



2024 SSMCP Business & Community Survey

***Summary Report
15 November 2024***



This survey seeks to identify the military connected customer bases of local businesses and the perceived effects of JBLM on the local economy.

Prepared by:

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Executive Summary:

How do South Sound businesses view the impact of Joint Base Lewis McChord (JBLM) on their business? Survey respondents' rate JBLM favorably giving it 4.2 out of 5 stars. The 2024 SSMCP Business and Community Survey seeks to identify the military connected customer bases of local businesses and the perceived effects of JBLM on the local economy. This is the first such survey since 2019. Survey results for the years 2019 and 2024 are quite similar. Perceptions of business operators or owners regarding JBLM's local economic impact were the primary focus of this report. Overall, perceptions of JBLM's economic impact fell short of the actual data when compared to previous economic impact studies. *(2022 SSMCP JBLM Regional Economic Impact Analysis)* The new survey data suggests the presence of JBLM provides a high degree of economic stability for Pierce and Thurston residents even during the shutdowns caused by the COVID-19 Global Pandemic.

Military/Defense Environment:

The JBLM military presence in Pierce and Thurston County is critical for national defense and an overwhelmingly positive force for the South Sound economy. Defense spending directly supports thousands of jobs, not only in the military, but also in the industries that provide goods and services to the DoD and the service member community. As this spending ripples through the economy, it stimulates business-to-business transactions in the supply chain and household spending of labor income, respectively referred to as indirect and induced effects. Statewide over 1,500 businesses contribute to the defense supply chain. (*Washington Military / Defense Economic Impact Analysis, 2024*)

Historical Survey Overview:

SSMCP recently completed a 2024 Business & Community survey. This is the first such survey since 2019. A survey conducted in 2015 employed a professional services contract with Elway Research at a cost of \$69,275. This survey was conducted using phone-based and online research. The business survey conducted in 2019 was done in collaboration with the University of Tacoma, Center for Business Analytics. SSMCP awarded a \$10,000 gift to the university for their cooperation. SSMCP staff conducted the 2024 survey with cost limited to only staff overhead. The 2024 used a very similar questionnaire as did the 2019 survey so that trends could be identified between this five-year gap in the final report. Future, SSMCP business surveys will occur once every five years.

Methodology:

How do South Sound businesses view the impact of JBLM on their business? Finding that out was the goal of the last survey conducted five years ago in 2019. How have perceptions changed in the last five years? This 2024 survey seeks to identify the military connected customer bases of local businesses and the perceived effects of JBLM on the local economy. Results will be tailored to the individual areas of unincorporated Pierce County, unincorporated Thurston County, and some municipalities of SSMCP that can be identified by zip code.

The survey was conducted between 27 August and 15 October 2024 using Survey Monkey as the analytic platform. Initial contact with potential respondents through use of Listserv data from chamber of commerce newsletters of Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber, Thurston County Chamber, Thurston Economic Development Council, and Lakewood Chamber. The links and QR code to the survey did not stimulate responses from newsletter readers. To increase response volume, SSMCP staff contacted local jurisdictions that were willing to contact respondents through use of their city or county Listserve data. The jurisdictions then distributed the questionnaire as a separate mailing rather than SSMCP staff publishing the links in a newsletter. This method of contact did result in the desired response volume.

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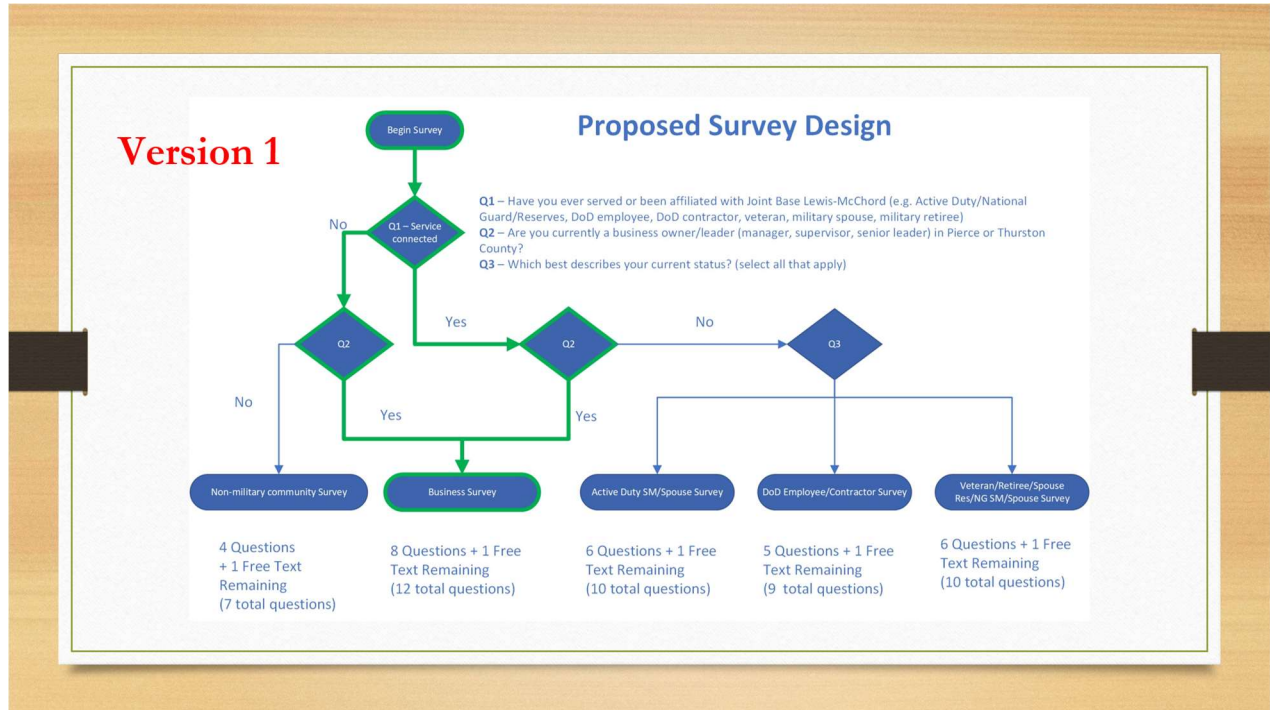
	<u>2019</u>	<u>2024</u>
▪ Responses:	560	594
▪ Business operator/owner =	56%	30%

