



*In business  
for your business.™*

# YOUR VOICE

## Survey Results February 2026

Insights From Canada's  
Small Business Owners





# About Your Voice survey

**Purpose and Context:** The CFIB Your Voice omnibus survey is conducted bi-monthly, focusing on issues that matter most to small business owners across Canada. For over five decades, CFIB has harnessed the collective voice of its members to produce data-driven policy strategies that reflect the needs of small businesses. Our inhouse survey capacity is a powerful tool designed to empower business owners to share insights on topics from government support to regulatory burdens.

**Impact:** The survey's insights are gathered directly from CFIB members, ensuring an authentic representation of small business priorities. These responses help shape CFIB's advocacy efforts, driving policies that are aligned with the evolving needs of the small business community.

## This report was prepared by:

Marvin Cruz (Senior Director, Research)  
Sanaz Dolatkhan (Data Analyst)  
Bérengère Fouqueray (Research Analyst)  
Alchad Alegbeh (Senior Research Analyst)

# Methodology

## *Your Voice* February 2026

**Survey Type:** An omnibus, controlled-access online CFIB survey.

**Survey period:** February 5 - February 25, 2026.

**Sample:** Based on responses from 1,379 CFIB members who are owners of Canadian independent businesses, from all sectors and regions of the country. For comparison purposes, a probability samples with the same number of respondents would have a margin of error of +/- 2.60%, 19 times out of 20.

### Notes:

1-In some instances, responses may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

2-Please note that our data may differ slightly from the figures published in our March 4 press release due to a methodological adjustment made afterward.



# February Your Voice Survey Insights

The February 2026 edition of *Your Voice* captures the latest views of 1,379 small business owners across Canada. As owners look at the year ahead, most are prioritizing ways to strengthen their operations, from investments in marketing, automation, e-commerce, training, and AI to better manage ongoing pressures. External conditions remain a challenge: U.S. tariffs continue raise costs and strain cross-border. Consumer spending remains moderate, with holiday shoppers opting for lower-cost and Canadian-made products. Against this backdrop, small business owners are calling on governments to reduce taxes and business costs, cut red tape, and create a more competitive and stable business environment.

## Business plans for 2026

Looking ahead, many small businesses plan to focus on internal improvements rather than expansion. Owners are most likely to increase investments in marketing, job or process automation, e-commerce, employee training, and AI-enabled technologies. In contrast, relatively few businesses intend to expand into new markets.

## The impact of U.S.-Canada trade war

Tariffs remain a major pressure point: 68% of small businesses report being affected—24% directly and 42% indirectly. Nearly three-quarters say the dispute has strained relationships with U.S. partners, and more than half no longer see the U.S. as a reliable trading partner.

## 2025 holiday season

Consumer spending showed few signs of recovery during the 2025 holiday season. Most businesses reported flat or declining revenues, in-store purchases, online sales, and foot traffic. Businesses observed more budget-conscious spending, with customers gravitating toward lower-cost purchases, as well as preferences for Canadian-made products.

## Business priorities

Owners want governments to address rising business costs, reduce the overall tax burden, improve health care access, cut red tape, and ensure fairer competition with large corporations. Reducing trade uncertainty and strengthening domestic conditions remain key to supporting small business stability and growth.

## Mandate vote

Businesses also weighed in on key advocacy issues through our *Mandate Vote* which include short, neutral backgrounders. A clear majority opposed giving preference to unionized organizations, owners were split on pursuing a free trade agreement with China, and a majority supported increasing the GST/HST threshold.



## Explore More Insights

- Region
- Business size
- Years in business

[View Dashboard](#)

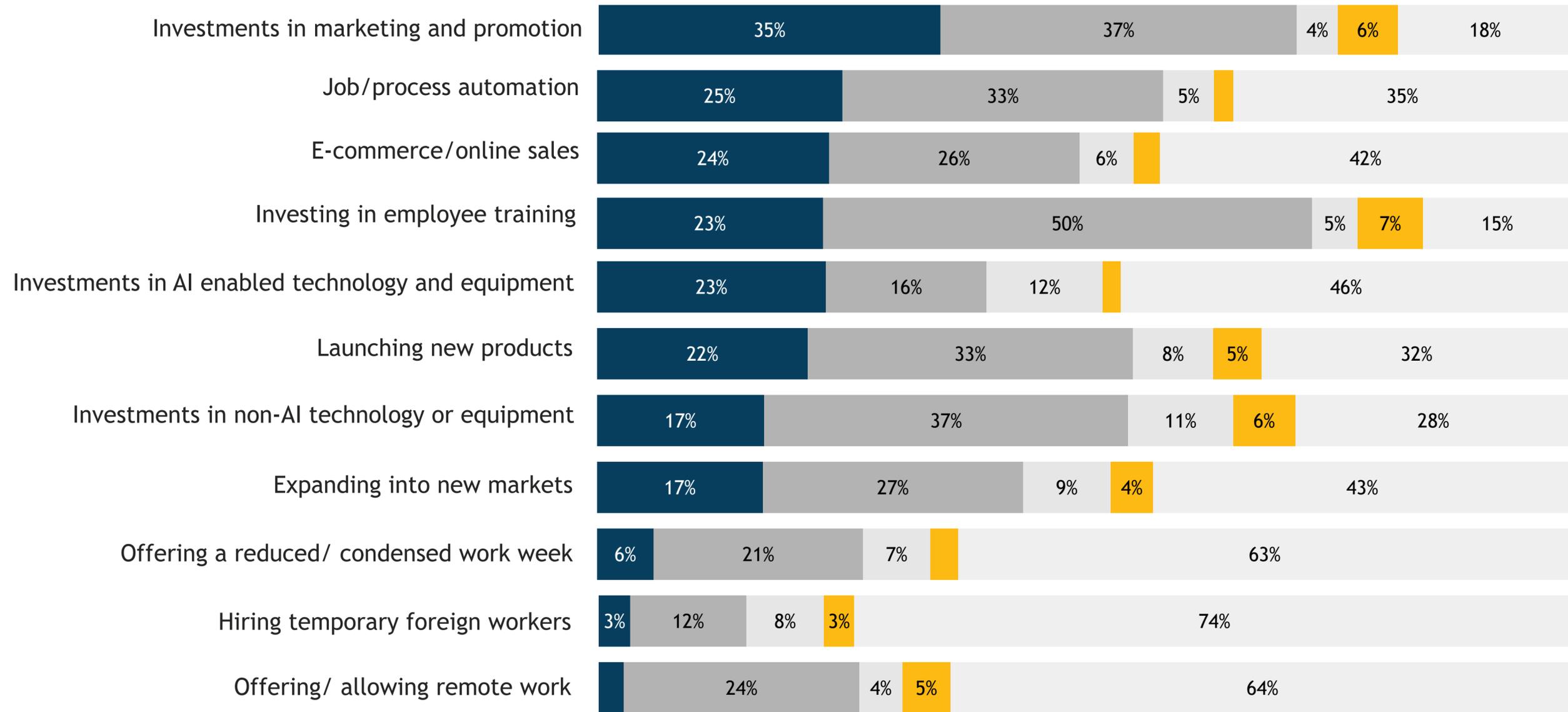
# Business plans for 2026



# In the year ahead businesses plan to invest mainly in marketing, automation, e-commerce, training, and AI-enabled technology. At the same time, they show little intention to expand into new markets.

Business owners' plans for 2026

● More ● The same ● Don't know/Unsure ● Less ● We don't do this/Have no plans to do it



Question: In 2026 does your business intend to do more or less of the following compared to 2025? (Select one for each line)

Source: CFIB, Your Voice Survey - February 2026, February 5 - 25, 2026, final results.

