



CARDSTON

Industry Report

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Executive Summary

Cardston's economy is defined less by broad expansion than by concentration and uneven movement. The town had 613 active business establishments in 2025, slightly above the previous year but still below its 2023 high, leaving the business base close to where it stood at the start of the period. Beneath that stability, the structure is distinctive. Employment is dominated by a small number of service sectors, especially educational services, which is by far the largest local employer and Cardston's clearest area of specialization. Health care and social assistance also plays a major role, while public administration and retail form a smaller second tier. The result is a local economy shaped by a few strong institutional and public-facing activities rather than a broadly even distribution of jobs.

That concentration shows up across several measures. Educational services stands out not only for its size but for its high level of specialization, with utilities and health care also more concentrated locally than in many other sectors. The labour force is similarly service-led, with health care, education, and retail employing many residents, though five-year changes were uneven across industries. Some parts of the economy posted strong gains, including transportation and warehousing among resident workers and sharp short-term increases in a few small service industries, but those jumps came from modest employment bases. Elsewhere, recent losses appeared in retail, agriculture-related employment, and several smaller industries. Cardston's business base also reflects a split character: agriculture and real estate account for many establishments, yet most firms are very small. Nearly three quarters of all establishments have no employees, and medium or large businesses remain limited.

This leaves Cardston with a business landscape that is locally varied but highly small-scale, alongside an employment base anchored by education, care, and public services. Some sectors have strengthened in the short term and others have weakened, but the larger pattern is not one of steady change in a single direction. Instead, Cardston appears as a town with a stable overall business count, a strong institutional core, and a local economy whose most visible shifts tend to occur around a relatively narrow set of sectors rather than across the whole market.

Business Establishments

Cardston had 613 business establishments in 2025, up 3.4% from 2024 but below the 2023 peak of 651. Over five years, the total increased 2.0%, after a 6.5% decline from 2024.

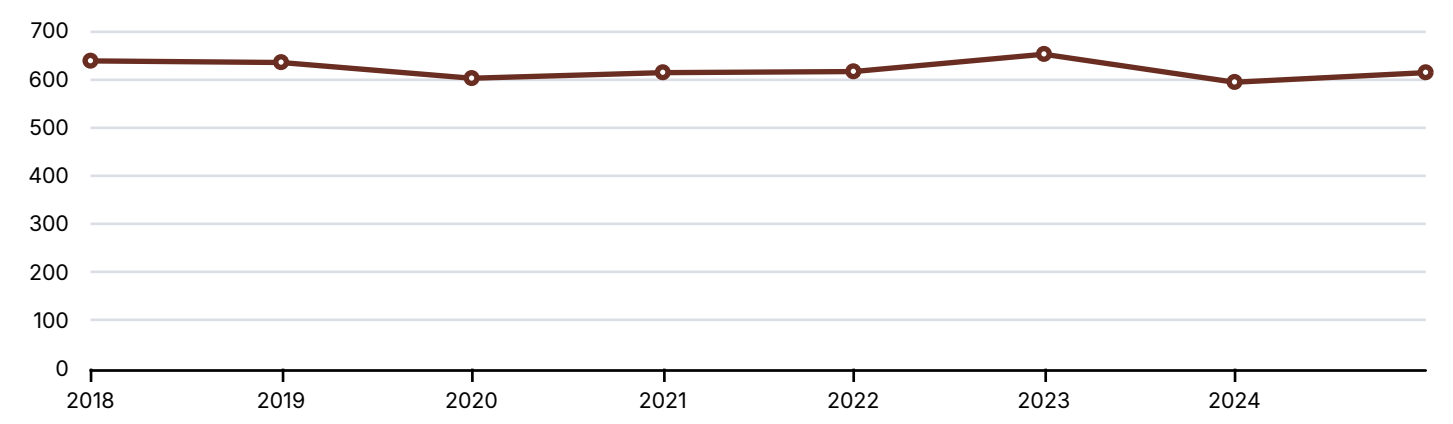


Figure 1.1: Shows the total number of active business establishments in the area, including those without employees. It helps indicate the scale and diversity of the local business base. (Cardston, 2018-2025)¹

Cardston had 613 active business establishments in 2025, leaving the local business base close to where it stood at the start of the period. The count edged down from 637 in 2018 to 634 in 2019, then fell to 601 in 2020 before recovering to 651 in 2023. That was followed by a sharper drop to 593 in 2024, a decline of 8.9%, and then a partial rebound of 3.4% in 2025. The pattern shows short-term volatility rather than a steady trend.

Cardston had 613 active business establishments in 2025, placing it above several nearby comparators but below the largest local totals in the dataset. The town was at 651 in 2023, fell to 593 in 2024, and then recovered by 3.4% in 2025. Over five years, the change was 2.0%, suggesting a largely stable business base despite recent fluctuation. Compared with Cardston County's 411 and Fort Macleod's 726, Cardston sits in the middle of the local range.

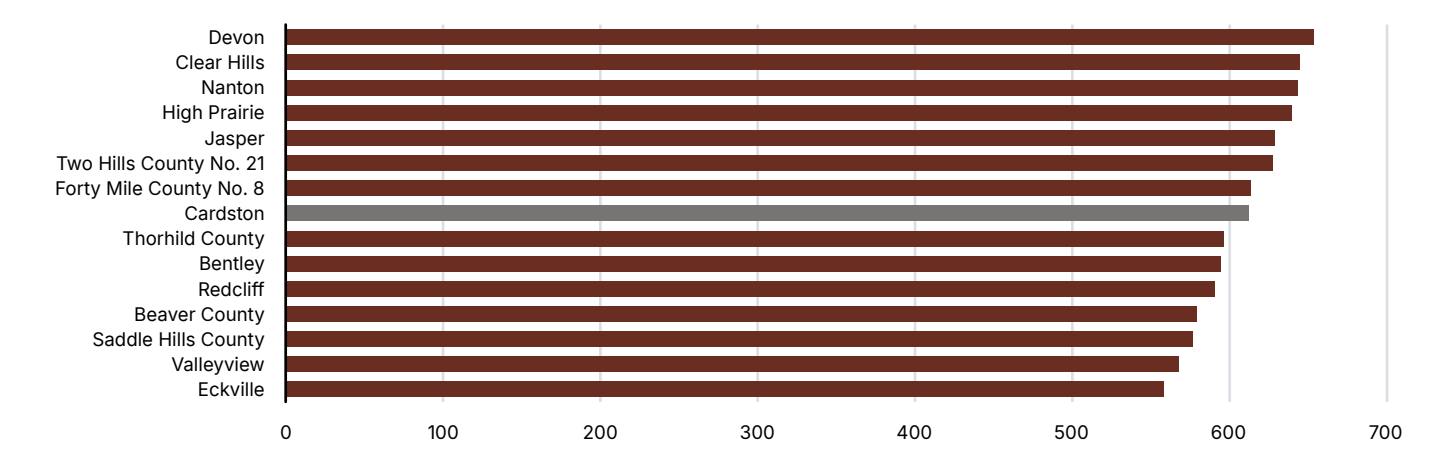


Figure 1.2: Comparison of Business Establishments with other locations (Cardston, 2025)¹

Resident Labour Force

Cardston's resident labour force remained led by health care and social assistance, which reached 350 people in 2021, up 20.7% from 2016. Transportation and warehousing grew fastest, rising to 55 people from 20.

