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Analysis in Brief

Analysis on majority women-owned businesses, first quarter of 2025 ^c

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Correction notice

On June 14, 2025, data in Table 1 related to "Percentage average wages are expected to decrease for all private sector businesses" were revised.

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Analysis on majority women-owned businesses, first quarter of 2025

by **Patricia Judd, Shivani Sood, and Chris Johnston**

To support the economy properly, it is vital to understand the factors influencing businesses and the challenges they may face. These challenges may vary across businesses owned by different population groups. Businesses that are owned by women may have different experiences from those owned by other population groups. Employer businesses that are owned by women are most frequently found in the [professional, scientific and technical services, as well as health care and social assistance](#) sectors.

From the beginning of January to early February 2025, Statistics Canada conducted the Canadian Survey on Business Conditions to collect information on the environment in which businesses are currently operating and on their future expectations. This article explores results from the survey for majority women-owned private sector businesses, focusing on their expectations related to labour, the supply chain, outsourced work and debt in the first quarter of 2025. Majority ownership is defined at 51% or more and was self-reported for private sector businesses only. This article focuses on the experience and challenges of majority women-owned businesses.

In the first quarter of 2025, majority women-owned businesses were significantly more likely to employ women at all employment levels compared with all private sector businesses. Additionally, majority women-owned businesses reported lower intention and ability to take on more debt compared with all private sector businesses. In the first quarter of 2025, the proportion of majority women-owned businesses and all private sector businesses that reported a decrease in revenue for the previous year was similar. However, majority women-owned businesses were more likely to experience a higher percentage decrease in revenue. Majority women-owned businesses were less likely to experience disruptions in acquiring inputs, products or supplies compared with all private sector businesses. Finally, the proportion of businesses that outsourced tasks, projects or short contracts was similar between majority women-owned businesses and all private sector businesses. However, there were differences between these two groups in the types of tasks that were outsourced.

