helps identify the biggest sources of jobs in the local economy. (Cardston County, 2022-2025)⁴

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.

Legal Notice and Disclaimer

This publication was created using the **Localintel Platform** and may include proprietary data, templates, and visualization elements licensed through it. This publication is provided for general informational purposes only. Localintel does not guarantee the completeness, accuracy, or suitability of this information for any particular purpose. No reuse, redistribution, or extraction of source data except as expressly permitted. Use of this publication is subject to applicable terms of use and restrictions available at localintel.com/terms.