

# 2023 CRA Report Card

Evaluating CRA's performance in its dealings with small businesses and tax practitioners



Seventh Edition

**CFIB**  
CANADIAN FEDERATION  
OF INDEPENDENT BUSINESS  
*In business for your business™*

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## Introduction

Small- and medium-sized enterprises are an integral part of the Canadian economy, making up 99.8% of employers in Canada and employing 88% of the total labour force (10.7 million individuals).<sup>1</sup> As the largest representative of small businesses in Canada, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) works to support small businesses, who have faced some unbelievably challenging years. Small business withstood the worst of the pandemic, and the business environment is still in recovery, with 56% of small businesses still below normal sales and 64% still dealing with pandemic debt.<sup>2</sup> Small businesses are vital to Canada's economic recovery in a post-pandemic world.

Many small businesses are still facing a long and challenging road to recovery after more than two years of uncertainty linked to the pandemic and lockdown measures. Labour shortages, inflation, supply chain disruptions, increasing costs (e.g., payroll taxes and carbon pricing), and unnecessary red tape have made it more difficult to run and grow a business. Year after year, small businesses have consistently cited tax compliance as one of the most challenging and time-consuming responsibilities.<sup>3</sup>

To administer tax laws and various social and economic programs, the Government of Canada and most provinces and territories rely on the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). Their responsibilities include providing taxpayers support to understand and fulfill their tax obligations, taking compliance and enforcement actions when necessary to uphold the integrity of the system, and offering avenues of redress when taxpayers disagree with an assessment or decision. CFIB often hears of misunderstandings with CRA, which can put small business owners at risk of serious consequences and hefty fines for non-compliance. All Canadian small businesses must deal with the administrative burden of deciphering the different layers of tax obligations and benefits/incentives that apply to them.

Despite the complicated and cumbersome Canadian tax system, during the pandemic, CRA was able to create and execute on programs and changes at a speed not previously seen within the federal government. Several financial support programs, such as the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS) and the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), were quickly implemented to help mitigate the economic impact to small business. While the pandemic certainly accelerated the adoption of various CRA programs and services—a notable accomplishment—CFIB has long been committed to working with CRA to improve the services it offers to SMEs, and in turn, improve tax compliance and make it easier to do business in Canada.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada, Table 33-10-0304-01 Canadian Business Counts, with employees, December 2021 Table 17-10-0005-01 – Population estimates on July 1st, by age and sex; and ISED calculations. (November 2022). <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/sme-research-statistics/en/key-small-business-statistics/key-small-business-statistics-2022>

<sup>2</sup> CFIB, Your Voice survey, results from September 8-26, 2022, n=3,679.

<sup>3</sup> CFIB, Regulation and Paper Burden survey, September 2017, n = 7,823.



Small businesses have consistently cited tax compliance as one of the most challenging and time-consuming responsibilities.



## 2023 CRA Report Card

This 2023 edition is the seventh report CFIB has published evaluating CRA’s performance in its dealings with small businesses. As with previous iterations, two surveys were administered to members: one to tax practitioners (such as accountants, bookkeepers, and tax consultants), and another to small business owners in various industries across Canada. To address the impact of COVID-19 relief programs available to small businesses, both surveys included a series of questions related to CRA’s administration of these programs, and a summary of the results is included in the pandemic section of this report. We did ask respondents to try and answer the remaining questions based on their experience with CRA outside of the COVID-19 programs but recognize that many of their experiences with CRA over the last three years may have been influenced by the impacts and programs associated with the pandemic. We have tried our best to distinguish between CRA COVID-19 services and regular services in this report.

## CRA’s Performance

CFIB asked business owners and tax practitioners to grade their overall impression of CRA’s service to their business. **Most grades ranged between a “B” and a “D” with the highest proportion of business owners (43%) and tax practitioners (36%) giving CRA a “C.”** Figure 1 displays the distribution of grades and reveals tax practitioners to be more critical in their evaluations than business owners.

Business owners’ and tax practitioners’ perception of CRA’s service has not changed since the 2014 report. From the small business perspective there is a small increase of those who rated the service as “excellent” (from 2% in 2017 to 3% in 2022) and as “good” (from 24% in 2017 to 27% in 2022), but the percentage of those who rated the service as “poor” (from 15% in 2017 to 19% in 2022) or “unacceptable” (from 4% in 2017 to 6% in 2022) has also slightly increased. Interestingly, small businesses in the arts, recreation and information (45%) and social services (32%) sectors were generally less critical of the services received by CRA, giving the highest ratings of “excellent” or “good.” Businesses in the professional services (32%) and hospitality (27%) sectors displayed the highest ratings of “poor” or “unacceptable.”

While previous versions of this report have seen tax practitioners be tough evaluators of CRA, respondents to the *2022 Tax Practitioner Survey* provided the most negative review of CRA since the question’s inception in 2011, giving no “A” and more “poor” (32%) and “unacceptable” (12%) grades. This is a significant jump from 2017 where 20% rated the overall service as “poor” and only 8% as “unacceptable.” Until this year, tax practitioners were gradually viewing CRA’s service more favourably with every new CFIB report.

Overall, CRA received a grade of “C” for “satisfactory” from business owners and tax professionals.

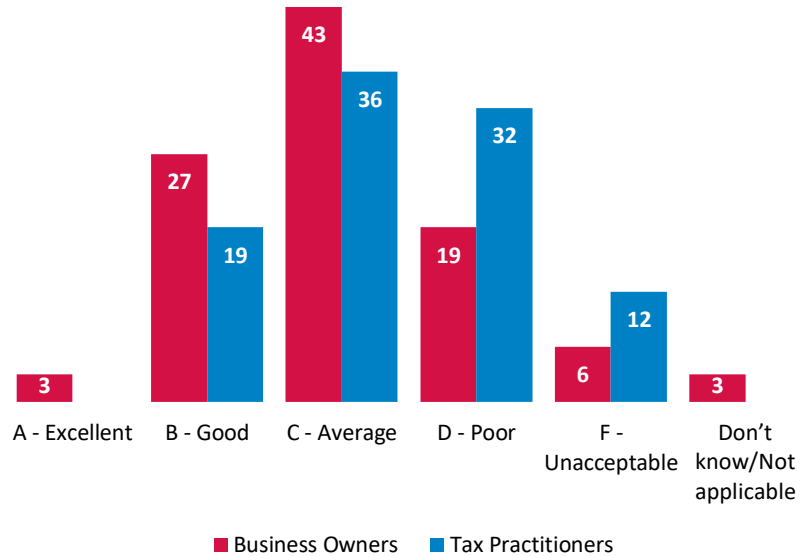
*“I know CRA’s trying but they are missing the mark in some key areas.”*

—Personal, Misc. Services, Ontario



Figure 1

**How would you rate CRA's overall service to your business? (% response)**



Sources: 1) CFIB, CRA Survey (Business Owners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=4,304.

2) CFIB, CRA Tax Administration Survey (Tax Practitioners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=226.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

While CRA retained its pre-pandemic grade, this does not reveal the full story. To track the progression, respondents were asked to assess *“how the service received from CRA had changed over the last 3 years.”* Results from both business owners and tax practitioners have been recorded since 2004, and unfortunately, this year’s survey results reveal a distinct increase in those that consider CRA’s service *“worse.”* This is particularly evident among tax practitioners with 76% stating that the service was *“worse,”* a dramatic increase from 47% in 2017 (Figures 2a and 2b).

Services by CRA evolved rapidly during the pandemic. CRA introduced new programs and initiatives, modified long standing services, reduced the number of audits they conducted, and became more lenient with deadlines. These changes were received positively by businesses. While some income support programs were supposed to be relatively simple, many of those who were dealing with the submission of pandemic relief initiatives, such as bookkeepers and accountants, shared an immense amount of frustration with the processes to access certain support initiatives.

1 in 4

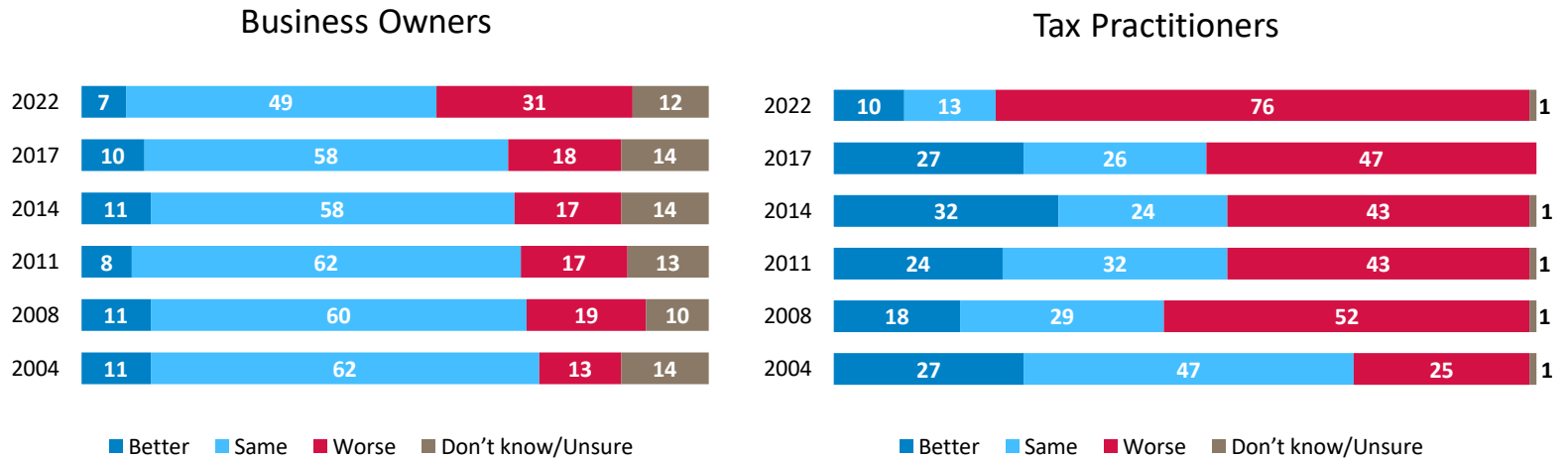
small businesses  
rated CRA's overall  
services as “poor” or  
“unacceptable.”



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Figures 2a and 2b

**How has the service you received from the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) changed during the past three years? (% response)**



Sources: 1) CFIB, CRA Survey (Business Owners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=4,304. 2) CFIB, CRA Tax Administration Survey (Tax Practitioners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=226. 3) CFIB, Canada Revenue Agency Report Card: CRA's Performance from the Small Business Perspective, December 2017.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

## Quality of Customer Service

CRA is the federal department that small business owners interact with the most. Either it is through mail correspondence, telephone help lines, or My Business Account (My BA), the quality of customer service offered by CRA can greatly impact whether a small business is able to understand and comply with their tax obligations. As a result of the feedback received from small businesses through the "Serving You Better consultation" in 2018, CRA committed to transforming the agency towards becoming more client-centric and small business friendly.<sup>4</sup> Over the last couple of years, CRA has certainly made efforts to improve its levels of customer service, but our data shows that there is still room for further improvement.

<sup>4</sup> CRA, Track how the CRA is helping small and medium businesses. June 2021. <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/corporate/about-canada-revenue-agency-cra/small-medium-businesses-canada-revenue-agency-committed-serving-you-better/serving-you-better-cra-helping-small-medium-businesses.html>.

31%

of SMEs and

76%

of tax practitioners felt that the service received from CRA has gotten "worse" in the past three years.

*"My general impression of CRA is that I want little or nothing to do with them. I'd like to be treated as a valued client."*

—Social Services, Nova Scotia



# 2 in 3

small businesses felt intimidated when dealing with CRA.

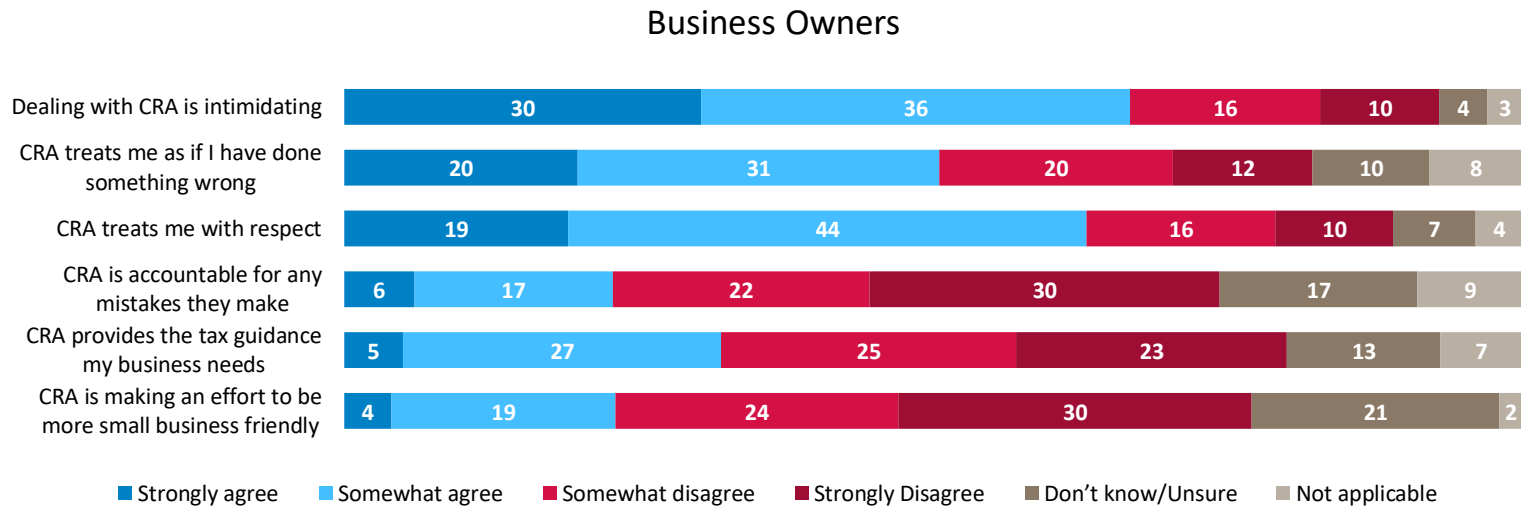
*“CRA scares me. I am concerned that if I complain they will target me or my business.”*

—Manufacturing, Alberta

Given the many ways that small business owners must interact with CRA, it is critical that they maintain a good relationship. To measure the health of this relationship, respondents were given a series of statements and asked to select their level of agreement (Figure 3). The response from business owners was mixed. On the positive side, almost two thirds (63%) of business owners felt that CRA treated them with respect, a result that has increased 12 percentage points since the 2011 survey. On the more negative side, 66% of business owners that were surveyed felt intimidated by CRA, 51% felt as if they were treated like they did something wrong, and nearly half (48%) felt they were not being provided with the tax guidance their business needed. Equally troubling, only 23% felt that CRA is accountable for its mistakes or is making an effort to be small business friendly. Evidently, while there has been improvement in recent years, the quality of the relationship between CRA and business owners still has significant room to improve.