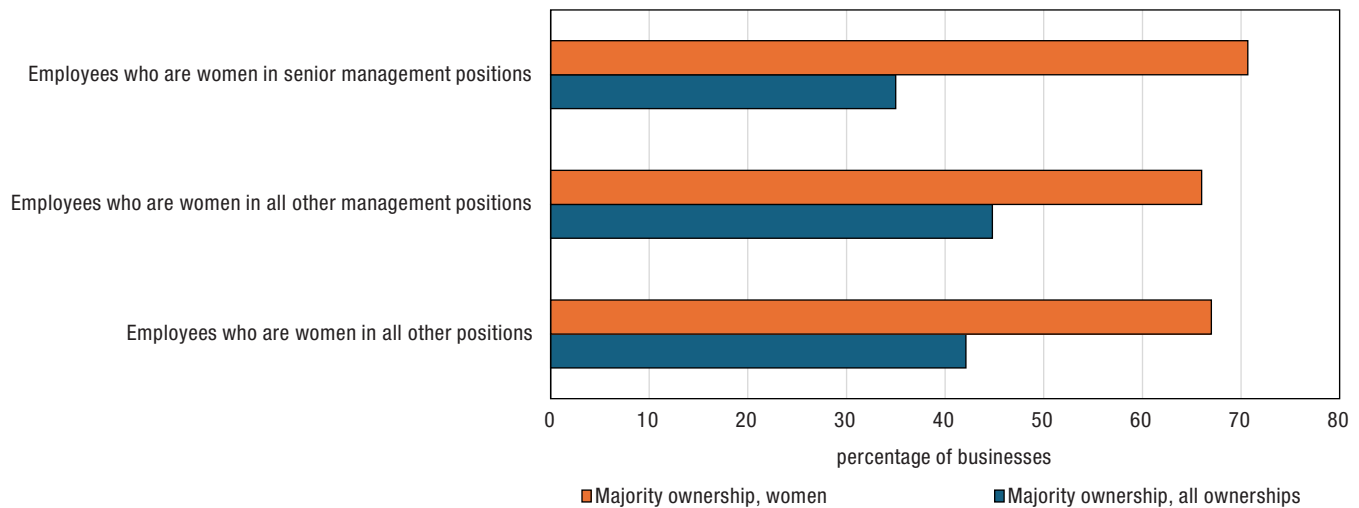
Employment of women in Canada

Majority women-owned businesses accounted for 19.5% of all private sector business in Canada in the first quarter of 2025. This is a 1.9 percentage point increase from the proportion of majority women-owned businesses in the first quarter of 2024 (17.6%). In January 2025, 80.4% of core-aged women (25 to 54 years old) were employed in Canada, according to the [Labour Force Survey](#). This is a 0.7 percentage points decrease from 81.1% in January 2024.

In the first quarter of 2025, the average proportion of women in senior management positions within majority women-owned businesses was double (70.7%) that of the proportion within all private sector businesses (35.0%). Senior management may include owners or operators for smaller businesses, and titles such as executive director, chief executive officer, chief financial officer and chief operating officer for larger businesses.

Majority women-owned businesses reported a higher proportion of women in other management positions (66.0%) compared with all private sector businesses (44.8%). Furthermore, the proportion of women in all other positions within majority women-owned businesses (67.0%) was significantly higher than that for all private sector businesses (42.1%).

For all three employment categories, the proportion of women was significantly higher in majority women-owned businesses compared with all private sector businesses.

Chart 1**Average percentage of women in employment categories, first quarter of 2025**

Source: Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, first quarter of 2025 (Table 33-10-0940-01).

Half (49.4%) of majority women-owned businesses anticipate the average wages of their employees to stay approximately the same over the next 12 months, whereas 45.4% of all private sector businesses anticipated the same. Anticipated wage increases were generally lower for majority women-owned businesses compared with all private sector businesses. Of majority women-owned businesses, more than one-quarter (27.4%) anticipated an increase in wages from 1% to 19%, while over 3 in 10 private sector businesses overall anticipated the same wage increase (31.9%).

Table 1**Change in average wages expected over the next 12 months, first quarter of 2025**

Percentage wages are expected to change	Majority women-owned businesses	All private sector businesses
	percentage of businesses	
Increase		
1% to 19%	27.4	31.9
20% and above	1.6	2.3
Unknown	9.8	8.9
Decrease		
1% to 19%	0.3	1.3
20% and above	0.8	0.9
Unknown	0.8	1.0
Stay approximately the same	49.4	45.4
Unknown	9.9	8.3

Source: Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, first quarter of 2025 (Table 33-10-0926-01).

One-third majority women-owned businesses concerned with labour-related obstacles

In the first quarter of 2025, one-third of majority women-owned businesses (33.1%) anticipate obstacles related to labour. This is a 3.4 percentage point increase from the first quarter of 2024 when 29.7% of majority women-owned businesses were expecting labour-related obstacles. Comparatively, in the first quarter of 2025, 35.7% of all private sector businesses expected labour-related obstacles which is a decrease from the previous year (38.4% in the first quarter of 2024).

In the first quarter of 2025, the proportions of businesses expecting labour-related obstacles over the next three months were largely the same for majority women-owned businesses and all private sector businesses (Table 2). The proportions for all private sector businesses showed a noticeable decrease across all obstacles when comparing the first quarters of 2024 and 2025. By contrast, when comparing the first quarters of 2024 and 2025, majority women-owned businesses saw increases in the proportions for recruiting and retaining skilled employees (by 2.0 and 4.0 percentage points, respectively) and a decrease (2.6 percentage point) for labour shortages.