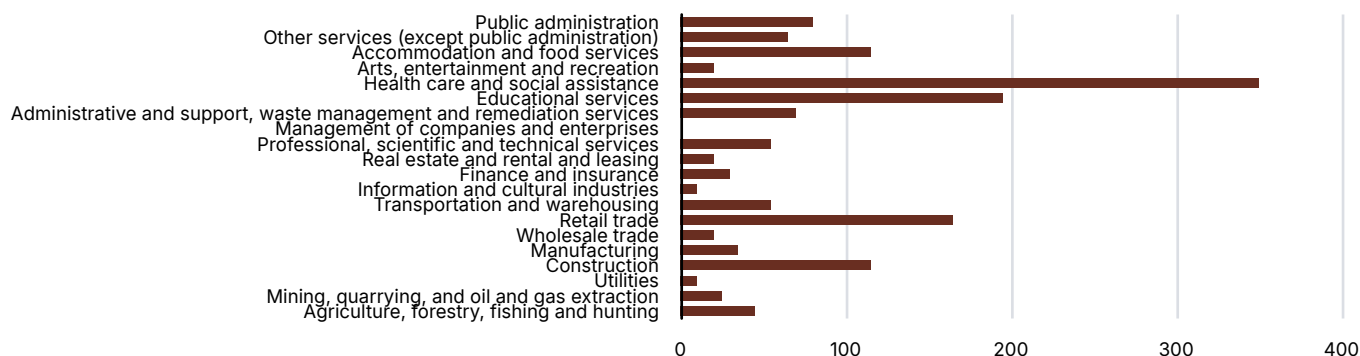


Figure 2.1: Shows the number of residents who are in the labour force. It helps indicate the size of the locally available workforce. (Cardston, 2021)²

In 2021, Cardston's resident labour force was spread across a mix of sectors, with health care and social assistance the largest at 350 people, followed by educational services at 195 and retail trade at 165. Several other sectors were smaller, including utilities and information and cultural industries at 10 each. The 5-year changes show uneven movement. Transportation and warehousing rose sharply by 175%, real estate and rental and leasing doubled, and retail trade increased 22.2%. By contrast, manufacturing fell 46.1%, arts, entertainment and recreation dropped 50%, and construction declined 20.7%.

Cardston's resident labour force in 2021 was spread across a broad set of industries, with health care and social assistance standing out as the largest employer category at 350 people. Educational services followed with 195, while retail trade accounted for 165 and both construction and accommodation and food services had 115 each. Public administration employed 80 residents, and several smaller sectors remained under 30. The pattern suggests a mixed local workforce led by services.



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

Star Sectors

Cardston’s largest specialized sector is educational services, with a location quotient of 6.1751 in 2025. Utilities also remains elevated at 2.6147, while health care and social assistance stands at 1.3267.

Cardston’s star sectors are concentrated in a small set of industries that combine specialization with recent movement. In 2025, educational services stands out as the strongest of these sectors, while utilities, health care and social assistance, and other services also appear in the mix. Educational services has a location quotient of 6.2, with a 1-year change of 1.8 and a 5-year change of 4.5. Utilities is also specialized at 2.6 and shows a 1-year increase of 3.1, along with a 5-year rise of 26.0. Health

care and social assistance records an LQ of 1.3, a 1-year change of 2.6, and a 5-year gain of 35.4. Other services is more uneven: its LQ is 1.1 and the 1-year change is 3.6, but the 5-year change is -33.6. That makes it the clearest case of short-term improvement against a weaker longer-term trend. Taken together, the pattern suggests that Cardston’s specialized employment base is anchored most strongly in educational services, with utilities and health care also showing recent momentum.

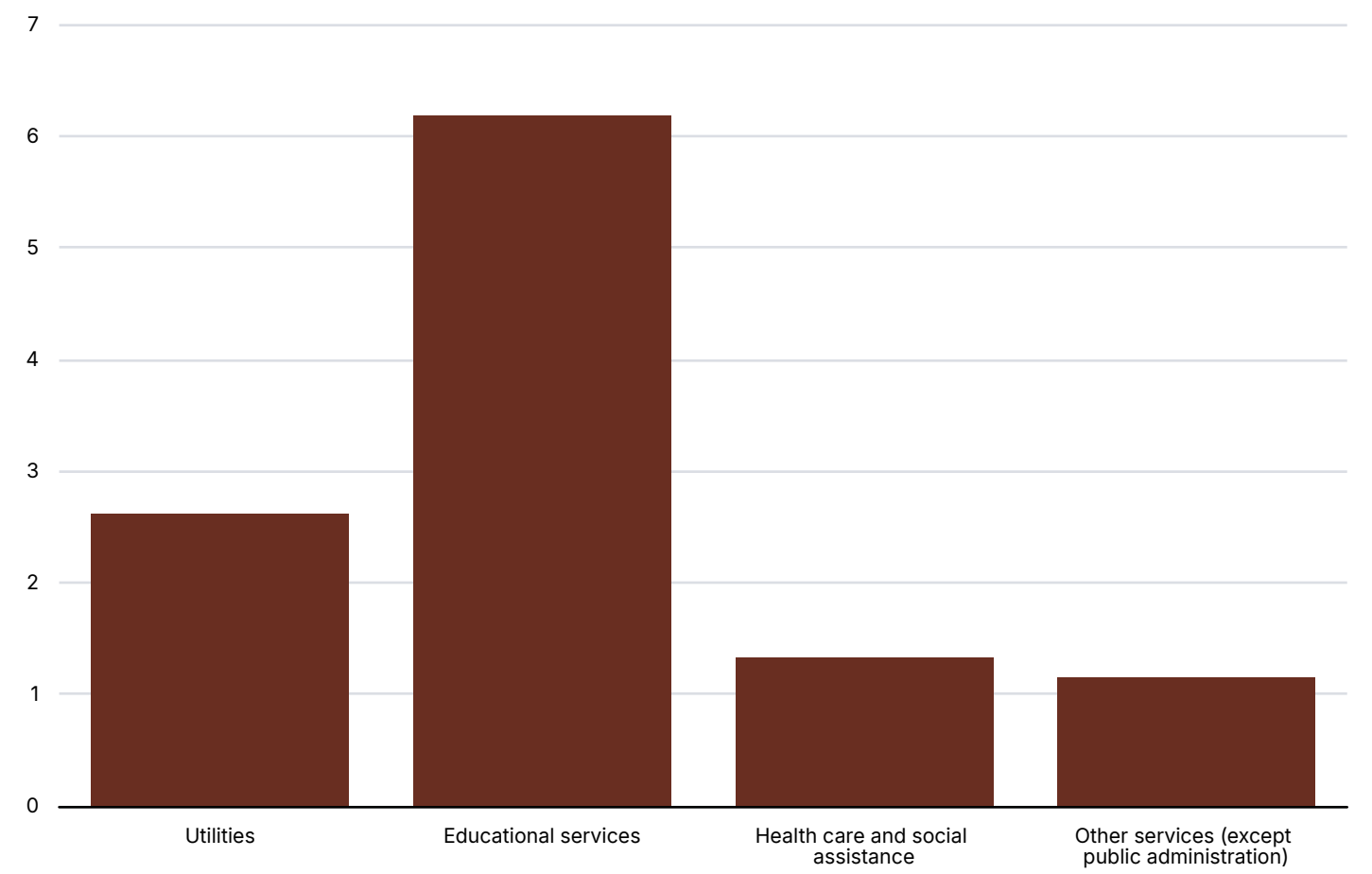


Figure 3.1: Shows major industry sectors where the local economy has strong specialization and increasing concentration or strong growth. Sectors are categorized based on specialization (location quotient) and recent employment growth or change in concentration. (Cardston, 2025)³

Fastest Growing Industries

Cardston’s fastest-growing industry in 2025 was services to buildings and dwellings, with 22 people, up 2,100% in one year and 340% over five years. Community food and housing services followed at 20 people, up 1,900%.

