Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

2025 Victorian Business Pulse



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The Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry is pleased to share the 2025 Victorian Business Pulse survey results, providing a comprehensive snapshot of the challenges, priorities and opportunities shaping Victorian businesses today.

With over 1,300 responses from businesses of all sizes and sectors, this year's survey highlights a community that is resilient, innovative and determined to thrive despite rising costs, skills shortages and economic uncertainty. Businesses are embracing digital transformation, adopting Artificial Intelligence (AI) and investing in workforce development, while seeking practical support to navigate change and unlock growth.

Key insights from the survey include:



Rising costs and economic uncertainty: 60% of businesses identify increasing operational costs as their biggest challenge.



Focus on revenue growth: 58% of businesses are prioritising revenue growth as essential for survival and economic stability.



Growth through marketing and brand awareness: 37% of businesses see effective marketing as crucial for growth, showing an increased focus on differentiation and customer engagement.



Employee development: 36% of businesses are committed to upskilling their workforce, recognising the value of a skilled team.



Growing interest in AI: 30% of businesses are keen to learn about AI is and its benefits.

These insights underscore the urgent need for targeted policies and practical support to reduce costs, close skills gaps and foster innovation. Victorian businesses remain determined to thrive, with a clear focus on growth, adaptability and developing their workforce.

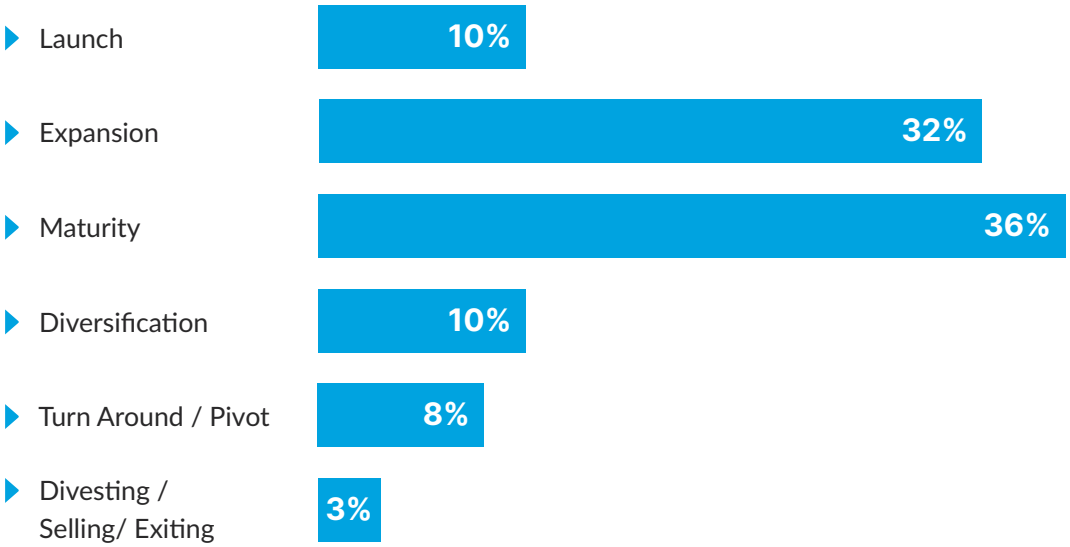
Demographics

The 2025 Victorian Business Pulse survey confirms that the Victorian Chamber supports businesses of all sizes and sectors across Victoria. Responses were received from every region and industry, as classified by Australian Bureau of Statistics.

