



Black Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (BEKH)
Co-generated Regional Research Report

Empowering Black Entrepreneurship

*A Research Report of Comprehensive
Analysis of Challenges, Opportunities,
and Policy Recommendations for
Western Canada*

*A partnership between the BEKH
Western Regional Hub (Simon Fraser
University, RADIUS) and the Black
Entrepreneurs and Businesses of
Canada Society (BEBC Society)*



BEKH





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Foreword from the Program Manager, Black Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub-Western Regional Hub (RADIUS SFU)

The Black Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (BEKH) is proud to present this report, a significant step in understanding the landscape of Black entrepreneurship in Canada. It provides crucial data and insights to inform policy and empower Black-owned businesses.

This report was created on the unceded, traditional and ancestral territories of the Squamish (Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw), Tsleil-Waututh (səlilwətaʔ), and Musqueam (xwməθkwəy̓əm) Nations. We acknowledge the lands on which Simon Fraser University (SFU) resides, including those of the Katzie, Kwikwetlem, Qayqayt, Kwantlen, Semiahmoo, Tsawwassen, and Stó:lō Nations. We honour Indigenous peoples who have stewarded these lands since time immemorial and call for collective action in decolonization and reconciliation.

As we honour this land, we reflect on our own African and Black ancestry. While we celebrate Black achievements, we must also acknowledge the historical and ongoing systemic violence that has shaped Black experiences. Black entrepreneurship stands as an act of resilience and economic self-determination, yet systemic barriers—such as limited access to capital, financial education gaps, and structural inequities—continue to hinder progress.

This research initiative, a collaboration between the BEKH Western Regional Hub at SFU (managed by RADIUS) and the Black Entrepreneurs and Businesses of Canada Society (BEBC), underscores our commitment to:

- Generating and sharing knowledge that supports Black-owned businesses.
- Amplifying Black entrepreneurial voices and advocating for systemic change.
- Building an inclusive ecosystem where Black entrepreneurs can thrive.

The findings highlight both the economic contributions of Black-owned businesses and the persistent challenges they face, including structural racism, implicit biases, and inadequate support programs. Addressing these issues requires:

- Greater visibility and representation for Black entrepreneurs.
- Expanded financial resources and tailored support programs.
- Increased mentorship, networking, and strategic partnerships.

We believe this report will serve as a catalyst for meaningful change. We call on policymakers, financial institutions, and the broader business community to use these insights to foster a more equitable and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem—one where Black-owned businesses can flourish and contribute to a more prosperous Canada.

—Raphael Ochil, BEKH Western Regional Hub lead and RADIUS SFU Portfolio Manager



Foreword from the President of Black Entrepreneurs & Businesses of Canada Society (BEBC)

The Black Entrepreneurs and Businesses of Canada Society (BEBC) is proud to present this vital research report, “Empowering Black Entrepreneurship: A Comprehensive Analysis of Challenges, Opportunities, and Policy Recommendations for Western Canada.”

Developed in collaboration with the Black Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub - Western Regional Hub (RADIUS SFU), this report represents a significant step forward in understanding and supporting the dynamic landscape of Black entrepreneurship in Western Canada.

Building on the success of the BEBC Black Business Summit 2024, which brought together over 2,500 Black founders under the theme “The Power of Us: Facing the Future Together,” this report deepens those conversations. The Summit’s overwhelming response highlighted both the immense potential and the growing need for targeted support within the Black business community.

This report provides a comprehensive analysis based on the experiences of 1,191 Black-owned businesses in Western Canada. Key findings include:

- The demographic composition of these businesses, emphasizing the representation of women, youth, 2SLGBTQIA+, and Afro-Indigenous entrepreneurs.
- The economic contributions of Black-owned businesses, showcasing their critical role in driving innovation, creating jobs, and enriching cultural diversity.
- The systemic barriers faced, including limited access to capital, mentorship, and professional networks.
- The report culminates in actionable policy recommendations designed to foster a more equitable and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem for Black Canadians.

We believe this report will serve as a powerful tool for advocacy and change. At BEBC, we remain steadfast in our commitment to supporting Black-owned businesses across Canada. We encourage all stakeholders to leverage the insights and recommendations within this report to inform policies and practices that empower Black entrepreneurs to thrive.

–Jackee Kasandy, Founder & CEO, BEBC Society & Kasandy Inc.





Key Findings

Demographic Overview of Black-owned businesses

- ▶ Western Canada is home to 1,191 Black-owned businesses, with British Columbia leading (497), followed by Manitoba (326), Alberta (302), and Saskatchewan (66). Women own 296 of these Black-owned businesses, with 58.1% in British Columbia, while youth (35 years or younger) entrepreneurs own 46 Black-owned businesses, primarily in British Columbia and Alberta.
- ▶ Representation among 2SLGBTQIA+ (fewer than 2%) and Afro-Indigenous entrepreneurs (19 businesses, with 12 of them in British Columbia) remains minimal. Black-owned non-profit businesses are most concentrated in British Columbia, accounting for about 10% of the province's total.

Economic Contributions and Key Challenges

Black-owned businesses enrich Canada's economy by fostering innovation, cultural diversity, and job creation. However, systemic challenges hinder their growth and sustainability:

- ▶ Inadequate access to capital: Black entrepreneurs face significant barriers when seeking financing due to structural racism, implicit biases, and limited access to credit and loans.
- ▶ Gap in financial education: Many Black entrepreneurs struggle with understanding credit systems and financial planning, particularly immigrants who are unfamiliar with Canadian financial norms.
- ▶ Limited outreach and awareness of financial opportunities: Insufficient targeted outreach by institutions and corporations leaves many Black entrepreneurs unaware of funding opportunities, grants, and market resources.
- ▶ Inadequate mentorship and networks: A lack of tailored mentorship programs and professional networks deprives Black entrepreneurs of critical business guidance and growth opportunities.

While initiatives like the Black Entrepreneurship Program (BEP) offer support, additional policies are needed to address these barriers, improve representation, and provide access and leadership opportunities to Black entrepreneurs.



Part 1:

*Introduction to Black-owned
Businesses in Canada*



1.0 Introduction

The ethnocultural makeup of Canada has shifted significantly, with racialized groups comprising 26.6% of the population in 2021, nearly double the 13.4% reported in 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2023).

Census data from 2021 reveals that, despite being more active in the workforce than White people, racialized individuals face higher unemployment rates (Gueye, 2023). Racialized groups had a labour force participation rate of 67.9% versus 62.2% for White people, but their unemployment rate was 12.5% compared to 9.5% for White people. Black people, the third largest racialized group, experienced one of the highest unemployment rates (14.3%) and generally earned lower incomes. In 2020, the employment income of Black men and women averaged 69% and 84% of that earned by White men and women respectively (Gueye, 2023).

Research shows that business ownership can yield higher income than wage employment, but data on racialized business owners in Canada is limited, particularly regarding the Black community.

Due to these challenges, some racialized individuals, especially Black people may turn to entrepreneurship as a means to improve economic conditions, promote innovation, and create jobs. Research shows that business ownership can yield higher income than wage employment, but data on racialized business owners in Canada is limited, particularly regarding the Black community (Grékou and Gueye, 2021; Gueye, 2023).

Despite an increasing effort by the federal government to develop needed data on Black business ownership in Canada, this area has remained one of the few where research is limited (Gueye, 2023). As noted by the Parliamentary Black Caucus, “It is hard to change something that cannot be measured,” in reference to the limitations of accessing data and insight on Black entrepreneurship in Canada, as well as the constraints facing the members of the Black business community (Gueye, 2023).

The lived experiences of a large majority of Canada’s Black population highlight the inadequacy of public policy in addressing the systemic discrimination and challenges faced by these communities; a problem partly stemming from the absence of data on this segment of the Canadian population. New research further suggests that Canadian philanthropy has not sufficiently invested in the well-being of Black communities and Black community organizations (Pereira et al., 2020).

Recent anti-Black racism movements have brought these issues back into focus, with some encouraging signs in the subsequent policy response. While the proposed investments and responses, such as the creation of the Black Entrepreneurship Program and the Black Entrepreneurship Loan Fund are steps in the right direction, plenty remains to be done (Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, 2024). To better assess economic impacts and provide more targeted solutions, it is critical to gather pertinent national-level data on the size, scope, and specific needs of Canada’s Black entrepreneur and business ecosystem.

Although recent studies of Black population in Canada have covered ethnographic and demographic data, as well as socio-economic and labour market outcomes, there remains a paucity of data on the Black business and entrepreneur ecosystem in Canada (Gueye, 2023; Coletto, et.al, 2021; CBCC, 2021; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2023, and Tawiah 2022). A broader and deeper understanding of the size, scope, and regional challenges faced by this ecosystem will help better tailor targeted policies and better quantify their economic and labour market impacts.

This study presents a deep dive into the ecosystem of Black entrepreneurship and business in Canada, specifically in Western Canada, to provide a clearer picture of its breadth and scope across the Canadian economy. By combining secondary data with extensive primary research, the study provides a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the size, scope, and economic impact of the Black entrepreneur and business ecosystem in Canada, the major challenges and barriers faced by its members, and opportunities to empower them and support their development. This report is intended to inform

policy proposals that effectively target key obstacles faced by Black entrepreneurs and businesses and is a starting point for further detailed impact assessment of such policies.

