

view on  
integrating  
sustainable  
development  
in businesses



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# opening remarks

For several years, Evol has been partnering with Réseau Mentorat for the Indice entrepreneurial québécois (Quebec entrepreneurial index). This broad survey has become the benchmark for measuring entrepreneurship in Quebec. While the report published in early summer 2023 by Réseau Mentorat specifically addressed the culture of acquisitions, today we are releasing a new report from this special partnership.

The mission of Evol, which is dedicated to developing diversified, inclusive entrepreneurship in the 17 regions of Quebec, is to contribute directly to the creation, growth, and acquisition of businesses that want to have a positive impact in line with the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

With this objective in mind, we teamed up with Réseau Mentorat to survey Quebecers and business owners about their level of knowledge, motivations, obstacles, and actions related to sustainable development.

**By joining forces,  
we can develop  
an entrepreneurial  
culture that reflects  
the values of  
sustainable  
development  
in Quebec.**





With the United Nations adopting global goals in 2015 to protect the planet and create a peaceful world with sustainable prosperity by 2030, what are Quebec entrepreneurs contributing to these goals? The findings of this report are unequivocal: despite our good intentions, much remains to be done.

Given the importance of small businesses to our economy, we encourage you to consult the “View on Integrating Sustainable Development in Businesses” and discover myths to debunk about integrating sustainable development in small businesses in our special dossier “Small businesses, big impact.”

We would like to thank our government partners, the Ministère de l'Économie, de l'Innovation et de l'Énergie, and Canada Economic Development, who made the publication of this study possible. We would also like to thank everyone on the Evol and Réseau Mentorat teams, particularly Rina Marchand, for their invaluable cooperation.

**-Géraldine Martin**  
**CEO of Evol**

# methodology at a glance

## RESPONDENTS

Data in this report was collected as part of the Indice entrepreneurial québécois 2022 conducted by Réseau Mentorat with 18,658 Quebecers, 5,022 of whom completed the questionnaire. This broad survey is designated component A.

It is also the result of a major mobilization of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. To complete component B of the survey, many partners, including Evol, sent the questionnaire to their networks. As a result, 1,160 business owners from the Quebec entrepreneurial ecosystem were added to the list of respondents, making up what is designated component B.

To produce this report, four questions about sustainable development were jointly developed by Evol and Réseau Mentorat, including one inspired by the [BNQ 21000](#) standard and added to the index's initial survey.

**Surveys conducted  
from December 12, 2022  
to February 20, 2023**

**5 022**

questionnaire  
respondents  
(component A)

- including **797**  
business owners

**1160**

respondents  
from the Quebec  
entrepreneurial  
ecosystem  
(component B)

For a total of **1957**  
business owners completing  
the questionnaire

**Four questions addressed sustainable  
development to discover:**

- The level of familiarity of Quebec entrepreneurs about SDGs;
- When entrepreneurs integrated sustainable development to their business;
- The level of maturity of businesses have achieved in 13 factors and issues related to sustainable development;
- What is holding back entrepreneurs from integrating sustainable development efforts to their business;
- The main drivers for entrepreneurs operating with a view to sustainable development.

**Most analyses<sup>1</sup> in this report deal  
with component B and specifically  
business owners with 1 employee  
or more (n=833).**

# highlights

## 2 in 10

entrepreneurs from the Quebec entrepreneurial ecosystem are familiar with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

### 2 x

Almost twice as many women as men are very familiar with the SDGs.

### +

Youth, immigrants, and people with a university education are more familiar with the SDGs.

### -

Business owners with higher sales are less familiar with the SDGs.

## 1 in 3

entrepreneurs integrated sustainable development principles before creating their business.

### +

More women, immigrants, and youth integrated the principles before their activities.

### +

Businesses pay greater attention to themes related to human resources.

### -

Business owners are less active in managing resources and waste – particularly greenhouse gas emissions.

## 1 in 3

entrepreneurs have not yet integrated sustainable development to their business. Here is what is holding them back:

**The impression that it does not apply to their sphere of activity.**

**The fact that it is not currently a priority.**

**A lack of familiarity with and information about the subject.**



## 1 in 2

entrepreneurs want to act soon. Here is what is prompting them to act:

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**Management engagement and conviction.**

**Increased financial performance.**

**Pressures from global climate crises.**

how familiar are you  
with the UN's Sustainable  
Development Goals (SDGs)?



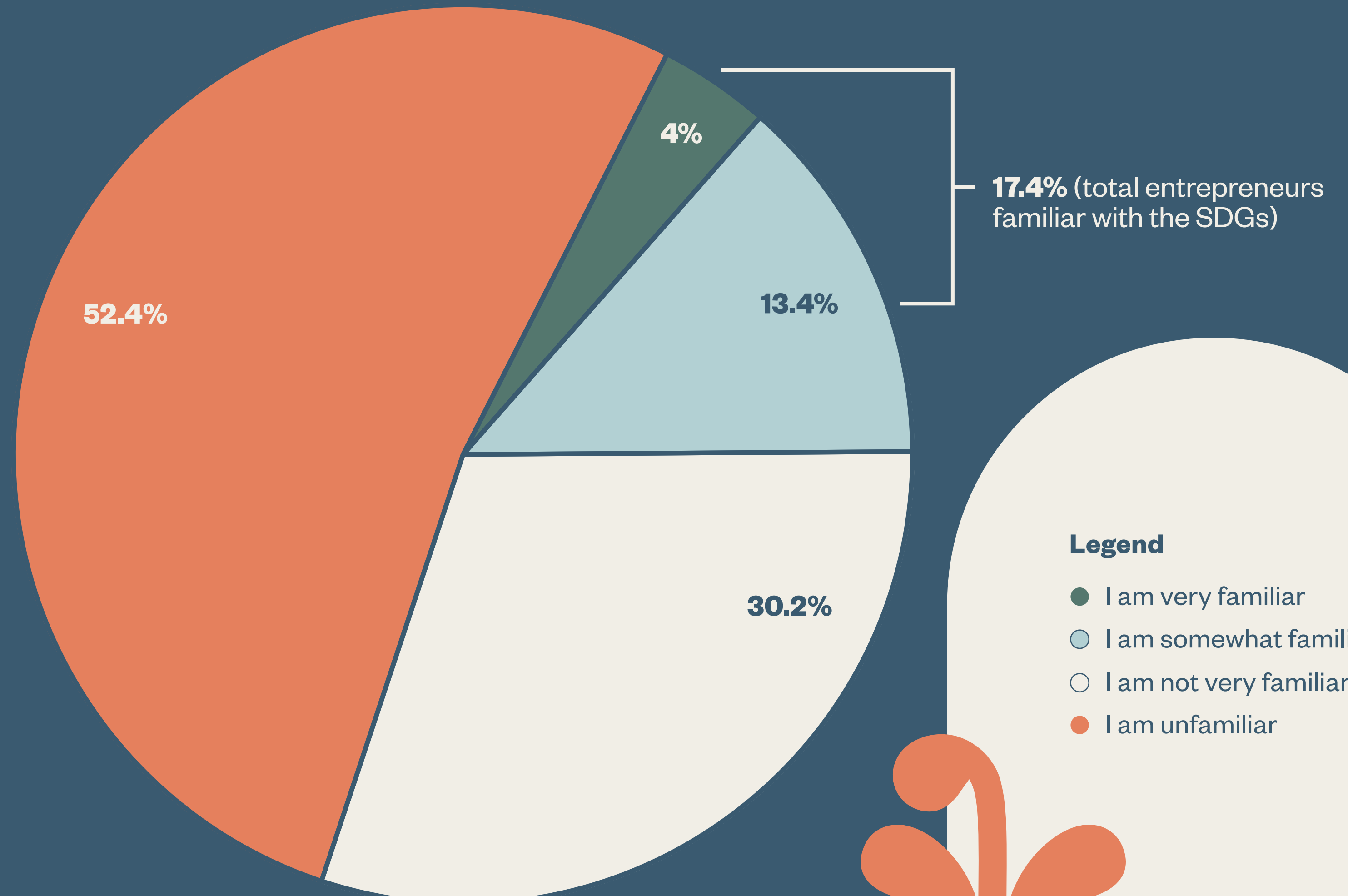


**HIGHLIGHT** — In Quebec, entrepreneurs in general know very little about the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); close to 2 in 10 are familiar with them.

Of the owners in component A, only 17.4% of respondents reported being familiar with the SDGs. Of these, 4% reported being very familiar with them and 13.4% reported being somewhat familiar with them.

As such, the SDGs do not resonate with most people. Given that 30.2% of respondents are not very familiar with them and 52.4% are completely unfamiliar with them, 82.6% of entrepreneurs consider themselves novices in the area.

