

Portrait of official language minority enterprises in Canada in 2021

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1. Summary

This report shows the characteristics and trends related to official language minority (OLM) owned enterprises. OLM enterprises are those that are owned at 50% or more by Canadian individuals whose first official language spoken (FOLS) is the minority official language—French for enterprises in Canada outside Quebec and English for enterprises in Quebec.

The report is based on data from the Business Linkable File Environment (B-LFE) and distinguishes two types of enterprises: employer enterprises (incorporated enterprises with more than one employee) and microenterprises (unincorporated enterprises and incorporated enterprises with one employee or less). Results are presented for the regions corresponding to each of Canada's seven Regional Development Agencies.

- In 2021, there were a total of 281,320 OLM enterprises in Canada, accounting for 5.4% of all enterprises. This included 32,230 employer enterprises and 249,090 microenterprises.
- The proportion of OLM enterprises varied by region: 11.6% in the Atlantic region (including 32.1% in New Brunswick), 14.7% in Quebec, 2.5% in Southern Ontario, 14.4% in Northern Ontario, 2.0% in the Prairies, 1.2% in the Pacific region (British Columbia) and 5.7% in the North (territories).
- From 2016 to 2021, the total number of OLM enterprises in Canada grew by 4.1%. This was mostly because of an increase in the numbers in Quebec (+10.6%), where the majority of OLM enterprises in the country are located.
- In Canada outside Quebec, the number of OLM enterprises decreased from 2016 to 2021 (-3.9%). Particularly sizable declines in the number of OLM enterprises were seen in the Prairies and in Northern Ontario, regions where the number of people with French as their FOLS also declined. These trends were similar for employer enterprises and microenterprises.
- From 2016 to 2021, changes in the number and proportion of OLM enterprises by region largely mirrored broader demographic trends regarding official language minority populations.
- In Quebec, the proportion of OLM enterprises was highest in the wholesale trade and the accommodation and food services sectors and lowest in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting sector. In Canada outside Quebec, the proportion of OLM enterprises was highest in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting sector, driven particularly by the large number of OLM enterprises in forestry and fishing in the Atlantic region.
- In Canada, the proportion of OLM employer enterprises (defined as incorporated enterprises with more than one employee) decreased from 5.4% in 2016 to 5.2% in 2021, but their number remained relatively stable from 2016 to 2021.
- Of the 32,230 OLM employer enterprises active in 2021, two-thirds (66%) were already active as OLM enterprises in 2016 (either as employer enterprises or microenterprises), and one-quarter (25%) were newly active enterprises. From 2016 to 2021, about 10% of OLM employer enterprises acquired or lost their OLM-ownership status because of a change of owners or, more commonly, because of a change over time in their owners' language characteristics.
- The median revenue for OLM employer enterprises (\$650,000) was slightly higher than that for other employer enterprises (\$630,000). Slightly more OLM enterprises (11%) reported a total revenue of \$5 million or more, compared with other enterprises (9%).
- Among OLM enterprise owners, 42.3% were women+ in 2021, a proportion similar to that for other enterprises. This proportion was lower in Quebec and in the Atlantic region.

Contents

1. Summary	1
2. Context and objectives.....	3
3. Data and definitions	4
3.1 Data	4
3.2 Definitions	4
3.3 Enterprise characteristics examined in this report	7
4. Official language minority enterprises: counts and general trends.....	9
4.1 How many official language minority enterprises are there in Canada?	9
4.2 How did things change from 2016 to 2021?	9
4.3 How do trends regarding official language minority enterprises relate to broader demographic trends in the official language minority population?	10
5. Employer enterprises	13
5.1 Industrial sectors	13
5.2 Rural enterprises	20
5.3 Employment in OLM employer enterprises	21
5.4 Revenue.....	23
5.5 Longitudinal changes among OLM employer enterprises from 2016 to 2021	25
5.6 Characteristics of owners	30
6. Microenterprises.....	34
6.1 Industrial sectors	34
6.2 Rural enterprises	36
6.3 Characteristics of owners	37
7. Conclusion.....	39
8. References and additional resources on official language minority enterprises	41
Appendix: Supplemental tables	42

2. Context and objectives

In 2022, the report *Official Language Minority Business Definitions: Potential and Limitations* was submitted to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED). Following a previous feasibility study, this exploratory study primarily focused on testing a data source and various definitions of official language minority (OLM) enterprises.¹

The present report shows the characteristics and some performance indicators of OLM enterprises, both incorporated and unincorporated.² It provides an overview of OLM enterprises and their main characteristics in 2021, along with comparisons with 2016. It also presents comparisons between OLM enterprises and other enterprises for various general indicators related to employment, revenue and longitudinal change. Most sections provide a regional breakdown according to the regions covered by each of the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs).

This report does not weigh in on the definition of an OLM enterprise. Instead, it builds on previous work for a definition based on the language profile of an enterprise's owners. It is enterprises that meet those ownership-related criteria that are called here "OLM enterprises." However, Statistics Canada has recently analyzed other aspects of businesses' language profiles, such as language skill requirements for employees and the languages used in business activities and service delivery.³ These aspects are not covered here.

The data and definitions used in this report are presented in Section 3. Section 4 provides general counts of OLM enterprises active in 2021 and compares them with the situation in 2016. Section 5 focuses on "employer enterprises," defined here as incorporated enterprises with more than one employee. It includes information on various characteristics of these enterprises and their owners, comparing OLM with non-OLM enterprises while examining changes from 2016 to 2021. Section 6 briefly discusses the characteristics and owners of "microenterprises," which include unincorporated enterprises and incorporated enterprises with no more than one employee. Section 7 concludes the report.

1. See Bastien et al. (2022) and Bastien and Lepage (2020).

2. In the English version of this report, the term "enterprise" is preferred over "business" to better reflect the concept measured in the data source (see Section 3.2.1).

3. See Statistics Canada (2023b) and Statistics Canada (2024).

3. Data and definitions

3.1 Data

3.1.1 The Business Linkable File Environment

This report relies on data from Statistics Canada’s Business Linkable File Environment (B-LFE). The B-LFE is based on various sets of administrative data, including the Business Register, and T2 Corporate Income Tax Returns, PD7 statements of account of current source deductions and T1 Financial Declaration files from the Canada Revenue Agency.

Additionally, a data linkage between the B-LFE and the Census of Population enables the identification of enterprise owners’ individual characteristics (age, gender and language profile). Information on owners and their language profile is therefore available only for owners who responded to the 2016 or 2021 Census of Population.⁴ Information is unavailable for owners who were not Canadian residents, were not individuals, or for whom the linkage between the owners’ database and the census was unsuccessful.

3.1.2 Comparisons with other data sources

A previous report on OLM enterprises as well as a series of infographics⁵ produced by Statistics Canada for ISED relied on a different data source, namely a linkage between the Canadian Employer–Employee Dynamics Database (CEEDD) and the 2016 Census of Population. Since then, the B-LFE has emerged as an alternative data source. For this report, the data source was changed, and the B-LFE was used instead of the CEEDD.

This change in the data source affects direct comparability with results from previous documents on OLM enterprises. It should also be noted that previous products on OLM enterprises considered only incorporated enterprises, whereas this report also includes unincorporated enterprises. Additionally, some smaller methodological adjustments were made to improve the quality of the data.

3.2 Definitions

In this report, as a summary, OLM enterprises are defined as those that are owned at 50% or more by Canadian individuals whose first official language spoken (FOLS) is the minority official language—French for enterprises in Canada outside Quebec and English for enterprises in Quebec. More details on the various terms of this definition are provided below.

This definition is based on the conclusions from a previous report that explored possible definitions of OLM enterprises.⁶

It should be noted that previous Statistics Canada products used different definitions of OLM enterprises, leading to different counts of enterprises being presented.⁷

4. When some owners of enterprises active in 2021 could not be linked to the 2021 Census, an attempt was made to locate them in the 2016 Census instead. In these cases, their characteristics were assumed to be unchanged from 2016 to 2021. The same approach was applied in reverse for enterprises active in 2016.

5. See Bastien et al. (2022) and Statistics Canada (2022a, 2022b and 2023a).

6. See Bastien et al. (2022).

7. For instance, Paez Silva (2024) defined OLM enterprises based on the identity of their primary owner only and included half of the enterprises whose primary owner had “English and French” as their FOLS as OLM enterprises. This approach differs from the majority-ownership approach used here.

The definition used here aims to reflect the diversity of the OLM populations while maintaining a focused approach when characterizing enterprises with multiple owners as OLM-owned.

3.2.1 What is an enterprise?

In this report, an enterprise is an economic operating entity situated in Canada and identified in the Business Register that completed tax filings for 2021 or 2016. Enterprises that did not complete tax filings are considered inactive and therefore out of scope.

Only enterprises with at least one identified owner associated with a social insurance number were included. Enterprises for which no identified owners had a Canadian social insurance number—for example, owners who are not Canadian residents or are not individuals—were not in scope.

An active enterprise may be incorporated or unincorporated. It may have no or multiple employees. Some active enterprises may have no revenue in a given year.

In this report, the term “enterprise” is preferred over “business,” as it refers to a specific concept in the Business Register.⁸

3.2.2 Who is an identified enterprise owner?

An enterprise owner is someone who has been named as an owner in the tax filings of a business and has a Canadian social insurance number.⁹

Information on ownership is available for entities associated with a Business Number and was aggregated at the enterprise level.

Not all owners of Canadian enterprises are identified. Non-Canadian owners (individuals who do not have a Canadian social insurance number or who do not file tax forms) are not identified, nor are institutional or corporate owners (owners that are not individuals).

Information on ownership shares of incorporated enterprises comes from Schedule 50 of the T2 Corporate Income Tax Return, which provides information on shareholders. All private corporations (non-publicly traded) must complete this schedule for any shareholder who holds 10% or more of the corporation’s common or preferred shares. It may not be possible to identify owners who hold less than 10% of shares, as reporting this information is not mandatory. Both common and preferred shares are considered, as well as both direct and indirect ownership.¹⁰

For unincorporated enterprises, owners are identified through their T1 Financial Declaration files (T1FD).

Note that the owners’ involvement in the enterprise’s activities (as employees, in a management capacity or otherwise) was not considered here. For simplicity, identified owners are referred to as “owners.”

8. “An enterprise is the legal operating entity at the top of the operating structure. [...] It is associated with a complete set of financial statements.” An enterprise may therefore encompass multiple entities associated with different Business Numbers while forming a single operating structure. See [Definitions and Concepts used in Business Register](#).

9. Note that “Canadian owners” include permanent residents and temporary residents who have a social insurance number. Permanent and temporary residents are also included in the census population as they reside in Canada.

10. The method for deriving ownership share is based on the one developed and further explained in Grekou, Li and Liu (2018). Bastien et al. (2022) used the same methods.

3.2.3 What is an official language minority enterprise?

As a general definition, an OLM enterprise is one where 50% or more of the ownership belongs to individuals whose first official language spoken (FOLS) is the minority official language, based on the enterprise's main operating address of the enterprise (not the owners' place of residence).¹¹ When an enterprise comprises multiple establishments, only the main operating address of the enterprise—where the enterprise is headquartered—is considered.

More specifically, in defining OLM enterprises, various elements related to the owners' language characteristics, the ownership structure, the location of the enterprise's main operating address and whether it is incorporated must be considered.

- An **incorporated enterprise in Quebec** is OLM-owned if at least 50% of the shares are held by identified owners whose FOLS is English.
- An **incorporated enterprise in Canada outside Quebec** is considered OLM-owned if at least 50% of the shares are held by identified owners whose FOLS is French.
- An **unincorporated enterprise in Quebec** is OLM-owned if at least 50% of identified owners have English as their FOLS.
- An **unincorporated enterprise in Canada outside Quebec** is OLM-owned if at least 50% of the identified owners have French as their FOLS.

For incorporated enterprises, it was not always possible to identify all the owners of a given enterprise (see Section 3.2.2 for details). Because the OLM-ownership status is based on at least 50% of shares belonging to identified owners who are part of the OLM population, unidentified owners were assumed to not be part of the OLM population by default. For unincorporated enterprises, because information on shares was unavailable, only identifiable owners were considered to derive OLM-ownership status.

Enterprises whose main operating address is not in Canada are not considered to be OLM-owned.

First official language spoken (FOLS)

The first official language spoken (FOLS) is a variable derived from three basic language concepts. This derivation divides the population into “English” and “French” groups based on people's knowledge of these languages, their mother tongue and the language they speak most often at home.¹²

English is the minority official language in Quebec, while French is the minority official language elsewhere in Canada.

People who had “English and French” or “Neither English nor French” as their FOLS—in other words, people who could not be attributed to one of the two official language groups—were not considered to be part of the official language minority population.¹³

11. Among owners of OLM enterprises in 2021, 5.2% of owners in Quebec and 4.7% of owners in Canada outside Quebec lived in a province where the minority official language is different from the one in the province where their enterprise is headquartered.

12. For more information, see [First official language spoken of person](#).

13. This approach differs from the one used in the 2022 report on definitions of OLM businesses (Bastien et al., 2022) and the infographics derived from it, where people with “English and French” as their FOLS were systematically

3.2.4 Distinguishing employer enterprises and microenterprises

For analytical purposes, distinguishing enterprises with several employees from enterprises with no employees (or with a single employee who may be the owner of the enterprise) is useful. The realities of these two main types of enterprises differ, as do the relevant analytical tools available to assess how they are doing.

Therefore, after a general presentation of the total number of OLM enterprises in Canada (Section 4), this report is divided in two parts. The first focuses on “employer enterprises” (Section 5), while the second focuses on “microenterprises” (Section 6). A more in-depth analysis of employer enterprises is provided, as more financial information is available for these enterprises.

Employer enterprises are incorporated enterprises with more than one employee.

Microenterprises are unincorporated enterprises¹⁴ and incorporated enterprises with one employee or less.

Distinguishing employer enterprises from microenterprises was considered more relevant than differentiating between incorporated and unincorporated enterprises. Although incorporated enterprises with one employee or less represented in 2021 the majority (72%) of incorporated OLM enterprises, they accounted for 17% of total revenue and 2% of employment among these enterprises.

3.3 Enterprise characteristics examined in this report

Province and region

In this report, results are presented for Canada, broken down by Quebec, the rest of Canada outside Quebec and the regions corresponding to areas covered by Canada’s seven Regional Development Agencies (RDAs):

1. Atlantic (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island
2. Quebec (Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions)
3. Southern Ontario (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario)
4. Northern Ontario (Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario)
5. Prairies (Prairies Economic Development Canada): Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta
6. Pacific (Pacific Economic Development Canada): British Columbia
7. North or territories (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency): Nunavut, Northwest Territories and the Yukon.