This report is divided into five parts. The first part presents a brief history of Black-owned businesses in Canada and an overview of contemporary trends. Part two presents demographic data on Black-owned businesses in Western Canada. The third part looks at the challenges faced by Black-owned businesses. Part four presents how policy can support Black-owned businesses. The final part concludes the report.

1.1 History of Black-owned businesses in Canada

Statistics Canada (2022) reports that small businesses, which include a substantial number of Black-led enterprises, employ over 10 million people, representing nearly 64% of the Canadian labor force. Spiteri's (2024) detailed insight into Black entrepreneurship in Canada provides a deep understanding of how Black-owned businesses have contributed to the country's socio-economic space.

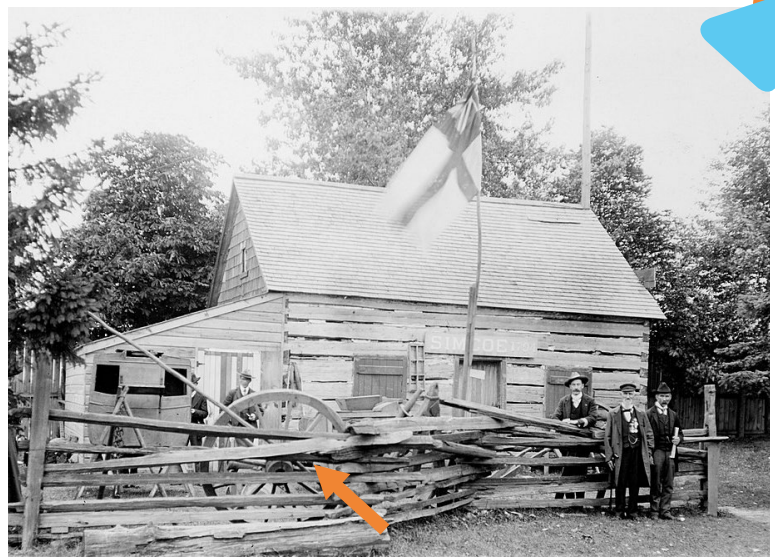
Spiteri (2024) notes that the history of Black entrepreneurship in Canada is complex and under-researched, especially beyond Nova Scotia and Ontario (Knight, 2019, cited in Spiteri, 2024). Nova Scotia, where Black refugees settled as early as the 1750s, saw Black women resourcefully crafting and selling goods to support their families (Hamilton, 1994). By the mid-20th century, Black-owned businesses in Canada included beauty salons, barbershops, and cooperative stores, with notable entrepreneurs like Viola Desmond founding beauty-related businesses in Halifax (Williams, 2021).

In Ontario, Black entrepreneurship flourished during the Underground Railroad era, particularly in Toronto and Chatham, where thriving Black communities developed. Early Black entrepreneurs, such as Thornton and Lucie Blackburn, who founded Toronto's first taxi service, laid foundational economic groundwork (Knight, 2019). By the 1880s, Toronto's Black-owned businesses ranged from barbershops to hotels (McFarquhar, 2007).

Spiteri (2024) asserts that though documentation on early Black entrepreneurship in Canada is limited and primarily focused on Ontario and Nova Scotia, evidence shows that Black entrepreneurs were present across other provinces as well. In Alberta, Black entrepreneurship dates back to the 1870s, notably with John Ware, a cowboy and rancher near the Red Deer River. Quebec's early Black settlements, linked to the rise of 19th-century railway companies, housed Black Canadians freed by the Canadian Slavery Abolition Act alongside American fugitive slaves. In British Columbia, late 19th-century Black migration led to the formation of vibrant communities, such as Hogan's Alley in Vancouver, by the early 20th century.



*Viola Desmond's powder compact.
Source: Nova Scotia Archives*



The arrow points to Toronto's first cab—a two-wheeled, one-horse vehicle called, "The City," operated and owned by Thornton and Lucie Blackburn. Source: Archives of Ontario

1.2 History of Black-owned businesses in Western Canada

Black entrepreneurship in Western Canada has a deep and resilient history, shaped by the migration of Black settlers seeking freedom and opportunity. From the late 19th century through the early 20th century, Black communities took root in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, driven by a desire to escape racial discrimination in the United States and other parts of Canada. Despite systemic barriers, these pioneers laid the foundation for vibrant Black business districts and economic networks that would endure for generations (Walker, 1980).

Early Black Settlements and Economic Ventures

Victoria, British Columbia (1850s)

One of the first significant Black communities in Western Canada emerged in Victoria, British Columbia, when approximately 800 Black pioneers arrived from California. Governor James Douglas, who had mixed Black ancestry, extended an invitation to these settlers, recognizing their potential to contribute to the region's economy and development. Many of these early settlers established successful businesses, including retail shops, farms, and service enterprises. However, their economic progress was often hindered by racial discrimination, exclusion from certain trades, and restrictive government policies that limited opportunities for expansion and financial success (Mathieu, 2010; BC Black History Awareness Society, n.d.).



*M.R. Smith & Co. Ltd. Biscuits and Confectionery. Moses R. Smith was a prominent Black business owner in Victoria, BC.
Source: Royal BC Museum and Archives*

Amber Valley, Alberta (1909)

In the early 20th century, over 1,000 Black settlers from Oklahoma migrated to Alberta, fleeing the oppressive Jim Crow laws that restricted their rights and economic opportunities in the United States. These settlers founded Amber Valley, a self-sustaining farming community where they cultivated the land and established local businesses. Despite their perseverance and agricultural success, they faced systemic racism, including government policies that sought to discourage Black immigration and business development. Financial institutions were reluctant to provide loans to Black entrepreneurs, limiting their ability to expand their enterprises and integrate into broader economic networks (Anthony D. 2024).



Farmer J. D. Edwards poses beside a grain field in Amber Valley, Alberta, late 1940s. Source: Glenbow Archives



Pioneer Junk, Park Grocery, and BC Supplies are shown in this 1970 photo shot from Main Street. During that time, the street was vibrant and dynamic. Source: City of Vancouver Archives. CVA 203-12.

Hogan's Alley, Vancouver (1900s-1970s)

During the early 20th century, Hogan's Alley in Vancouver became a thriving Black business hub, known for its lively entertainment scene, restaurants, and community-driven enterprises. The neighborhood was home to renowned jazz clubs, barber shops, and other businesses that served both Black and non-Black residents. Despite its cultural and economic significance, Hogan's Alley suffered the fate of many Black communities across North America. In the 1970s, urban renewal projects led to the destruction of the neighborhood, displacing Black residents and business owners. The erasure of this historic district had lasting consequences, disrupting economic progress and severing the communal ties that had sustained Black entrepreneurship for decades (Hogan's Alley Society, n.d.; City of Vancouver Archives, n.d.).

Despite facing systemic discrimination, Black settlers across Canada established strong institutions, thriving farms, and close-knit social networks, enriching Canadian history. Black-owned businesses continue to grow, making vital cultural, social, and economic contributions. In 2020, there were an estimated 144,980 Black-owned businesses in Canada, representing 2.4% of the total number of businesses in the country (Statistics Canada, 2023).

1.3 Contemporary Trends in the Black Business Community

The landscape of Black business ownership in Canada reveals notable trends in gender distribution, immigrant representation, industry focus, and financial performance, highlighting both progress and persistent challenges. The data presented below is drawn from Statistics Canada's 2023 research paper on Black entrepreneurs in Canada (Statistics Canada 2023; Gueye 2023).

Gender Dynamics

Men dominate Black entrepreneurship, accounting for 70.4% of Black entrepreneurs—a proportion higher than that of White and other racialized business owners. Between 2005 and 2018, the percentage of Black self-employed men rose from 1.8% to 3.5%, while Black self-employed women increased from 1.3% to 2.2%. Despite the growing share of unincorporated businesses owned by Black women, the gender gap continues to widen as men's ownership expands at a faster pace. Additionally, there is a noticeable lack of data on business owners who do not identify within the traditional gender binary.

Immigrant Representation

Immigrants form the majority of Black entrepreneurs in Canada, comprising 64.8% of male and 53.5% of female Black entrepreneurs. Key countries of origin include Nigeria, Jamaica, Ethiopia, Haiti, and Somalia, collectively representing over half (51.7%) of Black immigrant business owners.

Industry Focus and Business Types

Black-owned businesses represent 2.9% of unincorporated and 1.6% of incorporated enterprises in Canada, with significant activity in transportation, warehousing, and professional services. This reflects a diverse range of industries but also indicates opportunities for further growth in underrepresented sectors.

Financial Performance

Financially, Black-owned businesses face challenges. They are generally smaller, employ fewer workers, and exhibit lower profitability compared to businesses owned by White entrepreneurs or entrepreneurs in other racialized groups. Black-owned enterprises have an average profit margin of 8.5%, lagging behind the 14.9% margin of White-owned businesses and the 10.1% margin of businesses owned by other racialized groups. Lower returns on assets and fewer resources contribute to these disparities, underscoring the financial hurdles that Black entrepreneurs must overcome.

