Aviva Canada Risk Insights Report

Analyzing the risk facing Canadian businesses



Welcome to Aviva Canada Risk Insights

The Aviva Canada Risk Insights Report is an in-depth look at the current state of risk through the eyes of business owners and decision-makers. It's the first Canadian report of its kind and the beginning of an annual series that expands on our commitment to help businesses make sense of the unique risks they collectively face, better manage those risks and prepare for the future.

This report isn't anecdotal, it's the unique perspectives and attitudes of key decision-makers and business leaders within the insurance community.

The data contained draws from online interviews and survey responses from around 1,500 business leaders representing a range of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and Canadian-headquartered multinational corporations. Businesses have been divided into five categories spanning micro and small, with annual revenues below \$2.5 million, to large, with annual revenue over \$250 million. These participants were selected from the wider Canadian business population without bias to any existing relationship with Aviva Canada. This research provides a comprehensive source of intelligence on the risks Canadian businesses face, their level of preparedness, and their approach to risk management (i.e. the methods they're using to manage and mitigate those risks.) Additionally, this report applies expertise, context and insight from subject matter experts at Aviva Canada to support and enhance the survey findings.



Background and methodology

This research was carried out in partnership with the LogitGroup in September 2021 through an online survey of nearly 1,500 business owners, executive-level managers and key decision-makers across a variety of sectors. The majority of businesses surveyed have been in operation for five years or more. Our goal was to better understand a broad array of views including business risks, regulatory concerns and other challenges from the ongoing pandemic.

Throughout this report, business sizes are reported in five distinct categories based on their annual revenue stream:

- **Micro Small** businesses with annual revenues under \$2.5 million.
- **Small** businesses with annual revenues in the \$2.5 million to \$5 million range.
- **Core/Med** businesses with annual revenues in the \$5 million to \$10 million range.
- **Mid-Market** businesses with annual revenues in the \$10 million to \$250 million range.
- Large businesses with annual revenues greater than \$250 million.

Methodology

We spoke to business leaders across a wide variety of industries and regions to get a full picture of the threats and opportunities to Canadian businesses.





"Canadian businesses have proven adaptable in the face of a global public health crisis. At Aviva, we're confident we can help businesses mitigate the risks ahead, whatever they may be. Our purpose is to be with you today, for a better tomorrow."

Foreword from Jason Storah

We live in an unpredictable, fast moving and increasingly risky world. Our report highlights that reality. We can't predict risk or remove it all together, it's a fact of business life. As unforeseen as COVID-19-related risks were over the past two years, Canadian businesses already face new geo-political and inflationary risks that will impact everyone in 2022. We believe that gathering data is the first step to understanding the risks around us and helping Canadian businesses to become more resilient. We need to be able to see beyond the next curve in the road and identify future risks before they're already upon us - because we know they're coming. Clarity is critical; it informs the steps we take to prevent those risks from occurring and helps us manage the consequences of unexpected interruptions and unpleasant events.

The Aviva Canada Risk Insights Report helps in providing that clarity. In it, we reflect on the current state of risk from the perspective of the Canadian businesses living through it. We've collected insight on the top risks they're facing – public health events like COVID-19, cyber security and cyber events, the health and mental wellbeing of employees, skilled workforce shortages and business interruptions including supply chain. We've looked at how businesses are meeting these challenges head-on.

This report is a blueprint for resilience.

Canadian businesses have proven adaptable in the face of a global pandemic and at Aviva, we're confident we can help businesses mitigate the risks ahead, whatever they may be. Our purpose is to be with you today, for a better tomorrow.

Jason Storah

Chief Executive Officer, Aviva Canada

Contents

Changes to the risk landscape
5 biggest risks
1. Public health events
2. Cyber security and cyber events14
3. The health and mental wellbeing of employees16
4. Shortage of skilled workforce
5. Business interruption
The future of risk
Conclusion



Changes to the risk landscape

<mark>66</mark> -

"COVID-19 has helped shine a spotlight on risks related to cyber, employee and customer health and wellbeing, labour availability and complex supply chains with increased global dependencies. Businesses have been stress tested like never before – and sadly, many have failed. The ones that have adapted are emerging more resilient, more agile, more confident and with a deeper knowledge of how to assess and manage their risks effectively."