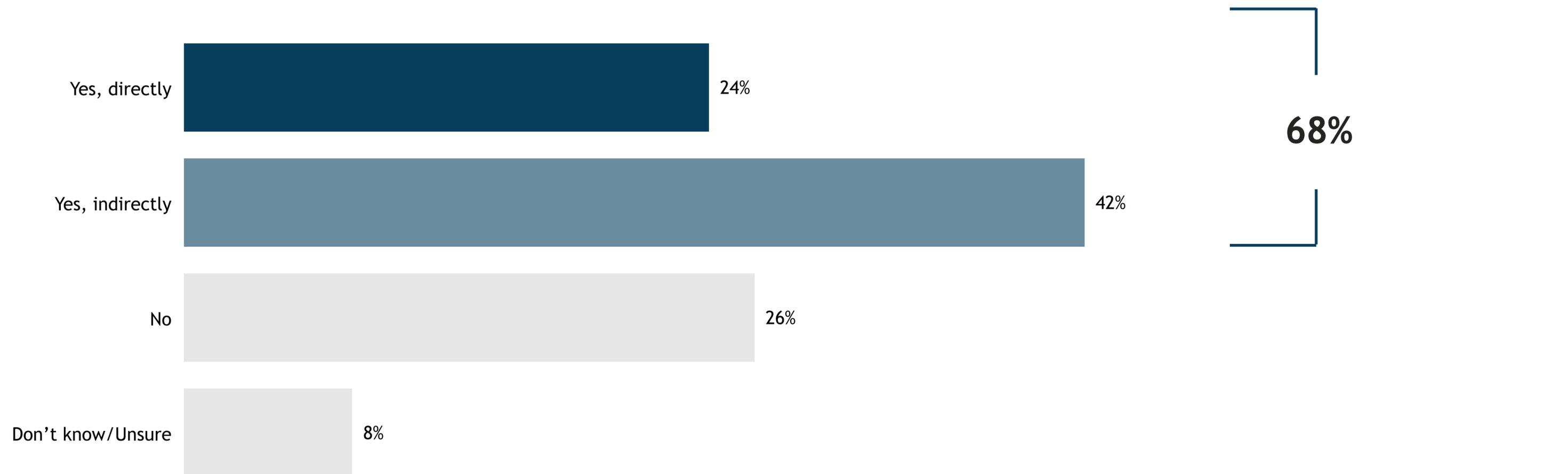
# The impact of U.S.-Canada trade war

---



# Overall, 68% of Canadian small business owners say they are affected by U.S. tariffs, with 26% directly affected and 42% indirectly.

Type of impact from U.S. tariffs on business owners



1,377 Responses

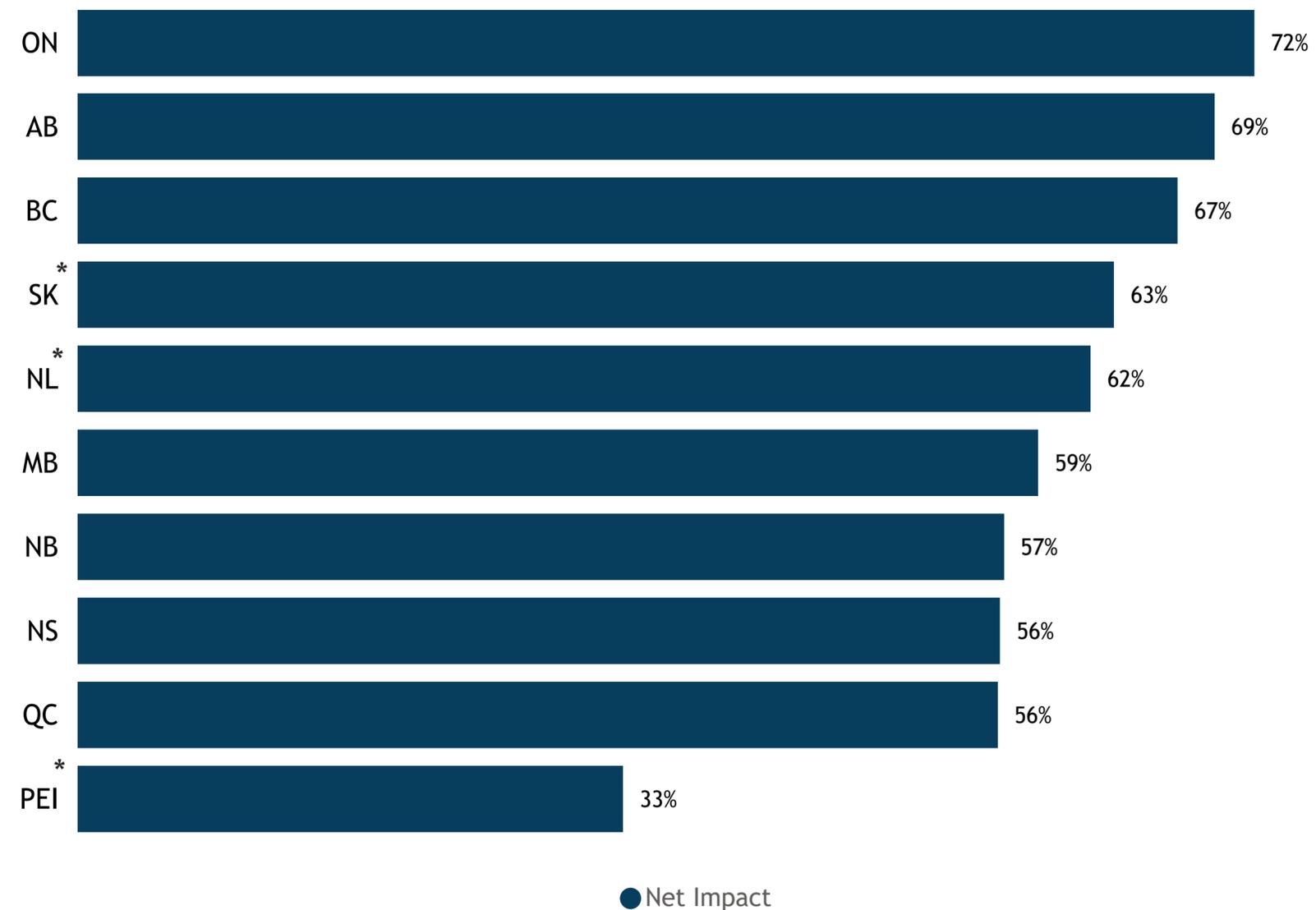
Question: Is your business currently being impacted by the U.S. tariffs on Canadian products? (Select one)

Source: CFIB, Your Voice Survey - February 2026, February 5 - 25, 2026, final results.



# Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia show the highest shares of businesses impacted by U.S. tariffs, likely reflecting their strong trade exposure to the U.S. market.

