



Edmonton Business Census - 2024

Using data to support Edmonton's Local Economy

Summary of findings from the 2024 Project
January 17, 2025

Land Acknowledgement

The lands on which Edmonton sits and the North Saskatchewan River that runs through it have been the sites of natural abundance, ceremony and culture, travel and rest, relationship building, making and trading for Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. Edmonton is located within Treaty 6 Territory and within the Métis homelands and Métis Nation of Alberta Region 4. We acknowledge this land as the traditional territories of many First Nations such as the Nehiyaw (Cree), Dene, Nakota Sioux (Stoney), Anishinaabe (Saulteaux) and Niitsitapi (Blackfoot).

Edmonton owes its strength and vibrancy to these lands and the diverse Indigenous peoples whose ancestors' footsteps have marked this territory as well as settlers from around the world who continue to be welcomed here and call Edmonton home.



Introduction

Businesses of all sizes and sectors drive Edmonton's dynamic economy. To truly understand this diverse community, we need reliable data – a clear view of the businesses that make our city thrive. That's why the City launched Edmonton's first-ever Business Census in 2023. The goal is to fill existing gaps in business data with more timely, relevant, and accurate information. In 2024, the project undertook an ambitious expansion to deliver more data on Edmonton's business community.

To gather this data, our team conducted in-person interviews across Edmonton, distributed online questionnaires and connected with businesses through phone calls. This has enabled us to create a comprehensive understanding of our commercial landscape. (We'll use "business" and "business establishment" interchangeably in this report for ease of reading.)

This data is not just for today; it's a roadmap for tomorrow. By analyzing trends in key areas like our Downtown, business improvement areas and industrial neighbourhoods we can make informed decisions to support businesses, nurture innovation and ensure Edmonton's economy is resilient, vibrant and inclusive.

We extend our gratitude to our economic development partners, stakeholders and especially the business community for participating in the census.

Our Partners:



Intended Impact

- The Program** - The Business Census provides a **true count** of business establishments and employers. The program is unique as it is based on a physical count and encompasses the entire population in the census area (as opposed to a sample). This provides the City, its economic development partners and the business community accurate, timely and relevant data for decision making.

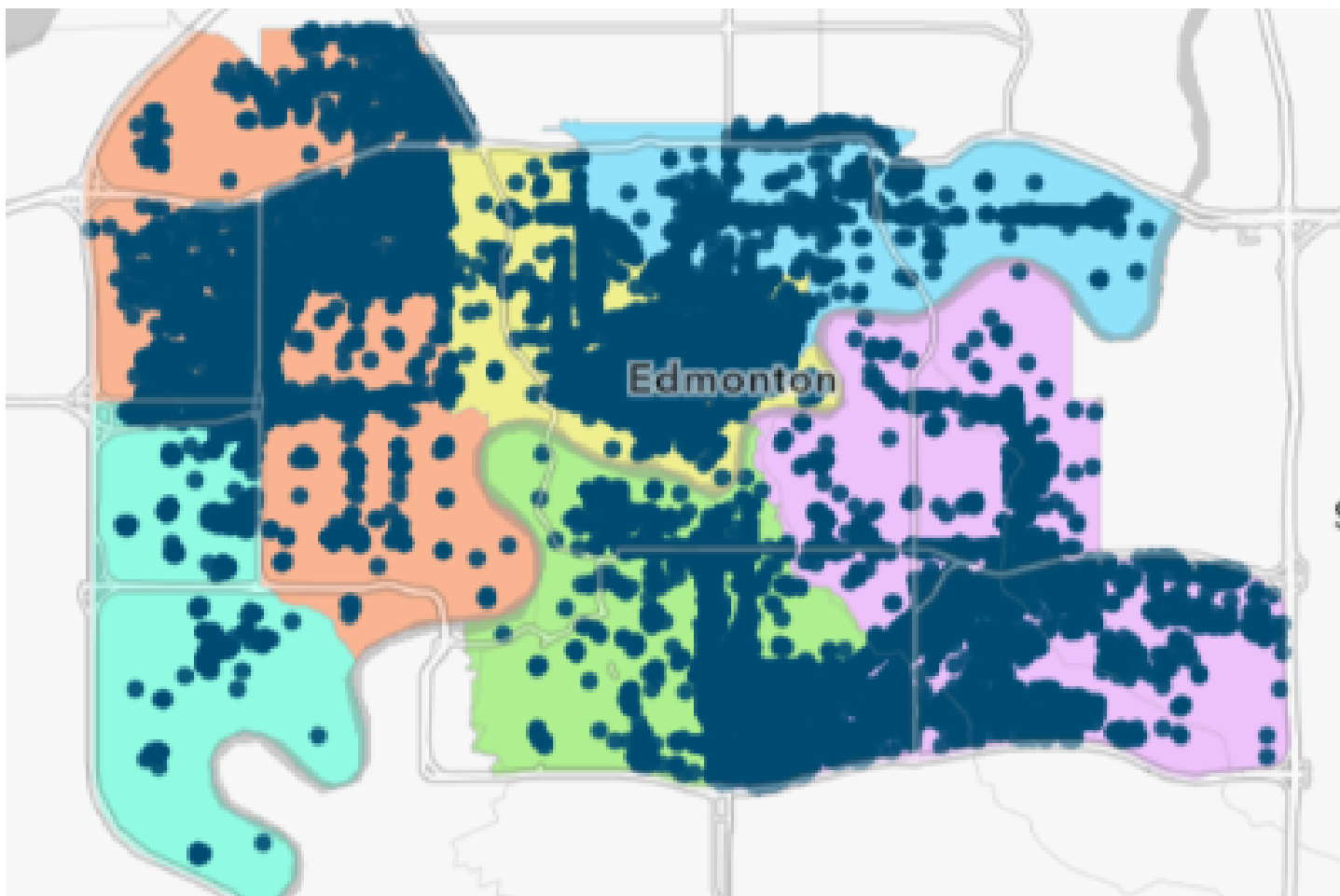
The Report - Offers interested parties a **concise overview of key observations** at a high level and provides insight into how we collected and analyzed the data. Readers are encouraged to interact with the dashboard at the end of this report.

