



2019 MEMBER SURVEY

LOWCOUNTRY
LOCAL FIRST

Who We Are

Lowcountry Local First (LLF) was founded in 2007.

MISSION:

Lowcountry Local First is a 501(c)3 nonprofit cultivating an economy anchored in local ownership, because local-independent businesses are the cornerstone of our culture, economy, and character.

OUR INITIATIVES

**GOOD
BUSINESS**

**GOOD
ENTERPRISES**

**GOOD
FARMING**



Survey Details

- Survey Size: **444 Member Companies***
- Total No. Responses: **111 Companies**
- Total Employees within Member Companies: **13,000****
- Response Rate: **25% of Total Business Membership**
- Median Company Age: **8 Years in Business**

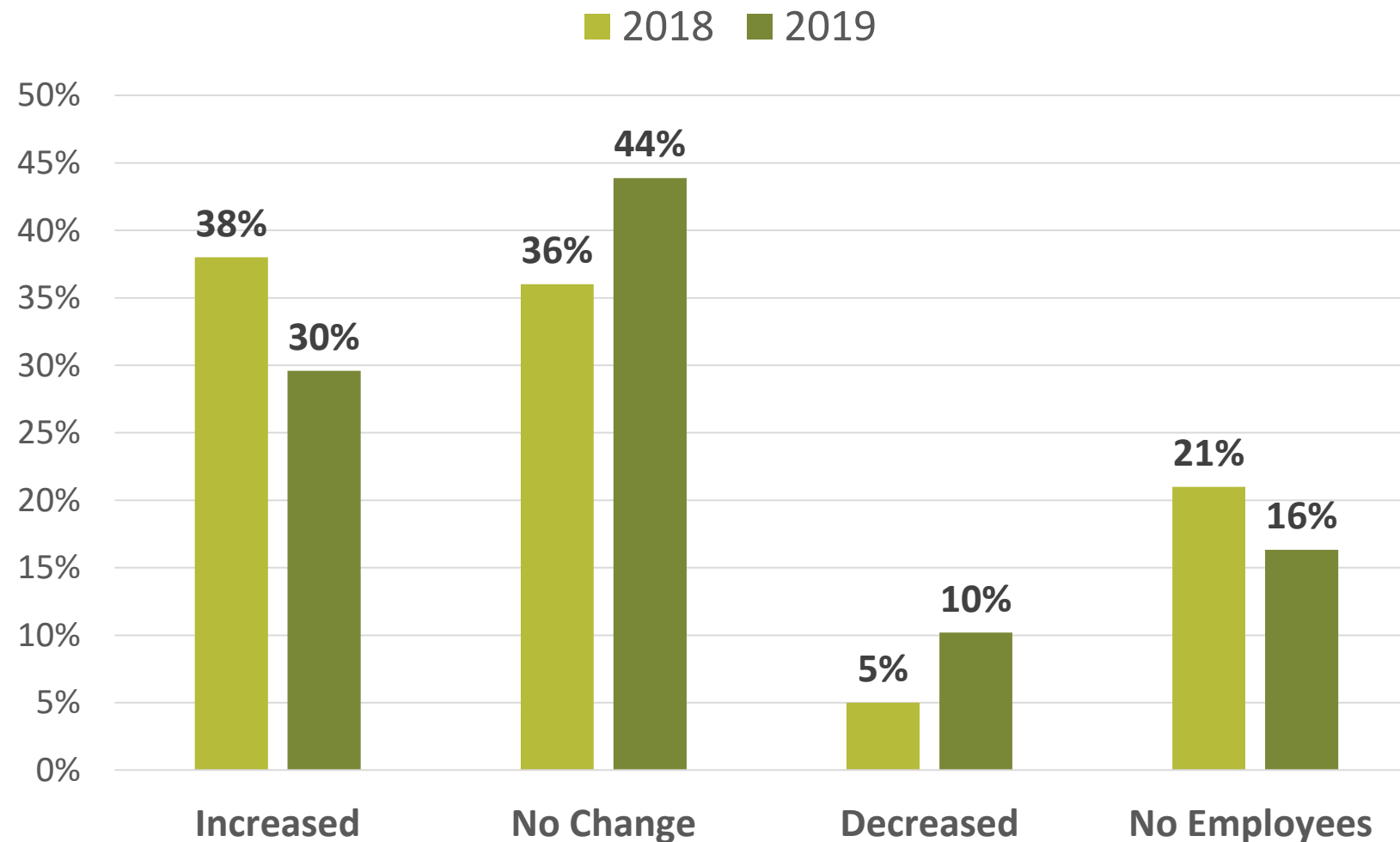
* 444 Business Members as of Nov 2019

** Estimated based on self-reporting by members companies



Company Growth by Employee Number

Compared to this time last year, has your employee number increased, decreased, or remained the same?
(Includes full-time and part-time)



