

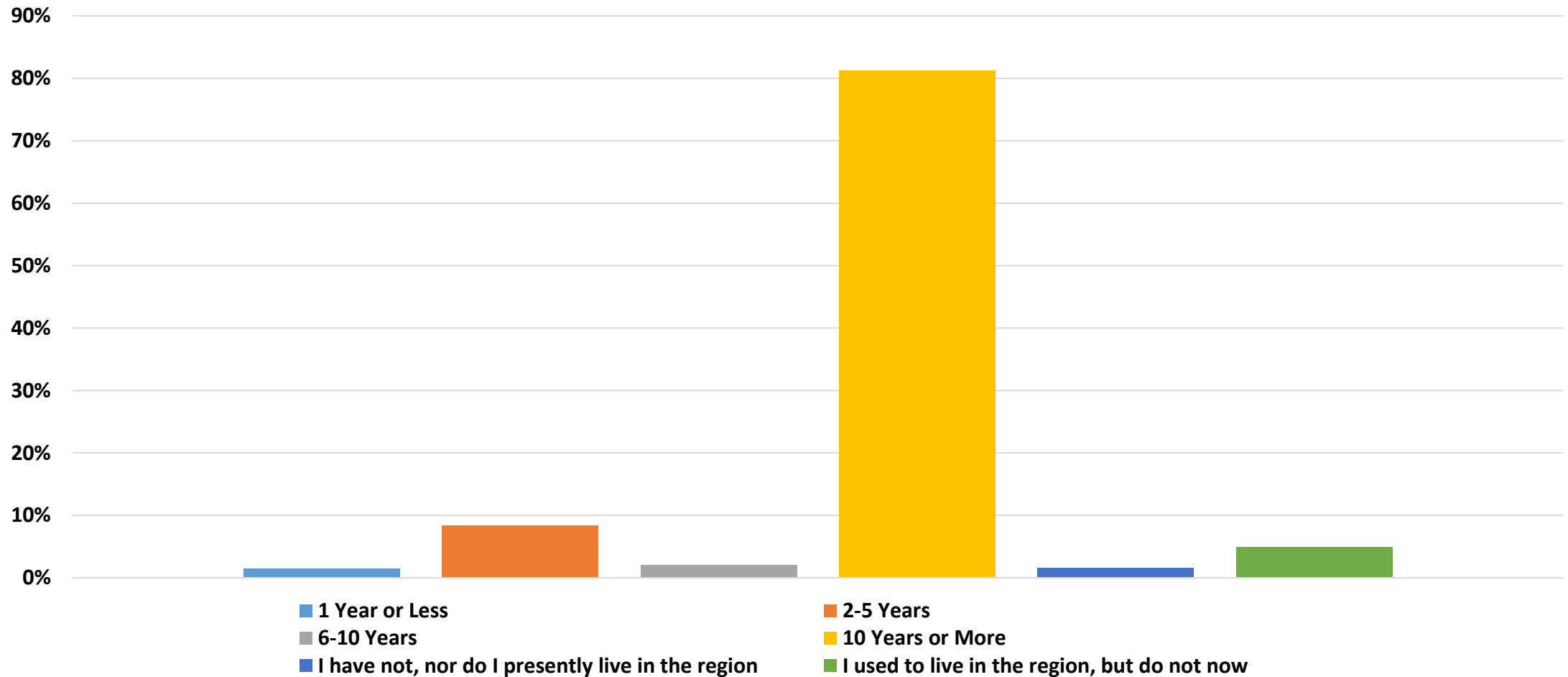


## **GO Virginia Region One – Community Survey**

**An online community survey was distributed in summer 2019 in order to gather input on the state of the region’s economy and identify what stakeholders view as regional strengths, challenges, and opportunities. Over a three week period from June 24, 2019 – July 12, 2019, 144 stakeholders responded to the survey.**

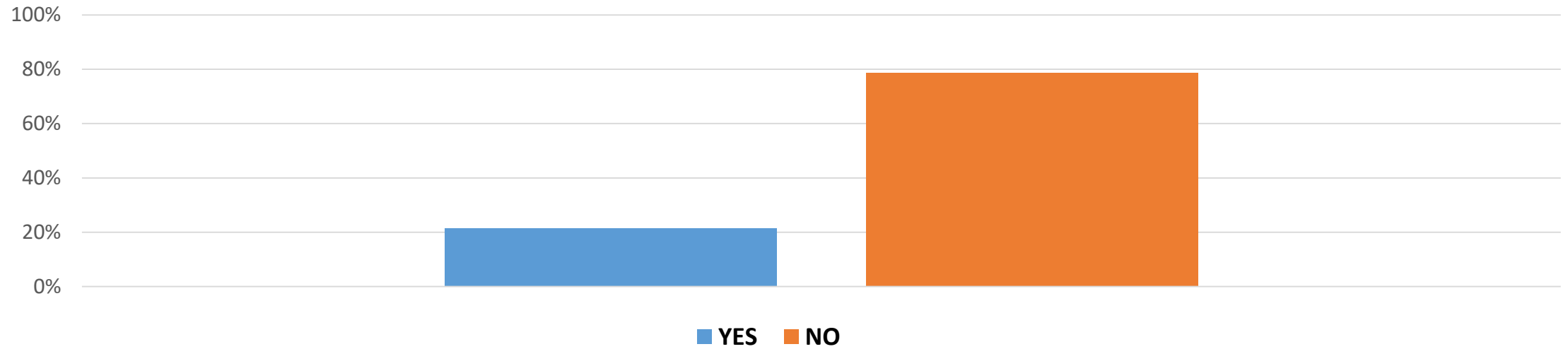


## Q1: How long have you lived in the region?





## Q2: Have you re-located back to the region within the past two Years?



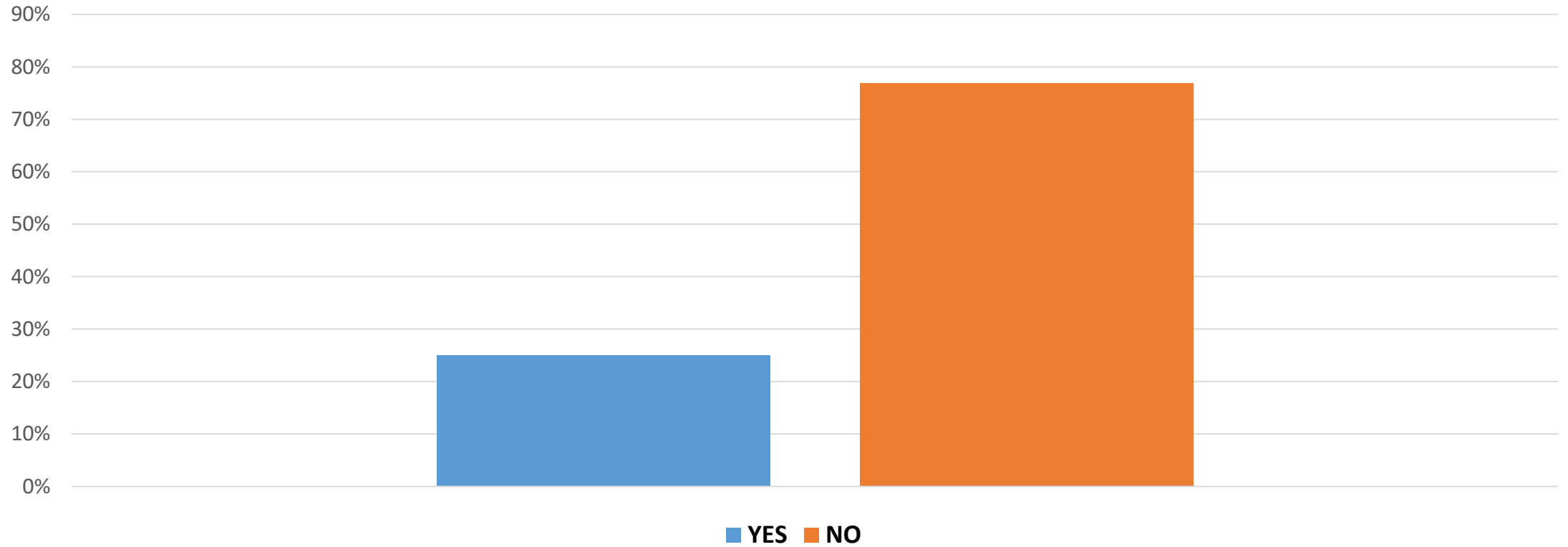


**Q:3 Where did you locate from and what was your reason for returning?**

- **San Francisco/Silicon Valley – Business Opportunity**
- **Nashville, TN – Moved to SWVA for jobs and to live closer to grandparents**
- **Lexington, KY - Job**