The Data - Enabling Edmontonians, our partners and any interested party to conduct their own in-depth exploration is a priority for this program. Datasets derived from this program can be accessed directly from the City's Open Data portal..

(<https://data.edmonton.ca>).



Summary of Findings



Survey Area

The 2024 Business Census area expanded from Ward O'day-min to these six districts (as defined by the City's District Plan): Central, Jasper Ave, North Central, Southeast, Scona and West Edmonton. The Business Census will cover the City of Edmonton entirely by 2026.

Locations visited in the previous year were revisited to capture new data points and update existing data. The map on the right shows commercial locations through a series of dots. Each dot represents one or more businesses sharing the same street address. The distribution of these dots offers a visual representation of the concentration and dispersion of commercial activities.

Highlights

- The study identified 17,655 businesses employing 342,917 people (with 78% in full-time and 22% in part-time roles).

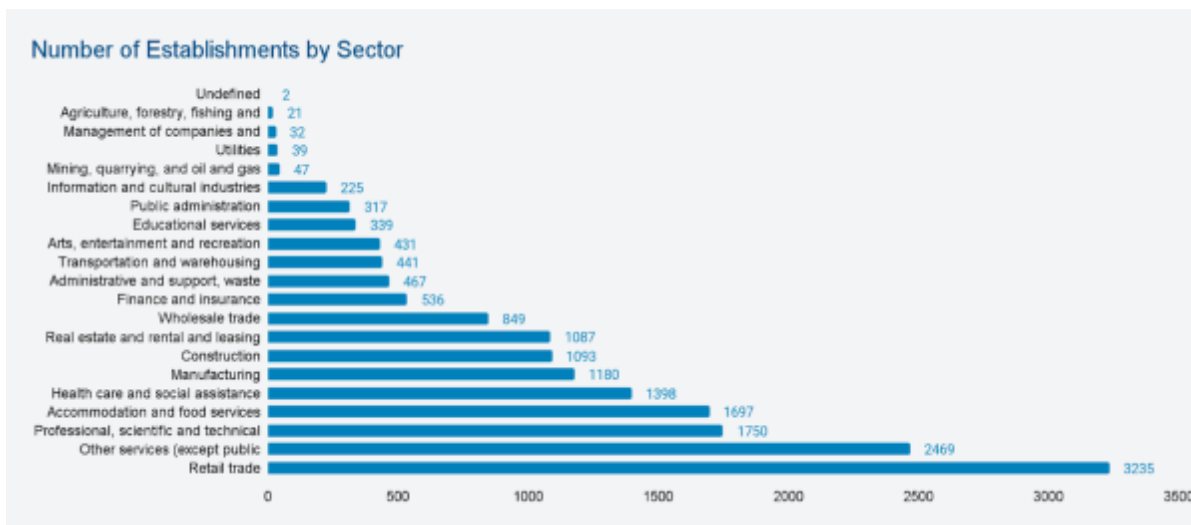
- The average number of people employed per establishment is 19.
- Not including the Public Administration Sector, small businesses (fewer than 100 employees) accounted for 98% of all establishments and 72% of employment in the census area.
- At 59%, in-person surveys accounted for the majority of completed surveys in the census area.
- The data collection process benefited from the use of diverse survey methods, including in-person data collection, desk research, online surveys, email and telephone surveys.
- The use of diverse survey methods helped enhance participation, accessibility and inclusivity in the data collection process.



A Closer Look at Key Trends

Business Categories

The Business Census codes each establishment counted according to the 2022 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). This system provides a standard method for analyzing the industry composition of an area and can be compared to other jurisdictions across North America. The chart below provides a sector breakdown of the businesses in the census area, offering a clear overview of the business mix.



