



The Canadian Women's
Community Economic Development Council

Conseil pan-canadien du développement économique communautaire
des femmes

FACT SHEET: WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

“Based on the level of activity, women entrepreneurs are as powerful in the economy as the Canadian aerospace sector.”

The Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs, p33.

There are more than 821,000 women entrepreneurs in Canada¹ contributing in excess of \$18 billion to the economy every year!

- The number of women entrepreneurs increased 208% between 1981 & 2001, compared with a 38% for men.
- Women owned 45% of Canadian small and medium enterprises in 2000, compared to 35% in 1998.

However,

- The gender 'wage gap' is wider among entrepreneurs than paid employees.
- Only 9% of women entrepreneurs are involved in international business.
- Average annual sales are significantly lower for women-owned firms.
- Women owned businesses own fewer tangible assets.
- Women tend to own firms in slower growth and higher risk sectors.
- Women-owned businesses are younger.

There is no disputing the fact that many of the challenges women entrepreneurs face are the same as those faced by all start-ups, small businesses, and growth-oriented businesses. Women, however, experience additional challenges in the startup and growth phases of their businesses due to very fact that they are women. These challenges include:

Systemic Differences

Women's life experiences are different from those of men, they often lack business experience, and they are socially conditioned differently from men. The concerns, responsibilities and business priorities and choices of women are different from those of men due to their respective roles in society, the family, and the business world.

Family Responsibilities / Time Constraints

Women still tend to take on a larger share of family responsibilities. This often leads to critical time constraints and less time to learn, network and grow their businesses.

Education and Training

Research indicates that women tend to lag behind their male counterparts with respect to management skills and entrepreneurial activity and that business skills training is crucial to starting or growing a business. It also reveals that when women have access to business skills training and experience equal to that of men, their success rates increase.

Limited Access to Information, Networks and Contacts

Women entrepreneurs network differently from their male counterparts. Mainstream business organizations do not specifically target women entrepreneurs to join their associations, understand their unique needs and challenges, represent their interests, or are simply not affordable. Between 40 and 70 percent of women business-owners state that it would be very helpful or extremely helpful for them to be able to meet regularly with *other women business-owners* to share ideas and experiences.

Limited Access to Capital

Women entrepreneurs are characteristically different from their male counterparts in how they finance their businesses. The number one concern of women entrepreneurs across Canada continues to be access to capital.

Women-centred CED addresses the unique needs of women entrepreneurs.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all statistics in this fact sheet have been taken from adapted from The Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs: Report and Recommendations, available online at: www.liberal.parl.gc.ca/entrepreneurs