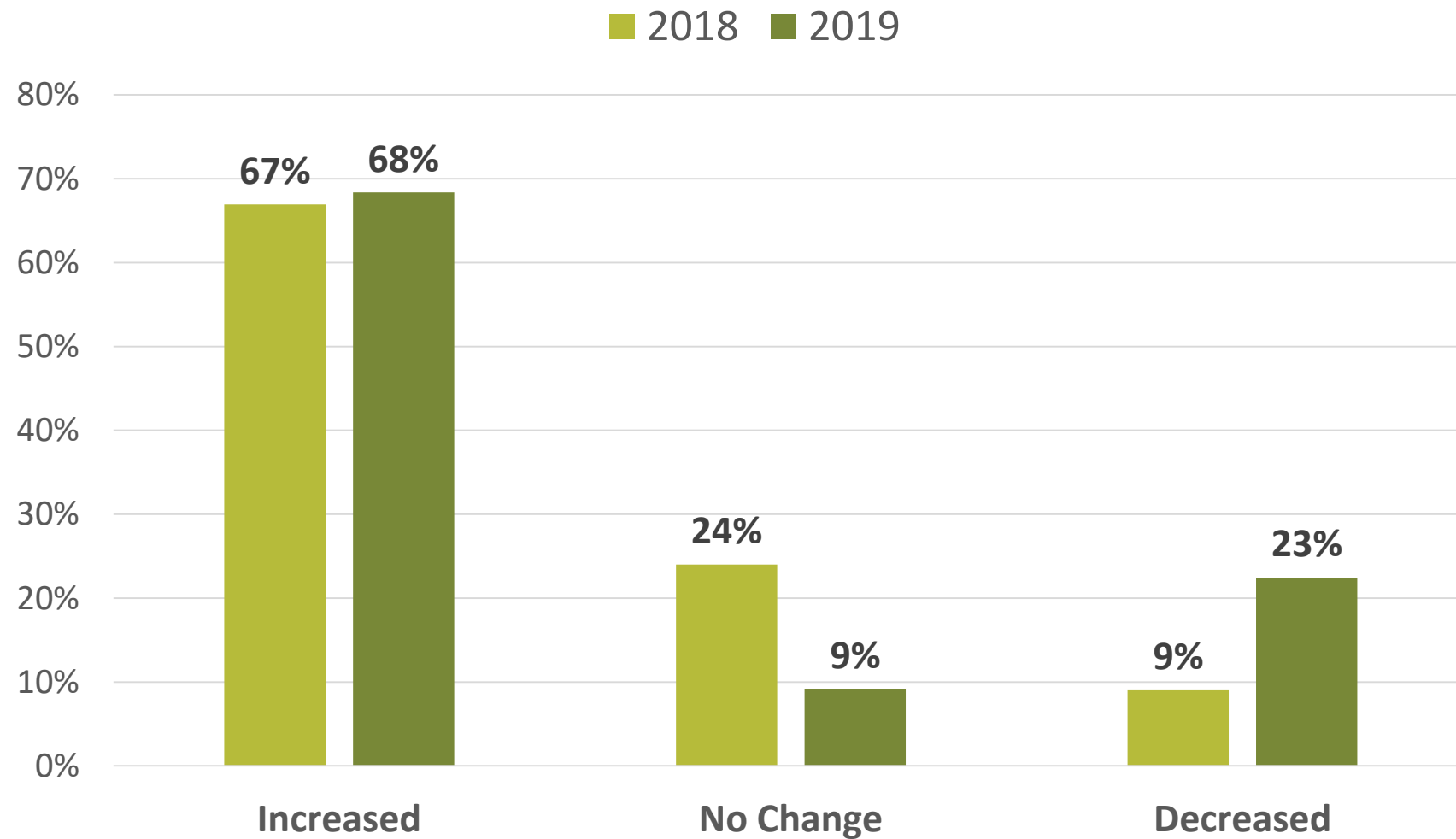
While 1/3 of members increased workforce size, more than half remained the same size or decreased number of employees over the past 12 months. The share of members downsizing doubled as compared to 2018.

Source: Lowcountry Local First 2019 Business Member Survey, December 2019.

Sample Size: 111 local, independent businesses representing 25% of LLF membership.

Annual Revenue Growth

Did gross revenue increase, decrease or remain static compared to the previous year?



