Canada-China Business Survey 2025/2026

Summary Report

Canada China Business Council

Dr. Walid Hejazi
Daniela Stratulativ
Bijan Ahmadi

March 2026

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 3
Big Takeaways 4
Survey Highlights 5
Survey Respondent Breakdown 8
- Figure 1: Canadian companies – Sectoral distribution 9
- Figure 2: Chinese companies – Sectoral distribution 9

A Shared Top Priority 10
- Figure 3: Canadian companies — China's role in the company's global strategic plan 11
- Figure 4: Canadian companies — China's role in the company's global plan today versus two years ago 11
- Figure 5: Chinese companies — Canada's role in the company's global strategic plan 11

Renewed Growth Momentum 12
- Figure 6: Canadian companies — Plans for expanding/contracting business in/with China in the next five years 13
- Figure 7: Chinese companies — Chinese company growth plans in Canada over the next five years 13
- Figure 8: Canadian companies — Future of the organization's business with China 14
- Figure 9: Chinese companies — Type of change in the company's business prospects in Canada 14

Optimism Weathers Changing Business Challenges 15
- Figure 10: Canadian companies — "Canadian company" branding impact on business development in China 16
- Figure 11: Canadian companies — Government of Canada's recalibrated approach to China 16
- Table 1: Canadian companies — Top obstacles in doing business in/with China 17
- Table 2: Canadian companies — Top five obstacles in doing business in/with China for 2023/2025, change in relative weighted average 18
- Table 3: Chinese companies — Top obstacles to doing business in Canada 19
- Table 4: Chinese companies — Top five obstacles in doing business in/with China for 2023/2025, change in relative weighted average 20
- Figure 12: Canadian companies — Forecast of number of regulatory obstacles in Mainland China over the next five years 21

Methodology 22
About the Canada China Business Council 23

CCBC thanks its survey sponsors, **ACDEG International Inc.** & **Bennett Jones**.

Executive Summary

Since CCBC's last survey in 2023, the global business environment has become increasingly complex as rising protectionism, supply chain diversification, and geopolitical uncertainty have required greater pragmatism from business and political leaders alike.

As a new Canadian government has taken office, our latest survey, conducted in late 2025 to early 2026 captures how Canadian and Chinese companies active in the bilateral business environment are adapting to changing policy and market realities.

CCBC's regular survey of the Canada-China economic landscape collects views from the ground up to build a full picture of the road ahead for trade and investment, commercial challenges, and market performance.

Big Takeaways

1 Resilience defies the gloom.

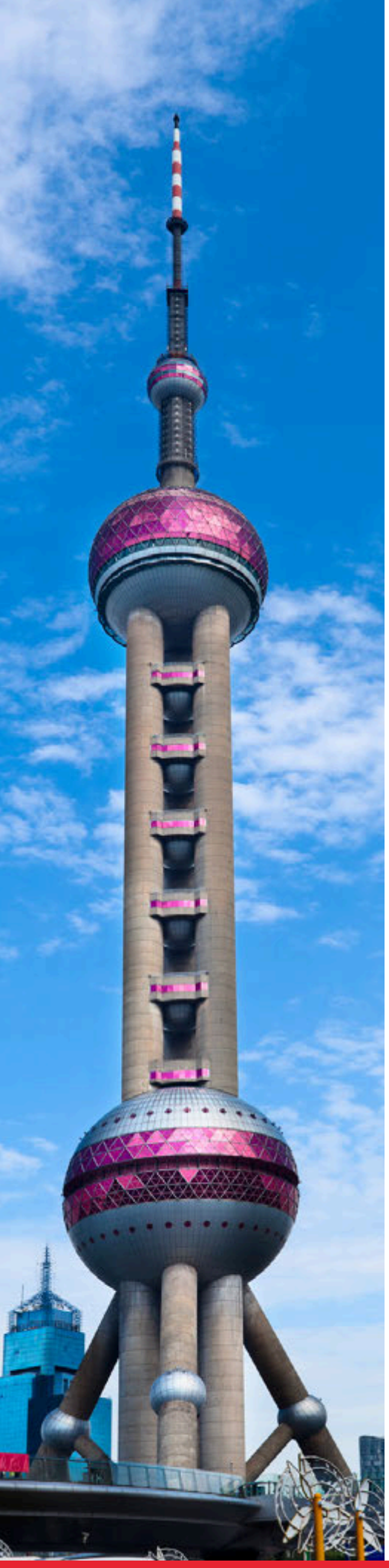
Despite geopolitical headwinds, profitability is up on both sides of the Pacific for Canadian and Chinese firms that have navigated relations and positioned themselves to expand their market ambitions.

2 Geopolitics evolves, obstacles remain.

While global tensions still shape business, specific frictions have shifted. For Canadian companies, spillovers from U.S.-China relations have superseded Canada-China ties as a driving influence, while public opinion has eased as a challenge for Chinese firms.

3 Pragmatic re-engagement underway.

As Prime Minister Carney has taken steps to recalibrate and improve economic relations with China, and as Canada advances its diversification strategy, Canadian companies have likewise elevated China as a priority market and adopted a more positive outlook on their business prospects there.



Survey Highlights

- **More than eight in ten surveyed companies (82%)** see the Carney government's new approach to China as having a positive business impact

- **Over two-thirds of Canadian companies surveyed (68%)** are preparing to expand their operations in China

- **The vast majority of firms surveyed (86%)** view China as a top or number one priority in their global strategies

- **Nearly three-quarters of Canadian firms (72%)** report that branding as a Canadian company in China is a business asset

- **Over half of surveyed companies (51%)** expressed optimism about the future of business in China

Canada China Business Council
Conseil d'affaires Canada-Chine
加中贸易理事会

Canadian companies' profitability increased compared to pre-COVID years

Nearly two-thirds (61%) of Canadian firms reported profitable or breakeven business in China

Resilience highlights Canadian companies' strengths in managing market uncertainty effectively. Relative to pre-COVID levels, gains were prominent in agri-food and agribusiness, as well as in transportation, aerospace and automotive sectors. These trends point to the potential for targeted market opportunities.