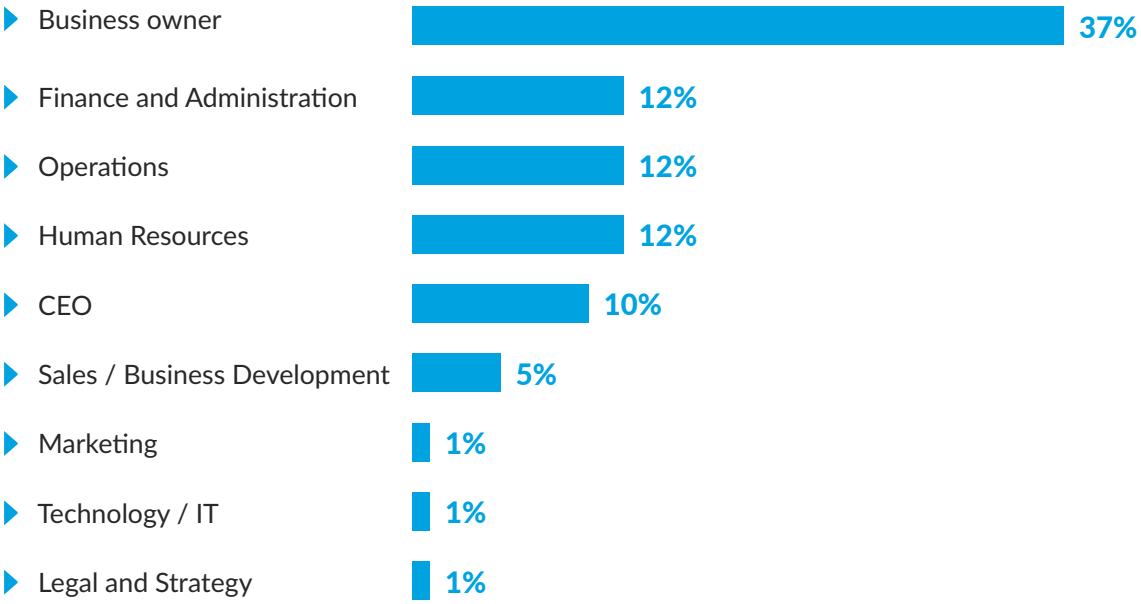
The Top 6 Industries of respondents

1. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
2. Manufacturing
3. Health Care and Social Assistance
4. Education and Training
5. Construction
6. Retail Trade

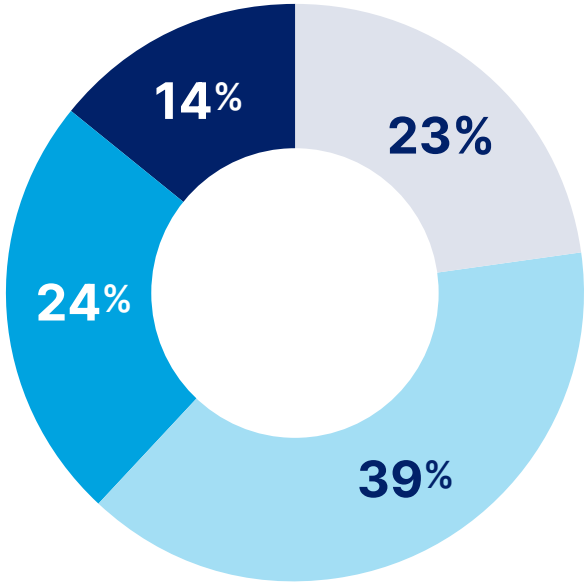
Business Lifecycle Phase



Job Position



Business Size



- 23% Sole trader (1-3 employees)
- 39% Small Business (4-35 employees)
- 24% Medium Business (36-200 employees)
- 14% Large Business (201+ employees)

Geographical Breakdown



Regional

23%

of respondents

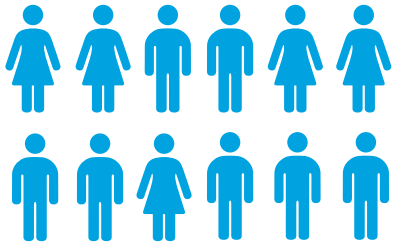




CBD

11%

of respondents



33%

of respondents

Suburban

33% of respondents were Not Specified

Business Challenges

The 2025 Victorian Business Pulse survey reveals that the **rising cost of doing business (60%)** is the most pressing challenge for Victorian businesses.

Other notable concerns include **reduced or inconsistent business revenue (35%)** and **navigating regulatory changes and compliance (24%)**, which remain consistent with survey results from September 2024.

These challenges highlight where support is most needed and where the Victorian Chamber is focused on delivering solutions to help businesses overcome barriers and achieve sustainable growth.