Net share of businesses impacted (directly or indirectly) by U.S. tariffs, by province



1,377 Responses

Question: Is your business currently being impacted by the U.S. tariffs on Canadian products? (Select one)

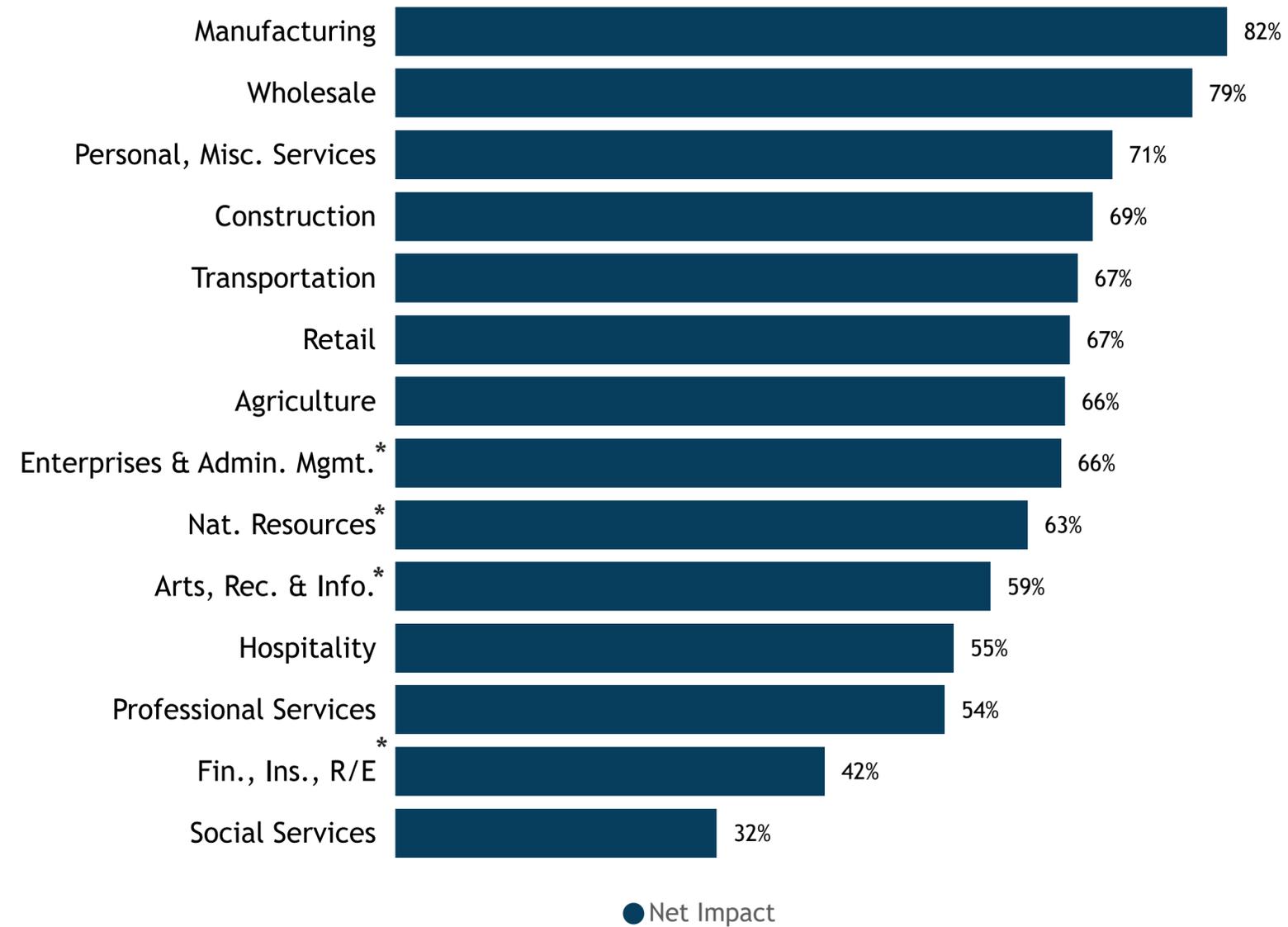
Source: CFIB, Your Voice Survey - February 2026, February 5 - 25, 2026, final results.

Note: \*Small sample size (<40). Net impact is the sum of direct and indirect impact.



# Wholesale, manufacturing, and retail businesses report the highest direct impact from U.S. tariffs, reflecting their strong exposure to cross-border trade.

Net share of businesses impacted (directly or indirectly) by U.S. tariffs, by sector



1,377 Responses

Question: Is your business currently being impacted by the U.S. tariffs on Canadian products? (Select one)

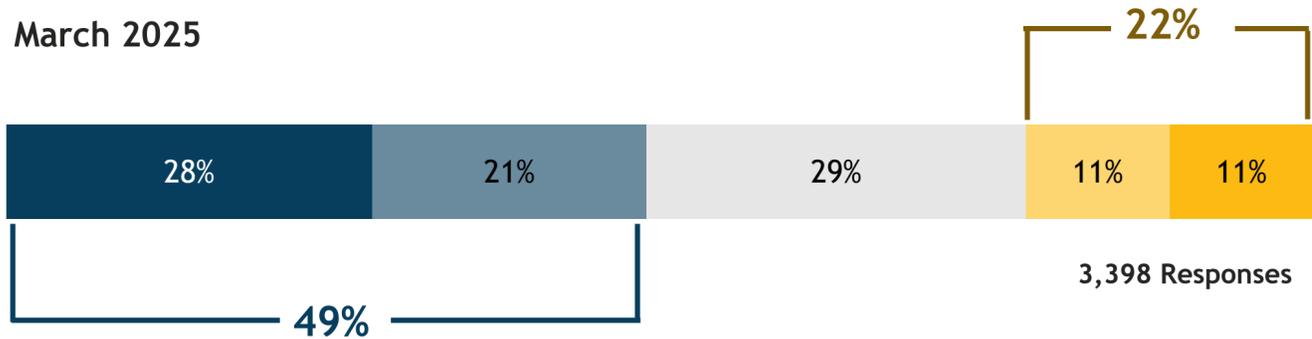
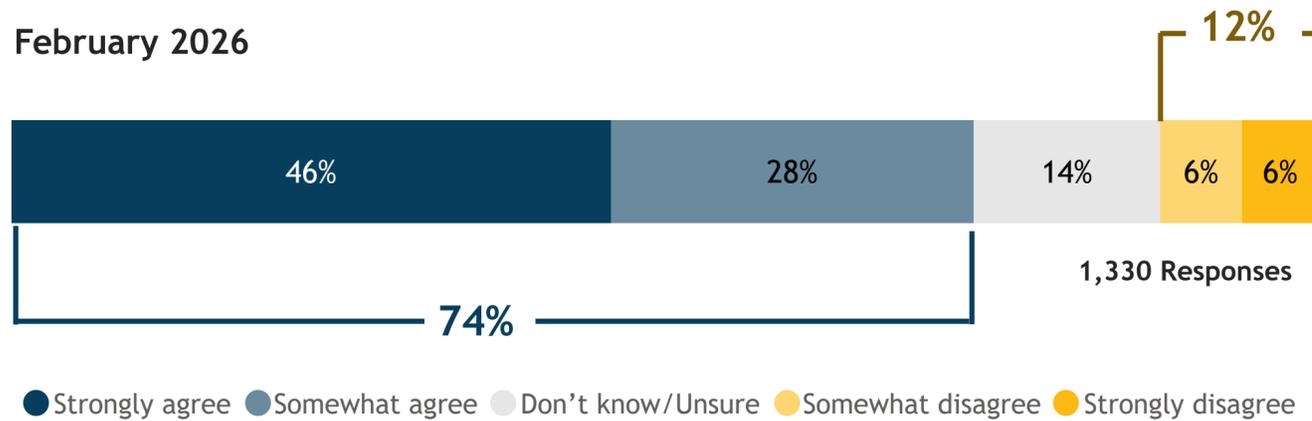
Source: CFIB, Your Voice Survey - February 2026, February 5 - 25, 2026, final results.

Note: \*Small sample size (<40). Net impact is the sum of direct and indirect impact.