<u>Respondents Status: (2024)</u>	
AD / spouse	2.5%
DOD employee	3.0%
Vet, Retiree, NG, Res	49.5%
Non-military	45%

JBLM helps attract talent to the region– 75%, (2019) 70% (2024) of respondents did not live in Pierce or Thurston County prior to their military affiliation.

When they come, they tend to stay – 63% (2019), 76% (2024) self-report as homeowners.

The survey design is shown in the graphic below.



Survey respondents were categorized based on how they self-identified by answering the first three questions distributing them into one of the five categories. This was done so no potential respondents were left out. All perceptions of JBLM’s local economic impact were valued with a primary focus on business operators or owners as highlighted in green in the graphic above.

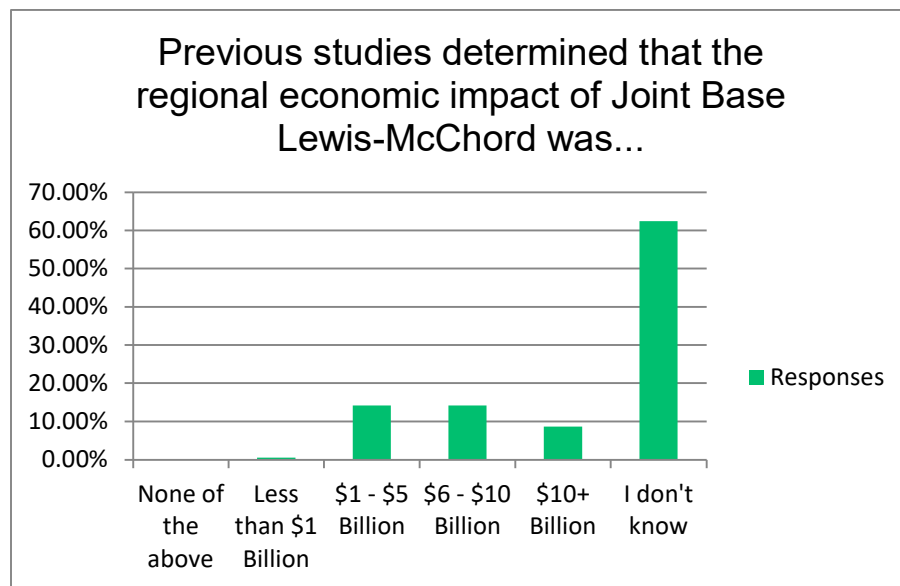
Key Results: (all survey results are available in Annex B)

Years affiliated with JBLM:	(2019)	(2024)
0-1 year	4.0%	9.9%
2-5 years	17%	12%
6-10 years	9.0%	12.6%
> 10 years	71.0%	66%

Most respondents have had an affiliation with JBLM for over ten years, which is consistent with the 2019 survey results. The 5% drop in the >10-year category is offset by 5.9% growth in the <1 year category which may suggest some degree of population growth in the region over the last five years.

The next question was designed to gain a better understanding of community knowledge regarding the impact of JBLM on the South Sound economy. Previous economic impact analyses conducted by SSMCP found JBLM’s economic impact across the South Sound approached \$15.0B. JBLM is the largest employer in Pierce County and, along with the Port of Tacoma, serves as the economic engine for Pierce County.

Perceived economic impact of JBLM on the region:	<u>2019</u>	<u>2024</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> < \$1.0 Billion:	10.0%	0.5%
<input type="checkbox"/> \$1 - \$5 Billion:	45.0%	13.4%
<input type="checkbox"/> \$6 - \$10 Billion:	30.0%	13.9%
<input type="checkbox"/> \$10+ Billion:	15.0%	8.56%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know:	n/a	63.4%



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This spike in the 2024 “Don’t Know” category at 63.4% of respondents indicates a need for better strategic communication on the economic impact of JBLM. The 2019 version of the survey did not have a “Don’t Know” selection forcing replies into the other four choices. Respondent perceptions of JBLM’s economic impact were quite low when compared to the known economic impact. (*Washington Military / Defense Economic Impact Analysis, 2024*) To ensure consistent messaging about JBLM’s impact, talking points should be prepared for SSMCP stakeholders. This would be a good task in 2025 for the Business & Economic Development Work Group.

