



Downtown
Seattle
Association

FULL RESULTS

Seattle Business Climate Survey 2026

What 247 Seattle businesses told us about the business climate, the challenges they face, their plans to grow or leave, and the policies they support.

247 businesses
responded

Fielded online, late
summer 2026

Conducted by the Seattle Metro Chamber in
partnership with the Downtown Seattle Association

The headline numbers

56% say Seattle's business climate has worsened over the past year

47% have seriously considered moving operations, jobs or investment out of Seattle

61% are pessimistic about the next 12 months

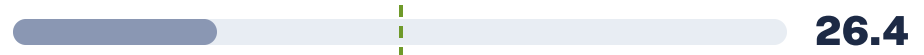
72% disagree that Seattle's tax, fee and compliance burden is competitive

Four scores, out of 100

Respondents placed each on a 0 to 100 slider. These are the averages, on one scale.

City responsiveness to business needs

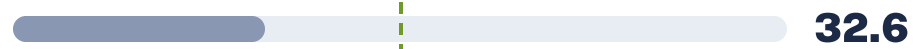
Q10 · 192 answered



26.4

Likely to recommend Seattle for business

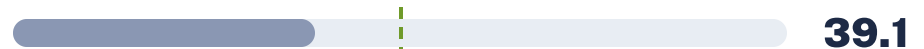
Q20 · 179 answered



32.6

Seattle business climate rating

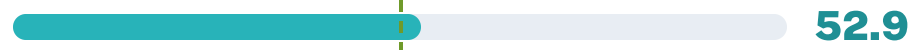
Q4 · 195 answered



39.1

Confidence in own business, next 12 months

Q17 · 187 answered



52.9

0 25 50 · midpoint 75 100

What stands out

- **Public safety and taxes** tie as the top challenge (64% each) and as the top reasons businesses considered leaving (59% each).
- **Improved public safety** (70%) and a **stronger downtown recovery** (56%) top the list of what would keep businesses here.
- Only **40%** say the area around their business feels safe always or most of the time; the largest group (42%) says it depends.
- Every policy proposal tested has **majority support**, led by reviewing taxes and fees (91%) and hiring more SPD officers (89%).

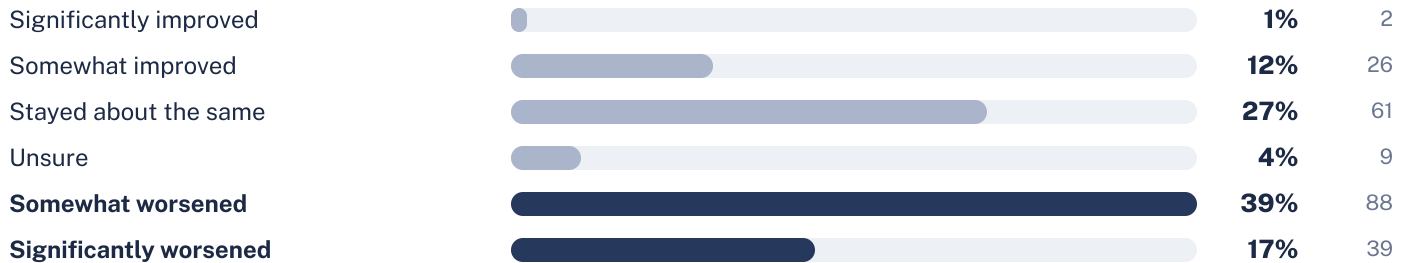
SECTION 1

Direction and outlook

Q5

Compared with this time one year ago, would you say Seattle's business climate has improved, worsened, or stayed about the same (select one)?