Policy Implications

The data highlights the need for targeted interventions to support the growth and sustainability of Black-owned businesses.

1.4 Data and Methods

While recent studies have explored ethnographic, demographic, socio-economic, and labour market outcomes for the Black population in Canada, there is a lack of comprehensive data on the Black business and entrepreneurship ecosystem. Although some recent reports have attempted to address this gap, there remains a significant lack of understanding of the challenges facing Black-owned businesses, which limits the policy responses needed to address these challenges. In combining data on the ethnographic, demographic, socio-economic situation of Black-owned businesses with a virtual town hall (VTH) that explores the unique challenges facing this segment of the Canadian business landscape, this report seeks to shed light on Black-owned businesses and drive policy discussions on this overlooked area of the Canadian economy.



The first phase (part one of the analysis) of this research report focused on conducting an environmental scan and collecting demographic data from over 1,000 Black-owned businesses, primarily in Western Canada. This was achieved through an online survey administered to Black business leaders and entrepreneurs. The data is segmented by province, gender, and other demographic variables to aid in understanding the diversity of Black-owned businesses .

Data for the second phase (part two) was derived primarily from a virtual town hall (VTH) held on November 12, 2024, as part of an engagement with Black business leaders and entrepreneurs. Approximately thirty Black business leaders and entrepreneurs across Canada attended the VTH. Inclusion criteria was ownership of a registered and operational Black business within Canada. Purposive sampling was adopted to identify these business leaders using the database of the Black Entrepreneurs and Businesses of Canada Society (BEBC). Outreach to participants was conducted via emails and BEBC marketing platforms.

Participants were divided into six groups, with each group assigned one open-ended question. Each group spent about 30 minutes on their assigned question. Some VTH participants sent in additional responses to the discussion questions. Secondary data comprising past research on Black-owned businesses was incorporated (and cited), often to demonstrate alignment of findings, as well as to demonstrate the recurrence of similar themes facing the Black business community.

The data from the VTH was analyzed using a mixed-methods approach. A note taker from each discussion room recorded and transcribed participants' responses to each question. The transcribed data was coded, using thematic codes relevant to the study's topic and research questions revealing a pattern of responses from the participants. Together, this data yielded a broader and more in-depth understanding of the size, scope, and regional challenges faced by this ecosystem.





Part 2:

*Ethnographic, Demographic
and Socio-economic Data on
Black-owned Businesses*



2.0 Summary of Sub-Section

- ▶ Data was gathered from 1,191 Black-owned businesses in Western Canada. Out of these, 497 Black-owned businesses are in British Columbia. Manitoba has 326. Alberta and Saskatchewan have 302 and 66, respectively. British Columbia has the highest number of Black-owned businesses in Western Canada.
- ▶ British Columbia alone accounts for 58.1% (172 out of 296) of the Black women-owned businesses across these four provinces. Alberta follows with 33.8%, while Manitoba and Saskatchewan together contribute 8.1% of the total Black women-owned Black-owned businesses .
- ▶ British Columbia and Alberta collectively represent 82.6% (38 out of 46) of the Black youth-owned businesses across the four provinces. Manitoba contributes 17.4% of the Black youth-owned businesses within the province's total.
- ▶ Fewer than 2% of all Black-owned businesses in Western Canada are owned by individuals identifying as Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and other gender and sexual identities (2SLGBTQIA+). Given the total of 1,191 Black-owned businesses, this means that fewer than 24 businesses are Black-owned 2SLGBTQIA+ businesses, emphasizing a relatively small representation. This data suggests that while 2SLGBTQIA+ representation exists among Black entrepreneurs in Alberta and British Columbia, it remains minimal in the broader context of Black-owned businesses in Western Canada.
- ▶ Alberta, British Columbia, and Manitoba collectively account for 19 Black-owned Afro-Indigenous businesses. With 12 of the 19 Black-owned Afro-Indigenous businesses, British Columbia emerges as the primary center for Afro-Indigenous entrepreneurship within the Black business community. This distribution shows that British Columbia represents 63.2% (12 out of 19) of these businesses, Alberta contributes 26.3%, and Manitoba accounts for 10.5%.
- ▶ Alberta, British Columbia, and Manitoba account for 453 Black-owned businesses that are 51% or more Black-owned. This figure represents the cumulative number of majority Black-owned businesses across the three provinces. Majority Black ownership is relatively common with Black-owned businesses in both British Columbia and Alberta. However, Manitoba has a noticeably lower proportion of such businesses (13.5%), highlighting a potential difference in ownership structures or demographics in that province's Black business community.
- ▶ Across Alberta, British Columbia, and Manitoba, there are a combined 71 Black-owned non-profit businesses (49 in British Columbia, 13 in Alberta, and 9 in Manitoba). This analysis highlights that British Columbia has the highest proportion of Black-owned businesses non-profits relative to its total, at about 10%, followed by Alberta with 4.3%, and Manitoba with 2.76%.

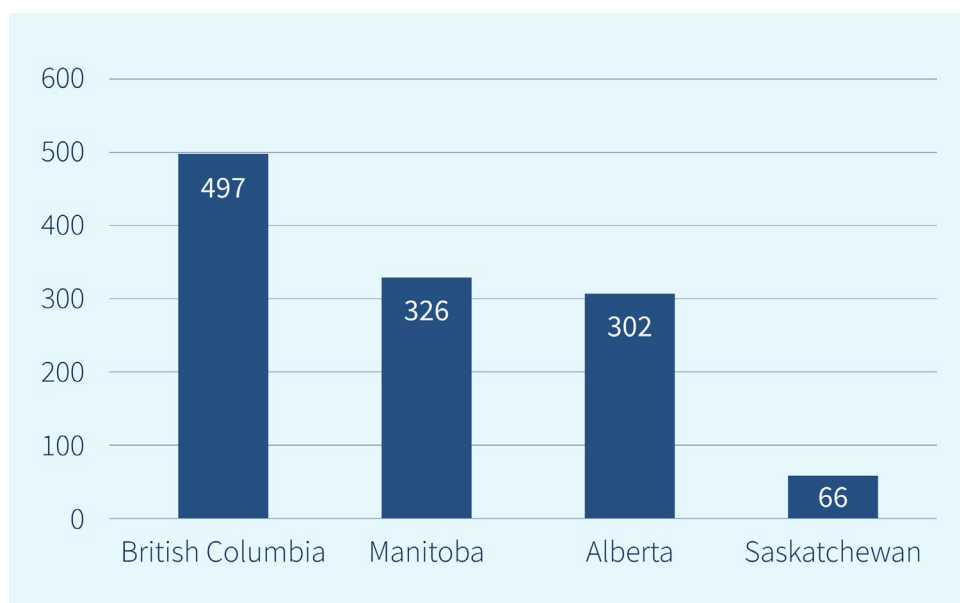
2.1 Geographic Distribution of Surveyed Businesses by Province (Western Canada)

British Columbia leads with 497 Black-owned businesses, representing approximately 41.7% of all Black-owned businesses in Western Canada. Manitoba follows with 326 Black-owned businesses, accounting for roughly 27.4% of the total. Alberta has 302 Black-owned businesses, or 25.4% of the total. Saskatchewan has the smallest number, with 66 Black-owned businesses, making up 5.5% of the total. In total, there are 1,191 Black-owned businesses in Western Canada.

British Columbia holds the highest concentration of Black-owned businesses among the four provinces, with almost twice as many Black-owned businesses as Manitoba and more than 1.5 times as many as Alberta.

British Columbia holds the highest concentration of Black-owned businesses among the four provinces, with almost twice as many Black-owned businesses as Manitoba and more than 1.5 times as many as Alberta. Despite Alberta having a population and economic profile larger than Manitoba, it has 24 fewer Black-owned businesses than Manitoba, indicating a relatively smaller share in comparison. Saskatchewan's 66 Black-owned businesses account for a small fraction of the total number in Western Canada, with just one business for approximately every 7.5 businesses in British Columbia. This statistical overview highlights that British Columbia has a notably higher count, followed by Manitoba, Alberta, and then Saskatchewan, each with distinct counts that outline a clear provincial hierarchy in the number of Black-owned businesses across Western Canada.