In Cardston's 2025 employment profile for employees aged 15 and over, the fastest growing industries are concentrated in two small service categories. The strongest gains are in services to buildings and dwellings, followed by community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services. Services to buildings and dwellings employed 22 people, with 1-year growth of 2,100% and 5-year growth of 340%. Community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services

employed 20 people, with 1-year growth of 1,900% and 5-year growth of 33.3%. Both industries are expanding from a low base, but the short-term surge is much sharper than the longer-term trend. That gap suggests recent momentum is stronger than the five-year pattern alone would imply. Taken together, the data point to fast growth in a narrow part of Cardston's employment base, while also showing that the absolute number of jobs remains modest.

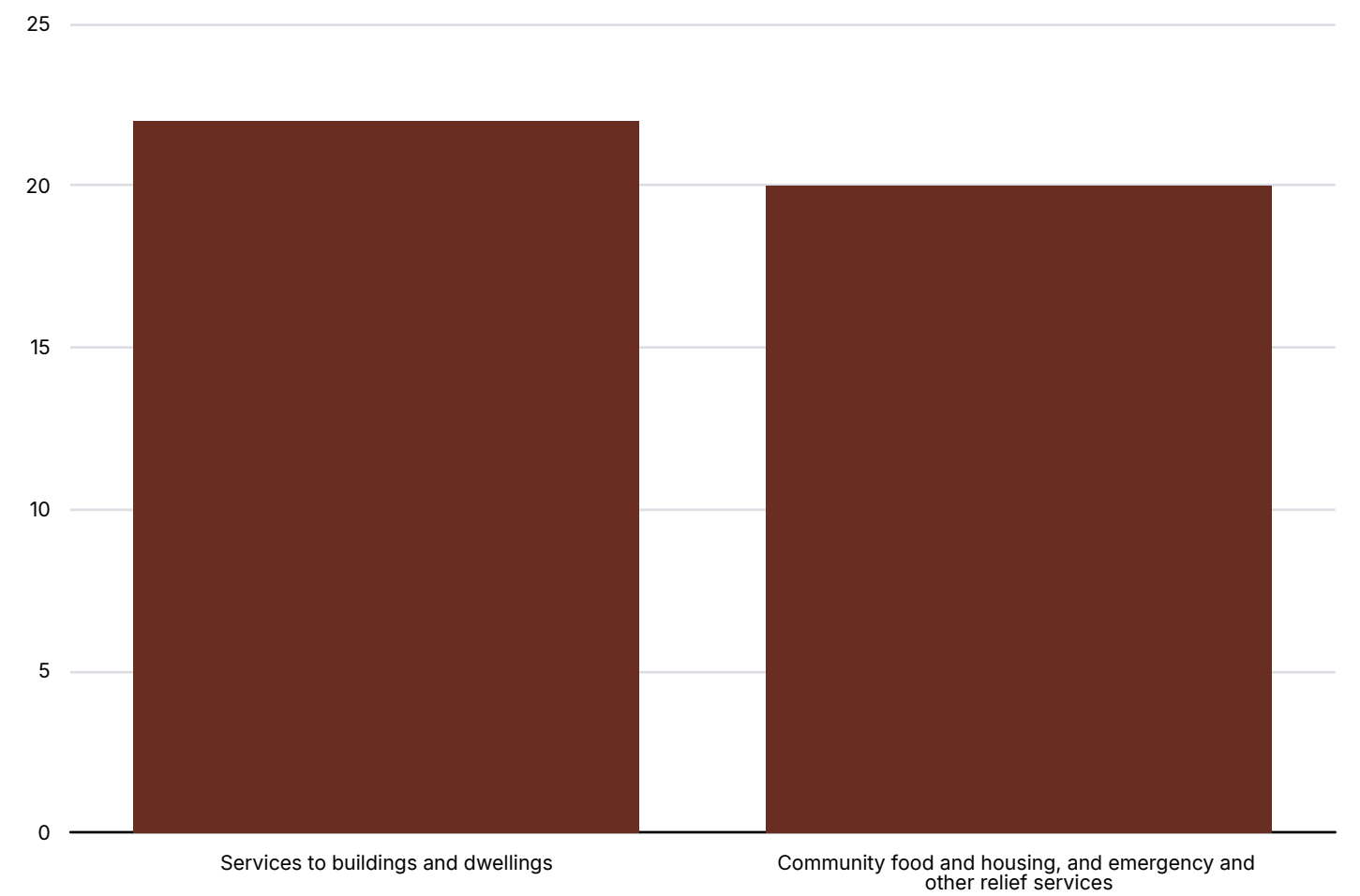


Figure 4.1: Shows industries where employment has increased the most over the selected time period. It helps identify where job growth is strongest in the local economy. (Cardston, 2025)⁴

Employment by Sector

Educational services remained Cardston’s largest employer in 2025 at 1,448 people, up 2.9% from 2024 and down 1.0% over five years. Health care followed with 499, and retail had 192.

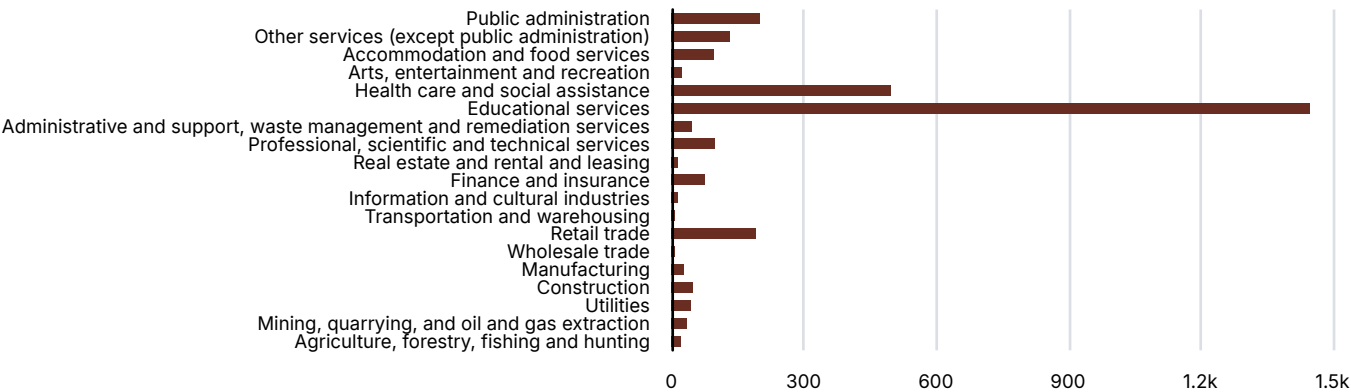


Figure 5.1: Shows how employment is distributed across industry sectors. It helps indicate which sectors account for the largest share of local jobs. (Cardston, 2025)⁴

Cardston’s 2025 employment is concentrated in a few sectors, led by educational services at 1,448 people and health care and social assistance at 499. Public administration, retail trade, and finance and insurance also stand out at 200, 192, and 77 respectively. Recent change is mixed: administrative and support services grew 119.1% in one year, while agriculture fell 27.6% and retail slipped 4.5%.