225 answered · 22 skipped

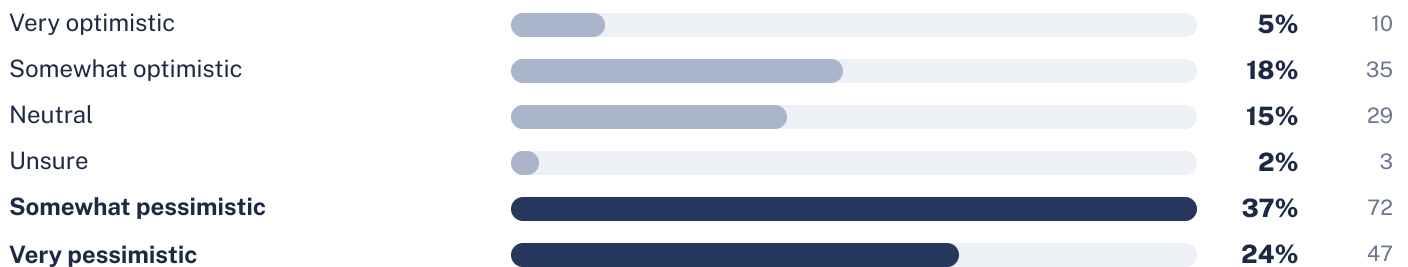


56% worsened (significantly or somewhat), 12% improved.

Q11

How optimistic are you about Seattle as a place to operate, grow, or invest over the next 12 months (select one)?

196 answered · 51 skipped

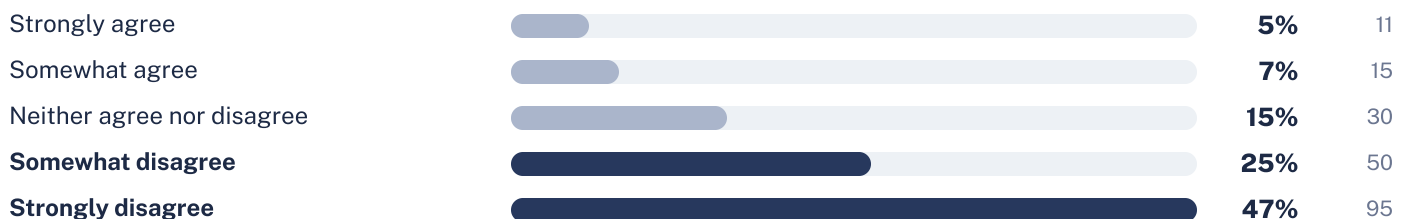


61% pessimistic, 23% optimistic.

Q9

Please describe your level of agreement with this statement: The overall burden of taxes, fees, and compliance costs in Seattle is competitive with comparable locations (select one).

201 answered · 46 skipped



72% disagree, 13% agree.

SECTION 2

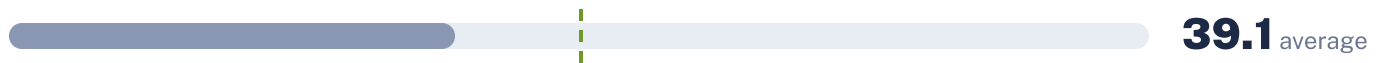
The four scores

Slider questions, 0 to 100. Averages to one decimal place.

Q4

How would you rate the current Seattle business climate?

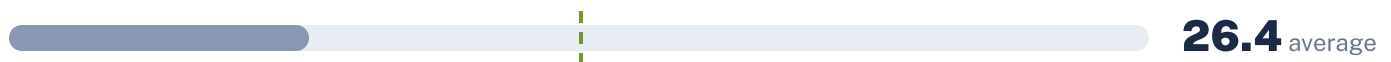
195 answered · 52 skipped



Q10

How would you rate the city of Seattle's responsiveness to the needs of businesses?

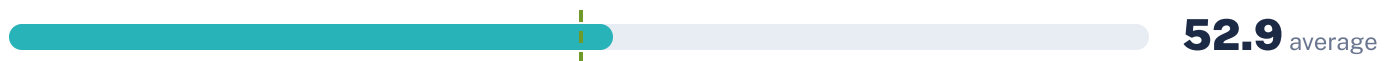
192 answered · 55 skipped



Q17

How confident are you in your business or organization's performance over the next 12 months?

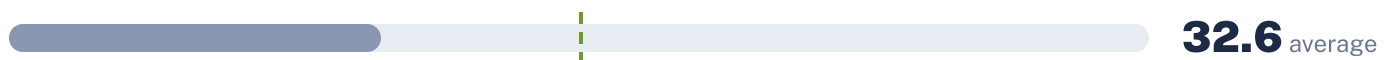
187 answered · 60 skipped



Q20

How likely are you to recommend Seattle as a place to start, operate, or grow a business?