*Figure 1.
Business Count by Province.
Data based on
BEBC Survey 2024*

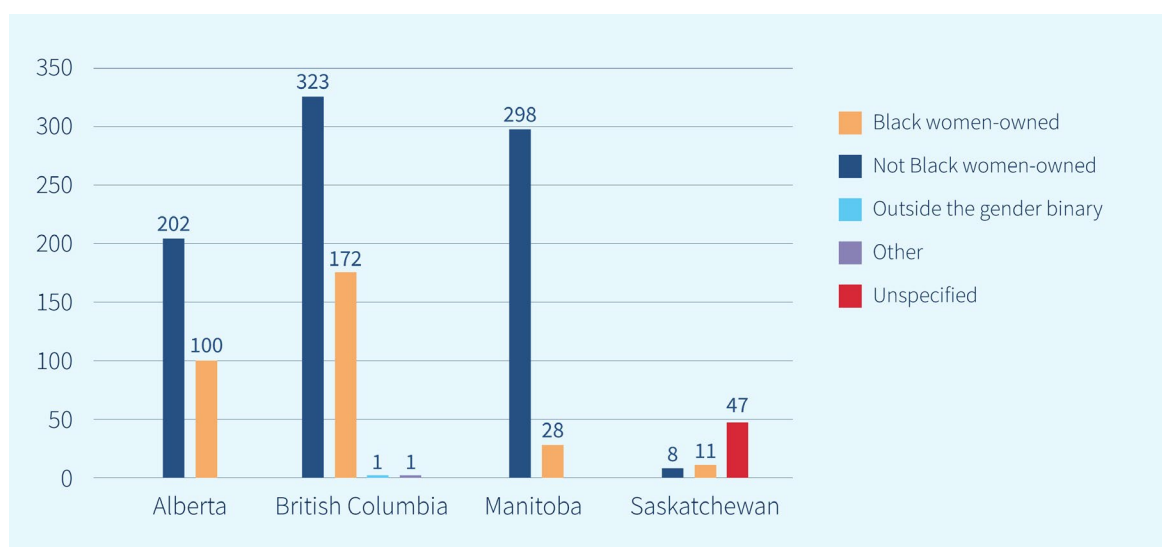


2.2 Black Women-owned Businesses

British Columbia has the highest count of Black women-owned businesses with 172. These businesses represent 34% of all Black-owned businesses in the province, indicating a relatively high level of entrepreneurship among women within the Black business community. Alberta has 100 Black women-owned businesses, which is the second highest count but constitutes a smaller portion of the total Black-owned businesses in the province compared to British Columbia. There are 28 Black women-owned businesses in Manitoba, a modest figure compared to British Columbia and Alberta. With 11 Black women-owned businesses, Saskatchewan has the lowest number, aligning with its overall smaller Black business community. Looking at these figures, British Columbia alone accounts for 58.1% (172 out of 296) of the Black women-owned businesses across these four provinces. Alberta follows with 33.8%, while Manitoba and Saskatchewan together contribute 8.1% of the total Black women-owned businesses.

This breakdown emphasizes that British Columbia has not only the highest number of Black-owned businesses but also a relatively high proportion of these led by women, reflecting a notable presence of women entrepreneurs within the province's Black business community.

Figure 2.
Women-
owned
Businesses.
Data based on
BEBC Survey
2024



2.3 Black Youth-owned Businesses

The total number of Black youth-owned businesses in Alberta, British Columbia, and Manitoba is 46. British Columbia and Alberta have an equal number of Black youth-owned businesses, with 19 each. This represents a balanced youth entrepreneurship presence within the Black business communities of these two provinces. Manitoba has the remaining 8 Black youth-owned businesses.

British Columbia and Alberta collectively represent 82.6% (38 out of 46) of the Black youth-owned businesses across the four provinces. Manitoba contributes 17.4% of the Black youth-owned businesses.

This data highlights a strong youth entrepreneurial presence in British Columbia and Alberta within the Black business community, while Manitoba has a smaller share of youth-led Black-owned businesses in comparison.

Figure 3.
Youth-owned Businesses. Data based
on BEBC Survey 2024





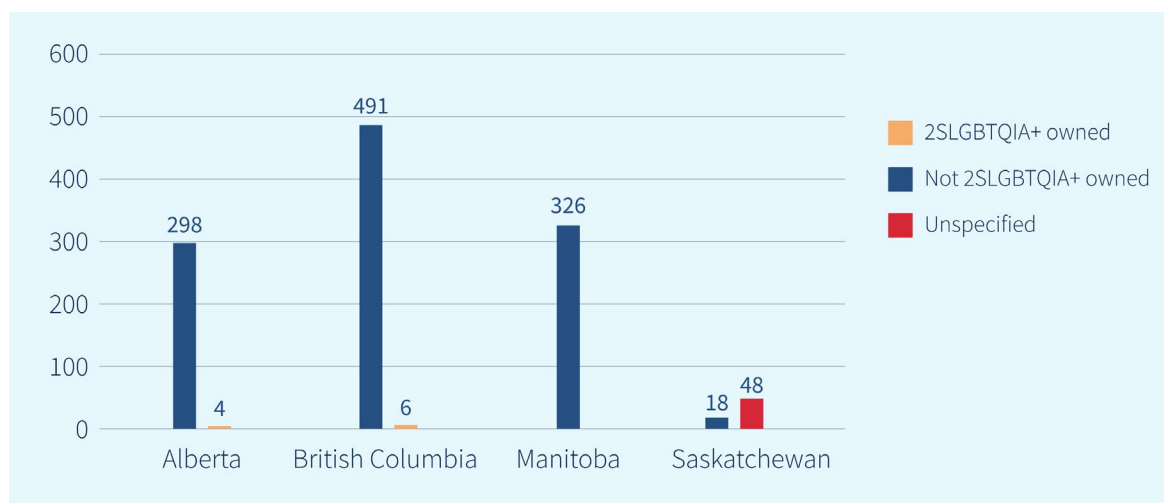
2.4 Black-owned 2SLGBTQIA+ Businesses

Fewer than 2% of all Black-owned businesses in Western Canada are owned by individuals identifying as Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and other gender and sexual identities (2SLGBTQIA+). Of the total 1,191 Black-owned businesses surveyed, fewer than 24 businesses are 2SLGBTQIA+-owned, emphasizing a relatively small representation.

Alberta and British Columbia collectively have 10 Black-owned businesses with 2SLGBTQIA+ owners. This combined figure highlights these two provinces as the only locations within the data where such ownership has been recorded. Manitoba has no 2SLGBTQIA+-identifying Black entrepreneurs recorded, indicating either a lack of representation or underreporting within the province.

Since Alberta and British Columbia are the only provinces with 2SLGBTQIA+-identifying Black entrepreneurs, all such businesses are concentrated in these two provinces, reflecting a notable but limited presence. This data suggests that while 2SLGBTQIA+ representation exists among Black entrepreneurs in Alberta and British Columbia, it remains minimal in the broader context of Black-owned businesses in Western Canada.

*Figure 4.
Businesses
Owned by
2SLGBTQIA+.
Data based on
BEBC Survey
2024*



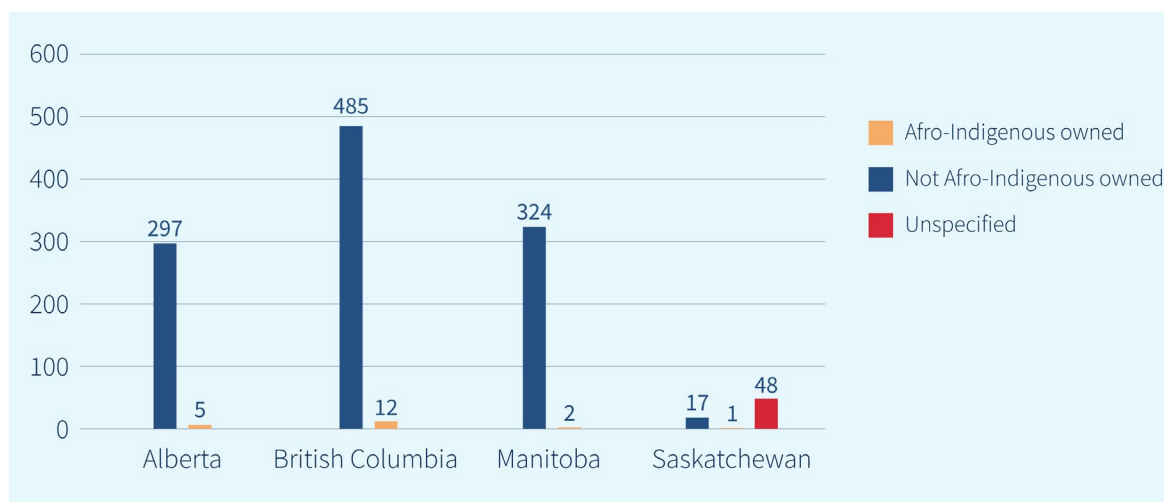


2.5 Afro-Indigenous-owned Black Businesses

With 12 of the 19 Afro-Indigenous-owned businesses, British Columbia emerges as the primary center for Afro-Indigenous entrepreneurship within the Black business community in these regions. Alberta has five Afro-Indigenous-owned businesses, representing the second-highest count. Manitoba has two Afro-Indigenous-owned businesses, the smallest number among these provinces. This distribution shows that British Columbia represents 63.2% (12 out of 19) of these businesses, Alberta contributes 26.3%, and Manitoba accounts for 10.5%. Alberta and Manitoba, while having fewer businesses, still add to the diversity of Black-owned businesses through Afro-Indigenous representation.

This data emphasizes a concentrated presence of Afro-Indigenous-owned businesses in British Columbia, with smaller yet notable numbers in Alberta and Manitoba.