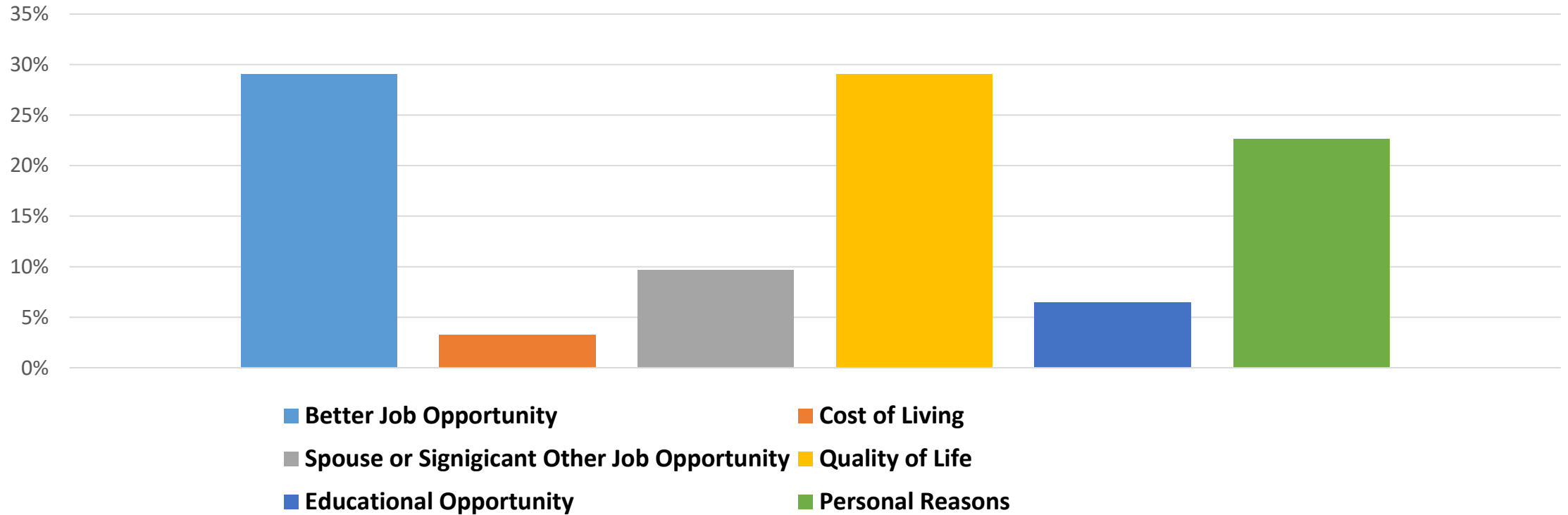


## Q4: Are you currently considering re-locating out of the region?



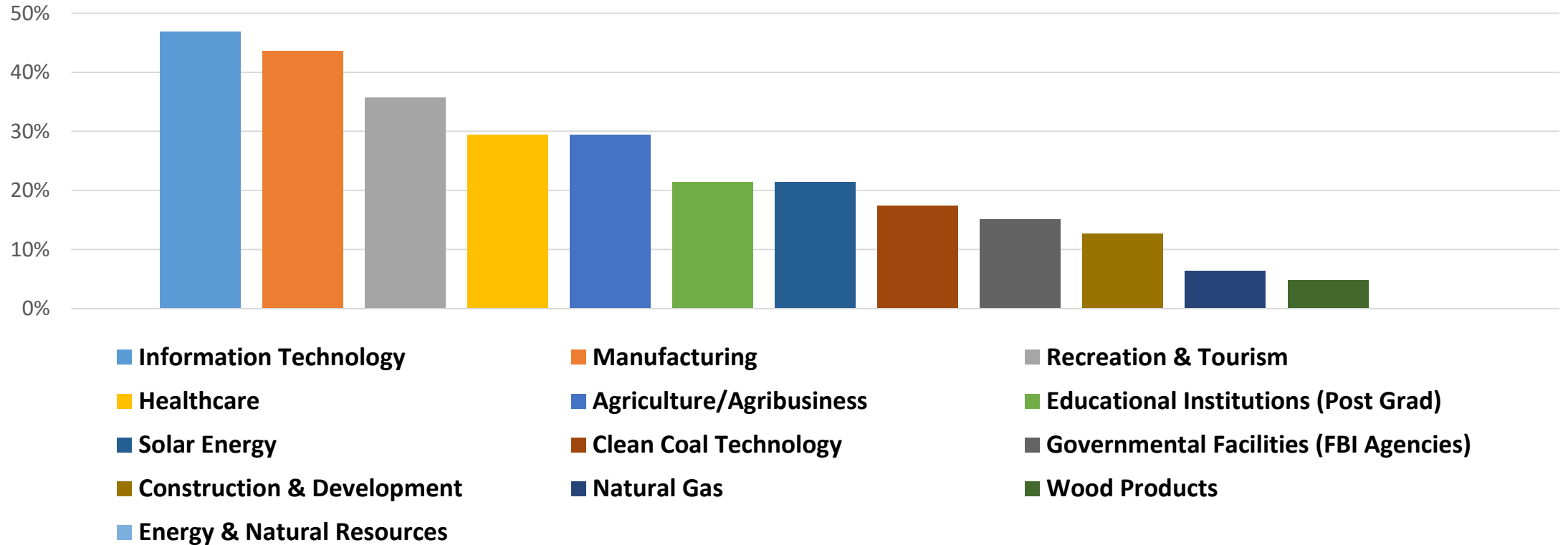


**Q5: If you answered yes, please indicate the primary reason you are considering relocation.**





## Q6: What type of industries should economic developers attract to the region to add higher-paying jobs? (Select up to 3)





## Q6: Comments from Survey Respondents

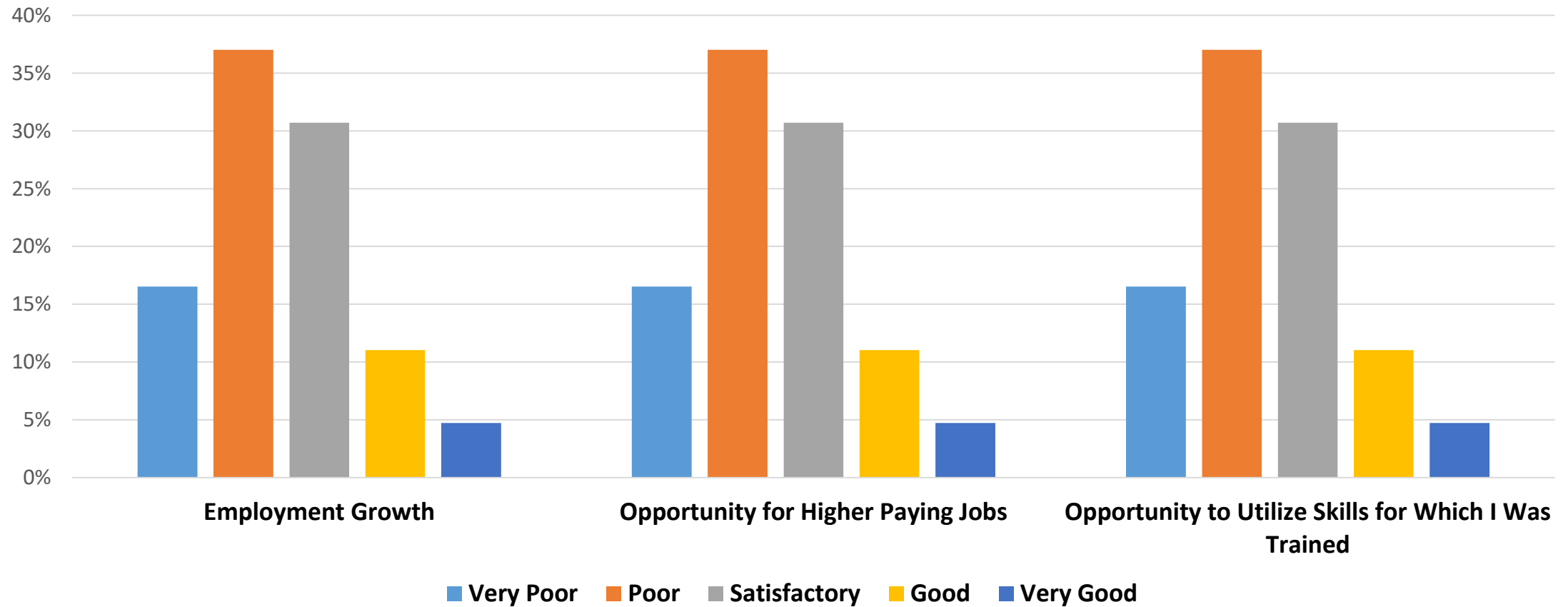
- **Manufacturing was once the heart beat of America. Should and could be again. We continue to lose to other countries.**
- **Healthcare that isn't a part of the current company which has a monopoly in the area.**
- **Hemp Farms**
- **Energy should remain a primary sector for the region, across all types of energy (coal, gas, solar, wind)**
- **Small Development/Main Street Improvement**
- **Is there a potential for synergy around health, i.e., healthy lifestyle and health retreats in conjunction with recreation and tourism, health device manufacturing, etc.?**
- **Advanced Manufacturing**
- **All of the above. Don't focus on just one.**