Chinese companies report robust and resilient profitability

Over three-quarters (77%) of Chinese firms reported profitable or breakeven business in Canada

Chinese firms operating in or with Canada posted strong profitability in 2024, with most profitable and no losses reported amid bilateral headwinds. Relative to pre-COVID years, many saw gains alongside rising Canadian demand for their offerings since 2018, signaling enhanced market access and adaptability.

Canadian companies face shifting obstacles while responding to new challenges to doing business with China

In a change from 2023, U.S.-China relations overtook Canada-China relations as the top obstacle for Canadian business with China

While three-quarters of Canadian businesses operating in or with China continue to grapple with prominent hurdles including tariffs, regulations, U.S.-China geopolitical tensions, and dual export controls, 40% also expect the regulatory environment in China itself to improve for business.

Chinese companies face lingering political and regulatory obstacles to doing business with Canada

Politicization of the bilateral business environment remains the top-rated concern of Chinese firms in Canada

Three-quarters of Chinese firms doing business in or with Canada highlighted the persistent challenge of business politicization alongside greater recognition of Investment Canada Act restrictions, as well as costlier and more scarce flight availability between the two countries.

China's role in Canadian companies' global strategic plan increases

Agri-food and Agribusiness made up the most of Canadian firms listing with China among their top global priorities

China holds a prominent place in the global strategic plans of Canadian companies, ranking among the top five priorities for over half of respondents and as the foremost priority for more than a third. Key sectors driving this emphasis include Agri-food and Agribusiness, Educational services, Natural resources, Professional, scientific and technical services and Wholesale trade.

Compared to two years ago, over a third of Canadian companies now accord China a higher strategic priority in contrast with previous pessimism. These evolving priorities signal a partial stabilization and renewed focus on conducting business with China despite geopolitical challenges.

Renewed Canada–China bilateral engagement welcomed

The overwhelming majority of Canadian (82%) and Chinese (90%) firms believe the Carney government's approach to China will have a positive business impact

In 2025, the survey introduced a question on the anticipated impact of the Government of Canada's recalibrated approach to China. Both Canadian and Chinese companies viewed this renewed engagement positively, anticipating benefits for their business outlook over the next 12 months.

Survey Respondent Breakdown

CCBC's 2025-2026 survey engaged businesses across a wide sample of industries, including 53 Canadian companies and 23 Chinese firms. Agri-food and agribusiness were the most represented sectors amongst Canadian firms, followed closely by those concentrated in educational and professional services, transportation, as well as finance and insurance.

Canadian companies generating over 1 billion CAD globally in annual gross revenue represented nearly a quarter of respondents, with over a third conducting business with China for more than two decades. Of Chinese firms surveyed, over a quarter that disclosed annual gross revenue also generated more than 1 billion CAD globally, with finance and insurance, as well as agri-food and agribusiness, most represented. Seen together, this survey's respondents are a key barometer of Canada-China business with established and diverse market experience.

N represented the number of respondents.

Figure 1: Canadian companies – Sectoral distribution

Which one of the following best reflects your company's sector?