Rate your opinion of JBLM's impact on the local economy – 4.2 stars



Generating local business:	(2019)	(2024)
Car	66%	71.6%
House	63%	76.5%
RV	10%	12.5%
Boat	5%	14%
Investment property	5%	13%

This graphic indicates respondents continue to spend most of their purchasing power in the South Sound. Given the Pandemic, inflation, rising interest rates, and elevated home prices, it is somewhat surprising to see home ownership increase by 13.5%

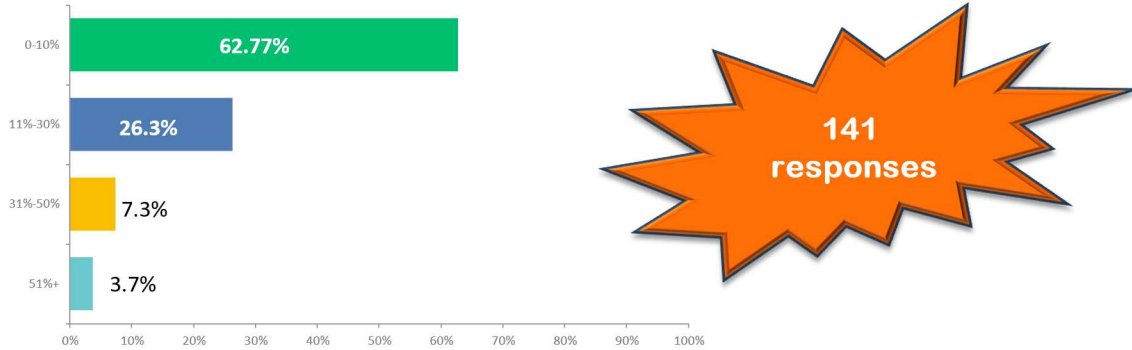
between 2019 and 2024. Other big-ticket items such as RVs, boats and investment properties demonstrate a healthy economy in the region. These numbers suggest the presence of JBLM provides a high degree of economic stability for Pierce and Thurston residents even during the business and school shutdowns during the Global Pandemic.

The chart below shows business owner perceptions concerning the direct, indirect and induced impacts realized because of the presence of JBLM on local businesses. Nearly two-thirds of respondents feel only 0-10% of their business can be attributed to JBLM. This is lower than anticipated. Previous SSMCP economic impact studies found 30,000 economic spin-off jobs in the South Sound are due to the presence of JBLM. (*2022 SSMCP JBLM Regional Economic Impact Analysis*)



BUSINESS OPERATOR RESPONSE

What percentage of your business revenue can be attributed to the presence of JBLM?



Conclusion / Way Ahead

A frequency of once every five years for a survey of this type seems appropriate. Survey results for the years 2019 and 2024 are quite similar. One surprising outcome was the lack of impact from the COVID-19 Global Pandemic. At a time when many people were living off federal government stimulus checks, all the categories listed under recent purchases had higher percentages than in pre-pandemic 2019: house, car, RV, boat, and investment property. This seems counterintuitive and may indicate that JBLM and more broadly the national security space provides economic stability for the region.

More effort is needed to mature messaging on the impact of JBLM. The 2025-2026 SSMCP Work Plan task, “Leverage economic impact study to conduct information, education, and awareness campaign (Bus & Econ Dev WG)”, is most appropriate.

Annex A-1

Business Survey Questions

1. Have you ever served at or been affiliated with Joint Base Lewis-McChord (e.g. Active Duty/National Guard/Reserves, DoD employee, DoD contractor, veteran, military spouse, military retiree)?
2. Are you currently a business owner/leader (manager, supervisor, senior leader) in Pierce or Thurston County?
3. This organization/business is
4. Previous studies determined that the regional economic impact of Joint Base Lewis-McChord was (drop down selection)
5. Which of the following industries/sectors best describes this organization/business?
6. How many years has this business operated in Pierce or Thurston County?
7. How many people are employed at this location?
8. What percentage of the employees are veterans of the U.S. armed services?
9. My business currently (select all that apply)
10. Primary Business zip code
11. What percentage of your business revenue can be attributed to the presence of JBLM?
12. Do you have any additional comments related to JBLM?

Annex A - 2

Active Duty / Spouse Questions

1. Have you ever served at or been affiliated with Joint Base Lewis-McChord (e.g. Active Duty/National Guard/Reserves, DoD employee, DoD contractor, veteran, military spouse, military retiree)?
2. Are you currently a business owner/leader (manager, supervisor, senior leader) in Pierce or Thurston County?
3. Which best describes your current status? (select all that apply)
4. Previous studies determined that the regional economic impact of Joint Base Lewis-McChord was (drop down selection)
5. How many years have you been or were affiliated with JBLM?
6. Which best describes your current housing status?
7. Prior to your military/JBLM affiliation did you ever live in Pierce or Thurston County?
8. Have you made a large purchase (house, car, boat, etc) during your affiliation with JBLM? (Select all that apply)
9. How often do you frequent businesses other than the Post Exchange/Base Exchange/Commissary?
10. Do you have any additional comments related to JBLM?

Annex A - 3

DoD Employee/Contractor Survey

1. Have you ever served at or been affiliated with Joint Base Lewis-McChord (e.g. Active Duty/National Guard/Reserves, DoD employee, DoD contractor, veteran, military spouse, military retiree)?
2. Are you currently a business owner/leader (manager, supervisor, senior leader) in Pierce or Thurston County?
3. Which best describes your current status? (select all that apply)
4. Previous studies determined that the regional economic impact of Joint Base Lewis-McChord was (drop down selection)
5. How many years have you been or were affiliated with JBLM
6. Prior to your military/JBLM affiliation did you ever live in Pierce or Thurston County?
7. Have you made a large purchase (house, car, boat, etc) during your affiliation with JBLM? (Select all that apply)
8. How often do you frequent the Post Exchange/Base Exchange/Commissary?
9. Do you have any additional comments related to JBLM?