While enterprises headquartered in the North are included in the totals for Canada, this region may not always be represented on its own in some sections of this report because of its small number of OLM enterprises.

included in the OLM population, regardless of the province. Considering the heterogeneity of the “English and French” category, excluding it from the OLM population enables a more focused definition of OLM enterprises and facilitates the analysis.

14. While some unincorporated enterprises sometimes have multiple employees, most (98%) do not. Additionally, less information related to employment is available for unincorporated enterprises than for incorporated ones. This was the motivation for treating them separately from incorporated employer enterprises.

Industrial sector

An enterprise's industry sector is determined based on the North American Industry Classification System¹⁵ and corresponds to its main business activity. Each enterprise is assigned a single industrial sector at any given time, even if it engages in multiple activities spanning several sectors.

Number of employees

Information on employment is derived from business information, including the PD7A – Statement of account for current source deductions, which is aggregated at the enterprise level.

The number of employees corresponds to the average number of employees over a calendar year.

Total and net revenue (employer enterprises only)

Information on revenue comes from enterprises' financial statements. Total revenue refers to the sum of all income sources. Net revenue refers to net income or loss before taxes and extraordinary items, i.e., the difference between total income and total losses, before tax.

Urban and rural status

An enterprise is considered urban if its main operating address is in a population centre, and rural if it is outside a population centre. A population centre has a population of at least 1,000 and a population density of 400 people or more per square kilometre, based on population counts from the 2021 Census.¹⁶

Individual characteristics of owners

Information on owners, including their age, gender and language characteristics, is drawn from the Census of Population.

When examining the characteristics of owners of OLM enterprises, all identified Canadian owners of those enterprises are considered, regardless of whether they could be considered part of the official language minority population.

Gender and enterprises owned by women+

In the 2016 Census, a binary variable (woman or man) was used to identify the owners' sex. In the 2021 Census, a new gender question allowed respondents to identify as other, non-binary gender categories. However, given that the non-binary population is small, individuals in the category "non-binary persons" are randomly redistributed into the other two categories to protect the confidentiality of their responses.¹⁷

The category "women+" thus includes women as well as some non-binary persons.

The definition of enterprises owned by women+ is based on the proportion of the enterprise held by women+, following an approach similar to that for OLM enterprises. However, a distinction is made between enterprises with more than 50% women+ ownership and those with exactly 50% women+ ownership.¹⁸

15. [North American Industry Classification System \(NAICS\) Canada](#)

16. See [Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021 – Population centre \(POPCTR\)](#) and [Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021 – Rural area \(RA\)](#).

17. This is the standard approach for disseminating 2021 Census data on gender. For more information on the topic, see [Filling the gaps: Information on gender in the 2021 Census](#).

18. Following Grekou, Li and Liu (2018).

4. Official language minority enterprises: counts and general trends

4.1 How many official language minority enterprises are there in Canada?

In 2021, there were a total of 281,320 OLM enterprises in Canada, accounting for 5.4% of all enterprises (Table 1). This included 32,230 incorporated enterprises with more than one employee (11.5% of OLM enterprises). It also included 83,800 incorporated enterprises with one employee or less (29.8%) and 165,260 unincorporated enterprises (58.8%) for a total of 249,090 microenterprises (see Table A1 in the appendix for a breakdown of OLM enterprise counts by enterprise type and region).

In Quebec, there were 164,560 OLM enterprises, accounting for 14.7% of all enterprises in this province.

In Canada outside Quebec, there were 116,760 OLM enterprises, accounting for 2.9% of all enterprises. These numbers and proportions varied by region. The highest proportions were found in Northern Ontario (where OLM enterprises were 14.4% of all enterprises), the Atlantic region (11.6%, including 32.1% in New Brunswick) and the North (5.7%). The region with the highest total number of OLM enterprises was Southern Ontario (48,850).

Table 1: Counts and proportion of official language minority enterprises by region and province, 2016 and 2021

Region	Number of OLM enterprises		% variation between 2016 and 2021	Proportion of enterprises that are OLM-owned	
	2021	2016		2021	2016
Canada (total)	281,320	270,350	+4.1%	5.4%	5.7%
Quebec	164,560	148,790	+10.6%	14.7%	14.0%
Canada outside Quebec	116,760	121,560	-3.9%	2.9%	3.3%
Atlantic	25,510	25,970	-1.8%	11.6%	12.2%
Newfoundland and Labrador	290	320	-9.4%	0.7%	0.7%
Prince Edward Island	490	500	-2.0%	2.5%	2.8%
Nova Scotia	3,520	3,680	-4.3%	3.8%	4.2%
New Brunswick	21,210	21,480	-1.3%	32.1%	32.9%
Ontario	60,480	62,290	-2.9%	3.0%	3.5%
Southern Ontario	48,850	49,380	-1.1%	2.5%	2.9%
Northern Ontario	11,620	12,910	-10.0%	14.4%	16.1%
Prairies	19,970	22,570	-11.5%	2.0%	2.4%
Manitoba	5,420	6,000	-9.7%	3.6%	4.2%
Saskatchewan	2,580	3,200	-19.4%	1.5%	1.8%
Alberta	11,970	13,380	-10.5%	1.8%	2.2%
British Columbia (Pacific)	10,300	10,200	+1.0%	1.2%	1.4%
Territories (North)	530	520	+1.9%	5.7%	5.9%

Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

4.2 How did things change from 2016 to 2021?

Compared with 2016, the total number of OLM enterprises in Canada increased from 270,350 to 281,320 (+4.1%) in 2021. This was mostly because of an increase in OLM enterprises in Quebec (from 148,790 to 164,560; +10.6%).

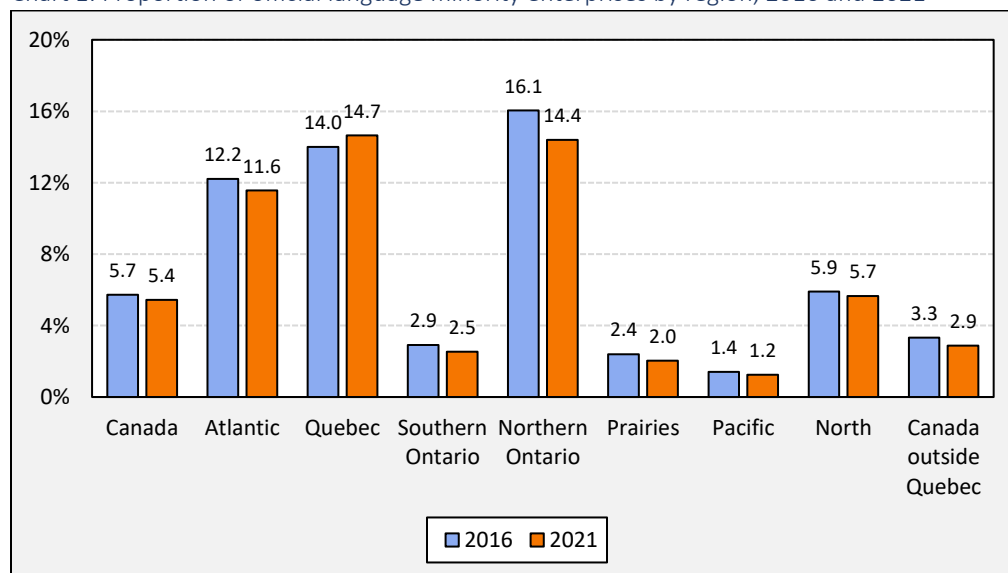
In Canada outside Quebec, the overall number of OLM enterprises declined from 121,560 in 2016 to 116,760 in 2021 (-3.9%), largely because of declines in the Prairies (22,570 to 19,970; -11.5%) and Northern Ontario (12,910 to 11,620; -10.0%). The number of OLM enterprises in the Pacific region and the

North remained relatively stable (with very slight increases), but otherwise the number of OLM enterprises in every other province and region in Canada outside Quebec decreased.

Somewhat similar trends were observed for employer enterprises (i.e., incorporated enterprises with more than one employee) and microenterprises (i.e., incorporated enterprises with one employee or less and unincorporated enterprises), although the increase was greater for OLM microenterprises (+4.5%) than for employer enterprises (+0.7%). Again, the situation was different in Quebec compared with Canada outside Quebec. In Quebec, strong growth in the number of OLM enterprises was observed for employer enterprises (+8.7%) and microenterprises (+10.8%). In Canada outside Quebec, the decrease in the number of OLM enterprises was more pronounced among employer enterprises (-7.7%) than among microenterprises (-3.4%).

Overall, the proportion of OLM enterprises decreased in all regions from 2016 to 2021 (Chart 1), except in the Pacific region and the North where it was stable and in Quebec where it increased (from 14.0% to 14.7%).

Chart 1: Proportion of official language minority enterprises by region, 2016 and 2021



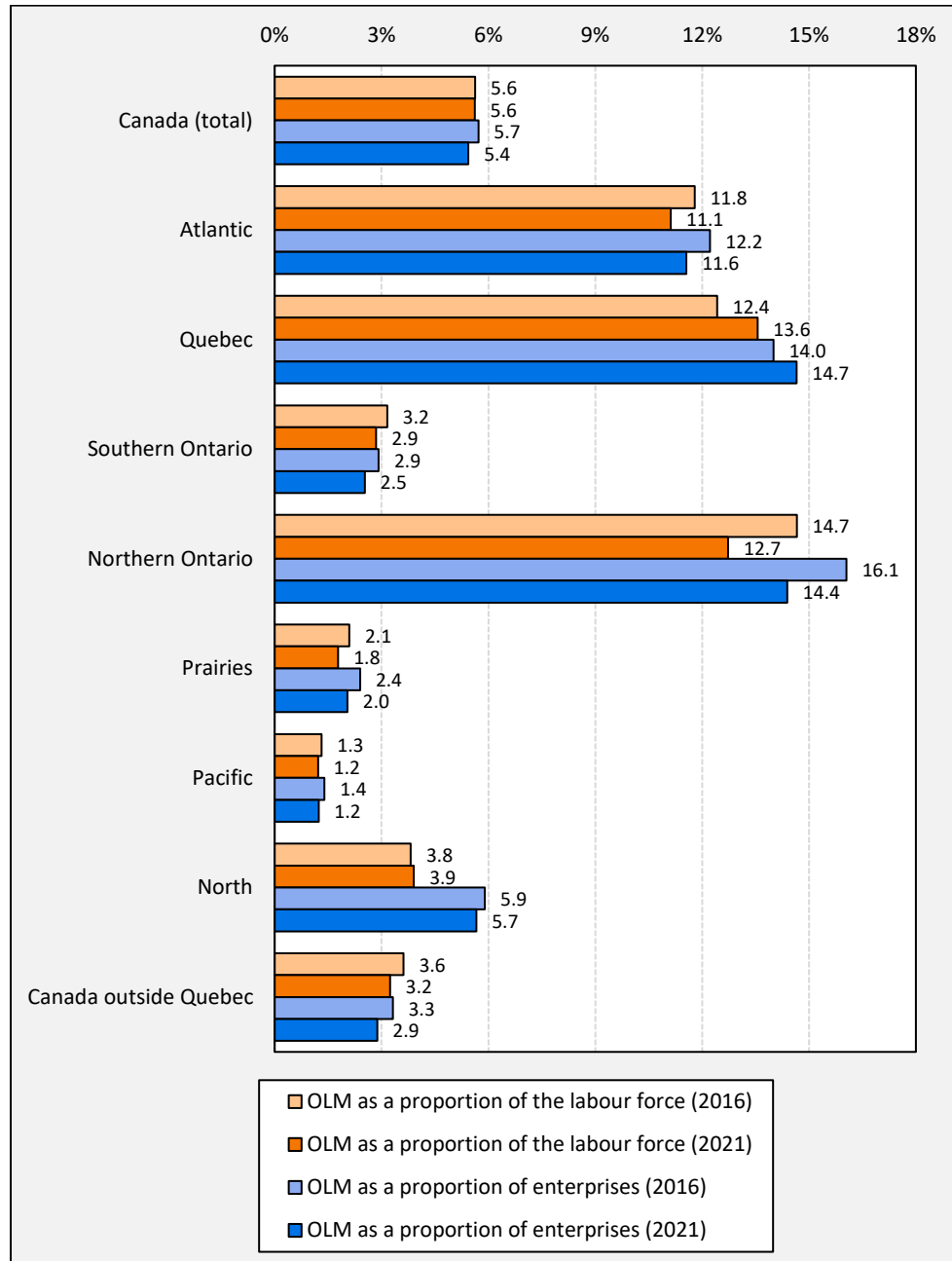
Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

4.3 How do trends regarding official language minority enterprises relate to broader demographic trends in the official language minority population?

The proportion of OLM enterprises in a region was closely tied to the proportion of people in the region who were part of the OLM population. However, in some regions, OLM enterprises were slightly overrepresented or underrepresented compared with the OLM population. Chart 2 compares the proportion of OLM enterprises in various regions with the proportion of the labour force¹⁹ whose FOLS was the minority official language—English in Quebec and French in Canada outside Quebec—in 2016 and 2021.

19. The labour force is defined as people aged 15 years or older who were active in the labour market (both employed and unemployed).

Chart 2: Proportion of people in the labour force whose first official language spoken is the minority official language and proportion of enterprises that are OLM enterprises, by region, 2016 and 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment and Census of Population.

In 2021, the proportion of OLM enterprises in Canada (5.4%) was slightly lower than that of the OLM labour force (5.6%). In some regions, the proportion of OLM enterprises was higher than that of the OLM labour force. This was the case in Quebec (14.7% of enterprises versus 13.6% of the labour force), Northern Ontario (14.4% versus 12.7%) and the North (5.7% versus 3.9%). The opposite was true in Southern Ontario (2.5% of enterprises versus 2.9% of the labour force) and in Canada outside Quebec when taken as a whole (2.9% versus 3.2%).

From 2016 to 2021, changes in the proportion of OLM enterprises largely mirrored demographic changes in OLM population. For instance, while the proportion of OLM enterprises in the Atlantic region decreased from 12.2% in 2016 to 11.6% in 2021, the proportion of people in the labour force with French as their FOLS also decreased at a similar rate, from 11.8% to 11.1%. A similar mirroring could be observed in all regions, except the North.

This mirroring applied not only to variations in the proportion of OLM enterprises but also to the variations in their absolute numbers (Table 2). Regions with decreases in the overall number of OLM enterprises from 2016 to 2021 also saw decreases in the overall size of their OLM labour force. Conversely, the considerable increase in the number of OLM enterprises in Quebec was mirrored by an increase in the OLM labour force in the province. However, in most regions, changes in labour force size from 2016 to 2021 were generally more pronounced than changes in the number of OLM enterprises.