In Cardston’s 2025 employment profile for employees aged 15 and over, educational services dominates local jobs, with 1,448 people. Health care and social assistance is the next largest sector at 499, followed by public administration at 200 and retail trade at 192. Smaller concentrations appear in other services at 134 and accommodation and food services at 96. The sector mix is uneven, with one very large employer and a secondary cluster of public-facing services.



Figure 5.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Naics - Educational services (Cardston)⁴

Establishments by Sector

Cardston’s business base in 2025 was led by agriculture with 137 establishments, up 7.0% from 2024 and 24.6% over five years. Real estate followed with 93, while construction held 57.

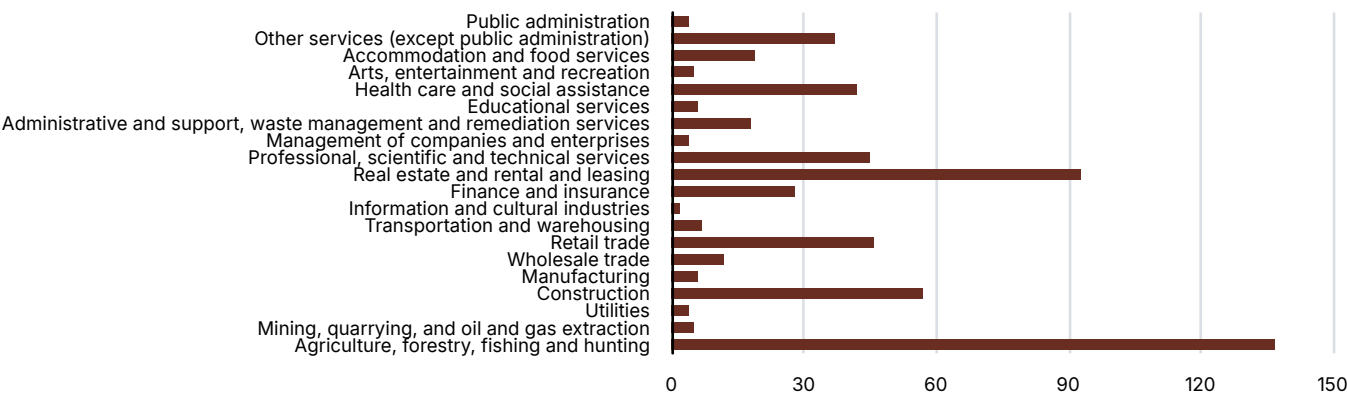


Figure 6.1: Shows how business establishments are distributed across sectors. It helps indicate the sector mix of the local business base. (Cardston, 2025)¹

Cardston’s business base in 2025 is concentrated in a few sectors, led by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting. Real estate and rental and leasing is also sizable, while retail trade and health care and social assistance form another clear tier of establishments. Agriculture counts 137 establishments, followed by real estate and rental and leasing at 93, construction at 57, retail trade at 46, and professional, scientific and technical services at 45. Over the past year, agriculture rose 7.0%, real estate rose 13.4%, and professional services rose 7.1%. Some sectors weakened recently, including retail trade, down 9.8%, health care and social assistance, down 8.7%, and transportation and warehousing, down 30.0%. Longer-term change is mixed: agriculture is up 24.6% over five years, while manufacturing is down 33.3%. The pattern suggests a locally varied business mix with recent growth in land-related and professional activities, alongside declines in several trade and service categories.

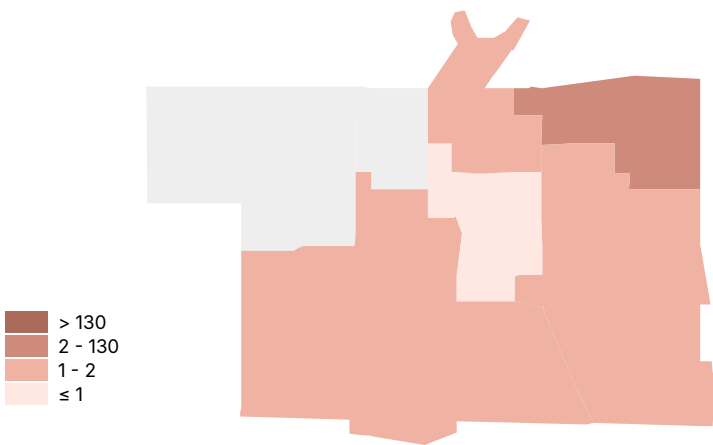


Figure 6.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Naics - Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (Cardston)¹

Cardston’s business base in 2025 is concentrated in a few sectors, led by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting with 137 establishments. Real estate and rental and leasing follows at 93, while construction has 57 and retail trade 46. Health care and social assistance accounts for 42 establishments, and other services for 37. The mix suggests a local economy where primary-sector activity and property-related services are especially prominent, with a broader set of service sectors filling out the remaining business landscape.

Establishments by Size

Cardston’s establishments remain concentrated among businesses without employees, which rose to 448 in 2025, up 2.5% from 2024 and 3.9% from 2020. The 5 to 9 employee group fell to 28, down 17.7% year over year.

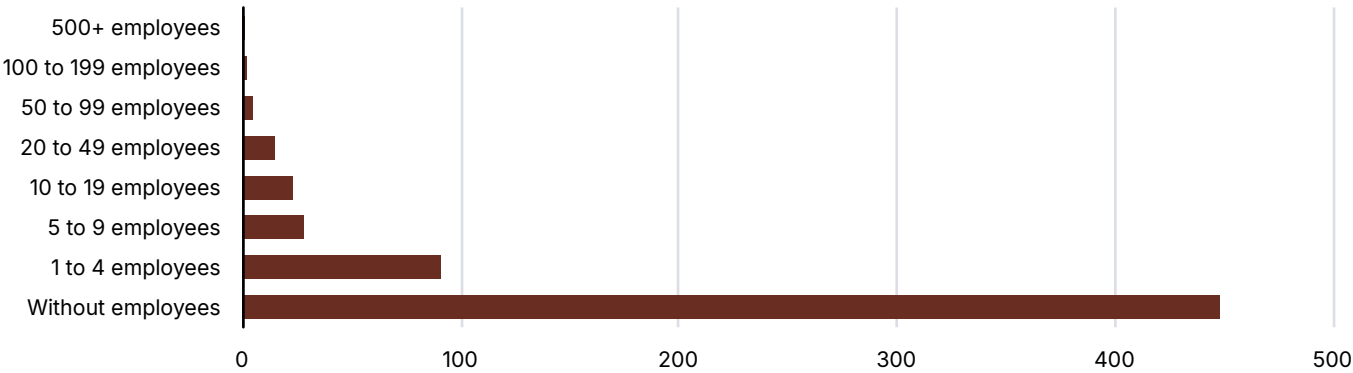


Figure 7.1: Shows how businesses are distributed by number of employees. It helps indicate whether the local economy is dominated by very small, small, or larger firms. (Cardston, 2025)¹

Cardston’s business base in 2025 is heavily weighted toward very small establishments. Firms without employees lead with 448 businesses, followed by 91 with 1 to 4 workers. Larger categories are much fewer: 28 with 5 to 9 employees, 23 with 10 to 19, and only 1 with 500+ employees. Recent change is mixed, with gains in no-employee and 1 to 4 employee firms, but declines in mid-sized businesses.