Annex A - 4

Veteran/Retiree/NG/Reserve SM/FM Survey

1. Have you ever served at or been affiliated with Joint Base Lewis-McChord (e.g. Active Duty/National Guard/Reserves, DoD employee, DoD contractor, veteran, military spouse, military retiree)?
2. Are you currently a business owner/leader (manager, supervisor, senior leader) in Pierce or Thurston County?
3. Which best describes your current status? (select all that apply)
4. Previous studies determined that the regional economic impact of Joint Base Lewis-McChord was (drop down selection)
5. How many years have you been or were affiliated with JBLM
6. Prior to your military/JBLM affiliation did you ever live in Pierce or Thurston County?
7. Have you made a large purchase (house, car, boat, etc.) during your affiliation with JBLM? (Select all that apply)
8. How often do you frequent businesses other than the Post Exchange/Base Exchange/Commissary?
9. Are you currently employed or seeking employment?
10. Do you have any additional comments related to JBLM?

Annex A - 5

Community Member Survey

1. Have you ever served at or been affiliated with Joint Base Lewis-McChord (e.g. Active Duty/National Guard/Reserves, DoD employee, DoD contractor, veteran, military spouse, military retiree)?
2. Are you currently a business owner/leader (manager, supervisor, senior leader) in Pierce or Thurston County?
3. Previous studies determined that the regional economic impact of Joint Base Lewis-McChord was (drop down selection)
4. Rate your opinion of JBLM's impact on quality of life in Pierce and Thurston Counties
5. Rate your opinion of JBLM's impact on the overall community in Pierce and Thurston counties
6. Rate your opinion of JBLM's impact on the local economy
7. Do you have any additional comments related to JBLM?

Annex B

Survey Monkey Summary Slides



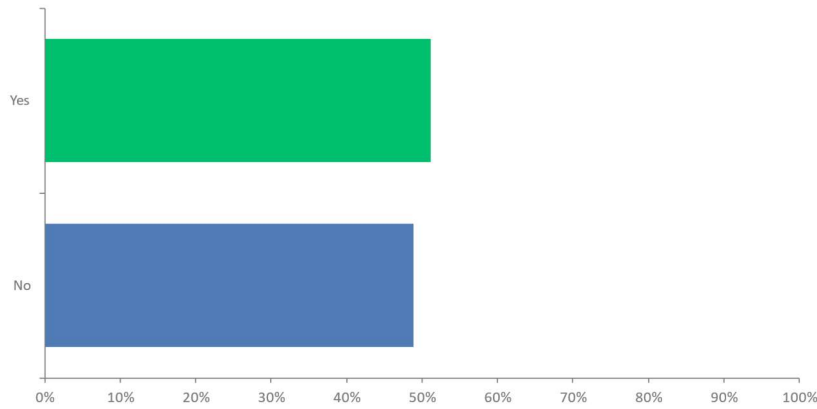
<u># of Respondents</u>	<u>category</u>
#594	all respondents
#177	Community Members non-military affiliated
#417	all respondents minus non-military community members
#197	Veterans, Retirees, NG, Res
#141	Business respondents only
#10	Active Duty / spouse*
#11	DoD civilian*

Note: * category not the focus of this study and too small of a sample size

All Respondents

McChord (e.g. Active Duty/National Guard/Reserves, DoD employee, DoD contractor, veteran, military spouse, military retiree)?

Answered: 594 Skipped: 0



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All Respondents

McChord (e.g. Active Duty/National Guard/Reserves, DoD employee, DoD contractor, veteran, military spouse, military retiree)?

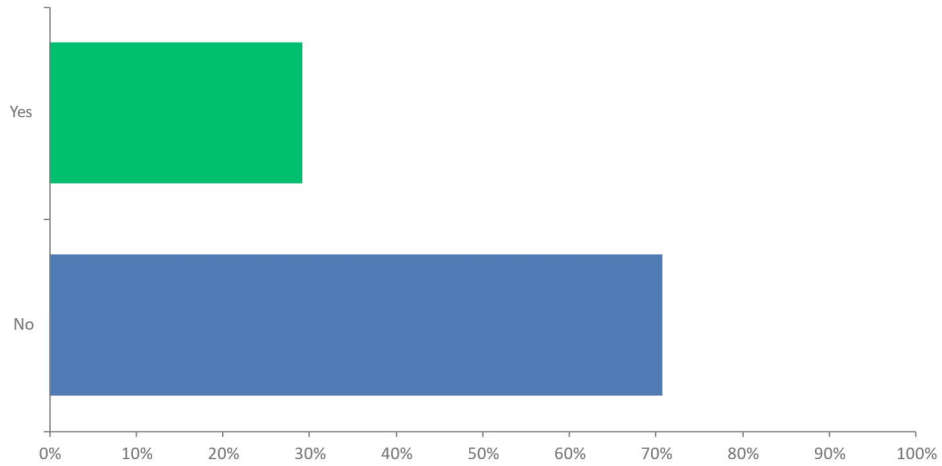
Answered: 594 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	51.18%	304
No	48.82%	290
TOTAL		594

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Q2: Are you currently a business owner/operator in Pierce or Thurston County?