Table 2: Relative change from 2016 to 2021 in the number of people in the labour force whose FOLS is the minority language and in the number of official language minority enterprises, by region

Region	OLM labour force	OLM enterprises
	2016-2021 percentage change (%)	
Canada (total)	+3,2	+4,1
Atlantic	-4,7	-1,8
Quebec	+13,8	10,6
Southern Ontario	-6	-1,1
Northern Ontario	-14,7	-10
Prairies	-15,3	-11,5
Pacific	-0,6	+1,0
North	-0,3	+1,9
Canada outside Quebec	-7,6	-3,9

Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment and Census of Population.

These results strongly suggest that trends in the numbers and proportions of OLM enterprises may be closely tied to broader demographic trends affecting the OLM population and their labour force participation.²⁰ These demographic trends would likely affect the number of potential OLM owners and, by extension, the number of OLM enterprises. However, other factors, such as differences in creation rates, survival rates or overall performance of OLM enterprises compared with other enterprises, may also be at play. Some of these factors are examined later in this report.

The rest of the report focuses on various characteristics of OLM enterprises and is divided into two parts: the first focuses on employer enterprises (Section 5), while the second examines microenterprises (Section 6).

20. For an overview of the demographic trends of the OLM population, see: [The Daily – While English and French are still the main languages spoken in Canada, the country’s linguistic diversity continues to grow.](#)

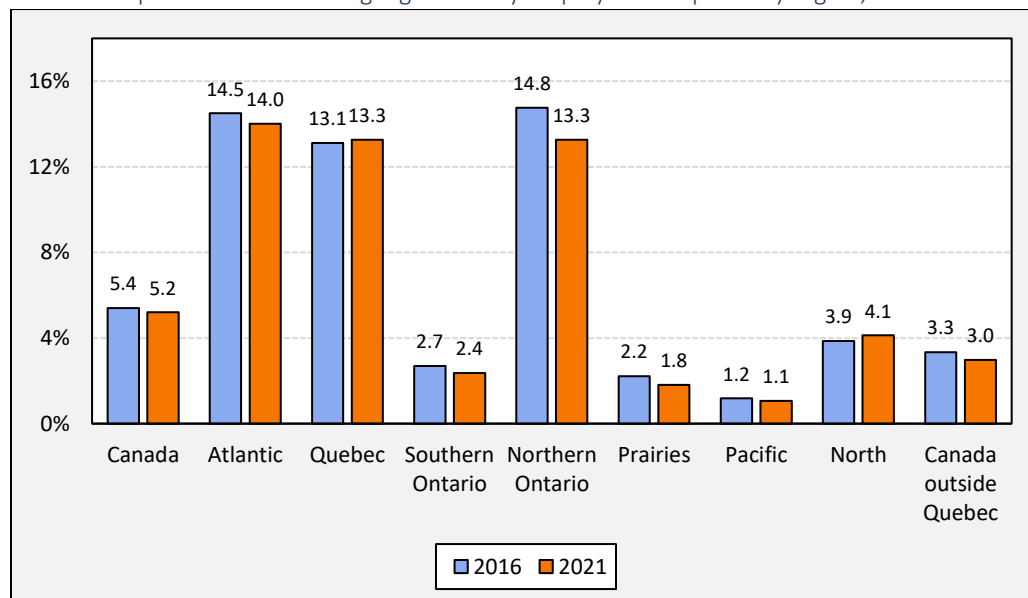
5. Employer enterprises

In 2021, there was a total of 619,390 incorporated enterprises with more than one employee in Canada, compared with 593,460 enterprises recorded in 2016, an increase of 4.4%. During the same period, the number of OLM employer enterprises increased only slightly, from 32,020 in 2016 to 32,230 in 2021, their proportion decreasing from 5.4% to 5.2%.

In 2021, OLM employer enterprises represented 11.5% of all OLM enterprises. In the various regions (Chart 3), the percentages of OLM employer enterprises were similar to those for all enterprises (see Section 4.2). However, in some regions, such as Quebec and Northern Ontario, the proportion of OLM employer enterprises was somewhat smaller than that for all enterprises, while the opposite was true in the Atlantic region. Among employer enterprises, the Atlantic region had the highest proportion of OLM enterprises (14.0%), whereas Northern Ontario had the highest proportion among all enterprises.

OLM employer enterprises saw changes in their regional numbers and proportions that were similar to those for all OLM enterprises (Section 4.2). The most notable exception is Quebec, where the increase in the proportion of OLM employer enterprises (from 13.1% in 2016 to 13.3% in 2021) was lower than that among all enterprises (from 14.0% to 14.7%).²¹ However, this still represented an increase of 8.7% in the total number of OLM employer enterprises in Quebec, while the numbers of such enterprises in other regions of Canada outside Quebec were stable or decreased (see Table A1 in the appendix).

Chart 3: Proportion of official language minority employer enterprises by region, 2016 and 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

5.1 Industrial sectors

5.1.1 Are official language minority enterprises concentrated in certain industrial sectors?

In Canada, the industry distribution of OLM enterprises was somewhat similar to that of other enterprises. Compared with other enterprises, there were relatively more OLM enterprises in the wholesale trade,

21. The North also stands as an exception, but these results should be considered with caution, as there were only 50 OLM employer enterprises in this region in 2021.

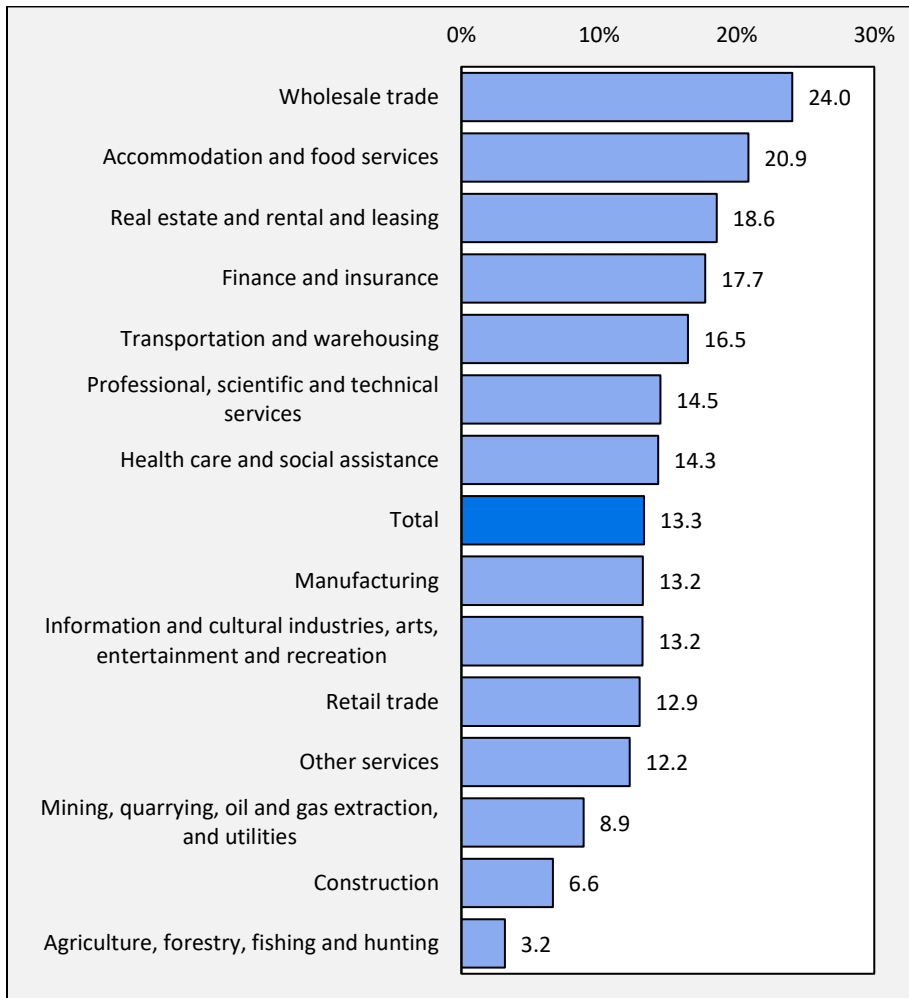
accommodation and food services, and manufacturing sectors. Conversely, there were fewer OLM enterprises in the construction and professional, scientific and technical services sectors.

The distribution of OLM enterprises differed significantly by region, as different industries are more prevalent in different regions of the country. For example, in British Columbia (Pacific region), Southern Ontario and Quebec, a significant proportion of OLM enterprises operated in the professional, scientific and technical services sector, whereas in the Atlantic region and the Prairies, a relatively large proportion of OLM enterprises operated in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting sector. In the Prairies, enterprises in this sector were mostly in crop production, while in Atlantic Canada they were more frequently in forestry and fishing.

The proportion of OLM enterprises among employer enterprises also varied by industrial sectors. In Canada, 5.2% of employer enterprises were OLM-owned in 2021, and the proportion of OLM enterprises per sector varied from 4.4% in the professional, scientific and technical services sector to 8.1% in the wholesale trade sector.

In Quebec, OLM enterprises represented 13.3% of all employer enterprises (Chart 4). The proportion of OLM enterprises was highest in the wholesale trade (24.0%) and accommodation and food services (20.9%) sectors. The proportion of OLM enterprises was lower in the construction (6.6%) and agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (3.2%) sectors. Operations in this sector are most often located outside the Montréal urban centre, where a large proportion of Quebec's OLM population is located. In the Montréal economic region, where 36.3% of employer enterprises were OLM-owned in 2021, the proportion of OLM enterprises in the construction (33.8%) or accommodation and food services (40.2%) sectors were more similar to the region's average.

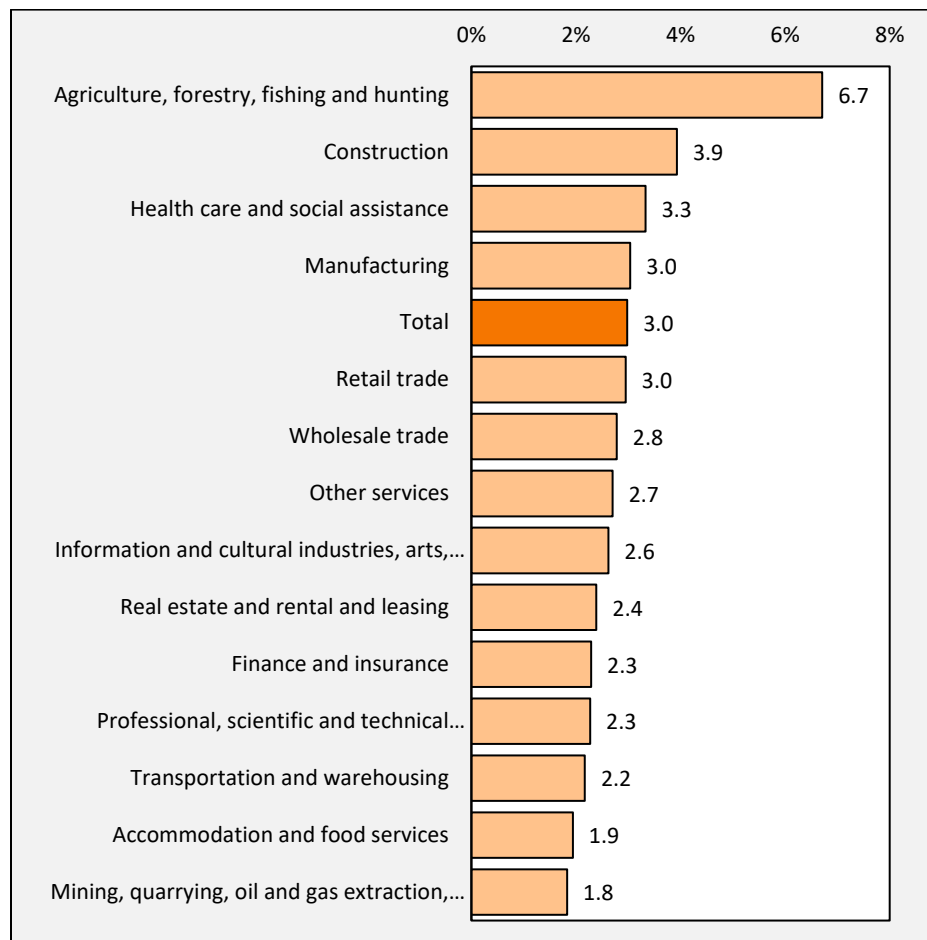
Chart 4: Proportion of official language minority employer enterprises by industrial sector, Quebec, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

In Canada outside Quebec (Chart 5), 3.0% of employer enterprises were OLM-owned. The proportion of OLM enterprises was particularly high in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (6.7%), driven by the large number (and proportion) of OLM enterprises in that sector in Atlantic Canada, particularly in forestry and in fishing. Conversely, the proportion of enterprises in the professional, scientific and technical services sector in Canada outside Quebec was lower than average, particularly in Northern Ontario. The proportion of OLM enterprises in the accommodation and food services sector was also lower, which is the opposite of the situation observed in Quebec.

Chart 5: Proportion of official language minority employer enterprises by industrial sector, Canada outside Quebec, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

5.1.2 Is the concentration of OLM enterprises in industrial sectors correlated with the language characteristics of the workers in these sectors?