The chart shows the relative sizes of different sectors. The top five sectors by establishment count are: Retail Trade; Other Services (except Public Administration); Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; Health Care and Social Assistance; and Manufacturing. These sectors represent roughly 60 percent of the businesses and half of the employment in the census area.

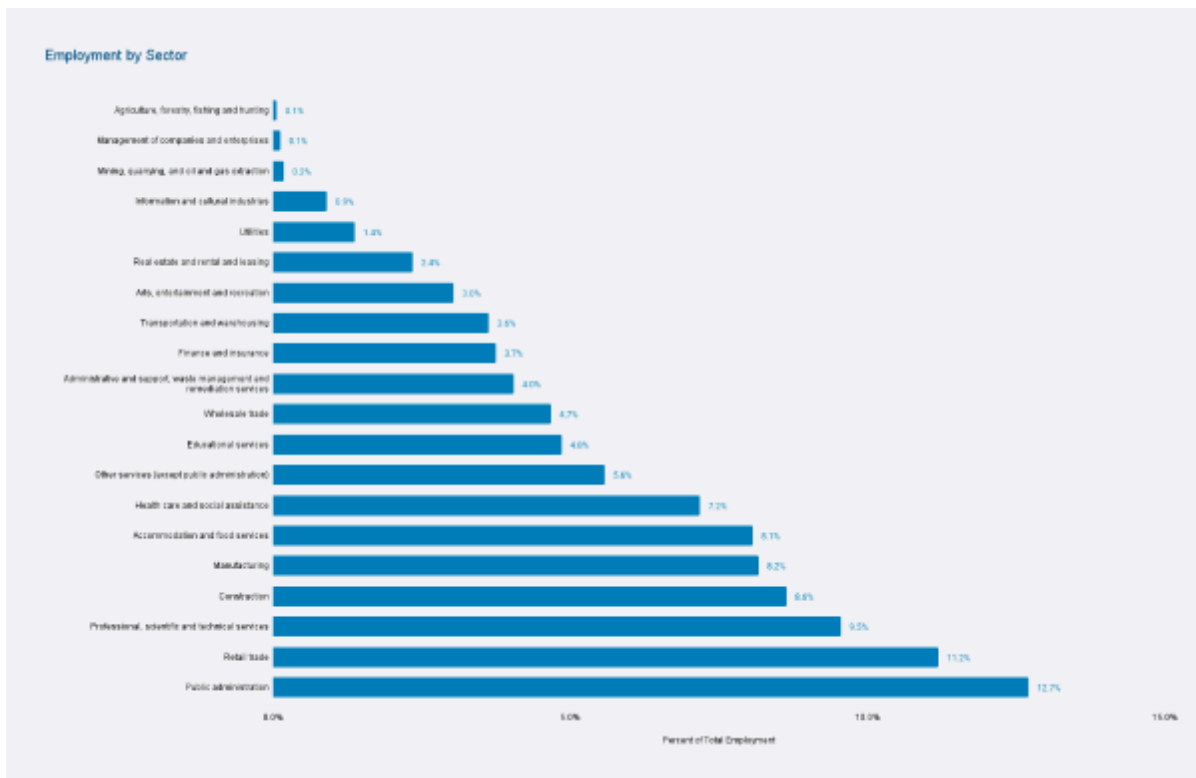
This sectoral breakdown can serve as a foundation for understanding potential focus areas for strategic development (e.g. emerging clusters) and resource allocation. Each establishment is coded to the six digit NAICS code and so this data (which is available on the City's Open Data Portal) can be further disaggregated than what is presented in this chart.

Overall, the city's economic landscape is diverse, as evidenced by the wide-ranging distribution of businesses across various sectors, from industries like Manufacturing; Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting; to more service-oriented domains such as Public Administration and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services.