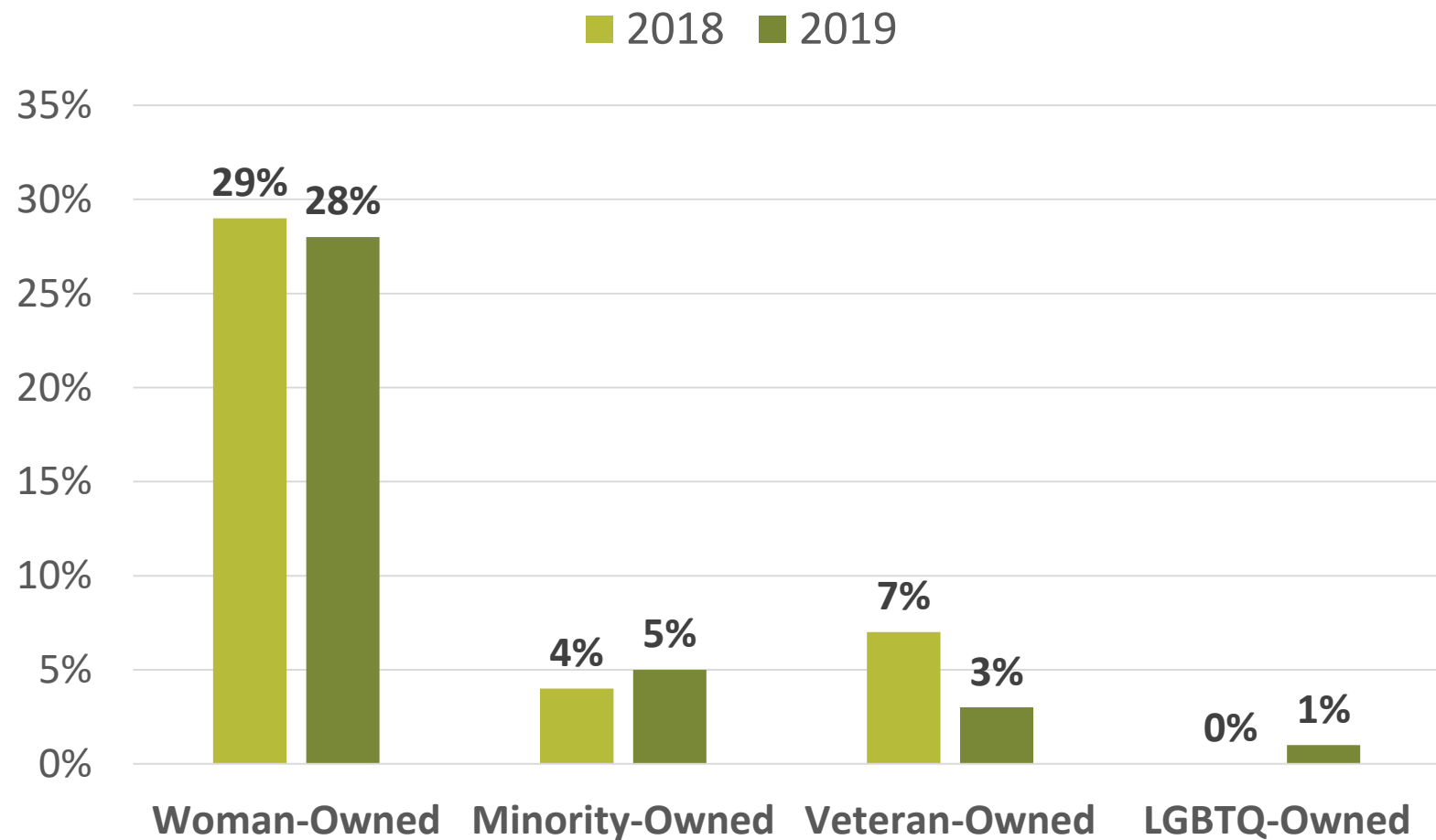
More than two-thirds of members reported increased revenue, while the share of members reporting a decline in revenue increased by 14%.

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Sample Size: 111 local, independent businesses representing 25% of LLF membership.

Ownership: Woman, Minority, Veteran, and LGBTQ

Is your business majority woman-owned, minority-owned, veteran-owned, or LGBTQ-owned?
(Self-identified by Members in Local Business Directory)