Figure 3

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (% response)



Sources: CFIB, CRA Survey (Business Owners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=4,304.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

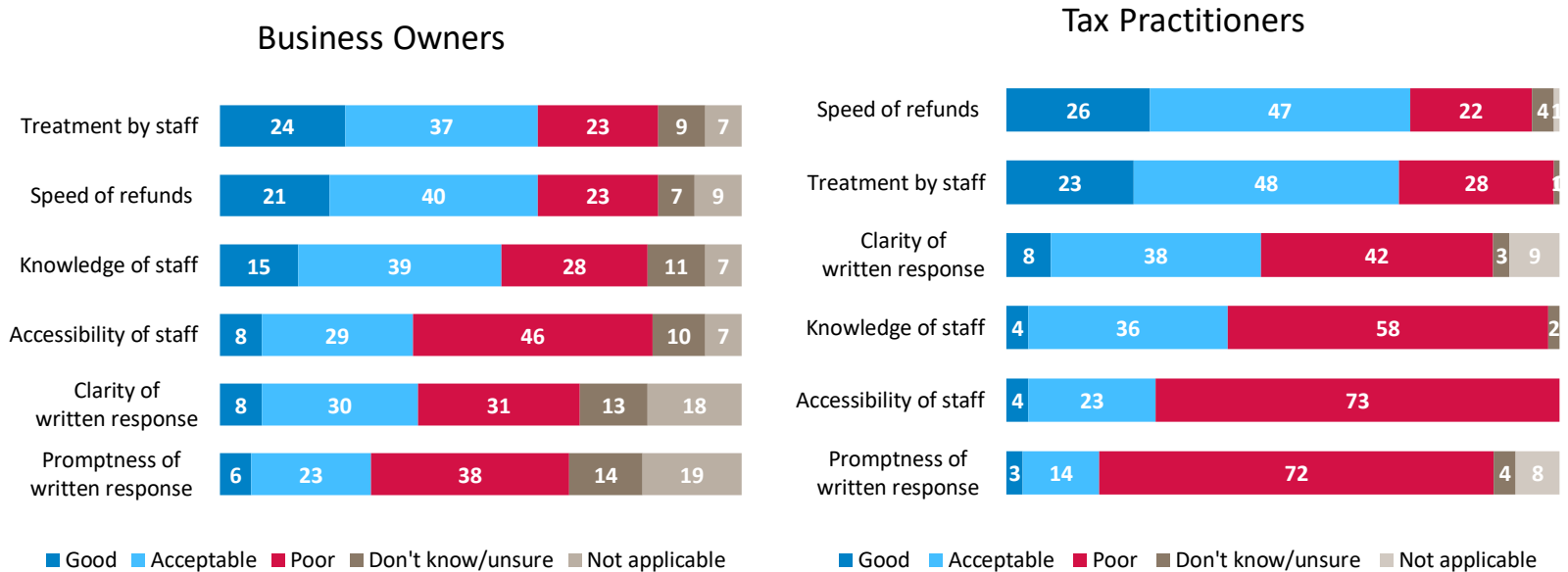
In order to better understand how CRA can improve its interactions with small business owners and tax practitioners, our survey asked a range of questions that were designed to measure the quality of several customer service elements. Both business owners and tax practitioners generally felt that the quality of customer service being provided was acceptable (Figures 4a and 4b). From the small business perspective, treatment by staff (24%), speed of refunds (21%), and knowledge of agents (15%) all topped the list with the highest ratings of “good.” Accessibility of staff (46%) and promptness of written responses (38%) were at the bottom of the list, receiving the highest ratings of “poor.”



Overall, tax practitioners were more critical in their assessment of CRA. In particular, accessibility of staff (73%), promptness of written responses (72%), and knowledge of staff (58%) received the highest ratings of “poor.” Speed of refunds (26%) and treatment by staff (23%) received the highest number of “good” ratings. In order to fully assess how these service standards align with the expectations of small business owners and tax practitioners, a further examination of three major customer service areas is provided below: **accessibility and treatment by staff, knowledge of staff, clarity and promptness of written responses.**

Figures 4a and 4b

**Overall, please rate the current service of CRA on each of the following customer service measures (% of response)**



Sources: 1) CFIB, CRA Survey (Business Owners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=4,304.

2) CFIB, CRA Tax Administration Survey (Tax Practitioners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=226.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

### Accessibility & treatment by staff

Interactions with CRA staff are inevitable for business owners and tax practitioners. Even as we’ve shifted towards using more electronic services (such as e-mail notifications and My Business Account), the quality of service being provided can leave strong, lasting impressions and is an important piece of any customer service model.

### Customer service areas of concern:

- Accessibility of staff
- Knowledge of staff
- Clarity and promptness of written responses

*“Always find CRA both helpful and polite, but they just seem to be disconnected within their information dissemination.”*  
—Retail, Ontario





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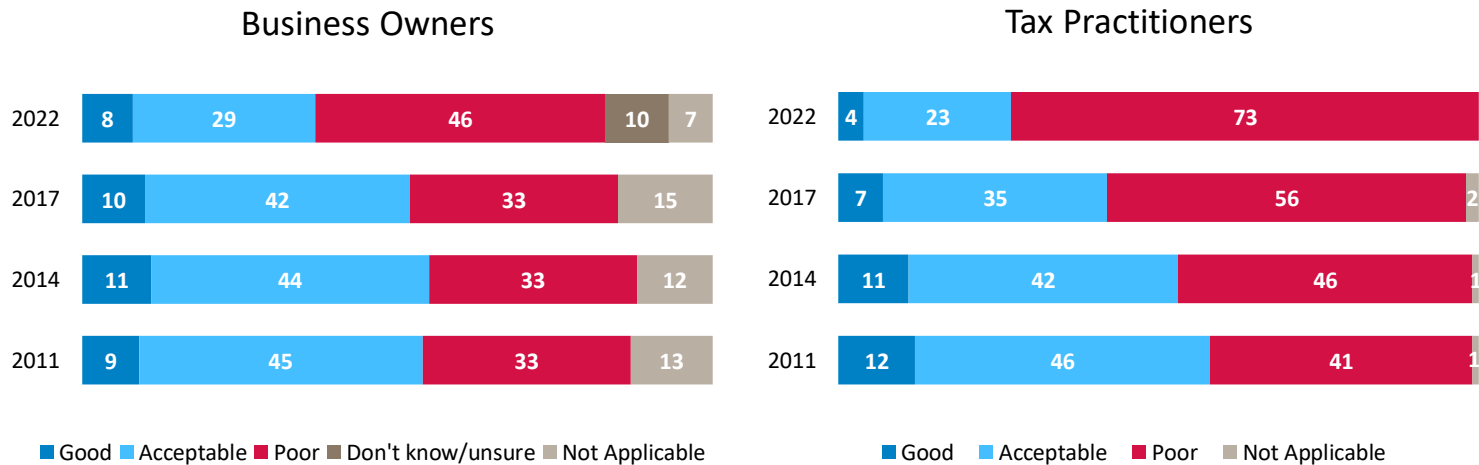
More recent accessibility issues are partially a consequence of measures taken to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 90% of CRA agents working remotely.<sup>5</sup> Like many other businesses during the pandemic, CRA had to shift its employees to remote work, and as such, allowance must be given to CRA and its staff as problems with Wi-Fi and background noise are all issues most people have had to deal with during the past three years. The steady decline in being able to access staff by tax practitioners in Figure 5b is cause for concern. While the pandemic might be to blame, there has been a significant increase in tax practitioners' ratings of "poor," jumping from 56% in 2017 to 73% in 2022. There has also been a significant increase in small business owners rating accessibility of staff as "poor," jumping from 33% in 2017 to 46% in 2022 (Figure 5a).

Figures 5a and 5b

**Overall, please rate the current service of CRA on each of the following customer service measures - Accessibility of Staff (% response)**

**46%**  
of small businesses  
and  
**73%**  
of tax practitioners  
rate accessibility of  
staff as "poor."

*"Access to CRA staff, when they have been working at home, has been horrendous."*  
—Manufacturing, Alberta



Sources: 1) CFIB, CRA Survey (Business Owners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=4,304. 2017 CRA Survey n=8,324. 2014 CRA Survey n=11,574. 2011 CRA Survey n=10,096. 2) CFIB, CRA Tax Administration Survey (Tax Practitioners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=226. 2017 Tax Administration Survey n=334. 2014 Tax Administration Survey n=426. 2011 Tax Administration Survey n=465.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

<sup>5</sup> Briefing for the Minister of National Revenue, Upcoming workplace and workforce changes. February 2022. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/corporate/about-canada-revenue-agency-cra/ministerial-transition-2021/issues/workplace-workforce-emerging-pandemic.html>



On a more positive note, both business owners and tax practitioners felt quite satisfied with how they were treated by staff. While getting a hold of someone at CRA remains an issue for many, once connected to CRA, the overall interaction tends to be relatively positive. As depicted in Figures 4a and 4b, nearly 61% of business owners and 71% of tax practitioners felt that the treatment by staff was “good” or “acceptable,” which is a marginal increase from the 2017 survey results. Interestingly, new businesses (those in business for less than a year) had the highest level of satisfaction with almost a third (30%) feeling “good” about the treatment by CRA staff.

### Knowledge of staff

A common pain point that arose in the 2022 survey was that CRA staff lacked adequate knowledge. Members described struggling to reach agents, and once they did, the CRA staff often did not have the appropriate knowledge to accurately answer their questions. This could potentially be attributed to CRA’s rapid hiring during the pandemic. The need to return CRA staff to the office goes beyond just accessibility and long wait times: many of our respondents believe that agents working from home has also reduced the quality of service they received.

Figure 4b reveals a high proportion (58%) of tax practitioners that consider CRA staff knowledge “poor” which is a slight increase from 2017 when 45% felt that the knowledge of staff was “poor.” While knowledge of staff did top small business owners’ list of “good” customer service measures, it is important to highlight that 39% felt it was “acceptable,” and 28% felt it was “poor” (Figure 4a). Again, this is a slight increase from 2017, where 20% felt the knowledge of staff was “poor.” Interestingly, businesses in the hospitality (21%) and social services (19%) sectors, which were hit hard during the pandemic, felt most satisfied with the knowledge of staff, giving some of the highest ratings of “good.”

Despite many business owners feeling generally satisfied with staff knowledge, when asked whether “CRA provides the tax guidance my business needs,” almost half of the respondents (48%) disagreed (Figure 3). In fact, many business owners feel frustrated with the inadequate and confusing information being shared, resulting in a lack of confidence in the knowledge of CRA staff. Business owners have expressed their desire for CRA to make more of an effort to educate small business owners and to use language that is comprehensible to them. **While CRA already does a good job with the dissemination of their newsletter (e.g., it is well written, and generally in plain language, with helpful links to tools and resources for SMEs), another idea would be to create a Small Business Owner’s Guide to CRA Compliance and ensure this is made available online or sent to all that register for a business number.**

### Clarity and promptness of written responses

Getting the right information quickly in a clear and concise manner also remains an issue for business owners and tax practitioners. Despite the efforts and commitments made by CRA to improve their written interactions with business owners and tax practitioners, whether it be through My Business Account, e-mail, letters, CRA Chatbot, etc., our 2022 survey results for “promptness of written responses” and “clarity of written responses,” were at the bottom of the list, receiving some of the highest ratings of “poor.” These

Only 15% of SMEs and 4% of tax practitioners felt that knowledge of staff was “good.”

*“We rarely talk with a CRA agent who can adequately and accurately explain and interpret the tax rules.”*

—Tax Practitioner,  
Saskatchewan



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results also reflect no change since the 2014 report, which should be a red flag for CRA, especially as they continue to push towards more digital services. Ensuring accurate and timely information is being provided to business owners is crucial. **As such, CRA should continue to work on making improvements to ensure they are meeting the needs of small business owners and tax practitioners.**

## CRA's Business Enquiries Line

The CRA call centre is one of the only ways that businesses can connect directly with CRA. It is vital that this be an accessible and useful point of contact. Prior to the pandemic, the call centres were already receiving a high volume of calls (more than 8 million calls annually).<sup>6</sup> When the federal government announced its COVID-19 Economic Response Plan, CRA was responsible for quickly implementing various new services and relief measures, all while managing the majority of their own employees who were shifting to working from home and trying to deliver critical services.<sup>7</sup> As a result of the pandemic relief measures, the CRA call centre volume significantly increased, which put a strain on call centre infrastructure and agents. In fact, in 2020-2021, only 33% of calls were answered within 15 minutes, compared to CRA's service standard of 65% of calls answered within that timeframe.<sup>8</sup> The CRA nearly doubled their number of agents at the call centre, and several updates to the technological infrastructure were also deployed in order to help alleviate the volume of calls.<sup>9</sup>

### Connecting to an agent

Many improvements were made to the call centre since the last iteration of this report in 2017, such as extended hours, call back feature, offering more self-service options, etc., but concerningly, there continues to be a distinct increase in businesses rating the accessibility of agents as "poor," as seen in Figures 5a and 5b. In fact, 80% of tax practitioners had to call multiple times before connecting to an agent and a similar number said they were on hold for an unacceptably long period of time (Figure 6). In comparison to the 2017 result, tax practitioners are able to connect faster to the call centre (85% had to call multiple times before connecting in 2017 vs. 80% in 2022), but now end up having to wait much longer to speak with an agent (67% were on hold for an unacceptably long

The Business Enquiries Line is one of the only ways that small businesses can connect directly with CRA.

*"Contacting CRA can be extremely frustrating, and it shouldn't be."*

—Manufacturing, Ontario

<sup>6</sup> Canada Revenue Agency (2018), [2017-18 Departmental Results Report: Tax](https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/corporate/about-canada-revenue-agency-cra/departmental-performance-reports/2017-18-departmental-results-report/tax.html#pg18). <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/corporate/about-canada-revenue-agency-cra/departmental-performance-reports/2017-18-departmental-results-report/tax.html#pg18>

<sup>7</sup> Briefing for the Minister of National Revenue. Managing call volumes - Investments in contact centres. February 2022. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/corporate/about-canada-revenue-agency-cra/ministerial-transition-2021/issues/call-volumes.html>

<sup>8</sup> Briefing for the Minister of National Revenue. Managing call volumes - Investments in contact centres. February 2022. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/corporate/about-canada-revenue-agency-cra/ministerial-transition-2021/issues/call-volumes.html>

<sup>9</sup> Briefing for the Minister of National Revenue. Managing call volumes - Investments in contact centres. February 2022. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/corporate/about-canada-revenue-agency-cra/ministerial-transition-2021/issues/call-volumes.html>



80%

of tax practitioners  
and

1 in 2

small business  
owners had to call  
multiple times  
before getting  
connected to an  
agent.