N = 53

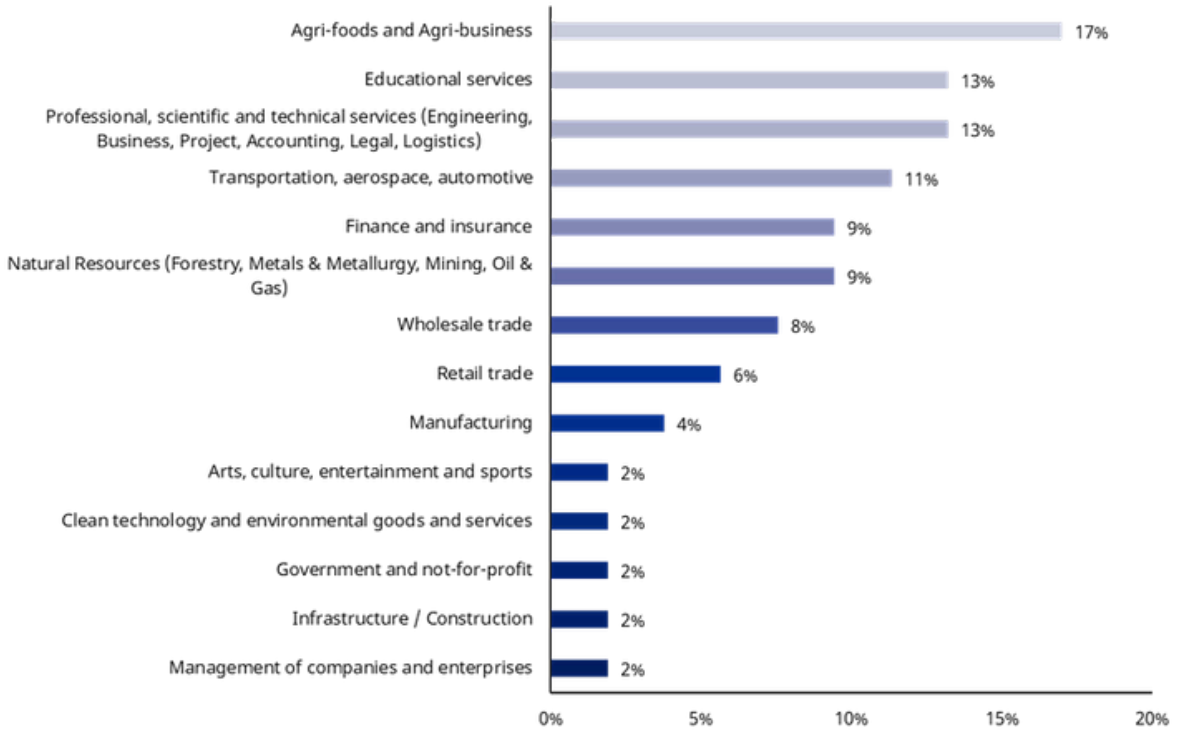
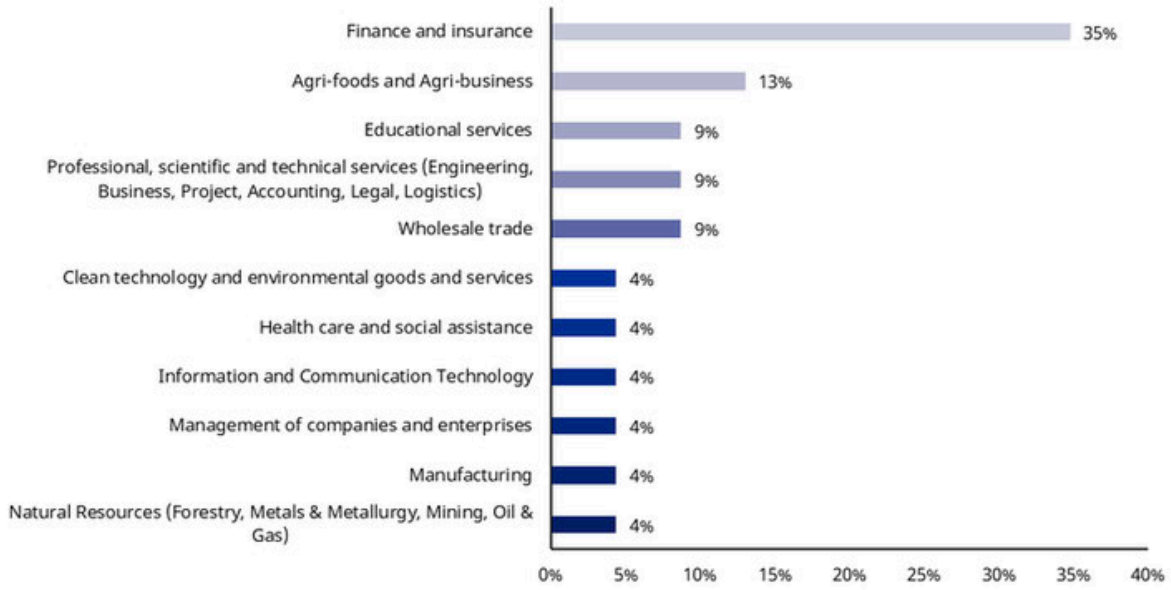


Figure 2: Chinese companies – Sectoral distribution

Which one of the following best reflects your company's sector?

N = 23



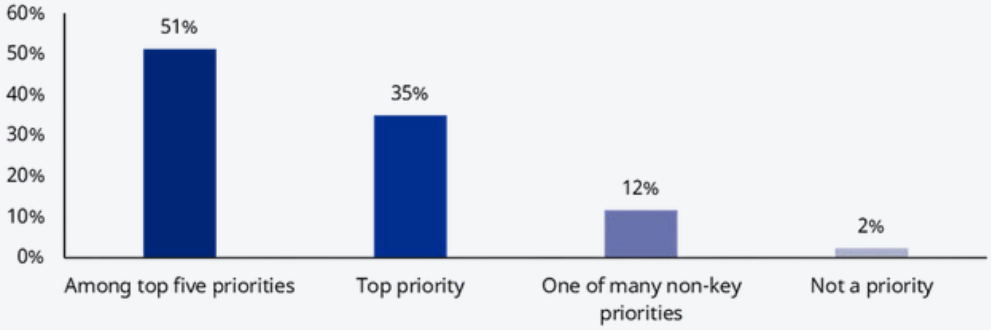
A Shared Top Priority

China remains an overwhelming priority for Canadian businesses surveyed, with over one-third identifying it as a top priority and over half identifying it among their top five priorities in their global strategy. In doing so, most Canadian firms did not change in this outlook between 2025 and 2023, with nearly a third elevating the Chinese market as an even higher priority over this period.

Chinese businesses engaged with Canada maintained it as a top priority, with over two-thirds identifying it as a top five or number one global priority. As geopolitical headwinds continue to present new pressures on multinational businesses, Canadian and Chinese firms appear to endure in their market commitments.

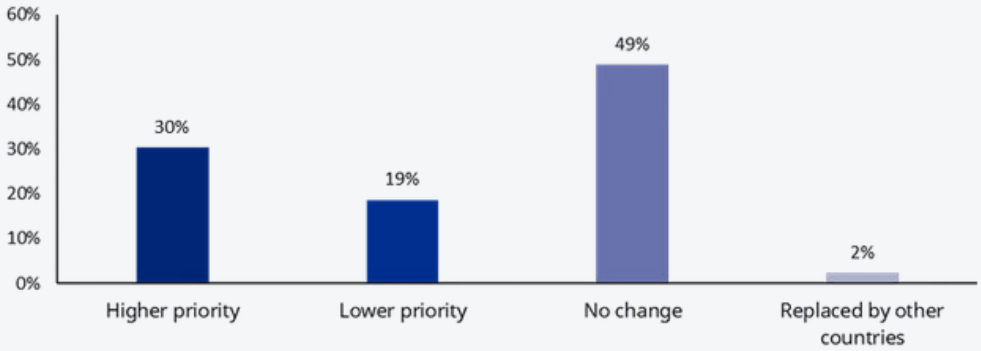
What role does China play in your company's global strategic plan?