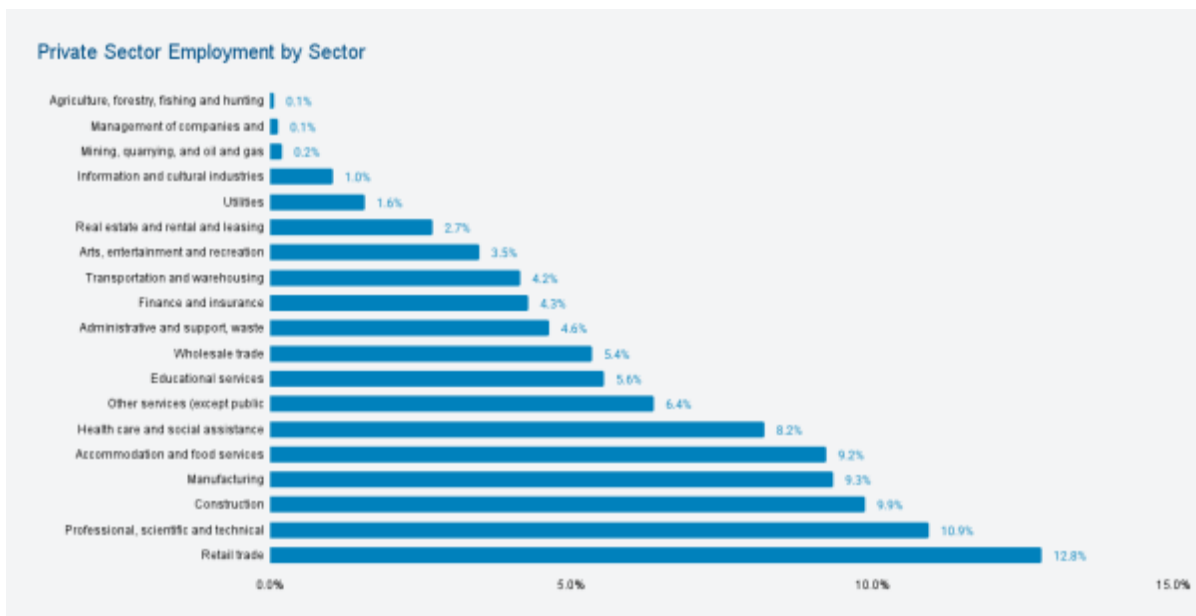
Employment by Sector

The 2024 census identified 342,917 people employed. Further analysis reveals that approximately 78% of employed people are in full-time positions and 22% are in part-time positions. The following

chart illustrates the distribution of employment across various sectors.



The chart above shows that Public Administration sector has the highest employment, accounting for 12.7% of total employment in the 2024 census area. The charts that follow will focus specifically on the current state of the private sector in Edmonton.



Private sector employment, encompassing all sectors except Public Administration, accounts for 299,378 employed individuals. In this context:

- Retail Trade sector has the highest employment, sitting at 12.8% of the total private sector employment, followed by Professional, Scientific and Technical services (10.9%), Construction (9.9%), Manufacturing (9.3%), and Accommodation and Food Services (9.2%).

The majority (98%) of employment is supported by small businesses (fewer than 100 employees). They account for 72% of the businesses in the 2024 census area. The small business category is typically defined as having 0-99 employees, however to align with the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce and provide more detailed insight into business size, the category was further disaggregated into the groupings of 1-4, 5-19 and 20-99 employees.

Some high-level observations on sectors by business size:

The following chart visually represents the distribution of businesses across various sectors and corresponding employment figures within each sector.

Business Size	Employment	Establishments
0	0	656
1-4	10,496	4,111
5-19	85,652	8,747
20-99	121,167	3,451
100-499	61,129	352
500+	20,934	21



This butterfly chart illustrates the distribution of businesses and employees across various sectors, highlighting some interesting disparities. The chart's left and right sides represent the number of businesses and employees per sector, respectively, allowing for quick comparisons. Notably, some sectors with a high concentration of businesses contribute proportionally fewer employees to the overall workforce. Conversely, certain sectors, despite having a smaller number of businesses, emerge as significant employers, underscoring the diversity and complexity of the local economy.

The butterfly chart also reveals significant variations in the average number of employees per establishment across different sectors. For example, the Retail sector has an average of 12 employees per establishment, whereas the Construction sector has an average of 27 employees. These differences may reflect variations in the number of employees required to operate an establishment, the prevalence of off-site employees who report to an office but work elsewhere, and other sectors specific labor requirements.

Goods and Services Producing Industries

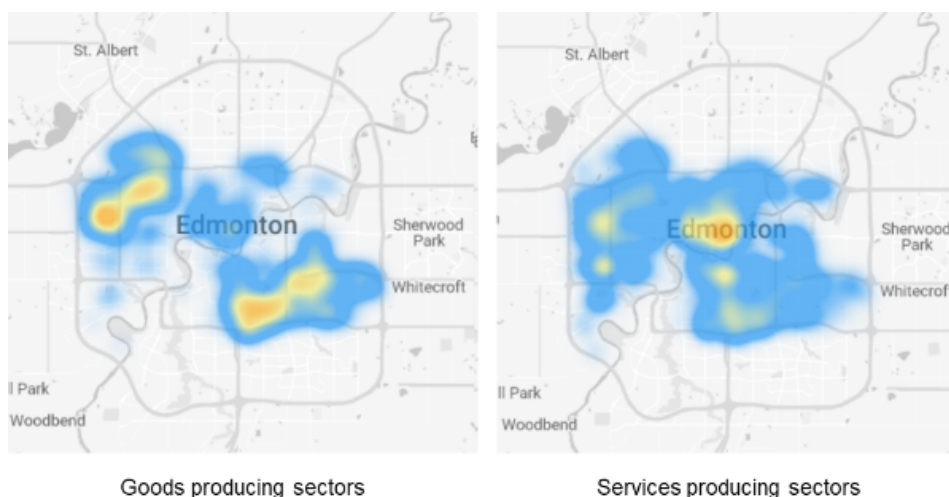
This breakdown of businesses is a variant of the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) that divides the economy

into two industry groupings: the goods-producing industries and the services-producing industries.