*\* Comments are examples and not an exhaustive list.*



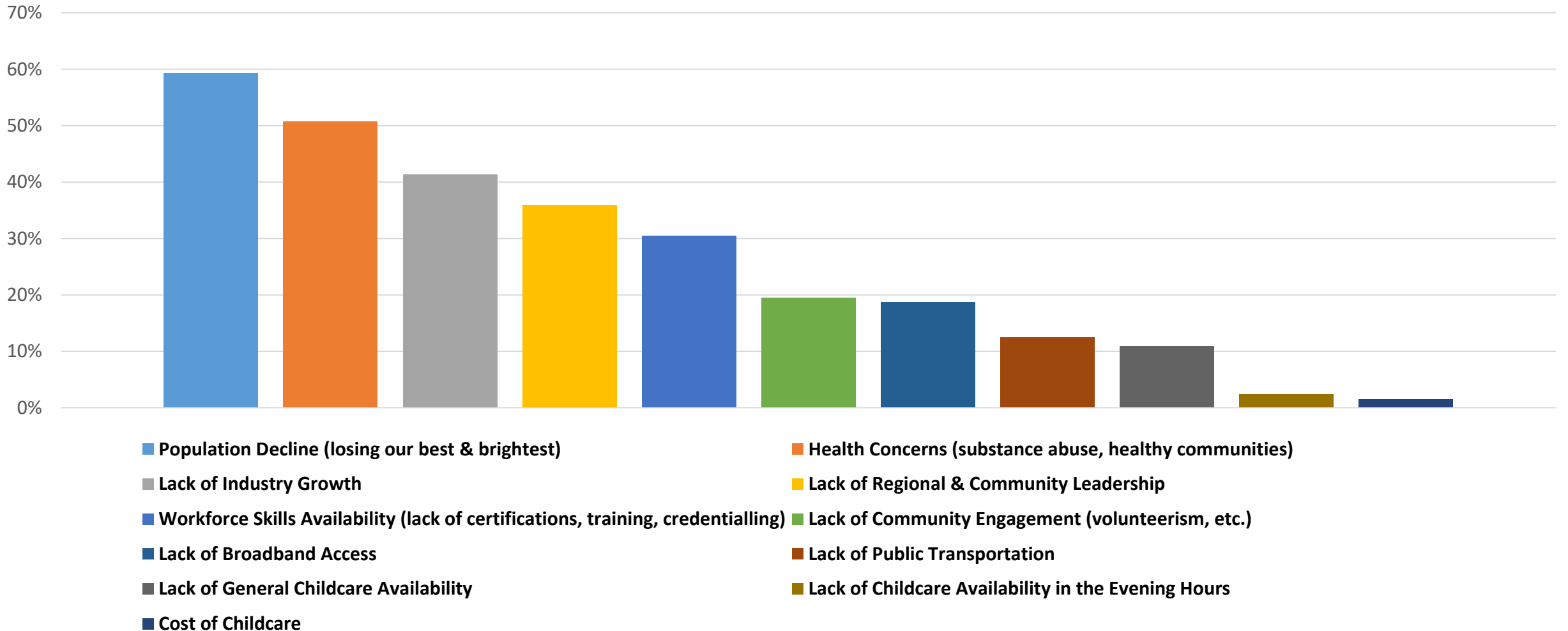


## Q7: How would you rate the following current economic conditions of the region?





## Q8: What key challenges do you feel your community must overcome to achieve economic advancement? (Select up to 3)





## Q8: Comments from Survey Respondents

- Lack of investment in the region by those who made their money in the region.
- Businesses supporting other businesses
- Quality of life – people won't stay or move here if they don't have the amenities, love where they live, etc.
- Absolutely need high speed internet available in ALL areas.
- Overcoming negative stigma associated with the region.
- Healthy citizens are always important.
- Soft skills; and a multi-generational devaluation of education must be addressed to find solutions to many of these challenges.
- It's a catch 22 with attracting new industry without a strong base of ready workforce, but difficult to train up for industry (jobs) that aren't here. Recreational opportunities are attractive to many, but lack of "young adult" amenities such as access to a critical mass of quality retail and dining is a limitation as is level of housing, childcare, broadband, etc.
- Lack of Angel Investors. I need an Angel Investor to kick start my business.
- Lack of affordable housing, more specifically rental properties

*\* Comments are examples and not an exhaustive list.*

## **Q9: What types of partnerships will be needed at the local, regional and state level to improve the economic situation in the region?**

- **Investment funds, incentives to attract investments, better workforce training, better education for K-12**
- **We have to show potential investors that we have workforce to fill their needs.**
- **Education, government, healthcare, financial and citizens**
- **Revenue sharing between municipalities within PDCs as well as between PDCs in the same general region**
- **All types – all overlap somehow. Partner silos still exist, but we've improved greatly.**
- **Maximizing the existing ones**
- **Federal, State and Local leaders working in a bipartisan partnership.**
- **Provide infrastructure updating, affordable "high speed" internet, natural gas**
- **Venture capitalization by private investors and business leaders, not academics**
- **What is already underway with various agriculture groups. You must reach out and engage those already in agriculture to learn and build upon what is already there. We're underway with this very effort.**
- **Community College Systems and Industry partnerships. More support for the arts, more support for locally grown food, more support for microbusinesses.**



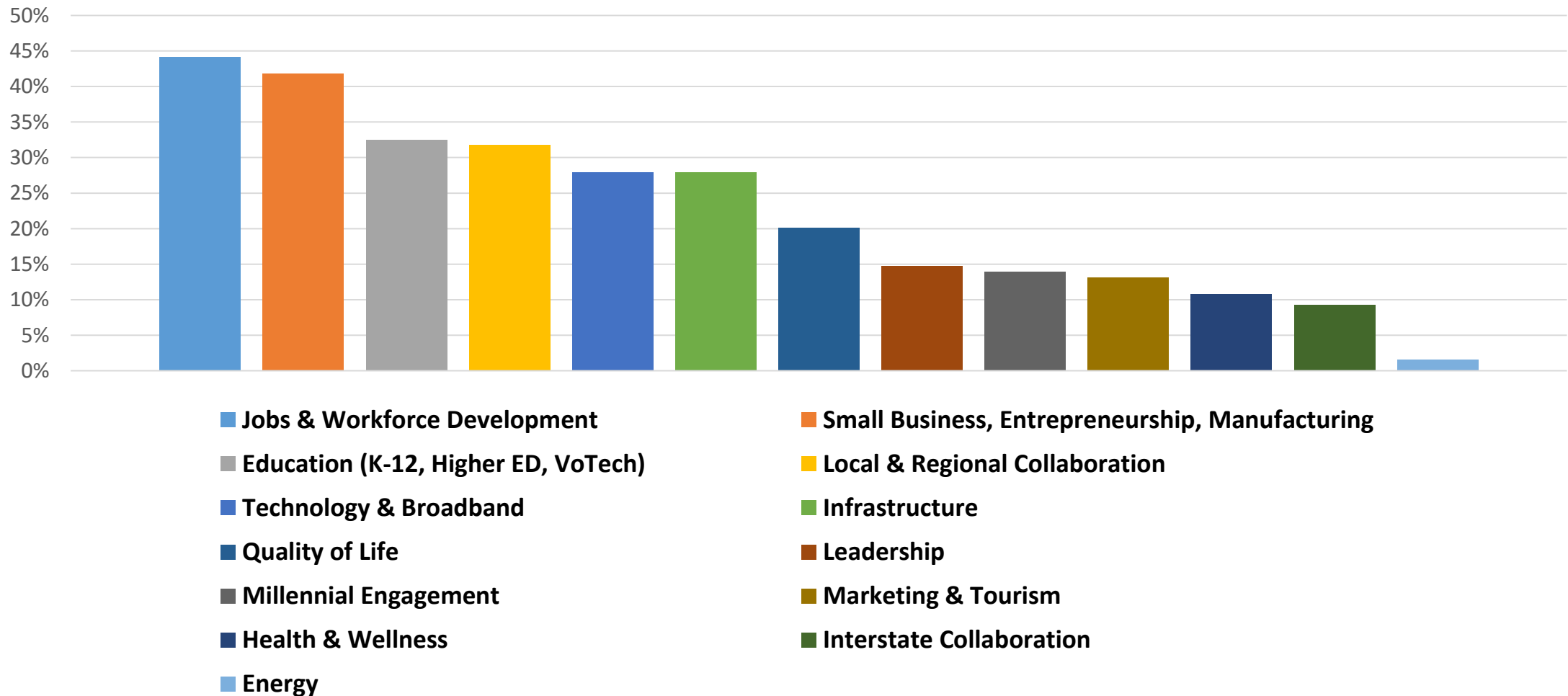
**Q9: What types of partnerships will be needed at the local, regional and state level to improve the economic situation in the region?**  
***Page 2.***