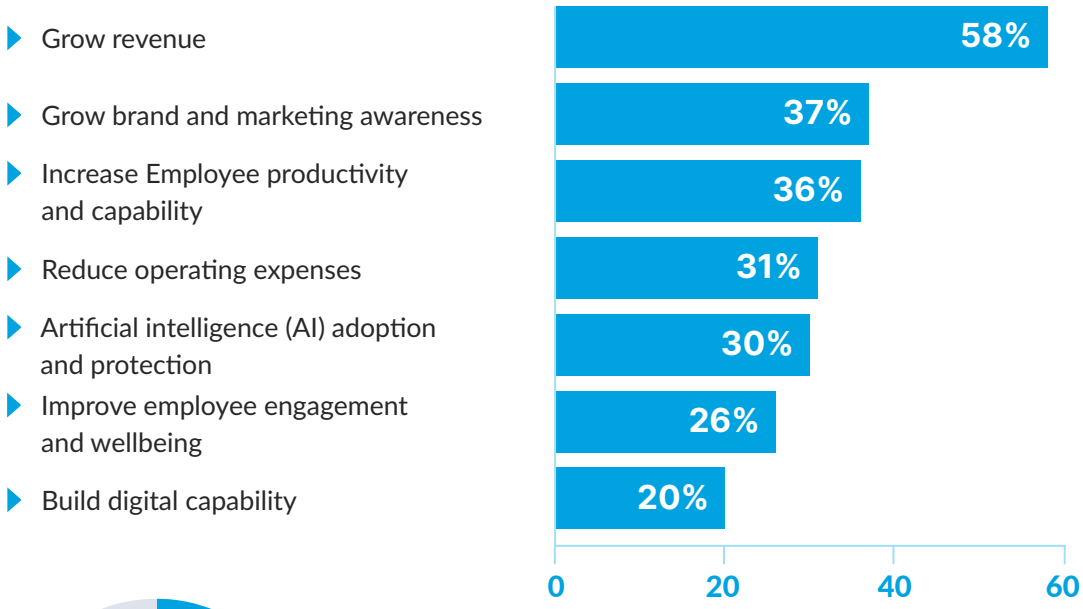
Business Objectives and Enablers

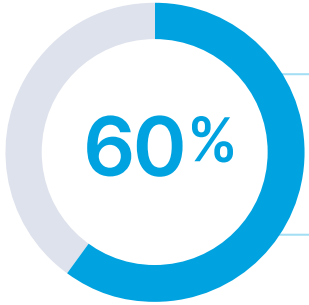
Victorian businesses are prioritising **revenue growth (58%), enhancing brand visibility (37%)** and **strengthening employee productivity and capability (36%)** to achieve their goals. There is also a strong focus on **reducing operating costs (31%)** and **adopting AI technologies (30%)** to support these objectives.

The main factors enabling Victorian businesses to achieve their objectives **are increasing brand awareness, upskilling in AI** and **seeking funding, grants or investment opportunities**. Additionally, **understanding customers, competitors and industry trends** and **embracing new digital technologies** are seen as important drivers for success.

These proactive strategies, supported by the Victorian Chamber demonstrate a forward-thinking approach to overcoming challenges and driving business growth.

Business Objectives





Collectively, a majority of businesses (**60%**) are seeking to incorporate AI, digital tools and new technologies in their business.

Top Business Enablers

To help Victorian businesses achieve their goals and overcome ongoing challenges, the Victorian Business Pulse survey identified the top enablers driving growth and resilience, and the areas that businesses have said they need the most support.

1	Attracting customers through marketing and brand awareness
2	Learning what AI is and how it can help business
3	Accessing funding, grants or investment opportunities
4	Human resource support and advice
5	Adopting new technologies or digital tools
6	Recruiting permanent or temporary staff
7	Upskilling or training employees
8	Understanding customers, competitors and industry trends
9	Workplace health, safety and wellbeing
10	Guidance on starting or growing your business, including strategy and structure

The Victorian Chamber is dedicated to providing practical solutions and expert guidance across these critical enablers, ensuring every business has the resources to thrive.



Enablers in Focus

Growth through marketing and brand awareness

In today's competitive environment, Victorian businesses are increasingly turning to marketing and brand awareness as their primary growth driver.

Small businesses and sole traders are especially focused on identifying the most effective marketing channels, developing clear and actionable strategies, creating engaging content and leveraging social media to expand their reach and strengthen their brands.

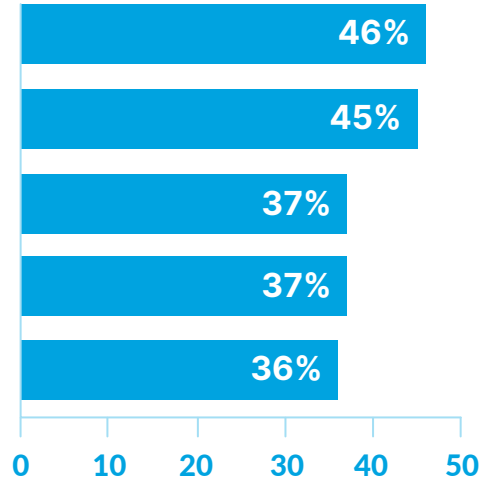


Marketing and brand awareness was identified as the leading growth enabler, with **20%** of businesses ranking it as their top enabler, and **40%** placing it among their top three.

- **62%** of respondents are small businesses or sole traders, reflecting the strong entrepreneurial spirit across Victoria.
- **32%** of respondents are currently in the expansion phase, actively seeking ways to scale their operations.