Cardston’s business base in 2025 is dominated by very small establishments. Of 613 businesses, 448 had no employees and 91 had 1 to 4 employees. Larger firms were rare, with 23 businesses in the 10 to 19 employee range, 15 in 20 to 49, and only one with 500 or more employees. The mix suggests a local economy built mainly on owner-operated firms, with limited presence of medium or large employers. The smallest category also grew 2.5% over the year, while 20 to 49 employee establishments rose 15.4% and 5 to 9 employee firms fell 17.6%.

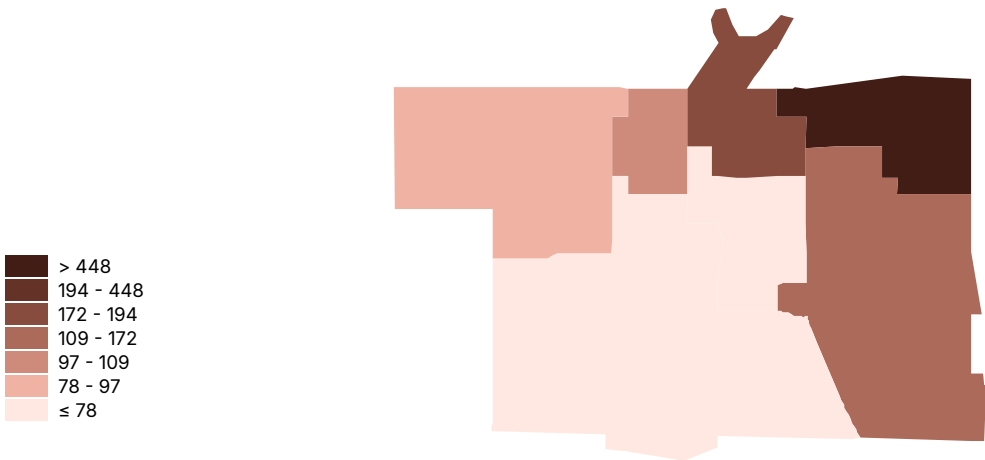


Figure 7.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Business Establishment Size - Without employees (Cardston)¹

Labour Market Gap

Cardston’s largest labour market gap is in educational services at 8.34. Other notable gaps are utilities at 4.5 and other services except public administration at 3.34, while transportation and warehousing is lowest at 0.2.

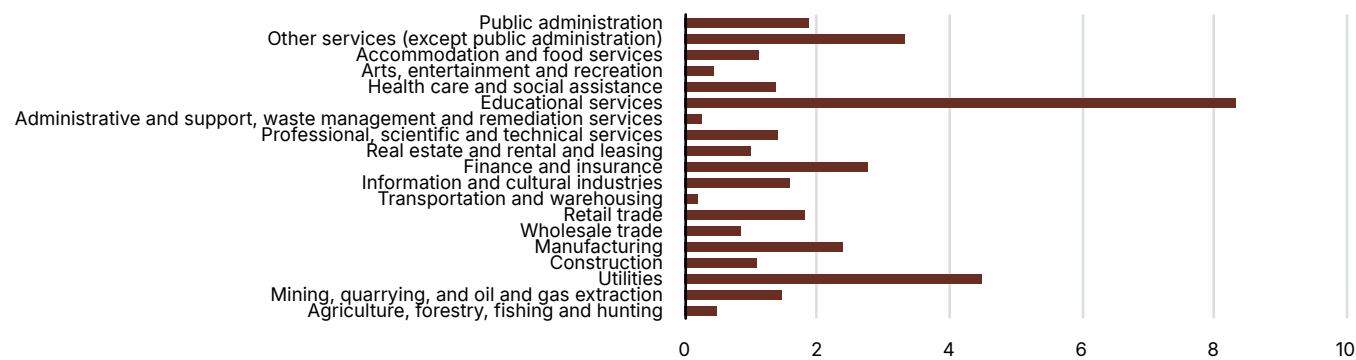


Figure 8.1: Shows the gap between the number of local jobs and the number of resident workers across all sectors. It helps indicate whether the area attracts workers in or sends workers out. (Cardston, 2021)⁵

In 2021, Cardston’s labour market gap varied sharply by sector, showing a few areas where local jobs were more concentrated relative to resident workers than others. Educational services had the largest ratio at 8.3, followed by utilities at 4.5 and other services at 3.3. Finance and insurance also stood out at 2.8, while manufacturing was 2.4. Several sectors were much closer to balance, including transportation and warehousing at 0.2, administrative and support services at 0.3, and agriculture at 0.5, suggesting a mixed local pattern rather than one uniform labour market.

In 2021, Cardston’s labour market gap varied sharply by sector, with the strongest ratios in educational services at 8.3 and utilities at 4.5. Other services except public administration followed at 3.3, while finance and insurance reached 2.8 and manufacturing 2.4. Several sectors sat below 1.0, including agriculture at 0.5, wholesale trade at 0.8, and transportation and warehousing at 0.2. The pattern suggests a mixed labour market, with some sectors drawing workers in and others relying more on resident labour exported elsewhere.



Figure 8.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Industry Sector - Educational services (Cardston)⁵

Largest Sectors

Educational services employed the most people in Cardston in 2025, at 1,448. Health care and social assistance followed with 499, while retail trade had 192, down 4.5% from a year earlier and 24.7% over five years.

Cardston’s employment base in 2025 is led by educational services, which accounts for 1,448 people. Health care and social assistance is the next largest sector at 499, followed by public administration at 200 and retail trade at 192. Other services, except public administration, is smaller still at 134. Taken together, the pattern points to a local workforce concentrated in a few service-oriented sectors rather than spread evenly across the economy. The recent changes are mixed. Educational services

rose 2.9% over the past year and was broadly stable over five years, while health care and social assistance increased 4.2% in the year and 33.4% over five years. Public administration was unchanged in the past year and up 33.3% over five years. Retail trade fell 4.5% in the past year and 24.7% over five years, and other services declined 37.7% over five years despite a 1.5% annual gain.