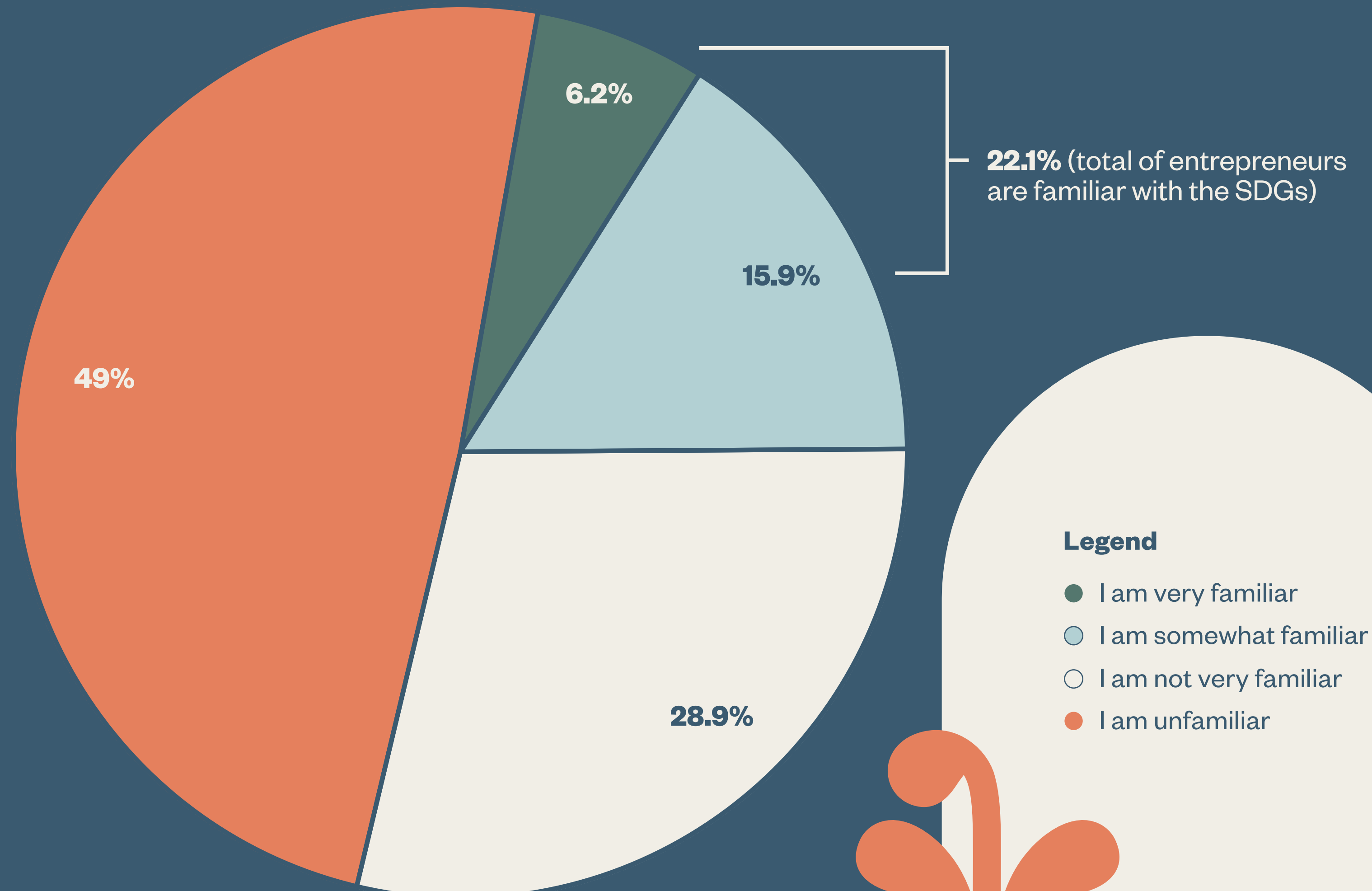
## familiarity with SDGs among entrepreneurs surveyed in the general population (component A – owners with 1 or more employees)



## knowledge of SDGs among entrepreneurs from the entrepreneurial ecosystem (component B - owners with 1 employee or more)

**HIGHLIGHT 2** — Quebec entrepreneurs are a bit more familiar with the SDGs than all other entrepreneurs, or slightly more than 1 in 5 entrepreneurs.

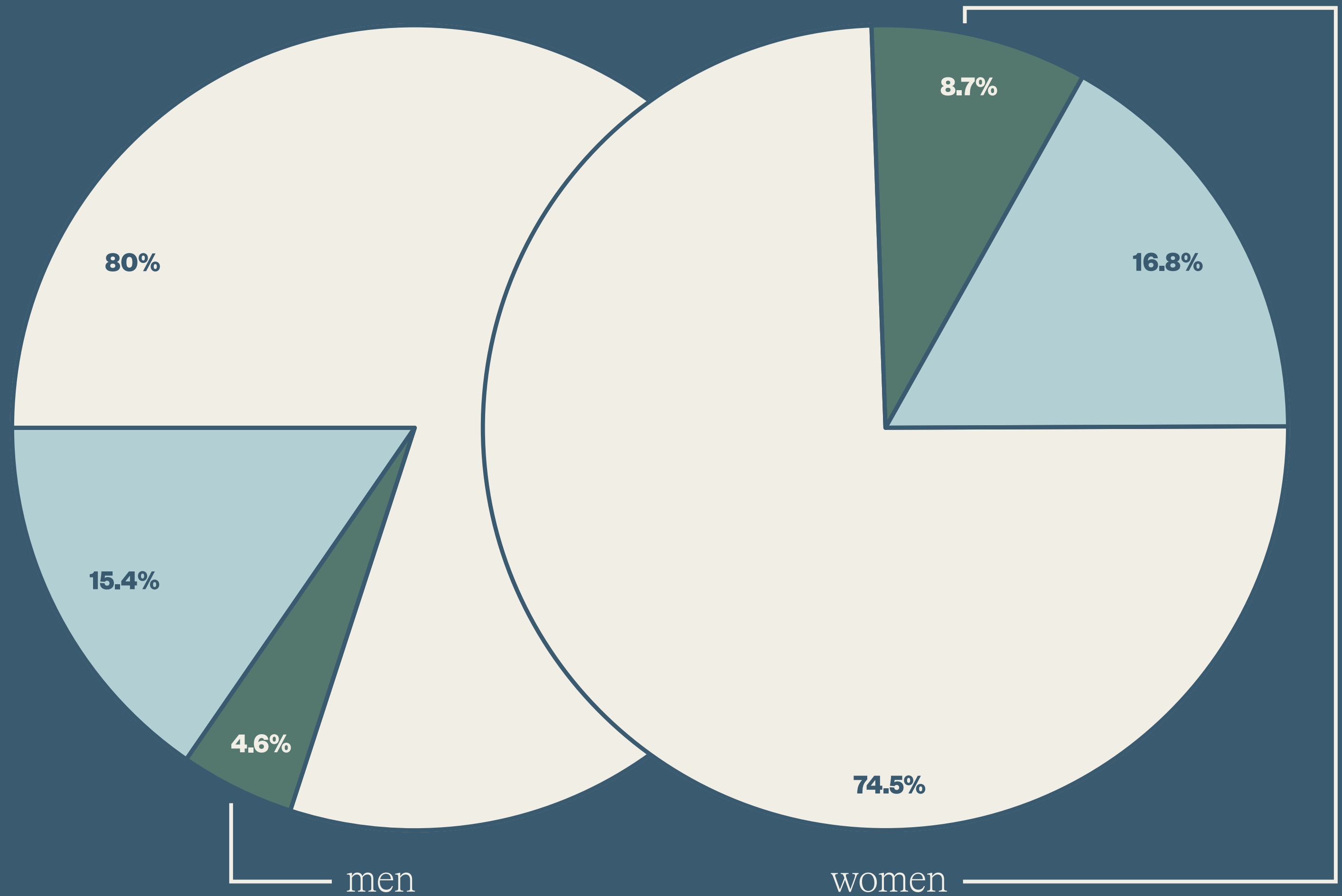
Of all respondents in component B (with one employee or more), the level of knowledge of SDGs is higher, while 22.1% of respondent said they are familiar with them. Among these, 6.2% reported being very familiar with them, and 15.9% reported being somewhat familiar with them.



# knowledge of SDGs among male and female entrepreneurs

(component B – owners with 1 employee or more)

**HIGHLIGHT 3** — Among business owners from the Quebec entrepreneurial ecosystem (component B), women stand out, with twice as many women as men report being very familiar with the SDGs (8.7% of women versus 4.6% men).



## Légende

- I am very familiar
- I am somewhat familiar
- I am not very or not at all familiar

**HIGHLIGHT 4** — Youth, immigrants, and people with a university education are among the groups that are more familiar with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

## knowledge of SDGs by age group

(component B – owners with 1 employee or more)

Young business owners aged 18 to 34 are more familiar with SDGs than other age groups, with 28.7% reporting being familiar with them.