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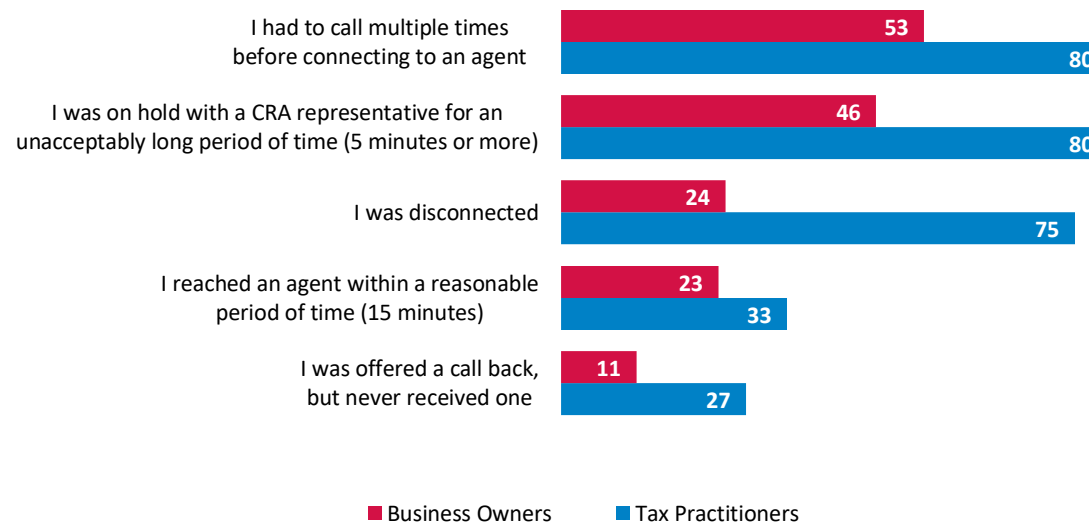
period in 2017 vs. 80% in 2022). As the group most frequently in contact with CRA, it is concerning that such a high percentage of tax practitioners has experienced major accessibility issues.

Small businesses seem to have had a slightly better experience when contacting CRA by phone: 53% claim they had to call multiple times and 46% were on hold for an unacceptably long period of time. These results remained relatively unchanged since the 2014 and 2017 surveys. However, even with CRA's efforts to upgrade their call centre infrastructure, the number of business owners (24%) and tax practitioners (75%) being disconnected has doubled since the 2017 report (11% for business owners and 39% for tax practitioners).

The "call back" feature is new to this report and is not a service that was previously evaluated. About 1 in 10 small businesses (11%) and a little over a quarter of tax practitioners (27%) claim to have not received a call back after being offered one. Although this initiative certainly aligns well with CRA's commitments to becoming more client-centric, the overall feedback from small business owners so far is fairly neutral, but some members have raised concerns related to fraud, unclear phone numbers, and lack of voicemails being left from agents when they call back.

Figure 6

**In the past three years, have you experienced any of the following when you contacted CRA by phone? (% response)**



Sources: 1) CFIB, CRA Survey (Business Owners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=4,304.

2) CFIB, CRA Tax Administration Survey (Tax Practitioners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=226.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.



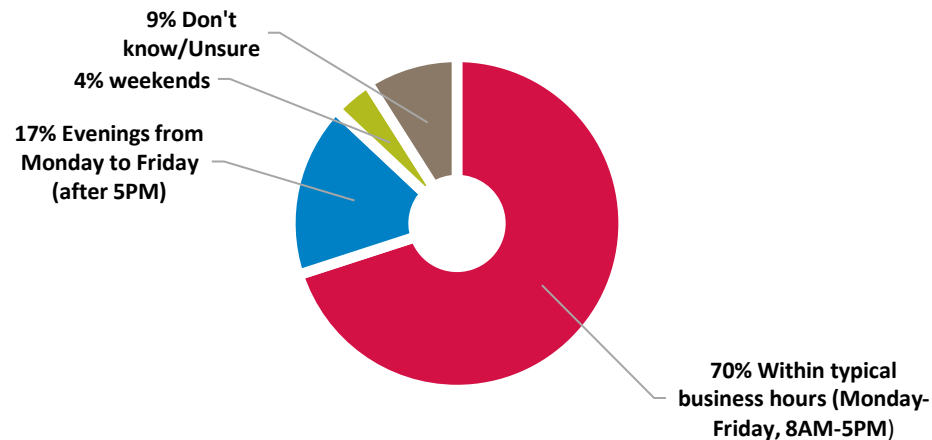
## Extended hours

Increased service hours are an important step to improving the accessibility of CRA’s services. While it appears that not everyone is aware of CRA’s extended hours, something that should be communicated more effectively, others were thankful for this improvement. The majority of small businesses prefer to access CRA’s business help line within normal business hours (Figure 7). However, nearly a quarter of them have indicated weekends and evenings as their preference for accessing the help line.

Further analysis on the extended hours question revealed that businesses with fewer than 5 employees, younger businesses (5 years or less), as well as businesses in the agriculture, retail, social services, and hospitality sectors, were more likely to prefer accessing the business help line during evenings and weekends. Additionally, respondents from Western Canada found that the extended hours did not benefit them as much as their Eastern counterparts. The accessibility of services across Canada is perhaps something CRA could consider when updating service hours.

Figure 7

**If you were seeking assistance related to your business, what would be your preferred day/time to contact CRA’s business help line? (% response)**



Source: CFIB, Your Voice - October 2022 - National Data, October 6-October 31, 2022, final results, n = 4,639.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

## Knowledge & information

As of September 2021, there were 5,700 agents working in call centres, compared to 3,700 in September of 2020. In addition to hiring more agents, the CRA temporarily procured the services of a third-party provider to respond to calls seeking general information

*“Call wait times on hold is completely unacceptable, however extended hours and the ability to gauge wait times on the website has been helpful.”*

—Tax Practitioner, Alberta

*“The call centre hours were not extended enough for B.C.”*

—Tax Practitioner, British Columbia



32%

of small business owners received a general answer that did not meet their needs.

60%

of tax practitioners got different, conflicting or wrong answers to their question.

“CRA telephone representatives should have better training or be able to refer anybody to the proper information.”

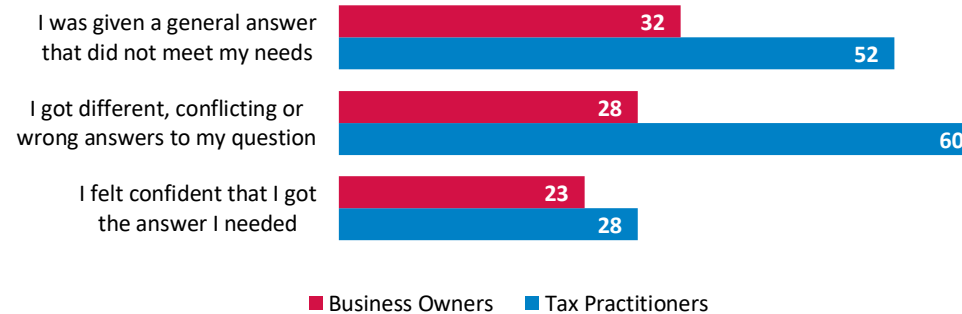
—Construction, Ontario

pertaining to COVID-19 benefits.<sup>10</sup> This staffing increase was intended to combat long wait times within CRA’s call centres; however, this potentially had a detrimental impact on the quality of service and the information agents imparted. Further light is shed on this issue in Figure 8 which shows that the majority (60%) of tax practitioners have received different, conflicting, and even incorrect answers to their questions by CRA agents.

The results from this part of the survey showed clear improvement from the 2014 to the 2017 survey, but unfortunately, the 2022 survey results demonstrate an increase in the level of dissatisfaction with the information and knowledge being shared by agents. In 2017, 30% of business owners and 38% of tax practitioners felt confident in the answers provided by agents, and as of 2022, those numbers have decreased to 23% and 28% respectively. Additionally, the number of business owners receiving wrong or conflicting answers has nearly doubled since 2017, jumping from 16% to 28%. This increase of dissatisfaction can likely be correlated to the fact that several COVID-19 programs were continuously changing and evolving as they were being implemented. As such, the latest program or service updates didn’t always trickle down to front line agents in a timely manner. For a service that is meant to help clarify elements of the tax system, this is unacceptable. Incorrect answers can be costly to small businesses as they can result in taxation mistakes, where penalties can come in the form of hefty fines or can lead to lengthy legal battles. CRA needs to be a reliable source of information and insight into the tax system for small businesses.

Figure 8

In the past three years, have you experienced any of the following when you contacted CRA by phone? (% response)



Sources: 1) CFIB, CRA Survey (Business Owners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=4,304.

2) CFIB, CRA Tax Administration Survey (Tax Practitioners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=226.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

<sup>10</sup> Briefing for the Minister of National Revenue. Managing call volumes - Investments in contact centres. February 2022. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/corporate/about-canada-revenue-agency-cra/ministerial-transition-2021/issues/call-volumes.html>



For a government agency, intended to help and not hinder small businesses, more training is needed to improve the knowledge of agents and the service they provide. While CRA does operate a two-tiered agent system, our members have frequently found that tier-one agents are unable to answer even simple tax-related questions. We are empathetic to the fact that call centres have high levels of turnover, and it takes time to get people adequately trained, especially on such a complex issue as taxes. But small businesses and tax practitioners rely on this information and could be penalized if not informed correctly, so it is imperative that CRA do all that it can to ensure high levels of knowledge and guidance for call-centre agents. This also highlights a deeper issue with the tax system. Frequently, small businesses complain about the unnecessarily complex language used by CRA. Simplifying legislation, processes and programs would make the system more accessible, reduce red tape and costs, as well as improve tax compliance.

### Accountability

Members have raised concerns about the lack of accountability for the advice and information given by agents through the call centre. As a tool to help ensure confidence and accountability in small businesses' interactions with CRA agents, name and ID numbers are to be provided. CRA calls are often recorded for training and review purposes, and the provision of an ID number allows the CRA to identify agents that may need additional training. It also provides a greater degree of security to the caller so that they can note the identity of the agent providing the advice.

When we asked our members if they have experienced agents providing their name and identifier number, responses were overwhelmingly positive, with 86% of tax practitioners and 48% of business owners experiencing this in the last 3 years (Figure 9). Interestingly, in the 2017 survey, only a third (33%) of business owners claimed to have received agent names and identification numbers, whereas the number for tax practitioners has remained almost unchanged since the 2014 survey. It is good to see this trending positively.

Figure 9

**In the past three years, have you experienced any of the following when you contacted CRA by phone? (% response)**



Sources: 1) CFIB, CRA Survey (Business Owners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=4,304.

2) CFIB, CRA Tax Administration Survey (Tax Practitioners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=226.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Most tax practitioners (86%) and more and more small businesses (48%) have noted that agents provided their name and identifier number.



## Agent professionalism

While most agents are following accountability measures (Figure 9), some respondents also expressed concerns about: agents stating their first name and identifier number too quickly to be noted, not being able to understand agents, issues with poor phone line connections, language barriers, and difficulty with pronunciations. Poor phone lines contribute to small businesses' desire for CRA agents to return to the office. However, connection alone is not the only issue of communication. Members also raised concerns about agents not speaking in a clear and comprehensible manner. Clear communication must be accessible, in both French and English, yet French Canadian members have expressed frustration with the small percentage of CRA agents that speak French.

Despite these communication complaints, small businesses did report positive interactions with the agents from CRA's Business Enquiries Line. In fact, agents' attitudes were rated favourably, with 70% of tax practitioners encountering an agent with a friendly attitude and just under half (46%) of business owners experiencing the same (Figure 10). Although 66% of business owners have indicated feeling intimidated in their dealings with CRA (Figure 3), we are pleased to see that agents' attitudes continue to improve in comparison to past survey results. These results are also aligned with CRA's reporting, where 74% of taxpayers calling the individual, benefits and business phone lines remain satisfied with the phone service.<sup>11</sup>

Figure 10

**In the past three years, have you experienced any of the following when you contacted CRA by phone? (% response)**



Sources: 1) CFIB, CRA Survey (Business Owners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=4,304.

2) CFIB, CRA Tax Administration Survey (Tax Practitioners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=226.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

<sup>11</sup> Briefing for the Minister of National Revenue. Managing call volumes - Investments in contact centres. February 2022. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/corporate/about-canada-revenue-agency-cra/ministerial-transition-2021/issues/call-volumes.html>

Most tax practitioners (70%) and 1 in 2 small businesses encountered an agent with a friendly attitude.

*“All of my interactions with the CRA (weekly and sometimes daily calls and/or use of Represent a Client) have been positive.”*

—Personal, Misc. Services, British Columbia



## Digital Services & Other Initiatives

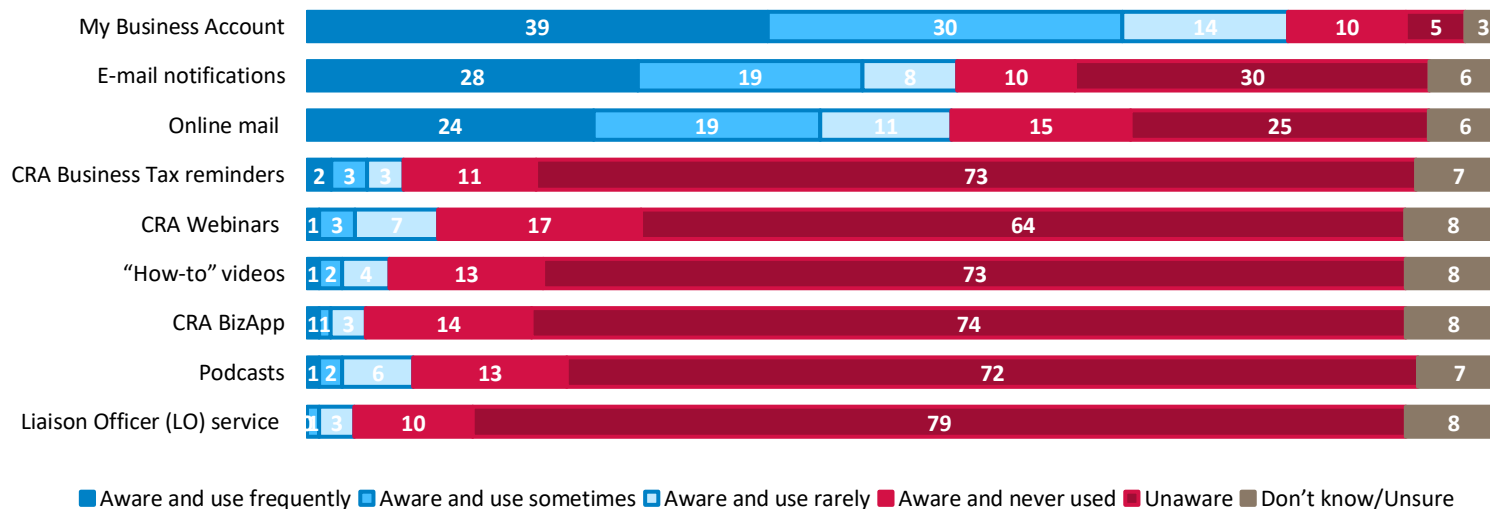
The unprecedented circumstances of the last three years have resulted in a societal shift to online spaces and communication. CRA is no different; today, there are many initiatives that CRA offers online. CRA’s efforts to digitize services for businesses have come a long way, and although the implementation of various electronic services has helped simplify and streamline certain taxation processes, many of these digital initiatives continue to remain underutilized.