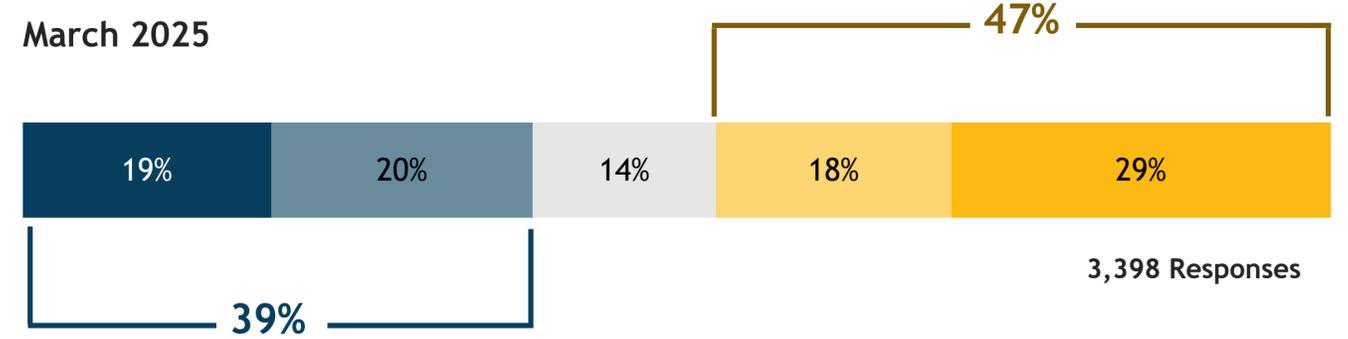
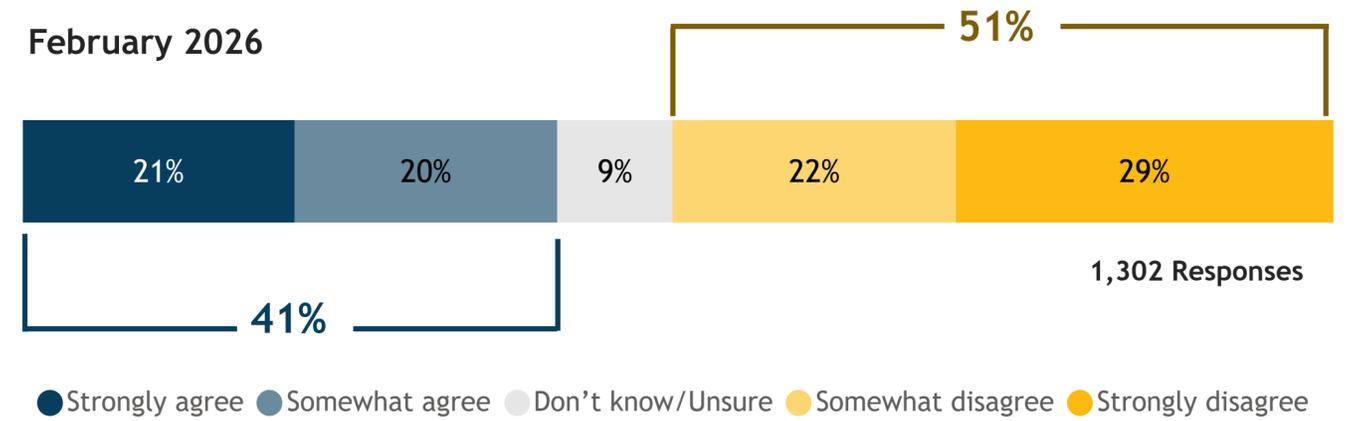


# The tariff dispute is increasingly damaging Canada-US business ties, with 74% of firms now saying the tariff dispute is hurting their U.S. partnerships, a significant increase since March 2025. At the same time, 51% no longer view the U.S. as a reliable trading partner.

The trade war has negatively impacted our relationship with our U.S. trading partners or clients



We consider the U.S. a reliable trading partner



Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the U.S.-Canada trade war? (Select one for each line)

Source: CFIB, Your Voice Survey - February 2026, February 5 - 25, 2026, final results.

CFIB, survey on the impact of U.S.-Canada war, March 13 - 31, 2025, final results.

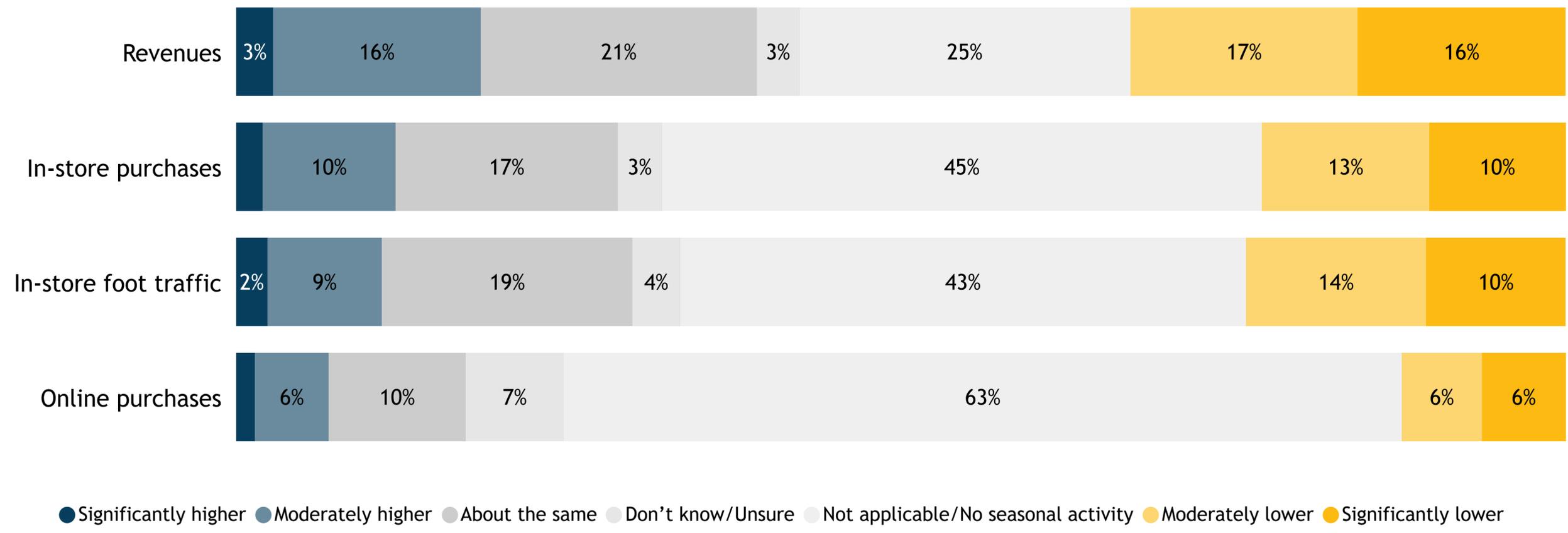
# 2025 holiday season

---



# Holiday performance in 2025 showed limited gains over 2024. For most businesses, core performance measures were either unchanged or declined.