Parallels can be made between the proportion of OLM enterprises by industrial sector and the language characteristics and languages used at work by workers in those sectors. Based on 2021 Census data, charts 6 and 7 show the proportion of workers in various sectors whose FOLS was the minority official language and the proportion of workers for whom the minority official language was the main language used at work in Quebec and in Canada outside Quebec.²²

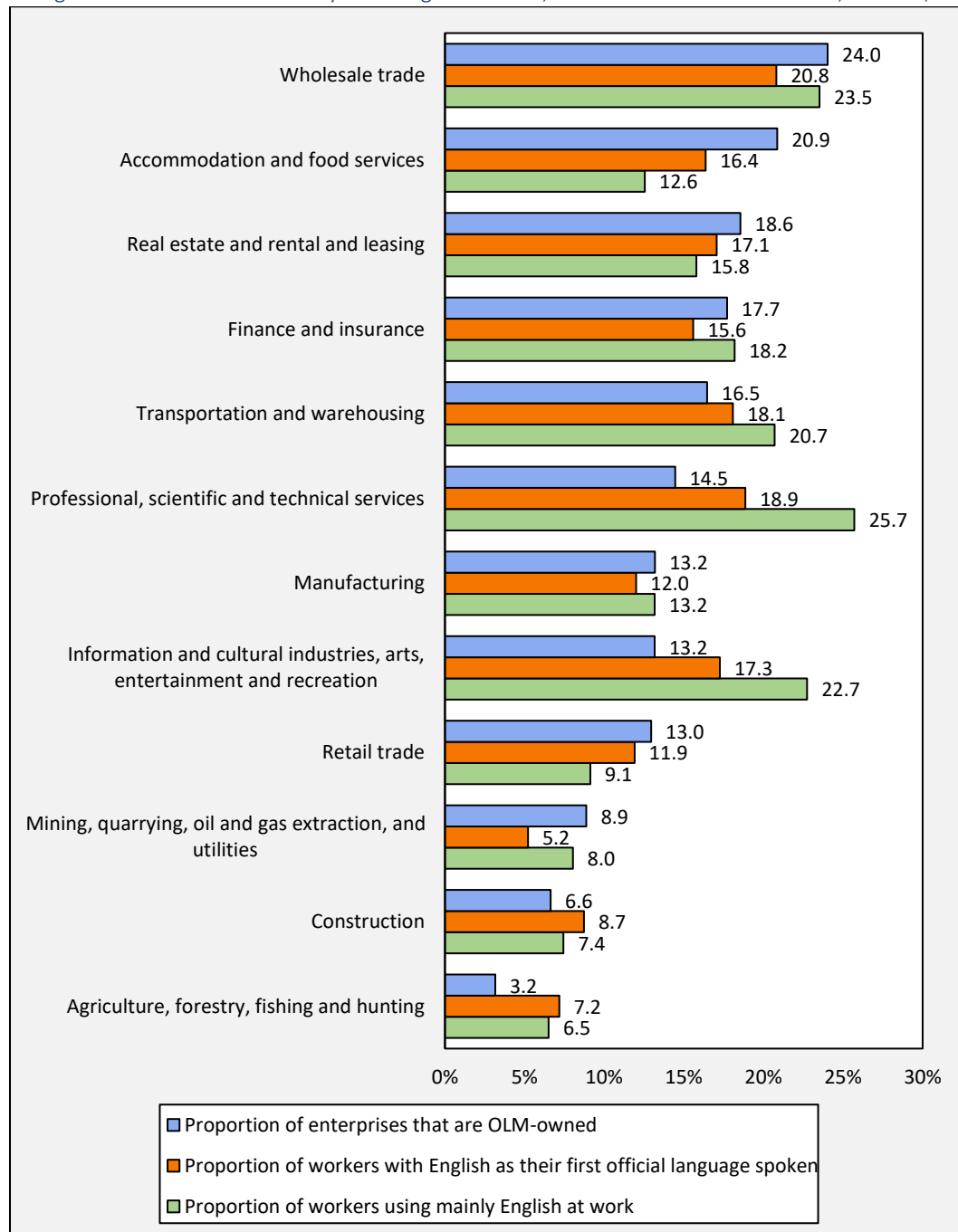
In Quebec (Chart 6), the proportion of OLM enterprises in a given sector is somewhat correlated with the proportion of workers with English as their FOLS in that sector, and to a lesser extent with the proportion of people working mainly in English. For instance, the wholesale trade sector had the highest proportions of OLM enterprises (24.0%) and workers with English as their FOLS (20.8%), as well as a high rate of workers

22. Data from the 2021 Census cover all workers and not only those who work for the private enterprises that are the subject of this report. Some workers were employed by public organizations, enterprises not owned by Canadian residents, etc. The following sectors were excluded from this analysis to facilitate comparisons: educational services, health care and social assistance, public administration, and other services.

who mainly use English at work (23.5%). Conversely, the sectors with the lowest proportions of OLM enterprises, such as the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting sector and the construction sector, had the lowest proportions of workers whose FOLS was English or who mainly used English at work.

Nevertheless, in Quebec, the proportions of OLM enterprises in a sector and the language characteristics of workers did not always mirror each other, especially when it came to the languages used at work. For instance, sectors such as professional, scientific and technical services as well as information and cultural industries, arts, entertainment and recreation had a high proportion of people who mainly used English at work, but a moderate proportion of OLM enterprises. In contrast, sectors such as accommodation and food services and retail trade, which are oriented towards providing services to the local population, had a much higher proportion of OLM enterprises compared with the proportion of workers who mainly used English at work.

Chart 6: Proportions of official language minority employer enterprises, workers whose first official language spoken is English and workers who mainly used English at work, for selected industrial sectors, Quebec, 2021

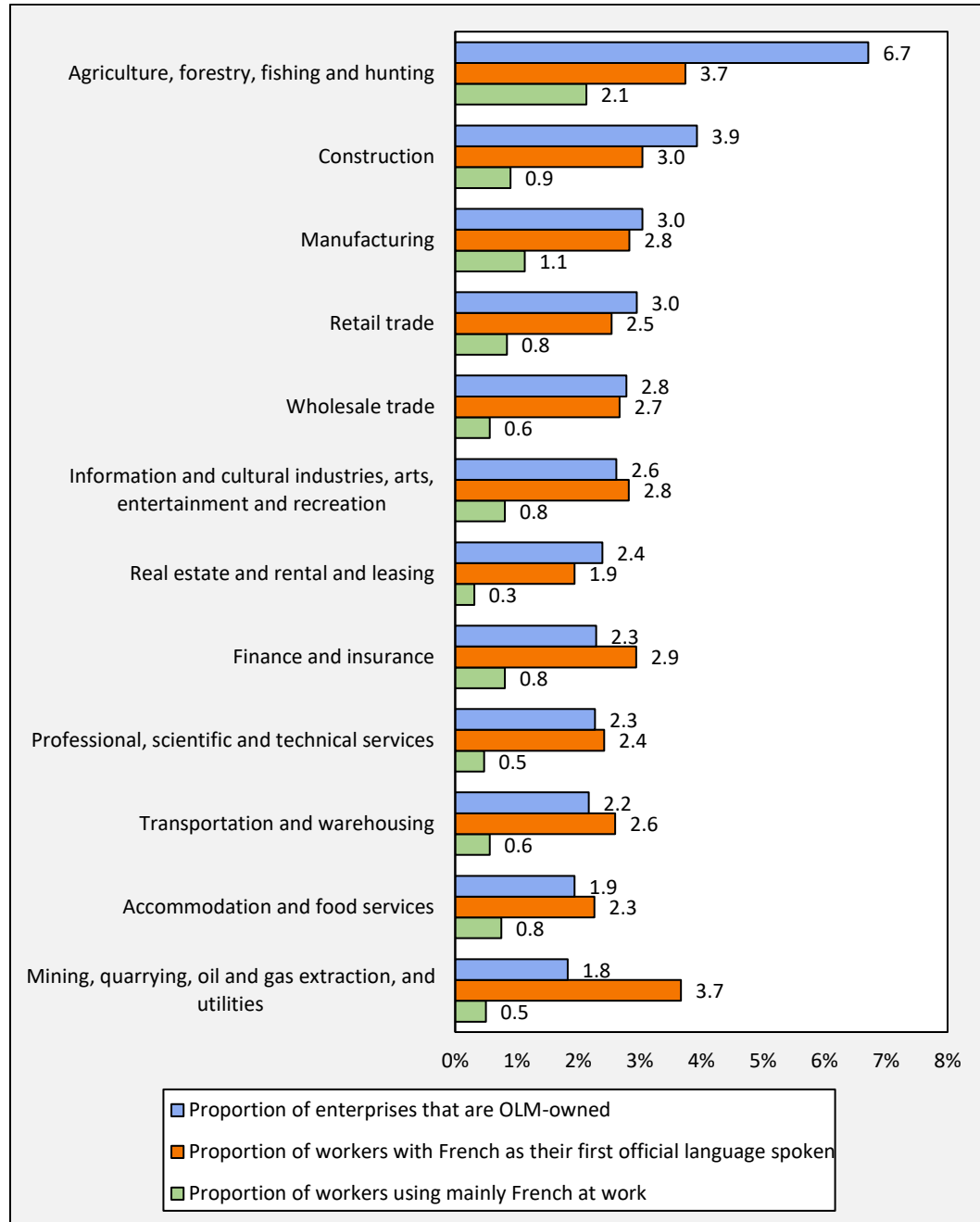


Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment and Census of Population.

In Canada outside Quebec, the correlation between the concentration of OLM enterprises and the language characteristics of workers was not as clear (Chart 7). The agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting sector, where the proportion of OLM enterprises is highest (6.7%), was also the sector where the proportions of workers with French as their FOLS (3.7%) or who mainly use French at work (2.1%) were highest. However, the sector with the second-highest proportion of workers whose FOLS was French was

the mining, quarrying, oil and gas extraction, and utilities sector (3.7%), but this sector had a below-average proportion of OLM enterprises (1.8%).

Chart 7: Proportions of official language minority employer enterprises, workers whose first official language spoken is French and workers who mainly use French at work, for selected industry sectors, Canada outside Quebec, 2021

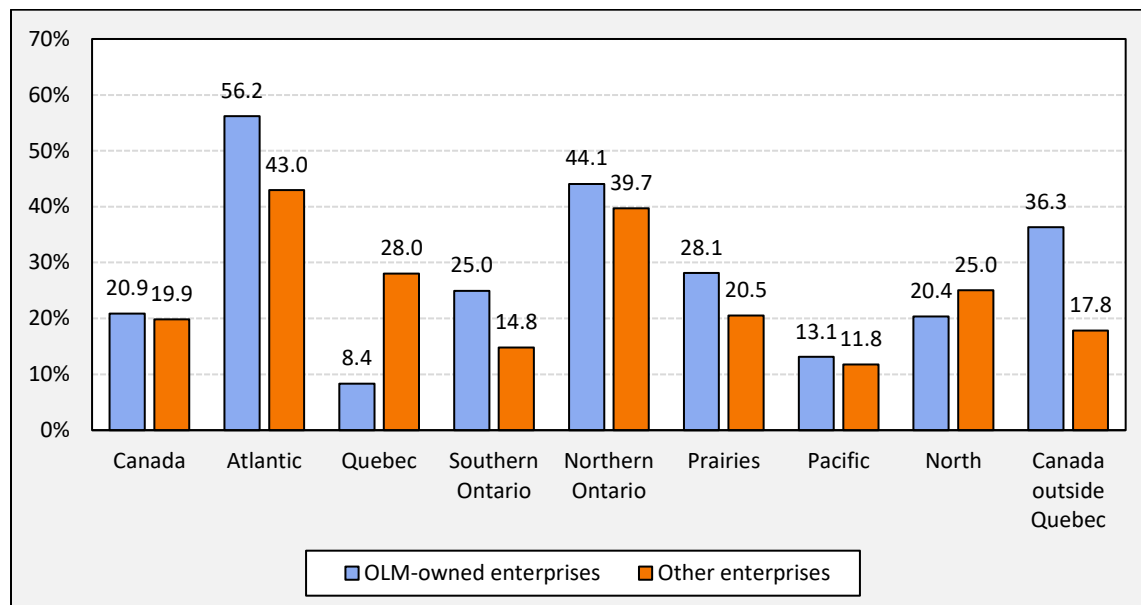


Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment and Census of Population.

5.2 Rural enterprises

Investment behaviours of OLM enterprises vary depending on whether they are in a rural or urban area.²³ In Canada in 2021, similar proportions of OLM (20.9%) and non-OLM (19.9%) enterprises were in rural areas. However, there were large regional variations (Chart 8).

Chart 8: Proportion of employer enterprises in rural areas, by official language minority ownership status and region, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

In Quebec, 8.4% of OLM enterprises were in rural areas, as opposed to 28.0% of other enterprises. This reflects the overall distribution of the English-speaking population in Quebec, which tends to be concentrated in urban areas, particularly the Montréal area.²⁴ Indeed, 63% of OLM enterprises in Quebec were headquartered in the Montréal economic region (corresponding to the island of Montreal).

Overall, in Canada outside Quebec, 36.3% of OLM enterprises were in rural areas, a much higher proportion than among other enterprises (17.8%). This is driven in part by the large proportion of OLM enterprises that are headquartered in the Atlantic region, where the proportion of rural enterprises is high.

More than half of OLM enterprises (56.2%) in the Atlantic region were in rural areas, compared with 43.0% of other enterprises in the region. In New Brunswick, where 47.1% of all employer enterprises were headquartered in a rural area, 53.5% of OLM enterprises were in a rural area. In the other Atlantic provinces, the vast majority (70.4%) of OLM enterprises were in a rural area, while this was not the case for other employer enterprises (42.6%).

In Southern Ontario, the proportion of OLM employer enterprises (25.0%) headquartered in a rural area is much higher than the proportion of other enterprises (14.8%) in a rural area. The Ottawa economic

23. See Demers, Rosa and Hamit-Haggar (2024).

24. See Auclair, Frigon and St-Amant (2023). In 2021, 80% of people with English as their FOLS lived in the Montréal census metropolitan area.

region, which covers southeastern Ontario,²⁵ is home to more than 57% of all OLM employer enterprises in Southern Ontario. One-third of these enterprises are in a rural area of the Ottawa region.

5.3 Employment in OLM employer enterprises

5.3.1 Number of employees

More than half (54.4%) of OLM employer enterprises—incorporated enterprises with more than one employee—had fewer than five employees in 2021 (Table 3), slightly fewer than for other enterprises (57.1%). Larger enterprises are relatively more common among OLM enterprises.

The share of OLM employer enterprises with one to five employees was highest in the Prairies (65.4%), where there was an overall greater proportion of small employer enterprises. There were also high proportions of small OLM employer enterprises in the Pacific region (61.6%) and the Atlantic region outside New Brunswick (64.5%).

Table 3: Distribution of official language minority enterprises and other enterprises by employment size, among employer enterprises, 2021

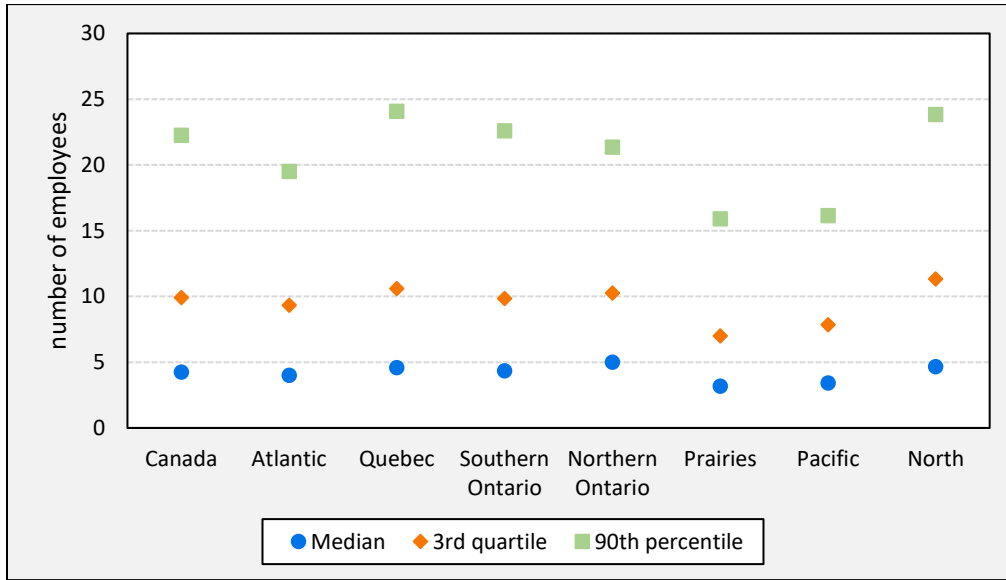
Number of employees	Canada		Quebec		Canada outside Quebec	
	OLM enterprises	Other enterprises	OLM enterprises	Other enterprises	OLM enterprises	Other enterprises
			%			
More than 1 and less than 5	54.4	57	52.2	52.9	57.1	58.1
At least 5 and less than 20	34.3	32.6	35.2	34.5	33.1	32.1
At least 20 and less than 40	6.7	6.0	7.4	7.2	5.8	5.7
At least 40 and less than 100	3.4	3.3	3.7	4.0	2.9	3.1
100 and more	1.3	1.1	1.5	1.5	1.1	1.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

The median number of employees among OLM employer enterprises was 4.25, compared with 4.0 among other enterprises. Among OLM enterprises, the median number of employees was highest in Northern Ontario (5.0) and lowest in the Prairies (3.2).