The majority, representing 87% of businesses, fell within the service industry category, highlighting its dominant presence in the census area. Conversely, the goods-producing industry accounted for a modest 13%.



We also see noticeable difference in the concentration of goods and services producing sectors in different areas of Edmonton, as shown in the heatmap below.



In Edmonton's Central district (e.g. Downtown and surrounding area) only 3% of businesses are goods-producing. Conversely, 23% of businesses in the Jasper Place and Southeast districts (which include some of Edmonton's industrial neighbourhoods) are goods producing. These differences could be attributed to the attributes of each area such as zoning, as well as physical assets such as transportation infrastructure. Additionally, the Business Census data identifies possible industry clusters which may influence where a business is located.

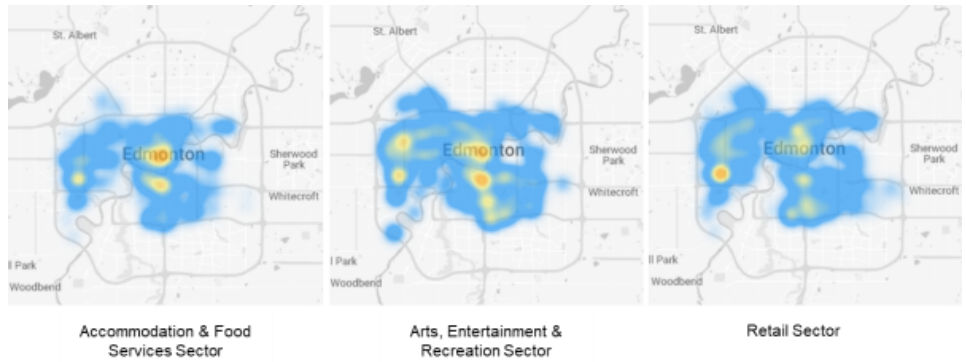
Industry Clusters

Industry clusters are the close geographical grouping of businesses in related industries. These clusters include businesses who buy and sell from each other or offer complimentary activities and ultimately create competitive advantages that may incentivize other businesses to invest in or relocate to the same area. Information on industry clusters can be used to support economic development by informing decisions on infrastructure investments, business attraction strategies, and targeted support programs for key industry clusters.

This section provides a brief overview of sector clusters. A more in-depth analysis of industry clusters, including the attributes of the locations where such clusters exist will require additional data on linkages and spillovers. At a high-level, we expect attributes such as access to infrastructure (roads, rail spurs, etc.), people (both consumers and the labour force) and other businesses are what encourage these clusters to form. We encourage readers to access this data and conduct further analysis through the City's Open Data Portal.

Edmonton's Entertainment and Recreation Hubs

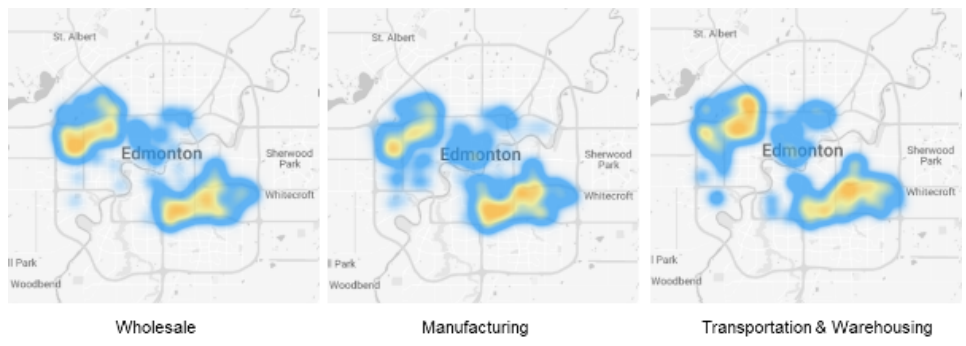
A notable trend observed in the heatmap is the geographical clustering of the Accommodation & Food Services, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation, and Retail sectors. This pattern likely arises from these sectors' tendency to serve similar customer bases, such as tourists, local residents, and those seeking leisure activities. By locating near each other, these businesses can create a synergistic effect, attracting more customers and enhancing the overall appeal of the area.



While much of the census area contains these businesses clear concentrations appear in Edmonton's Downtown, Old Strathcona (Whyte avenue area) and West Edmonton (in particular, West Edmonton Mall). It can be inferred that these three areas serve as Edmonton's destination locations for anyone looking to eat, shop, recreate or be entertained.

Wholesale, Manufacturing, and Transportation Hubs

The data reveals a distinct pattern of co-location among the Wholesale, Manufacturing, and Transportation and Warehousing sectors. It indicates that businesses in these sectors operate in close proximity to streamline supply chains, reduce transportation costs, and facilitate efficient distribution of goods.