Business performance during the 2025 holiday season compared to 2024



1,267 Responses

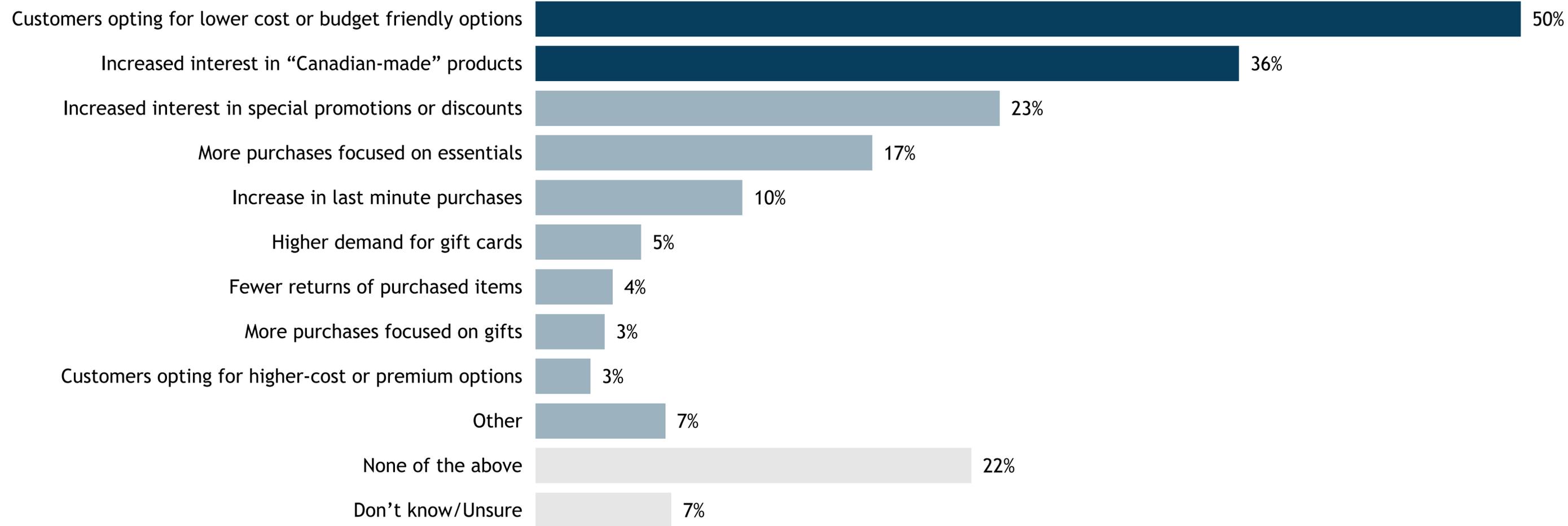
Question: How did your business's recent holiday season compare to 2024 on the following? (Select one for each line)

Source: CFIB, Your Voice Survey - February 2026, February 5 - 25, 2026, final results.



# Budget-friendly choices dominated the 2025 holiday season trends, with many customers shifting toward lower-cost options. Interest in Canadian-made products also stood out.

Trends observed during the holiday season



975 Responses

Question: What trends did your business observe during the 2025 holiday season? (Select all that apply)

Source: CFIB, Your Voice Survey - February 2026, February 5 - 25, 2026, final results.

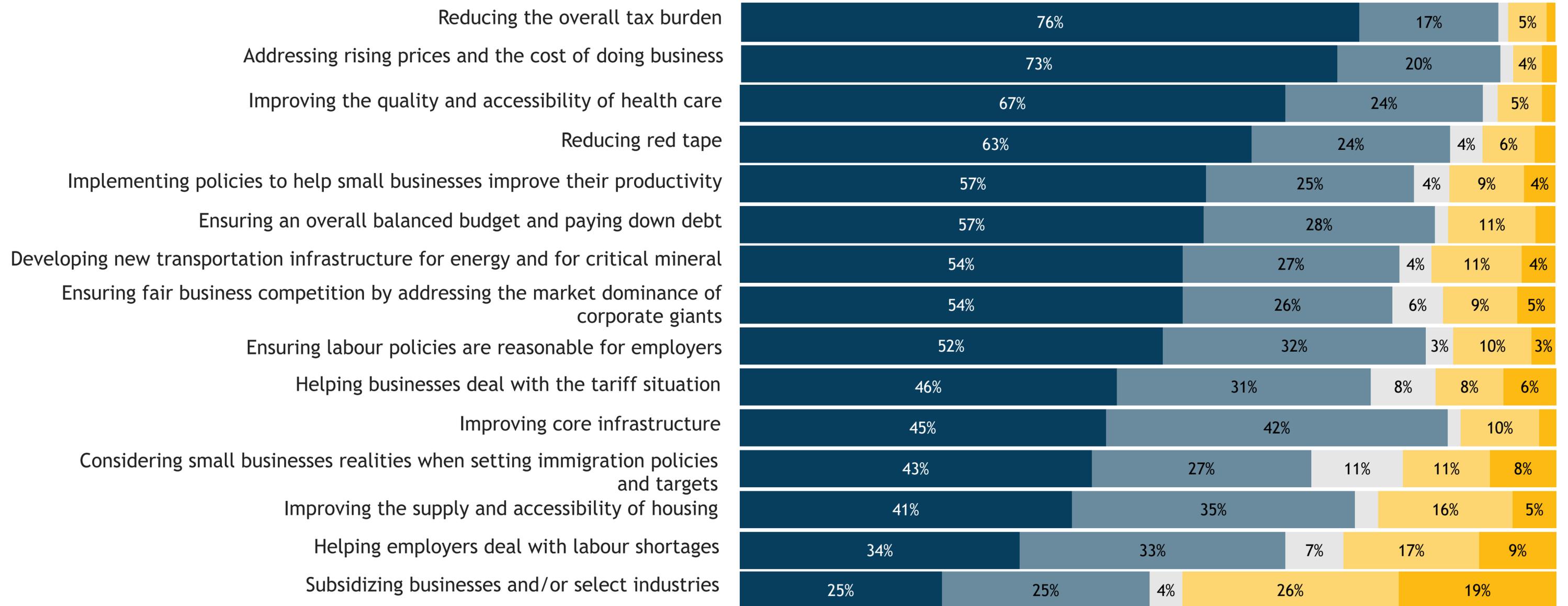
# Business priorities

---

# Small businesses want governments to focus on reducing the overall tax burden, tackling rising prices and business costs, improving access to quality health care, and cutting red tape.

Business owners' priorities for their governments for 2026

● High priority ● Medium priority ● Don't know/Not applicable ● Low priority ● Not a priority



Question: For 2026, please indicate the level of priority you would like governments to place on the following issues. (Select one for each line)

1,171 Responses

Source: CFIB, Your Voice Survey - February 2026, February 5 - 25, 2026, final results.

# Mandate Vote

---

CFIB members shape our official positions on key policy issues. Our Mandate Vote presents policy questions—each with a short background—so members can guide how CFIB should advocate on their behalf.

# A clear majority of businesses opposed governments giving preference to unionized organizations, supporting equal access for all businesses.

Should government policies give preference to unionized organizations over non-unionized private businesses?

## Background

Recent government announcements, including the latest federal budget, have introduced programs that prioritize unionized, not-for-profit, and public-sector providers when allocating funding and delivering services. Examples include:

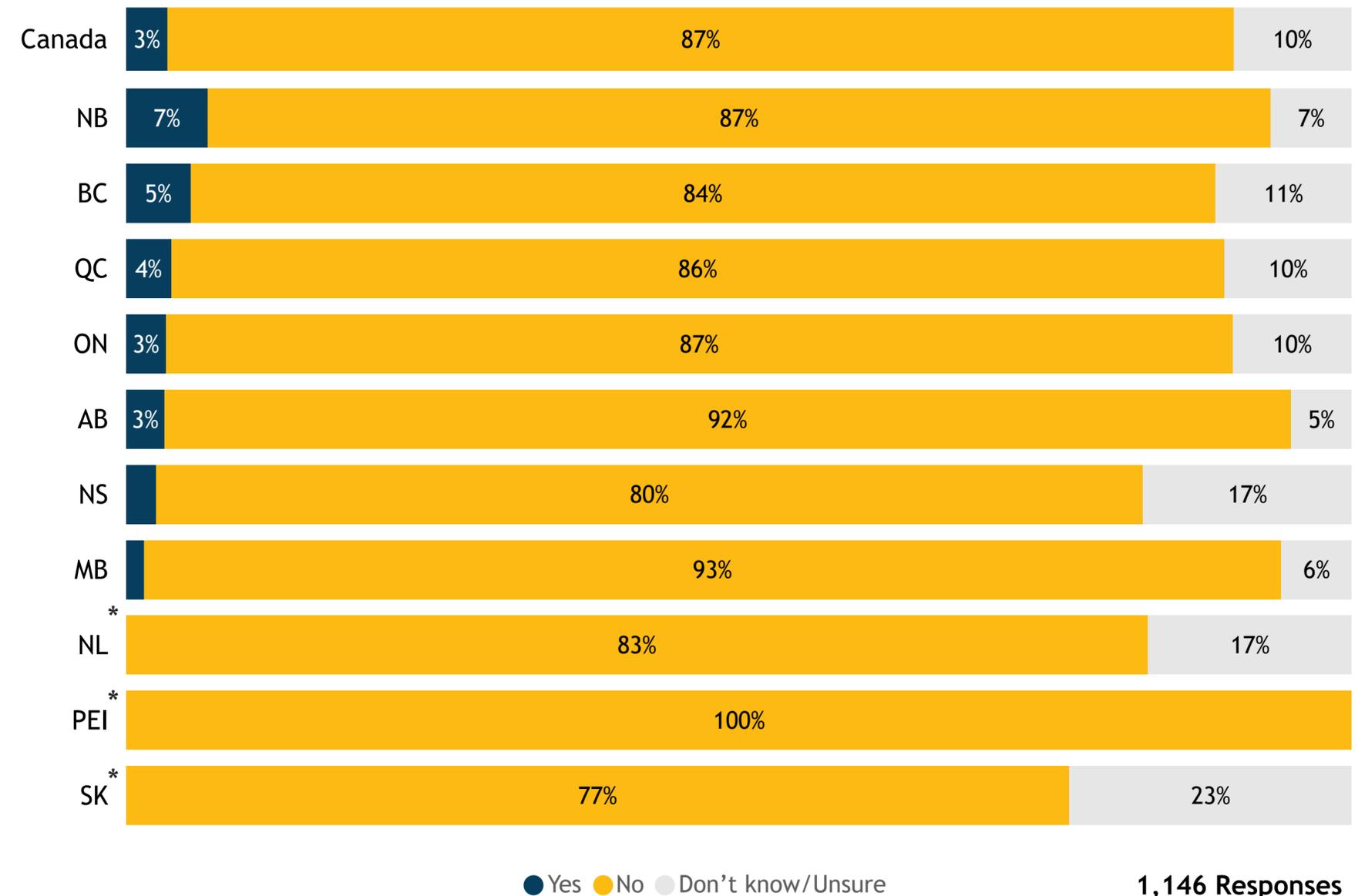
- Funding for union-led training programs also offered by private colleges.
- Infrastructure funding that explicitly considers the use of unionized labour. For example, major public projects in B.C. delivered under Community Benefits Agreements, where contractors must follow union-based hiring rules.

## Supporting arguments:

- Policies giving preference to unionized organizations can support higher labour standards, better training, and service quality.
- It may promote job stability and fair wages, contributing to more reliable long-term services.

## Opposing arguments:

- It may disadvantage SMEs and non-unionized businesses when competing for funding or contracts.
- It can increase costs and limit choice, particularly in sectors like childcare, training, and infrastructure.



1,146 Responses

Source: CFIB, Your Voice Survey - February 2026, February 5 - 25, 2026, final results.

Note: \*Small sample size (<40).

# A majority of businesses support increasing the GST/HST threshold above the current \$30,000 annual taxable sales.

Should the threshold for collecting and remitting the GST/HST be increased (threshold is currently \$30,000 in annual taxable sales)?

## Background

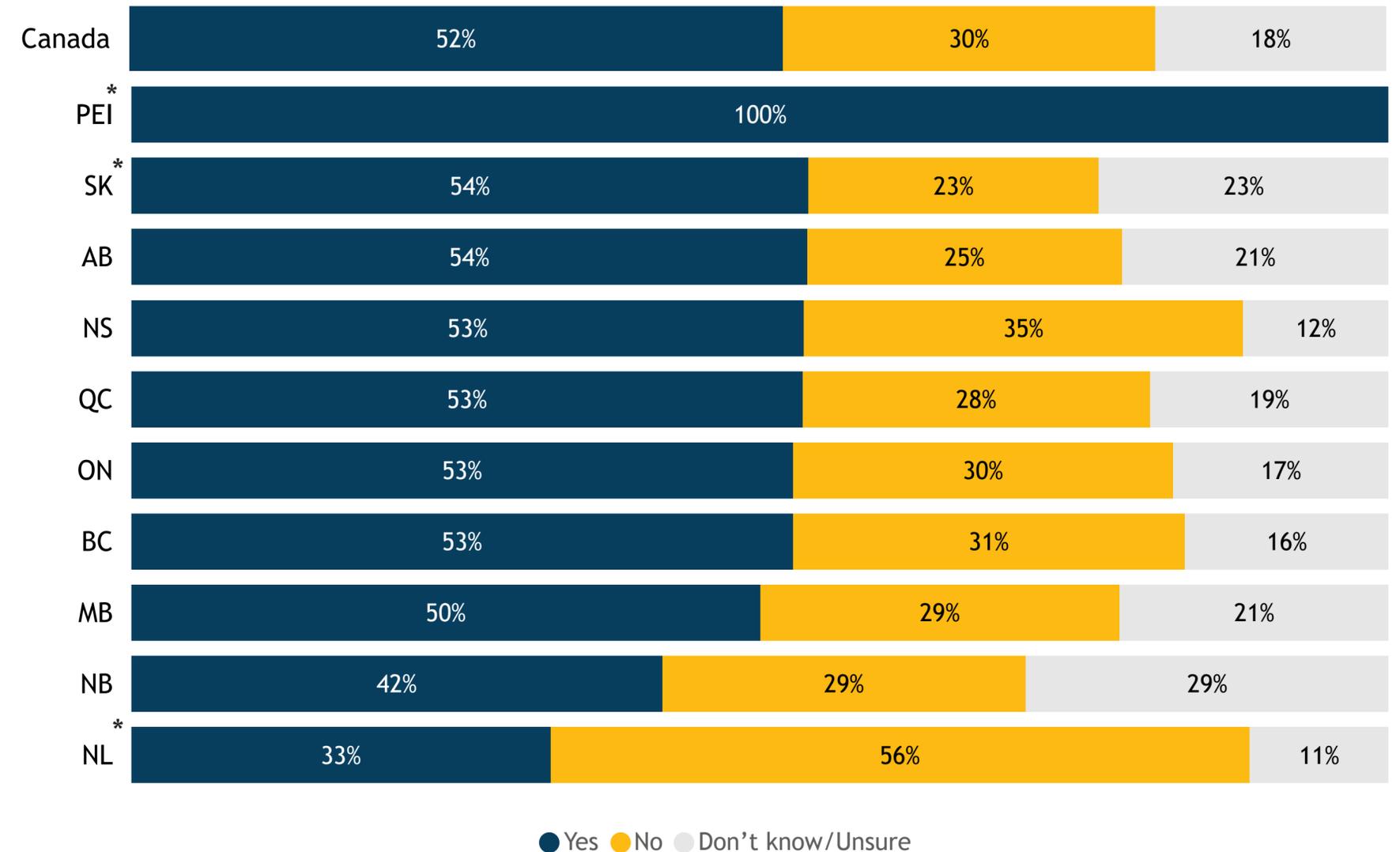
Currently in Canada, businesses that have \$30,000 or less in annual taxable sales are not required to collect and remit the Goods and Services Tax/Harmonized Sales Tax (GST/HST). The GST/HST threshold has remained at \$30,000 since it was introduced in 1991. Other countries (e.g., Australia, New Zealand, U.S.) have thresholds that are nearly double the Canadian threshold. Some suggest the threshold should be increased above \$30,000.