	<b>18-34</b>	<b>35-49</b>	<b>50+</b>	<b>Total</b>
Familiar with SDGs	<b>28.7%</b>	21.1%	20.8%	22.1%
Not familiar with SDGs	71.3%	78.9%	79.2%	77.9%

## knowledge of SDGs among immigrants and native-born Canadians

(component B – owners with 1 employee or more)

Immigrants are twice as likely as native-born Canadians to report being familiar with the SDGs: 40.8% versus 18.7%.

	<b>Immigrants</b>	<b>Native-born Canadians</b>	<b>Total</b>
Familiar with SDGs	<b>40.8%</b>	18.7%	22.1%
Not familiar with SDGs	59.2%	81.3%	77.9%

## knowledge of SDGs by education level

(component B - owners with 1 employee or more)

Level of education also has a major impact on the degree of familiarity of SDGs, with only 8.3% of people whose highest level of education is primary/secondary school being familiar with the SDGs, compared with 18.3% of people with college studies and 26.9% of those with a university degree.

	Primary/ Secondary	College	University
Familiar with SDGs	8.3%	18.3%	26.9%

## knowledge of SDGs by sales

(component B – owners with 1 employee or more)

We also note that the higher the sales of a business in the ecosystem (component B), the less entrepreneurs are familiar with the SDGs.

	Sales		
	Under \$200 k	\$200 k - \$999 k	\$1000 k - \$9 999 k
I am very familiar	10.1%	4.8%	3.1%
I am somewhat familiar	22.3%	13.8%	12.8%
<b>Total - Familiar</b>	<b>32.4%</b>	<b>18.6%</b>	<b>15.9%</b>

# findings



While the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were developed to offer a path to a better future, this report shows that a large proportion of entrepreneurs are not sufficiently familiar with them.

The level of familiarity with SDGs seen as a function of a business's sales may be surprising. It is exciting to see that business owners with more limited means are nonetheless informed.

Interestingly, we found that familiarity with SDGs is clearly higher among women, youth, and immigrants.

These groups, currently underrepresented in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, are a vital force for a more prosperous, sustainable economy.

Given these results, it is essential to pursue efforts to raise awareness and inform entrepreneurs about SDGs and sustainable development targets, whether through communication campaigns, informative content, or shedding light on inspiring stories and businesses that make a positive contribution to our society. Partners in Quebec's entrepreneurial ecosystem also have an important role to play in education and coaching.

**Several groups that are still underrepresented in entrepreneurship are a vital force for a more prosperous, sustainable economy.**

when did you integrate  
sustainable development  
to your business?



In this section, we explore when entrepreneurs integrated sustainable development to their business (if applicable). Was it before its launch (at the ideation and business plan stage) or once it was operating? Was it one of their motivations for going into business?

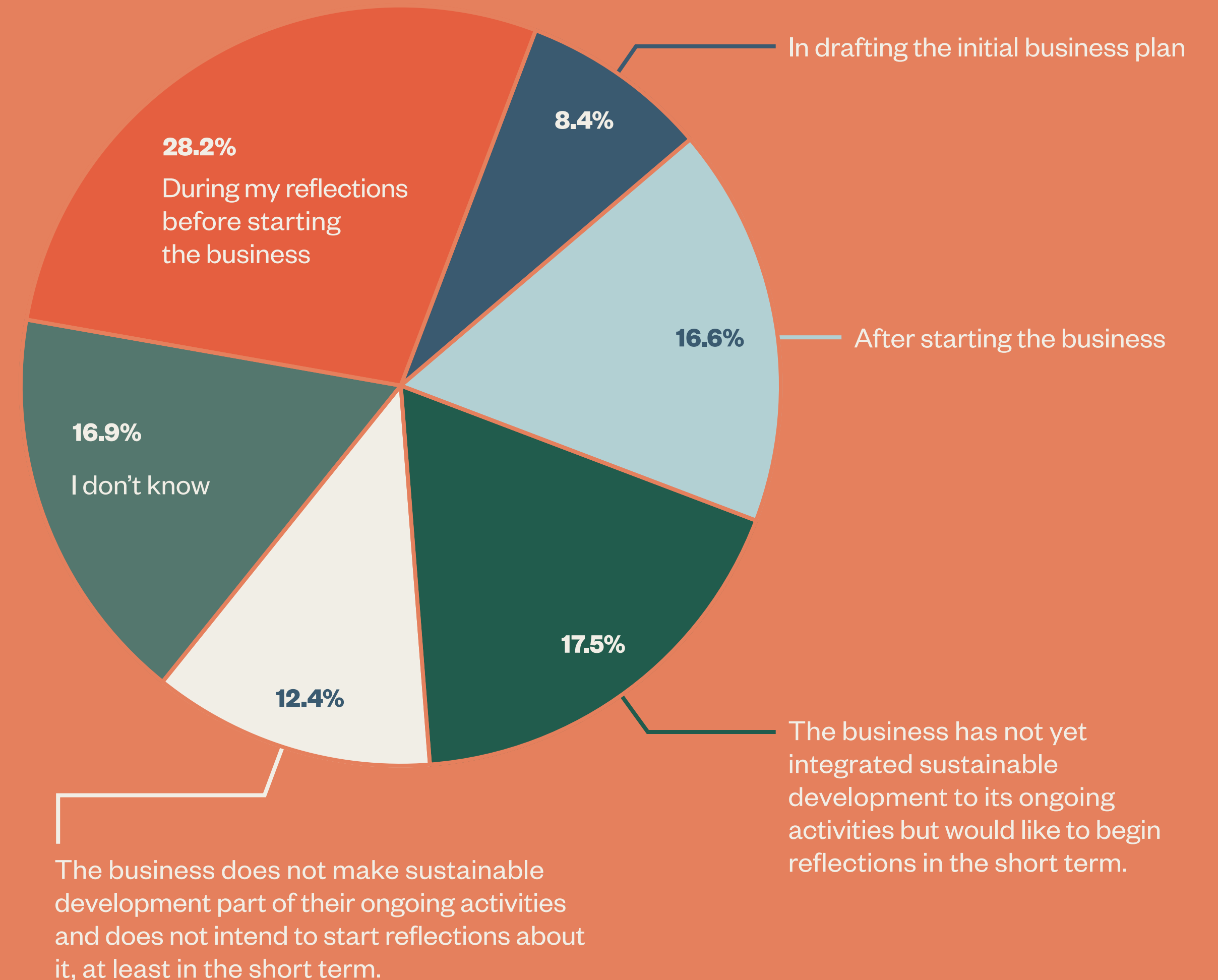
Notwithstanding the level of familiarity with the Sustainable Development Goals (previous section), respondents were presented a definition of sustainable development inspired by the Sustainable Development Act.

**HIGHLIGHT 1 — Over a third of entrepreneurs from the Quebec entrepreneurial ecosystem (component B, 36.6%) reported having integrated sustainable development before starting their business.**

While 36.6% of entrepreneurs reported having integrated sustainable development before starting their business, 28.2% of entrepreneurs reported having done so when starting their business project, whereas 8.4% indicated having done so when drafting their business plan.