Answered: 592 Skipped: 2

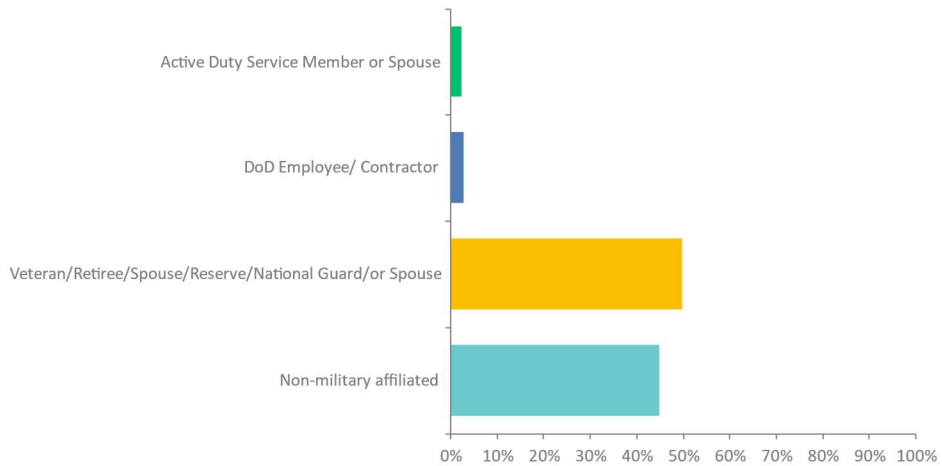


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Respondents minus Business Owners

Q3: Which best describes your current status?

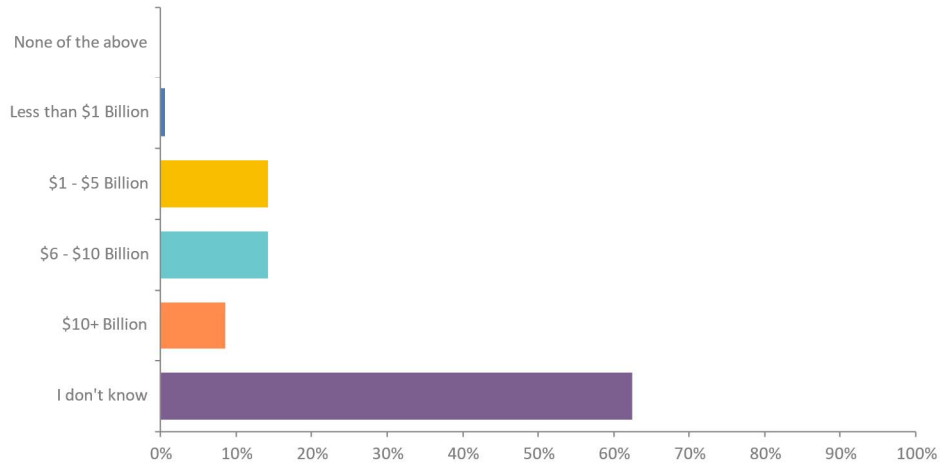
Answered: 417 Skipped: 177



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Q4: Previous studies determined that the regional economic impact of Joint Base Lewis-McChord was...

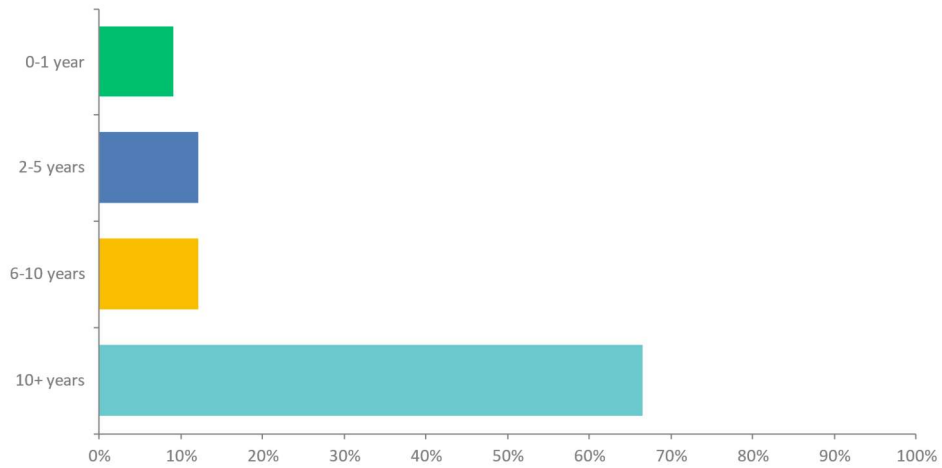
Answered: 197 Skipped: 397



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Q5: How many years have you been or were affiliated with JBLM?