Edmonton's Wholesale, Manufacturing and Transportation and Warehousing sectors are most dense in the city's north-west and south-east. The clustering may also reflect shared infrastructure needs, such as access to major transportation routes (such as Yellowhead Trail, Anthony Henday Drive and Whitemud, and access to rail spurs), industrial parks, and warehousing facilities.

This interdependence highlights the interconnected nature of these sectors and their crucial role in driving economic activity. Another primary driver of this observed clustering may be due to zoning rules that aim to locate these types of businesses away from residential areas.

Distribution of Sectors Across Districts

Understanding the unique characteristics of each district enables the development of tailored strategies that leverage existing strengths and address specific challenges. The table below illustrates the geographic distribution of sectors.

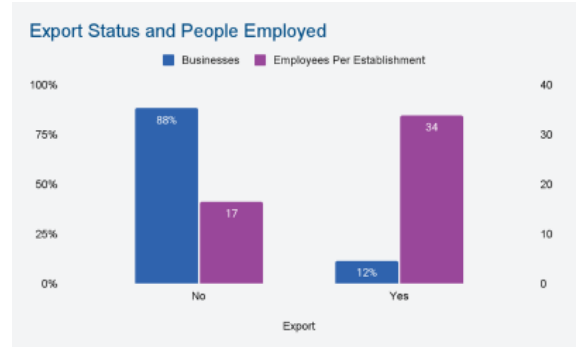
Sectors	District / Business Count					
	Central	Jasper Place	North Central	Scona	Southeast	West Edmonton
Accommodation and food services	561	200	152	403	166	215
Administrative and support, waste managem...	116	131	20	30	163	7
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	3	4	1	4	9	-
Arts, entertainment and recreation	100	94	34	73	91	39
Construction	52	535	23	35	441	7
Educational services	99	80	23	42	79	16
Finance and insurance	167	129	21	57	136	26
Health care and social assistance	505	261	111	253	168	100
Information and cultural industries	65	43	14	30	50	23
Management of companies and enterprises	8	10	3	4	7	-
Manufacturing	69	378	34	87	599	13
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	1	7	-	3	36	-
Other services (except public administration)	550	626	211	373	599	110
Professional, scientific and technical services	583	431	56	176	478	26
Public administration	184	46	27	23	31	6
Real estate and rental and leasing	640	167	84	64	110	22
Retail trade	591	778	393	495	555	423
Transportation and warehousing	20	176	18	22	198	7
Undefined	-	1	-	-	1	-
Utilities	9	10	1	1	17	1
Wholesale trade	27	386	19	22	393	2

For example, Jasper Place and Southeast districts show a high concentration of businesses in the construction sector, while the Central District has a greater proportion of Public Administration establishments. These variations may reflect differences in zoning regulations, historical development patterns, or other underlying characteristics of each district. The insights gleaned from the heat map have significant implications for policy, economic development, and urban planning initiatives, including targeted investments in infrastructure, workforce development, or business support programs.

Exporters as Large Employers

The City collected data on export status for 11,333 businesses and have identified 1,328 businesses that export goods or services outside Canada.

It is important to acknowledge that only some businesses (about 64% of the businesses in the census area) randomly participated in answering this question. However, given the response rate, we can interpret the ratio of exporting and non-exporting businesses as a relevant characteristic of business in the survey area.



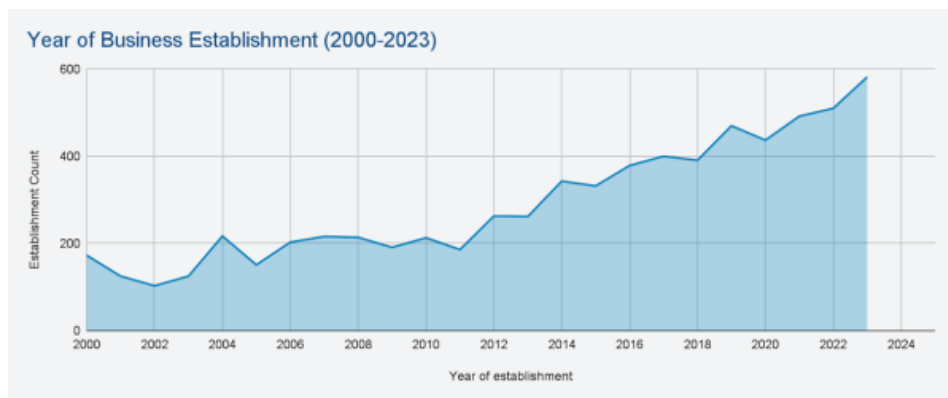
- The data indicates a potential positive correlation between export activities and higher employment rates. Establishments that indicate they export goods or services reported an average of 34 people employed per establishment versus an average of 17 people employed per establishment for non-exporters.



Other Insights

Year of Business Establishment

This time series chart provides a historical overview of when businesses opened in Edmonton.