Maz Bown

Chief Risk Officer, Aviva Canada



Changes to the risk landscape

COVID-19 has changed the way Canadian businesses view risk. It's amplified cyber security threats and raised the profile of employee and customer health and wellbeing. It's impacted labour availability and highlighted the vulnerabilities of supply chains. Amidst the changing risk environment, the businesses we've spoken with have responded by focusing on the fundamentals. One-third (35%) of those surveyed place business growth as their number one priority and around a quarter (24%) put customer retention at the top of their list.





We've identified a secondary tier of priorities emerging - activities that may not necessarily be the top focus but are supporting that core mission of growth. At least onein-five (20%) businesses surveyed are devoting resources to financial management, investment in technology and IT, sustainability, marketing and cyber security. It's a part of that wider adaption to disruption. However, our data shows a surprising trend surrounding risk management activities: despite the effects of COVID-19, only 17% of those surveyed currently place risk management as a focus. It's a sentiment that varies across business sizes.

Different size, different approach

Large companies have different priorities than smaller companies (less than \$2.5 million in annual revenue) perhaps because the latter have proven less resilient to the pandemic and are responding more slowly.

For corporations (over \$250 million in annual revenue), the rapidly evolving digital future is holding their attention. Nearly a guarter (24%) say they plan on funneling resources into big data and analytics. While 29% are focused on technological investment, they're also making employee retention, diversity and inclusion a priority.

Smaller companies still reeling from the effects of COVID-19 say they're more concerned with staying in business, with over half placing most of their focus on business growth and customer retention, with many not consistently undertaking any risk management activities.

What are the barriers?

It's not entirely a question of prioritization - there are other factors at play. When asked what was preventing their business from implementing sound risk prevention protocols, nearly four out of ten (37%) say they feel they lack expertise and are not sure where to get started. A similar amount (36%) says they lack the budget to invest in risk management or the understanding and awareness of risks to their business. A third say regulatory restrictions or lack of buy-in from senior leadership is holding them back. Only 7% feel nothing is preventing them from developing a more sound risk prevention plan.

It can't be overstated while businesses have to continually weigh priorities and be considerate about how they're allocating resources, every business, no matter its size or complexity, can benefit from an up-todate business continuity plan (BCP). A majority of the businesses we spoke with say they recognize that and are actively updating their plan. A BCP helps businesses understand specific risks they're facing and gives them a framework for responding effectively. In moments of serious incidents, like a fire, a BCP can be the difference between disaster and survival.

"Only 17% of businesses would currently place risk management as a key business priority"



Building a support network

Amidst turbulent times, businesses need a partner to help navigate the risks they're facing. For a third of those surveyed, insurance businesses have been that key advisor followed by health and safety executives. Beyond that, our research shows businesses are looking to industry peers, third-party consultants, business organizations (like Chambers of Commerce), and the Federal government.

The survey results showed mid-sized companies in the medium and middle-market groups (\$5 million to \$250 million) are more likely to have relied on health and safety executives, industry peers and third-party consultants. Larger, corporate businesses tend to have more of this type of expertise in-house and are more likely to look for advice and support from both the Federal and Provincial governments.

As businesses adjust to the changing risk landscape, that support network will be a critical part of understanding and managing risk. However, the most critical piece of the equation will be to identify the risks ahead.



5 biggest risks

We asked business leaders what major risks they believe their business is particularly exposed to.

Public health events – particularly COVID-19 – seem to have shifted focus away from more traditional risks like storms, flooding, hail and fire/explosions. It's also helped to amplify the four other top risks: cyber security, health and mental wellbeing of employees, concern around the shortage of skilled workers and business interruption. It's shown the interconnectedness of certain types of threats.

Public health events

- 2 Cyber security and cyber events
- **3** The health and mental wellbeing of employees
- **2.** Shortage of skilled workforce
- **5** Business interruption



1. Public health events



The COVID-19 pandemic has marked a defining moment for many Canadian businesses. Domestically, efforts to contain the virus through lockdowns of non-essential businesses have caused the largest disruption in recent history. For some businesses, the effects of the pandemic made survival impossible. According to our research, COVID-19 forced the closure of one in three businesses in the last 18 months, while a similar number have been impacted by government and regulatory restrictions. With that in mind, it's not surprising that a third of those surveyed (32%) ranked public health events as the single biggest risk they're facing.