Figure 3: Canadian companies — China's role in the company's global strategic plan



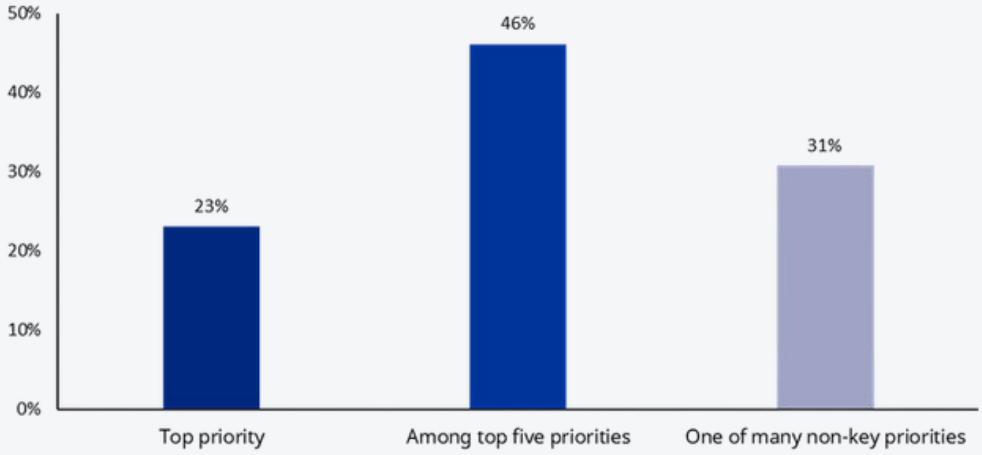
In your company's global plan today versus two years ago, how has China's role changed?

Figure 4: Canadian companies — China's role in the company's global plan today versus two years ago



What role does Canada play in your company's global strategic plan?

Figure 5: Chinese companies — Canada's role in the company's global strategic plan



Renewed Growth Momentum

Canadian and Chinese companies both expressed optimism in the medium-term outlook for their businesses, with **68%** of Canadian firms and **92%** of Chinese firms committing to expanding market operations. Optimism dominated sentiment across all respondents, particularly Canadian businesses in agri-food and agribusiness, education, and professional services.

Just over half of Canadian firms viewed their future in the Chinese market positively, relative to **40%** who expressed neutrality. Asked to project the outlook for business in the aftermath of the Canadian election, over half of Chinese firms foresaw improvement in their prospects in Canada. In this context, businesses on both sides of the Pacific appear to have greater confidence in investing for the medium-term.

Figure 6: Canadian companies — Plans for expanding/contracting business in/with China in the next five years

Is your company planning to expand or contract its business in/with China in the next five years?

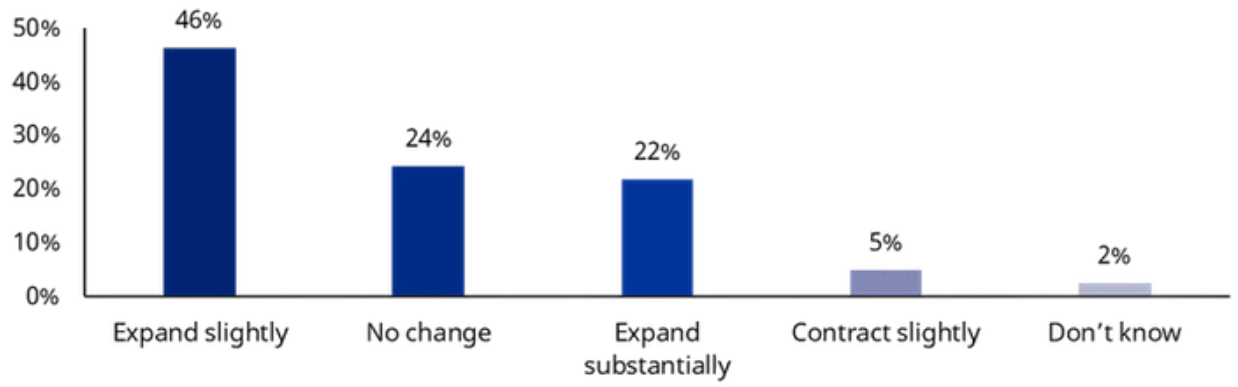
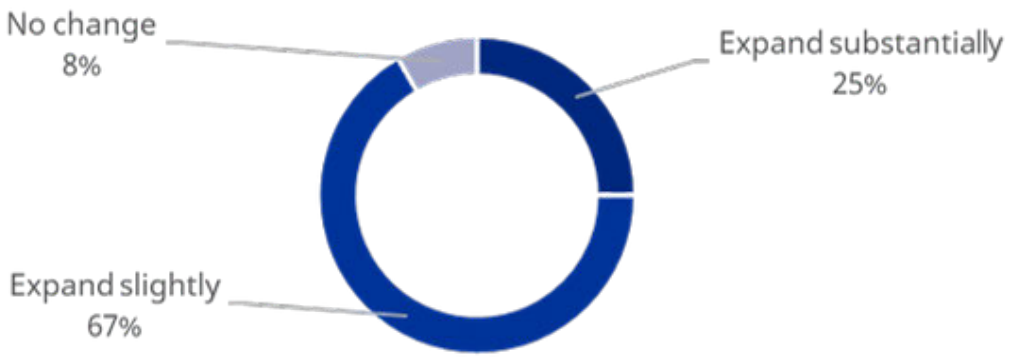