- Focus on infrastructure, improving school conditions
- Coordination/consolidation/collaboration of economic development directors; education of local elected officials about economic development; education of the public on good paying job opportunities and how to get certificates/skills; Community Colleges being more nimble and proactive to forecast workforce needs; Reinvigorate high school technical skills programs (welders, electrical, plumbing, carpentry) and set them up with apprenticeships after graduation; LESS focus on big box retail and more investment in local small business growth.
- Continued collaboration and revenue sharing projects will be key.
- Business and education partnerships
- Angel Investors
- Acceptance of regionalism by local jurisdictions. More involvement on local level by all constituents.
- Partnerships between educational institutions and employers

*\* Comments are examples and not an exhaustive list.*

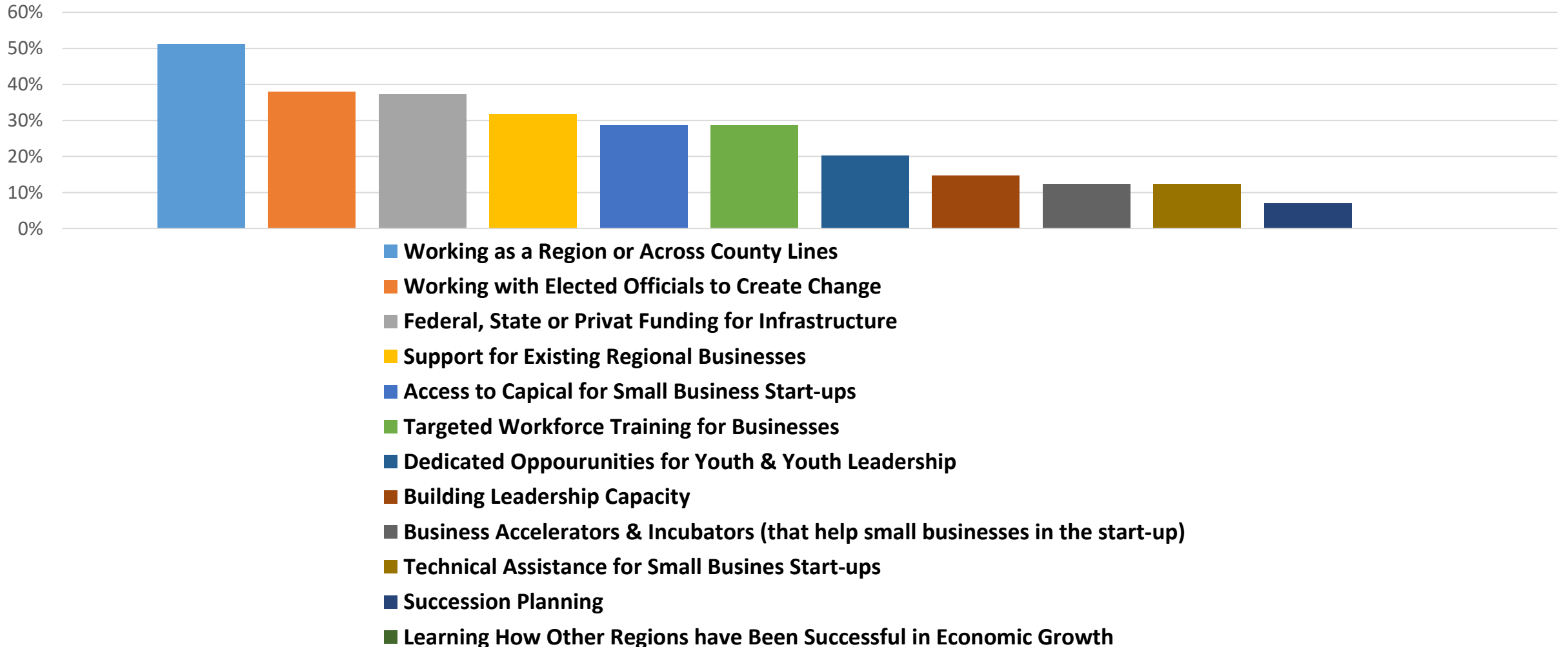


## Q10: What are the most important things that the Region One Council should consider to help the region address economic challenges? (Select up to 3)



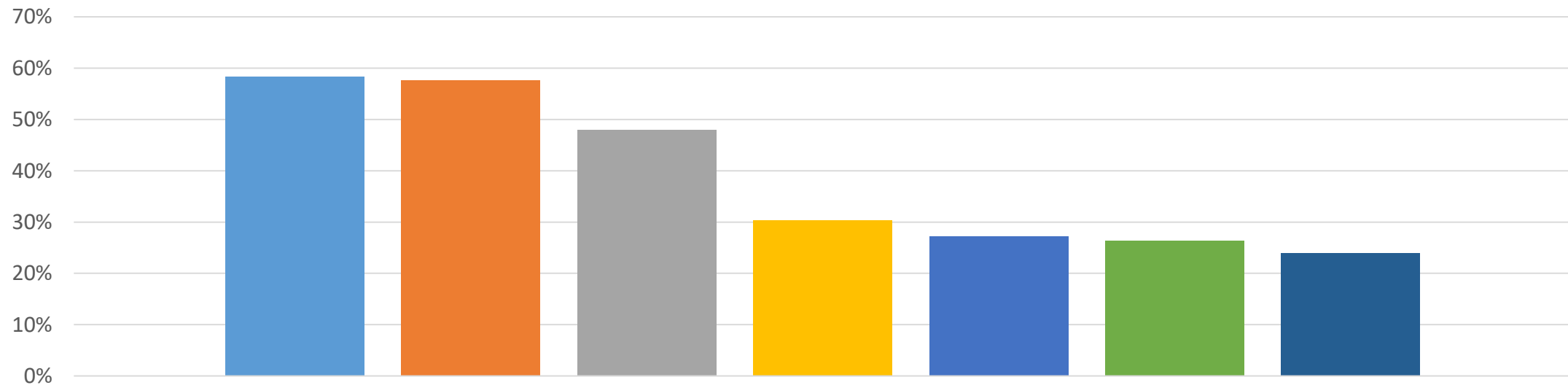


## Q11: What are the most important tools and resources to build economic growth? (Select up to 3)





## Q12: What are the most effective ways to create more jobs, raise wages and diversify the economy in the region? (Select up to 3)



- Recruitment of New Companies to the Region
- Improving Quality of Life (such as better quality of K-12 system and high speed internet access)
- Partnering with Local Universities & Community Colleges
- Reducing Regulations and Tax Burdens for Businesses
- Improving Access to Capital for Start-ups
- Working Through Established Regional Economic Development Groups
- Creating Regional Community Workgroups to Develop and Implement New Ideas





## Q12: Comments from Survey Respondents

- **Market, Market, Market.**
- **Showcase our area for bigger business ideas...one being capitalizing on its natural beauty and scenic mountains...comparable to the Smokey Mountains, so get mentors from Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg areas and follow suit.**
- **Increase the educational attainment level of the region.**
- **Fewer Handouts**
- **Make use of the properties we have already. Allow new businesses time to grow.**
- **Address quality healthcare and K-12 education region wide**
- **Begin by building your base. Start with making non-student rental properties available at a decent price, then take it a step further and create “after 5 activities”; bars, shopping, a recreation center. Making a locality attractive to live in will in turn make it attractive to work in.**
- **Availability of Angel Investors**