Figure 5. Afro-Indigenous-owned Businesses. Data based on BEBC Survey 2024



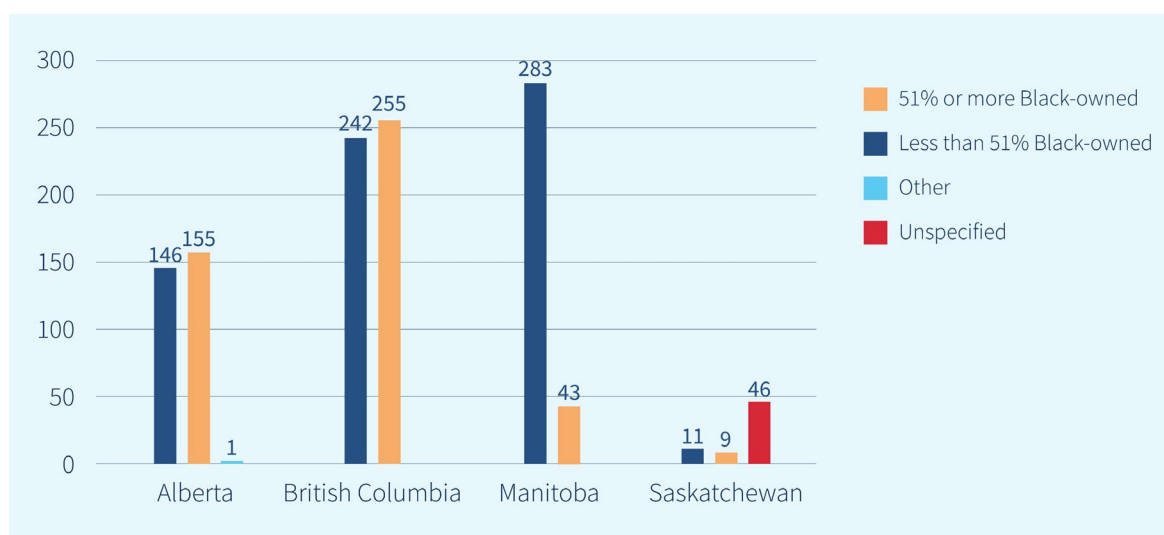
2.6 Businesses That Are 51% Black-owned

Alberta, British Columbia, and Manitoba together account for 453 Black-owned businesses that are 51% or more Black-owned. This figure represents the cumulative number of majority Black-owned businesses across the three provinces.

As noted earlier, there are 497 Black-owned businesses in British Columbia. With 51.3% of these businesses having majority Black ownership, this translates to approximately 255 Black-owned businesses (51.3% of 497) where 51% or more of shares are Black-owned.

Alberta has 302 Black-owned businesses in total. Of these businesses, 154 (approximately 51%) indicated a majority Black ownership. In Manitoba, about 44 out of 326 Black-owned businesses are majority Black-owned, which constitutes approximately 13.5%. The data suggests that majority Black ownership is relatively common in Black-owned businesses in both British Columbia and Alberta. However, Manitoba has a noticeably lower proportion of such businesses, highlighting a potential difference in ownership structures or demographics in that province's Black business community.

*Figure 6.
Businesses
that are 51%
Black-owned.
Data based on
BEBC Survey
2024*





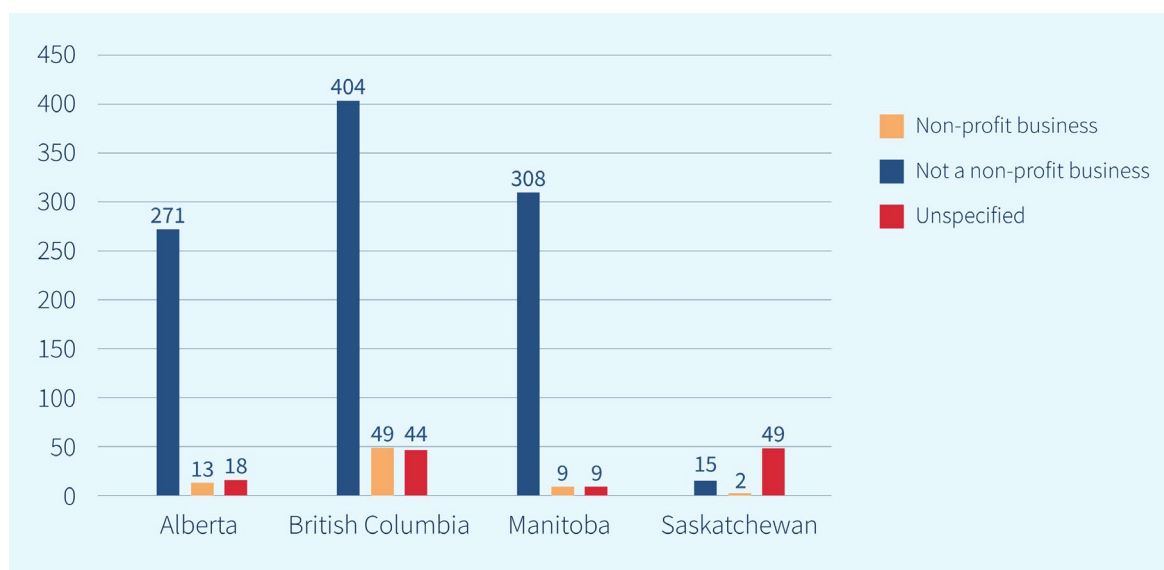
2.7 Black-owned Non-Profit Businesses

Across Alberta, British Columbia, and Manitoba, there are a combined 71 Black-owned non-profit businesses (49 in British Columbia, 13 in Alberta, and nine in Manitoba).

With a total of 497 Black-owned businesses in British Columbia, 49 are non-profits, which constitutes approximately 9.9% of all Black-owned businesses in the province-close to the stated 10%. Alberta has a total of 302 Black-owned businesses, with 13 Black-owned non-profit businesses. This represents approximately 4.3% of the Black business community in Alberta. Manitoba has 326 Black-owned businesses in total. Among these, nine are non-profits, making up approximately 2.76% of Black-owned businesses in the province.

British Columbia has the highest proportion of Black-owned non-profit businesses relative to its total, at about 10%, followed by Alberta with 4.3%, and Manitoba with 2.76%. This indicates that Black-owned non-profit businesses are more prominent in British Columbia compared to the other two provinces.

*Figure 7.
Non-Profit Type
of Businesses.
Data based on
BEBC Survey
2024*





Part 3:

*A Qualitative Assessment of
Black-owned Businesses
in Canada*





3.0 Summary of Sub-Section

This section highlights the results of discussions with Black business leaders during Black Entrepreneurs and Businesses of Canada Society's (BEBC) virtual town hall (VTH). It presents challenges and opportunities identified by business leaders as well as recommendations touted by these individuals.

- ▶ Black-owned businesses enrich Canada's economy by introducing unique products and services, fostering cultural diversity, and driving innovation. These businesses act as community anchors, reducing unemployment, and promoting local development through job creation and mentorship.
- ▶ Structural racism and implicit biases in financial institutions and markets significantly hinder access to capital and opportunities for Black entrepreneurs.
- ▶ Black entrepreneurs face unique barriers to credit and financing, compounded by systemic barriers to credit and financing, particularly for immigrants and new entrepreneurs.
- ▶ Many Black entrepreneurs are unaware of funding, grants, and market opportunities due to insufficient targeted outreach and a lack of accessible resources.
- ▶ Challenges vary by region and sector, with rural areas facing resource deficits and urban areas dealing with intense competition.
- ▶ Black entrepreneurs are often stereotypically associated with a narrow range of industries, limiting opportunities in diverse fields like technology and manufacturing.
- ▶ A lack of tailored mentorship and effective networks leaves Black entrepreneurs without guidance on critical business strategies and limits their ability to access growth opportunities.
- ▶ Black-owned businesses suffer from poor representation in media and marketing, leading to lower public awareness and limited role models for aspiring entrepreneurs.
- ▶ Existing programs like the Black Entrepreneurship Program (BEP) are important but insufficient. Policies must address systemic exclusion, fund non-traditional sectors, and support leadership roles for Black professionals.
- ▶ Partnerships between businesses, institutions, and policymakers can enhance visibility, provide shared resources, and create platforms to support and advocate for Black entrepreneurs.



3.1 The Economic Impact of Black-Owned Businesses and Strategies for Showcasing Their Contributions

Black-owned businesses play a vital role in shaping both local and national economies in Canada. Their impact extends beyond economic metrics, enriching cultural landscapes and creating opportunities that resonate deeply within communities. These economic and cultural contributions include:

Cultural Enrichment


Black-owned businesses bring diverse cultural elements to the economy, offering unique products, services, and perspectives. For instance, a food vendor might introduce nutritional variety and cultural heritage through traditional dishes, fostering cross-cultural appreciation. This closes cultural gaps and creates spaces where communities can share and celebrate diversity.

Economic Innovation and Diversity

The diversity of backgrounds among Black entrepreneurs introduces innovative approaches to doing business. From creating new product lines to offering alternative business models, Black entrepreneurs add value to the broader economy by providing consumers with more options and fostering competitive markets.