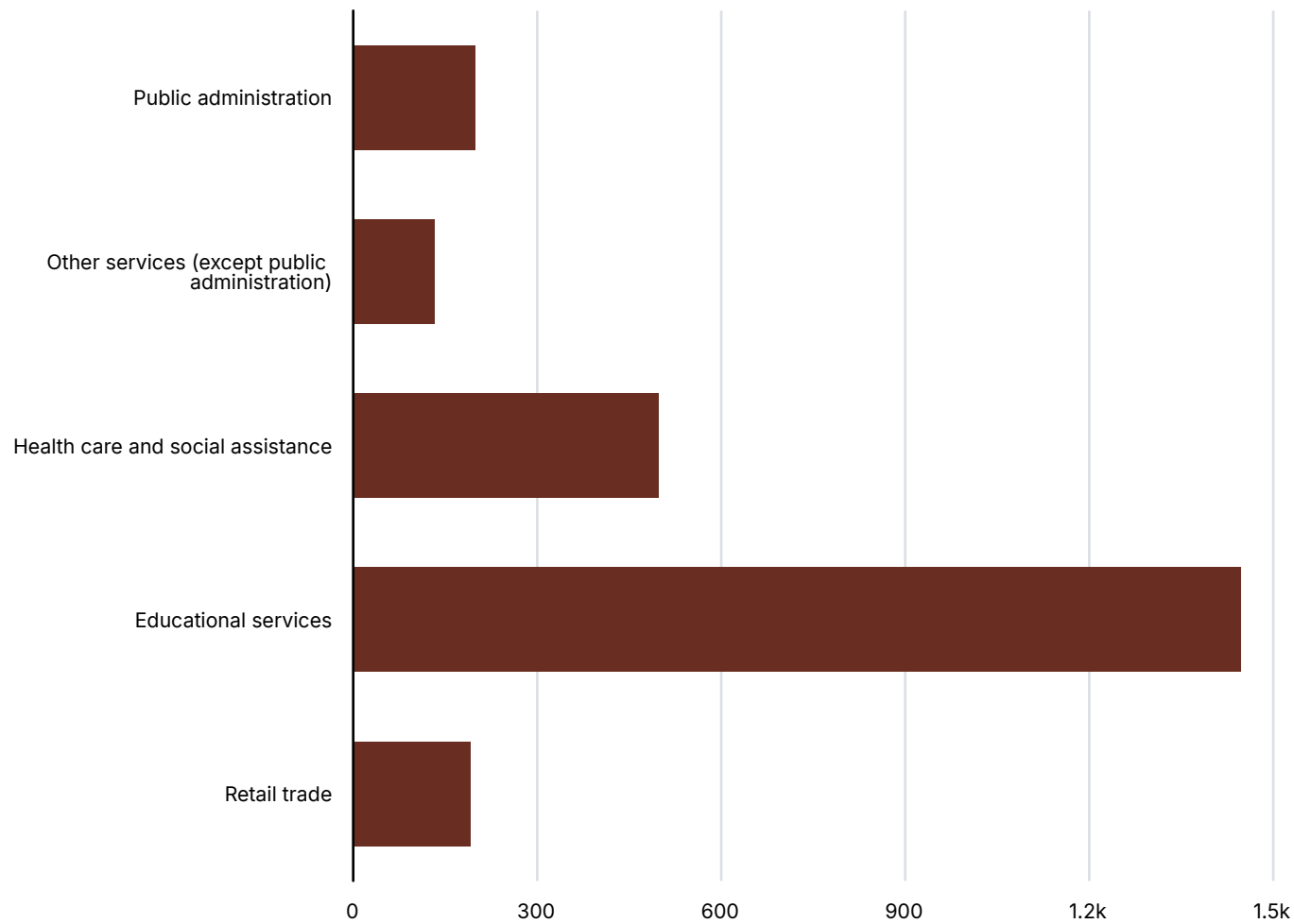


Figure 9.1: Shows the sectors employing the most people. It helps identify the largest pillars of the local economy. (Cardston, 2025)⁴

Micro Establishments Share

Cardston’s micro-establishment share was 100.0% in transportation and warehousing in 2025, unchanged from five years earlier. Information and cultural industries fell to 50.0%, down 37.5% from 2024 and 37.5% over five years.

In Cardston, the share of micro establishments in 2025 varies widely across business sectors, showing a local business base that is very small in some activities and more mixed in others. The measure covers establishments with 0 to 4 employees. Several sectors are at or near full concentration in micro firms: agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, wholesale trade, transportation and warehousing, and management of companies and enterprises all stand at 100%. At the other end,

manufacturing is 50%, and information and cultural industries is also 50%, with the latter falling 37.5% over the past year and 37.5% over five years. Retail trade sits at 67.4%, while accommodation and food services is 63.2%. That sector also posted the sharpest one-year increase, up 26.4%, after a 1.3% five-year decline. The pattern suggests that micro establishments are especially dominant in several local sectors, while a few industries support relatively larger firms.

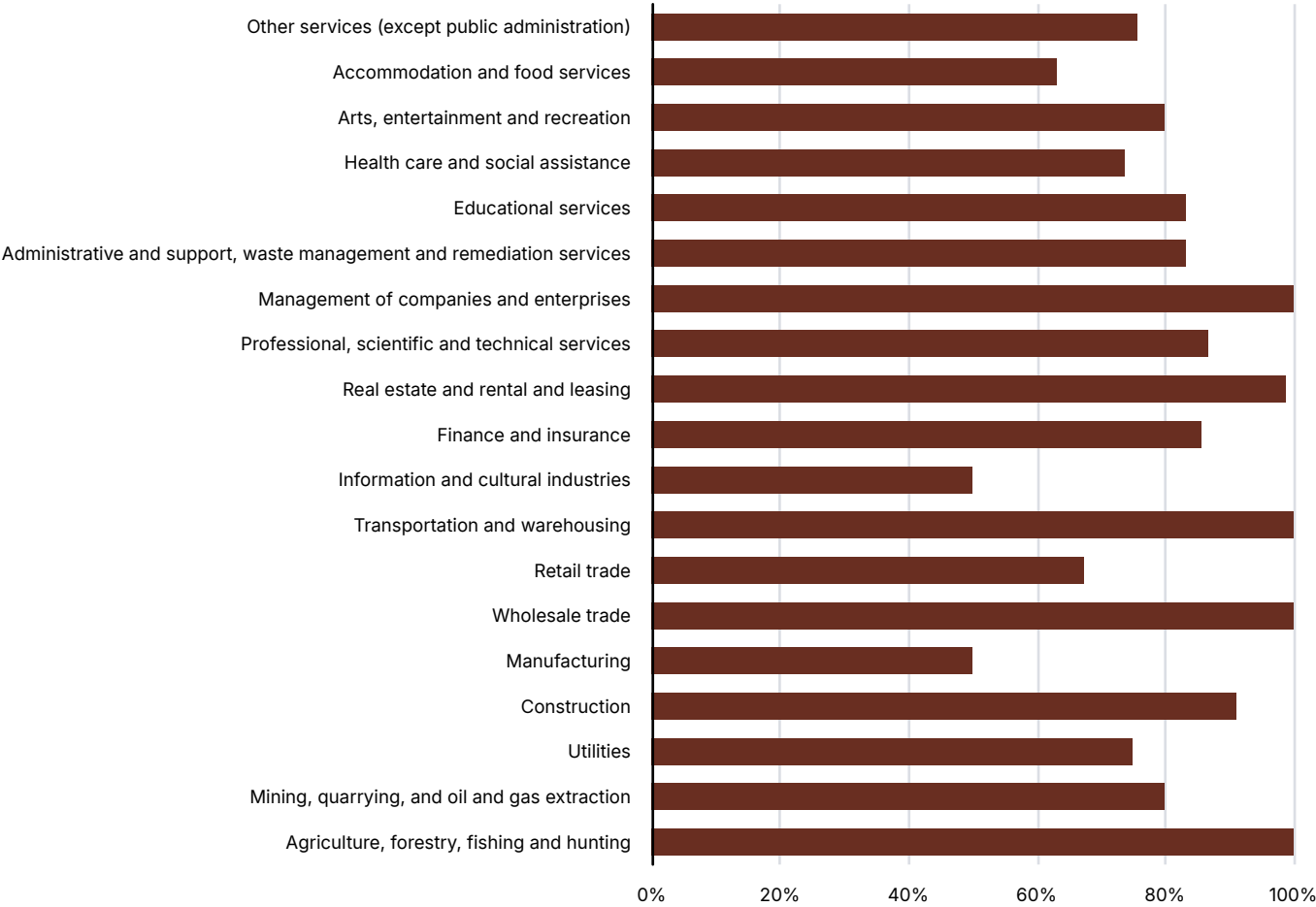


Figure 10.1: Shows the share of businesses with 0 to 4 employees. It helps indicate how much the local business base is made up of very small firms. (Cardston, 2025)⁶

Specialist Sectors (LQ)

Cardston’s largest specialization is educational services, with an LQ of 6.1751, well above other sectors. Utilities follows at 2.6147, while public administration, health care and social assistance, and other services remain lower, at 1.4975, 1.3267 and 1.1455.