Table 2**Expectations of labour-related obstacles over the next three months, first quarters of 2024 and 2025**

	Majority women-owned businesses		All private sector businesses	
	First quarter of 2024	First quarter of 2025	First quarter of 2024	First quarter of 2025
	percent			
Shortage of labour force	17.5	14.9	22.4	16.2
Recruiting skilled employees	22.3	24.3	28.5	26.0
Retaining skilled employees	13.9	17.9	21.4	17.6

Note: Respondents were able to select multiple labour-related obstacles over the next three months. This table will not sum to 100%.

Source: Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, first quarter of 2025 (Table 33-10-0917-01).

More than one-quarter majority women-owned businesses concerned with consumer-related obstacles

More than one-quarter of majority women-owned businesses (27.3%) expect attracting new or returning customers to be an obstacle over the next three months, while over one in five private sector businesses overall (22.0%) expect attracting new or returning customers to be an obstacle over the next three months.

Similar proportions of majority women-owned businesses (15.3%) and all private sector businesses (15.5%) expect supply chain-related challenges over the next three months. A higher proportion of majority women-owned businesses (8.6%) expect difficulty acquiring inputs, products or supplies from abroad compared with all private-sector businesses (7.4%). Conversely, majority women-owned businesses (7.5%) were less likely to expect difficulty in acquiring inputs, products or supplies from within Canada compared with all private sector businesses (8.5%).

Over one-quarter majority women-owned businesses less likely to take on debt

In the first quarter of 2025, the proportion of majority women-owned businesses (10.5%) that are planning to apply for debt financing over the next three months was lower compared with the proportion of all private sector businesses (11.3%).

Among these businesses that do not plan to apply for debt financing, over one-quarter (26.9%) of majority women-owned businesses reported being unable to take on more debt compared with nearly one-quarter (23.3%) of private sector businesses. Furthermore, of these businesses that indicated being unable to take on more debt, majority women-owned businesses reported their request would be turned down (23.6%) and too difficult or time consuming to apply (11.2%) as reasons they are unable to take on debt more often than all private sector businesses (17.7% and 7.8%, respectively). Conversely, majority women-owned businesses (4.5%) cited payment terms being unfavourable as a reason they were unable to take on more debt less often than all private sector businesses (8.0%).

Most majority women-owned businesses (64.7%) reported being very confident in their ability to make payments to suppliers and service providers in full and on time. This proportion is on par with all private sector businesses (64.2%).

One in ten majority women-owned business reporting large revenue decreases between 2023 and 2024

The proportion of majority women-owned businesses (31.5%) and all private sector businesses (32.2%) reporting a decrease in revenue between 2023 and 2024 was similar. However, of those businesses that reported a decrease in revenue, 1 in 10 majority women-owned businesses (10.0%) reported a 50% to 59% decrease in revenue,

compared with 7.0% private sector businesses overall reporting the same decrease. Meanwhile, a decrease in revenue from 20% to 29%, was less likely for majority women-owned businesses (18.7%) compared with all private sector businesses (24.4%).

Most majority women-owned businesses do not plan to invest in advanced technologies over the next 12 months

In the first quarter of 2025, three in five majority women-owned businesses (59.5%) reported that they do not plan to invest in advanced technologies over the next 12 months. Similarly, 60.8% private sector businesses overall reported they have no plans to invest in advanced technology. Of those businesses that do not plan to invest in advanced technologies, the proportion of majority women-owned businesses reporting the reason as no financial resources available (14.6%) was greater than that among all private sector businesses (13.0%).

Table 3

Reasons majority women-owned businesses are not planning on investing in advanced technologies over the next 12 months, first quarter of 2025

	Majority women-owned businesses	All private sector businesses
	percentage of businesses	
Not relevant at this time	79.5	79.4
Recently made investments in advanced technologies	6.8	6.3
No knowledge or expertise to invest in advanced technologies	3.6	5.2
No financial resources available	14.6	13.0
Other reason	0.9	2.1

Note: Respondents were able to select multiple reasons for not planning to invest in advanced technologies over the next 12 months. This table will not sum to 100%.