From the survey responses, it was clear that the impact of COVID-19 varies wildly depending on the size of the business and the industry category. One of the undeniable trends defining the past 2 years is the acceleration of technological adoption to cope with current and future public health risks. The pandemic didn't create the demand for technology, but it served as the ultimate case study for its importance.



Gauging the impact of COVID-19

While businesses have had nearly two years to adjust to the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic, there's still some division when it comes to its impact. According to our research, 45% feel COVID-19 will have a negative long-term impact on their businesses while 47% say that impact will be positive. Just 8% say the pandemic will have no impact on their business. Smaller businesses are most likely to rank the impact as negative. Businesses that have been positively impacted say they've undertaken more risk mitigation efforts overall, turned to a higher number of sources for support and are more likely to look to other business organizations (e.g. Chamber of Commerce) for advice. They're also looking to innovate.



Impact of COVID-19 on the use of technology

A technological leap

Before COVID-19, the impetus to adopt technology was on businesses. While many had invested in some sort of technological infrastructure, there was no real sense of urgency. COVID-19 changed that. The absence of faceto-face interactions and disrupted supply chains forced many businesses to reassess technology's role in their day-to-day operations. Over half of the business leaders we spoke with have increased their digital footprint as a result of COVID-19 to protect against future disruptions and ensure customers have access to their products and services. Further to that, 46% say they've increased investments in innovation or undertaken supply chain reviews. The remaining focus has been on increasing automation and workforce training. Overall, 71% of businesses are looking to use technology to increase online sales and marketing, and 66% are planning to use more online systems and software (e.g. finance, HR).

Our research also identified how different-sized businesses are using technology as a result of COVID-19. Medium-sized businesses say they've increased emphasis on digital assets across the board while large corporate businesses are more likely to have already implemented supply chain reviews to limit business interruption. Just under half (41%) of micro small businesses say they haven't changed the way they use technology as a result of COVID-19, a factor that could come into play during recovery as they compete with their digitally accelerated counterparts. Consumers are increasingly demanding faster responses, more value, and better services, with an accelerated focus on on-demand capabilities. This could be a future sticking point for some SMEs.



66

"Very few businesses, regardless of size, have had to contend with an event that comes close to COVID-19. Yet so many of those businesses have persevered, investing in technology and drawing from their support network to find a way out of this pandemic-fueled mess together. The key going forward will be capitalizing on the changes that came out of COVID and making sure businesses have the infrastructure to compete in the new market."

Fred Shurbaji

Managing Director, Small Medium Enterprise, Aviva Canada

A defining disruption

Our research also shows medium-sized businesses (\$5 million to \$250 million in annual revenue) were hit hardest by COVID-19 from an operations standpoint. A third of those in this category say they've been unable to conduct business or completely shut down compared to just over a quarter (27%) of large businesses. However, as company size increases, regulatory and legal changes as a result of the pandemic are having more of an impact. The pandemic has also had a rippling effect with one in five businesses reporting it has experienced extortion, terrorism, or state-sponsored attacks as well as civil commotion as a result of COVID-19. These incidents highlight the sweeping impact public health events can have. If there's a silver lining to COVID-19, it's that businesses are emerging from it more digitally innovative and with an idea of what to expect from future public health events.

As COVID-19 rippled across the globe highlighting our interconnectivity something unexpected happened: competition between businesses took a back seat as companies united, working together to find solutions and weather the storm together.



2. Cyber security and cyber incidents

The pandemic has put public health events front and centre but the persistent threat to cyber security and cyber attacks remains top of mind. Nearly a third (30%) of business leaders we surveyed point to cyber threats as the biggest risk. The concern from business leaders is unsurprising as the rush to preserve business continuity amidst mass workfrom-home strategies left many businesses with lacklustre IT infrastructure in place. Many IT teams called the increase in remote work a "ticking time bomb" with 76% in a poll by HP saying they felt "cyber security had been forced to take a backseat to business continuity during the pandemic."1

A growing threat

Tools like cloud storage, email, online banking and digital supply chains have become integral for many businesses and give cyber criminals a variety of avenues to exploit.