179 answered · 68 skipped



Q19 is not included: its wording repeats Q17, in the survey itself as well.

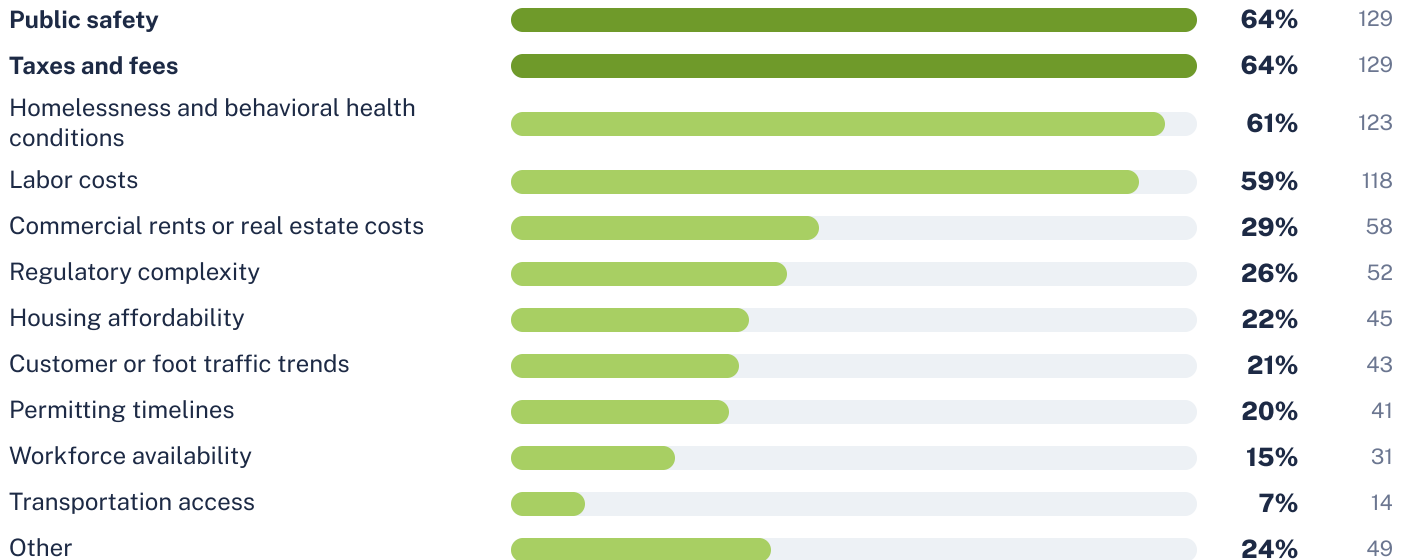
SECTION 3

Challenges

Q6

Which of the following issues are the biggest challenges for your business in Seattle today (select up to five)?

201 answered · 46 skipped

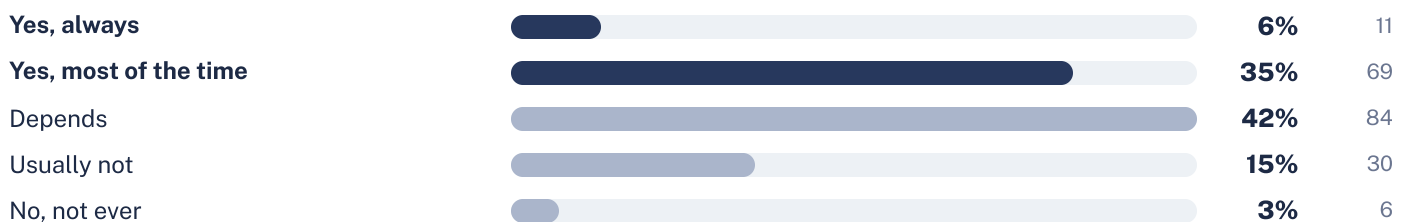


Respondents could choose up to five, so percentages add up to more than 100.

Q8

Does the area around your business feel safe (select one)?