## when did you integrate sustainable development to your business?

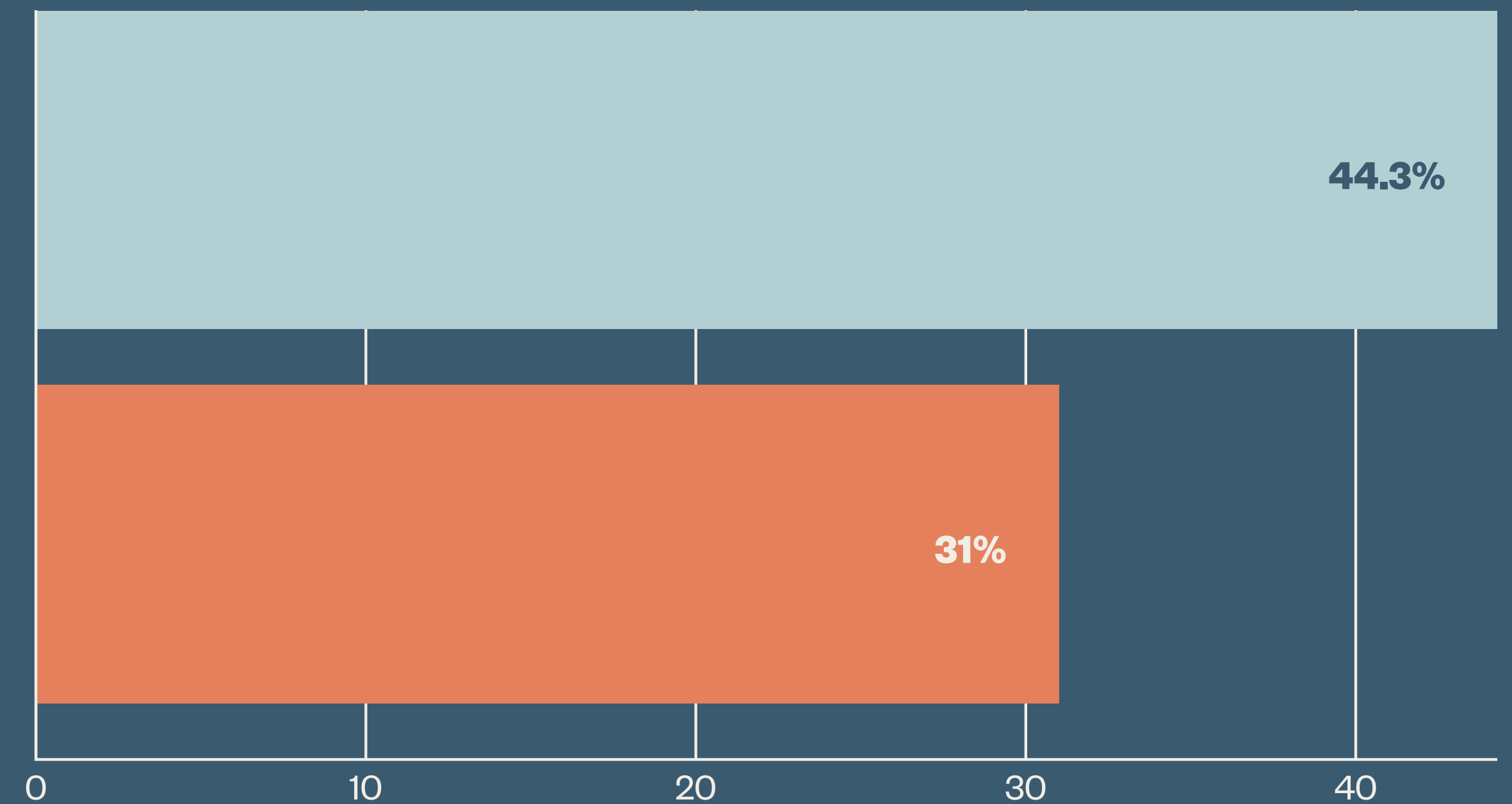
(component B – owners with 1 employee or more)





## integration of sustainable development before starting a business by gender identity

(component B – owners with 1 employee or more)



### Légende

● Women ● Men

### HIGHLIGHT 2 — Many more women than men integrated SD before starting their business.

We found that 44.3% of women report having integrated sustainable development to their business before starting it, compared with 31% of men who responded to the survey.

Furthermore, more than a third of women (34.9%) reported that sustainable development was one of their intrinsic motivations for starting a business, compared with 23.2% of men.

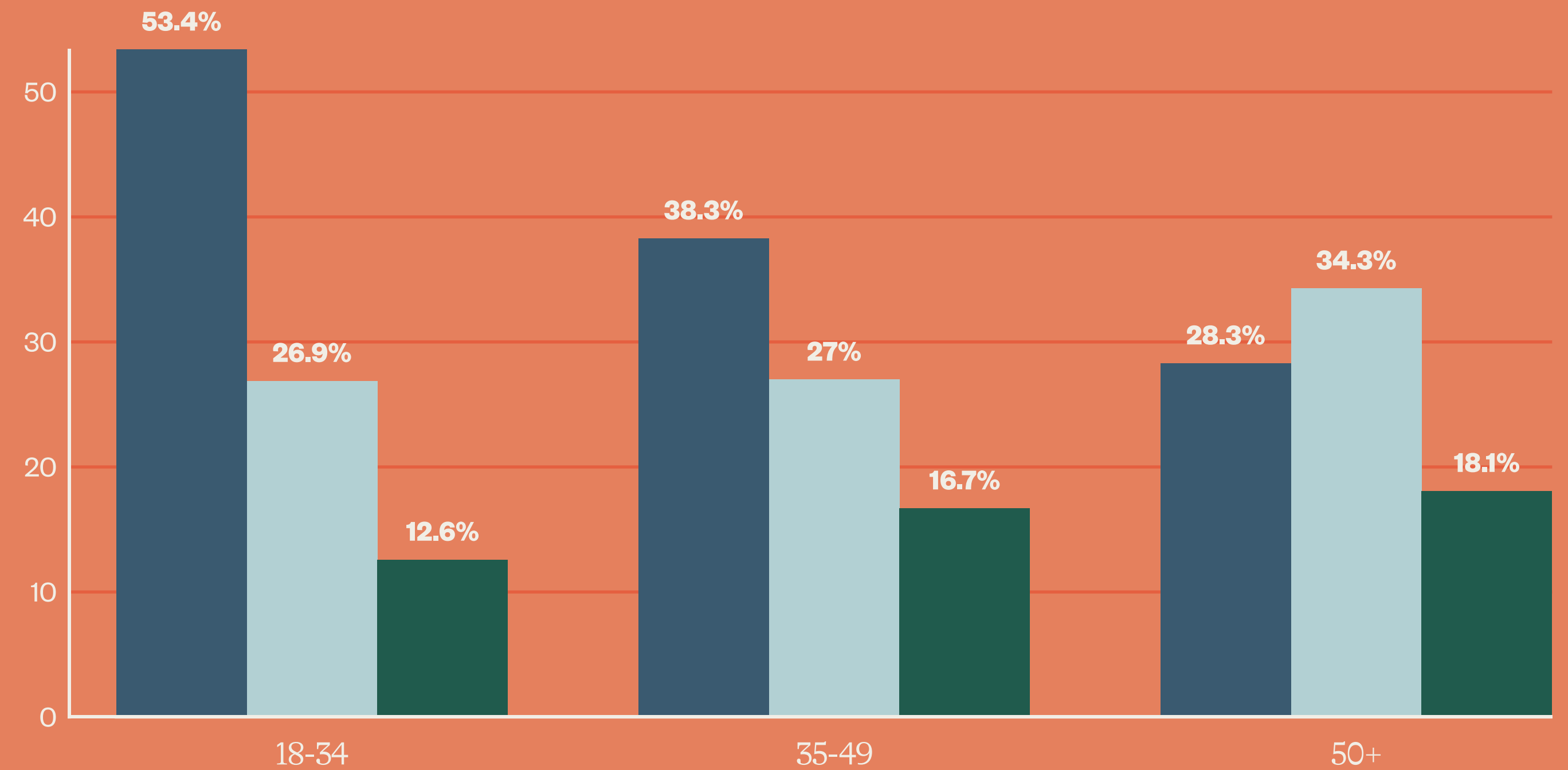
**HIGHLIGHT 3 — More than half of young entrepreneurs aged 18 to 34 integrated sustainable development before starting their business.**

In fact, 53.4% of respondents aged 18 to 34 reported having integrated notions of sustainable development before starting their business (41.1% even indicated that SD was one of their initial motivations for being an entrepreneur).

This stronger tendency among youth to integrate SD before starting their business echoes their greater familiarity with the SDGs than other age groups (see the first section).

## integration of SD before starting a business by age

(component B – owners with 1 employee or more)

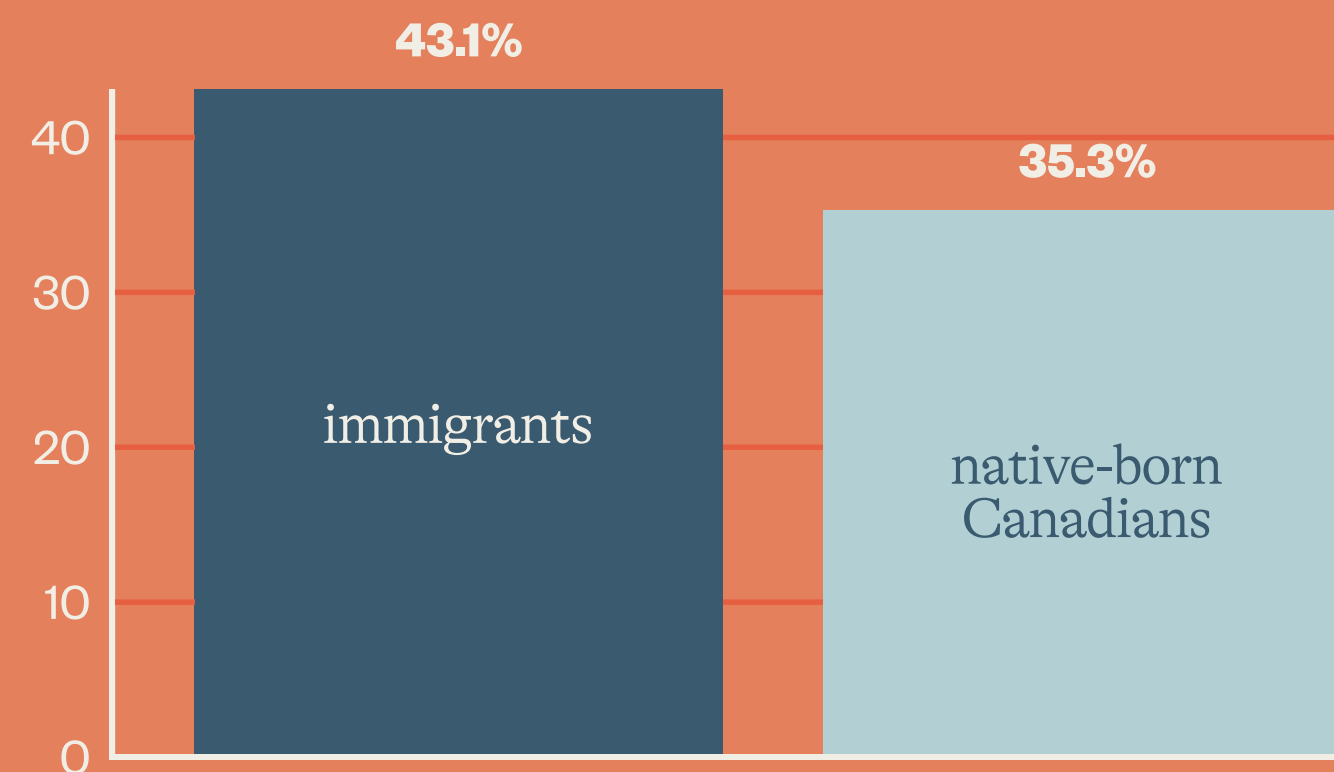


### Legend

- Before starting the business
- Business has not yet integrated sustainable development
- After starting the business