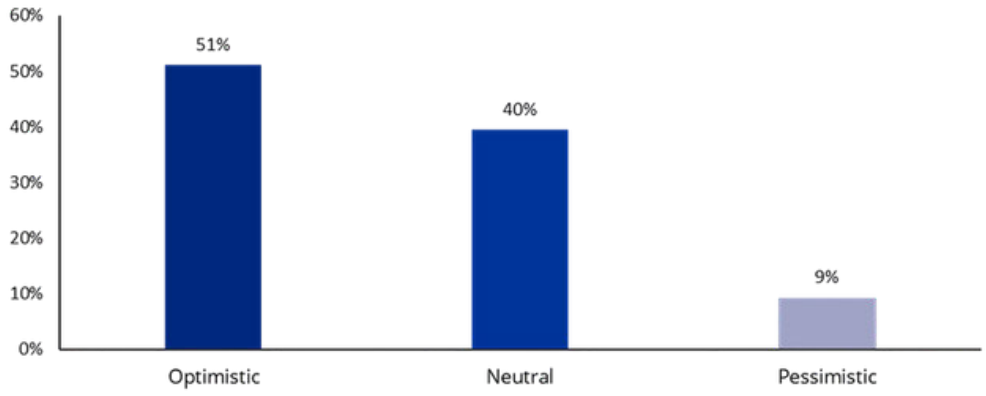
Figure 7: Chinese companies — Chinese company growth plans in Canada over the next five years

What are your company's growth plans in Canada over the next five years?



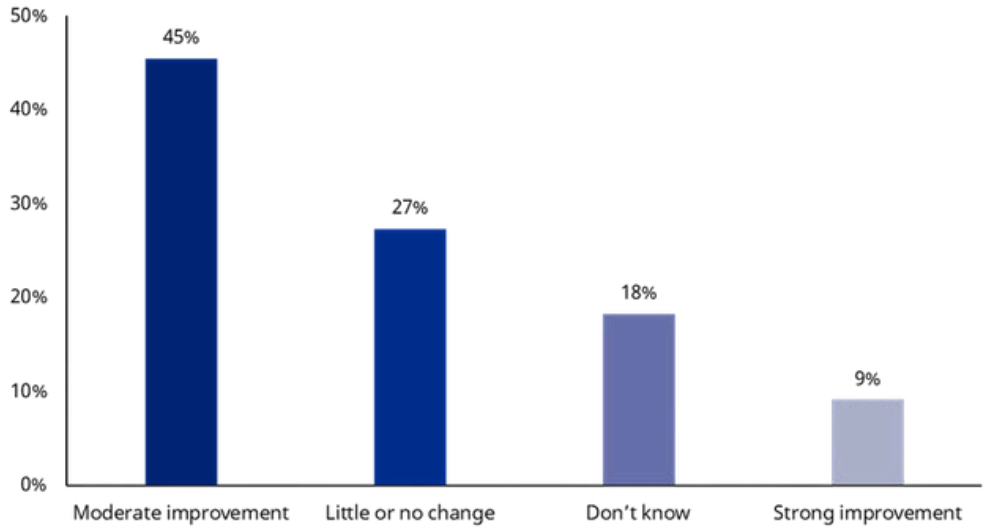
In the context of the current geopolitical/ economic situation, how do you feel about the future of your organization's business with China?

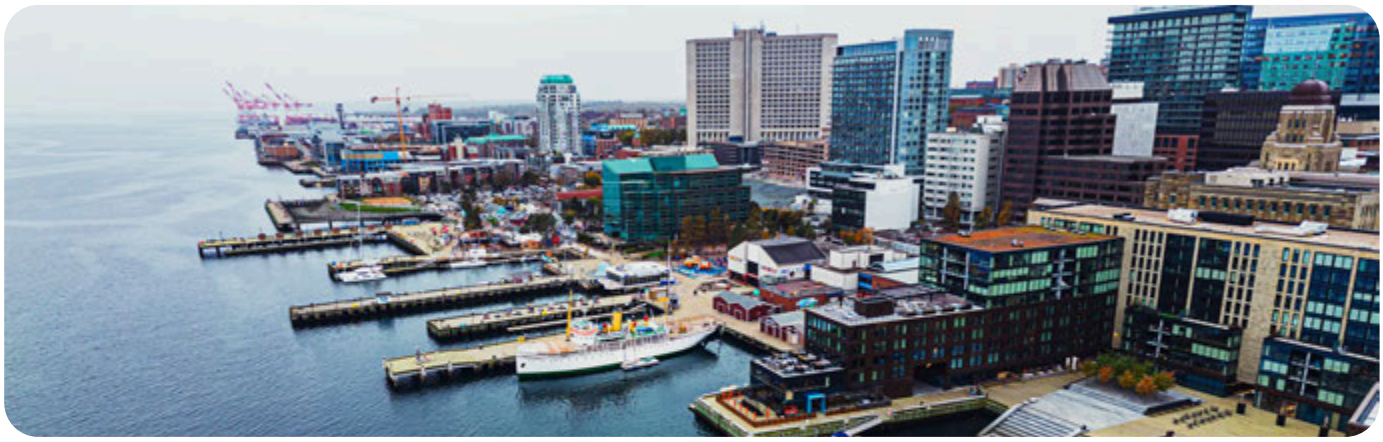
Figure 8: Canadian companies — Future of the organization's business with China



What kind of change do you anticipate in your company's business prospects in Canada over the next 12 months due to ongoing geopolitical and economic developments?