- The chart is based on the 10,317 responses to the question "What year did your business start operating in Edmonton?". For readability, only the past 23 years are displayed. Some businesses demonstrated resilience, tracing their origins to the 17th century. Although not displayed on the chart, more than 120 businesses are 100+ years old. Since data collection concluded at the end of August 2024, there was a high risk of undercounting businesses that opened during the year, particularly those established in the last quarter. To mitigate this potential bias, we opted to analyze trends only up to the end of 2023.

Diversity in Local Business Ownership

The objectives of collecting identity-based data are:

- to fill gaps in our understanding of the demographic make-up of business ownership within Edmonton (that is used to inform policy and programming decisions),
to create a baseline from which to measure business ownership diversity, and
to celebrate the diversity within Edmonton's business community.

A note on intersectionality: The survey revealed that a business may have one, or multiple owners, all of whom may or may not identify with multiple demographic categories. This intersectionality adds a layer of complexity to the understanding of diversity and

highlights the uniqueness of each entrepreneur's narrative. Therefore, the counts in this section represent individual responses.

Ethnic or Cultural Background			
Demographic Category - Level 1	% of Owners	Demographic Category - Level 2	% of Owners
African Origins	4.8%	African, n.o.s.	3.0%
		Central and West African origins	0.2%
		North African Origins	0.3%
		Southern and East African origins	1.3%
		Asian Origins	27.4%
		East and Southeast Asian origins	9.6%
		South Asian origins	9.0%
		West and Central Asian and Middle Eastern origins	3.9%
Caribbean origins	0.1%	Caribbean, n.o.s.	0.1%
		Jamaican	0.1%
European Origins	2.6%	British Isles origins	0.3%
		Eastern European origins	0.8%
		European, n.o.s.	0.2%
		Other Western European origins	0.2%
		Southeast European origins	0.1%
		Southern European origins	0.9%
Latin, Central and South American oi	1.3%	Hispanic, n.o.s.	0.2%
		Latin, Central or South American, n.o.s.	1.0%
		Mexican	0.1%
		Salvadorean	0.1%
North American Origins	2.1%	North American Indigenous origins	2.0%
		Other North American origins	0.1%
Oceanian Origins	0.1%	Oceanian, n.o.s.	0.1%
Other ethnic and cultural origins	61.6%	White, n.o.s.	57.8%
		Jewish	0.2%
		Other ethnic and cultural origins, n.o.s.	3.7%

Figure 17: Business Owner Ethnic or Cultural Origin

Notes

- Categories used in coding were derived from Statistics Canada's List of Ethnic or Cultural Origins 2021. "n.o.s." refers to "not otherwise specified".
Demographic Category - Level 1 - sums up all responses into the broadest category defined in Statistics Canada's List of Ethnic or Cultural Origins.
Demographic Category - Level 2 - sums up all responses into the most detailed category defined in Statistics Canada's List of Ethnic or Cultural Origins. Any categories with fewer than 2 responses were rolled up into the next broadest category - e.g. Caribbean, n.o.s. includes responses from other Caribbean nations.

Identity of Business Owners

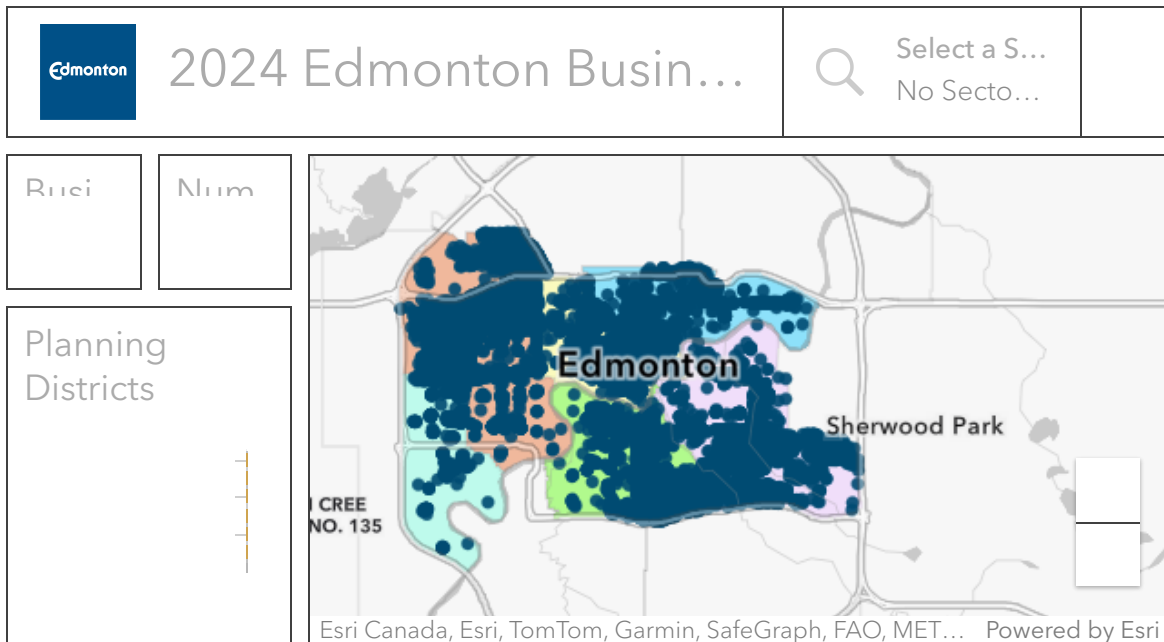
Analysis of business ownership reveals a predominantly male demographic, with men representing 62.5% of business owners. Women comprise 29.6% of owners, while 6.1% preferred not to answer and 0.9% identified as LGBTQ2S+. Groups, including persons with disabilities, individuals new to Canada (less than 3 years in Canada) constitute a small proportion of business owners, totaling less than 1%.