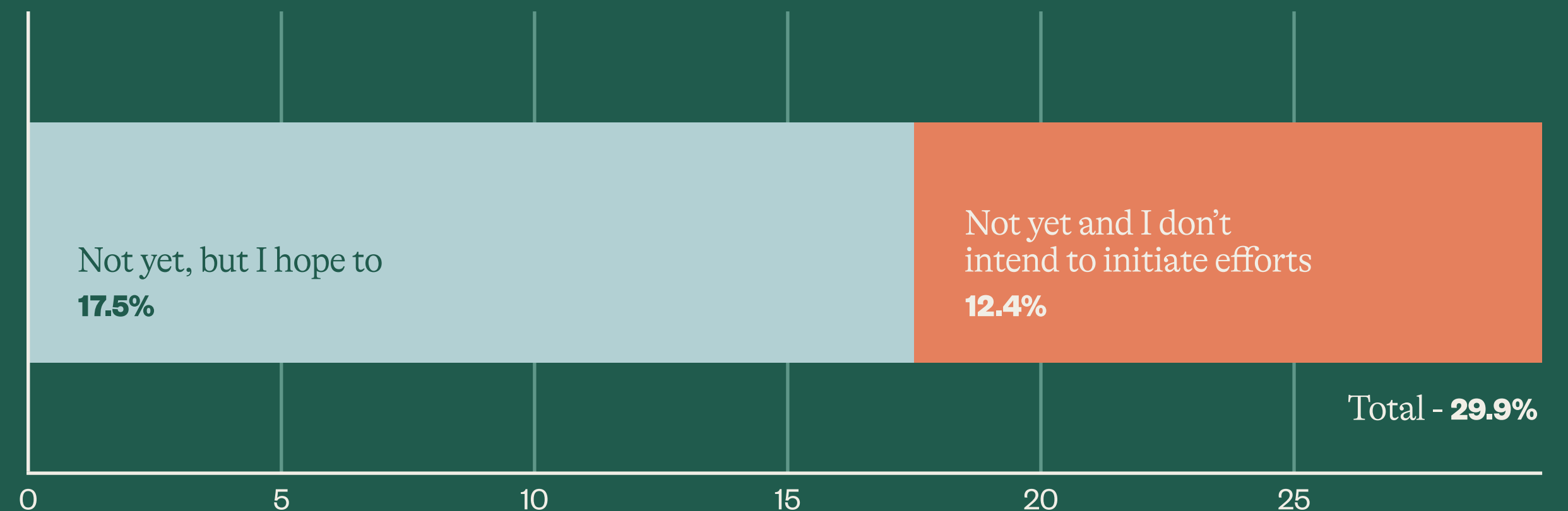
## integration of sustainable development before starting a business for immigrants and native-born Canadians (component B – owners with 1 employee or more)

It is interesting to note that immigrants are also more inclined than native-born Canadians to have integrated sustainable development before starting their business (respectively 43.1% and 35.3%).



## intention for sustainable development among entrepreneurs who have not integrated it (component B - owners with 1 employee or more)

**HIGHLIGHT 4** — Almost 1 in 3 businesses (29.9%) have not yet integrated sustainable development. Fortunately, more than half of them plan to do so soon (17.5%).




# findings

This report shows that while most businesses lagged in integrating sustainable development, there are agents of change in Quebec's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Even though 1 in 3 respondents have not integrated sustainable development practices to their business, the good news is that half of this group plans to do so soon.

Another interesting fact: a third of respondents reported having integrated sustainable development before starting their business. Of these, businesses owned by women and immigrants clearly stand out. The same applies to younger entrepreneurs, with the study showing that the younger the respondent, the greater the chance that they integrate sustainable development to their business model early on. This data therefore points to a more sustainable future for businesses.

We know that businesses that integrated sustainable development at the startup phase are more likely to implement strategic efforts in sustainable development, such as producing environmentally responsible goods and services, responsible purchasing practices, a management framework, and waste management.

Given this data, we need to coach entrepreneurs from the early stages of starting their business and support them to make it easier for them to act, by integrating avenues for reflection in business plan templates, by offering economic development advisors and other support resources for sustainable development, and by offering coaching that meets the needs of entrepreneurs.



**1 in 3 businesses remains inactive in sustainable development, but half of them say they are ready to initiate efforts. It is a sign that there are agents of change in the entrepreneurial community!**

level of integration  
with 13 SD indicators



In this section, we asked entrepreneurs who integrated sustainable development to their business (component B, owners with 1 employee or more) about the level of integration reached (choice of 5 levels) for 13 goals or issues, broken down into three thematic groups in the following matrix.

## sustainable development integration matrix<sup>2</sup>

### GROUP 1 — OPERATIONS

- 1 – Responsible purchasing or procurement policy
- 2 – Impact on local development
- 3 – Business ethics
- 4 – Production of environmentally responsible goods and services

### GROUP 2 — HUMAN RESOURCES

- 5 – Working conditions
- 6 – Equity, diversity, and inclusion

- 7 – Skills development

- 8 – Participation and labour relations

- 9 – Occupational health and safety

### GROUP 3 — RESOURCE AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

- 10 – Raw materials and waste management

- 11 – Energy and water management

- 12 – Managing greenhouse gas emissions

- 13 – Managing other types of pollution

To do this, entrepreneurs were to identify the appropriate level of integration for the 13 goals or issues among these 5 options:

#### LEVEL 1

My business **has not yet started** reflections (no directive or policy).

#### LEVEL 2

My business is engaging **in reflections** (in development).

#### LEVEL 3

My business has **integrated some practices** (complies with legislation in general).

#### LEVEL 4

My business constantly **seeks to distinguish itself** (at the leading edge, beyond regulatory requirements).

#### LEVEL 5

My business **wants to be a benchmark** in the industry (it is **the** way to be in business).

Excluding entrepreneurs who in the previous question indicated that they have not integrated sustainable development to their day-to-day activities (or have not started reflections on this in the short term) and entrepreneurs who are unaware of sustainable development's place in their business, 589 entrepreneurs responded to this section of the questionnaire. At this stage, respondents again indicated whether their business had not yet begun reflections related to the 13 goals (the total by goal in the following table therefore does not equal 100%).

## summary table for the 13 sustainable development goals or issues

(component B - owners with 1 employee or more)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
<b>Level 1</b>	12.5%	13.6%	13.2%	10.6%	7.3%	8.7%	9.5%	9.4%	5.6%	12.7%	24.2%	23%	19.2%
<b>Level 2</b>	14.4%	14.1%	13.7%	15.7%	15.8%	9.9%	15.1%	13.1%	9.1%	16.2%	16.2%	18.9%	18.1%
<b>Total inactive (Levels 1 and 2)</b>	<b>26.9%</b>	<b>27.7%</b>	<b>26.9%</b>	<b>26.4%</b>	<b>23.1%</b>	<b>18.6%</b>	<b>24.6%</b>	<b>22.5%</b>	<b>14.6%</b>	<b>28.9%</b>	<b>40.3%</b>	<b>41.9%</b>	<b>37.3%</b>
<b>Level 3</b>	30.5%	27.1%	31%	24%	29%	32.5%	31%	30.8%	36%	29.9%	27.5%	23.4%	28.4%
<b>Level 4</b>	22.6%	22.4%	17.7%	20.4%	26.3%	24.8%	26.2%	25.1%	28.7%	21.1%	16.1%	17.5%	17.7%
<b>Level 5</b>	11.6%	14.5%	16.1%	20.9%	13.2%	15.6%	9.8%	13.3%	12.3%	11.7%	7.7%	8.7%	8.2%
<b>Total active (Levels 3, 4 and 5)</b>	<b>64.7%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>64.7%</b>	<b>65.2%</b>	<b>68.5%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>69.1%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>62.7%</b>	<b>51.3%</b>	<b>49.7%</b>	<b>54.3%</b>

# group 1 – operations

**HIGHLIGHT 1** — All themes for the group related to operations showed a relatively high integration rate, with respondents reporting an integration rate of between 64% and 65.2%.