Risk rating of cyber security based on industry

Any business, small or large, can be targeted – more than once - and the effects of an attack can be devastating. Four out of ten business leaders surveyed say they're concerned about the snowballing effects of cyber security breaches.

For corporations we spoke with, their biggest concern is that a cyber attack would not only impact business operations but also damage their relationship with their customers and tarnish their reputation. Close to half of corporate businesses feel that a cyber attack could expose them to a loss of data. Businesses in the large commercial category rank cyber security a higher risk (47%) than public health events (38%). Sector-wise, it's a greater concern for professional services, manufacturing, realty and retail compared to other industries.

¹ https://press.hp.com/content/dam/sites/garage-press/press/press-kits/2021/hpwolf- security-rebellions-and-rejections/hp-wolf-security-report-rr-final.pdf





ress logged < [if] ret:log.origir_set (278,56,34,#) if = frame ript src = { #wq, xk, #89_method }

Aviva Risk Insights Report

mard]#>>access:deria

porse?



Importance of creating a cyber security culture

Cyber criminals are getting more sophisticated and continually finding new ways to access information. Creating a culture of cyber security awareness – especially in cases where employees are using their own devices for work or working from home – and a clear process for protecting assets can help reduce human error or negligence while also educating employees on the new methods and threats hackers are using. The threats are ever evolving, keeping pace means ensuring cyber risk mitigation strategies are constantly reviewed and up-to-date.

"The pandemic has fueled an unprecedented adoption of technology and digital assets, making cyber security more important than ever. Responses to cyber incidents need to be timely and coordinated. They require experts for incident management, and specialists that can also help the business learn from the incident and proactively shore-up defenses.

All this takes top technical talent, something not all businesses have in-house. Cyber insurance is a vital part of a company's cyber security strategy. It ensures you have the resources to protect yourself if and when an incident occurs."

Zoey Todorovic

Chief Information Officer, Aviva Canada

3. The health and mental wellbeing of employees

There's no question the past 2 years have tested employee health and wellbeing. For many businesses, it was already becoming a key pillar but the pandemic completely changed the way we think about both physical and mental health, especially in the workplace. As essential workers continued to go into work with increased restrictions and employees moved from the social office environments into their homes, sometimes isolated for weeks and months during lockdowns, mental health suffered. The return to work is also creating no shortage of anxiety for Canadians.

Of the business leaders we spoke with, 29% say the health and wellbeing of employees is one of their biggest concerns. However, some sectors are more concerned than others. In the realty sector, a business where face-to-face meetings are a vital interaction, six out of ten businesses are concerned with employee and customer health and wellbeing. Around half of businesses surveyed in the retail and business and professional services industries say the same.



Concern for employee and customer health and wellbeing based on industry





Essential and strained

In the manufacturing sector, where many businesses were deemed essential and had employees in the workplace with amped-up health and safety protocols and regulations/changes implemented by the government as a result of COVID-19, close to half (45%) of businesses have seen an impact to employee mental health and wellbeing.

But it's not just essential workers feeling strained. Flexible working has been effective for many workplaces, helping weather the lockdown days of the pandemic but there are downsides to the pressures of working from home and the stress of being 'always-on.' This state lowers employee satisfaction which can impact wider business operations and the workforce. Over half (51%) of those in the business and professional services sector say employee and customer health and wellbeing is a key concern. As we move forward and businesses adapt to permanent remote workforces or hybrid working arrangements, engagement and connection between employees will require more attention and resources.

66 -

"Health and wellbeing are top of mind, especially with large organizations. For us, the pandemic has been an exercise in helping to balance all the pressures our people have experienced by encouraging them to look after themselves first and then focusing on work. We have applied three principles; Healthcare +, Trust People and Communicate, Communicate, Communicate. Employee wellbeing has been an outcome from our approach to the pandemic as well as specific things we have delivered. If there is one thing that has been clear in the past two years, it is that thinking you know what is coming next is much less effective than listening and adapting."

