

Small business investment outlook – by sector



■ **Employee training** is the most common investment priority; at least two-thirds of firms in every sector plan to invest at the same level or more over the next 12 months compared to 2025. Professional and business services (86%), construction (83%), manufacturing (81%), and agriculture (81%) stand out, though businesses across both service and goods-producing sectors continue to prioritize human capital and skills development to varying levels.

■ **Marketing and promotion** are also a major growth area, with 75% of firms looking to invest. Arts, recreation and information firms stand out, with 97% planning the same or higher spending, followed by retailers (83%) and wholesalers (82%). For these three sectors, this strong focus on promotion aligns with their efforts to expand **e-commerce and online sales**, led by arts, recreation and information (86%), wholesale (68%), and retail (64%).

For wholesale firms, this reflects efforts to pivot toward new suppliers and customers amid recent trade tensions. In arts, recreation, and retail, higher online investment aligns with the nature of their sales, as tourism, entertainment, and consumer goods increasingly depend on digital visibility. With both softer demand and ongoing trade tensions, firms in these sectors appear to view visibility, customer engagement, and online channels as effective ways to support sales and reach new markets.

■ **Investments in non-AI technology or equipment** involve at least 50% of firms across all sectors (except transportation). Professional and business services (78%), and arts, recreation and information (71%) lead these investments, reflecting their relatively high degree of digitization. Manufacturing (68%) and agriculture (64%) also stand out, as these sectors are traditionally capital-intensive and therefore more inclined to upgrade equipment.

■ **Automation investments** are mostly concentrated in manufacturing (74%), wholesale (73%), and agriculture (71%). These sectors are particularly exposed to trade tensions and appear to be seeking productivity gains through process improvements.

■ **AI investments** are strongest in service-oriented sectors, with arts, recreation and information (69%), professional and business services (65%), and finance and insurance (61%) reporting a higher share of firms planning to maintain or increase spending. These industries are usually more digitized, which facilitates the adoption and integration of AI tools into their operations.

■ **Table 2 – Share of firms planning the same or higher investment levels, by sector and investment type (% responses)**

	Skills, Marketing Investments			Technology, Process Investments		
	Employee Training	Marketing & Promotion	E-commerce	Non-AI tech. or equip.	Automation	AI tech. & equip.
Canada	77	75	52	61	61	45
	Investment intensity: ■ Strong ■ Good ■ Above average					
Fin., Ins., R. Est., & Leasing	67	76	62	65	57	61
Prof. and Bus. services*	86	73	51	78	68	65
Arts, Rec. & Info.	69	97	86	71	47	69
Retail	69	83	64	50	54	36
Wholesale	79	82	68	62	73	52
Manufacturing	81	79	53	68	74	46
Construction	83	69	28	58	64	44
Agriculture	81	62	49	64	71	45
Transportation	71	46	26	46	56	32
Other services*	77	72	48	61	53	42

Source: CFIB, Your Voice February 2026 survey, n = 1,195-1,215.

*Notes: Professional and Business Services include Professional Services and Enterprises & Admin. Mgmt., and Other Services includes Health and Education, Hospitality, and Personal Services.