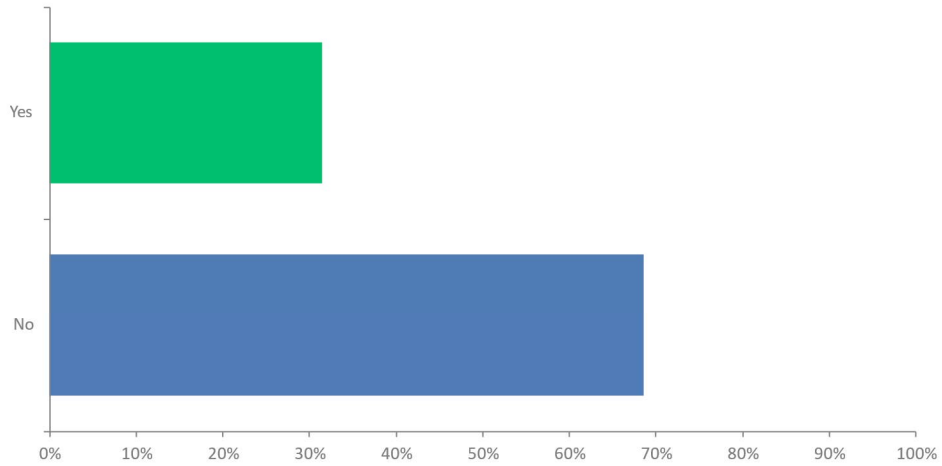
Answered: 197 Skipped: 397



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Q6: Prior to your military/JBLM affiliation did you ever live in Pierce or Thurston County?

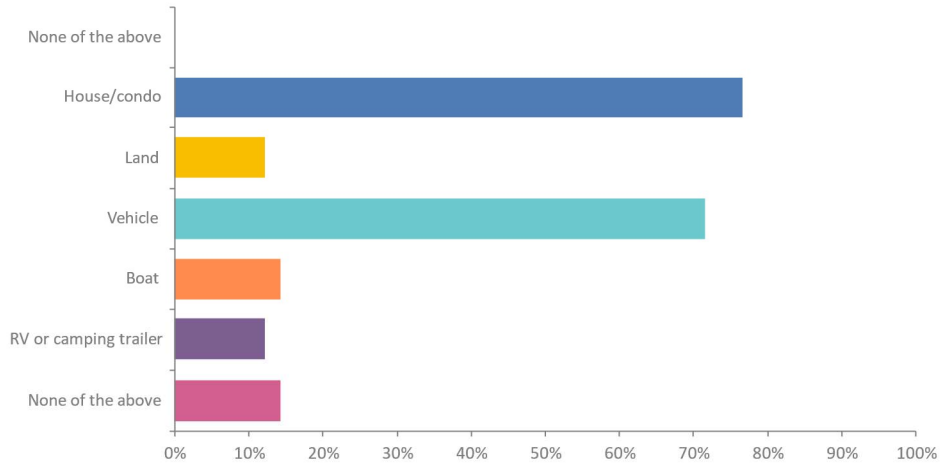
Answered: 197 Skipped: 397



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Q7: Have you made a large purchase (house, car, boat, etc) during your affiliation with JBLM? (Select all that apply)

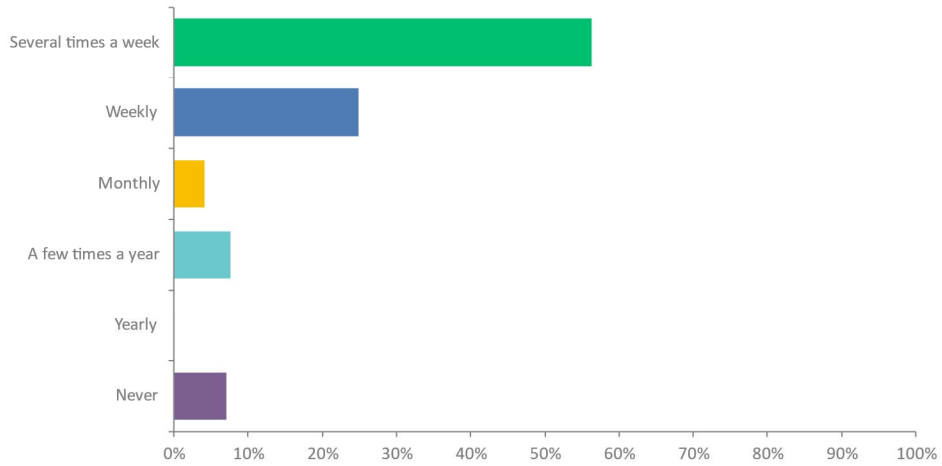
Answered: 197 Skipped: 397



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Q8: How often do you frequent businesses other than the Post Exchange/Base Exchange/Commissary?

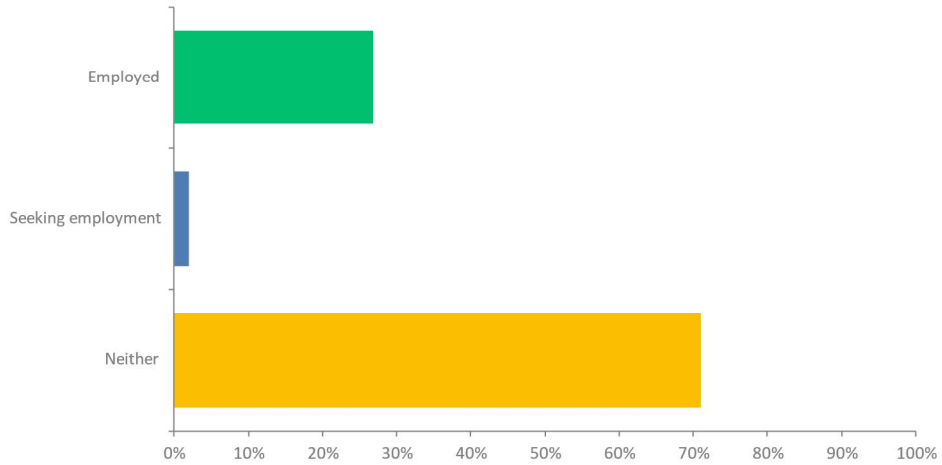
Answered: 197 Skipped: 397



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Q9: Are you currently employed or seeking employment?