The production of environmentally responsible goods and services obtained the highest results at level 5, the highest result of this group (20.9%).

Conversely, the impact on local development showed slightly lower results than the other themes in this group.

## level of integration - group 1 : operations

(component B – owners with 1 employee or more)



### Legend

- L1 - Not yet started reflections
- L2 - Reflecting
- L3 - Some practices integrated
- L4 - Trying to stand out
- L5 - Wants to be a benchmark



# group 2 – human resources

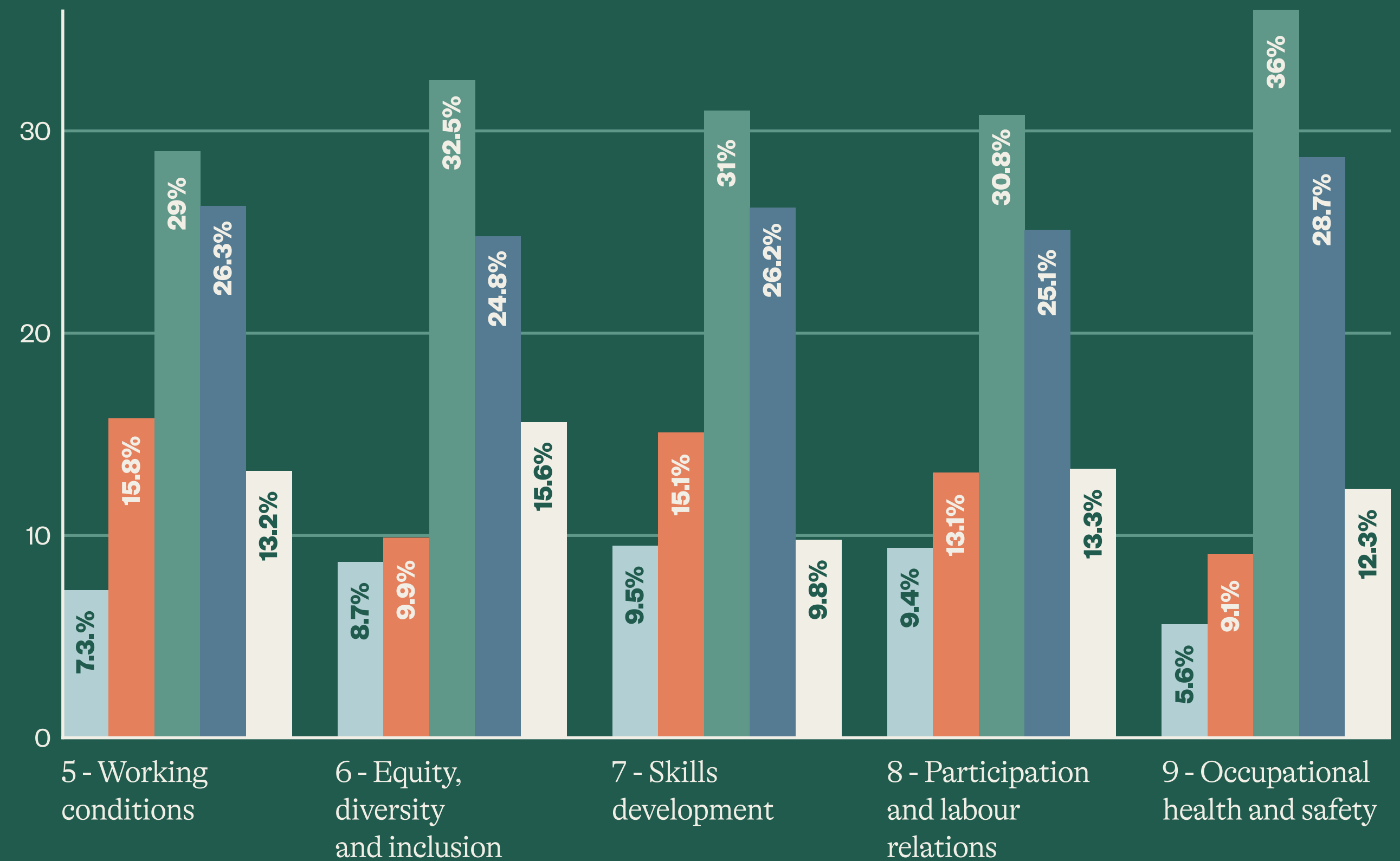
**HIGHLIGHT 2** — In the human resources group, entrepreneurs indicated greater action with respect to sustainable practices in their business.

Theme 9 (occupational health and safety) had the highest action rate with 77% of respondents reporting being in the highest levels of integration (3, 4, or 5).

Of this group, skills development had the highest inactivity score, at 24.6%.

## level of integration - group 2: human resources

(component B – owners with 1 employee or more)



### Legend

- L1 - Not yet started reflections
- L2 - Reflecting
- L3 - Some practices integrated
- L4 - Trying to stand out
- L5 - Wants to be a benchmark

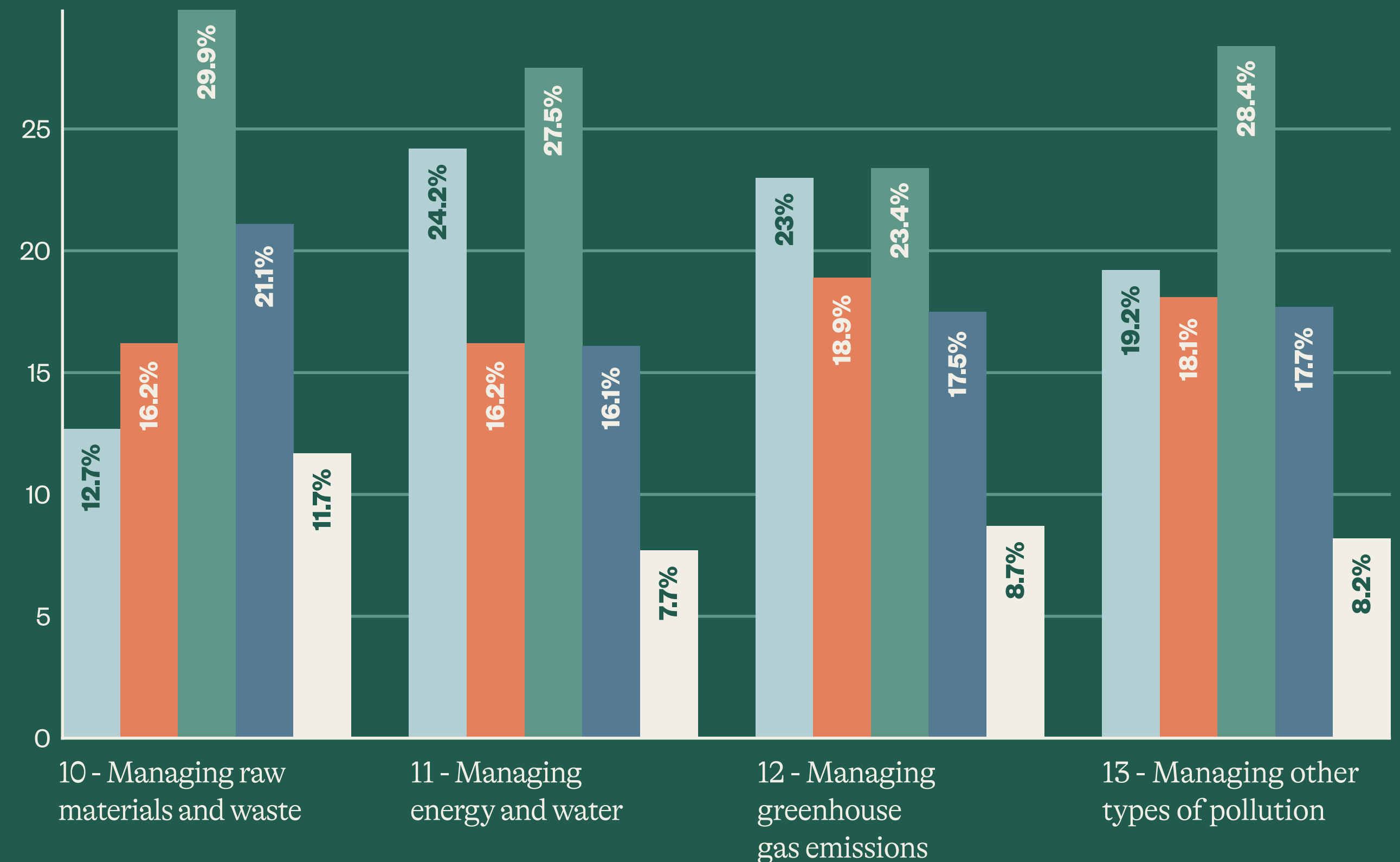
# group 3 – resource and waste management

**HIGHLIGHT 3** — Group 3 (resource and waste management) showed the highest levels of inaction (levels 1 and 2).

Managing raw materials and waste has the highest action score of this group with 62.7%.