*\* Comments are examples and not an exhaustive list.*



## **Q13: What is currently working at the state or regional level that needs to be continued, supported and/or scaled to improve the regional economy?**

- **Seed Capital program, entrepreneurship challenges, regional economic branding efforts**
- **We have many regional groups working in collaboration with the community colleges, and workforce development. We need qualified candidates to fulfill these jobs. We need to see growth of young people in trade such as Electricians, Plumbers, etc. These are well-paying opportunities that aren't being taken advantage of as we lose most to retirement. The need for these professions is great in the region.**
- **Reduce regulations**
- **The use of social media to promote businesses and opportunities.**
- **Regional approach**
- **Accept experience as a degree**
- **Emulate the ED effort in Eastern KY**
- **GOVA working with other funding sources for the sake of efficiency and effectiveness. Ecotourism in its infancy. Community Colleges working with employers directly.**
- **Attracting greater investment interest by the private sector in Appalachian Mountains of Virginia.**
- **Available "ready" lots for manufacturing**



## **Q13: What is currently working at the state or regional level that needs to be continued, supported and/or scaled to improve the regional economy? [Page 2.](#)**

- **There is a regional coalition building across the state line that needs to be broadened and strengthened. Also a better direct line of support and attention from the leaders in Richmond in support of our work, not telling us what we need to be doing, but rather supporting and validating the leader's work in our region.**
- **GENEDGE is making it really easy for businesses to learn about and have access to grants that are available**
- **The focus on expanding existing businesses and supporting new and small business.**
- **The level of investment; it just needs to be focused and managed better to prevent redundancy and to insure results**
- **Associate Degree technical programs. Short term training through workforce.**
- **Tax and infrastructure incentives; an additional focus on small business development to bolster downtowns; any efforts to strengthen the educational system**
- **New broadband legislation (if we cannot meet infrastructure needs of new businesses they will not consider us)**
- **Right to work (friendly attitude toward industry), VA Enterprise Zones, etc.**
- **The regional Workforce Development Boards are an effective resource for aligning the needs of the region with the resources and training capacity needed to address them.**
- **Quality of educational opportunity and good infrastructure – these are essential to further development in SWVA**
- **Regional IDAs; regional groups focused on outdoor recreation, tourism and cultural heritage; state focus on broadband expansion to last mile**

*\* Comments are examples and not an exhaustive list.*



## **Q14: What have been the economic success stories of the region in the last 10 years?**

- **Growth of Tourism Industry; some improvements on the educational front; Appalachian Spring outdoor and recreational development**
- **Community and Tourism Development putting more emphasis on Workforce Development**
- **Spearhead Trails, Tourism, Quality of Life**
- **Higher Education**
- **Businesses and industry choosing our area to locate**
- **Recruitment of IT companies, wonderful outcomes from public schools, broadband access has improved but still lacking**
- **Big picture thinkers who bring ideas to the table and those being supported even when they are “different” than what we have traditionally done. Success comes when regions work together!**
- **Diversification and growth of existing businesses. Establishing Southwest VA as a tourist destination. Focus on small business**
- **Manufacturing is rebounding**
- **Many of our small to mid sized companies that depended on coal have diversified their business models and found new markets.**
- **The region’s successful transition to a post-coal economy has attracted new industries and opportunities. The economy has diversified and stabilized admirably.**



## Q14: What have been the economic success stories of the region in the last 10 years? **Page 2.**

- **Broadband backbones for industry; focus on small business and entrepreneurship; revitalized downtowns and Main Streets**
- **Any story of expansion or addition with business and industry**
- **Some of the downtown revitalization programs seem to have made an impact on their communities**
- **Home-grown manufacturing businesses that have advanced their technology and production efficiency and retained jobs**
- **Resilience, tourism**
- **CGI, Northrup Grumman, many manufacturers in the region that are highly rated, many industries with highly rated customer satisfaction or quality.**
- **Downtown Marion's revitalization; Speyside Cooperage locating in Smyth and Washington Counties (informal partnership between two counties was noteworthy); Wytheville's multiple partnerships to boost tourism; E&H expansion into health sciences and research. We shouldn't overlook the long term value of research.**
- **Inn at Wise renovation; St Paul's success; Lee Theatre renovation; UVA-Wise improvements on campus; downtown support; successful arts programs like Jan Thompson's 9 O'clock Club and Shane and Amber Burke in Coeburn; the May's Theatre Project that sold out Christmas events. Highly successful people and productions who deserve funding for exciting growth opportunities for young people (think the long lasting and very successful Theatre Bristol); local brewery restaurants, music festivals; Crutchfield; Marion downtown success; Barter Theatre and Abingdon**

*\* Comments are examples and not an exhaustive list.*



## **Q15: What are the economic decline stories of the region in the last 10 years?**

- **Coal, Coal and Coal**
- **Slow growth; Inability to find jobs in the area; Losing graduates due to the above**
- **Schools decline in numbers; population decline; opioid addiction; high rate of disability; black lung; refusal to admit coal is no longer king**
- **Drug and health issues in the region have made a large population of laborers unemployable.**
- **Energy; population decline; apathy**
- **Coal – someone, somehow should make investments of solar throughout the region. We are way behind everyone else in technology**
- **The loss of coal jobs and the combining of our regional health care to one company which resulted in the loss of 100s of jobs.**
- **Loss of population; loss of local businesses; declining healthcare availability; lack of a positive attitude**
- **Continued drug use within working age; population declines**
- **Coal. The failure to take former tobacco land and repurpose for the CBD wave. The failure of higher education to find a way to provide test-out options for former miners who could earn credentials for manufacturing, but still have to drive to classes first.**
- **Loss of coal industry without an immediate support industry behind it. Terrible and negative press about our region across the Commonwealth and country that is stereotypic rather than factual – creating a challenge for recruitment. Loss of consideration in the USDA relocation application due to competitive rather than collaborative partnerships.**
- **UVa-Wise Enrollment Decrease**
- **Competition among local governments and lack of collaboration between agencies; lack of performance measures over tax payer-supported grants.**



## **Q15: What are the economic decline stories of the region in the last 10 years? Page 2.**

- **Population decline; number of students receiving standard vs. advanced diplomas at high school graduation; number of working age adults leaving the region for jobs; money spent on preparing sites for employers who have never shown up while decreasing school funding and focusing on teaching to the test, which has created a generation of students who lack critical thinking skills**
- **Many small businesses and mom pop eateries going out of business**
- **Coal, obviously; agriculture; manufacturing**
- **Lack of ability to fill high tech jobs – CGI and Northrup Grumman**
- **Manufacturing, population decline, failure of legislative and congressional leadership to get behind clear economic vision for the region**
- **Brain drain. Coal industry not being replaced with alternative energy industries. Workforce depleted due to health and substance abuse.**

*\* Comments are examples and not an exhaustive list.*



## **Q16: What has been the impact of collaboration or cooperation on the economic change in the region?**

- **Making progress towards the common goal of development**
- **I think the biggest positive change that has come from cooperation is in the tourism industry**
- **Leaders working together have assisted the economy – these teams produce fresh ideas, but struggle to be carried out if there is a lack of execution. The challenge is not in the planning. The people in the area that would be out spending money at these businesses we try to start up (but can't without capital) are on budgets, so they can't afford to. So maybe target the population first that you want out spending money to help the economy. And then educate small businesses that you usually go into debt before you profit – it's like they give up too soon.**
- **Economic growth is important on a regional level as all can benefit from it. Local growth is also critical though due to the geographic restraints of the area and the lack of public transportation.**
- **Whenever governments and their industrial development authorities in one county have collaborated with other counties, the entire region has benefited because of the job creation.**
- **Positive, especially tourism, trails, etc. Focus on workforce has been good, since the region has a considerable number of non-participating citizens in the workforce.**
- **It allows us to finish second on a grander scale. Seriously, collaboration is the only hope for successfully marketing the region to organizations that have the entire world from which to choose.**