Figure 9: Chinese companies — Type of change in the company's business prospects in Canada





Optimism Weathers Changing Business Challenges

As Canadian and Chinese companies have maintained their optimism, including the resilience of the Canadian brand in the Chinese market, they have done so while managing structural shifts in barriers to business.

Between 2023 and 2025, U.S.-China relations strikingly represented the only top obstacle to an increase in resonance, growing as a concern by **10%** and surpassing the Canada-China relationship itself. Meanwhile, predictability for Canadian companies in China has improved, with Chinese laws and regulations dropping as a top concern by over **21%**, which may reflect increasing legal certainty.

As the Carney government has taken office, **82%** of Canadian firms viewed the impact on business positively. Chinese companies maintained concerns with foreign investment restrictions and difficulties they encounter with the review processes under the Investment Canada Act, but politicization and public opinion have softened as challenges to their business, giving way to frictions over flight cost and availability that may reflect the room left to recover to pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 10: Canadian companies — “Canadian company” branding impact on business development in China

What role, if any, does the branding of being a "Canadian company" play in your business development in China?

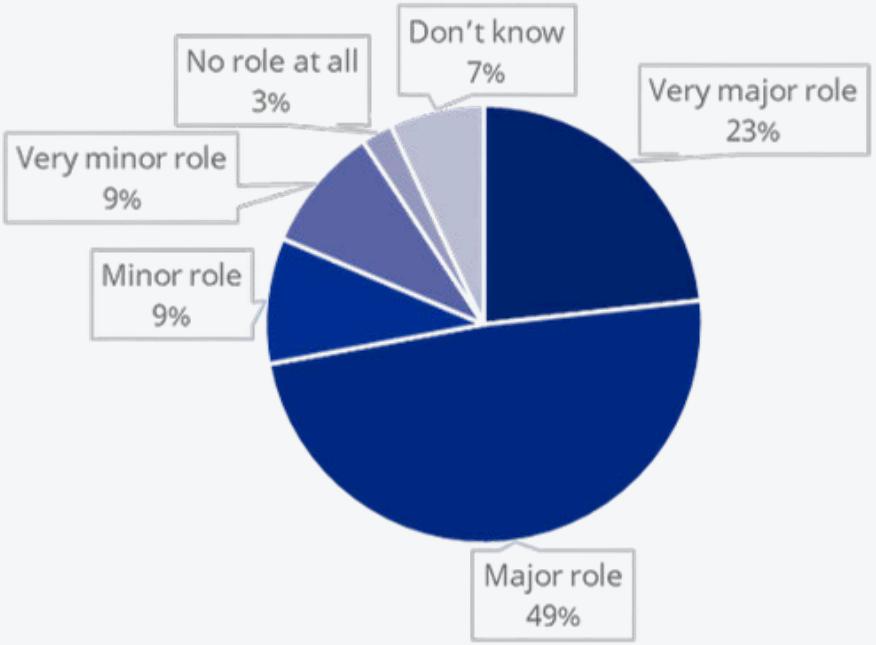


Figure 11: Canadian companies — Government of Canada’s recalibrated approach to China

The Government of Canada, under Prime Minister Carney, has signaled a recalibration of Canada’s approach to China and resumed bilateral economic dialogues (JETC) after a seven-year pause. How do you anticipate this renewed engagement in bilateral relations will affect your company’s business outlook in the Chinese market over the next 12 months?

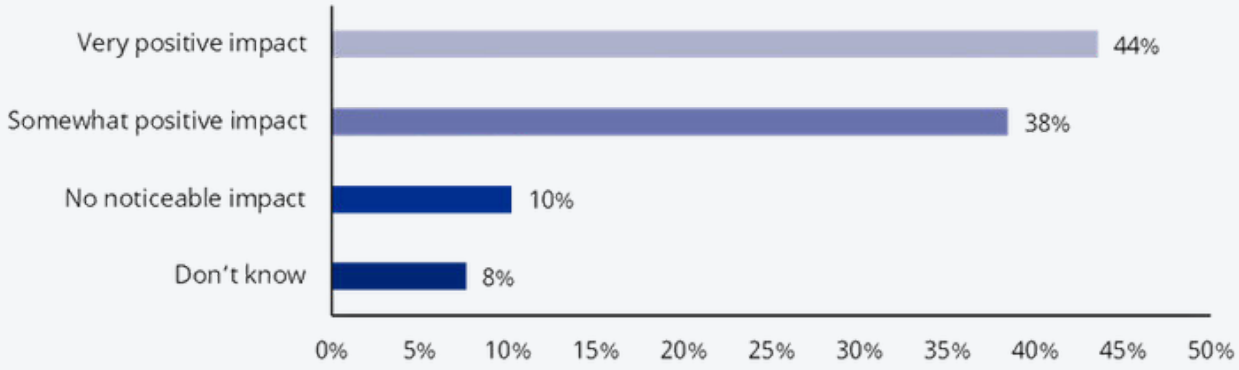


Table 1: Canadian companies — Top obstacles in doing business in/with China

Tell us about your obstacles to doing business in/with China. Please rate each on a 5-point scale where 1 means only a minor barrier and 5 means a major barrier.