As part of this year’s survey, we presented our members with an extensive list of digital initiatives and services offered by CRA and asked them to rate their usage of them. Unsurprisingly, business owners were mostly unaware of the initiatives offered, with tax practitioners being more aware but still not utilizing them (Figures 11a and 11b). The most widely known initiative was My Business Account (MyBA) used by 83% of business owners and 95% of tax practitioners. Despite poor awareness of CRA’s webinars, podcasts, BizApp, and Liaison Officer (LO) service, we did receive positive feedback from small business owners on the initiatives that provide clarity on the complex tax system. Unfortunately, these initiatives can only help those small business owners that are aware of them, and while support is high for many programs, awareness is not. One of the biggest challenges CRA currently faces is to find ways to ensure that business owners are more aware of the programs that are available to them.

Figures 11a and 11b

Please indicate whether you are aware and have used each of the following (% response)

### Business Owners



Business owners were mostly unaware of the digital services and other initiatives.

*“Many CRA programs such as webinars and podcasts are unknown. CRA should do a better job of informing small business owners on the availability of such resources.”*

—Professional Services, Ontario

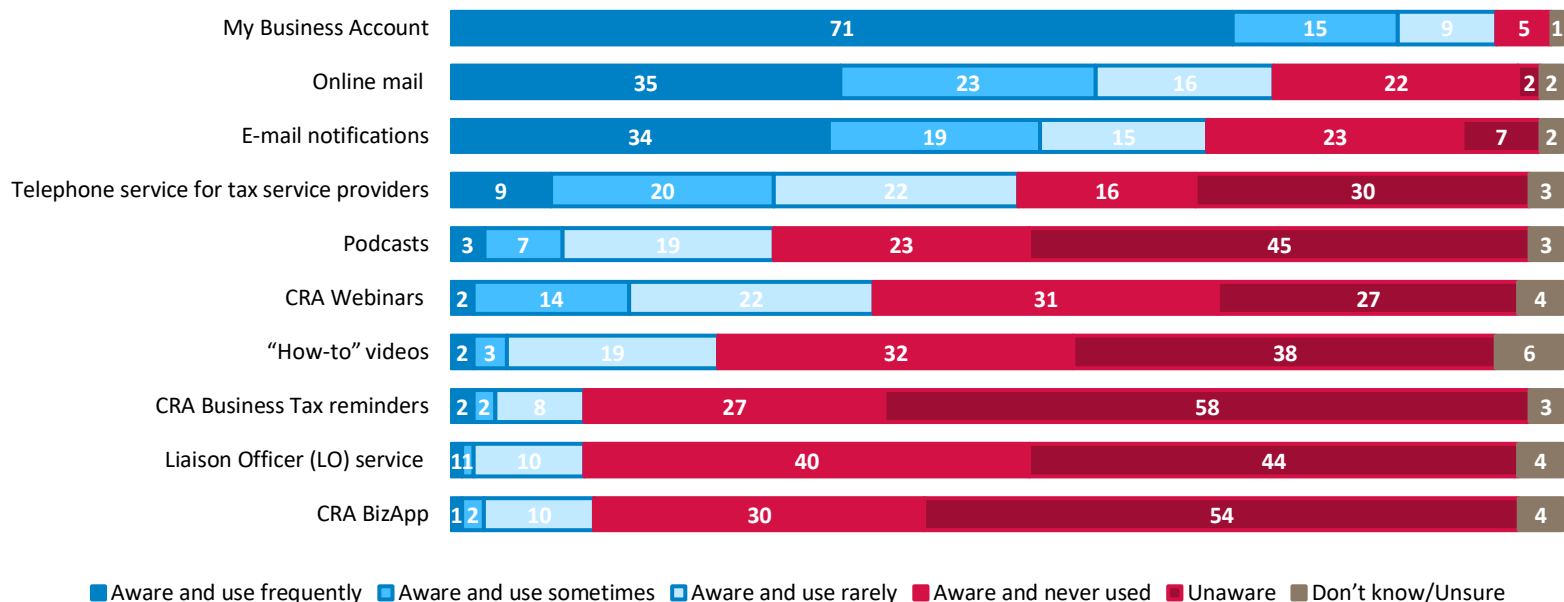


Tax practitioners were more aware of digital services and other initiatives but still not utilizing them.

*“When CRA sends me e-mails saying there is new information about my business that I should look at, they never provide a link to the web page.”*

–Unclassified, Ontario

### Tax Practitioners



Sources: 1) CFIB, CRA Survey (Business Owners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=4,304.

2) CFIB, CRA Tax Administration Survey (Tax Practitioners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=226.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

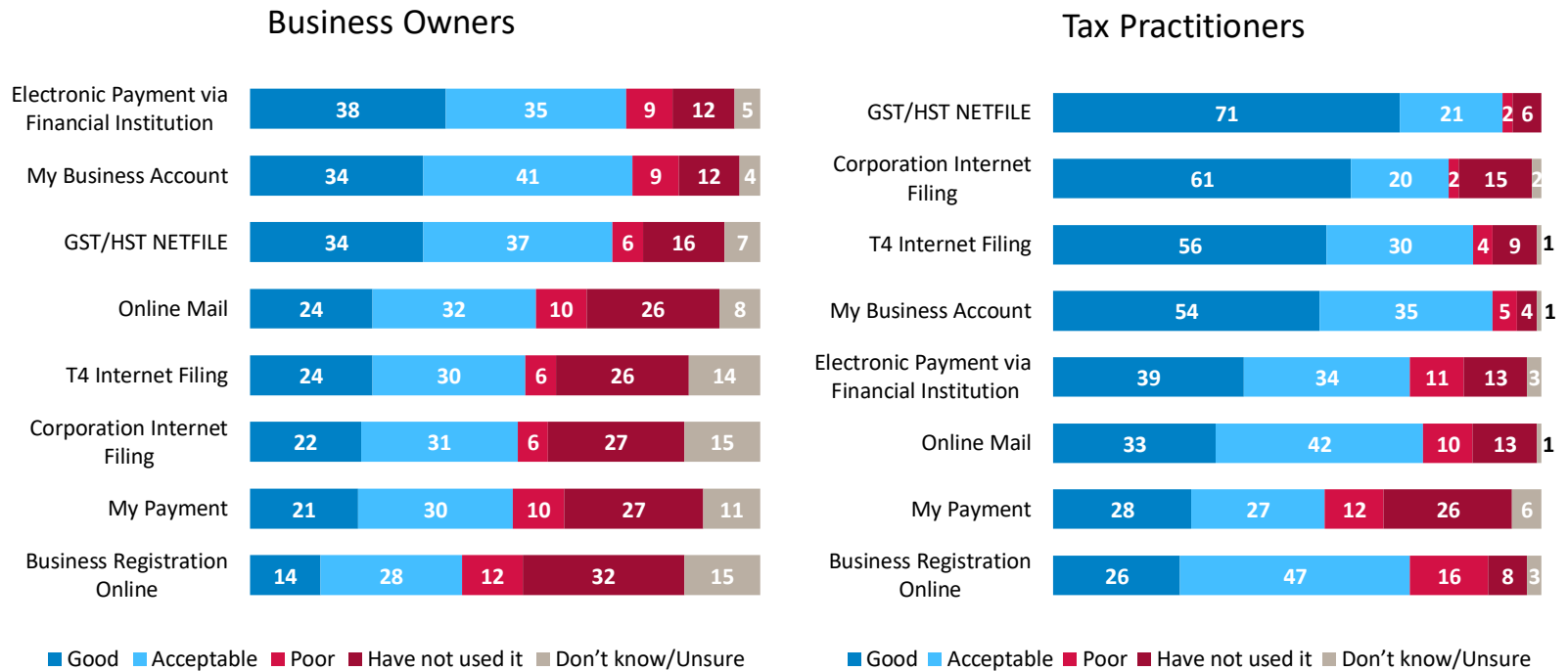
Generally, the electronic services offered by CRA are well liked when used by small business owners and tax practitioners. For those that are aware and have used CRA’s electronic services, the majority consider them to be either “good” or “acceptable” (Figures 12a and 12b). The top-rated electronic services offered by CRA for small business owners are My Business Account, electronic payments via financial institutions and GST/HST NETFILE. Tax practitioners were most satisfied with the GST/HST NETFILE, My Business Account, corporation internet filing, and T4 internet filing.

Of those that had used these electronic services, the highest level of dissatisfaction for business owners was with business registration (12%), My Payment (10%), and online mail (10%). Tax practitioners were most dissatisfied with business registration (16%), My Payment (12%), electronic payment via financial institutions (11%), and online mail (10%). Despite these programs receiving the lowest levels of dissatisfaction, the biggest issue appears to be that many business owners are simply not using the various online services that are available because they do not know they exist.



Figures 12a and 12b

**How would you rate the following CRA electronic services? (% response)**



Sources: 1) CFIB, CRA Survey (Business Owners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=4,304.

2) CFIB, CRA Tax Administration Survey (Tax Practitioners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=226.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

**My Business Account (MyBA)**

The digital service that business owners and tax practitioners used most was MyBA (Figures 11a and 11b). Since its inception, the functionality of MyBA has continued to expand and has the potential to reduce the time and effort that is required for businesses to file their taxes. MyBA gives business owners an easy-to-access and consolidated location for many of their tax needs. So, it is good to see that a sizeable proportion of business owners (83%) and tax practitioners (95%) use MyBA, which is a significant increase from 2017 when a little over half (55%) of business owners were using MyBA. It is important to note that there remains a small percentage of small businesses who prefer to access tax services offline. In fact, 15% of business owners and 5% of tax practitioners indicated they have never used MyBA (Figures 11a and 11b).

For those that are aware and have used CRA’s electronic services, the majority consider them to be either “good” or “acceptable.”



MyBA was rated as one of the top digital services offered by CRA and most small business owners (83%) and tax practitioners (95%) use it.

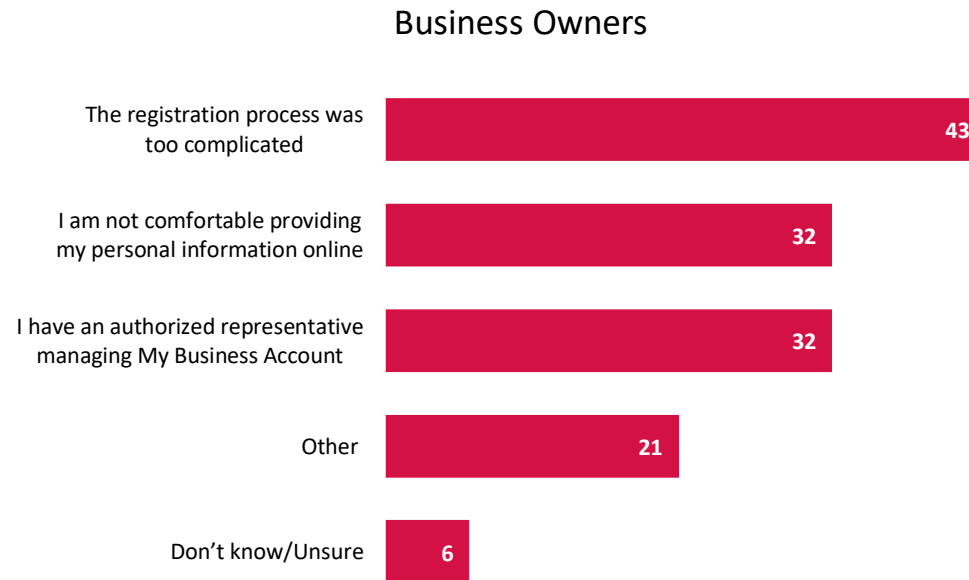
## 2023 CRA Report Card

The two main reasons small business owners are not using MyBA are the complicated registration process (43%) and not wanting to provide personal information online (32%) (Figure 13). Interestingly, businesses located in Nova Scotia (60%) and Saskatchewan (65%), and those in the agriculture sector (58%) indicated that the complicated registration process was their top deterrent from using MyBA. About one third of businesses (32%) who do not use MyBA indicated they had an authorized representative to manage their account. Issues with access to reliable internet, being locked out of their accounts, the portal not being user-friendly, and risks of being hacked or being part of fraudulent online activities, were all listed as other reasons for not wanting to use MyBA.

Given these apprehensions, it is important to ensure that traditional, non-electronic tools remain available. Not all business owners have access or are able to use online services. In particular, for businesses located in remote or rural areas with limited access to broadband internet, making online payments can be difficult. If CRA expects small businesses to utilize their online services, then they should make filing online simpler, quicker and more efficient to encourage greater usage.

Figure 13

### Why have you not used My Business Account? (% response)



Sources: CFIB, CRA Survey (Business Owners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=296.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.



Overall, MyBA was rated as one of the top digital services offered by CRA, as 34% of business owners and 54% of tax practitioners found it to be “good” (Figures 12a and 12b). This data shows an increase in satisfaction for both business owners and tax practitioners since the 2017 survey. We have also continued to support the initiative within MyBA to provide a written answer to a business owner’s enquiry within 10 business days and that CRA will honour that response even if it’s later found to be incorrect as long as all the required information has been provided.

### Liaison Officer (LO) service

Since the last iteration of this report in 2017, the Liaison Officer (LO) service, which had originally started as a pilot project, was implemented into a permanent initiative and expanded to include incorporated businesses. This was seen as a positive step towards building a better customer service relationship with small business owners. Through the LO service, the CRA offers free expert tax assistance, support, and guidance to small businesses. The goal of this service is to help small businesses understand their tax obligations and avoid common tax errors.<sup>12</sup> While we applaud this education-focused approach, this initiative remains underutilized.

During the pandemic, the LO service took on a new role, and proactively sought to support thousands of small businesses with key information to help them access COVID-19 relief measures. Despite the outreach by the LO service, 79% of small business owners and 44% of tax practitioners remain unfamiliar with this initiative (Figures 11a and 11b). Businesses in social services (90%), arts, recreation and information (85%), as well as retail, hospitality and agriculture (80%) were much more likely to be unaware of the LO service. On a positive note, there has been an increase in the percentage of those who are aware of the LO service (92% of business owners were unaware of the service in 2017 vs. 79% in 2022).