Cardston’s specialized employment profile is led by educational services, which records the highest location quotient at 6.2 in 2025. Utilities also stands out at 2.6, while health care and social assistance, public administration, and other services are more modestly specialized at 1.3, 1.5, and 1.1. Recent movement is mixed but mostly positive. Utilities rose 3.1% over the past year, health care and social assistance increased 2.6%, other services grew 3.6%, and educational services edged up 1.8%.

Public administration was the only listed sector to decline, falling 2.3%. The longer view shows stronger gains in utilities and health care and social assistance, up 26.0% and 35.4% over five years. Educational services also remained elevated, though its five-year gain was smaller at 4.5%. By contrast, other services dropped 33.6% over five years. Cardston’s specialist sectors are concentrated in education, with recent growth in several other areas but weakness in public administration.

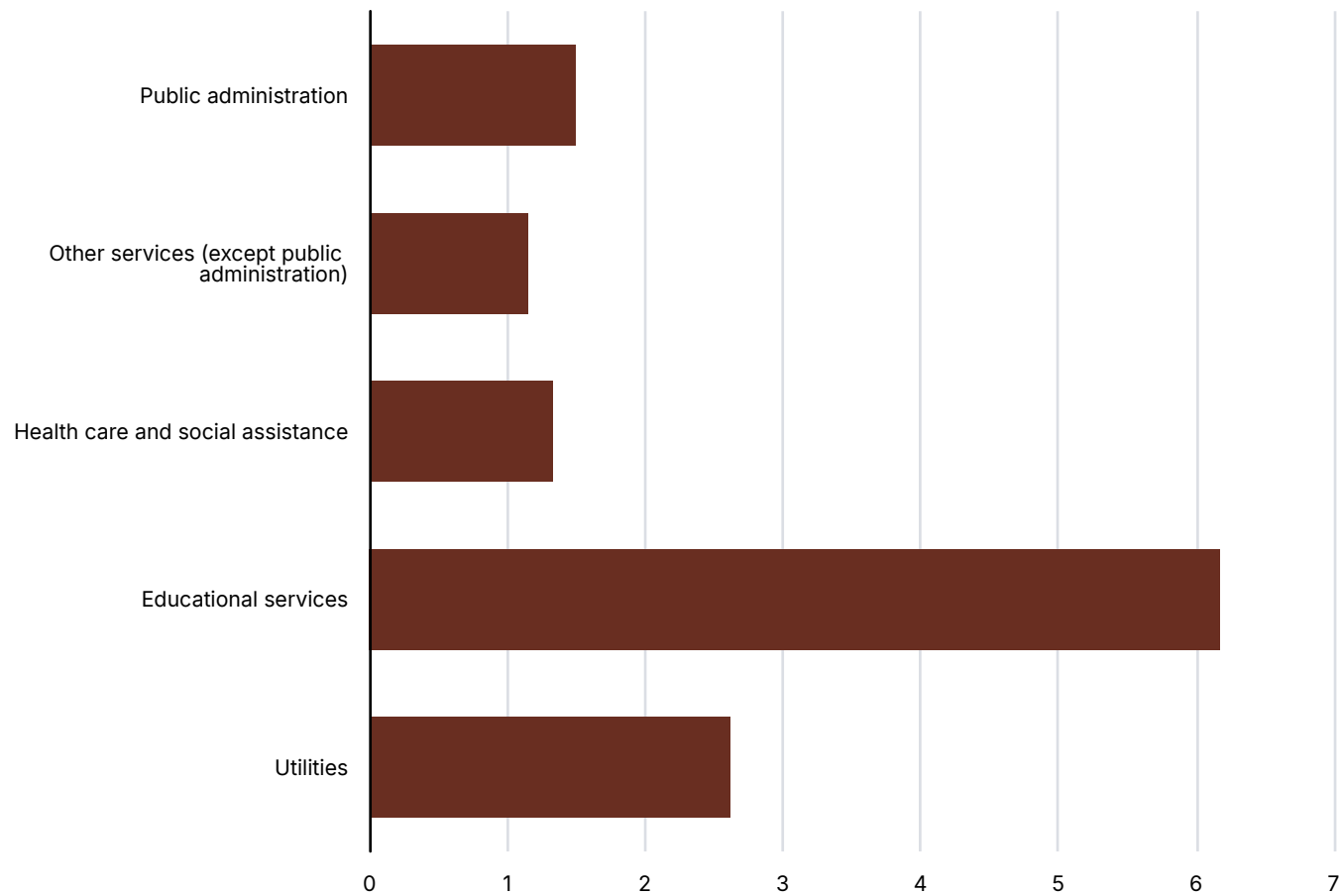


Figure 11.1: Shows sectors where the local economy has the highest level of specialization based on employment concentration compared with the national average. Sectors are categorized based on specialization (location quotient) and recent employment growth or change in concentration. (Cardston, 2025)³

Declining Industries

Cardston’s largest declining industry in 2025 was oilseed and grain farming, with 3 employees, down 72.7% from a year earlier. General freight trucking had 1 employee and fell 50.0% year over year, 75.0% over five years.

Cardston’s 2025 employment data for people aged 15 and over shows a small set of industries with sharp job losses. The declines are concentrated in a few sectors rather than spread evenly across the local economy. Oilseed and grain farming employed 3 people, after a 72.7% drop over one year. General freight trucking employed 1 person and fell 50% in the past year, with a 75% decline over five years. Other support services employed 2 people, down 66.7% over one year and unchanged

over five years. The pattern points to limited but uneven weakness. Two of the three industries show steep recent decline, while general freight trucking also has a large longer-term contraction. Oilseed and grain farming and other support services are still present, but at very low employment levels. Taken together, the data suggests that Cardston’s shrinking industries are small in size but notable for their pace of decline.