25. For the area covered by the Ottawa economic region, see [Variant of Standard Geographical Classification \(SGC\) 2021 for Economic Regions – 3510-ER – Ottawa – Economic region](#).

Chart 9: Employment metrics for official language minority employer enterprises by region, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

5.3.2 What share of employment do OLM enterprises account for?

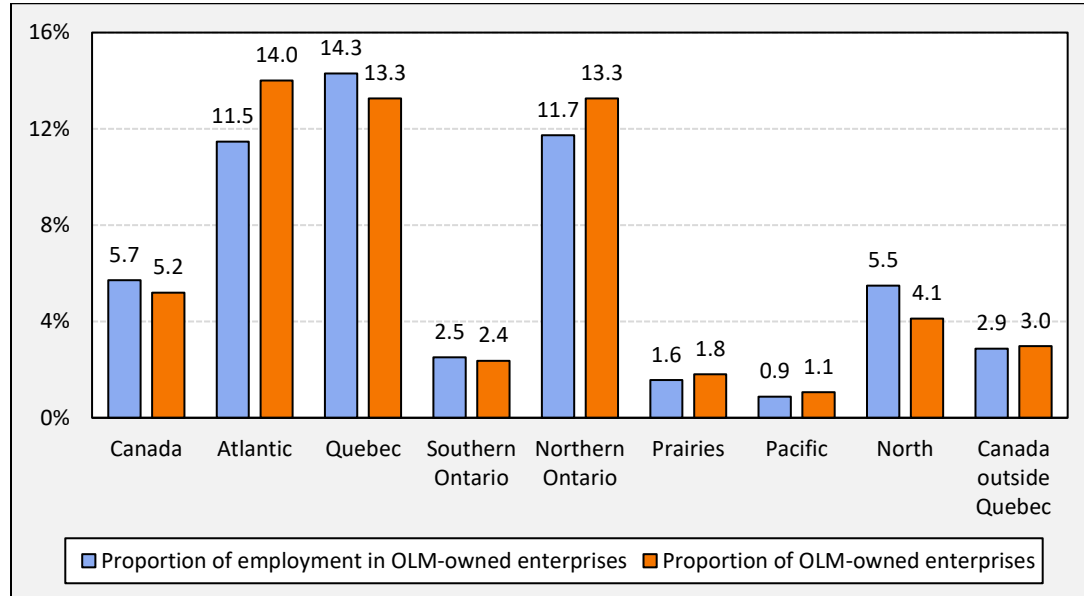
In total, incorporated enterprises with more than one but fewer than 5,000 employees²⁶ accounted for 6.8 million employees in 2021, up 1.2% compared with 2016. Meanwhile, employment in OLM enterprises of this size decreased by 2.7% over the same period, from about 399,120 to 388,300. As a result, the employment share of OLM enterprises declined from 5.9% in 2016 to 5.7% in 2021. This remains above their share of enterprises (5.2%) because they were larger, on average, than their non-OLM owned counterparts.

The share of employment in OLM enterprises was higher in Quebec (14.3% in 2021), Northern Ontario (11.7%) and the Atlantic region (11.5%), and lower in the Pacific (0.9%) region, the Prairies (1.6%) and Southern Ontario (2.5%) (Chart 10). From 2016 to 2021, this share decreased in all regions, along with the share of OLM enterprises, except for the Atlantic region and the North where it remained stable.

The share of employment in OLM enterprises is higher than the proportion of OLM enterprises in Quebec and the North. Conversely, it is lower in Northern Ontario and the Atlantic region, partly because of the larger proportion of smaller OLM enterprises in these regions.

26. Enterprises with more than 5,000 employees were excluded from statistics regarding the share of employment, as those very large enterprises act as outliers and distort the general picture. In 2021, around 30 enterprises with over 5,000 employees in Canada were in scope for this report; they accounted for 9.7% of total employment in incorporated enterprises with more than one employee.

Chart 10: Share of employment in official language minority employer enterprises (up to 5,000 employees) compared with the overall proportion of official language minority employer enterprises, by region, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

5.4 Revenue

In 2021, relatively more OLM employer enterprises (10.6%) reported a total revenue of \$5 million or more, compared with non-OLM employer enterprises (9.4%). Among enterprises with a revenue of \$5 million or more, OLM enterprises were more frequently in the wholesale trade sector, while non-OLM enterprises were more frequently in the retail trade and construction sectors. The median revenue for OLM enterprises was \$650,000, while it was \$630,000 for other employer enterprises.

However, the proportion of OLM enterprises reporting positive net revenue (profits) was the same as that for other enterprises. In 2021, 75% of both reported positive net revenue.

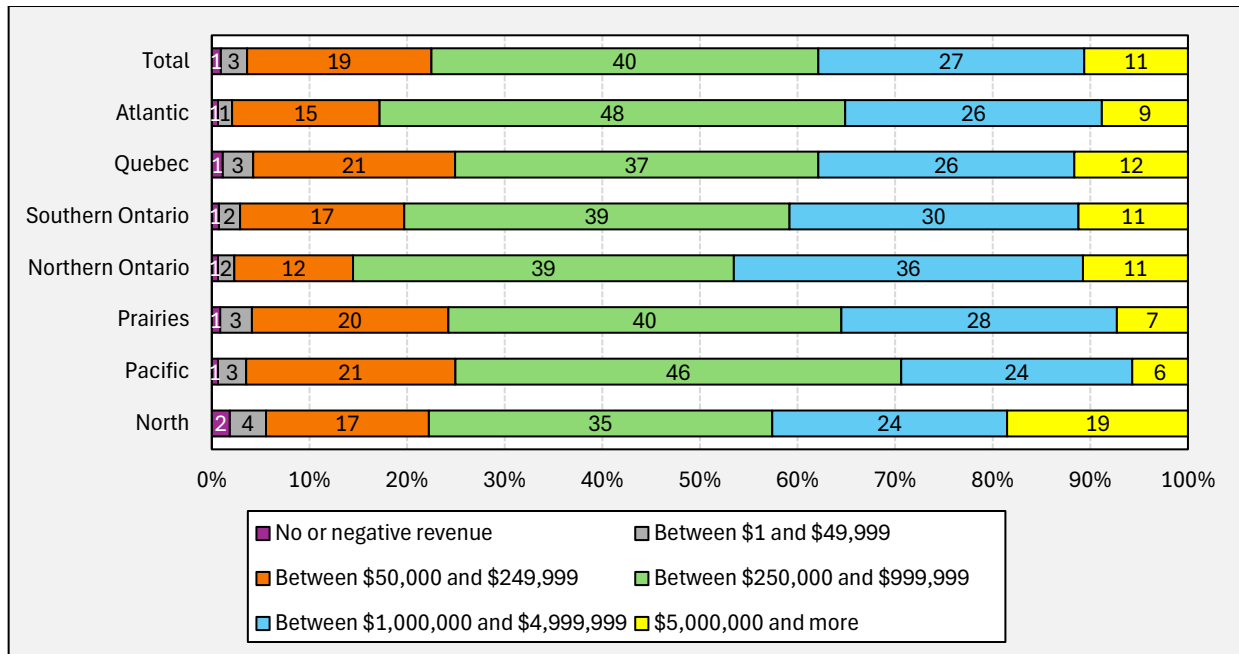
Table 4: Distribution of employer enterprises by total revenue category, by official language minority status, Canada, 2021

Total revenue categories (in \$CAN)	OLM enterprises	Other enterprises
	%	
No or negative revenue	1	1
Between \$1 and \$49,999	3	3
Between \$50,000 and \$249,999	19	20
Between \$250,000 and \$999,999	40	39
Between \$1,000,000 and \$4,999,999	27	27
\$5,000,000 and more	11	9
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

OLM enterprises headquartered in the North and Northern Ontario tended to report higher total revenue. Almost half (47%) of OLM enterprises in Northern Ontario reported a total revenue of \$1 million or more, compared with 29% of those in the Pacific region. Enterprises with large revenue that were headquartered in Northern Ontario were more frequently in the retail trade sector, compared with enterprises with large revenue in other regions.

Chart 11: Distribution of official language minority employer enterprises by revenue category, by region, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

5.5 Longitudinal changes among OLM employer enterprises from 2016 to 2021

As previously stated, there were 32,230 OLM employer enterprises in 2021, a similar number as in 2016 (32,020). However, while slightly more than half of these enterprises (17,470 or 54.6%) remained OLM employer enterprises from 2016 to 2021, a significant minority had been replaced. This section highlights the longitudinal changes that occurred among the pool of OLM employer enterprises from 2016 to 2021. Table 5 summarizes the main changes.

Table 5: Summary of the variation in the number of official language minority employer enterprises from 2016 to 2021, Canada

OLM employer enterprises in 2016			OLM employer enterprises in 2021	
32,020		Total		32,230
17,470	Remained OLM-owned employer enterprises			17,470
5,320	Stopped operating (were active in 2016, but were not active in 2021)	Net: +2,850	Started operating (were not active in 2016, but were active in 2021)	8,170
5,940	Employer enterprises in 2016 that became microenterprises in 2021	Net: -2,010	Microenterprises in 2016 that became employer enterprises in 2021	3,930
3,290	OLM-owned in 2016 became not OLM-owned in 2021	Net: -630	Not OLM-owned in 2016 became OLM-owned in 2021	2,660

Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

Overall, 8,170 OLM employer enterprises were active in 2021, but did not exist or were inactive in 2016. Conversely, 5,320 enterprises active in 2016 ceased operations in 2021. Note that enterprises created after 2016 that ceased operations before 2021 were excluded from this report, as they were inactive both in 2016 and 2021.

Some employer enterprises active in 2021 were also active in 2016, but as microenterprises (3,930). In other words, they gained employees from 2016 to 2021, becoming a different enterprise type. Conversely, some enterprises that were active as microenterprises (with one employee or less) in 2021 reported more than one employee in 2016 (5,940). In total, these changes in enterprise type amounted to a net loss of 2,010 OLM employer enterprises from 2016 to 2021.

Some employer enterprises also remained active from 2016 to 2021 but changed OLM-ownership status because of a change in their ownership—either through a change in owners or a change in the owners' language characteristics over time). There were 2,660 employer enterprises that became newly OLM-owned from 2016 to 2021, while 3,290 were no longer OLM-owned (net loss of 630).

These changes over time are broken down further in this section. Considering all factors, Quebec was the only region with an overall net increase in the number of OLM employer enterprises (Table 6).

Table 6: Net variation in the number of official language minority employer enterprises from 2016 to 2021, by region

	Net variation
Canada	+210
Atlantic	-20
Quebec	+1,420
Southern Ontario	-360
Northern Ontario	-200
Prairies	-610
Pacific	-30
Canada outside Quebec	-1,210

Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

5.5.1 How many OLM employer enterprises began or ceased operations from 2016 to 2021?

In 2021, there were about 8,170 active OLM employer enterprises were not already active in 2016, accounting for 25.4% of the total (compared with 26.2% among non-OLM enterprises). OLM employer enterprises represented 5.0% of all employer enterprises that became active from 2016 to 2021, while they represented 5.4% of those that had been active since 2016 or before. In other words, in 2021, the proportion of OLM enterprises was slightly lower among younger enterprises than among older ones.

Conversely, 16.6% (5,320) of the 32,020 OLM employer enterprises active in 2016 were no longer active in 2021. This proportion is similar to that among other enterprises (16.4%). An enterprise ceasing operations does not necessarily imply that it closed its doors permanently or that its situation worsened. In some cases, businesses may have merged or been amalgamated with other enterprises or been acquired.

Considering only OLM employer enterprises that became active or ceased operations, there was a net increase of 2,850 OLM employer enterprises from 2016 to 2021. However, this situation varied by region (charts 12 and 13).

In Quebec, when considering only enterprises that became newly active or ceased operations, the number of OLM employer enterprises grew by a net 2,120 from 2016 to 2021. Among OLM employer enterprises in Quebec in 2021, the proportion of newly active enterprises (27.8%) was higher than that among other enterprises (24.5%). However, the proportion of OLM employer enterprises that were active in 2016 but had become inactive by 2021 was also higher (17.3% or 2,830 enterprises) than for other enterprises (14.5%). Many sectors contributed to the net increase in the number of OLM employer enterprises, including professional, scientific and technical services (+330); retail trade (+300); construction (+260); and accommodation and food services (+220).