Only about 4% of small business owners have accessed the LO service (Figure 11a), and the feedback received from those who have used it is relatively positive. As shown in Figure 14, more than half of small businesses rated the service as good (22%) or acceptable (47%). **As this service continues to expand, increasing awareness among small business owners should be a top priority for CRA, as this initiative seeks to improve tax compliance without using penalties.**

79%  
of small business  
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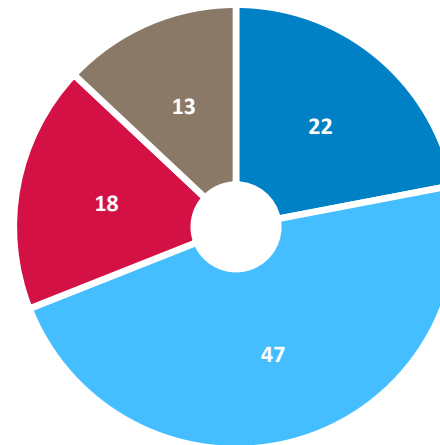
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<sup>12</sup> The Liaison Officer Service. Information Session. <https://www.carfac.ca/carfacwp2019/wp-content/uploads/Liaison-Officer-presentation-Feb-2022.pdf>



Figure 14

### How would you rate your experience with the Liaison Officer Service? (% response)



■ Good ■ Acceptable ■ Poor ■ Don't know/Unsure

Sources: CFIB, CRA Survey (Business Owners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=114.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

## Website

Small businesses want to be able to access tax information quickly and easily and searching through CRA’s website is the most likely way SMEs will do that. However, members have complained that information is difficult to find and that it is not written in plain language. Even tax practitioners have expressed frustration with the complex language used. Similar to past surveys, business owners and tax practitioners were asked to assess the user-friendliness, readability/simplicity of information, and availability of information on the CRA website. As depicted in Figures 15a and 15b, the majority of responses were “good” or “acceptable” for both business owners and tax practitioners; however, there is a significant proportion that also rated these services as “poor.” Results were slightly more positive for tax practitioners, as they are more likely to have a good working knowledge of the website because they would tend to use it more frequently.

CRA's website is an important tool to help small businesses with their tax obligations but it can be difficult to navigate and understand.

*“My main concern is their website. It is not intuitive, it's extremely difficult to find what I'm looking for, you must click on many pages to get to where you want to go.”*

—Professional Services, Ontario



2023 CRA Report Card

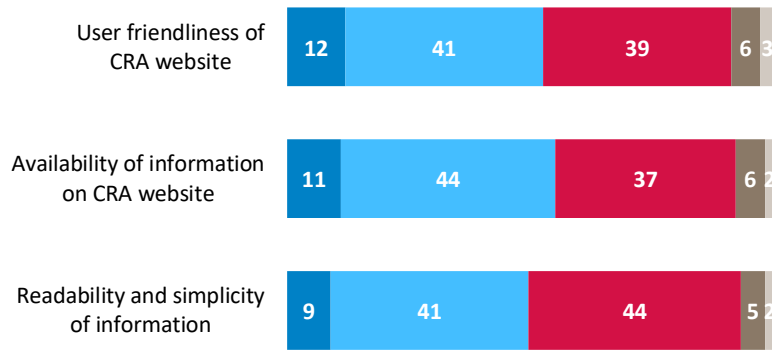
Figures 15a and 15b

**Overall, please rate the current service of CRA on each of the following customer service measures (% response)**

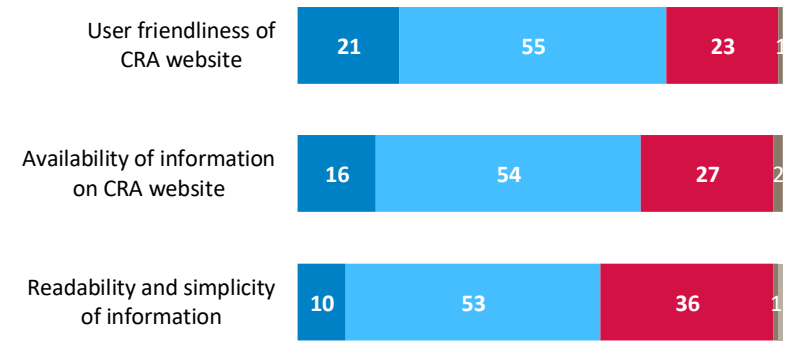
Both business owners and tax practitioners see much room for improvement with CRA's website, citing that the information is difficult to find and not in plain language.

*“I am a very educated person and find CRA difficult to deal with and understand. They need a language editor. Their sentences are incomprehensible and full of contradictions.”*  
 —Hospitality, New Brunswick

**Business Owners**



**Tax Practitioners**



■ Good ■ Acceptable ■ Poor ■ Don't know/Unsure ■ Not applicable

■ Good ■ Acceptable ■ Poor ■ Don't know/Unsure ■ Not applicable

Sources: 1) CFIB, CRA Survey (Business Owners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=4,304.

2) CFIB, CRA Tax Administration Survey (Tax Practitioners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=226.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

It can often be difficult for a small business owner to navigate the CRA website in order to find the information or forms they need. The navigation of the website is not intuitive, and the search function often does not turn up the information business owners are looking for. Only 12% of businesses said that the user-friendliness of CRA's website was "good." Businesses with more than 20 employees were more satisfied with the user-friendliness of CRA's website, likely because they may have a dedicated professional supporting the business's financials, whereas smaller employers have limited internal resources. The results are more positive for tax practitioners, where 21% rated user-friendliness as "good."

Small business owners have also complained that information is difficult to find, and that it is not written in plain language. Only 11% of small businesses rated the availability of information as "good" and 9% rated the readability and simplicity of the information as "good." Again, ratings for tax practitioners were slightly more positive, but even tax practitioners have expressed frustration with the complex language used on CRA's website. Businesses located in smaller communities (45%), which would also include northern communities, were the most critical with the readability and simplicity of the information, giving some of the highest ratings of "poor." When looking at the data on readability and simplicity of the information by sector, agricultural businesses displayed the highest ratings of "poor" (51%), followed closely by natural resources (48%) and manufacturing (47%). The Income Tax Act is arguably



## 2023 CRA Report Card

one of the most complex pieces of legislation that small business owners are required to comply with. Many struggle to understand their obligations, and information online is often too difficult to understand. **As such, it is essential that information aimed at business owners is communicated in plain language and includes clear examples where possible.**

Since the 2014 survey, the data collected on the performance of CRA’s website has essentially remained the same. However, the results from this year’s survey show a marginal increase in “poor” ratings by small business owners in each of the categories. This should be a red flag for CRA, especially given the commitments it has made to adopt measures that will provide better service for small businesses.

Audits can instill a sense of fear and panic in small businesses and interactions with CRA can leave them feeling guilty until proven innocent.

*“They should use a little common sense when deciding to audit a small business. Generally, the folks at CRA are trying their best, but appeals and gathering additional information from taxpayers to satisfy the audit or objection requires a lot of time.”*  
—Retail, Alberta

Assessment of CRA’s website: “Poor”	2022	2017	2014
User-friendliness	39%	32%	32%
Readability/simplicity of information	44%	41%	32%
Availability of information	37%	28%	27%

## Audits

When CRA conducts an audit, it does so to ensure compliance with Canada’s tax laws and to maintain public confidence in the fairness of the system. CFIB is supportive of these goals but cautions that if audits are not done in a courteous and timely manner, they may negatively impact the relationship between SMEs and CRA. It is not uncommon for members to describe audits as “arbitrary,” and for interactions to leave them feeling “guilty until proven innocent.” This has been an ongoing trend since the original CRA Report Card. Over the years, the CRA has made changes with the auditing process, but unfortunately, audits continue to pose significant challenges for business owners.

## Contact with small business

There are various reasons CRA may reach out to small businesses, such as: missing payments, owing tax monies, reviewing tax documents, or it could even be the Liaison Officer service. Whether it is a letter, a phone call or an e-mail notification, advising the taxpayer that their accounts are being reviewed and/or information is to be submitted, for many there is a sense of panic and fear that CRA is auditing them. Although CRA has taken a more customer-focused approach in its interactions with small businesses, there is still





lots of room for improving the contact with them, especially for matters that are considered to be routine check-ups. **CRA should strive to ensure that all taxpayer communications clarify CRA’s intent and outline what is required of them in plain language.**

In the past three years, 51% of small business owners reported CRA contacting them by mail, 46% by phone, and 35% by e-mail. These results show no change from 2017, but to be noted, contact via e-mail is a new feature which has only recently been allowed by CRA. Only 4% reported being contacted in person or virtually for an audit, which is a significant decrease from the 2017 results where 14% were contacted in person (Figure 16). This reduction can be explained by the fact that CRA deliberately paused doing audits for several months in 2020/21 in recognition of the hardships caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on businesses and individuals. It is our understanding that regular audit workloads have now resumed.

Figure 16

**Has your business been contacted by CRA during the past three years? (% response)**



Sources: CFIB, CRA Survey (Business Owners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=4,304.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

**Time spent complying with an audit**

Every time a business owner is contacted by CRA, they are forced to devote time to answering questions and completing tasks that they would otherwise dedicate to operating their businesses. This puts an enormous strain on small business owners, which is, unsurprisingly, the most costly when contact is for the purposes of an audit.

Since 2001 there has been a steady increase in the number of days required of a small business to comply with CRA audits. For the purpose of this report, complying was defined in the survey as “anything [the business owner] is asked to do to meet the demands of

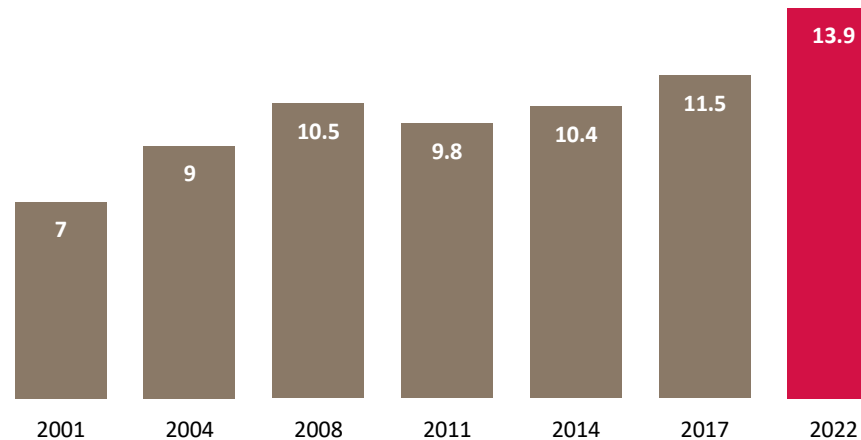
During COVID, audits were suspended for some time so no surprise that only 4% of small businesses reported being audited, which is a significant decrease from 2017 (14%).



*the auditor.*” In 2022 the average number of days taken to comply with a CRA audit increased from 11.5 in 2017 to 13.9 (Figure 17). The consistent increases in the time spent to comply with an audit are troubling. The 2017 report had already flagged this as an area of concern and yet it is now even longer. Perhaps the impacts of COVID-19 also affected the length of audits as many auditors were moved to work in other higher priority areas of CRA, but regardless of the reasons, it is a trend that we will be watching closely in future reports.

Figure 17

**Average number of days spent by small businesses complying with CRA audit during the last 3 years**



Sources: 1) CFIB, CRA Survey (Business Owners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=4,304. 2) CFIB, Canada Revenue Agency Report Card: CRA’s Performance from the Small Business Perspective, December 2017.

Note: Respondents were asked to enter the total number of days.

**Quality of the auditor**

As CRA moves towards being more small business friendly, we also asked business owners and tax practitioners to rate their experience with CRA audits (Figures 18a and 18b). We found that there have been some improvements, but major shortfalls still exist. On a positive note, more than half of small business owners and tax practitioners felt that the overall professionalism of the auditor was “good” or “acceptable.” From the tax practitioner’s perspective, the level of satisfaction with the professionalism of auditors jumped by 10 percentage points, from 17% rating it as “good” in 2017 to 27% in 2022.

On the question of whether the time used to comply with their audit was effective, the response from business owners and tax practitioners remained relatively static from past survey results. However, there were variations depending on the location of the business that are noteworthy. Businesses located in rural areas indicated the highest levels of dissatisfaction with 81% rating the time

The number of days spent complying with an audit has been increasing over the years and has doubled since 2001.

*“A recent audit of two separate HST return periods revealed everything to be 100% in order on our end. In the meantime, numerous hours of time were spent providing CRA with information they requested – a tremendous waste of time and a substantial cost to my business.”*  
–Construction, Ontario



to comply with an audit as “poor” (48%) or “acceptable” (33%). This makes sense given the limited resources available to businesses in smaller communities.

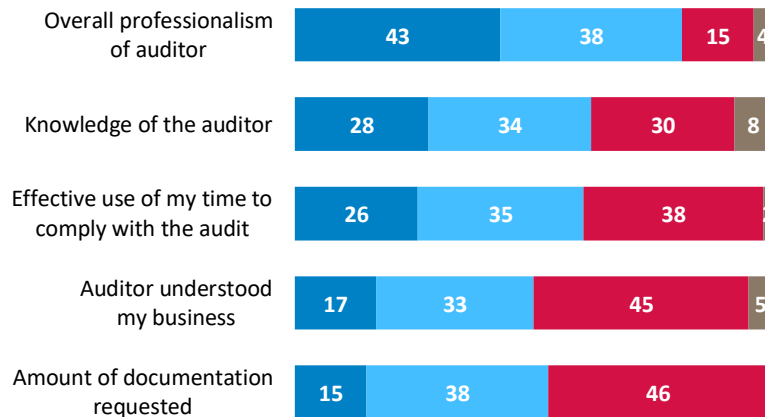
Businesses were asked for the first time this year whether they felt the auditor knew or understood their business. Almost half (45%) rated it as “poor” and indicates a lack of confidence in the auditor’s ability to understand their business. This is particularly apparent in the transportation (80%), retail (60%), and hospitality (56%) sectors, which all had the highest ratings for “poor.” Additionally, nearly half of business owners (46%) and tax practitioners (44%) felt that the amount of documentation being requested by CRA was “poor.” As part of the auditing process, small businesses are forced to devote time to answering questions and completing tasks that they would otherwise dedicate to operating their businesses. **In order for businesses to feel that auditors understand their business and to help reduce the number of documents being requested, CRA should continue ensuring sector specific or specialized auditors remain available to assist in the auditing process.** One third (30%) of small business owners rated the auditor’s knowledge as “poor,” an increase from the 2017 results, which was 25%. While tax practitioners generally felt that the auditor’s knowledge had improved since the 2017 survey (19% rating it as “good”), 30% still cited it as “poor.”