Danny Davies

Chief People Officer, Aviva Canada

4. Shortage of skilled workforce

The labour shortage has been hanging over industries, like the trades, in recent years but the pandemic has widened the gap, creating deficits in industries that haven't traditionally struggled to find employees. The hospitality industry is a prime example. During the pandemic, many were forced to make career changes when restaurants and travel-related businesses were shut down. According to Statistic Canada's second-quarter 2021 job vacancies report, vacancies increased to an all-time high in accommodation and food services reaching 89,000, a 14.9% rise from the second quarter of 2019 to the second quarter of 2021.¹ The tightening and subsequent easing of health restrictions have hit the industry hard. Of the businesses we've spoken to in this sector, 31% rate skilled labour shortages as a serious risk.

Construction is also facing labour shortages as demand balloons during the pandemic. Vacancies in this industry grew by 46.7% over the past two years. According to our survey, more than a third of construction businesses (36%) rate a shortage of skilled workers as a key risk.

¹ https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210921/dq210921a-eng.htm

66

"COVID-19 has exacerbated the skilled labour shortage and workforce dynamics don't point to this ending anytime soon. For almost all larger businesses, people are their competitive advantage; the inability to build the right team and skillset strips that away. It can hurt productivity, quality, safety and fulfilment and lead to the deterioration of a brand's reputation. Overcoming this challenge will require a balance of investing in the team's health and wellbeing, incentivizing talent and upskilling internally."

Urs Uhlmann

Managing Director, Global Corporate & Specialty, Aviva Canada





Larger business, larger challenge

Larger businesses are more likely to be concerned about the shortage of skilled workforce with a third of large corporations rating this a top concern versus just 16% of micro small businesses. The same groups that are worried about skilled worker shortages are also concerned about the health and mental wellbeing of their employees, clearly looking to retain and engage employees.

The skilled labour shortage may fall below the more pressing threats of public health events, cyber incidents and employee health and wellbeing, but there's interconnectivity. Fewer new immigrants during the pandemic have intensified labour shortages. For Canadian businesses, that means striking a balance between finding the right talent and upskilling internally to develop the skills necessary to adapt to an increasingly digital world and promote employee health and wellbeing.



Risk rating of shortage of skilled workforce according to business size

5. Business interruption



Any disruption to a business's operations can result in financial loss and impact its reputation, and our research reflects that. More than a quarter (27%) of businesses surveyed see business interruption, including supply chain disruptions, as a major threat going forward. Before the pandemic, the majority say they'd taken steps to mitigate business interruptions, like developing a business continuity plan (BCP), but more than half acknowledge it's time to make updates.

Best laid plans

There's a consensus among over half (58%) of the business leaders we spoke to that their BCP worked well during COVID-19, but will require some changes moving forward. A quarter of businesses say they will leave their current plan in place and don't feel the need to make changes. Around one in ten businesses (12%) say their BCP failed to pass the pandemic stress test and will require considerable revisions.

Sectors also had different responses to their BCP's effectiveness. Both the farming and realty sectors were the most likely to be happy with their current plan. For businesses in industries hit hardest by the pandemic (retail and business and professional services), nearly one in five surveyed feel their business continuity plan didn't work well and will need considerable revision.



Managing emerging risks

Our research shows a clear attempt by businesses to offset emerging risks with proactive measures. The mass movement across sectors to adopt and invest in digital innovation, supply chain monitoring and business automation helps serve to prepare and insulate businesses for some of the risks ahead. Just under half of Canadian companies have increased their digital footprint to secure their business and preserve continuity while ensuring customers have access to their products.

As businesses look to review supply chains, there is no shortage of emerging risks to consider with a BCP. Climate change and extreme weather events, like the record-breaking heatwave in B.C. in the summer of 2021, and the increasing intensity of wildfires and flooding are creating immediate risks to business operations and supply chains. The increase and overall severity of cyber attacks combined with a growing reliance on technology illustrate the importance of cyber business interruption coverage. It's about more than just being aware of the risks but also having a plan for the worst-case scenarios.

66 -

"The disruption caused by the Covid pandemic are enormous and longlasting. Supply chains have failed to adapt quickly and this has had a meaningful global economic cost. The pandemic forced the closure of one in three businesses in the last 18 months and is a stark reminder to prepare for the unknown and frequently reassess plans in order to withstand the risks of the future."