Areas of marketing support businesses are seeking

- Choosing the right marketing channels
- Creating a clear marketing strategy to reach customers
- Creating compelling and engaging content
- Developing a marketing action plan and step-by-step roadmap to execute marketing strategy
- Assistance with social media marketing



How the Victorian Chamber can help

THRIVE SME Enablement Program

THRIVE is the Victorian Chamber's initiative specifically designed to support small and medium businesses accelerate business growth and productivity. THRIVE brings together expert insights, practical tools and immersive learning experiences to help you tackle real-world business challenges across marketing, sales, AI, finance and more.

Find out more



Marketing, Sales and Customer Service Training

Learn the skills to deliver exceptional customer service, master effective selling strategies and elevate your business with digital and social media marketing training. Our training courses are designed to help you excel in customer service and improve customer retention rates.

Find out more



It's time for TikTok – Self-Paced Learning

In this three-part, self-paced virtual training, you'll explore how TikTok can support your business goals, hear real-world insights from other businesses and gain practical tips you can apply immediately.

In partnership with

TikTok

Find out more



Business Growth Tools and Templates

Gain access to a range of business growth tools and templates providing structured frameworks and practical resources to save time and reduce errors. These tools include marketing campaign and channel planning templates, reporting frameworks and more.

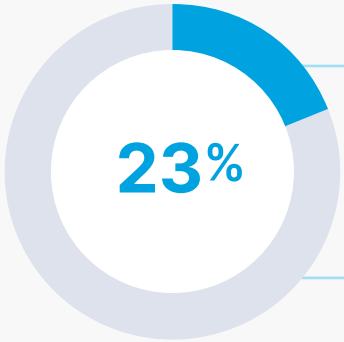
Find out more

Artificial Intelligence and digital transformation

As technology evolves rapidly, Victorian businesses are placing greater emphasis on AI adoption and digital transformation to drive growth and productivity.

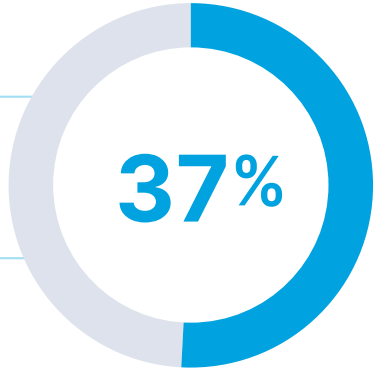
While small businesses and sole traders are keen to integrate AI tools and digital solutions, many feel underprepared for the pace of change and are seeking expert guidance to navigate these new frontiers safely and effectively.

The digital business landscape is now a clear a priority.



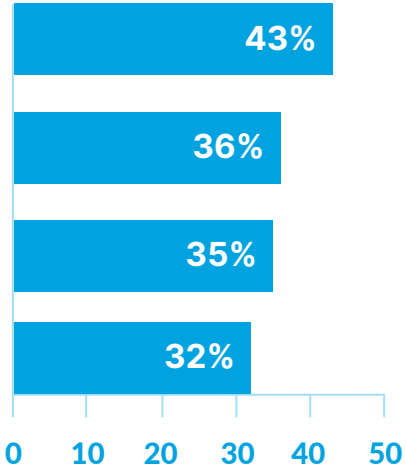
23% are focused on building their digital capability and adopting new technologies or tools

37% of businesses want to learn what AI is and how it can help their business

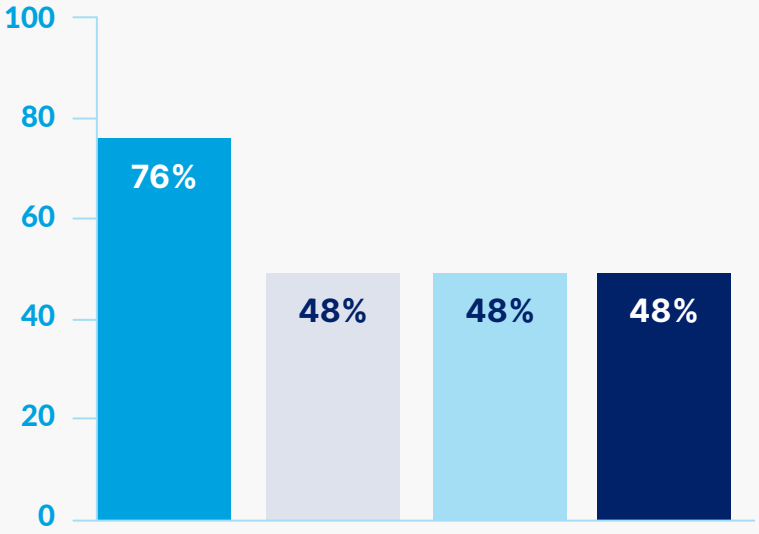


Among businesses focused on AI, the top areas of support needed are:

- **43%** want help connecting AI tools with existing systems and workflows.
- **36%** are seeking guidance on using AI safely and responsibly, including privacy, ethics and compliance.
- **35%** need training for their teams to use AI confidently.
- **32%** are interested in creating custom AI workflows such as chatbots or automation to streamline operations.