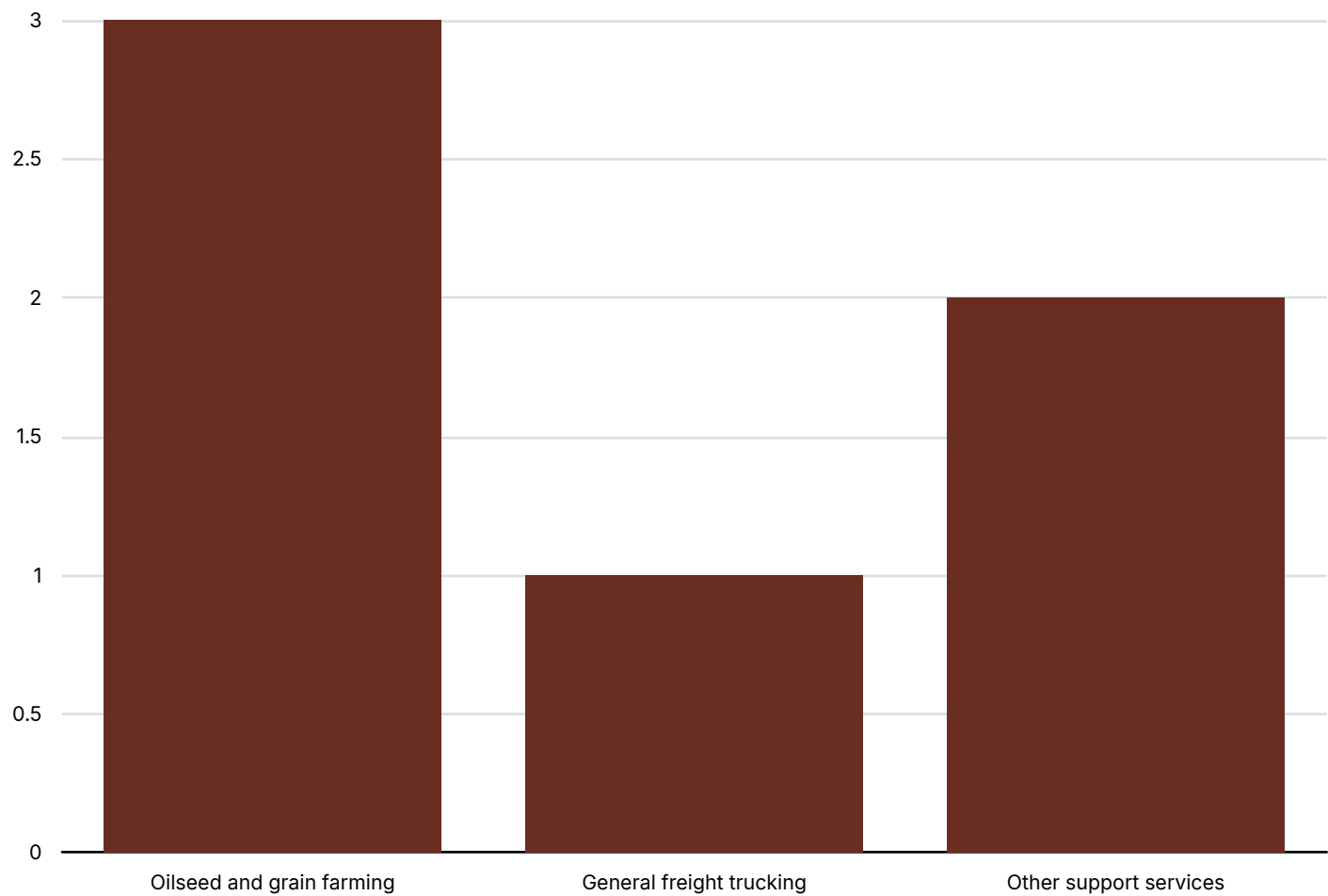


Figure 12.1: Shows industries where employment has decreased the most over the selected time period. It helps identify parts of the local economy that are losing jobs. (Cardston, 2025)⁴

Largest Industries

Elementary and secondary schools employed the most people in Cardston in 2025, with 1,448 jobs, up 2.9% from a year earlier and 1.0% below five years earlier.

Cardston's employment profile is led by education, health care, and public administration, with elementary and secondary schools clearly the largest industry in 2025. Within the scope of employees aged 15 years and over, that sector accounts for 1,448 people, well ahead of other major local employers. Other sizable industries include other local, municipal and regional public administration at 185 people, community care facilities for the elderly at 160, and general medical and surgical hospitals

at 150. Recent movement is mixed. Schools rose 2.9% over the past year, while public administration was unchanged. Hospitals were also flat, but they show the strongest longer-term gain, up 900% over five years. By contrast, grocery and convenience retailers fell 1.6% in the past year and 49.6% over five years. The pattern points to a local economy concentrated in public-facing services, especially education and care.

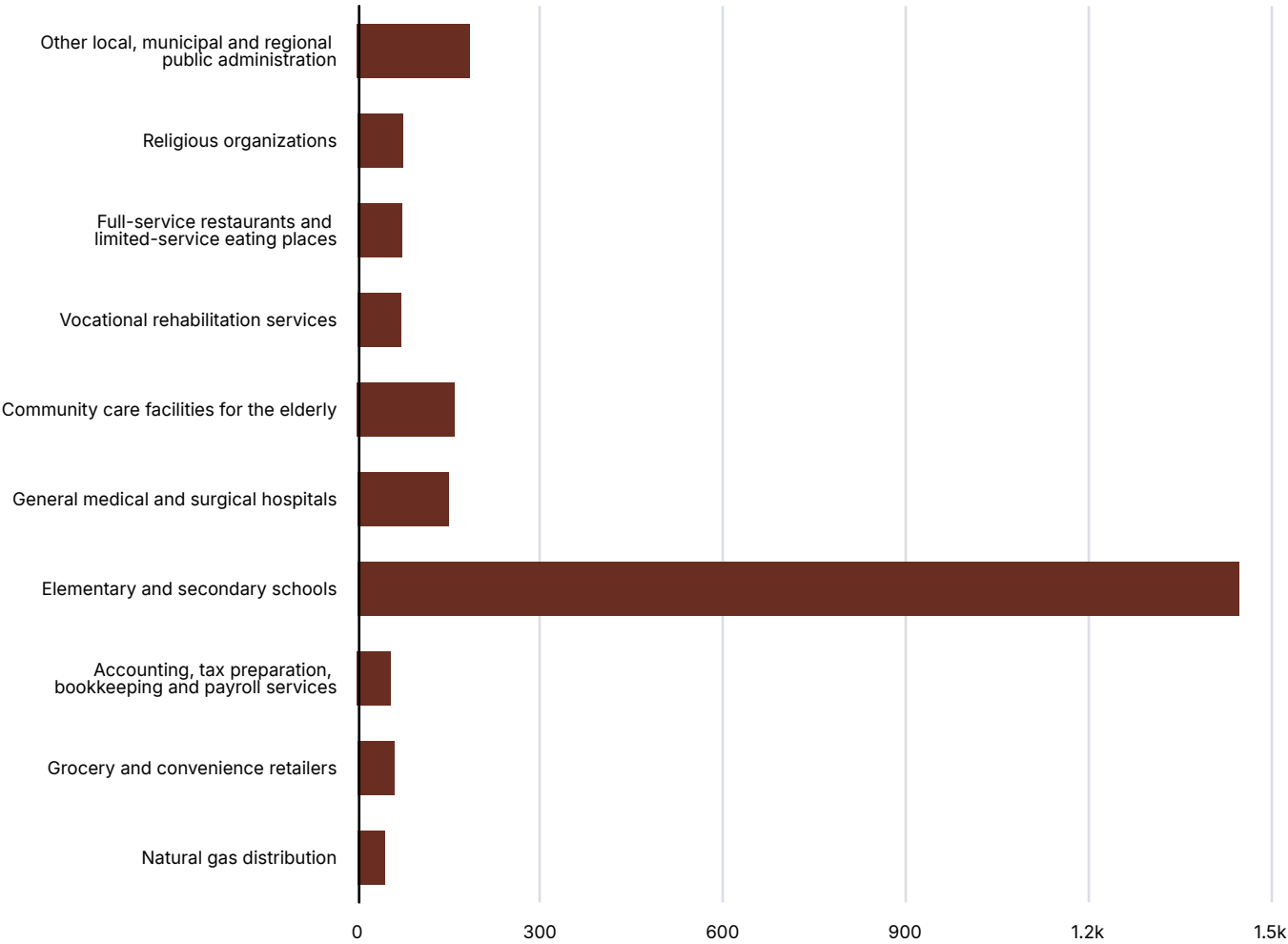


Figure 13.1: Shows the industries with the highest employment. It helps identify the biggest sources of jobs in the local economy. (Cardston, 2025)⁴

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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