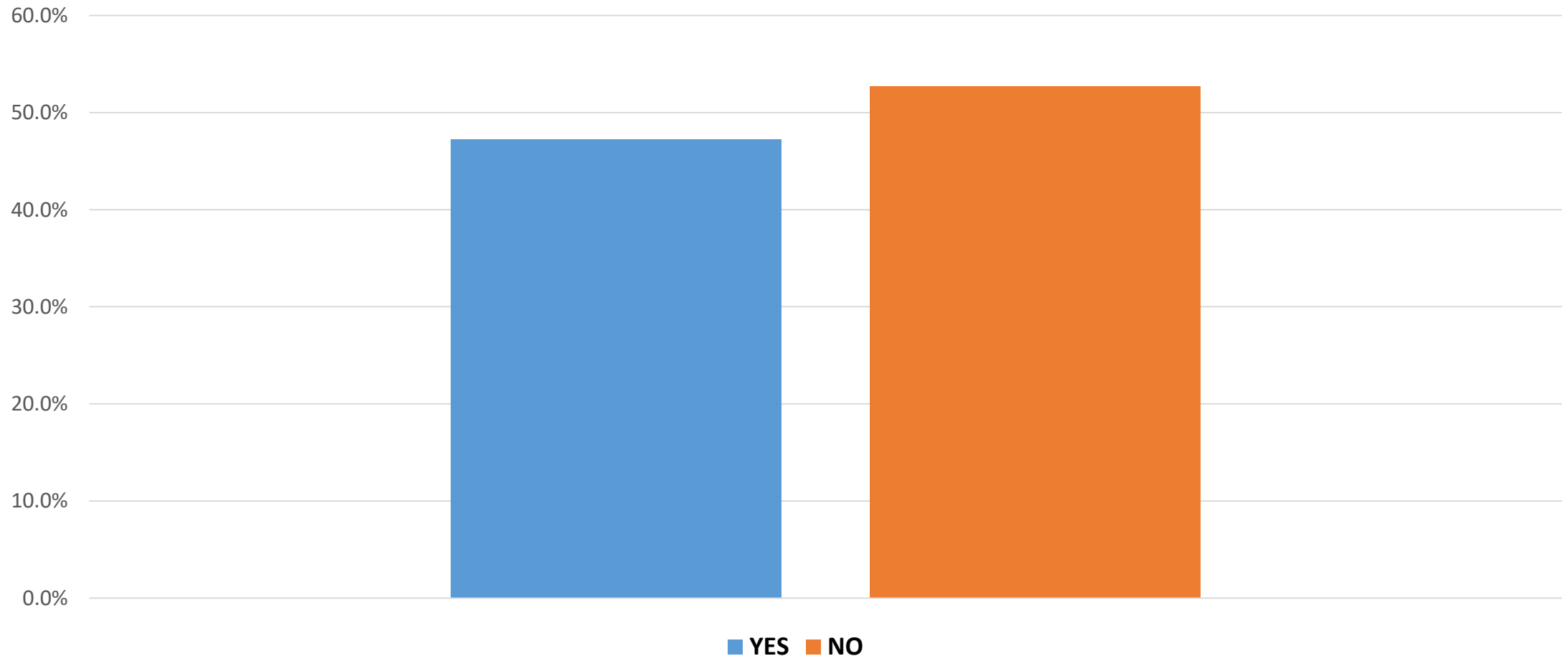
## **Q16: What has been the impact of collaboration or cooperation on the economic change in the region? Page 2.**

- Needs to get better and stronger, good momentum
- Things seem to be improving.
- We are moving in that direction but an impact is yet to be seen.
- Growth of existing businesses and new businesses in the region
- In agriculture what has resolved around the SW Farmers Market. Agriculture demand is growing and creating jobs. The emergence of new farming operations, the changing of calving season, the certification of farms, lots going on.
- A greater understanding of the reality of the regional situation and stronger relationships among individuals determined to create a new era of prosperity.
- The region has seen the benefits of supporting entrepreneurship along with traditional economic development efforts.

*\* Comments are examples and not an exhaustive list.*

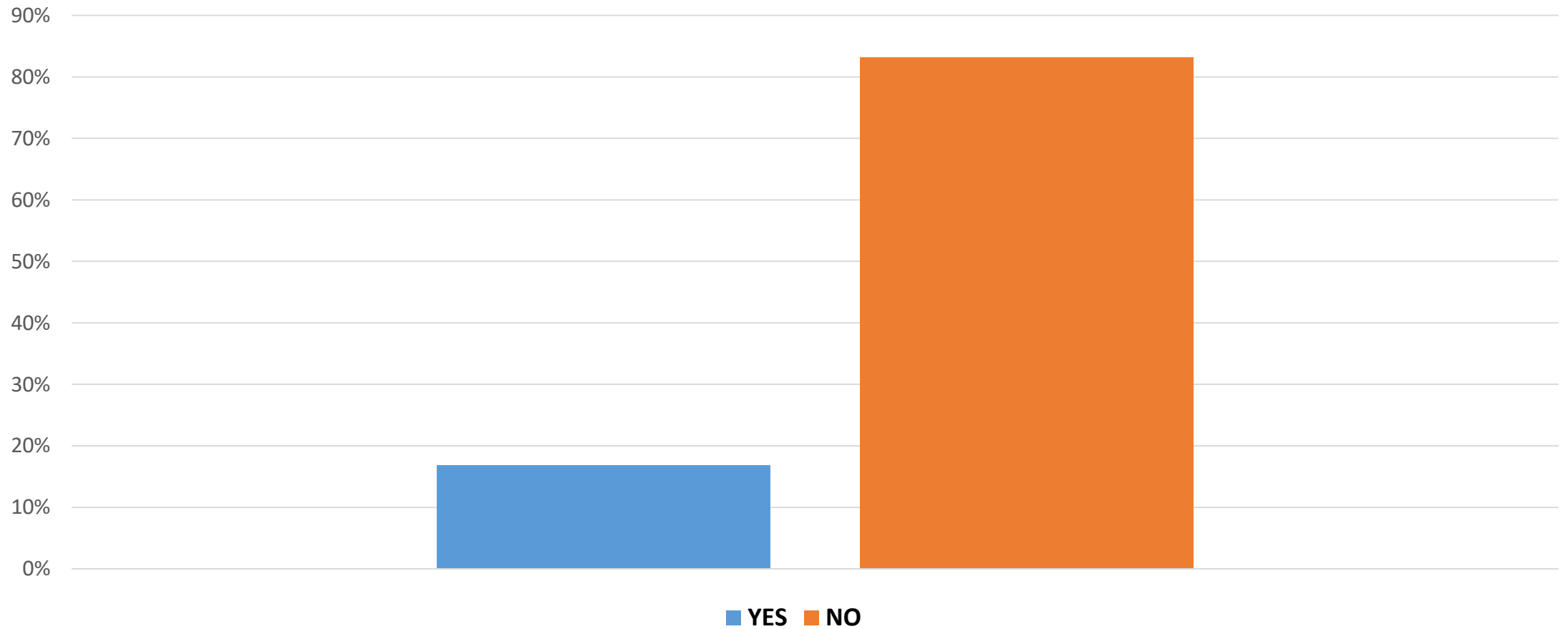


**Q17: Have you attended any GO Virginia Region One events in the last two years? (e.g. Council Meetings, Workgroup Meetings, Workshops, etc.)**