Figures 18a and 18b

**Overall, how do you rate your level of satisfaction with CRA audits on each of the following aspects? (% response)**

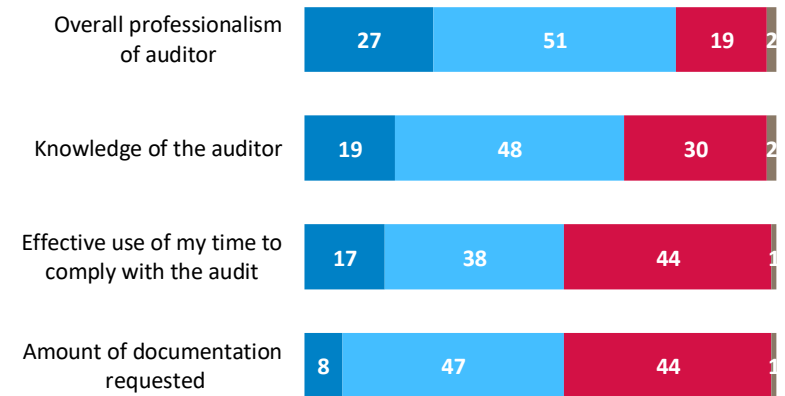
**45%**  
of small businesses felt a lack of confidence in the auditor’s ability to understand their business.

### Business Owners



■ Good ■ Acceptable ■ Poor ■ Don't know/Not applicable

### Tax Practitioners



■ Good ■ Acceptable ■ Poor ■ Don't know/Unsure

Sources: 1) CFIB, CRA Survey (Business Owners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=133.

2) CFIB, CRA Tax Administration Survey (Tax Practitioners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=168.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

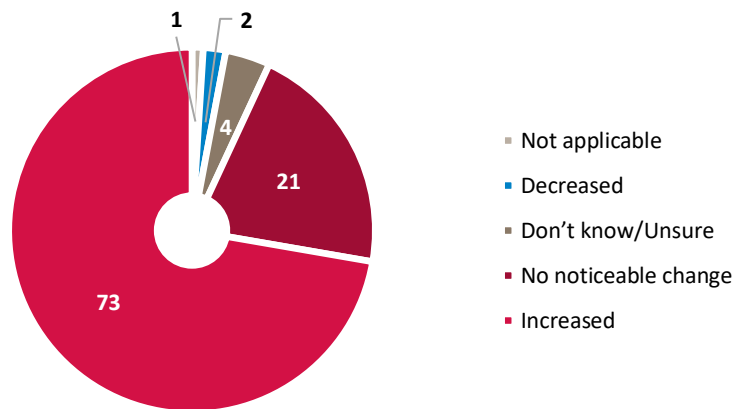
## Administrative Tax Burden

Administrative burden (“Red tape”) can be defined as excessive government regulations (i.e., unfair, overly costly, poorly designed, or contradictory rules and regulations) and poor government customer service. Small businesses face significantly higher costs and spend much more time than large businesses to comply with government regulations.<sup>13</sup> For small business owners, the cost and time needed for compliance with their tax obligations can significantly affect their competitiveness.

Despite efforts made by CRA to reduce irritants related to the Canadian tax system for small business, tax compliance remains challenging. When we asked our tax practitioner members how the overall administrative burden of tax obligations for their clients has changed over the past three years, a staggering 73% said this burden had increased (Figure 19). This is a 7 percentage point increase since 2017. The past three years have been especially difficult for small businesses, so this is not the time to be increasing the tax and administrative burden on small businesses still struggling with the aftermath of the pandemic.

Figure 19

**How has the overall administrative burden of tax obligations on your business clients changed during the past three years? (% response)**



Sources: CFIB, CRA Tax Administration Survey (Tax Practitioners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n = 226.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

<sup>13</sup> CFIB. Canada’s Red Tape Report. The Cost of Regulation to Small Business. January 2021. <https://www.cfib-fcei.ca/en/research-economic-analysis/canadas-red-tape-report>



# 73%

of tax practitioners said that the overall administrative tax burden of their clients had increased.

*“Our overall federal tax burden in Canada—particularly for small business—is way too high. Addressing that would be the most helpful thing the government could do.”*

—Hospitality, British Columbia



### Top tax-related irritants

At the federal level, tax-related issues ranked high among small business irritants. Of the most burdensome regulations reported by small business owners, three are CRA/tax-related (Figure 20). In fact, businesses have consistently cited GST/HST (60%), income taxes (58%), and payroll taxes (56%) as the most burdensome federal regulations.

Why are taxes so challenging for small business owners? The complexity of the federal tax system, constant changes to legislation, the amount of paperwork, the frequency of submitting certain taxes, the amount of tax measures an entrepreneur is subject to, the different levels of government involved in levying and collecting tax (e.g., provincial, municipal, federal, etc.), long wait times for reaching an agent, and dealing with audits, are all contributing factors to the tax burden felt by business owners. Few have in-house accountants or human resources specialists to help manage and understand their tax obligations. Although electronic tools (such as T4 Internet Filing and GST/HST NETFILE) have been developed to ease the processing of these returns, the uptake numbers and level of satisfaction have remained relatively static since the 2017 report (Figure 12a).

Figure 20

### Most burdensome federal regulations (% response)



Source: CFIB, Regulation and Paper Burden Survey, 2020, n=6,407.

Of the most burdensome federal regulations reported by small business owners, three are CRA/tax-related.

*“Larger companies can afford to hire a dedicated employee for these tasks. Small businesses cannot. The red tape needs to be reduced.”*  
—Hospitality, Ontario

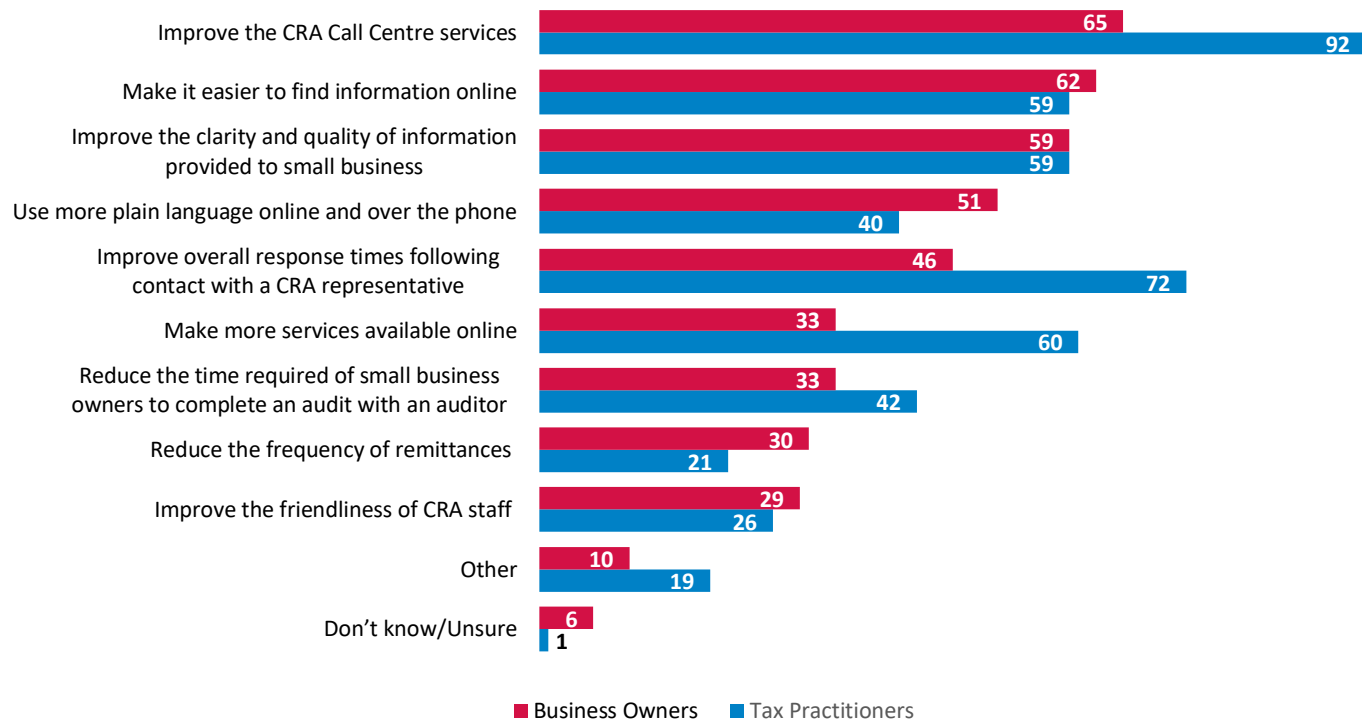


## Reducing the tax burden on small businesses

At a time when small businesses are still making less than their normal revenues and many are carrying pandemic-related debt, reducing the overall tax burden for small business remains a key priority with 92% citing the reduction of the overall tax burden as a top issue for governments in 2023.<sup>14</sup> When we asked business owners and tax practitioners to provide us with what, in their view, is the most important thing CRA could do to reduce their tax burden and improve service, irritants related to agent accessibility and clarity of information topped the list (Figure 21).

Figure 21

### What are the most important things CRA could do to improve its service and reduce tax burden? (% response)



Sources: 1) CFIB, CRA Survey (Business Owners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=4,304. 2) CFIB, CRA Tax Administration Survey (Tax Practitioners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=226.

<sup>14</sup> CFIB, preliminary results for the Your Voice - January 2023, n = 1,649.

Three most important things CRA can do to reduce SME tax burden and improve service:

1. Improve the CRA Call Centre services
2. Make it easier to find information online
3. Improve the clarity and quality of information provided to SMEs

Not being able to access information and/or staff is costly to small businesses and does not fit in with CRA's goal to be more small business friendly. The time it takes to get into contact with a CRA agent can be considerable, and in a world where time is money, small businesses cannot afford this expense. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that one of the most important improvements tax practitioners (92%) and business owners (65%) want CRA to make is to continue enhancing the CRA call centre services (Figure 21). Improving overall response times following contact with a CRA representative was also highly desired (72% for tax practitioners and 46% for business owners).

“Lack of staff knowledge” and “lack of clear information” are two key areas where small business owners and tax practitioners feel that the CRA could improve their services to help improve tax compliance. Making it easier to find information online, improving the clarity and quality of information, and using more plain language online and over the phones were all among some of the most selected responses. CRA should make it a top priority to improve the dissemination of information and should focus on ensuring that forms, documents, and websites are clear and easy to read. Additionally, one of the most popular responses from tax practitioners is to make more services available online (60%). Small business owners and tax practitioners are generally supportive of CRA online tools and initiatives (Figures 11a and 11b), but many small business owners are either unaware of these services or do not know how to access them.

Over the years, CRA has attempted to ensure that tax and non-tax policies do not place entrepreneurs at a competitive disadvantage, but sadly, from the perspective of small businesses, little to no improvements have been made to address their hefty tax compliance burden. CRA should focus on policies that can help small businesses deal with their rising costs and heavy debt loads so they can have more leeway to invest in their future. **As such, finding ways to reduce the tax compliance burden on small business should be a top priority for CRA.**

## Taxpayer Fairness

One of CRA's core responsibilities is to uphold the integrity of the tax system, and when clients disagree with actions taken, CRA is supposed to offer avenues for redress.<sup>15</sup> These avenues are intended to ensure taxpayer fairness. Business owners were asked about their awareness and use of these initiatives, whereas tax practitioners were asked about the effectiveness. As identified in previous sections of this report, communication and awareness remain an issue. Small businesses reported that it was unclear what steps

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<sup>15</sup> CRA. 2020-21 Departmental Results Report. <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/corporate/about-canada-revenue-agency-cra/departamental-performance-reports/2020-21-departamental-results-report.html#toc4>



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Small businesses reported that it was unclear what steps needed to be taken to address issues of taxpayer fairness.

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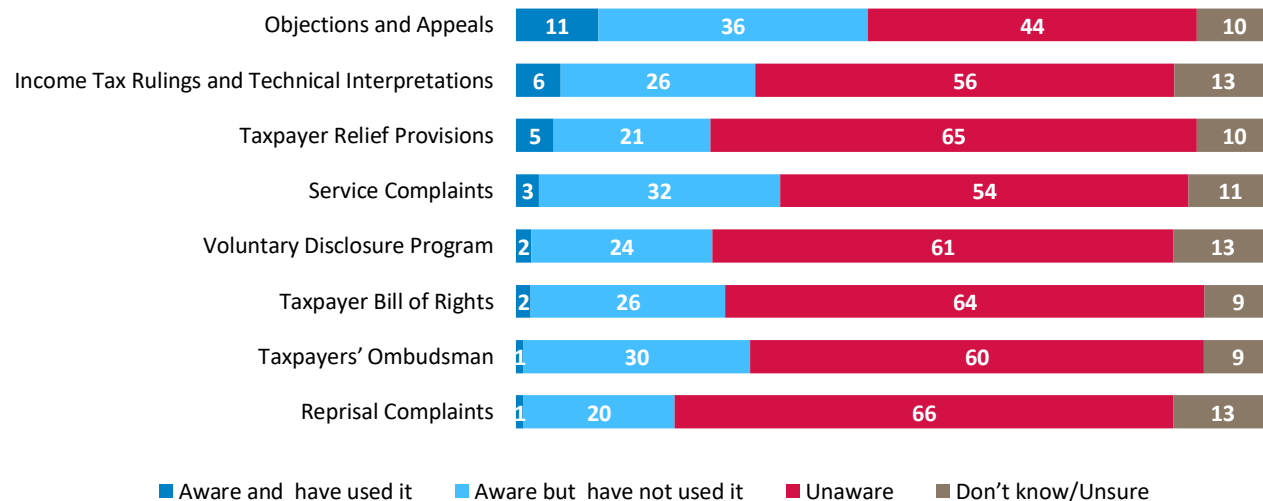


needed to be taken to address issues of taxpayer fairness, and perhaps more troubling, how these initiatives address taxpayer fairness. Among business owners only a small percentage indicated they had used the initiatives, which is likely because they may not have had any need to use them or had a professional doing it for them. In fact, 44 to 66% of small businesses were unaware of these taxpayer fairness initiatives, illuminating the need for CRA to better communicate and raise awareness for taxpayer fairness initiatives (Figure 22).

As expected, tax practitioners were more familiar with these initiatives. However, they were not all considered effective. The most effective initiatives were Income Tax Rulings and Technical Interpretations (51% effective), the Voluntary Disclosure Program (44% effective), and Objections and Appeals (43% effective) (Figure 23). Income Tax Rulings and Objections and Appeals also had some of the highest levels of awareness among business owners. Interestingly, one of the initiatives business owners were most aware of (35%) was Service Complaints. However, 53% of tax practitioners rated this as one of the least effective avenues for redress.

Figure 22

**Please indicate your awareness and use of the following tools designed to address taxpayer fairness. (% response)**



Sources: CFIB, CRA Survey (Business Owners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=4,304.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Between half and two thirds of small business owners were unaware of the various tools available to address taxpayer fairness.