Community Development

Black-owned businesses are anchors of community growth, offering job opportunities, and promoting local economic development. By employing members of the community, they directly contribute to reducing unemployment and building economic stability. Moreover, their involvement in education, such as sharing knowledge and experiences, fosters skill development within the community.



“Black-owned businesses [144,000 of them in Canada] play a critical role in shaping both local and national economies. They not only create jobs within their communities but also inspire innovation and fill unique market gaps that drive overall economic growth.

These businesses often reinvest in their communities, supporting local suppliers, creating mentorship opportunities, and fostering entrepreneurship among the next generation. Their success uplifts neighborhoods, strengthens networks, and contributes to a more inclusive and diverse economic ecosystem that benefits everyone.”

- Black business leader at the virtual town hall

3.1.1. Strategies to Showcase Contributions

The section below highlights strategies identified by Black business leaders during the virtual town hall (VTH) to showcase their contributions within the broader Canadian business space.

Highlighting Specific Sectors

Focusing on particular industries, such as textiles, food, or technology, can help illustrate the depth of contributions Black-owned businesses make. This targeted approach enables tailored marketing strategies that emphasize unique strengths and innovations.

Media Visibility

Increased exposure through traditional and digital media platforms, including radio, television, and social media, can spotlight success stories and the impact of these businesses. Bold, confident marketing campaigns can further attract public and consumer interest.

Storytelling and Advocacy

Sharing stories about the origins, challenges, and successes of Black entrepreneurs can connect their contributions to broader economic and cultural narratives. Engaging with the right supporters, such as influencers, policymakers, and community leaders, amplifies these stories and enhances their reach.



By recognizing and promoting the multifaceted contributions of Black-owned businesses, Canada can better appreciate their role in economic and cultural development. Showcasing these contributions effectively not only celebrates diversity but also encourages investment and support, ensuring these businesses thrive and continue their impactful work.

Building Partnerships

Participants touched on how collaborating with other businesses, institutions, and organizations creates networks that boost visibility and credibility. Such partnerships foster resource-sharing, innovation, and collective growth, presenting Black-owned businesses as integral contributors to the economy.

Knowledge Sharing

Leveraging intellectual capital by sharing experiences, best practices, and insights with others in the community strengthens the overall entrepreneurial ecosystem. This collective wisdom can inspire emerging entrepreneurs and help established businesses grow further.



“Access to capital remains the most significant barrier for Black-owned businesses, acting as a bottleneck to growth and scalability. This challenge is compounded by systemic inequities in lending practices and a lack of financial institutions willing to take the risk on underrepresented entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, Black entrepreneurs often face limited access to high-value networks, procurement opportunities, and mentorship programs, leaving them at a disadvantage in a competitive marketplace. Without meaningful intervention, these challenges perpetuate cycles of underinvestment and economic exclusion.”

- Black business leader at the virtual town hall

3.2 Unique Barriers Faced by Black Entrepreneurs in Accessing Capital, Markets, and Networks

Black entrepreneurs in Canada encounter distinct challenges in accessing capital, markets, and networks. These barriers are deeply influenced by systemic inequities, cultural dynamics, and regional and sectoral variations. Addressing these obstacles is crucial for fostering an equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem.

3.2.1. Systemic Bias and Implicit Bias in Interactions With Public and Private Institutions

One of the primary challenges identified by participants is the systemic bias facing many Black-owned businesses. Discussions on this bias centered on how structural barriers within private financing and banking hinder Black entrepreneurs’ access to resources, capital, and opportunities. **Participants cited how implicit biases often result in unequal treatment during critical interactions, such as applying for loans, negotiating contracts, or seeking partnerships. These biases perpetuate a cycle of exclusion, limiting the ability of Black entrepreneurs to compete on equal footing.**

The challenge of accessing financing echoes similar conclusions of research conducted on Black entrepreneurs, such as Export Development Canada’s (EDC) work on challenges facing Black-owned businesses (EDC, 2023). In this report, Black entrepreneurs cited similar systemic challenges, where banks and financial institutions treated them unfairly. Similar conclusions on perceived racism and unfair treatment of Black entrepreneurs, with negative effects on their access to capital, were highlighted in other reports that sought to understand the barriers facing Black-owned businesses (Coletto, Deacon, and Burgessson, 2021; CBCC, 2021; and Elmi et al., 2021). It is worth noting that similar challenges have been documented in other jurisdictions in North America. For a comprehensive overview of this challenge facing Black entrepreneurs, see Steven Rogers’ book, *Successful Black Entrepreneurs: Hidden Histories, Inspirational stories, and Extraordinary Business Achievements* (2022).

Related to the above, Black women entrepreneurs face compounded challenges due to intersecting racial and gender biases. Their experiences in accessing funding, mentorship, and business networks are often marked by misogyny, including skepticism and undervaluation of their capabilities, further marginalizing their efforts in spaces predominantly dominated by men.

Gueye’s (2023) comprehensive overview of Black-owned businesses across Canada noted the significant differences between men and women, with men accounting for more than two-thirds (70.4%) of the total businesses and women for 29.6%. Whereas Gueye’s (2023) work did not draw a direct link between access to finance and business ownership, it nonetheless noted that the gap between men and women within the Black business community is the highest amongst racialized groups in Canada.

3.2.2. Awareness and Outreach

Participants noted that many Black entrepreneurs are unaware of available funding, grants, and market opportunities due to a lack of targeted outreach and accessible information. This information gap is exacerbated by the failure of predominantly White organizations to meaningfully engage with Black communities, often relying on performative gestures rather than actionable support.

In a related study that echoes these findings, Myriam Francisque, the national lead for Inclusive Trade, Black and racialized exporters at Export Development Canada (EDC), observed that “many Black entrepreneurs are highly educated, they have great knowledge in professional fields, but when it comes to running a business, it’s a different type of knowledge” (EDC, 2023).

Knowledge around available opportunities notably influences access to finance, as well as other business development opportunities. This challenge has been cited in previous studies on Black-owned businesses, such as Black Entrepreneurs and Businesses of Canada (2021); Coletto, Deacon, and Burgesson (2021); and Elmi et al., (2021).



3.2.3. Regional and Sectoral Variations

The entrepreneurial landscape for Black entrepreneurs varies significantly by region in Canada, shaped by local economic conditions, cultural norms, and systemic challenges. While certain opportunities may be present, they are often underused due to barriers such as exclusion and persistent stereotypes.

Participants noted that barriers faced by Black entrepreneurs vary significantly depending on location and industry. **For example:**

- **In urban regions, competition for funding is fierce, but networking opportunities may be more abundant.**
- **Rural and remote areas often lack accessible resources, infrastructure, and Black-led business networks.**
- **Sector-specific challenges exist, such as difficulties for tech entrepreneurs in accessing venture capital compared to those in consumer goods, where markets may be more receptive to cultural diversity.**

For example, a participant noted that Calgary has a strong presence of Black contributors in data analysis and business intelligence, but few Black entrepreneurs. They point to the conservative nature of the region, coupled with experiences of deliberate exclusion, which have led to hesitation among Black professionals to transition into ownership roles. This reluctance reflects a systemic issue that policies must address by creating safe, inclusive opportunities for Black entrepreneurs to take leadership positions.

Also, alcohol distribution was identified as a sector with national uniformity in opportunities and challenges. Given its potential, policies should explore ways to increase Black representation in this industry, including access to distribution networks and market entry support.

3.2.4. Building Community Engagement

Discussions centered around how a lack of outreach from organizations to Black communities highlights the need for Black leaders to actively engage with their communities. Participants observed that such engagement can foster awareness of opportunities, share critical resources, and empower entrepreneurs to navigate systemic challenges effectively.

Participants emphasized the absence of a strong resource-sharing community as a primary hurdle. A robust network can provide referrals, mentorship, and access to critical information, yet such structures are often underdeveloped within Black entrepreneurial circles.

3.2.5. Mentorship and Networking

Mentorship tailored to the needs of Black entrepreneurs was frequently cited as lacking. This lack of guidance often left them feeling uncertain about essential business strategies, such as navigating taxation, setting product prices, and identifying industry-specific opportunities within their local contexts.

Existing programs often do not align with the realities of Black-owned businesses, and many networking events fail to yield tangible results. Consistent with the work of Elmi et al. (2021) and CBCC (2021), the limited availability of positive role models and networks have been ranked amongst the most critical challenges facing Black-owned businesses. These limitations have negative impacts on Black entrepreneurs' awareness of opportunities within their communities and business links that can facilitate the growth of their businesses.

3.2.6. Lack of Visibility and Community Creation

A recurring theme was the limited visibility afforded to Black-owned businesses in marketing and branding. Participants noted disparities in opportunities to showcase their ventures, which affects their ability to compete effectively in broader markets.