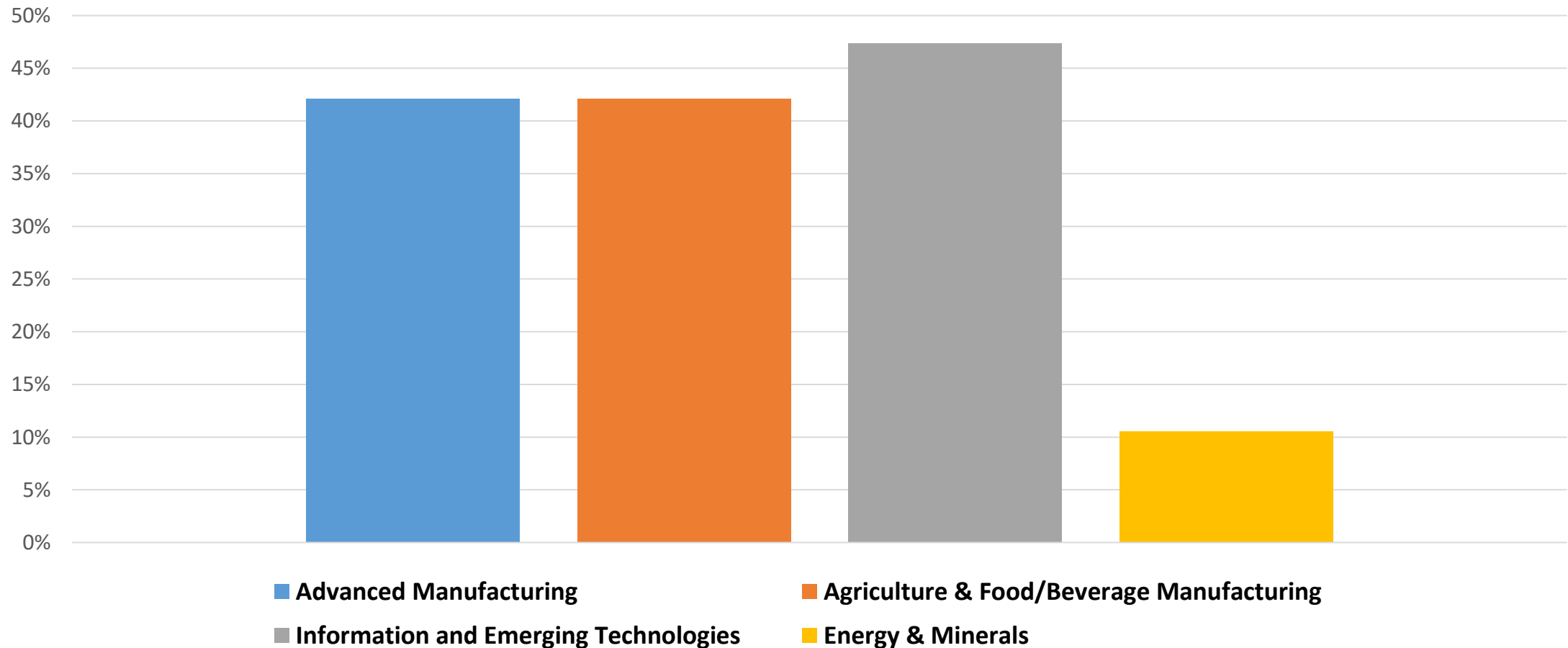


## Q18: Are you considering submitting a project for GO Virginia funding?



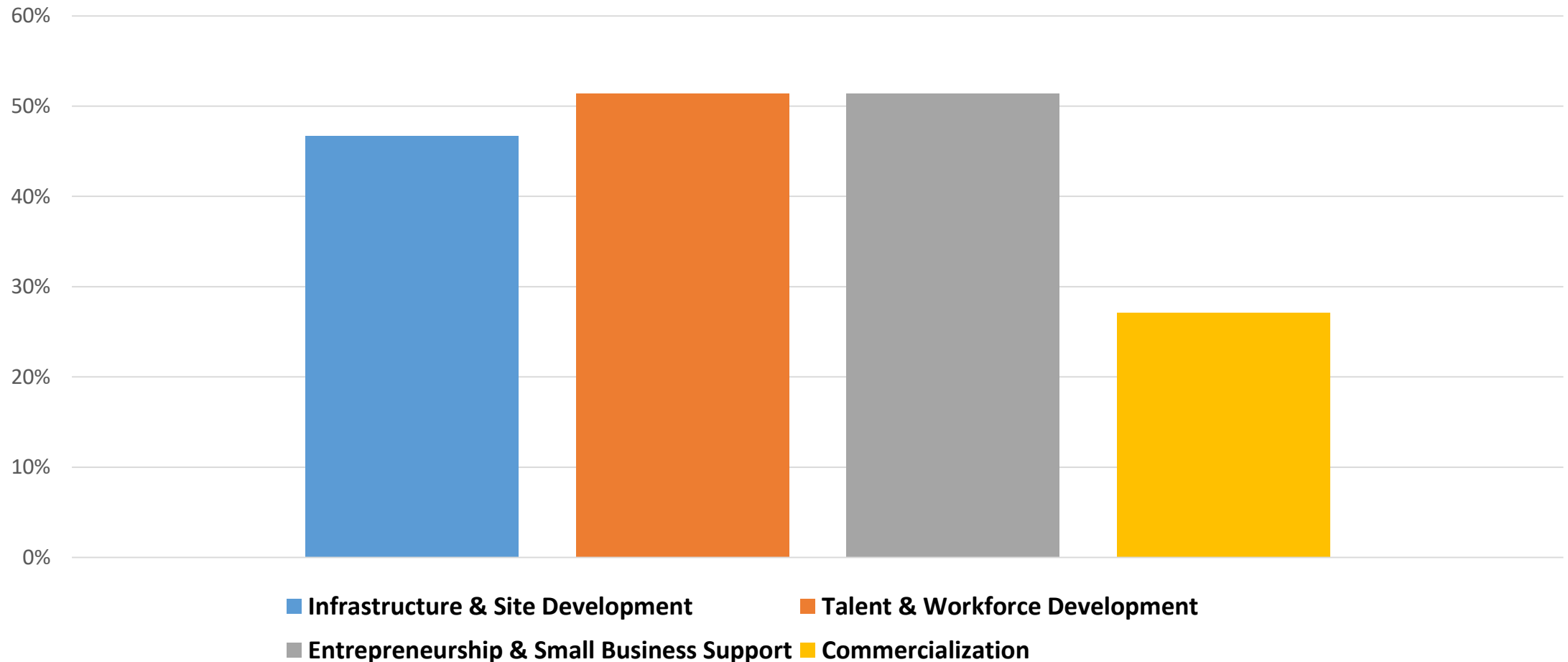


**Q19: If you answered yes to the previous question, which Region One industry target applies to your project? Select all that apply.**





## Q20: What regional investments should GO Virginia be making in order to grow the economy in Region One?





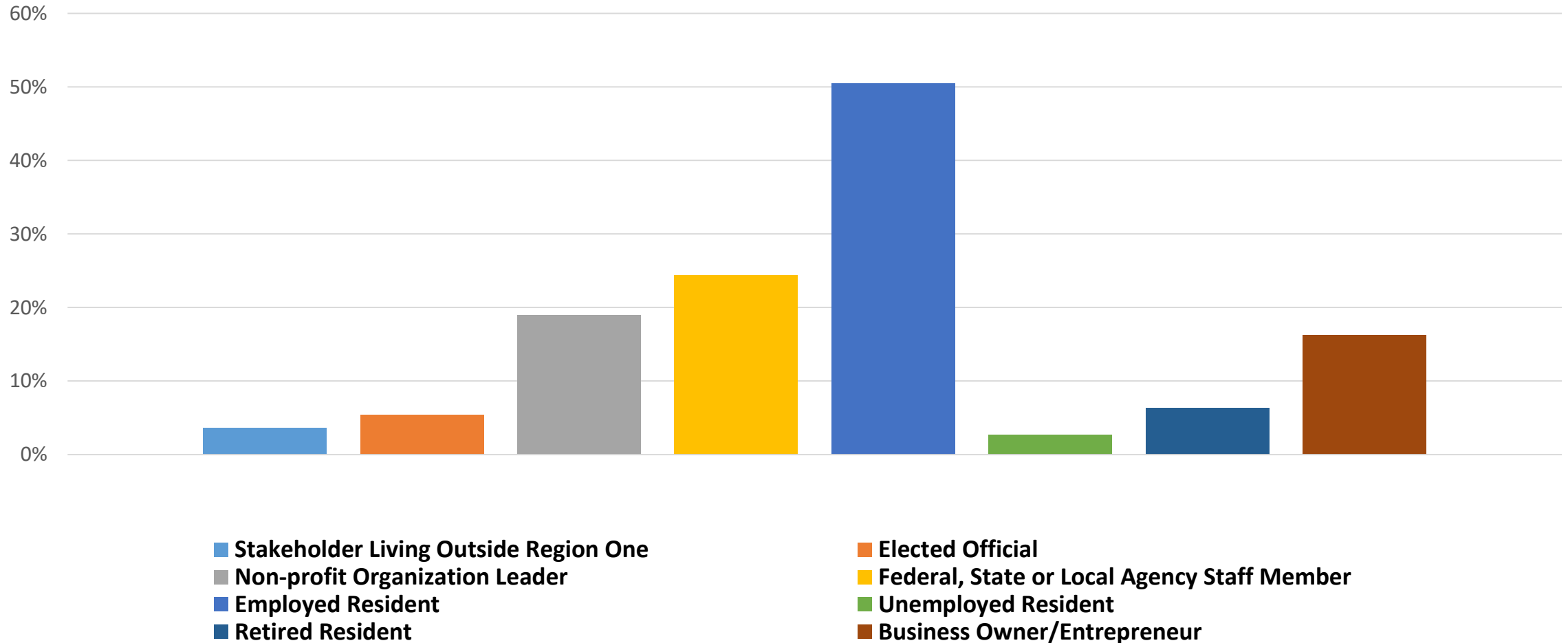
## Q20: Comments from Survey Respondents