200 answered · 47 skipped



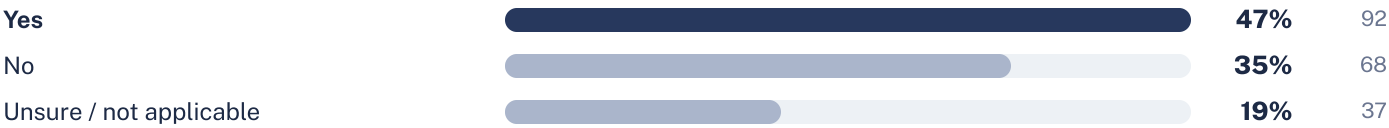
40% feel safe always or most of the time.

Staying or going

Q13

Have you seriously considered moving operations, jobs, or investment out of Seattle in the past 12 months (select one)?

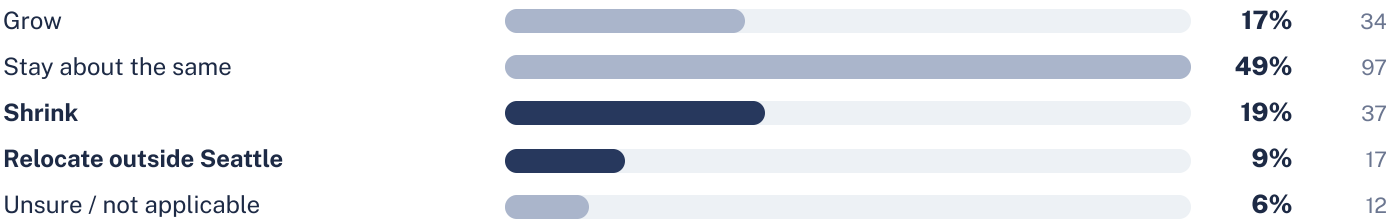
197 answered · 50 skipped



Q12

Over the next 12 months, do you expect your Seattle operations to grow, stay about the same, shrink, or relocate (select one)?

197 answered · 50 skipped



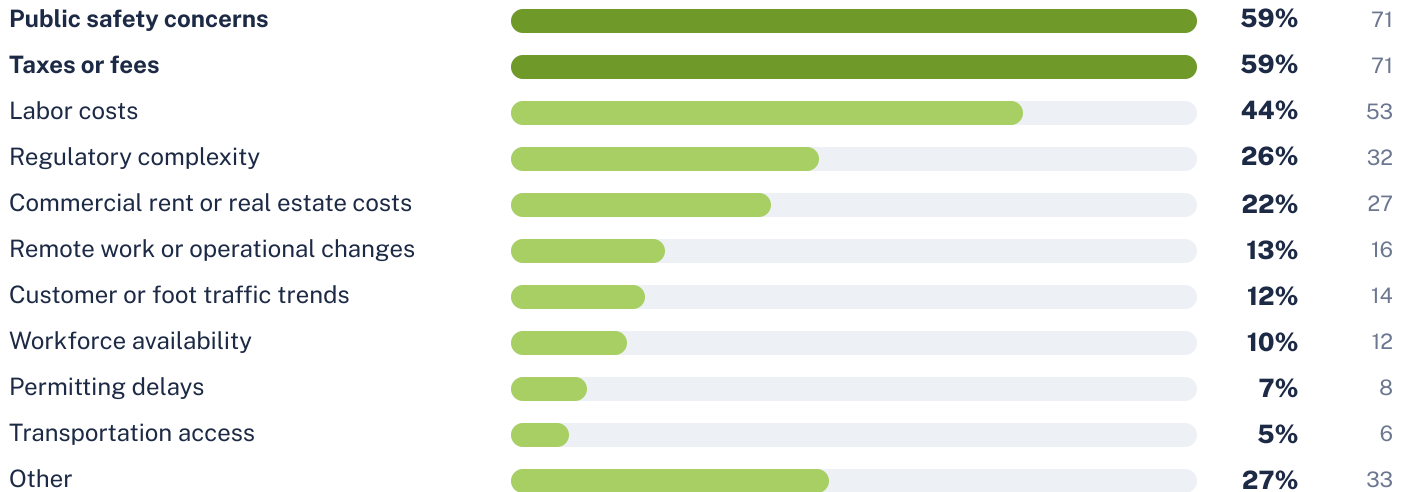
27% expect to shrink or relocate; 17% expect to grow.