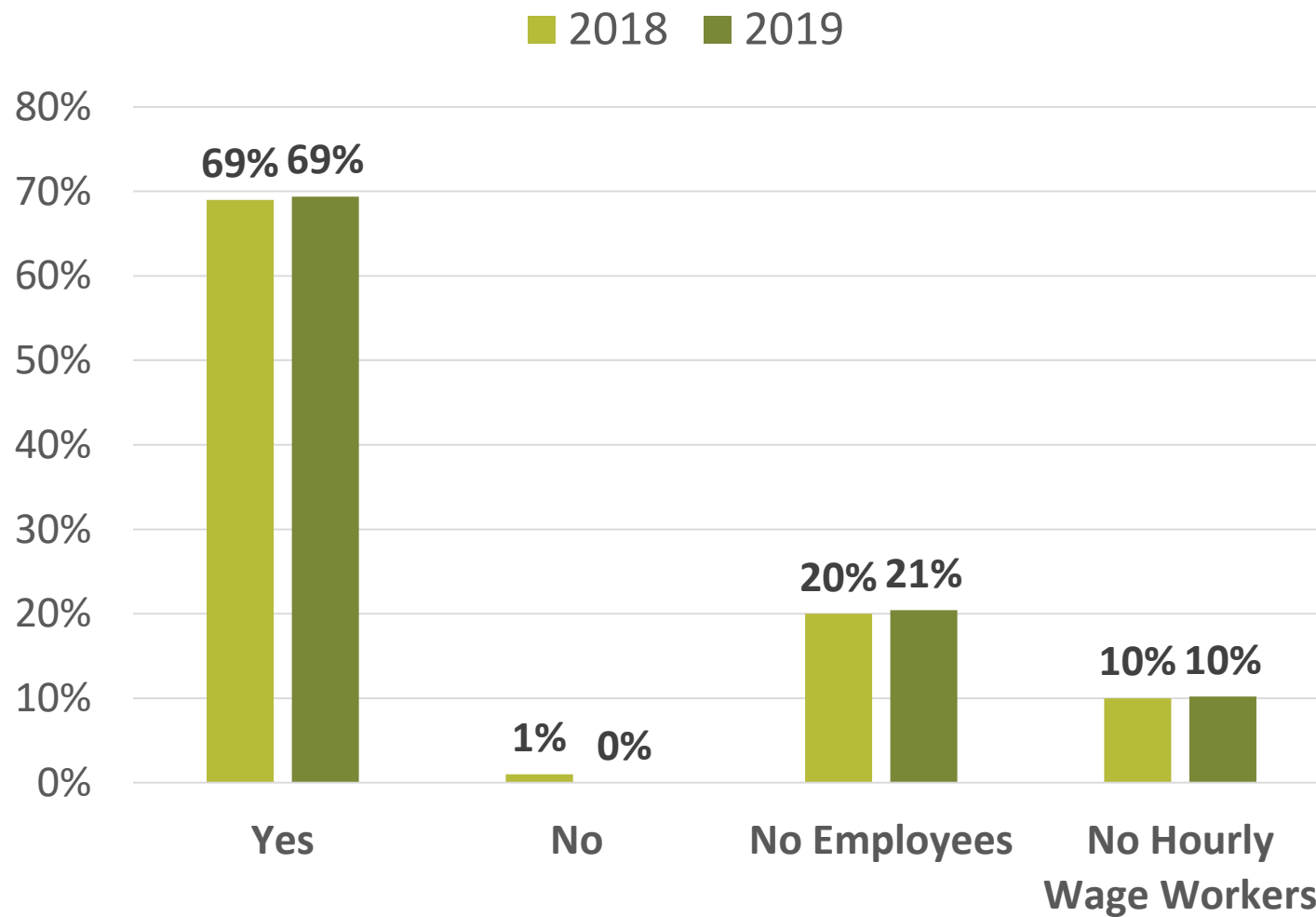


Company ownership from historically underrepresented categories decreased by 3% from 2018 to 2019, and represent 37% of the total membership.

Data from LLF Business Directory 1-15-2020 from a total of 428 companies.
Members self-identify these categories.

Minimum Wage

Do all of your employees earn a wage higher than the current South Carolina minimum wage (\$7.25 an hour)?