The absence of visible Black-owned enterprises was cited as a critical gap. Participants noted that without prominent examples of successful Black-owned businesses, young people and aspiring entrepreneurs will lack role models to inspire and guide them. **Policies should encourage the development of community-driven initiatives that spotlight Black-owned enterprises and foster collaboration.**

3.2.7. Sector-Specific Stereotypes

Nationally, Black entrepreneurs are often stereotypically associated with industries like food, hair care, skin care, and sports. While these sectors are vital and culturally significant, this narrow focus overlooks the diverse capabilities of Black entrepreneurs in fields like technology, manufacturing, and professional services. **Policies should seek to dismantle these stereotypes by supporting Black-owned businesses across a broader range of industries.**





Part 4:

*Policy Recommendations to
Address Obstacles Faced by
Black Entrepreneurs*



4.0. Policy Recommendations to Address Obstacles Faced by Black Entrepreneurs

Black entrepreneurs in Canada encounter various challenges, including financial constraints, regulatory hurdles, and limited access to resources. Targeted policy changes and programs can help address these obstacles and create a more equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem.

“Policy changes must be bold and targeted to dismantle systemic barriers that Black-owned businesses face.

Governments and financial institutions need to implement policies that guarantee equitable access to capital through grant programs, low-interest loans, and initiatives designed specifically for underrepresented entrepreneurs. Additionally, procurement policies should mandate greater inclusion of Black-owned businesses in public and corporate supply chains, creating opportunities for these businesses to compete on a level playing field. Education and capacity-building programs that focus on financial literacy, procurement readiness, and scaling strategies are equally critical.

These policy shifts are not just about fairness—they’re about unlocking the economic potential of Black-owned businesses to drive innovation and prosperity for everyone.”

- Jackee Kasandy, Founder, Black Entrepreneurs and Businesses of Canada Society & Kasandy Inc.



4.1. Procurement Quota for Black-owned businesses

To promote economic equity and inclusive growth, we recommend establishing a procurement quota of 3% to 5% for Black-owned businesses at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels. This quota would be modeled after the existing requirement for federal departments and agencies that ensures a minimum 5% of the total value of contracts are held by Indigenous businesses. Implementing a similar quota for Black-owned businesses would drive economic contributions and unlock the potential of these communities.

These can be achieved with the following implementation measures:

Awareness campaigns to inform Black-owned businesses about procurement opportunities

Capacity building programs to equip Black entrepreneurs with procurement skills

Supportive ecosystems through partnerships with organizations like BEBC that is already offering a [Procurement & Certification Readiness Course](#) to provide mentorship and support

Accountability and reporting mechanisms to ensure compliance and transparency in achieving the target



4.2. Enhancing Visibility for Black Entrepreneurs: A Path to Empowerment

Visibility in the market and among policymakers is essential for the success and sustainability of Black-owned businesses in Canada. Improving visibility requires a multifaceted approach that tackles systemic barriers, fosters community collaboration, and promotes advocacy.

Participants noted that Black entrepreneurs must be represented in policy making spaces to ensure their voices are heard and their unique challenges addressed. Black representation in government and key policy forums can drive exposure and pave the way for meaningful engagement. Policymakers from Black communities can also champion initiatives that prioritize the needs of Black-owned businesses.

Discussions explored the need for investing in campaigns that highlight successful Black-owned businesses across regions, emphasizing their diversity and impact. Visible success stories can inspire new entrepreneurs and challenge stereotypes about Black entrepreneurship.

4.3. Awareness of and Access to Resources

A critical gap exists in Black entrepreneurs' awareness of existing grant opportunities and how to access them. Expanding outreach through targeted communication and education is vital. Simultaneously, the scarcity of grants and financial support tailored to Black-owned businesses remains a significant hurdle, necessitating both public and private sector intervention to create more equitable funding streams.

Simplifying and streamlining access to information through centralized platforms or referral systems can reduce the complexity entrepreneurs face. Offering courses on navigating funding, procurement, and other business essentials was also recommended as an effective strategy.

4.4. Enhancing Mentorship and Training

Participants consistently highlighted the scarcity of mentorship networks and support systems within their communities and regions. **Tailored mentorship programs that focus on business development and practical networking opportunities can be transformative.** Discussions noted how establishing mentorship programs and robust support networks can provide entrepreneurs with guidance and resources tailored to their needs, fostering resilience and growth.

Participants called for government and corporate-backed initiatives that provide relevant and actionable guidance for Black entrepreneurs.

Participants further observed that investing in community-building initiatives can foster networks that empower Black entrepreneurs. Participants suggested supporting organizations like the Black Entrepreneurs and Businesses of Canada Society and creating programs that encourage collaboration and resource sharing.

Given the recurring theme of the need for mentorship to support Black-owned businesses, this study recommends further research into the influence of mentorship on Black entrepreneurship, as well as further research on how other demographic variables, such as age and education status, may intersect with mentorship needs for Black entrepreneurs.



4.5. Leveraging Community Channels

Community hubs, such as religious centres, can be instrumental in enhancing visibility for Black entrepreneurs. By serving as platforms for information dissemination and networking, these spaces can foster connections that amplify business exposure. Additionally, **incubators and community services** should prioritize collaboration among Black-owned businesses to generate collective awareness and market buzz.

Also, a **centralized database** to connect Black entrepreneurs with resources, funding opportunities, and community members can facilitate collaboration and streamline access to support.

4.6. Expanding Financial Resources

The importance of financial education is gaining traction within the Black business circle and the broader society, yet the diverse needs of the Black community in this area remain largely unaddressed. Previous studies on Black Canadians noted that for members of this community, especially recent immigrants from Africa, the Caribbean and elsewhere where credit systems differ or do not exist, understanding credit is a learned experience rather than inherited knowledge (CBCC, 2021). This experience gap creates unique challenges, often leaving recent immigrants with limited knowledge on how to navigate credit systems and financial planning without guidance. The issue of the intersection between credit and race may require further studies to understand how biases from financial institutions may be related to these two variables.

As noted earlier, beyond individual education, systemic barriers compound these challenges. Black Canadians often lack access to financial programs or opportunities for homeownership and business funding. Furthermore, the absence of social innovation hubs limits Black entrepreneurs' ability to collaborate, share ideas, and drive growth in their businesses.

Addressing these gaps requires targeted programs that acknowledge the unique financial landscape faced by the Black community while fostering education and opportunity for future generations. While recent programs such as the EDC's Inclusive Trade Investment Program (ITIP) and the Black Entrepreneurship Program (BEP) are steps in the right direction, more remains to be done if the Black business community is to gain a footing within the broader business landscape. In line with this, participants called for the development of funding mechanisms specifically designed to alleviate financial barriers for Black entrepreneurs. These include:

- **Micro and seed funding loans to support startups and small businesses**
- **Partnering with financial institutions to address systemic biases in lending practices**
- **Encouraging the inclusion of Black entrepreneurs in government procurement opportunities**
- **Equity funding programs to provide capital for scaling operations**
- **Tiered financial support to help businesses manage growing pains, such as meeting demands after securing large contracts**

Continued education and training programs focusing on financial literacy, regulatory navigation, and operational management were also highlighted as essential for long-term success.



4.7. Strategic Events and Media Engagement

Previous studies on Black entrepreneurship noted that awareness campaigns for funding programs often fail to account for the distinct ways Black communities access and engage with information (CBCC, 2021). This disconnect means Black entrepreneurs often remain unaware of available opportunities.

To address this, events designed for Black-owned businesses need to have an understanding of the unique needs of this community, as well as the optimal ways to engage the Black community. Special events showcasing Black-owned businesses can be powerful tools for building market presence, but gaining traction within the community requires finding ways to build bridges to these businesses. In keeping with this goal, participants observed that partnering with community influencers can attract media attention and enhance public visibility.

Similarly, encouraging Black entrepreneurs to participate in strategic events like chamber of commerce meetings fosters confidence and creates opportunities for broader engagement. Thus, efforts to amplify the presence of Black-owned businesses in media, advertising, and branding must be prioritized. These efforts include:

- Offering government and corporate sponsorships for marketing campaigns featuring Black entrepreneurs
- Creating platforms that specifically promote Black-owned businesses



*Photos from the Black Entrepreneurship and Research Symposium, presented by RADIUS SFU, UBC's Black Advisory Hub, and the Black Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub
February 28, 2025*

4.8. Building Alliances

Strategic alliances with policymakers and political office holders can play a transformative role in shaping policies that support Black entrepreneurs. Advocacy efforts should focus on fostering partnerships that amplify the needs of the community and influence decision-making processes.

Again, discussions centred on the need to foster community creation by supporting initiatives that bring Black entrepreneurs together, enabling collaboration, resource-sharing, and mutual growth. Visible networks of thriving businesses can provide a foundation for lasting economic empowerment.

4.9. Inclusive Ownership Programs

Developing initiatives that support Black professionals in transitioning into ownership roles, particularly in conservative regions where systemic exclusion persists, has been highlighted as a key strategy to enhance Black participation in sectors beyond their stereotypical industries. **This support can include targeted funding, mentorship, and leadership training programs.** Thus, by expanding support for Black entrepreneurs in non-traditional sectors through grants, training, and networking opportunities, as well as by showcasing the successes of Black-owned businesses in industries like technology, data analysis, and manufacturing, policies can help shift perceptions and broaden opportunities.

4.10. Legal and Regulatory Assistance

Entrepreneurs often struggle with the legal complexities of taking investments and forming agreements. **Providing subsidized or free legal services for handling agreements and other contractual needs can alleviate this barrier and encourage more investments.** Tax incentives specifically designed for Black-owned businesses can ease financial burdens, encouraging investment and sustainability during the early stages of growth.