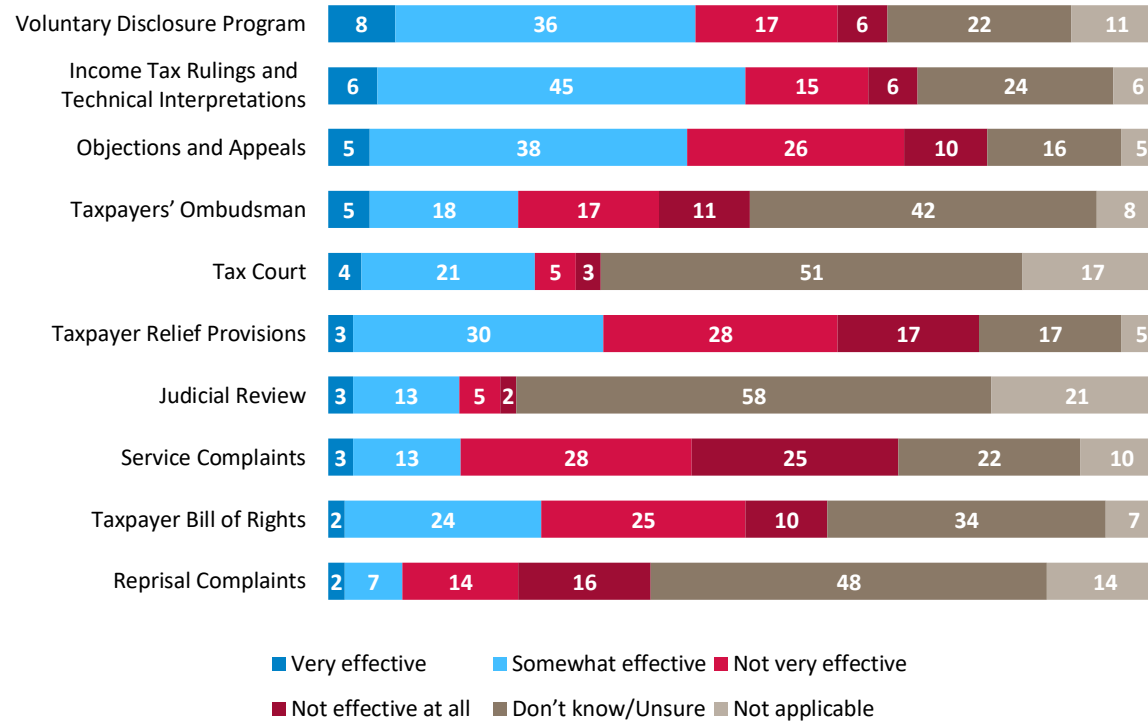
*“I had to go through the ombudsman before my case saw any movement at all. It sat with CRA untouched for 60 days.”*  
—Retail, Nova Scotia





Figure 23

**How would you rate the effectiveness of each of the following in addressing taxpayer fairness? (% response)**



Sources: CFIB, CRA Tax Administration Survey (Tax Practitioners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=226.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Further evidence of problems with taxpayer fairness is the length of time it takes to process and address issues. CRA revealed that it takes on average: 142 days to complete low complexity income tax objections, 318 days to complete medium complexity income tax objections, and over 690 days to complete high complexity income tax objections.<sup>16</sup> These timelines seem unnecessarily long and

<sup>16</sup> CRA. Processing times and complexity levels - Income tax and GST/HST objections. December 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/about-canada-revenue-agency-cra/complaints-disputes/complexity-level-processing-time.html>

Most (88%) small businesses believe that CRA should be required to compensate when a case is ruled in favour of the taxpayer.



## 2023 CRA Report Card

contradictory to the strict deadlines CRA imposes on taxpayers. **To increase taxpayer fairness, CRA should extend the time allowed to file a Notice of Objection from 90 days to 180 days and reduce the time that CRA takes to process a Notice of Objection.** Small businesses have raised concerns that the current 90-day restriction on the date of the assessment/reassessment means that they cannot take an informal approach to deal with these matters as it takes CRA considerably longer to deal with informal requests for changes to be made.

CRA played a pivotal role in developing and delivering some key COVID-19 programs used by many SMEs.

Additionally, when a business owner feels that CRA did not interpret the facts or apply the law correctly, they may decide to bring the case to tax court after exhausting all other levels of appeal. These cases can take a long time to resolve and legal expenses can add up quickly. Typically, taxpayers are responsible for paying their own legal fees, even if the tax court rules in their favour; whereas in other courts of law, the losing party is often ordered to pay some or all of the winning party's fees. CRA will only pay legal expenses if the judge rules they acted maliciously towards the taxpayer. **Eighty-eight percent of SMEs believe that CRA should be required to compensate when a case is ruled in favour of the taxpayer.**<sup>17</sup> Many business owners hesitate to bring their case to tax court due to the costs involved, even if they may be in the right. As such, ensuring taxpayers' legal costs are compensated in cases they have won may help increase CRA's accountability.

## CRA & COVID-19

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic warped the economic landscape and affected small businesses in unprecedented ways. Many small businesses were forced to reduce their operations or shut down completely, and today, many are still fighting for survival. The CRA administered many of the pandemic support programs, which aimed to relieve the financial burden and provide monetary support to keep businesses afloat. The success of these initiatives was contingent on programs being delivered fast and not making it too complicated to access them. CRA played a pivotal role in developing and delivering some key COVID-19 programs, such as the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS), the Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB), and the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS). This section of the report will explore how well small businesses and tax practitioners think CRA did in delivering relief to small businesses during the pandemic.

### Administration of support programs

As part of this year's survey, we asked small business owners and tax practitioners to share their views on the administration of COVID-19 support programs. Overall, the results received from both business owners and tax practitioners were generally positive (Figures 24a

<sup>17</sup> CFIB, Mandate 272, September-November 2018, n= 9,324.



Most small businesses (58%) and tax practitioners (69%) were satisfied with how CRA managed CEWS, but somewhat less satisfied with CERS.

*“The pandemic programs were handled well and quite easy to claim from on the CRA website, in my opinion.”*

—Construction, Ontario

and 24b). The most used measure for businesses was the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) and, where eligible, businesses also made use of two other important programs: the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) and the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS). While CEBA was well liked by both business owners and tax practitioners, the program was not administered by CRA, and as such, will not receive any further analysis as part of this report.

### Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS)

Administered by the CRA, CEWS provided businesses with a subsidy to help cover the costs of employee wages. Out of all the federal government programs created to help businesses during the pandemic, CEWS was the most utilized, with over 5,000,000 applications being approved from March 2020 until October 2021, and of those applicants, approximately 98% (4,987,940) were considered small- and medium-sized businesses. According to Statistics Canada, businesses that used CEWS were less likely to close and had higher employment growth post-pandemic than businesses that did not use the program. As such, CEWS was a lifeline to many struggling small businesses.

To claim CEWS, employers had to submit their applications through My Business Account or through a web portal and had to demonstrate to the CRA that they had experienced a reduction in revenue to qualify for the subsidy. As depicted in Figures 24a and 24b, CEWS received the highest ratings of satisfaction from both business owners (58% very or somewhat satisfied) and tax practitioner (69% very or somewhat satisfied). Businesses in the following sectors had the highest levels of satisfaction, feeling either “very” or “somewhat satisfied”: arts, recreating and information (76%), manufacturing (67%), construction (64%), and hospitality (63%). A small proportion of business owners (14%) and tax practitioners (19%) were unsatisfied with the administration of the program.

### Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS)

The business rental relief program initially launched as the “Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance” (CECRA), where small businesses had to rely on their landlords to submit an application for the subsidy, which caused major obstacles for all involved. As such, the federal government decided to completely redesign and overhaul the program. CERS was seen as a big improvement and provided easy-to-access rent/mortgage support until October 2021 for qualifying businesses affected by COVID-19. More than 2,000,000 applications were approved by CRA, making this COVID-19 program the second most utilized CRA program among businesses.

This program was also administered through My Business Account or web portal, and the overall feedback from business owners and tax practitioners was relatively positive. In fact, over a quarter (28%) of business owners and more than half of tax practitioners (54%) felt “very” or “somewhat” satisfied with the administration of CERS. Businesses in the arts, recreation and information (60%), hospitality (43%), and social services (40%) sectors had the highest ratings of “very” or “somewhat” satisfied. Again, a very small proportion of business owners (14%) and tax practitioners (23%) were dissatisfied with the administration of CERS.



### Other CRA administered COVID-19 programs

Additional programs, such as the Hardest-Hit Business Recovery Program (HHBRP), the Tourism and Hospitality Recovery Program (THRP), and the Canada Recovery Hiring Program (CRHP), were implemented later in the pandemic to help mitigate further impacts on specific sectors. From the business owner’s perspective, many have either not “used” or were considered “ineligible” for these programs. For those who qualified and have used these programs, the results regarding the level of satisfaction with CRA’s administration are fairly neutral. Conversely, tax practitioners tended to be more positive about the administration of these programs: 34% for CRHP, 26% for THRP, 24% for HHBRP are either “very” or “somewhat” satisfied.

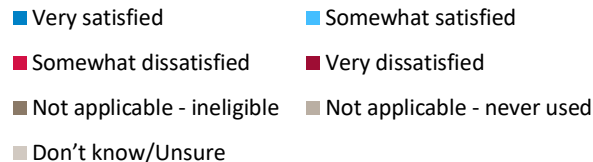
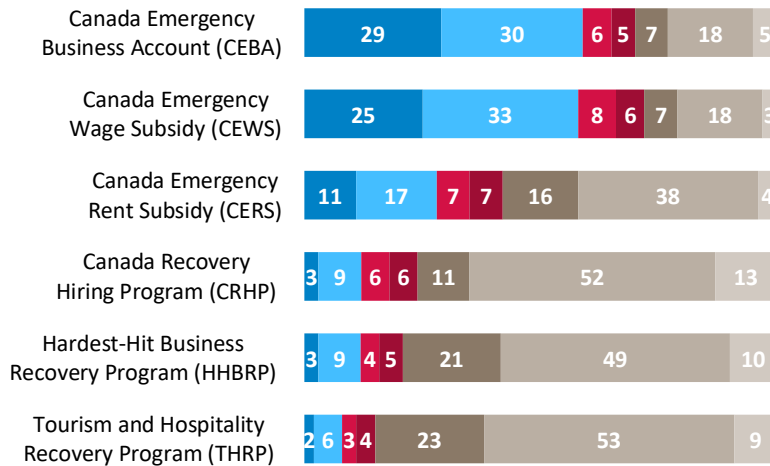
Figures 24a and 24b

### How satisfied are you with how CRA administered the following COVID-19 support programs? (% response)

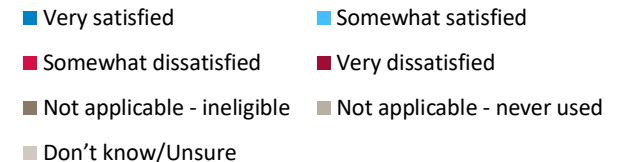
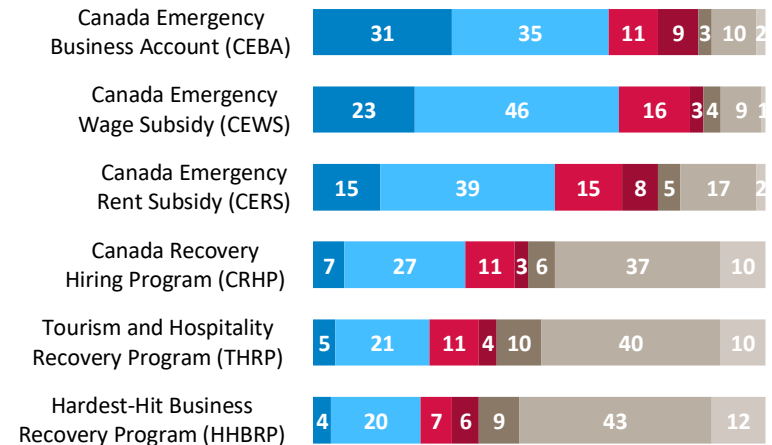
Some small business owners did encounter frustrations with how CRA administered the COVID-19 programs.

*“The government kept changing the parameters for these subsidies and it was very confusing and time consuming and the information on the CRA website was also very confusing.”*  
 –Social Services, Ontario

#### Business Owners



#### Tax Practitioners



Sources: 1) CFIB, CRA Survey (Business Owners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=4,304.

2) CFIB, CRA Tax Administration Survey (Tax Practitioners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=226.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.



The quick implementation of these programs was critical for the survival of many small businesses, and although the consensus regarding the deployment of these programs was mostly positive, many businesses and tax practitioners did encounter issues and frustrations. CFIB recognizes that some of the challenges raised by small businesses were beyond the control of CRA or were the result of government's efforts to adjust elements of these programs in response to feedback from organizations like CFIB. Nevertheless, some of the challenges SMEs faced with the administration of these COVID-19 relief programs included:

- Lack of clarity in the legislation and delays with its implementation;
- Confusing and changing eligibility criteria;
- Complexities with calculating revenue loss; and
- Frustration with getting answers through the CRA call centre due to long wait times and agent's lack of knowledge.

### Helpfulness of pandemic related initiatives

To address some of the frustrations and issues with the implementation of COVID-19 programs, CRA temporarily adjusted and/or introduced a number of services. We asked small business owners and tax practitioners to rate the helpfulness of these pandemic related CRA initiatives. Our data revealed that initiatives which simplified a tax process and/or reduced the time, energy and money spent complying with tax obligations were considered as the most effective.

For tax practitioners, the introduction of a temporary flat rate method for home office expenses was the most helpful (81%) while a third (37%) of small business owners and 70% of tax practitioners found CRA's eligibility calculators to be helpful. Both measures aimed to reduce the compliance burden on small businesses and individuals. The temporary flat rate method was implemented to simplify employee home office expenses at a time when so many people were working from home. Similarly, the CRA eligibility calculators aimed to simplify the process of determining eligibility for the emergency relief programs. We can apply the lessons learned from these initiatives in a post-pandemic working world. For example, the temporary flat rate method for home office expenses could be made permanent given the emergence of a hybrid working model and the number of people who will likely continue to work from home at least some of the time. Furthermore, the eligibility calculators were excellent tools to help small business owners and tax practitioners to navigate the complexities of these programs and could be applied to other tax measures that are frequently used by small business owners.

Interestingly the initiatives that were least helpful to small business owners and tax practitioners were increased support from CRA during the application process, increased social media presence, and e-mail communication. There are no definite conclusions that can be drawn as to why certain initiatives were perceived as less helpful, but these efforts should be applauded as they show a willingness on the part of CRA to try new initiatives, make changes as needed based on feedback, and generally be more flexible about how they approach administering new tax policy. During a very difficult time, many business owners and tax practitioners felt that CRA stepped up to the plate when they were needed, and while many of the COVID-19 relief programs and initiatives were not perfect, CRA adapted

Recognizing the challenges being faced by business during COVID-19, CRA temporarily adjusted and/or introduced a number of initiatives.