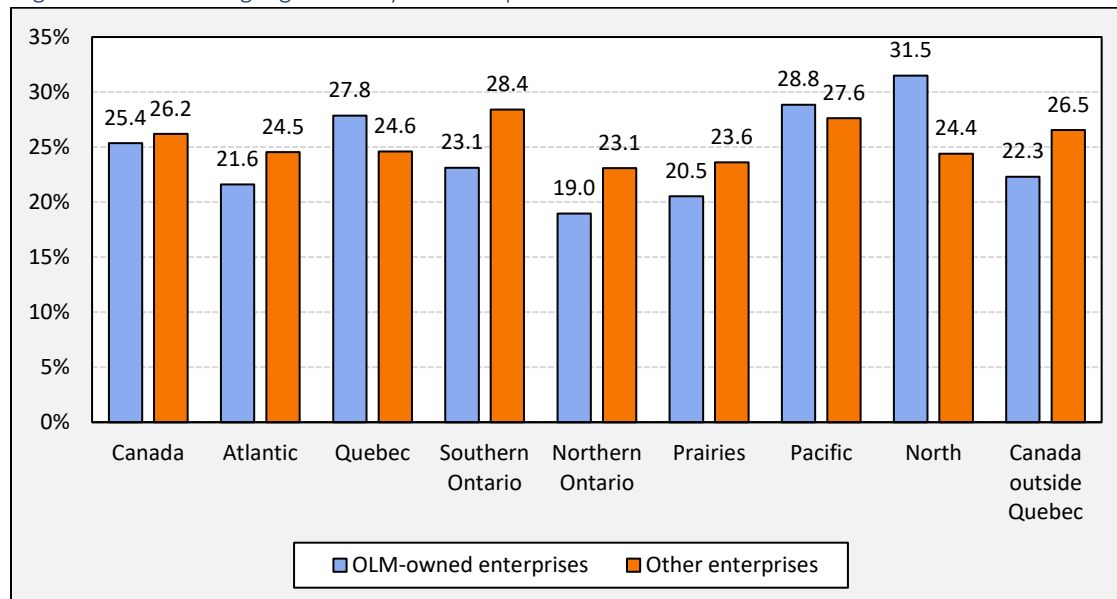
In Canada outside Quebec, the number of OLM employer enterprises grew by a net 730 because of enterprises becoming active or ceasing operations. This was largely driven by a net increase in Southern Ontario (+330) and the Atlantic region (+300). The net increase in the Pacific region (+140) is proportional to the increase in Quebec, considering the number of OLM enterprises in the region. At the same time, there was little change in Northern Ontario and the North, while the Prairies (-90) saw a decrease.

In Canada outside Quebec overall, the proportion of OLM enterprises (22.3%) that became active between 2016 and 2021 was lower compared with other enterprises (26.7%). This was generally the case across regions, with the Pacific region being an exception. However, there was more variation between regions

with regards to the proportion of enterprises that ceased operations. In Canada outside Quebec, 15.9% of OLM employer enterprises active in 2016 were no longer active in 2021, compared with 16.9% among other enterprises. However, in Northern Ontario and the Prairies, the proportion of enterprises ceasing operations was similar or greater to that of other enterprises.

Demographics and dynamics within industrial sectors appeared to play a role in explaining variations in the proportion of newly active enterprises across the country. Demographics can affect the number of potential entrepreneurs creating new enterprises. Additionally, the rate at which new enterprises appear (and disappear) varied by sector.²⁷ Further analysis would be needed to understand the factors behind the differences in the proportion of enterprises that ceased operations.

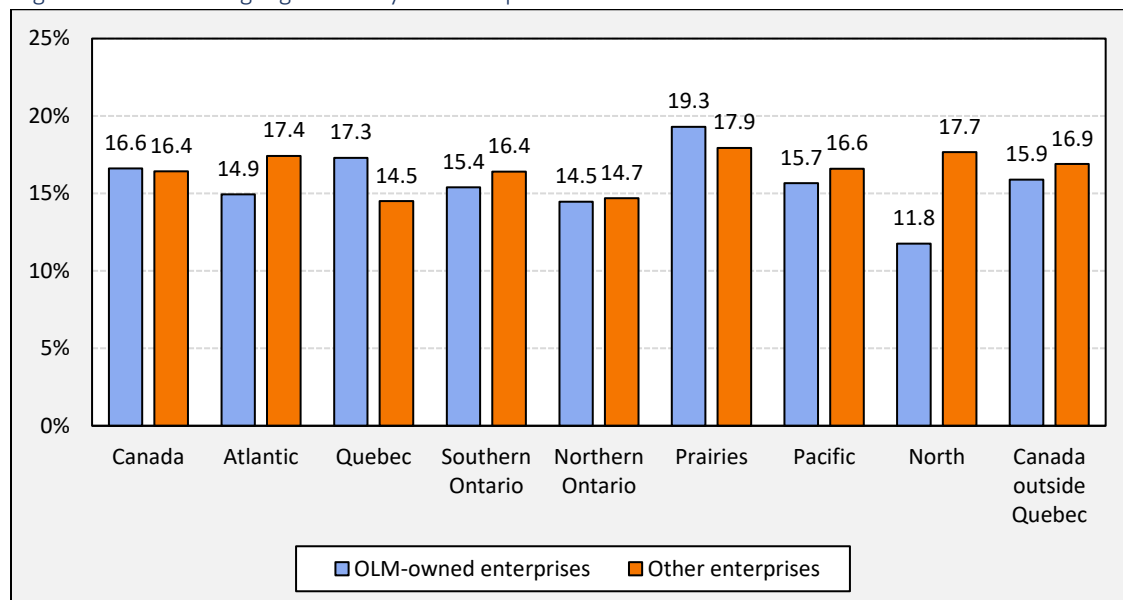
Chart 12: Proportion of employer enterprises active in 2021 that were not active in 2016 (new enterprises), by region and official language minority ownership status



Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

27. For instance, the accommodation and food services sector has relatively high turnover rates, with enterprises entering and exiting the market at a comparatively higher frequency. Higher or lower concentrations of OLM enterprises in such a sector contribute to explain differences in the proportions of new enterprises.

Chart 13: Proportion of employer enterprises active in 2016 that were not active in 2021 (ceased operations), by region and official language minority ownership status



Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

5.5.2 Is employment in OLM enterprises growing or declining?

Of the 32,020 OLM employer enterprises that were active in 2016, more than 5,000 (16,6%) were no longer active in 2021. Of the remaining 26,700 OLM employer enterprises in 2016, 5,940 had one employee or less in 2021, becoming microenterprises. About 4,000 of them (or 15.9% of the enterprises active in 2016 and still active in 2021) had no employees in 2021, which is equivalent to a 100% decline in employment.

Table 7: Employment variation of official language minority employer enterprises and other employer enterprises active in both 2016 and 2021, Canada

Employment variation between 2016 and 2021	Number of OLM enterprises	Proportion of OLM enterprises	Proportion of other enterprises
<i>Enterprises active in 2016</i>	32,020	100%	100%
Enterprises no longer active in 2021	5,320	16.6%	16.4%
Enterprises still active	26,700	83.4%	83.6%
Employment decreased by 100%	4,230	15.9%	16.9%
Employment decreased by between 50% to 100%	2,730	10.2%	10.2%
Employment decreased by between 10% to 50%	6,770	25.3%	24.2%
Employment increased or decreased by no more than 10%	5,260	19.7%	20.1%
Employment increased by between 10% and 50%	4,120	15.4%	15%
Employment increased by between 50% and 100%	1,960	7.3%	7.4%
Employment increased by more than 100%	1,640	6.1%	6.3%

Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

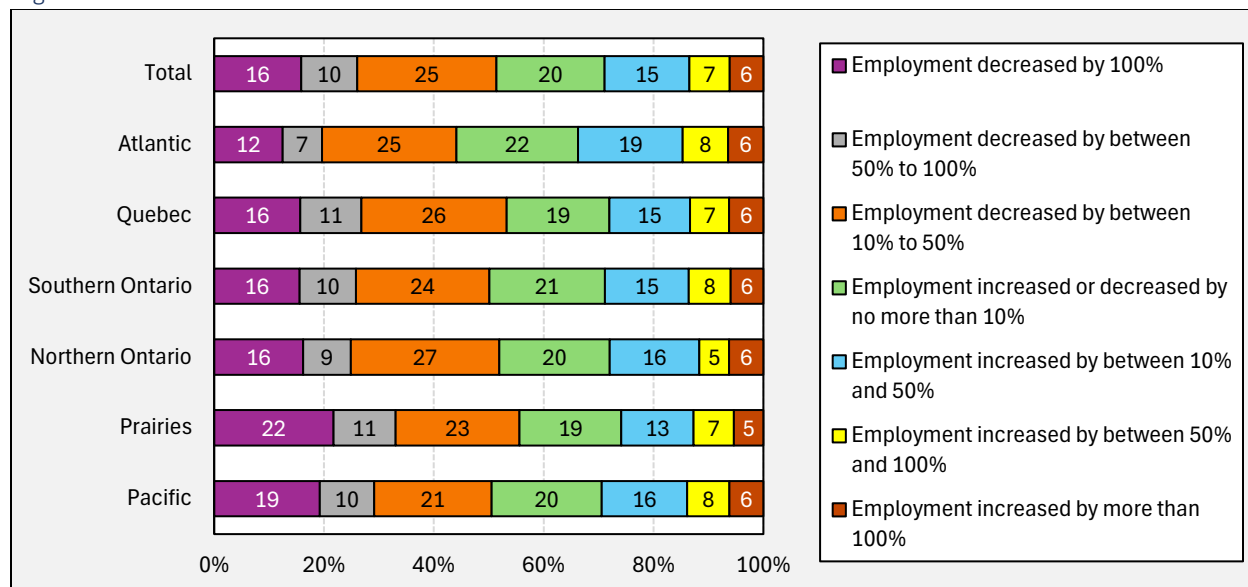
At the same time, 6.1% of active OLM employer enterprises reported more than doubling their employment from 2016 to 2021, while another 7.3% reported increases of 50% to 100%.

In addition, about 3,930 OLM microenterprises active in 2016 had become employer enterprises (more than one employee) by 2021.

These employment variations in OLM enterprises mostly mirrored those in other enterprises. However, the proportion of enterprises with a 100% decline in employment was slightly higher among non-OLM enterprises (16.9%), compared with OLM enterprises (15.9%).

Employment variation among OLM employer enterprises was similar in Quebec, Southern Ontario and Northern Ontario. In the Prairies, a larger proportion of enterprises were active with employees in 2016 but reported no employees in 2021 (22%). This is in addition to a larger than average proportion of OLM employer enterprises that were no longer active in 2021 (19.3%). This coincides with other challenges in the Prairies region. According to the Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours, the overall number of jobs in this region decreased by 2.3% from 2016 to 2021, while the overall number of jobs in Canada increased by 3.0%.²⁸

Chart 14: Employment variation of official language minority employer enterprises active in 2016 and 2021, by region



Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

Across the country, relatively large employment increases were observed in the construction sector, where jobs increased by 9% from 2016 to 2021 according to the Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours. In the finance and insurance sector, a relatively large proportion of enterprises reported large employment decreases, despite the overall growth in jobs. The professional, scientific, and technical services sector was more volatile, with many enterprises increasing and decreasing in size. Overall, the number of jobs in this sector increased by 22% over that five-year period.

5.5.3 Do OLM employer enterprises remain OLM-owned over time?

The OLM status of an enterprise may change over time if the language profile of its owners changes. Among the 32,230 OLM employer enterprises in 2021, about 2,660 or 8% were already active employer

28. See Statistics Canada, [Table 14-10-0202-0 Employment by industry, annual](#).

enterprises in 2016 but were not OLM-owned at the time. Conversely, 3,290 OLM employer enterprises active in 2016 were still active employer enterprises in 2021 but were no longer OLM-owned, amounting to about 10% of the OLM employer enterprises active in 2016. Overall, this amounted to a net decrease of 630 OLM employer enterprises in Canada.

Among the 2,660 enterprises that acquired OLM-ownership status from 2016 to 2021, more than half did so because the owners remained the same individuals, but their language characteristics changed over time. In other words, the same individuals responded differently to language questions in the 2016 and 2021 censuses. This happened more frequently in Quebec, with the most frequent case being owners whose FOLS was French and English in 2016 and only English in 2021. In Canada outside Quebec, there were more cases involving owners whose FOLS was English in 2016 and French in 2021.

In other cases where enterprises acquired an OLM status from 2016 to 2021, it was almost always because the ownership had changed. In very few cases, enterprises moved in or out of Quebec, affecting their OLM-ownership status (as the status is based on the location of the enterprise's headquarters, not the owners).

A similar pattern was observed for employer enterprises that were active in both 2016 and 2021, but that had instead lost their OLM-ownership status during that period.

5.6 Characteristics of owners

5.6.1 Enterprises owned by women+

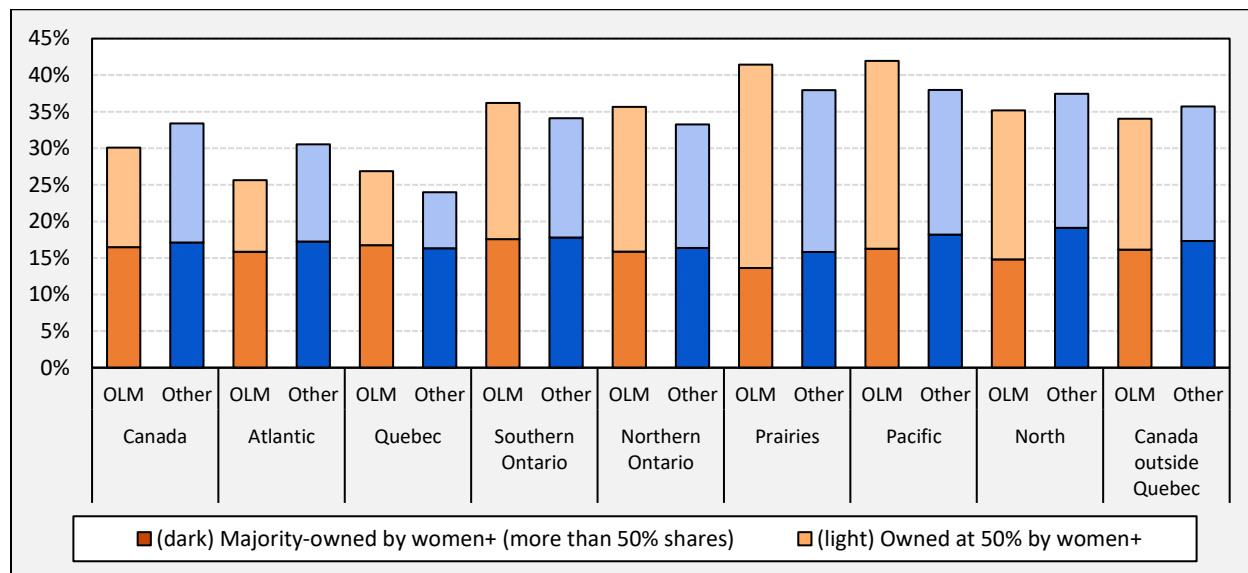
In Canada, the proportion of enterprises owned by women has been growing over the last few decades, although they remain a minority of enterprises.²⁹ Among OLM employer enterprises, 16.5% were mostly owned by women+ (more than 50% ownership) and 13.6% were owned at exactly 50% by women+ (30.1% when combining both categories), slightly less than among non-OLM enterprises (Chart 15).

However, there were regional variations. The lower proportion of enterprises owned by women+ among OLM enterprises was related in part to the fact that a significant proportion of these enterprises were concentrated in Quebec and the Atlantic region, where rates of women+ ownership are lower overall.