Source: Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, first quarter of 2025 (Table 33-10-0928-01).

Most majority women-owned businesses less likely to experience disruptions over last 12 months

Less than one-quarter majority women-owned businesses (23.4%) experienced disruptions which impacted their ability to acquire inputs, products or supplies (domestic or international) over the last 12 months. This was slightly less than the proportion of all private sector businesses (27.7%).

A smaller proportion of majority women-owned businesses (4.5%) reported disruptions due to international geopolitical events compared with all private sector businesses (7.3%). Furthermore, the proportion of majority women-owned businesses that reported disruptions due to labour disputes impacting suppliers (8.1%) was lower compared with all private sector businesses (10.4%).

Majority women-owned businesses (11.5%) reported disruptions due to labour disputes impacting transportation or logistics providers similarly compared with all private sector businesses (11.6%).

Table 4

Types of disruptions that affected the ability of the business to acquire inputs, products or supplies from Canada or abroad over the last 12 months, first quarter of 2025

	Majority women-owned businesses	All private sector businesses
	percentage of businesses	
Disruptions due to labour disputes impacting suppliers	8.1	10.4
Disruptions due to labour disputes impacting transportation or logistics providers	11.5	11.6
Disruptions due to international geopolitical events	4.5	7.3
Disruptions due to natural events	2.8	4.9
Other disruptions	5.1	4.4
No disruptions experienced	76.6	72.3

Note: Respondents were able to select multiple types of disruptions which impacted the ability of the business to acquire inputs, products or supplies from Canada or abroad over the last 12 months. This table will not sum to 100%.

Source: Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, first quarter of 2025 (Table 33-10-0931-01).

Proportion of businesses that outsourced work similar between majority women-owned businesses and all private sector businesses

The proportion of businesses that outsourced any tasks, projects or short contracts in the last 12 months was similar between majority women-owned businesses (52.7%) and all private sector businesses (51.8%).

The proportion of businesses that outsourced accounting, law or other professional services was the most commonly reported type of task for both groups, although was slightly higher for majority women-owned businesses (39.1%) than all private sector businesses (36.2%). Majority women-owned businesses were significantly more likely to outsource website or software development and computer programming (21.0%) than all private sector businesses (16.7%). Similarly, majority women-owned businesses were more likely to outsource sales and marketing support tasks (15.0%) compared with all private sector businesses (10.5%).

Outsourced delivery driving and errands was the only type of task where the majority women-owned businesses (7.7%) reported a lower proportion than all private sector businesses (9.5%).

Table 5
Selected tasks, projects or short contracts outsourced by businesses over the last 12 months, first quarter of 2025

	Majority women-owned businesses	All private sector businesses
	percentage of businesses	
Accounting, law or other professional services	39.1	36.2
General labour, repairs, cleaning service	21.9	19.2
Website or software development, computer programming	21.0	16.7
Information technology (IT) service support	16.1	13.4
Sales and marketing support	15.0	10.5
Graphic design, audio-visual production	13.0	9.0
Data entry, tagging photos or videos, and other clerical tasks	8.1	4.6
Delivery driving, errands	7.7	9.5

Note: Respondents were able to select multiple types of tasks, projects or short contracts outsourced over the last 12 months. This table will not sum to 100%.
Source: Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, first quarter of 2025 (Table 33-10-0932-01).

Methodology

From January 2 to February 6, 2025, representatives from businesses across Canada were invited to take part in an online questionnaire about business conditions and future business expectations. The Canadian Survey on Business Conditions uses a stratified random sample of business establishments with employees classified by geography, industry sector, and size. Proportions are estimated using calibrated weights to calculate the population totals in the domains of interest. The total sample size for this iteration of the survey is 21,224, and results are based on responses from a total of 9,785 businesses or organizations.

References

Statistics Canada. (2025). Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, first quarter of 2025.

Statistics Canada. (2025). Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, first quarter of 2024.