## Supporting arguments:

- Fewer small businesses would have to remit GST/HST, thereby reducing their compliance burden.
- It would increase small business competitiveness in Canada and abroad.

## Opposing arguments:

- It would create a disincentive for smaller businesses to grow beyond the new threshold.
- It would decrease the amount of sales tax revenue generated to government.



1,150 Responses

Source: CFIB, Your Voice Survey - February 2026, February 5 - 25, 2026, final results.

Note: \*Small sample size (<40).

# Business opinion is split, with no clear mandate emerging on whether Canada should pursue a free trade agreement with China.

## Should Canada pursue a free trade agreement with China?

### Background

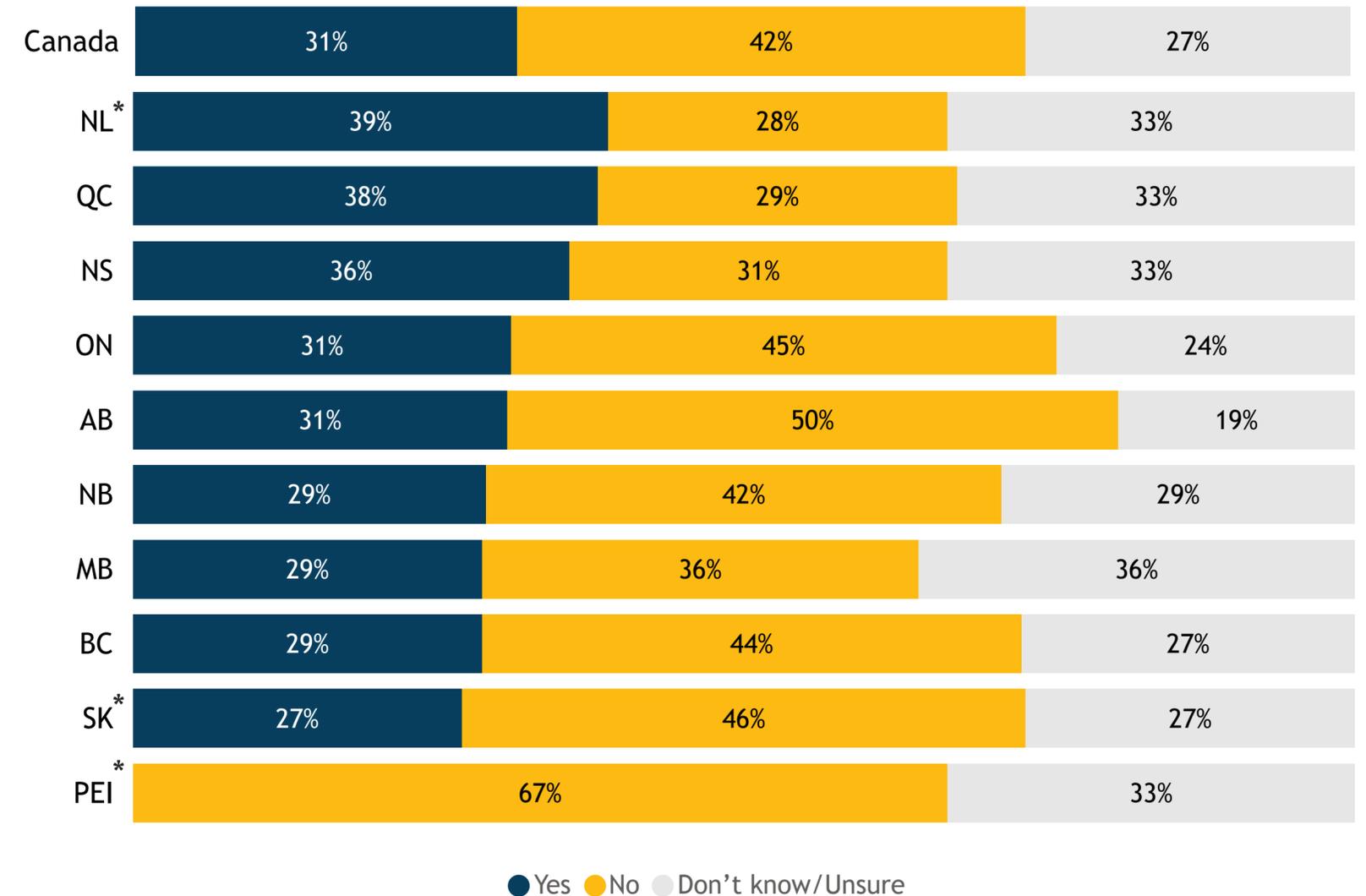
In recent years, the federal government has made international trade a priority through the renegotiation of existing agreements or the negotiation of new ones. This commitment was further strengthened with the ongoing trade dispute with the United States. China is currently Canada's second largest trade partner, following the United States, but is not one of the 51 countries with which we have a free trade agreement. Some say that Canada should pursue a free trade agreement with China.

### Supporting arguments:

- It would help strengthen Canada's relationship with our second largest trade partner;
- Free trade with China would help attract foreign investment to Canada and strengthen the economy.
- Deeper access could reduce dependence on the U.S. and open scale for agri-food, energy and services.

### Opposing arguments:

- Canada should not enter in a free trade agreement with a country that has a poor track record on human rights and dealing with the environment;
- It would result in an influx of inexpensive goods from China, hurting many Canadian businesses.
- U.S. leaders have recently threatened 100% tariffs on Canadian goods if Canada "makes a deal" with China



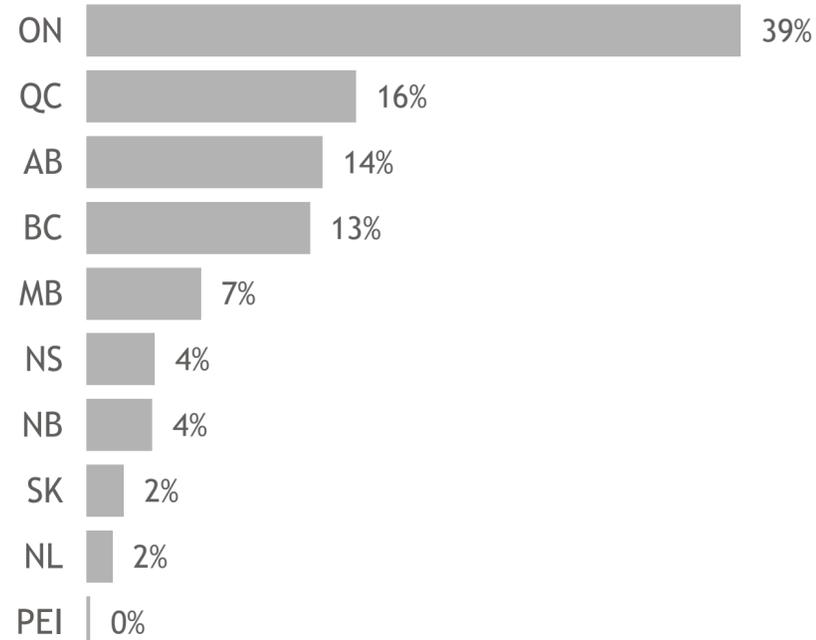
1,148 Responses

Source: CFIB, Your Voice Survey - February 2026, February 5 - 25, 2026, final results.