For those building digital capability, the most sought-after support includes:



- 76% want to automate business processes.
- 48% need help with technology selection and implementation.
- 48% are looking for digital upskilling and training.
- 48% seek support with data analytics and dashboard tools.

How the Victorian Chamber can help



AI Workshop Series - Practical AI for Business

Discover how AI can drive productivity and innovation in your business through our hands-on workshop series covering practical AI tools, safe implementation, and real-world use cases, helping you build confidence and skills to leverage AI for growth.

Find out more

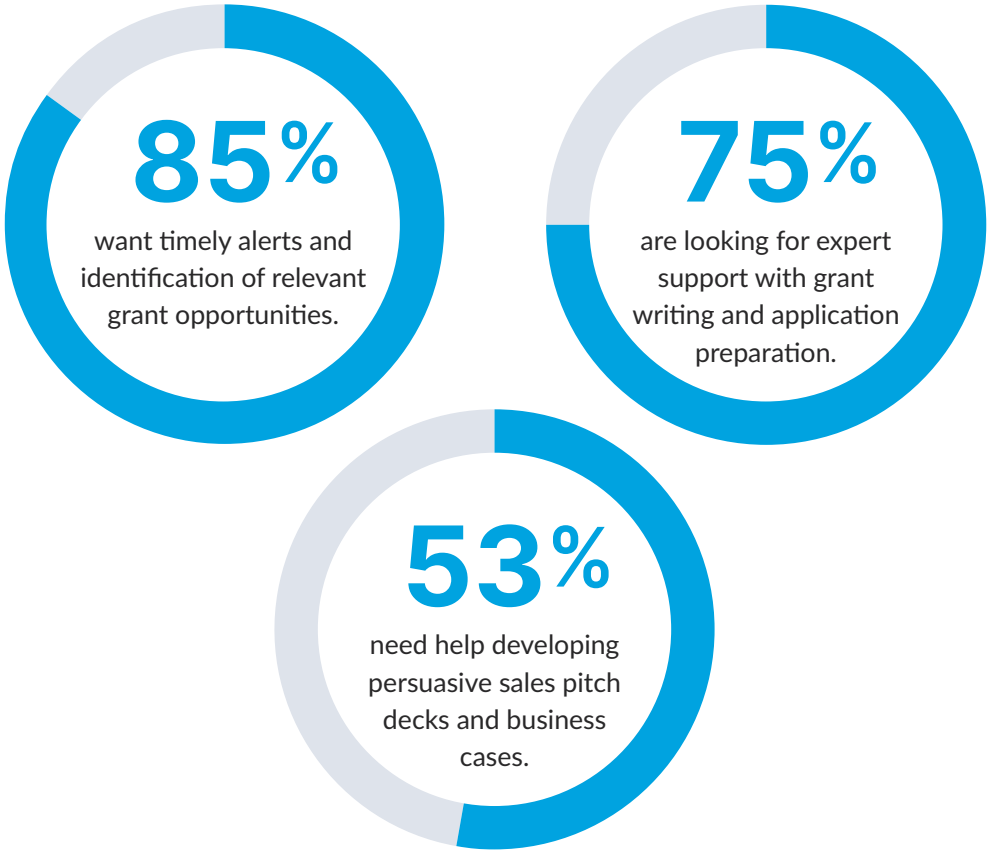
Access to funding, grants or investment opportunities

Securing funding, grants, and investment is a top priority for many Victorian businesses seeking to fuel growth, innovation and resilience.

However, navigating the complex landscape of available opportunities can be challenging, especially when it comes to identifying the right grants, preparing compelling applications and demonstrating investment readiness.



What support businesses are seeking most:





How the Victorian Chamber can help

Grant Finder

The Victorian Chamber offers support to help you navigate and identify local, state and federal government grants that align with your business needs. Grant Finder is an interactive tool designed to simplify your search, providing access to over 891 grants valued at more than $103.1 billion, available to Victorian businesses across all levels of government.