*"I truly appreciate the help offered by CRA over the past year. It was a real learning curve, but the financial help provided by the government was greatly appreciated and made it possible for us to see it through this most difficult period."*  
—Retail, Nova Scotia



relatively quickly to a challenging situation and took a more customer-focused approach to their delivery of these new programs and tax measures.

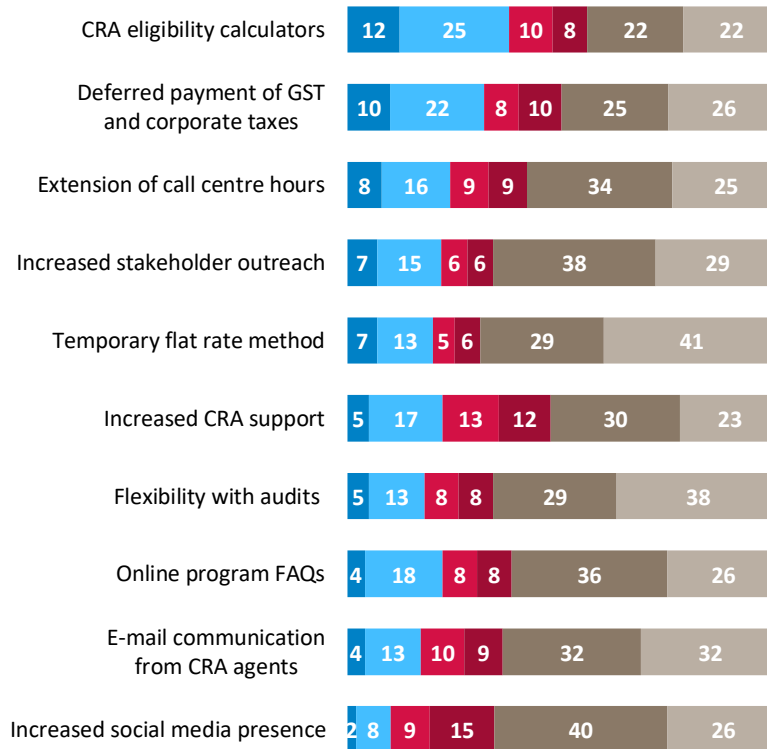
Figures 25a and 25b

**How helpful were each of the following pandemic related CRA initiatives? (% response)**

Initiatives which simplified a tax process and/or reduced the time, energy and money spent complying with tax obligations were considered the most effective.

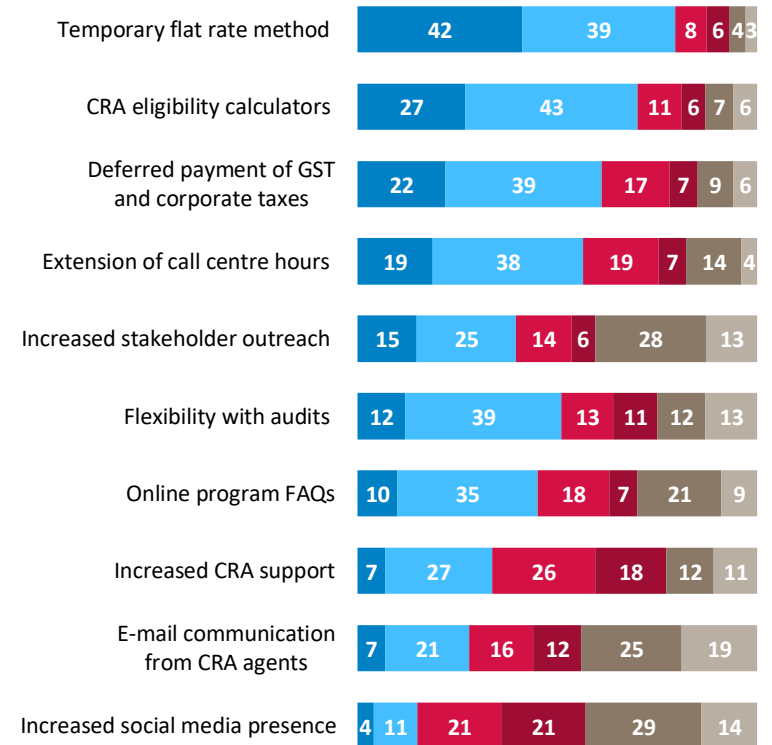
*“I really appreciate the longer timelines given by the CRA during COVID. Knowing that if I missed calling someone back by a day or a week, that it would be okay, really lowered my stress level.”*  
 —Arts, Recreation & Information, Alberta

**Business Owners**



Very helpful    Somewhat helpful    Not very helpful  
 Not helpful at all    Don't know/Unsure    Not applicable

**Tax Practitioners**



Very helpful    Somewhat helpful    Not very helpful  
 Not helpful at all    Don't know/Unsure    Not applicable

Sources: 1) CFIB, CRA Survey (Business Owners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=4,304.

2) CFIB, CRA Tax Administration Survey (Tax Practitioners), June 1-July 11, 2022, final results, n=226.

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

## Conclusions & Recommendations

After the unprecedented nature of the past few years, the requirements for CRA to rapidly evolve and adapt their programs and services is a notable accomplishment. While some performance indicators saw marginal increases in positive responses, **the overall grade has remained unchanged since 2014, as small business owners have consistently awarded the Agency an overall grade of “C” for the level of service they receive.**

CRA has made efforts to improve its interactions with SMEs, but its service outcomes still do not align with the expectations of small business owners. As such, there is still work to be done to improve CRA’s relationship with SMEs. To maintain and improve the strength of the service that CRA provides, CFIB recommends the following to address the key concerns raised by our members:

### 1. Improve the accessibility of CRA staff

Small business owners work hard to meet their tax obligations. In doing so, they dedicate time and capital that could otherwise be invested in growing their businesses. Understandably, this means that they are left frustrated when CRA does not process or respond to their requests in a timely manner. To help address this, CFIB recommends the following:

- Continue to make improvements to the CRA call centre so that small business owners are able to get timely and accurate answers to their questions.
  - Increase the service standard for the call centre from 65% to 80% of calls to be answered within 15 minutes.<sup>18</sup>
  - Increase the number of senior agents in order to improve wait times, and set a service standard wait time for reaching a second agent.
  - Update CRA agents more regularly about tax policy/program changes to ensure they are not providing business owners with outdated information.
- Ensure that there is adequate communication and information sharing between branches within CRA.
- Improve training of specialized auditors who are trained to deal with specific sectors, such as agriculture.
- Improve the Dedicated Telephone Service (DTS) for tax practitioners to broaden the type of questions that can be answered. Ensure that agents monitoring this line have a higher level of knowledge than those on the general phone line.
- Ensure traditional, non-electronic tools remain available to SMEs.

<sup>18</sup> CRA. Service Standards 2022-2023. April 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/about-canada-revenue-agency-cra/service-standards-cra/service-standards-2022-23.html>



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*“Allow us to e-mail in with questions, or if we have a specific agent, we should be able to e-mail them information. When you do get an agent who knows what they are talking about, it is a fantastic experience.”*  
—Arts, Recreation & Information, Alberta

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## 2. Ensure accurate and timely information is provided to business owners

The Income Tax Act is the most complex piece of legislation that small business owners are required to comply with. Many members struggle with their obligations and information online is often too difficult to understand. Accessible and accurate information is crucial for the success of small businesses. CFIB recommends the following:

- Rewrite website content in plain language and use search engine-optimized keywords so that content can be found more quickly on the CRA website. (Internet searches for tax-related questions bring up websites from accounting firms ahead of the CRA's website, whereas the CRA should be the go-to source in Canada.)
- Exempt CRA from government of Canada's restrictions on website design so they can use more creative means to share information crucial to small business taxpayers.
- Enhance the communication of services offered to SMEs. Significant improvements have been made to the services aimed at SMEs, such as My Business Account and e-mail notifications. However, many businesses are not aware that they even exist.
- Ensure all CRA letters and communications are clear and transparent, providing information such as a payment due date, the amount owed, which account to make the payment on, and outline any penalties or interest amounts associated with being late.
- Make sure that rules and rulings are communicated in plain language, and where possible include multiple examples, to provide complete clarity.
- Business owners have expressed their desire for CRA to make more of an effort to educate small business owners and use language that is comprehensible to them. While CRA already does a good job with the dissemination of their newsletter (e.g., well written, and generally in plain language, with helpful links to tools and resources for SMEs), something similar that could be created is a "Small Business Owner's Guide to CRA Compliance" that is available online or sent to all that register for a business number.

## 3. Expand specialized services and improve awareness among small businesses

Our research suggests that a significant number of initiatives run by CRA are underutilized. While CRA does advertise them, they fail to do so effectively. To improve awareness about the services that are available and to improve CRA-SME relations, CFIB recommends the following:

- Continue to make efforts to communicate CRA services on a range of platforms, electronic or otherwise, such as letters, social media, and phone calls.
- Ensure more businesses know about the initiative within My Business Account to provide a written answer to an enquiry within 10 business days and that CRA will honour that response even if it's later found to be incorrect as long as all the

*"Make things easier to find through online portals. Make wait times better when calling in to CRA. Let businesses know about the other services offered by the CRA via newsletter, mail or e-mail."*

*—Hospitality, British Columbia*

*"The CRA needs to make information readily available without twists and turns that make the information unattainable and confusing."*

*—Unclassified, Alberta*





required information has been provided. To further reduce call volumes, the CRA should reduce its target response time for enquiries received through My Business Account from 10 days to 3 days.

- Implement similar tools to the eligibility calculators for other CRA programs or services as they were extremely helpful to small business owners and tax practitioners in navigating the complexities of the COVID-19 relief programs.
- Increase awareness of other CRA services, such as the Liaison Officer Service, among small business owners to help improve tax compliance.

#### 4. Ease the regulatory tax burden for small businesses

More needs to be done to make it easier for small business to succeed in Canada and to reduce the unnecessary burdens that are placed on them by our cumbersome tax system. To accomplish this, CFIB recommends the following:

- Expand the One-for-One rule to include the Income Tax Act to help reduce the regulatory burden on small businesses.
- Establish a standard tax deduction for small business owners, for example those with less than \$300,000 in revenue, which gives them the option to claim a standard percentage of their income as expenses rather than itemize each business expense (e.g., transportation and travel expenses).
- Make the temporary flat rate method for home office expenses permanent, given the emergence of a hybrid working model and the number of people who will likely continue to work from home at least some of the time.
- Update the thresholds for GST and source deductions on a more regular basis to account for inflation.
- Offer more flexible timelines for businesses to file taxes (e.g., owners that pay themselves irregularly, seasonal businesses, etc.).
- Require CRA to pay the same amount of interest on money they owe to a taxpayer as is required for a taxpayer who owes money to CRA.
- Waive interest charges that are less than \$100.
- Require CRA to compensate for legal expenses when a case is ruled in favour of the taxpayer.
- Reduce the requirement to use fax for submitting documents. Allow for alternate options to be available (e.g., scanning of documents to be sent via e-mail with electronic signature) as most small business owners do not have access to a fax machine.
- To increase taxpayer fairness, CRA should extend the time allowed to file a Notice of Objection from 90 days to 180 days and reduce the time that CRA takes to process a Notice of Objection.
- Allow business owners to easily access tools that use artificial intelligence that can enable them to make educated determinations about whether or not they are in compliance based on cases that have been decided in tax court, and ensure that CRA officially recognizes and honours these determinations. This will reduce the regulatory burden, helping businesses find the answers they need, while also reducing pressure and call volumes on agents.

*“Cut red tape, create documents in plain English that everyone can understand, easier access to help when I need it, via phone or e-mail.”*

—Manufacturing, Ontario

*“Tax Code is too complex. Reducing requirements of certain filings, would make taxes simpler to interpret and understand.”*

—Wholesale, Ontario



## Methodology

This 2023 edition is the seventh report CFIB has published evaluating CRA's performance in its dealings with small businesses. Previous surveys were conducted in 2001, 2004, 2008, 2011, 2014 and 2017. The information for this report was collected through two surveys that were distributed to CFIB members from June 1<sup>st</sup> to July 11, 2022. The first survey was sent to the general small business population and the second to tax practitioners. The number of responses from small business owners was 4,304. Findings are statistically accurate within +/- 1.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The number of responses from tax practitioners was 226. Findings are statistically accurate within +/- 6.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. In this report the results from the General Member Survey were referred to as business owners, the results of the dedicated Tax Practitioners Survey were referred to as tax practitioners.

### Results from two surveys collected between June 1<sup>st</sup> and July 11, 2022:

1. Survey of business owners got 4,304 respondents.
2. Survey of tax practitioners got 226 respondents.

## About the authors

**Michelle Auger is Senior Policy Analyst for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB).** Since joining CFIB in 2015, Michelle has assisted hundreds of small business owners in resolving complex federal issues. She has maintained effective working relationships with key contacts within the federal government and other external agencies to facilitate problem solving as well as improve services to small businesses. In addition, Michelle has led and managed several national initiatives with a variety of different scopes, including work on succession planning, competition, credit cards, taxation, fraud awareness, mental health and well-being, among others. Michelle holds a bachelor's degree in Social Sciences with specialization in Geography and Sociology from the University of Ottawa and has recently completed a certificate program in Project Management.

**Rachel Ng is Manager, Member Information and Escalations for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB).** Since 2019, Rachel has supported small business owners in resolving complex federal issues and has worked closely with key contacts within the federal government to clarify small business issues. Throughout the pandemic, she was responsible for providing feedback to government stakeholders, such as the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), to improve their services/tools, programs, and approachability for small business owners. Rachel holds a bachelor's degree in Economics from Carleton University.

**Harriet Finlayson was hired as part of the 2022 CFIB/Scotiabank Summer Internship in Public Policy and Entrepreneurship** where her main projects were assisting with the CRA Report Card and curating Canadian minimum wage worker profiles at a provincial level. Harriet holds a bachelor's degree in Politics and International Relations from the University of Kent in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and recently graduated with a master's in Political Science with a Specialization in Transitional Justice and Post-Conflict Reconstruction from the University of Western Ontario. Her time with CFIB was eye-opening as she gained exposure to small business challenges, conducted small business research using internal and external datasets, and represented business views to top-level government representatives.

## About CFIB

CFIB is a non-partisan organization exclusively representing the interests of 97,000 small and medium-sized businesses in Canada. CFIB's research capacity is second-to-none because it is able to gather timely and concrete information from members about business issues that affect their day-to-day operation and bottom line. In this capacity, CFIB is an excellent source of up-to-date information for governments to consider when developing policies impacting Canada's small business community.

To learn more, visit [cfib.ca](https://cfib.ca).

## Additional resources

Questions or data requests: [research@cfib.ca](mailto:research@cfib.ca)

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

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