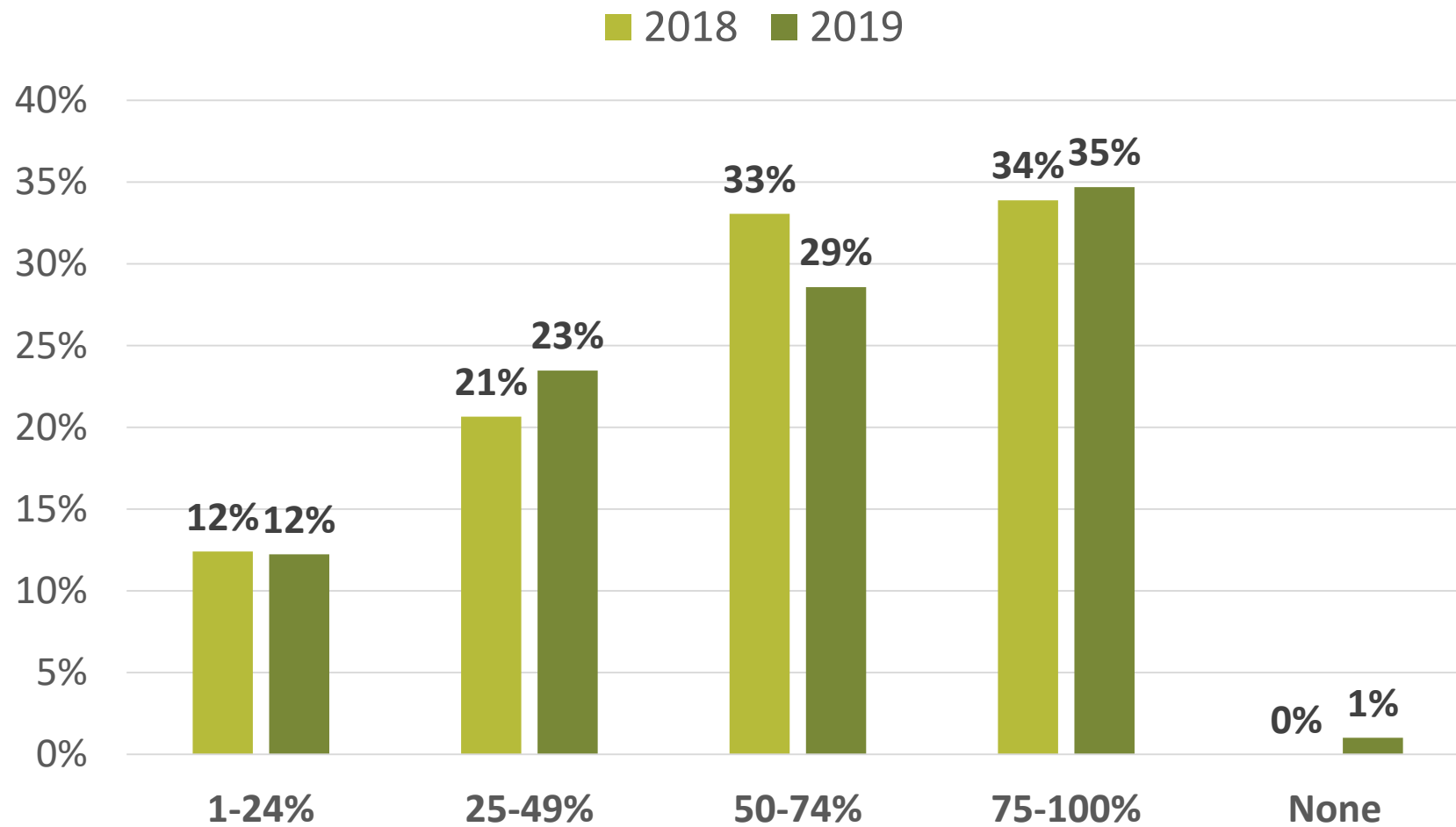
More than two-thirds of members with hourly employees provide wages greater than minimum wage.

Source: Lowcountry Local First 2019 Business Member Survey, December 2019.

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Working with Local Businesses