Find out more

Victorian Chamber News and Updates

Unlock new opportunities for your business with the latest news and updates from the Victorian Chamber. Stay informed about funding programs, government grants and investment opportunities as soon as they become available.

Subscribe here to receive the Victorian Chamber's news and updates direct to your inbox.

Subscribe

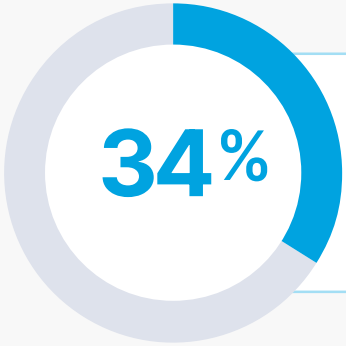
Human Resource Support

Human Resource and Health and Safety support are essential for driving growth in Victorian businesses.

By addressing skill shortages, reducing staff turnover and enhancing employee wellbeing, businesses can build a more stable and productive workforce. Focusing on HR training and workplace safety helps manage staff more effectively and fosters a healthier, more engaged team, ultimately contributing to business success.

Apart from the primary challenge of rising business costs, Human Resource and Safety issues combined make up 57% of the challenges faced by Victorian businesses, these include:

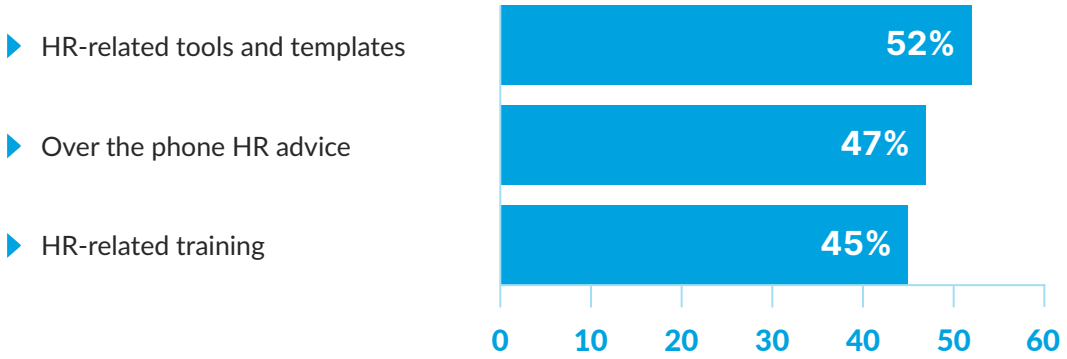
- **23%** Staff skill shortages
- **17%** Difficulty attracting or retaining staff
- **17%** Employee mental health and wellbeing



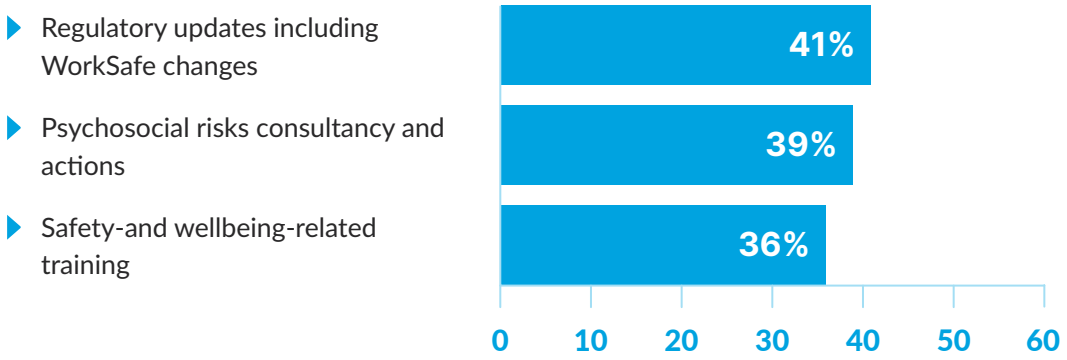
Consequently, over a third of Victorian businesses requested support in Human Resources and Workplace Health and Safety.

Support businesses are seeking

The most significant need is for:



In the safety domain, the highest demand is for:



How the Victorian Chamber can help



HR and Workplace Relations Support

Lean on us for expert Workplace Relations and HR support, including Fair Work Commission representation, workplace investigations, enterprise bargaining and compliance advice. We offer tailored HR packages, employee engagement strategies and training to enhance workplace culture and productivity, ensuring your business effectively manages both routine and complex HR issues.

Find out more



Mental Health and Safety Support

We are here to help you build and maintain safe, productive and thriving workplaces. Our tailored safety and mental health packages are designed to meet your business needs and enhance productivity while ensuring the safety of your workforce. We provide expertise and training in occupational health and safety, mental health and manage workers' compensation.

