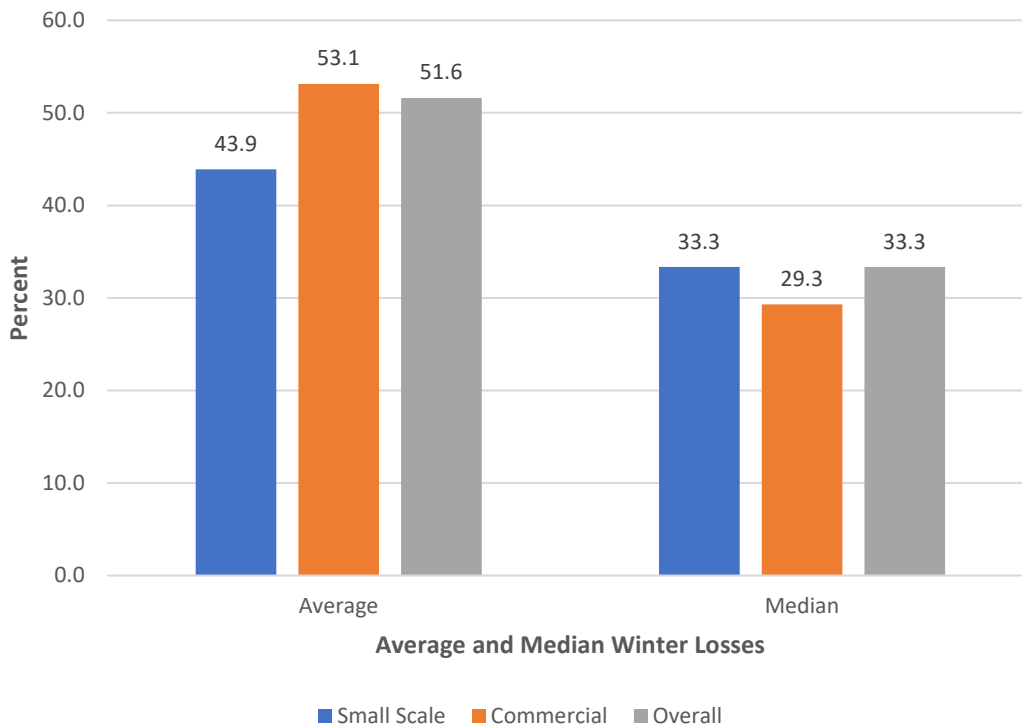


# Ontario Beekeepers' Association Summary of 2024 Winter-loss Survey Results

July 2024

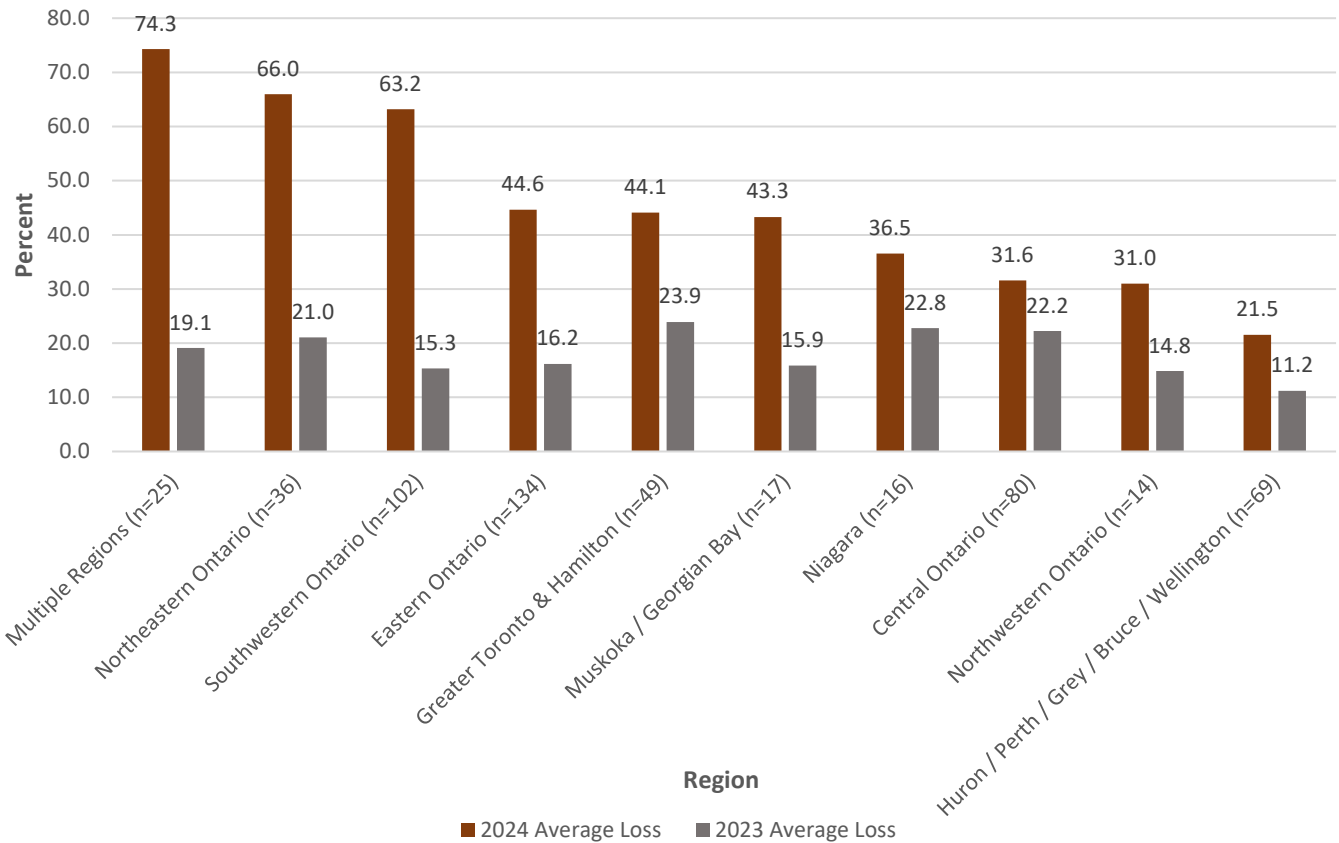
In the spring of 2024, a total of 542 Ontario beekeepers responded to the Ontario Beekeepers' Association's (OBA's) winter-loss survey representing 28,174 hives that went into the winter in the fall of 2023. The overall average winter loss reported was 51.6% and the median winter-loss was 33% (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Average and median winter-losses reported by small scale (<50 hives), commercial (>50 hives) and all Ontario beekeepers.

Average winter losses were higher among commercial beekeepers (53.1%) in 2024 compared to small scale beekeepers (43.9%). Median losses for commercial beekeepers (29.3%) were slightly lower than small scale beekeepers (33.3%). In 2024 the losses were substantially higher across all regions than they were in 2023 (Figure 2). Some large commercial beekeepers reported hives dwindling in the summer or early fall with significant losses before winter.

The top three reasons beekeepers cited as contributing factors to winter-losses were fluctuating winter weather, weak colonies going into winter, and high fall mite levels. Compared to responses to the same question in 2023, a higher proportion of beekeepers in 2024 felt that their hives were not doing as well as the previous year.