Why they'd leave, and what would keep them

Q14

If yes, what were the primary reasons you considered moving operations, jobs, or investment out of Seattle (select up to three)?

121 answered · 126 skipped



Asked of those who had considered moving out. Up to three choices.

Q15

What factors would make you more likely to invest, expand, or remain in Seattle over the long term (select up to three)?

190 answered · 57 skipped



Up to three choices, so percentages add up to more than 100.

SECTION 5

What matters most

Q16

In your opinion, what are the most important factors in Seattle affecting your business today (rate each item)?

191 answered · 56 skipped

Very important Somewhat important Neutral Somewhat unimportant Not important Unsure

Improving public safety (187)



Stronger downtown recovery (189)



Increasing support for small businesses (186)



Improving predictability of taxes and fees (189)



Reducing regulatory complexity (183)



Faster permitting (182)



Incentives for job retention or expansion (184)



Increasing housing supply (185)



Strengthening workforce development (182)



Better transportation access (182)



Percentages are of those who rated each item; the count is in brackets.

Q16 in detail

	VERY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT UNIMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT	UNSURE	TOTAL
Improving public safety	71.1% 133	19.8% 37	5.3% 10	2.7% 5	0.5% 1	0.5% 1	187
Stronger downtown recovery	61.9% 117	24.3% 46	7.4% 14	1.1% 2	2.6% 5	2.6% 5	189
Increasing support for small businesses	58.1% 108	24.7% 46	10.8% 20	2.7% 5	1.6% 3	2.2% 4	186
Improving predictability of taxes and fees	57.7% 109	25.4% 48	10.1% 19	1.6% 3	3.2% 6	2.1% 4	189
Reducing regulatory complexity	49.7% 91	25.7% 47	16.9% 31	1.6% 3	3.8% 7	2.2% 4	183
Faster permitting	30.2% 55	31.3% 57	18.7% 34	4.4% 8	14.3% 26	1.1% 2	182
Incentives for job retention or expansion	26.6% 49	30.4% 56	21.7% 40	8.2% 15	8.2% 15	4.9% 9	184
Increasing housing supply	22.7% 42	33.0% 61	24.9% 46	8.1% 15	8.1% 15	3.2% 6	185
Strengthening workforce development	17.0% 31	31.3% 57	30.2% 55	7.7% 14	7.7% 14	6.0% 11	182
Better transportation access	15.9% 29	34.6% 63	28.6% 52	7.7% 14	11.0% 20	2.2% 4	182

SECTION 6

Policy proposals

Q18

Would you support or oppose the following policy proposals?

184 answered · 63 skipped

Strongly support
Somewhat support
Neutral
Somewhat oppose
Strongly oppose
Unsure

City policies that review taxes and fees for their impact on the business climate and job market (175)



City policies that increase the hiring of additional SPD officers and invest in improving the stability of SPD leadership (175)



City policies that target public safety strategies in commercial districts and downtown neighborhoods, including investment in CCTV and the Real Time Crime Center (177)



City policies that shorten permitting timelines for commercial tenant improvements and housing production (174)



City policies that expand public investments or partnerships that help small businesses navigate permitting, compliance, and access to resources (175)



City policies that encourage investment or partnership with local organizations to enhance business recruitment, retention, and expansion for mid-sized small businesses with 21 to 100 employees (178)



Every proposal has majority support (strongly plus somewhat), and opposition never tops 7%.