On theme 12 – managing greenhouse gas emissions – respondents reported the greatest lag integrating practices or still reflecting (41.9%).

## level of integration - group 3: managing resources and waste (component B – owners with 1 employee or more)



### Legend

- L1 - Not yet started reflections
- L2 - Reflecting
- L3 - Some practices integrated
- L4 - Trying to stand out
- L5 - Wants to be a benchmark

# findings

Entrepreneurs pay particular attention to human resources practices, where they indicated a higher level of activity in their business. The theme of equity, diversity, and inclusion showed a high rate of activity.

On the other hand, the group related to resource and waste management showed the least activity. Despite the focus on the importance of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, only 1 in 2 respondents reported being active in this area. Clearly, reducing GHG emissions, energy and water management, and reducing other types of pollution remain challenges for entrepreneurs.

Compared with group 3 on managing resources and waste, group 1 related to operations showed more promise. Respondents were better able to produce environmentally responsible goods and services (65.20%), showing a higher activity rate than the themes in group 3. On this point, 15.70% of respondents reported engaging in reflections, compared with 10.60% who have not yet started the effort, which suggests an understanding of the importance of environmentally responsible production.

Also, in all results in this section, it is interesting to see the proportion of respondents at level 1 (have not yet started reflections) compared with level 2 (my business is engaging in reflections). It remains to be seen how to get the first group to begin reflections and the second group to act.

**Given the data, it is essential to properly equip and support entrepreneurs in their efforts to integrate sustainable development.**



# obstacles and drivers for integrating SD efforts



In this section, we are interested in obstacles to entrepreneurs implementing sustainable practices in their business and the main drivers that prompt them to act.

The question was: “You mentioned that you do not plan to start reflections in the short term on sustainable development or are unsure about doing so. Can you explain why?”

## OBSTACLES

Respondents reporting not having integrated sustainable development to their business and not planning to start reflections on the issue in the short term (n=244) were prompted to explain why in a free text field.

**HIGHLIGHT 1 — The 3 main reasons entrepreneurs are not acting are: the impression that the issue of SD does not apply to their area of activity (19.3%), the fact that it is not a priority (15.6%), and a lack of familiarity and information (14.3%).**

# obstacles to integrating sustainable development

(component B – owners with 1 employee or more)

- 19.3% **The issue does not apply to my area of activity (service, computer-based job, etc.)**
- 15.6% **I currently have other priorities/projects**
- 14.3% **Lack of familiarity with the issue/not enough information**
- 8.5% I already apply it/I am already sufficiently green
- 7.3% Activity not highly developed right now/I will do it in the future
- 7.2% Lack of interest/no need/not a necessity
- 6.3% Closing/sale of the business/business at end of life
- 4.7% Lack of time/too busy
- 4.0% I am against sustainable development/I don't believe in it
- 3.8% Other
- 3.7% Difficulty making changes/adapting my business
- 3.6% I haven't thought about it/the opportunity has not presented itself
- 3.4% Lack of financial means/activity too expensive/inflation
- 2.0% am retiring soon/I am at the end of my career
- 0.3% It is an SME/small business/self-employed worker
- 14.7% I don't know/decline to answer



**HIGHLIGHT 2** — In terms of drivers, the 3 main reasons indicated by entrepreneurs are: commitment and conviction of company management and/or the board of directors, cost reduction/increased financial performance and pressure from global climate crises.

## DRIVERS

All respondents (component B, 1 employee or more) were asked to select the main reasons that motivate or could motivate their business to advance in terms of sustainable development (maximum of three reasons, sorted by order of priority).

The question was: “What are the main motivators or potential motivators for your business to advance in terms of sustainable development? Please select a maximum of three reasons or drivers in order of importance for your business, with 1 being the greatest driver, etc.”

Among the leading drivers, men point more to gains in productivity and financial performance (M 9.2% vs. W 5%), while for women, stakeholder commitment and social pressures are the main drivers.

Youth seem to be more sensitive to social pressures resulting from climate crises (Y 19.6% vs. total 11.2%).

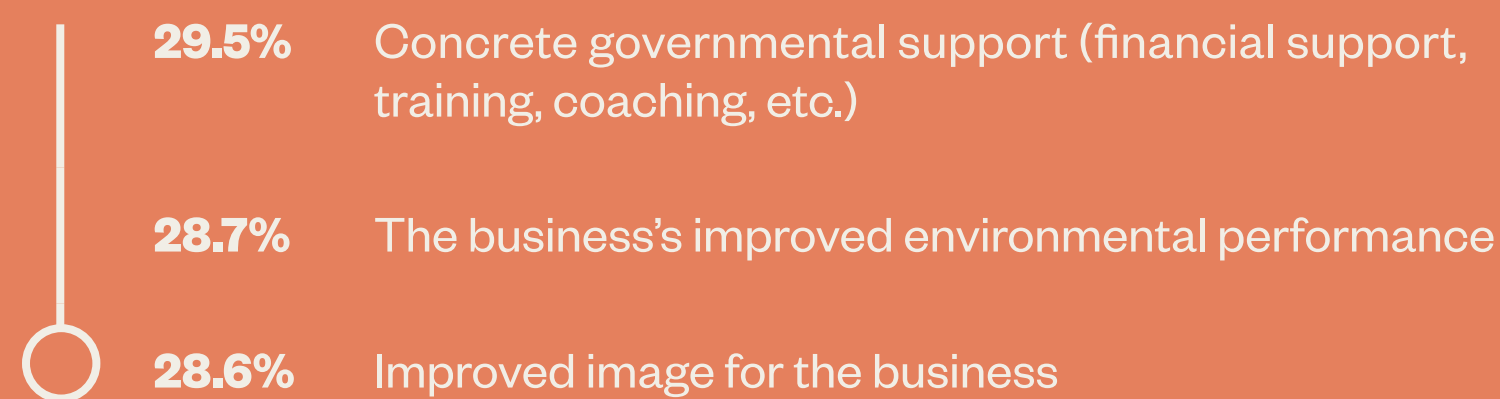
## main leading choices as drivers

(component B -owners with 1 employee or more)



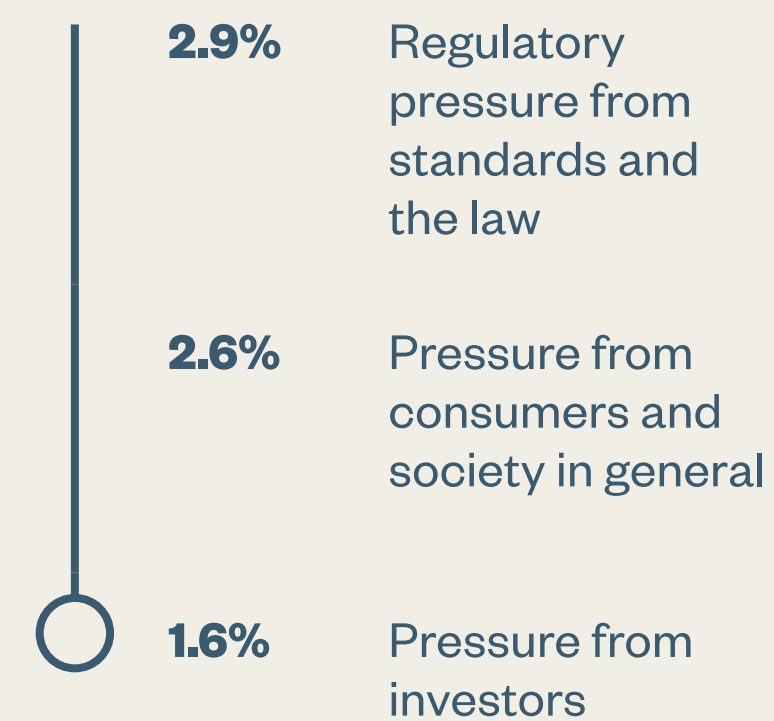
**HIGHLIGHT 3** — Other reasons raised by respondents include: concrete governmental support, improving the environmental performance of the business and improving the business's image.

## main drivers in the first 3 choices (component B – owners with 1 employee or more)



## the least mentioned drivers

(component B – owners with 1 employee or more)



**HIGHLIGHT 4** — All forms of pressure from laws and regulations as well as from investors, consumers, and society in general do not seem to influence entrepreneurs.


# findings

There is an increasing number of initiatives to encourage businesses to become more ecological, diversified, and equitable. But which are best for encouraging businesses to act?

The results of this study show the sincere desire of businesses to improve their environmental and financial performance. Entrepreneurs surveyed are aware of the positive impact of these efforts on their image, but their motivation seems to go well beyond that.