Answered: 197 Skipped: 397



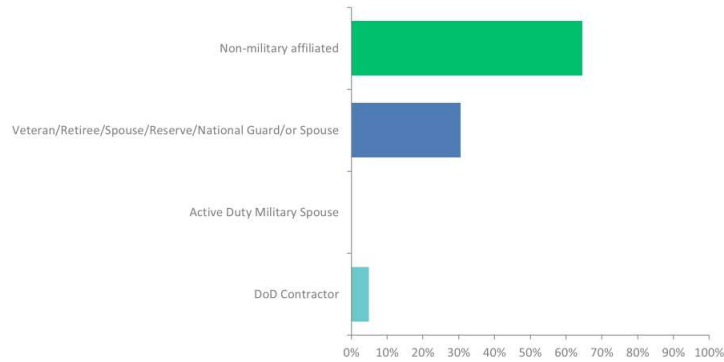
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Business Operator Only

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Q21: Which best describes your current status?

Answered: 141 Skipped: 453

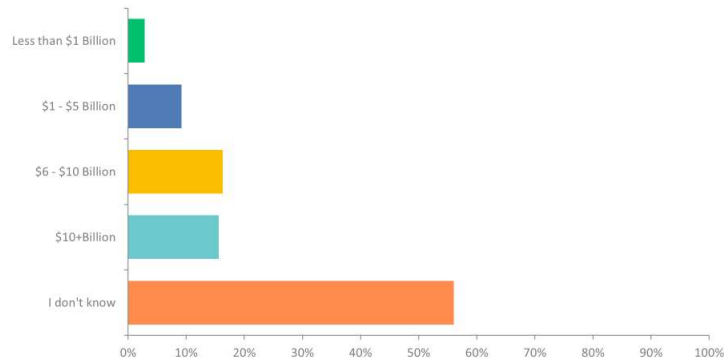


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Business Operators Only

Q23: Previous studies determined that the regional economic impact of Joint Base Lewis-McChord was (drop down selection)

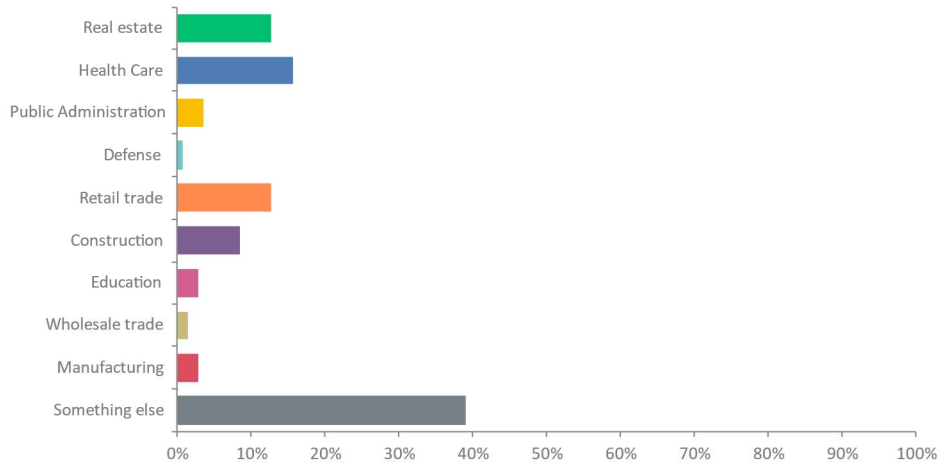
Answered: 141 Skipped: 453



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Q24: Which of the following industries/sectors best describes this organization/business?

Answered: 141 Skipped: 453

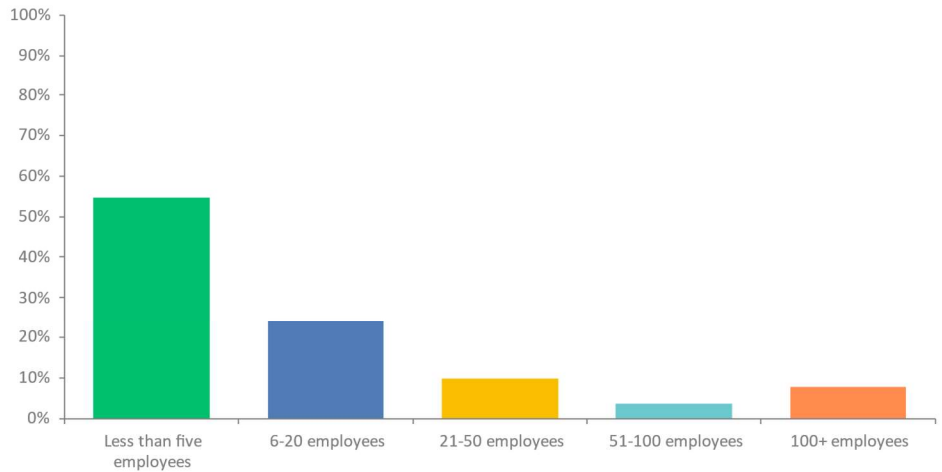


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Business Operators Only

Q26: How many people are employed at this location?