Overall, among individual owners of OLM employer enterprises in 2021, 30.8% were women+, compared with 35.0% of owners of other enterprises. These rates were similar in 2016. Again, this difference between OLM and non-OLM enterprises was explained in part by lower overall rates of women+ enterprise owners in Quebec. In Quebec, 27.8% of owners of OLM enterprises were women+, compared with 28.0% among owners of other enterprises, and in Canada outside Quebec, 34.2% of owners of OLM enterprises were women+, compared with 36.7% among owners of other enterprises.

29. See Grekou, Li and Liu (2018) and Tam, Sood and Johnston (2024) for a general portrait of women-owned businesses.

Chart 15: Proportion of enterprises owned by women+, by official language minority-ownership status and region, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

5.6.2 Age of owners

Owners of OLM employer enterprises tended to be a little older than owners of other enterprises (Tables 8 and 9), both in Quebec and in Canada outside Quebec. There were smaller proportions of owners of OLM enterprises that were younger than age 35 compared with owners of other enterprises (10.0% versus 13.2% in Quebec; 9.3% versus 10.3% in Canada outside Quebec), and larger proportions that were older than 50 (57.4% versus 50.3% in Quebec; 57.8% versus 55.3% in Canada outside Quebec).

Table 8: Age of owners of employer enterprises, by official language minority-ownership status and region, 2021

Age	Canada		Quebec		Canada outside Quebec	
	Owners of OLM enterprises	Other owners	Owners of OLM enterprises	Other owners	Owners of OLM enterprises	Other owners
	%					
34 and younger	9.7	10.9	10	13.2	9.3	10.3
35 to 49	32.8	34.8	32.6	36.5	33	34.4
50 to 64	40.7	38.8	40.1	37.1	41.4	39.2
65 and older	16.8	15.5	17.3	13.2	16.3	16.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

Overall, the average age was slightly higher for owners of OLM enterprises than that of owners of other enterprises. For enterprises in Quebec and Canada outside Quebec, the average age of owners of OLM enterprises increased slightly from 2016 to 2021. This was also the case for owners of non-OLM enterprises and, more broadly, for the Canadian population as a whole.

Table 9: Average age of owners of employer enterprises, by official language minority-ownership status and region, 2016 and 2021

	Canada		Quebec		Canada outside Quebec	
	Owners of OLM enterprises	Other owners	Owners of OLM enterprises	Other owners	Owners of OLM enterprises	Other owners
	<i>mean age</i>					
2016	51.4	50.4	51.4	49.5	51.3	50.6
2021	52.0	51.1	52.1	49.9	52.0	51.4

Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

5.6.3 Language characteristics of owners

The language characteristics of the owners of OLM enterprises vary. This is firstly because OLM populations are linguistically diverse and include people who relate to the minority official language in different ways. Additionally, since OLM enterprises are defined here as those that are majority-owned by people whose FOLS is the minority language (and not exclusively owned by them), some owners of OLM enterprises are not themselves part of the OLM population.

As such, in 2021, English was not the FOLS of 12.5% of owners of OLM employer enterprises based in Quebec, and French was not the FOLS of 17.6% of owners of OLM enterprises in Canada outside Quebec.

Table 10: Language characteristics of owners of official language minority employer enterprises, 2021

		Canada	Quebec	Canada outside Quebec
			%	
First official language spoken	English	54.5	87.5	17.3
	French	43.6	9.1	82.4
	English and French	1.7	2.9	0.3
	Neither English nor French	0.2	0.4	0.0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
Knowledge of official languages	English only	20.1	27.2	12.2
	French only	3.6	1.4	6.2
	Both English and French	76.0	71.0	81.6
	Neither English nor French	0.3	0.5	0.0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
Mother tongue	English (incl. English + non-official language)	32.4	48.0	14.8
	French (incl. French + non-official language)	42.0	7.9	80.6
	English and French	1.9	2.5	1.2
	Non-official language	23.7	41.6	3.5
	<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
Language spoken most often at home	English (incl. English + non-official language)	58.4	71.6	43.5
	French (incl. French + non-official language)	30.0	10.3	52.2
	English and French equally	2.9	2.6	3.3
	Non-official language	8.7	15.6	1.0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

Knowledge of both official languages is widespread among the owners of OLM enterprises. Among owners of OLM employer enterprises in Quebec, 71.0% could speak English and French (compared with 55.5% of owners of other enterprises in Quebec). In Canada outside Quebec, 81.6% could speak both languages (compared with 6.4% of owners of other enterprises). Among owners of OLM enterprises in Quebec,

27.2% spoke only English. In contrast, among owners of OLM enterprises in Canada outside Quebec, a greater proportion spoke only English (12.2%) than only French (6.2%).

English was the mother tongue of about half the owners of OLM enterprises in Quebec, while a large proportion had a non-official language as their mother tongue (41.6%). However, English was the language used most often at home by the majority of the owners of OLM enterprises (71.6%), although a substantial proportion of owners spoke French (10.3%) or a non-official language (15.5%) most often at home.

French was the mother tongue of 80.6% of owners of OLM enterprises in Canada outside Quebec. However, a significant proportion of those owners spoke mostly English at home (43.5%), whereas a little over half spoke mostly French at home (52.2%).

6. Microenterprises

In 2021, there were a total of 249,090 OLM microenterprises—unincorporated enterprises and incorporated enterprises with one employee or less—accounting for 5.5% of all microenterprises. Two-thirds of them (66.4%) were unincorporated enterprises. These enterprises are different in many ways, such as in size and industry distribution, from incorporated enterprises with multiple employees discussed in Section 5. For instance, there is a much larger proportion of microenterprises in the real estate and rental and leasing sector. However, differences between OLM and non-OLM microenterprises were generally similar to those between OLM and non-OLM employer enterprises.

The proportion of OLM microenterprises was highest in Quebec (14.8%) and Northern Ontario (14.6%).

Table 11: Proportion of official language minority microenterprises per region, 2021

Region	Number of OLM microenterprises	Proportion of microenterprises that are OLM-owned
Canada	249,090	5.5%
Atlantic	20,920	11.1%
Quebec	146,780	14.8%
Southern Ontario	43,810	2.6%
Northern Ontario	10,190	14.6%
Prairies	17,730	2.1%
Pacific	9,190	1.3%
North	470	5.9%
Canada outside Quebec	102,310	2.9%

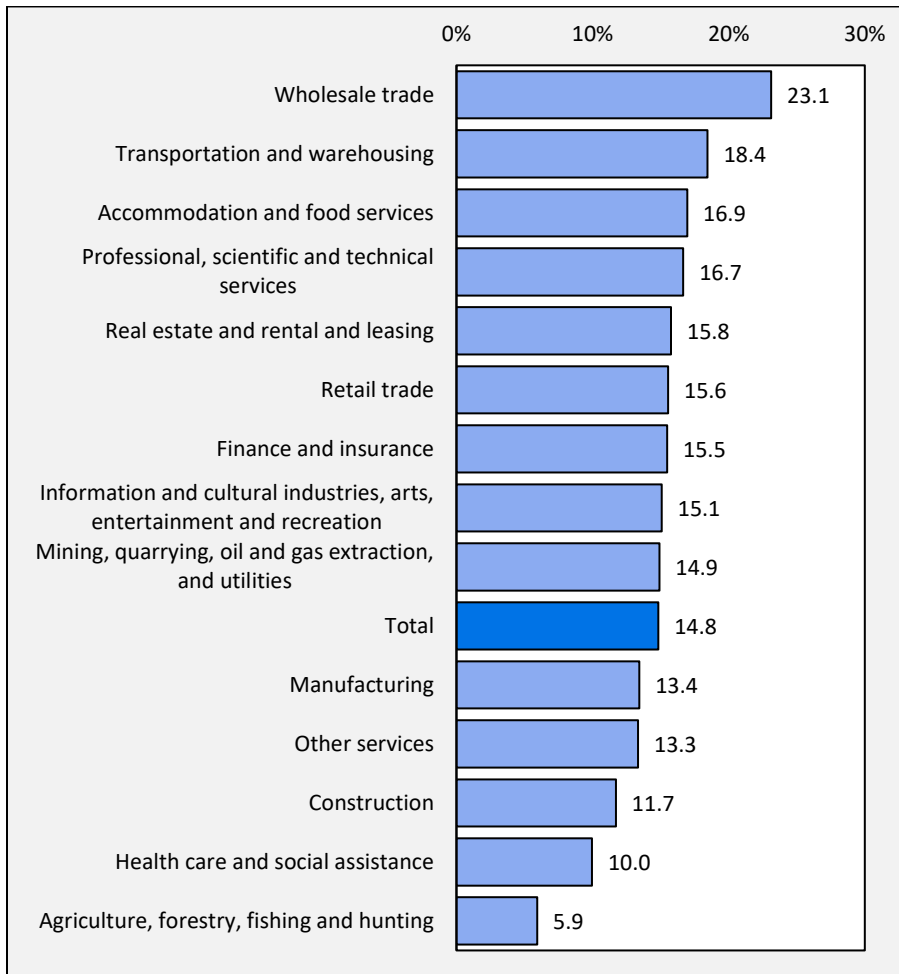
Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

6.1 Industrial sectors

Among OLM microenterprises, the most frequent industry sector was real estate and rental and leasing (33.7%), followed by professional, scientific and technical services (11.4%).

In Quebec (Chart 16), while the overall proportion of OLM microenterprises stood at 14.8% in 2021, this varied by sector. The proportion of microenterprises that are OLM owned was highest in the wholesale trade sector (23.1%), followed by the transportation and warehousing (18.5%) sector, and was lower in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (5.9%), health care and social assistance (10.0%) and construction (11.7%) sectors. The relative industrial concentration of OLM microenterprises in the province was similar to that of OLM employer enterprises (Section 5.1.1).

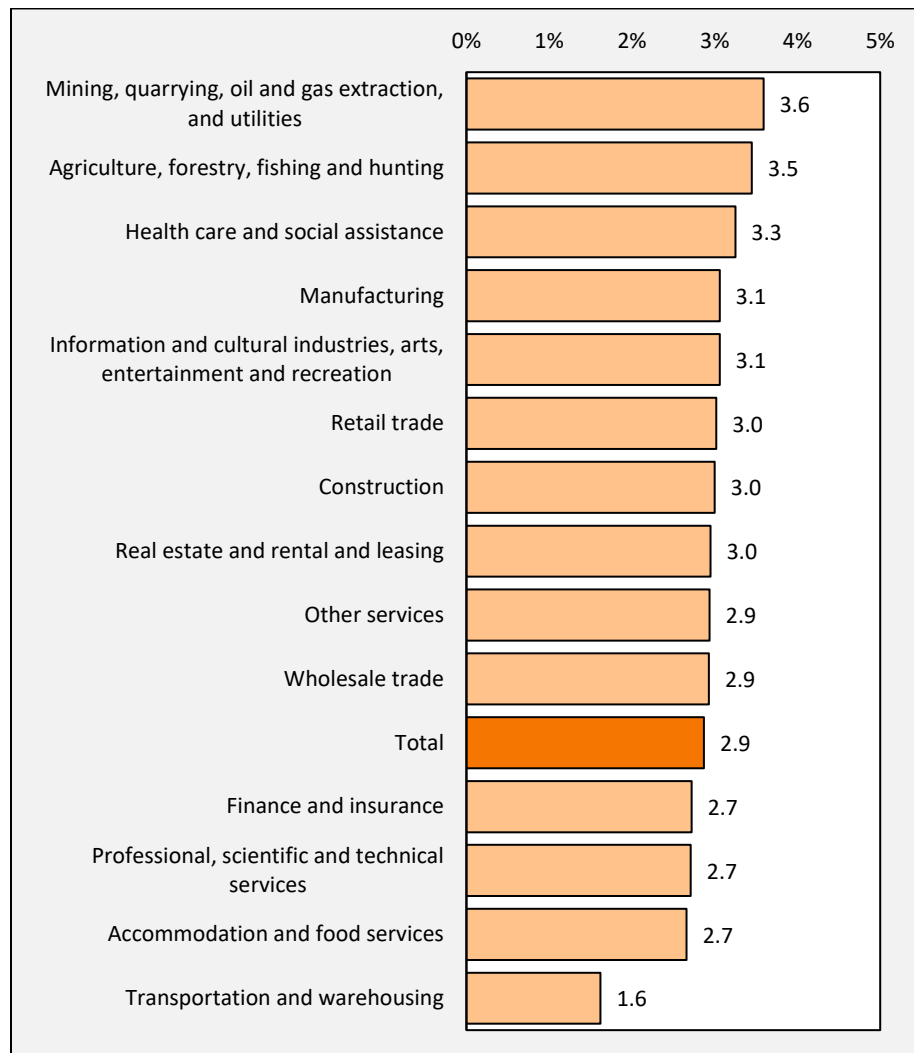
Chart 16: Proportion of official language minority microenterprises by industrial sector, Quebec, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

In Canada outside Quebec (Chart 17), 2.9% of microenterprises were OLM-owned. The lowest proportion was in the transportation and warehousing sector (1.6%). It was highest in the mining, quarrying, oil and resources and gas extraction, and utilities sector (3.6%). The relative concentration of OLM microenterprises in this last sector was very different from the situation observed among employer enterprises (Section 5.1.1). OLM employer enterprises were underrepresented in this sector, although this sector had the second-highest proportion of the workforce in Canada outside Quebec with French as their FOLS. High proportions of OLM microenterprises could also be found in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (3.5%) and health care and social assistance (3.3%) sectors.

Chart 17: Proportion of official language minority microenterprises by industrial sector, Canada outside Quebec, 2021



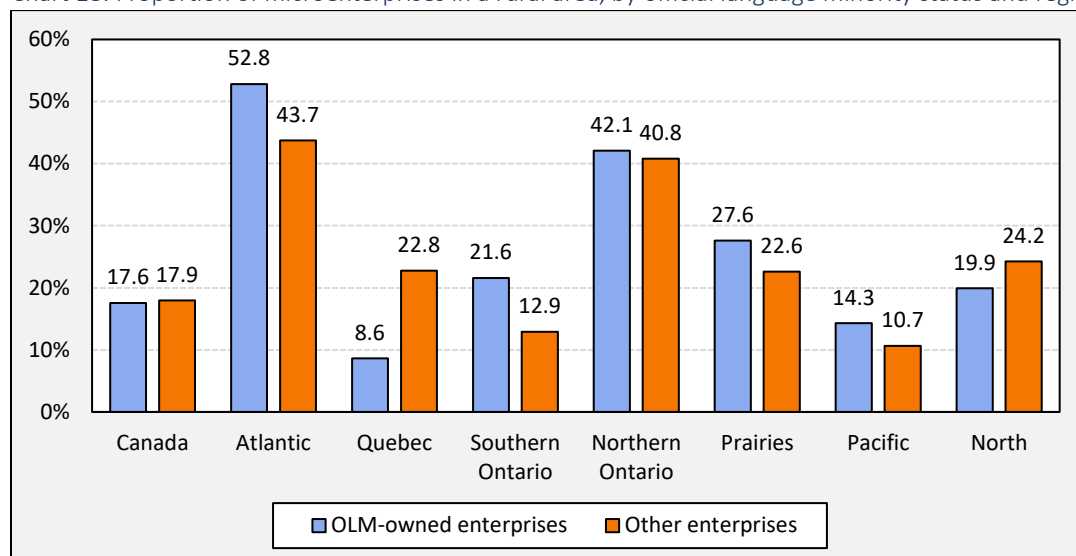
Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

6.2 Rural enterprises

As with employer enterprises (Section 5.2), similar proportions of OLM (17.6%) and non-OLM (17.9%) microenterprises were in rural areas at the national level, though this varied widely by region (Chart 18).