4.11. Cultural Competency Training for Institutions

Introducing cultural competency training for public and private institutions, including financial institutions, can ensure policies are inclusive and responsive to the unique challenges faced by Black entrepreneurs.

Financial institutions need to adopt a culturally informed approach when engaging with Black entrepreneurs. For example, standard funding criteria applied to all applicants may not adequately address the distinct and complex financial challenges faced by Black entrepreneurs, necessitating tailored strategies to meet their specific needs.

4.12. Access to Supply Chains

Access to suppliers and buyers remains a persistent challenge for many Black entrepreneurs. Establishing networks and creating platforms that facilitate these connections is critical. **This could include organized buyer-supplier matchmaking events or dedicated online marketplaces for Black-owned businesses.**

By addressing these areas, Black entrepreneurs can gain greater visibility, influence, and opportunity within the Canadian market. This approach will not only empower individual businesses but also contribute to the economic vitality of Black communities across the country.





4.13. Support for Scaling, and Public Private Partnerships

Programs that provide rapid resourcing for businesses facing sudden growth, such as businesses that have secured large contracts, can help mitigate the risks associated with scaling operations. Participants noted that collaborative initiatives between governments and private sectors can drive inclusive economic development. Such partnerships could include:

- **Co-funding opportunities for Black-owned businesses**
- **Sponsoring mentorship and training programs**
- **Creating platforms for Black entrepreneurs to engage with policymakers and industry leaders**

The expected impact of these policy recommendations include:

Economic Growth: Enhanced capacity of Black-owned businesses leading to greater contributions to Canada's gross domestic product (GDP)

Innovation and Diversity: Fresh perspectives, innovative solutions, and a richer diversity of services and products in the public sector

Job Creation: Increased employment opportunities within Black communities

Equity in Access: Ensuring Black-owned businesses receive their fair share of economic opportunities





Part 5:

Conclusion



5.0. Conclusion

Black entrepreneurs are pivotal to Canada's economic and cultural fabric, contributing innovation, community development, and cultural enrichment. However, systemic barriers, such as biases in financial institutions, limited access to resources, and inadequate representation, continue to stifle their growth and potential. These barriers are exacerbated by regional and sectoral variations, which further limit the growth and potential of Black entrepreneurs.

To foster a more equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem, targeted policies and initiatives are required. This includes addressing systemic racism in financial institutions, increasing outreach and awareness of available resources, and creating inclusive platforms for mentorship, networking, and scaling. In particular, greater visibility through media and strategic marketing campaigns, as well as strategic partnerships, can amplify the success of Black-owned businesses and shift societal perceptions about the industries they represent.





By investing in tailored financial support, mentorship programs, and inclusive policy frameworks, Canada can unlock the full potential of Black entrepreneurs, driving innovation, economic growth, and cultural diversity across the country.

Ensuring these businesses thrive will not only contribute to the broader economy but will also empower Black communities and create a more inclusive and sustainable future for all.

Dr. Olutoyin Oyelade, President of Casa Foundation at the first Black Entrepreneurship and Research Symposium in Vancouver, February 2025



5.1. Glossary of Terms

This glossary helps define the key concepts and challenges discussed in the report, providing a foundation for further exploration of the Black business ecosystem in Canada.

2SLGBTQIA+ stands for Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual, and the plus sign represents other gender identities and sexual orientations.

Afro-Indigenous signifies individuals with both African and Indigenous heritage.

Black Business Ecosystem is the collective network of Black entrepreneurs and businesses, encompassing their interactions, resources, and shared experiences. This ecosystem includes not only the businesses themselves but also the supporting institutions, networks, and cultural dynamics that influence their development and success.

Black Business Leader refers to an individual who has started, owns and/or is part of the leadership of a business or businesses that are identified as Black-owned. The report focuses on the experiences and challenges of these individuals as key drivers of the Black business ecosystem.

Black Entrepreneur: Individuals of African descent who start, own, and operate businesses across various industries. They play a significant role in the Canadian economy, creating jobs, driving innovation, and building wealth within their communities.

Black-owned Businesses are companies or enterprises that are owned and operated by Black individuals or groups. These businesses can operate in various sectors, and they contribute significantly to the Canadian economy.

Capital refers to financial resources, such as investments, loans, and grants, that businesses require for startup, operation, and expansion. Access to capital is a significant challenge for Black entrepreneurs due to systemic barriers in lending practices.

Community Anchors are businesses that play a vital role in their local communities by providing jobs, services, and economic opportunities. Black-owned businesses often serve as community anchors, contributing to local development and fostering entrepreneurship among the next generation.

Cultural Competency refers to the ability of individuals and institutions to understand, appreciate, and interact effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The report recommends cultural competency training for financial institutions to ensure fair and equitable treatment of Black entrepreneurs.

Cultural Enrichment describes the positive impact of diverse cultural elements on the economy and society. Black-owned businesses contribute to cultural enrichment by introducing unique products, services, and perspectives, fostering cross-cultural appreciation and understanding.

Economic Innovation involves the creation of new products, services, or business models that add value to the economy. Black entrepreneurs, through their diverse backgrounds and experiences, often bring innovative approaches to business, contributing to economic growth and diversity.

Implicit Bias refers to unconscious attitudes or stereotypes that influence our understanding, actions, and decisions. Implicit bias in financial institutions and markets can lead to discriminatory lending practices and unequal treatment of Black entrepreneurs.

Inclusive Ownership Programs are initiatives designed to support individuals from underrepresented groups in transitioning into business ownership roles. These programs aim to increase diversity in business ownership and create opportunities for those who have historically faced barriers.

Majority Black-Owned Business is a business where Black individuals or entities own 51% or more of the shares. The report examines the prevalence of majority Black-owned businesses as an indicator of ownership structures and control within the Black business community.

Markets refer to the places or platforms where buyers and sellers exchange goods and services. Access to markets is essential for business success, but Black entrepreneurs often face barriers in reaching wider markets due to lack of visibility and networking opportunities.

Misogynoir: a term coined by [scholar Moya Bailey](#) to describe the unique form of misogyny that Black women experience, which combines both racism and sexism. It highlights how anti-Blackness and gender discrimination intersect, leading to specific forms of prejudice, stereotyping, and oppression that Black women face in Business

Mentorship involves a relationship where an experienced individual provides guidance, support, and advice to someone less experienced. Tailored mentorship programs are crucial for supporting Black entrepreneurs in navigating the challenges of starting and growing a business.

Networks are interconnected groups of individuals or organizations that provide support, resources, and opportunities. Access to high-value networks is essential for business growth, but Black entrepreneurs often face exclusion from these networks, limiting their access to opportunities and capital.

Non-Profit Black-owned Businesses are businesses owned and operated by Black individuals or groups with a primary mission of serving the community or a specific cause, rather than generating profit. These businesses play a vital role in community development and addressing social issues.

Policy Recommendations are suggestions for changes in laws, regulations, or programs to address a particular issue or achieve a desired outcome. The report outlines policy recommendations to address the obstacles faced by Black entrepreneurs and promote a more equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Racialized Individuals/Groups is a term used to refer to people or communities that are socially categorized based on perceived racial differences. This term acknowledges the social construction of race and its impact on individuals' experiences and opportunities.

Regional Variations refer to the differences in economic conditions, cultural norms, and opportunities across different geographical areas. The report highlights how regional variations impact the experiences and challenges faced by Black entrepreneurs in Canada.

Scaling refers to the process of expanding business operations to handle increased demand and growth. Black-owned businesses often face challenges in scaling due to limited access to capital and networks.

Sectoral Variations refer to the differences in opportunities and challenges across different industries or sectors. The report discusses how sector-specific stereotypes and barriers limit Black entrepreneurs' participation in diverse fields.

Stereotypes are oversimplified and generalized beliefs about a particular group of people. The report addresses stereotypes that limit opportunities for Black entrepreneurs in certain sectors.

Storytelling involves sharing personal experiences and narratives to connect with audiences and convey a message. The report emphasizes the importance of storytelling in showcasing the contributions and challenges of Black entrepreneurs.

Strategic Alliances are partnerships formed between individuals or organizations to achieve a common goal. The report encourages the formation of strategic alliances between Black entrepreneurs, policymakers, and institutions to advocate for policy changes and to support business growth.

Systemic Bias/Racism refers to the ways in which institutions, policies, and practices create and perpetuate racial inequalities. The report highlights how systemic bias creates significant barriers for Black entrepreneurs in accessing capital, markets, and networks.

Visibility refers to the extent to which a business or individual is known and recognized by the public and potential customers. Increasing visibility for Black-owned businesses is crucial for attracting investment, customers, and support.

Youth-Owned Black-owned businesses are enterprises owned and operated by Black youth of African descent. The report explores the specific challenges and opportunities faced by young Black entrepreneurs in Canada.

Women-Owned Black-owned businesses are companies or enterprises owned and managed by Black women. The report examines the gender dynamics within the Black business community and the specific challenges faced by Black women entrepreneurs.

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