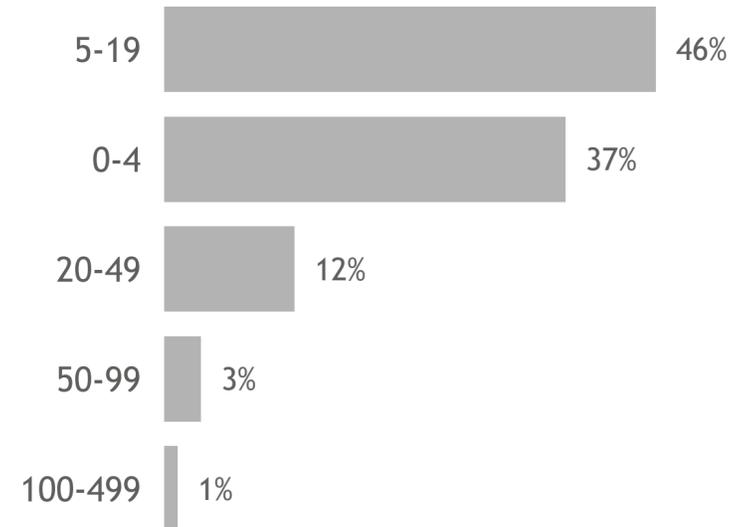
Note: \*Small sample size (<40).

# Appendix: Sample distribution

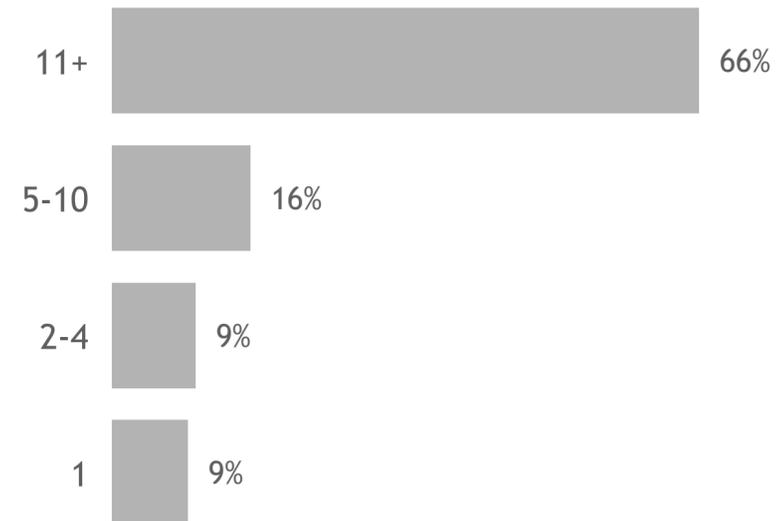
By location of the business



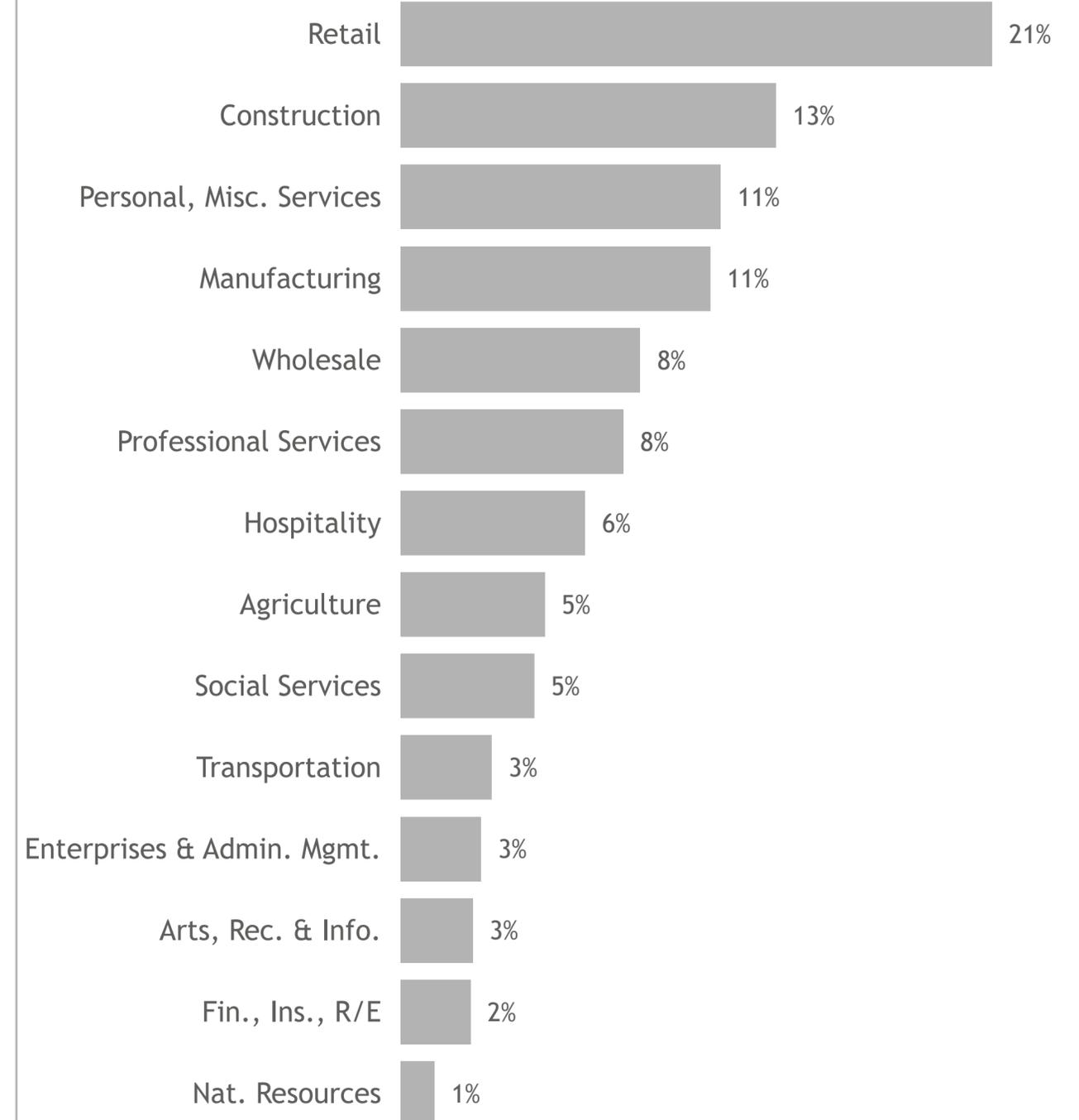
By number of employees



By years in business



By industry



# CFIB Research Publications and Business Stats



## Monthly Business Barometer®

Our monthly survey tracks small business confidence, expectations and operating conditions in Canada.



## Enterprise Pulse

Overview of self-employed, businesses with employees, entries/exits, and insolvencies.



## Private Sector Job Vacancies in Canada

Quarterly insights on private sector job vacancies in Canada, highlighting vacancy rates by province, sector, and business size.



# Questions or data requests

## Simon Gaudreault

Chief Economist and Vice-President,  
Research

[simon.gaudreault@cfib.ca](mailto:simon.gaudreault@cfib.ca)



## Marvin Cruz

Senior Director, Research

[marvin.cruz@cfib.ca](mailto:marvin.cruz@cfib.ca)



# Additional information

## All CFIB research



[cfib.ca/research](https://cfib.ca/research)



[@CFIB\\_FCEI\\_Stats](https://twitter.com/CFIB_FCEI_Stats)



[research@cfib.ca](mailto:research@cfib.ca)