In Quebec, 8.6% of OLM microenterprises were in rural areas, as opposed to 22.8% of other enterprises. In Canada outside Quebec, the proportions of OLM microenterprises in rural areas were generally larger than those of other enterprises, though these proportions were similarly high in Northern Ontario.

Chart 18: Proportion of microenterprises in a rural area, by official language minority status and region, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

6.3 Characteristics of owners

6.3.1 Women+ owners

In 2021, the proportion of women+ owners of OLM microenterprises (43.1%) was somewhat similar to that of owners of other microenterprises (44.5%). However, it was notably higher than the proportion of women+ owners of employer enterprises—30.8% for OLM employer enterprises and 35.0% for other employer enterprises (see Section 5.6.1).

As was the case for employer enterprises, the slight difference in the share of women+ owners between OLM and non-OLM enterprises was mostly because of the concentration of OLM enterprises in Quebec, where the proportion of women+ owners is a bit lower than elsewhere in Canada.

Table 12: Proportion of women+ among owners of microenterprises, by official language minority status, 2021

	Canada		Quebec		Canada outside Quebec	
	Owners of OLM enterprises	Other owners	Owners of OLM enterprises	Other owners	Owners of OLM enterprises	Other owners
	%					
2016	42.9	44.1	42.0	42.8	44.0	44.5
2021	43.1	44.5	42.0	42.6	44.6	44.9

Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

From 2016 to 2021, the proportion of women+ owners of OLM microenterprises was stable in Quebec, while it increased slightly in Canada outside Quebec. These trends were similar for non-OLM enterprises.

6.3.2 Age of owners

As with employer enterprises (Section 5.6.2), owners of OLM microenterprises had a somewhat older age structure than owners of other enterprises. This was more specifically the case in Canada outside Quebec, where there were fewer people younger than age 35 among owners of OLM enterprises than among owners of other enterprises (10.3% versus 13.7%) and more people over 50 (61.9% versus 55.8%).

Inversely, among owners of microenterprises located in Quebec, the age structure did not differ by OLM status.

Table 13: Age of owners of microenterprises, by official language minority status and region, 2021

	Canada		Quebec		Canada outside Quebec	
	Owners of OLM enterprises	Other owners	Owners of OLM enterprises	Other owners	Owners of OLM enterprises	Other owners
	%					
34 and younger	12.0	13.6	13.2	13.3	10.3	13.7
35 to 49	28.9	30.4	29.8	30.0	27.9	30.5
50 to 64	35.9	34.2	35.0	34.5	37.2	34.1
65 and older	23.2	21.8	22.0	22.2	24.7	21.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

6.3.3 Language characteristics of owners

The language characteristics of owners of OLM microenterprises differed somewhat from those of OLM employer enterprises (see Section 5.6.3). More specifically, owners of OLM microenterprises were slightly more likely to have the minority official language as their FOLS. This was the case for 92.3% of owners of microenterprises in Quebec and 87.0% of those in Canada outside Quebec, compared with 87.5% and 82.4%, respectively, of owners of OLM employer enterprises. This was because microenterprises were less likely to have multiple owners and therefore also less likely to have owners who were not part of the OLM population as defined here.

Table 14: Language characteristics of owners of official language minority microenterprises, 2021

		Canada	Quebec	Canada outside Quebec
		%		
First official language spoken	English	58.0	92.3	12.8
	French	40.6	5.4	87.0
	English and French	1.2	1.9	0.2
	Neither English nor French	0.2	0.4	0.0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
Knowledge of official languages	English only	22.4	32.5	9.1
	French only	2.8	0.9	5.4
	Both English and French	74.5	66.2	85.6
	Neither English nor French	0.2	0.4	0.0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
Mother tongue	English (incl. English + non-official language)	32.9	49.7	10.7
	French (incl. French + non-official language)	38.9	4.7	84.0
	English and French	1.8	2.4	1.0
	Non-official language	26.4	43.2	4.2
	<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
Language spoken most often at home	English (incl. English + non-official language)	62.1	73.2	47.6
	French (incl. French + non-official language)	24.3	7.6	46.3
	English and French equally	3.5	2.6	4.8
	Non-official language	10.0	16.6	1.3
	<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

7. Conclusion

In 2021, there were 281,320 OLM enterprises in Canada, amounting to 5.4% of private enterprises in scope of this report. While the number and proportion of OLM enterprises grew in Quebec from 2016 to 2021, they decreased in Canada outside Quebec. These decreases were more pronounced among employer enterprises and in Northern Ontario and the Prairies.

From 2016 to 2021, the regional trends in the number and proportion of OLM enterprises largely mirrored changes in the OLM workforce, suggesting that these trends may be closely tied to broader demographic trends regarding the OLM population and their labour force participation. In other words, the change in the number of (potential) OLM owners in a given region appears to be a key driver of the change in the number of OLM enterprises. However, general demographic and enterprise trends did not fully align. This could be in part because various demographic dynamics (aging, migration, etc.) may be different for enterprise owners than for the rest of the OLM population. Additionally, other factors related more specifically to business dynamics may also be at play.

This report examined various aspects of longitudinal change from 2016 to 2021 for employer enterprises. First, considerable turnover in the OLM enterprise population was observed over time. Of the OLM employer enterprises active in 2016, about three-quarters (73%) were still active as OLM enterprises in 2021 (either as employer enterprises or microenterprises). A certain proportion ceased their activities between the two periods (17%), but about 10% lost their OLM status because of a change in the language profile of their owners. Conversely, a similar proportion of OLM employer enterprises active in 2021 acquired an OLM status because of a change in the language profile of their owners since 2016. In most of these cases, OLM status changes were not because of a change in owners, but because of a change in the language characteristics (languages spoken at home, languages known, etc.) of the same owners.

As for the longitudinal changes that could explain the broader trends in the number of OLM enterprises, results show that in 2021, there were comparatively fewer OLM enterprises among newly active enterprises (enterprises not active in 2016), except in Quebec and, to a lesser extent, in the Pacific region and the North, where there were more. Although the proportion of newly active enterprises does not constitute a direct measure of enterprise creation, it may suggest that the creation of new OLM enterprises was comparatively lower than that of other enterprises in Canada outside Quebec, particularly in the Atlantic region and Northern Ontario. Inversely, this may suggest that proportionally more OLM enterprises were created in Quebec, the Pacific region and the North, the only regions where the number of OLM enterprises grew from 2016 to 2021. Further analysis would be required to better assess and understand these apparently differing rates of enterprise creation. Specifically, research could focus on the various factors (demographic or other) affecting entrepreneurship among OLM populations.

In contrast, the decrease in the proportion of OLM enterprises in Canada outside Quebec and the increase in Quebec did not appear to be the result of differences in survival or growth trends for those enterprises. Among employer enterprises that were already active in 2016 in Canada outside Quebec, the proportion of those that were still active in 2021 was similar for OLM and non-OLM enterprises. In fact, it was even higher among OLM enterprises in some regions, such as the Atlantic region and Southern Ontario; in Quebec, this proportion was lower among OLM enterprises. Similarly, the proportions of enterprises that saw their employment increase or decrease from 2016 to 2021 were similar for OLM and non-OLM enterprises.

The summary employment and revenue indicators examined here tend to suggest that OLM enterprises are performing similarly to other enterprises. However, further analysis is needed to assess whether there are specific areas where OLM and non-OLM enterprises differ. These analyses could focus on specific aspects of business performance and, to facilitate comparisons, on specific regions.

Indeed, one of the main differences between OLM enterprises and other Canadian enterprises was in their regional distribution, which mirrored that of OLM populations (large to moderate concentrations in certain regions of New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario, and smaller proportions in other regions). Similarly, OLM enterprises in Canada outside Quebec were located in rural areas more often than other enterprises, whereas the opposite was true for OLM enterprises in Quebec. While this report focused on general trends for OLM enterprises in Canada, local trends could be different.

OLM and non-OLM enterprises also differed in their distribution by industry sectors. This is partly related to their concentration in certain regions, but not entirely. In Quebec, the proportion of OLM enterprises in a given industry sector was correlated with the proportion of workers in this sector whose FOLS was English and, to a lesser extent, with the proportion of workers who used mainly English at work. In Canada outside Quebec, this correlation was less evident, except in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting sector, where the highest proportions of OLM enterprises and workers with French as their FOLS or their main language of work were found.

Finally, the language characteristics of an enterprise's owners do not necessarily reflect the languages used as part of its activities. The relationship between the language characteristics of the owners, the language of business activities and the language characteristics of employees remains little documented and may warrant further study.

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Appendix: Supplemental tables

Table A1: Counts of OLM enterprises by region and type, 2016 and 2021

Region	2021				2016			
	Total	Employing enterprises (incorporated)	Microenterprises		Total	Employing enterprises (incorporated)	Microenterprises	
			Incorporated	Unincorporated			Incorporated	Unincorporated
Canada (total)	281,320	32,230	83,830	165,260	270,350	32,020	238,330	73,570
Atlantic	25,510	4,590	6,750	14,170	25,970	4,610	21,370	6,100
Newfoundland and Labrador	290	50	60	190	320	50	260	70
Prince Edward Island	490	60	90	340	500	50	450	80
Nova Scotia	3,520	620	980	1,930	3,680	650	3,040	940
New Brunswick	21,210	3,860	5,640	11,720	21,480	3,860	17,620	5,020
Quebec	164,560	17,780	51,240	95,540	148,790	16,360	132,430	43,000
Ontario	60,480	6,460	16,690	37,310	62,290	7,020	55,270	15,020
Southern Ontario	48,850	5,030	14,070	29,740	49,380	5,390	43,990	12,620
Northern Ontario	11,620	1,430	2,620	7,570	12,910	1,630	11,280	2,400
Prairies	19,970	2,240	6,300	11,430	22,570	2,840	19,730	6,900
Manitoba	5,420	610	1,400	3,410	6,000	680	5,320	1,390
Saskatchewan	2,580	220	650	1,710	3,200	290	2,910	750
Alberta	11,970	1,410	4,240	6,320	13,380	1,870	11,510	4,760
British Columbia (Pacific)	10,300	1,110	2,730	6,460	10,200	1,140	9,070	2,460
Territories (North)	530	50	120	350	520	50	470	110
Canada outside Quebec	116,760	14,450	32,590	69,720	121,560	15,660	105,910	30,580

Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

Table A2: Proportion of employer enterprises that are OLM enterprises, by industrial sector and by region, 2021

Industrial sector	Canada	Atlantic	Quebec	Southern Ontario	Northern Ontario	Prairies	Pacific	Canada outside Quebec	
				<i>% of OLM enterprises</i>					
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	5.7	25.2	3.2	2.8	34.1	2.7	1.0	6.7	
Mining, quarrying, oil and gas extraction, and utilities	2.2	15.8	8.9	2.4	11.9	1.2	1.1	1.8	
Construction	4.6	14.6	6.6	3.7	13.6	2.8	1.2	3.9	
Manufacturing	6.0	17.4	13.2	1.9	15.3	1.9	1.3	3.0	
Wholesale trade	8.1	13.3	24.0	2.4	15.3	1.3	0.9	2.8	
Retail trade	5.4	12.1	12.9	2.2	12.2	1.4	0.9	3.0	
Transportation and warehousing	5.2	12.7	16.5	1.3	19.9	1.5	0.7	2.2	
Information and cultural industries, arts, entertainment and recreation	5.2	9.5	13.2	2.4	9.4	2.3	1.1	2.6	
Finance and insurance	4.6	11.0	17.7	2.1	10.7	1.7	1.0	2.3	
Real estate and rental and leasing	5.3	9.8	18.6	2.0	11.8	1.9	0.7	2.4	
Professional, scientific and technical services	4.3	10.0	14.5	2.2	10.3	1.5	1.3	2.3	
Health care and social assistance	5.1	16.3	14.3	2.7	12.2	1.4	1.4	3.3	
Accommodation and food services	6.2	9.7	20.9	1.4	8.7	0.8	0.8	1.9	
Other services	4.7	11.0	12.2	2.4	14.3	1.9	0.9	2.7	
Total	5.2	14	13.3	2.4	13.3	1.8	1.1	3.0	

Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.

Table A3: Proportion of microenterprises that are OLM enterprises by industrial sector, by region, 2021

Industrial sector	Canada	Atlantic	Quebec	Southern Ontario	Northern Ontario	Prairies	Pacific	Canada outside Quebec
	<i>% of OLM enterprises</i>							
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	3.9	10.2	5.9	3.2	18.9	2.1	1.2	3.5
Mining, quarrying, oil and gas extraction, and utilities	3.9	6.9	14.9	5.3	16.5	1.4	1.2	3.6
Construction	4.3	11.8	11.7	2.6	12.6	2.8	1.4	3.0
Manufacturing	5.7	12.1	13.4	2.3	13.3	2.3	1.8	3.1
Wholesale trade	7.3	13.2	23.1	2.4	16.9	2.1	1.0	2.9
Retail trade	5.5	11.6	15.6	2.5	14.2	1.8	1.1	3.0
Transportation and warehousing	4.5	8.6	18.4	1.3	14.7	1.4	0.7	1.6
Information and cultural industries, arts, entertainment and recreation	6.3	10.5	15.1	2.8	9.9	2.6	1.7	3.1
Finance and insurance	5.8	11.4	15.5	2.4	15.4	1.9	0.9	2.7
Real estate and rental and leasing	6.0	9.9	15.8	2.8	16.6	2.3	1.2	3.0
Professional, scientific and technical services	5.4	10.0	16.7	2.7	11.5	2.0	1.5	2.7
Health care and social assistance	5.0	12.4	9.9	2.9	11.3	1.9	1.6	3.3
Accommodation and food services	5.6	8.8	16.9	1.9	10.2	1.6	1.7	2.7
Other services	5.4	13.7	13.3	2.4	13.9	1.9	1.3	2.9
Total	5.5	11.1	14.8	2.6	14.6	2.1	1.3	2.9

Source: Statistics Canada, Business Linkable File Environment.