Colin Simpson

Chief Financial Officer, Aviva Canada



The Future of Risk

We're living through a period of acceleration – threats like public health events, cyber attacks and weather events caused by climate change have become more present, wide-sweeping and impactful. Canadian businesses are more aware of the risks and are taking action.

For the majority of businesses we surveyed, the focus on risk management activities will increase over the next five years, particularly those in the medium and middle market category. Regardless of size, commercial businesses see COVID-19 as a key challenge and they're reevaluating their insurance coverage. For corporations (over \$250 million in annual revenue) 72% will make changes to their coverage in the next year. However, one in five corporate businesses expects their risk management activities to remain unchanged and close to half (45%) of micro-businesses also have no plans to change their risk management tactics.

New world, new rules, new challenges

As the business environment has evolved over the past 2 years, regulators have responded with new laws surrounding the digital economy (e.g., digital taxation and privacy) alongside clarification surrounding how existing rules work within this new environment. According to our data. medium and middle-market businesses are the most likely to be very concerned about short-term regulatory challenges. Larger businesses remain divided with the level of concern they have around regulatory challenges and how it will all pan out.

Businesses will take out more insurance coverage to better protect themselves



"Our research shows Canadian businesses are learning from the past 2 years and planning for resilience. The majority of those we spoke with plan to increase their focus on risk management activities over the next five years. They recognize the importance of implementing proper risk protocols to help ensure the safety and longevity of the business. They see the threats both tangible and intangible and know it's time to be proactive."

Susan Penwarden

Chief Technical Underwriter, Aviva Canada



"2/3 businesses indicate they will increase their focus on risk management activities"



The overall attitude is that COVID-19 and cyber security will be key risks in the next 12 months but consumer protection also comes onto the radar as business size increases. Meanwhile, small and medium-sized enterprises say they're particularly concerned with mandatory insurance requirements.

As businesses look forward and brace for regulatory challenges, cyber threats and the lingering effects of public health, resilience will come from seeking to understand those risks and the unique impact they can have on a business.

Risk rating of cyber security based on company size



Conclusion



It's hard to imagine a period in living history with a greater impact on our perception of risk than the past 2 years. Canadian businesses struggled to keep their doors open amidst lockdowns and increased health and safety protocols. They lost countless furloughed employees to other sectors and watched their supply chains tested to the point of breaking.

And yet, despite the greatest disruption businesses have experienced in decades, they moved onwards. Businesses have been resilient because they've adapted and they're more aware of the risks surrounding them. They've reevaluated their BCPs and invested in the technology to grow. The insight in this report makes that clear.

COVID-19 has fundamentally challenged how businesses assess, manage and mitigate risk. However, they're meeting those challenges head-on and with clarity. At Aviva Canada, we strive to add to that clarity and help businesses prepare for the unknown. The report is part of that commitment.

Note to readers:

Tragically, 2022 has already demonstrated to us the unpredictability of risk in today's global environment. As unforeseen as the risk of a global pandemic was just two years ago, Canadian businesses already face new risks related to global security and inflation caused by the conflict in Ukraine. First and foremost, Aviva joins Canadian business leaders in supporting those affected by the crisis in Ukraine. Unfortunately, the conflict underscores that Canadian businesses operate in an unpredictable, fast moving and increasingly risky world.

Contact us

We hope this report has helped you understand and consider some of the risks to your business in 2022 and into the future. For more guidance on key risks, you can visit the Aviva Business blog, contact your insurance broker or speak with our in-house team of risk management experts.

Visit the Aviva Risk Management Solutions website at **aviva.ca/risksolutions**

Issued by Aviva Canada Inc.



About Aviva Canada

Aviva Canada is one of the leading property and casualty insurance groups in the country, providing home, automobile, lifestyle and business insurance to 2.4 million customers. A subsidiary of UK-based Aviva plc, Aviva Canada has more than 4,000 employees focused on creating a bright and sustainable future for our people, our customers, our communities and our planet. Launched in 2019, Aviva Canada is investing in safer communities through Aviva Take Back Our Roads, which uses data driven solutions and strategic collaborations to make safer roads a reality for all. In 2021, we announced our plan to become a net zero carbon emissions company by 2040, the most demanding target of any major insurance company in the world.



For more information, visit **aviva.ca**.