**Figure 2:** Average winter losses reported in 2024 compared to 2023 by region of the province.

Beekeepers who felt their overwinter losses were relatively low were most likely to attribute their success to effective fall feeding, effective varroa control, and good population sizes going into winter. Beekeepers who attributed their overwintering success to their education related to pests and diseases had the lowest average overwinter losses.

Ontario beekeepers appreciate the recent funding announcement from the Governments of Ontario and Canada through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership’s Honey Bee Health Initiative. While these intermittent funding opportunities are welcomed, beekeepers also need improved risk management options. The causes of the overwinter losses reported here will require actions that are beyond the scope of individual beekeepers. The OBA would like to see OMAFRA and its partners re-invigorate the monitoring and testing program for residues found in honey, pollen, wax and bee samples. With ever increasing anecdotal reports of Amitraz resistance in Ontario, and the OBA Technology Transfer Program (TTP) having detected efficacy below thresholds for resistance in two hives in a small study last fall, the OBA would like to see OMAFRA continue and expand Amitraz resistance testing in Ontario. The OBA encourages partners to act on the recommendations developed last time the industry faced high winter losses. These recommendations include sustained funding to TTP and are outlined in the *Report by the Industry-Government Honey Bee Sustainability Working Group on Actions to Improve the Sustainability and Resiliency of the Canadian Beekeeping Sector*.