Key	
Policy	
Regulatory/Administrative	
Business Environment	

Obstacle	2021	2023	2025	Change
Relations between China and U.S.	2	3	**1**	▲
Relations between Canada and China	1	1	**2**	▼
Competition level	4	4	**3**	▲
Geopolitical risk	New	2	**4**	▼
Visa processing for Chinese visitors to Canada	9	9	**5**	▲
Non-tariff barriers to trade	17	28	**6**	▲
Regulations and laws in China interpreted inconsistently/lack of transparency	6	5	**7**	▼
Business culture differences	14	26	**8**	▲
Research collaboration restrictions	32	29	**9**	▲
Business licenses, approvals to expand operations, certifications, product approvals – challenging to obtain	7	8	**10**	▼
Customs procedures in China	12	18	**11**	▲
Marketing to Chinese consumer preferences/adaptation of products to Chinese market needs	36	32	**12**	▲
Operational costs increases for your company in China	21	13	**13**	-
Internet access quality and/or censorship	13	6	**14**	▼
Market access limitations due to national security concerns	15	17	**15**	▲

Table 2: Canadian companies — Top five obstacles in doing business in/with China for 2023/2025, change in relative weighted average

Change in Top Challenges' Relative Weighted Average:

Obstacle	2023	2025	Change
Relations between China and U.S.	3.34	**3.68**	10.18%
Relations between Canada and China	3.71	**3.47**	-6.47%
Competition level	3.2	**3.18**	-0.63%
Geopolitical risk	3.65	**3.18**	-12.88%
Visa processing for Chinese visitors to Canada	2.74	**2.65**	-3.28%
Regulations and laws in China interpreted inconsistently/lack of transparency	2.96	**2.32**	-21.62%

Table 3: Chinese companies — Top obstacles to doing business in Canada

Tell us about your obstacles to doing business in/with Canada. Please rate each on a 5-point scale where 1 means only a minor barrier and 5 means a major barrier.

Obstacle	2021	2023	2025	Change
Politicization of the Canada-China business environment	2	3	**1**	▲
Foreign investment restrictions in Canada/Investment Canada Act	3	8	**2**	▲
Flight cost between Canada and China	New	10	**3**	▲
Labour regulations	9	21	**4**	▲
Flight availability and/or travel time between Canada and China	New	7	**5**	▲
Policies/regulations of Canadian government	11	2	**6**	▼
Business licenses, approvals to expand operations, certifications, product approvals – challenging to obtain	17	4	**7**	▼
Difficulty finding the right Canadian partner with goals aligned to mine	5	16	**8**	▲
Canadian public opinion on China	4	1	**9**	▼
Discrimination against Chinese companies in Canada	16	6	**10**	▼
Complexity of tax regulations	15	14	**11**	▲
Marketing to Canadian consumer preferences / adaptation of products to Canadian market needs	19	19	**12**	▲
Visa processing for Chinese visitors to Canada	12	5	**13**	▼
Costs for your company's operations in Canada	10	13	**14**	▼
Financing availability	6	17	**15**	▲

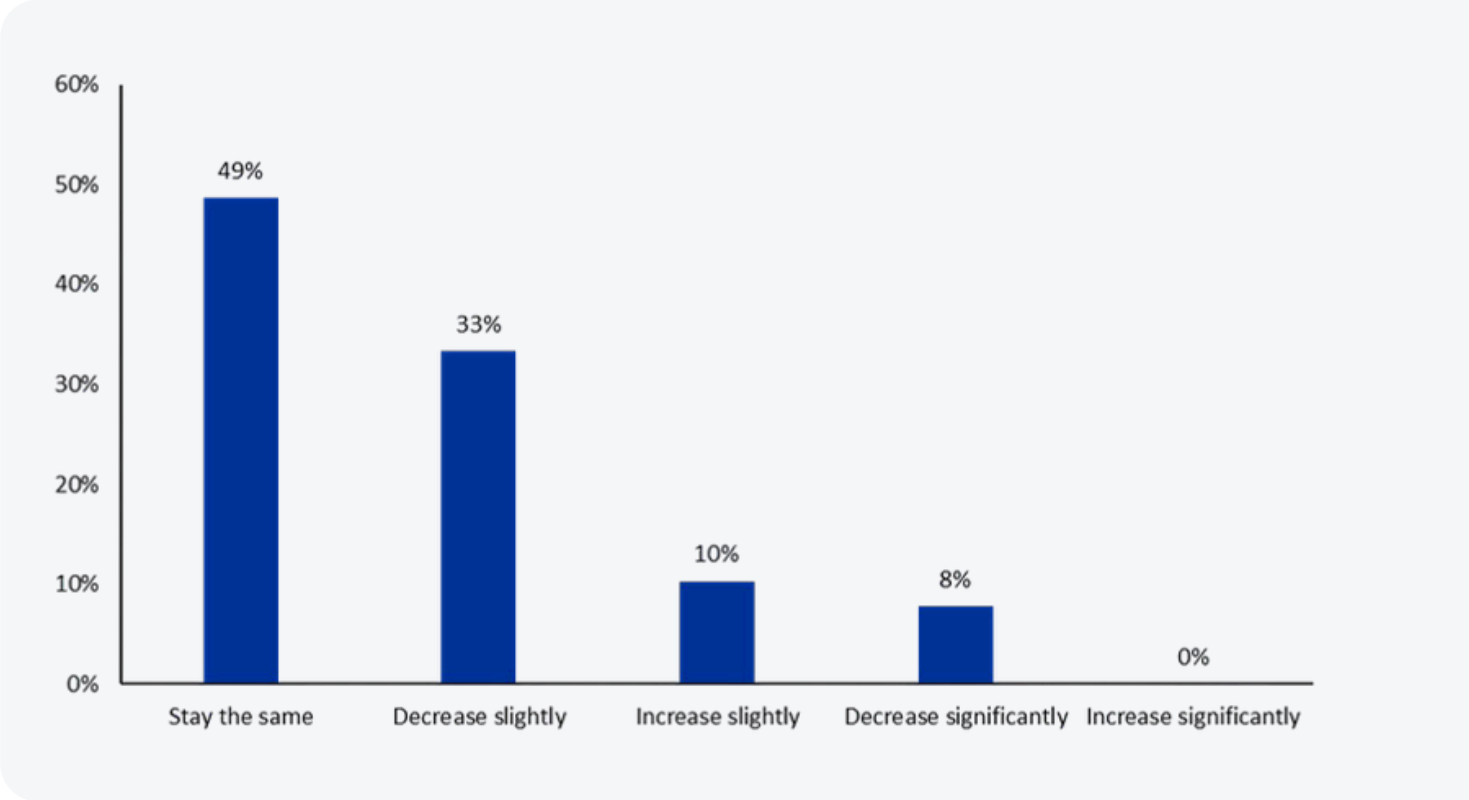
Table 4: Chinese companies — Top five obstacles in doing business in/with China for 2023/2025, change in relative weighted average