Find out more



Workplace Tools and Templates

Streamline your business operations and HR processes with our expertly crafted tools and templates. With over 100 templates, letters and fact sheets designed by experts, you have access to the best HR solutions and business resources at your fingertips. Current and compliant resources covering areas like Fair Work Act Legislation, recruitment checklists, Employment Contracts, workplace behaviour policies, and salary benefit guidelines.

Find out more

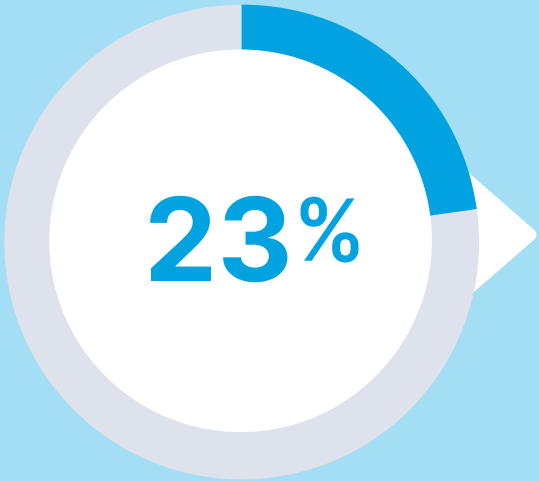
Training and Development

Victorian businesses are investing in growth by upskilling their staff, with a strong emphasis on leadership development.

Many are choosing face-to-face training to help employees transition into managerial and senior leadership roles.



Businesses are addressing staff challenges by focusing on upskilling their existing workforce





23% face staff skill shortages and **17%** have difficulty attracting or retaining staff



36% are seeking to grow by investing in employee development, making engagement, retention and training top priorities

Key areas of workforce upskilling and development focus:

- **48%** are upskilling employees into managerial roles through targeted training
- **39%** are focused on executive leadership and coaching
- **37%** are investing in risk and compliance training, highlighting the importance of regulatory awareness
- **33%** are focusing on sales and customer experience training
- **31%** are building stronger project management skills across teams



How the Victorian Chamber can help

Training courses designed for business success

Leadership and Management Training

We help you and your staff reach your full potential with our personalised leadership and management courses.

Find out more

Future Leaders Program

A curated selection of our top operational management courses, designed to guide new and tenured managers to achieve organisational success.

Find out more

Project Management Training

From establishing new teams to implementing innovative technologies, project management training can ensure effective execution.

Find out more

Risk and Compliance Training

We empower organisations to meet legal obligations and build safer, more resilient workplaces through expert-led training across a wide range of risk and compliance courses.

Find out more

The impact, in their words

From Manager to Leader Training



"This was my favourite course so far. Jane enabled us to work through each element of the training, encouraging stories and examples all the way through, and empowered us to come up with plans and workable strategies to move forward within our own businesses."

Stacey Fedden
NECA Education & Careers

Find out more

Day to Day Management and Supervision of Staff Training



"A brilliant one-day course for anyone in a people management role. Kate delivered the content in a clear, engaging style that really encouraged group participation. I'm heading back to work feeling much more confident in my ability to manage my team effectively."

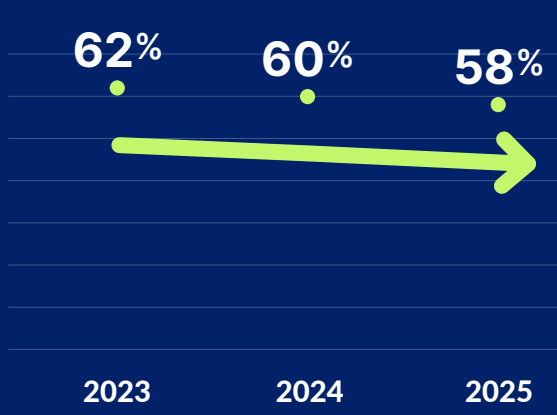
Jono Finch
Maroondah Golf Park

Find out more

Changing Trends

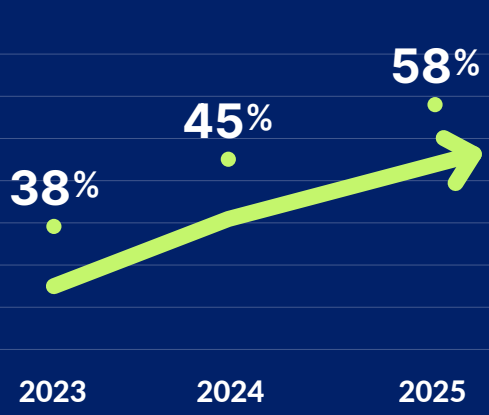
Victorian Business Pulse **2023-2025**

Revenue growth remains the top priority for Victorian businesses, but focus is softening