What percentage of your suppliers/service-providers/contractors are locally-owned and locally-headquartered businesses?



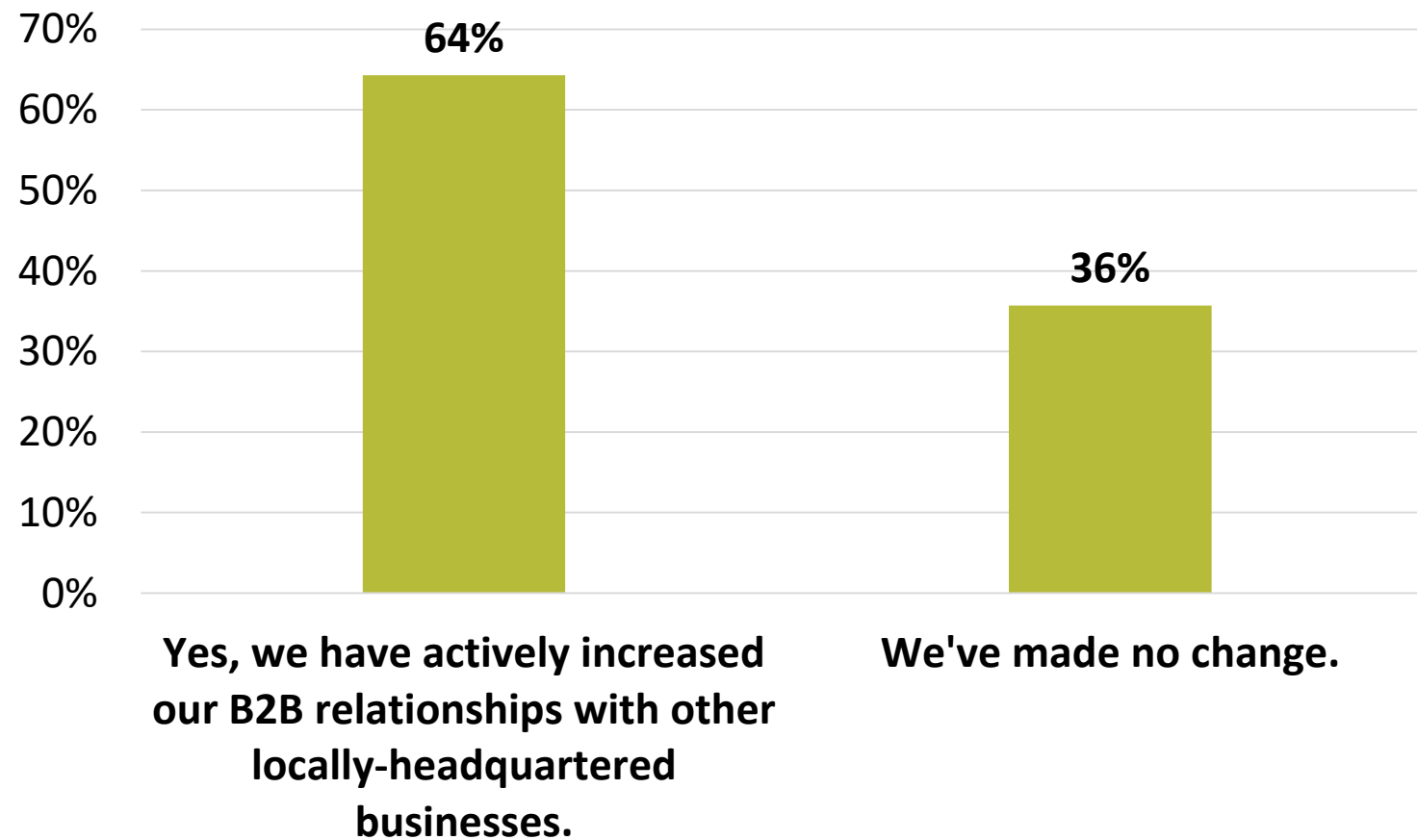
Two-thirds of members source more than half of their products or services with LOCAL companies.