Change in Top Challenges' Relative Weighted Average:

Obstacle	2023	2025	Change
Politicization of the Canada-China business environment	3.36	**2.83**	-15.77%
Foreign investment restrictions in Canada/Investment Canada Act	2.73	**2.73**	-
Flight cost between Canada and China	2.64	**2.67**	1.14%
Labour regulations	1.73	**2.67**	54.34%
Flight availability and/or travel time between Canada and China	2.73	**2.58**	-5.49%
Canadian public opinion on China	3.64	**2.43**	-33.24%
Policies/regulations of Canadian government	3.36	**2.55**	-24.11%
Business licenses, approvals to expand operations, certifications, product approvals – challenging to obtain	3	**2.53**	-15.67%
Visa processing for Chinese visitors to Canada	1.73	**2.33**	34.68%

Figure 12: Canadian companies — Forecast of number of regulatory obstacles in Mainland China over the next five years

How do you expect the number of regulatory obstacles facing your company in Mainland China to change over the next five years?



Methodology

Survey design

The survey was designed by researchers at the Rotman Institute for International Business to include the most relevant issues and areas of business for Canadian companies conducting business in or with China, as well as for Chinese companies operating in Canada.

To examine trends and understand the evolution of perceptions and business strategy, the survey includes several of the same questions as previous CCBC surveys. These addressed profitability, expansion into China, sourcing products and services from China, as well as obstacles encountered by Canadian companies doing business in/with China and Chinese companies conducting business in/with Canada.

In 2025, a set of new questions was introduced to capture emerging policy and market developments relevant to both Canadian and Chinese companies. These particularly addressed the effects of tariffs, regulatory changes or market access restrictions introduced since 2024, as well as the effect of the Government of Canada's recalibrated approach to China on their business outlook.

Data collection

The Canada China Business Council disseminated the survey from October 2025 to January 2026 through its membership and contacts, as well as numerous other channels. It was open to all in the Canada-China business community, regardless of CCBC membership status.

Upon completion of the data collection process by CCBC, the analysis was conducted independently by the research team at the Rotman Institute for International Business under the supervision of Professor Walid Hejazi.

About the Canada China Business Council

The Canada China Business Council (CCBC) is a non-profit, non-partisan, membership-based organization established in 1978 to promote and facilitate trade, investment, and commercial engagement between Canada and China.

With seven chapters across Canada and China, CCBC operates as a truly bilateral organization. It provides market insights, trusted networks, and practical, on-the-ground support to companies and organizations active in, or exploring opportunities within, the Canada–China commercial relationship.

Today, CCBC represents over 300 member companies, including large corporations, mid-sized enterprises, innovative small businesses, and leading institutions across key sectors such as agri-food, energy and natural resources, manufacturing, consumer goods, health and wellness, financial services, technology, infrastructure, education, and professional services, among others.

CCBC supports its members by helping them navigate complex operating environments, stay informed on regulatory and market developments, and build effective relationships with partners, policymakers, and stakeholders in both countries.

Beyond its member services, CCBC has, for nearly five decades, served as the leading voice of the Canadian business community in Canada and China on issues affecting bilateral trade and investment. The Council supports constructive dialogue with governments and public and private sector stakeholders to advance stable, pragmatic, and mutually beneficial economic relations.

Through its chapters, events, research, and engagement initiatives, CCBC plays a central role in fostering informed, practical, and forward-looking economic cooperation between Canada and China.

For further information, please visit: www.ccbc.com.

Our Mission:

At the Canada China Business Council (CCBC), our mission is to create more and better business between Canada and China by identifying obstacles and pursuing strategies to reduce their impact.

Acknowledgment:

The 2025-2026 Canada China Business Survey is a collaborative project conducted by the Rotman Institute for International Business at the University of Toronto for the Canada China Business Council.

Authors:

Dr. Walid Hejazi: Professor, Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto
Daniela Stratulativ: Senior Advisor – International Trade and Foreign Direct Investment
Bijan Ahmadi: Executive Director & Chief Operating Officer, Canada China Business Council

The full and extended version of the report is available exclusively to CCBC members. Please contact your regional CCBC Chapter Director to request access.

- **Atlantic Provinces & Quebec: Claire Zhang** (claire@ccbc.com)
- **Ontario & Manitoba: Jeff Zhang** (jeff@ccbc.com)
- **Prairies and British Columbia: Lotta Ygartua** (lotta@ccbc.com)
- **Beijing: David Perez-Des Rosiers** (perez.dr@ccbc.com)
- **Shanghai: Edward Dai** (edward@ccbc.com)

For media inquiries, please contact Jacky Yu (communications@ccbc.com)**.**

CCBC thanks its survey sponsors, **ACDEG International Inc.** & **Bennett Jones**.

ACDEG

Bennett Jones