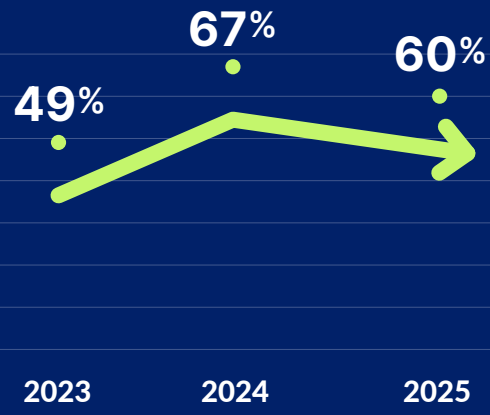
While still the leading objective, the proportion of Victorian businesses prioritising revenue growth has gradually declined, suggesting a diversification of business objectives.

Surge in **marketing and brand awareness** as a growth driver



The importance of marketing and brand awareness has grown dramatically, now nearly matching revenue growth as a core focus for Victorian businesses.

Cost of doing business remains the top challenge, but pressure is easing



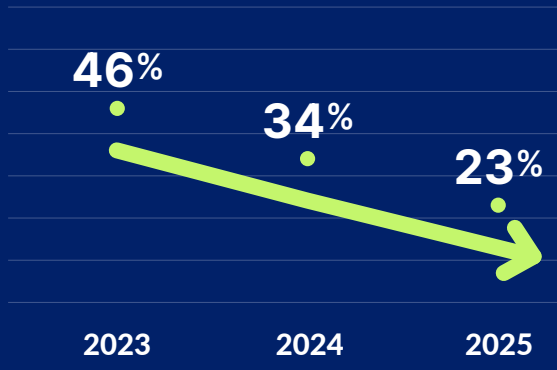
The spike in 2024 has moderated, but operational costs are still the most significant challenge for businesses.

Changing Trends

Victorian Business Pulse **2023-2025**

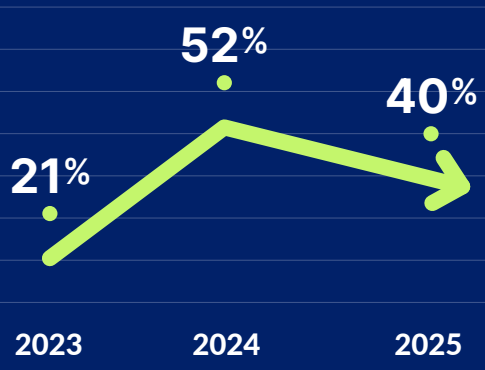
Victorian businesses are adapting to a rapidly changing environment by shifting their focus from traditional revenue growth to marketing, digital transformation and workforce development. While cost pressures and skill shortages remain, the growing emphasis on AI, technology adoption and practical support signals a forward-thinking, resilient business community.

Staff skill shortages: a declining but persistent challenge



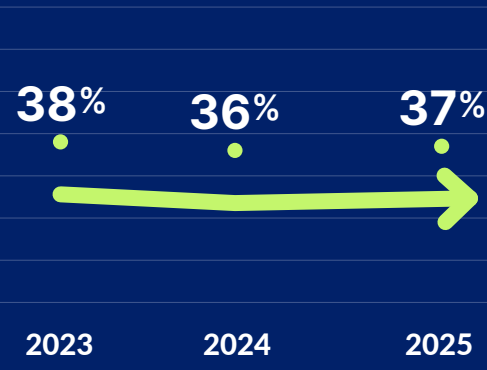
Skill shortages are steadily decreasing as a reported challenge, indicating success in workforce development, changing hiring needs or possible AI adoption driving efficiencies.

Marketing and brand awareness as the leading enabler



After a sharp rise in 2024, marketing remains the top growth enabler for Victorian Businesses.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): Rising as a key enabler



AI rose from the fifth highest enabler in 2023 to third in 2024 and second in 2025, reflecting renewed growth and its expanding role in digital transformation across Victorian businesses

Enable your business to strive and thrive

The Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry is your trusted partner in business success

Whether you're seeking training and development, workplace relations and HR, health, safety and wellbeing, programs and grants, international growth, networking and events, or guidance in emerging areas like AI and cyber security - we're here to help your business strive and thrive.

Ready to unlock your business's full potential? Connect with us today.

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