- **Broadband internet**
- **Technical Assistance for small businesses, whether existing or start up, is extremely important to the health of the local business community.**
- **Tourism and quality of life – Let's make sure people want to live here before we offer jobs, otherwise we can't win with the other regions that have both jobs and good quality of life, tourism, etc.**
- **Investments in organizing and people in the farm sector and creating business plans**
- **Affordable child care**
- **Marketing region as a viable place to live.**

*\* Comments are examples and not an exhaustive list.*

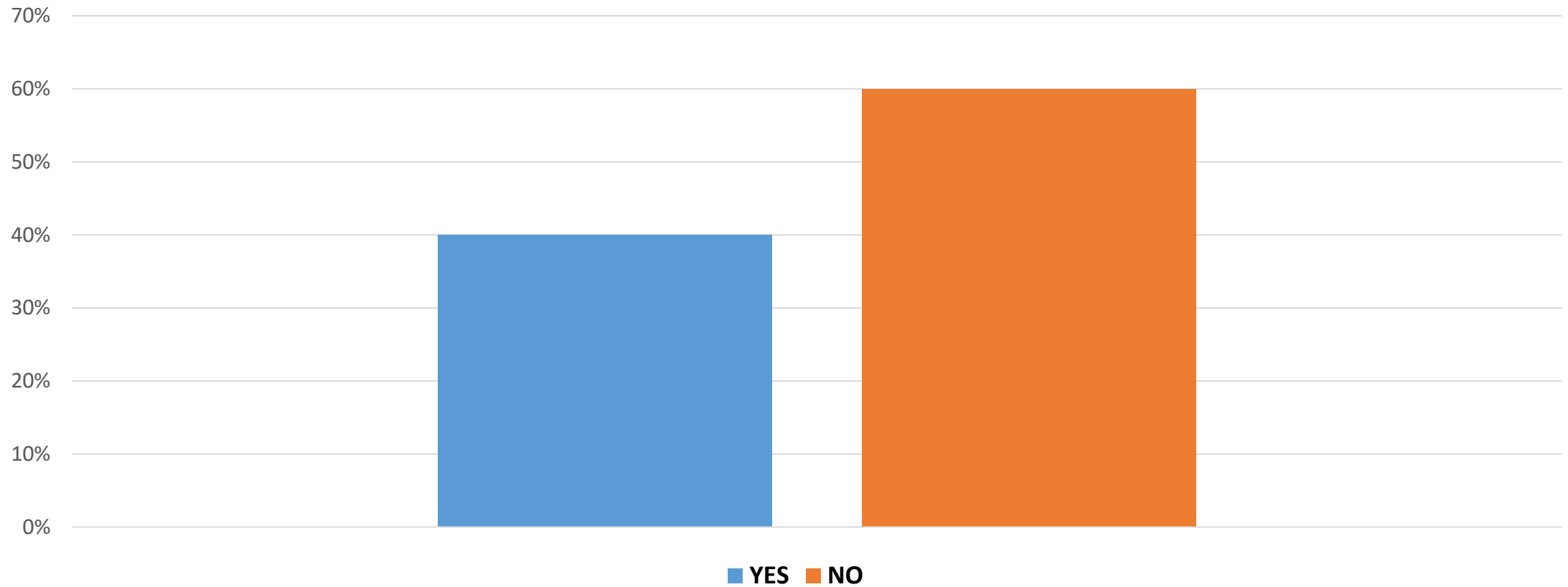


## Q21: What affiliations best describe you?





**Q22: If you are a stakeholder living outside Region One, would you be interested in moving to Southwest Virginia?**





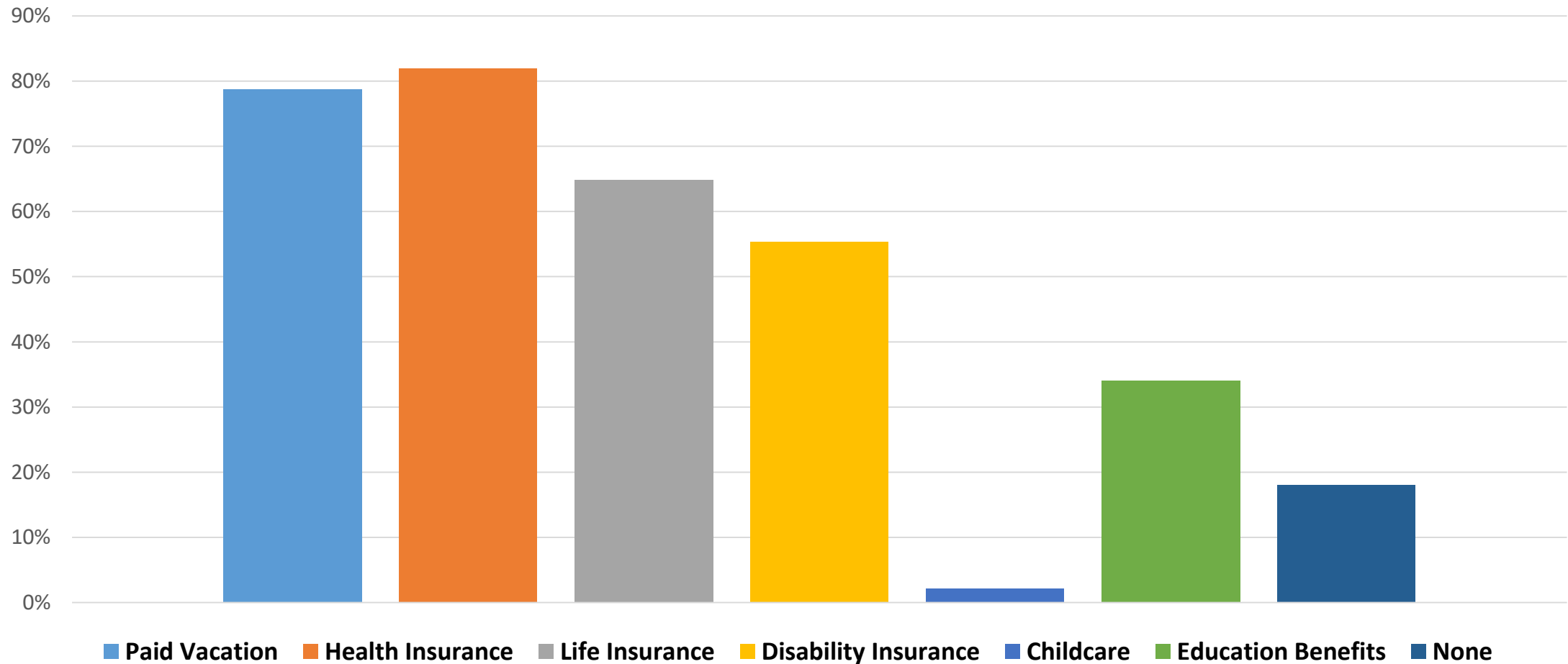


## Q23: Please choose what best describes your current employment status.





## Q24: What benefits does your work provide you?





## Q25: What is your zip code?

22601 – Winchester, VA

24015 – Roanoke, VA

24201/24202 – City of Bristol, VA

24210/24211/24212 – Abingdon, VA

24216 – Appalachia, VA

24219 – Big Stone Gap, VA

24224 – Castlewood, VA

24228 – Clintwood, VA

24230 – Coeburn, VA

24236 – Damascus, VA

24243 – Dryden, VA

24245 – Dungannon, VA

24251 – Gate City, VA

24260 – Honaker, VA

24263 – Jonesville, VA

24266 – Lebanon, VA

24273 – City of Norton, VA

24277 – Pennington Gap, VA

24283 – St. Paul, VA

24293 – Wise, VA

24323 – Crockett, VA

24327 – Emory, VA

24333 – City of Galax, VA

24340 – Glade Spring, VA

24343 – Hillsville, VA

24354 – Marion, VA

24360 – Ft. Chiswell, VA

24368 – Rural Retreat, VA

24370 – Saltville, VA

24382 – Wytheville, VA

24605 – Bluefield, VA

24609 – Cedar Bluff, VA

24637 – Pounding Mill, VA

24641 – Richlands, VA

37604 – Johnson City, TN

37620 – City of Bristol, TN

37659 – Jonesboro, TN

37664 – Kingsport, TN



## Q26: What is your age?