Answered: 141 Skipped: 453

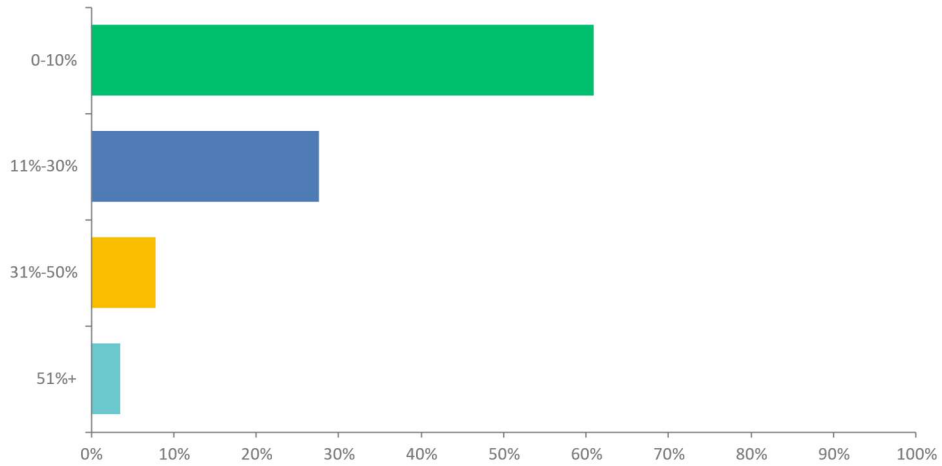


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Business Operators Only

Q29: What percentage of your business revenue can be attributed to the presence of JBLM?

Answered: 141 Skipped: 453

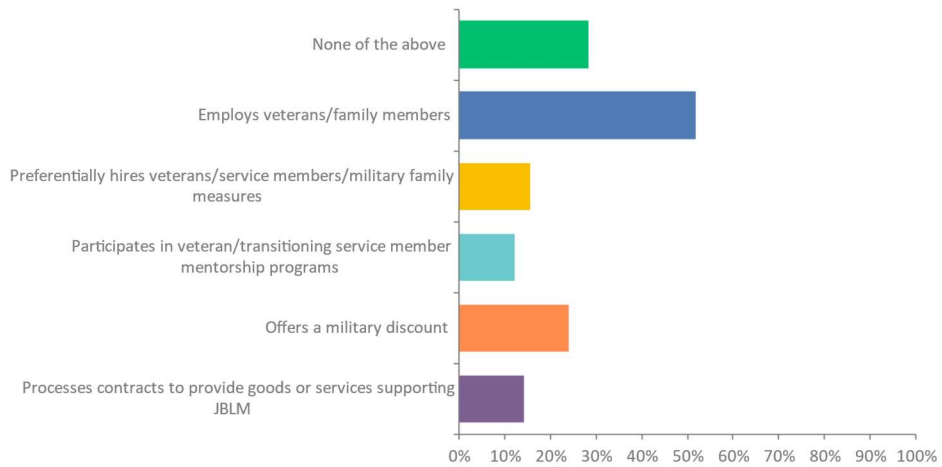


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Business Operators Only

Q30: My business currently (select all that apply)

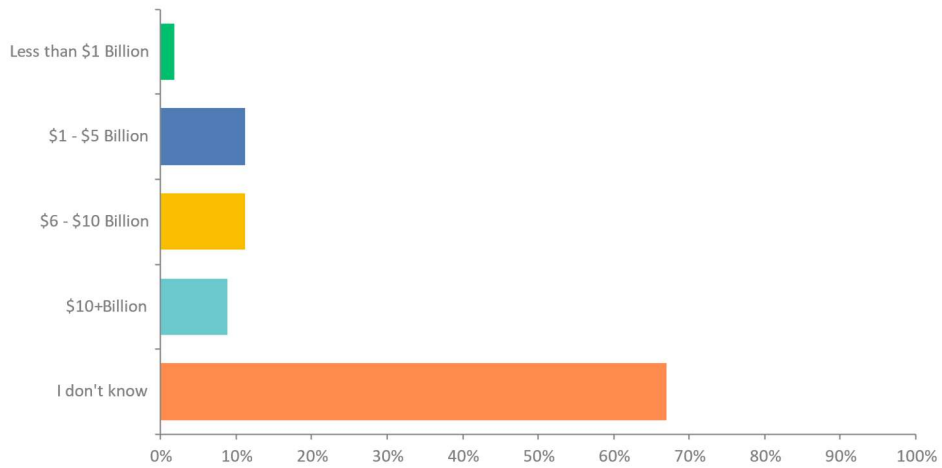
Answered: 141 Skipped: 453



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Q31: Previous studies determined that the regional economic impact of Joint Base Lewis-McChord was (drop down selection)

Answered: 170 Skipped: 424



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Q34: Rate your opinion of JBLM's impact on the local economy

Answered: 170 Skipped: 424

	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
★	2.35%	5.88%	12.94%	30.59%	48.24%	170	4.16
	4	10	22	52	82		

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Annex C

Business Operator Zip Codes

98032	1
98047	1
98057	1
98327	3
98335	2
98338	1
98371	4
98372	2
98388	2
98390	2
98402	2
98403	1
98404	1
98405	5
98409	4
98418	1
98421	1
98424	1
98433	1
98444	2
98445	1
98446	1
98466	21
98498	10
98499	12
98501	16
98502	10
98503	21
98506	5
98512	5
98513	6
98516	7
98531	1
98532	1
98576	1
98580	1
98589	1
98597	1
	159