Q18 in detail

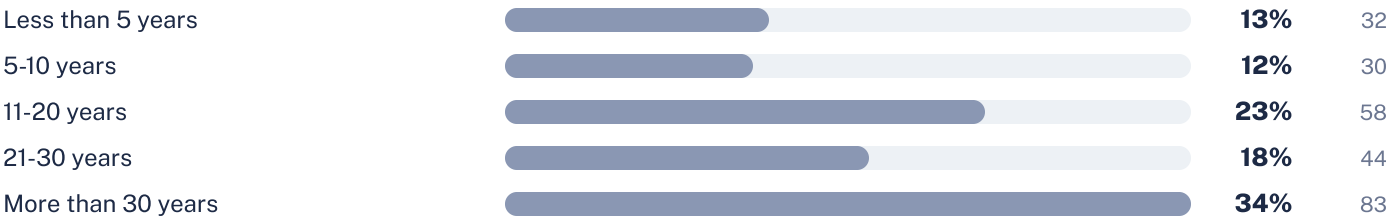
	STRONGLY SUPPORT	SOMEWHAT SUPPORT	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT OPPOSE	STRONGLY OPPOSE	UNSURE	TOTAL
City policies that review taxes and fees for their impact on the business climate and job market	74.3% 130	17.1% 30	6.3% 11	1.7% 3	0.6% 1	0.0% 0	175
City policies that increase the hiring of additional SPD officers and invest in improving the stability of SPD leadership	72.6% 127	16.6% 29	3.4% 6	4.6% 8	2.3% 4	0.6% 1	175
City policies that target public safety strategies in commercial districts and downtown neighborhoods, including investment in CCTV and the Real Time Crime Center	67.8% 120	16.4% 29	7.3% 13	3.4% 6	4.0% 7	1.1% 2	177
City policies that shorten permitting timelines for commercial tenant improvements and housing production	60.9% 106	18.4% 32	13.8% 24	2.9% 5	1.7% 3	2.3% 4	174
City policies that expand public investments or partnerships that help small businesses navigate permitting, compliance, and access to resources	49.1% 86	25.7% 45	18.3% 32	2.9% 5	2.9% 5	1.1% 2	175
City policies that encourage investment or partnership with local organizations to enhance business recruitment, retention, and expansion for mid-sized small businesses with 21 to 100 employees	41.6% 74	29.8% 53	19.7% 35	3.4% 6	2.8% 5	2.8% 5	178

Who responded

Q2

How many years have you been in business (select one)?

247 answered · 0 skipped

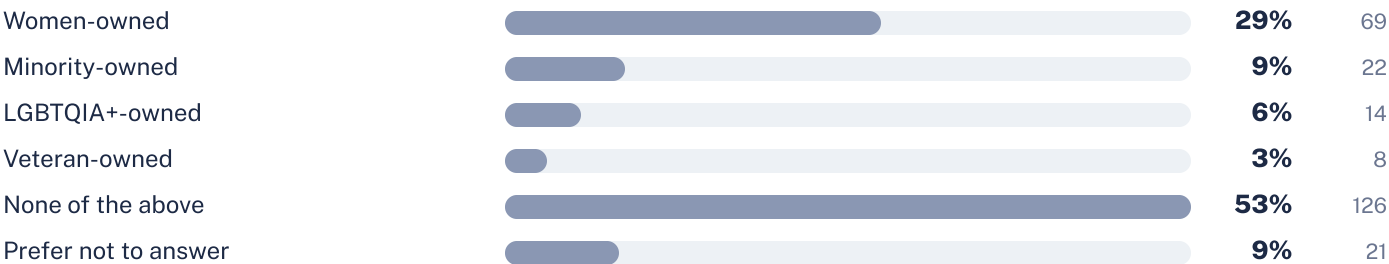


The survey's top option read "More than 31 years"; shown here as more than 30.

Q3

Is your business majority-owned by any of the following groups (select all that apply)?

236 answered · 11 skipped



Select all that apply.

Notes and method

The 2026 Business Climate Survey was conducted online by the Seattle Metro Chamber in partnership with the Downtown Seattle Association in late summer 2026, and drew **247 responses**.

Who took part. Respondents chose to take part, so the results reflect the businesses that responded rather than a random sample of all Seattle businesses.

Reading the numbers. Not every respondent answered every question; each question shows how many answered and skipped. Percentages are of those who answered that question and are rounded, so some totals differ from 100 by a point. Where respondents could choose more than one answer (Q3, Q6, Q14, Q15), percentages add up to more than 100.

Slider questions (Q4, Q10, Q17, Q20) report the average position on a 0 to 100 slider.

Not included. Q1 asked for the business name, which is kept confidential. Q7 and the closing questions were open-ended written answers. Q19 is omitted because its wording repeats Q17, in the survey itself as well.

Wording. Question wording is as asked, with minor typing errors in the original corrected.

Data and interactive results. The full results, a 3-minute video and the data in JSON are available on the survey website.



Please cite as: Seattle Metro Chamber, 2026 Business Climate Survey, conducted in partnership with the Downtown Seattle Association.