Dashboard

This user-friendly dashboard provides an overview of key metrics in the 2024 dataset. You can use it to visualize business locations, sector-specific counts, and employment statistics. Use the selector tool in the top right corner to delve deeper into sector-specific counts and employment figures

Additionally, data sets related to the Business Census can be accessed on the City's Open Data Portal. Simply navigate to <https://data.edmonton.ca> and search for "Business Census".



Explore the dashboard to understand patterns by sector and planning district.



Methodology

- **Who do we collect data from?** The Business Census defines a business as any entity that operates from a commercial location in Edmonton. This may include for profit, not for profit, non-governmental agencies, government and government agencies. Home-based businesses are outside the scope of the survey.
- **Privacy and Confidentiality:** Adherence to corporate Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) policies was paramount throughout the project. The following measures were implemented to safeguard privacy and confidentiality:
- **Informed Consent:** Before participating in any survey, businesses were provided with a FOIP statement about the purpose of the survey and the use of their response. Informed consent was obtained to ensure voluntary and knowledgeable participation.
- **Anonymity:** Responses were anonymized during data collection and analysis to protect personal identifying information.
- **Data Storage:** All data was collected and stored electronically in secure folders in compliance with corporate data security standards. Access to the data was restricted to authorized personnel only.
- **Reporting Aggregation:** Results were aggregated at a level that preserved the anonymity of individual respondents. This approach was applied in the reporting phase to present insights without compromising confidentiality.

How is Data Collected? Students currently enrolled in one of Edmonton's post-secondary institutions were hired and trained to collect the data.

- **In-Person Surveys:** In-person surveys were conducted to ensure direct and personal interaction with businesses and to confirm physical address and location, resulting in a true count of business establishments. Enumerators used geospatial

information systems and structured questionnaires to maintain consistency across responses and ensure no commercial place was missed within the census area.

Online Forms: To facilitate broader participation and reach geographically, particularly to businesses outside the census area, an online survey was designed and published on the City's website. The survey link was distributed through various communication channels, including postcards, QR codes, and social media. The online survey enabled the City to measure the effectiveness of data collection methods. Information gathered from outside the districts we visited in 2024 will be saved and used to inform the expansion of the business census in the years to come.

Phone Surveys: Phone surveys were used to follow up with businesses that could not participate in the in-person survey. Training and a standardized script were followed to ensure consistency. Businesses were also given the option to reschedule callbacks to ensure greater participation.

Other Methods: Additional methods (including emails, phone calls, and desk research) were tailored to large employers operating at multiple locations.

Data Imputation Process

- Businesses were categorized to the most applicable industry classification as per the 2022 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Canada 2022 Version 1.0. Responses to the demographic questions were coded to Statistics Canada's List of Ethnic or Cultural Origins 2021. Missing values relating to publicly available information about a business (such as the services a business provides, company history, contact information, etc.) were completed through online research.

Missing values relating to total employment were addressed using a multi-step approach. First, we used data from the 2023 Business Census. In cases where data from 2023 was not available, we employed a stratified mean imputation strategy. The dataset was divided into 683 groups based on their 6-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes, representing distinct Canadian industry classifications. The mean total employment was calculated independently for each of these 683 groups. Missing employment values within each group were replaced with the corresponding group's mean. This preserved the relationships and similarities inherent in the data by ensuring that imputed values were consistent with the typical employment levels within their respective Canadian Industries Groups. In a few cases where a 6-digit NAICS group had too few data points to reliably calculate a mean, we broadened the classification to the 5-digit NAICS level and used the mean of that broader industry category for imputation.

Limitations

- Only businesses observed by enumerators were recorded in the study. It is possible some locations were missed due to factors such as a lack of access or signage.

Survey responses are voluntary and were not always provided by senior managers or business owners.

The non-response rate is not uniform across all the sectors with some sectors having a higher non-response rate than others.

This may limit the generalization of some trends observed in the data to all sectors.

Due to non-response from some businesses, it is possible that some trends may not have been fully captured.

Future plans 2025~2026. The Business Census study area will continue to expand until it covers the entirety of the City of Edmonton (estimated in 2026). We will also be revisiting the areas already covered in previous years to provide timely, relevant data and year over year comparisons.

Contact Us: businesscensus@edmonton.ca