Source: Lowcountry Local First 2019 Business Member Survey, December 2019.

Sample Size: 111 local, independent businesses representing 25% of LLF membership.

B2B Relationships

Since becoming a member of Lowcountry Local First, have you made changes to your practices of working with locally-headquartered suppliers/service-providers?



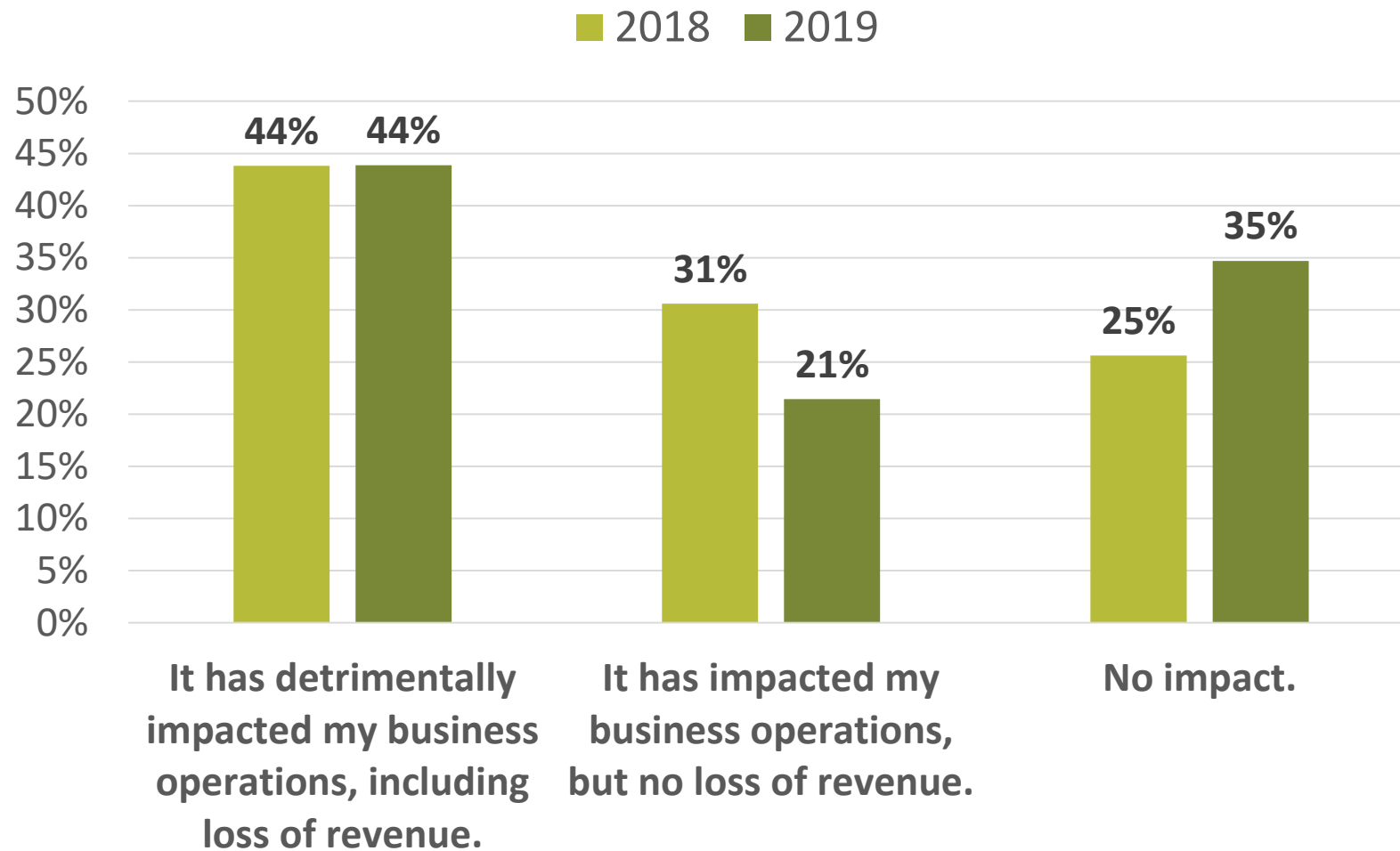
Two-thirds of members have actively increased business with LOCAL companies since joining LLF.