While regulatory pressure seems to have only limited influence on the motivation of entrepreneurs surveyed, this report shows that the intention and commitment of management are essential for integrating sustainable development in business. We also note that concrete support from government and support organizations make a difference to entrepreneurs.

Finally, the fact that most entrepreneurs feel that sustainable development is not an issue for their area of activity or do not have the information shows that there is still a lot of work to do in terms of education and coaching.



**If we want entrepreneurs to contribute to their full potential and be agents of change, the entire ecosystem has to mobilize to find solutions!**





special dossier – small  
businesses, big impact

# small businesses, big impact

As part of the first “View on Integrating Sustainable Development in Business” conducted alongside the *Indice entrepreneurial québécois 2022*, Evol published a special dossier about small businesses (component B, one employee or more).<sup>3</sup>

One might think that only large businesses have the means and the scope to have a significant positive impact. This report shows that even the smallest businesses can have a big impact with respect to sustainable development.

Here are 5 major myths to debunk about small businesses.

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this analysis, we define a small business as one having sales of less than \$200 k.

## ○ myth no. 1

**SMALL BUSINESSES HAVE A MORE LIMITED UNDERSTANDING OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, WHICH EXPLAINS WHY THEY ARE LESS LIKELY TO INTEGRATE IT TO THEIR BUSINESS PLANS.**

**False.** In fact, among entrepreneurs from the Quebec ecosystem, knowledge of SDGs is inversely proportional to the size of the business: the smaller the business, the greater the familiarity with SDGs (“very familiar” and “somewhat familiar”).

In fact, 1 in 3 small business owners (32.4%) (business with sales of under \$200 k), reported being familiar with the SDGs. This rate dropped to 1 in 10 (10.4%) among very large businesses (sales of \$10 million and more).

## ○ myth no. 2

**SMALL BUSINESSES THAT ARE AT THE STARTUP STAGE HAVE A LOT TO THINK ABOUT. THEY HAVE TO PRIORITIZE THEIR FINANCIAL VIABILITY BEFORE INTEGRATING SD PRACTICES.**

**False.** More small businesses integrate sustainable development from the start of the process. In fact, among businesses with sales of less than \$200 k, 50.8% integrated SD before even starting their business.

These rates drop to 32.7% for businesses with sales of between \$200 k and \$999 k, 26.4% for businesses with sales of between \$1 million and \$9.9 million, and 9.6% among very large businesses (\$10 million+).

### ○ myth no. 3

**SMALL BUSINESSES DO NOT HAVE THE MEANS TO IMPLEMENT SD PRACTICES, WHICH IS THE MAIN OBSTACLE TO THEM DOING SO.**

**False.** Aside from small businesses that do not feel SD is an issue for their area of activity (25.1%) and the fact of having other current priorities (24.6%), it is a lack of knowledge that seems to be the main obstacle to implementing sustainable development practices (16%) and not a lack of financial means (2.9%).

In fact, a lack of familiarity with SD underlies the reasons most often raised and explains the lack of motivation among businesses in terms of SD, in addition to being a major obstacle to its implementation.

### myth no. 4

**BUSINESSES THAT ARE NOT SUBJECT TO PRESSURE FROM FUNDERS TO IMPLEMENT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT MEASURES HAVE MORE OPPORTUNITY TO ACT.**

**False.** Among businesses with sales of less than \$200 k, the conviction and commitment of management (20.1%) was identified as the main drivers for action, followed by pressure from global climate crises (13.2%) and concrete aid from government (12.6%).

### myth no. 5

**EVEN IF SMALL BUSINESSES WANT TO DO THEIR PART, THEIR REACH IS MINIMAL AND THEY CAN'T HAVE A SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE IMPACT ON SOCIETY.**

**False.** Small businesses make up 97.7%<sup>4</sup> of private businesses in Quebec. Furthermore, they distinguish themselves by making sustainable development central to their activities, particularly by producing environmentally responsible goods and services.

In conclusion, small businesses have the potential to be agents of change, to foster the creation of sustainable jobs, and to promote equitable economic growth if they receive adequate support.

<sup>4</sup> Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada

# appendices — methodology

## COMPONENT A — LEGER WEB PANEL

The provincial study (Indice entrepreneurial québécois 2022) was conducted through a web survey of a sample of 5,022 respondents across Quebec 18 years and older who can express themselves in French or English. Data was collected from December 12, 2022 to January 15, 2023. The median time to complete the questionnaire was around 11.31 minutes.

To establish the incidence of the different entrepreneurial categories at the beginning of the survey, Leger initially surveyed 18,658 respondents. For a probability sample of 18,658 respondents, the maximum margin of error was  $\pm 0.7\%$ , 19 times out of 20. The survey was conducted of 5,022 respondents, 3,752 of whom were involved in one of the steps in the entrepreneurial process. For a probability sample of the same size, the margin of error was  $\pm 1.6\%$ , 19 times out of 20.

A respondent may qualify in more than one category. However, to reduce the length of the questionnaire, the types attributed were exclusive in terms of the questionnaire path for owners, intentions, and efforts. Using the most recent data from Statistics Canada, results were weighted according to gender, age, region, mother tongue, being an immigrant or not, as well as by incidence of each entrepreneurship indicator, to make the sample representative of the adult population of Quebec.

## COMPONENT B — BUSINESS OWNERS FROM A NETWORK OF PARTNERS

The provincial study (Indice entrepreneurial québécois 2022) was conducted using a web survey with a sample of 1,160 business owners who can express themselves in French or English. Data was collected from December 19, 2022 to February 20, 2023. The median duration of the questionnaire was around 30 minutes. Réseau Mentorat worked with a list of organizations, including Evol, to reach business owners. These organizations sent the survey link to owners. For a probability sample of 1,160 respondents, the maximum margin of error was  $\pm 2.9\%$ , 19 times out of 20. The traditional chain has four categories: business owners, entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurial efforts, and closings. However, the survey was solely for business owners. The result was 1,160 business owners. Using the most recent data from InfoCanada, the results were weighted according to number of employees and the region to make the sample as representative as possible of businesses in Quebec.<sup>5</sup>

5. The data in this report is from the Indice entrepreneurial québécois 2022 by Réseau Mentorat. The 2022 index is presented by the Ministère de l'Économie, de l'Innovation et de l'Énergie du Québec as well as the following major partners: National Bank, the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, Familles en affaires – HEC Montréal, National Bank – HEC Montréal Institute for Entrepreneurship and the Ordre des CPA du Québec. It was conducted in partnership with the Centre de transfert d'entreprise du Québec, Evol, and Leger.

## BNQ 21000 matrix and standard

The matrix is an adaptation of the self-evaluation<sup>6</sup> grid for the BNQ 21000 standard, available for free online, as well as its application guide. It is also inspired by work done as part of the recent survey on sustainable development published by the MEIE in 2018 (also using the same self-evaluation grid).<sup>7</sup>

The BNQ 21000 standard is meant to provide a reference framework for businesses that want to undertake sustainable development efforts. It proposes a strategic management framework developed from recognized references, such as the principles of Quebec's Sustainable Development Act.



## glossary

**OWNERS** — Sole owners of a business (including sole owners of a franchise business and self-employed workers). Owners/partners of a registered or incorporated business (including partnership owners of a franchise business are included).

**IMMIGRANT POPULATION** — People born abroad to non-Canadian parents and who have or have had landed immigrant status, a Certificat de sélection du Québec (CSQ) (Quebec selection certificate), whose application for permanent residency is under way, or a study or work permit.

**SEX AND GENDER** — For the purposes of comparability with data from the Indice entrepreneurial québécois 2022, we use the indicator of sex to refer to a male or female entrepreneur (“You are... A man, a woman, non-binary including those who are nongendered, bi-gender, gender fluid, two-spirit or other”). However, respondents also had the opportunity to indicate the gender they identify as.

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT** — Sustainable development responds to current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. It also targets a progressive global transformation of the economy and society while respecting natural resources through a process that promotes social equity (definition provided to respondents).

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6. This is a self-evaluation grid integrated to the BNQ 21000 standard, designed mainly by Neuvaction and the Université de Sherbrooke's Chaire Desjardins en gestion du développement durable (see the bibliography).

7. For example, this report uses a category of inactivity (levels 1 and 2) and activity (levels 3, 4 and 5) to analyze the results for 13 indicators (a base measurement of “rate of activity”). It is a different approach than that adopted by the *Sondage sur le développement durable réalisé auprès des entreprises du Québec – MEIE (2018)* (survey on sustainable development conducted with Quebec businesses) and for which only businesses that chose levels 4 or 5 were considered to have adopted sustainable development management processes (a measurement of the “rate of adoption” focused on leaders in SD).

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# resources

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[BNQ 21000 standard](#)

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[BNQ 21000 standard – MEIE](#)

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[Quebec’s Sustainable Development Act](#)



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