Source: Lowcountry Local First 2019 Business Member Survey, December 2019.

Sample Size: 111 local, independent businesses representing 25% of LLF membership.

Impact from Flooding & Severe Weather

Please indicate the impact to your business from increased flooding and severe weather events

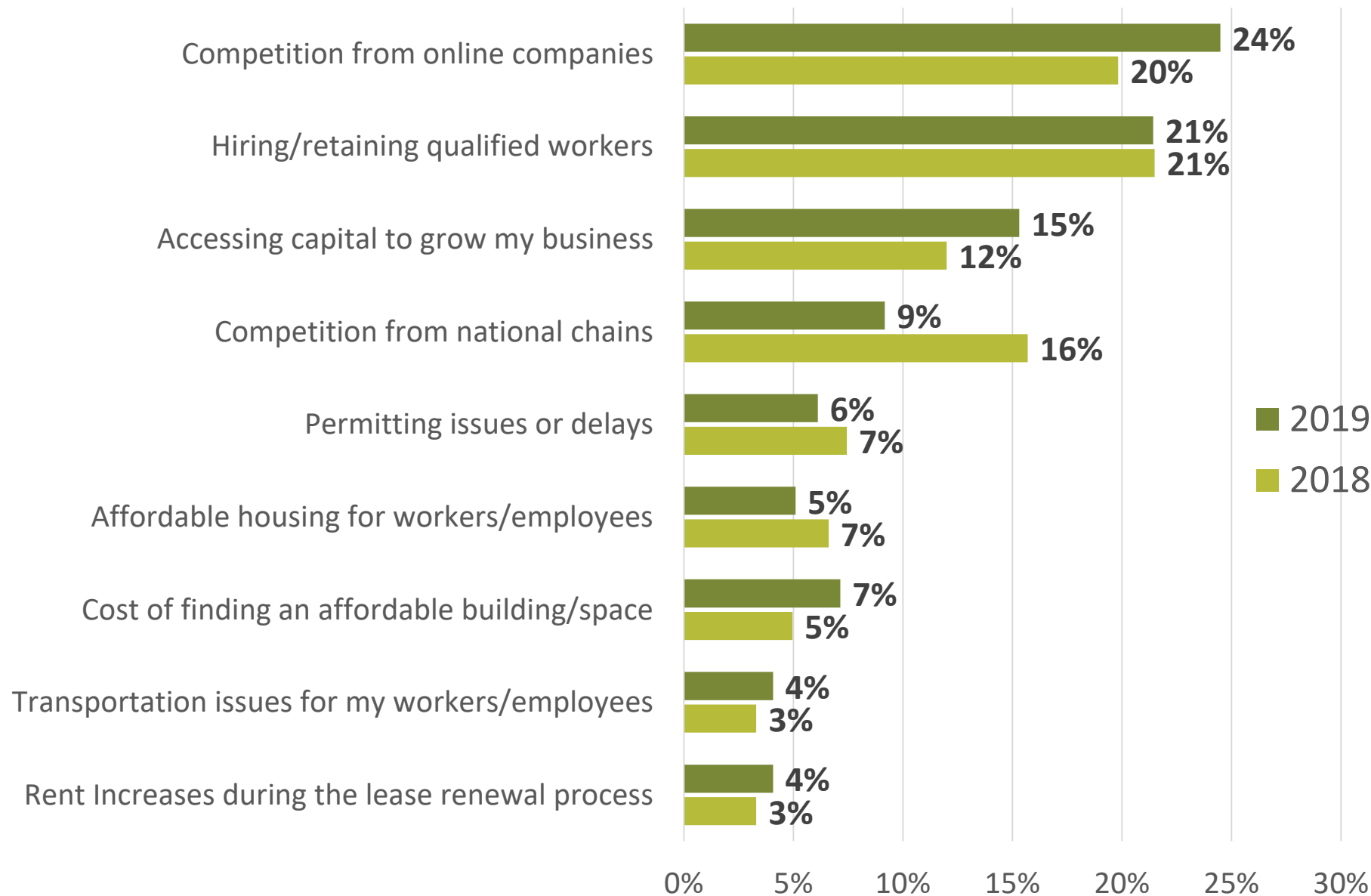


Two-thirds of members were impacted by flooding and severe weather events in 2019, including the loss of revenue for 44% of companies.

Source: Lowcountry Local First 2019 Business Member Survey, December 2019.

Sample Size: 111 local, independent businesses representing 25% of LLF membership.

Top Challenges



Competition from online companies eclipsed hiring/retaining talent after four straight years of ranking as the top challenge, though it remains among most reported challenges, along with competition from national chains.

Source: Lowcountry Local First 2019 Business Member Survey, December 2019.

Sample Size: 111 local, independent businesses representing 25% of LLF membership.

Advocacy Priorities

What are your priorities for change at a city/region level, so we can take those back to elected officials and local/state leadership?

TOP RESPONSES (in order of popularity)

- #1** – Increasing the availability of affordable commercial space/land for businesses.
- #2** – Addressing the prevalence of chain businesses through zoning that supports unique, independent businesses.
- #3** – Implementing tax breaks for property owners that keep rents affordable for local businesses.
- #4** – Shifting government and institutional procurement contracts to local businesses (e.g. purchasing contracts from cities, hospitals, universities, etc.).



Source: Lowcountry Local First 2019 Business Member Survey, December 2019.

Sample Size: 111 local, independent businesses representing 25% of LLF membership.

LLF's Unique Role

What is the #1 program, service, campaign or resource Lowcountry Local First can provide to accomplish our mission?

TOP RESPONSES (in order of popularity)

#1 – 'Support Local' public awareness campaigns highlighting impact of local businesses to consumers

#2 – Networking and building the "relationship economy"

#3 – Advocate and work with elected officials on policy to level the playing field for homegrown businesses



Source: Lowcountry Local First 2019 Business Member Survey, December 2019.

Sample Size: 111 local, independent businesses representing 25% of LLF membership.

Member Testimonials

"The team at Lowcountry Local First are passionate about being advocates for the Local Business Community. They are very genuine people who believe in what they do and we are the better for it. "

"Being a local business it's important to support an organization that supports us all. Stay in touch with what Lowcountry Local First does by joining as a member and supporting their efforts to increase local awareness of businesses that are native to the Lowcountry."

"Affordable rent has helped keep my overhead low which has been critical in helping me stay open and profitable. My business would likely have failed if not for Local Works."

"I think it's just about the most important organization local business owners can join. And the [Good Business] Summit is always amazing. I learn something and am inspired by it every year!"

Takeaways

- ❖ **Top Challenges:** Online competition from non-local large corporations ranked the top challenge for our members, and is a growing threat to our members' ability to succeed. It impacts many industries – not just retailers. Hiring and retaining qualified workers remains a challenge across the board.
- ❖ **Revenue:** While 68% of members reported an increase in revenue, the share of companies with revenue declines grew from 2018 by 14%, possibly impacted by rise in online competition and lack of workforce.
- ❖ **B2B Multiplier Effect:** Our members value B2B relationships and are working with local suppliers and service providers for the majority of their needs. Membership in LLF has increased local purchasing.
- ❖ **Flooding:** Flooding and severe weather events are having a detrimental impact for the majority of our members, including loss of revenue for nearly half.

Source: Lowcountry Local First 2019 Business Member Survey, December 2019.

Sample Size: 111 local, independent businesses representing 25% of LLF membership.

Takeaways continued

- ❖ **Advocacy:** Members would like LLF to advocate for affordability solutions for commercial space, as well as strategies to address the prevalence of chain businesses through zoning that supports unique, independent businesses.

- ❖ **LLF Services:** Our members find the following most impactful in accomplishing our mission:
 1. 'Support Local' public awareness campaigns highlighting impact of local businesses to consumers.
 2. Networking and building the "relationship economy."
 3. Advocate and work with elected officials on policy to level the playing field for homegrown businesses.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT.

Find these one-of-a-kind
local businesses at

LOWCOUNTRY
LOCAL FIRST.ORG

