

Module 3 Factsheet

Overview

This module provides an overview of the distribution of co-operatives across Canada, offering insights into provincial and regional trends. The module examines the impact co-operatives have on the Canadian economy and some of the notable impacts co-ops have regionally.

Co-ops at a glance

According to the 2019 data on Canadian Co-operatives, there are 5,812 non-financial co-operatives across the country. The provinces with the most co-operatives are Quebec (2,578) and Ontario (1,104). The majority (53%) of co-ops have no employees, while 44% employ 1-99 people, and only 3% employ 100 or more.

The top five industries for number of co-ops are:

1. Real estate, rental, and leasing (housing co-ops): 33.6%
2. Wholesale and retail trade: 14.2%
3. Other services and public administration: 12.9%
4. Health care and social assistance: 8.9%
5. Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting/Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction: 5.9%

Measured by revenue, the top five industries are:

1. Wholesale and retail trade: \$39.2 billion
2. Construction and manufacturing: \$9.5 billion
3. Real estate, rental, and leasing: \$968.5 million
4. Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting and mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction: \$734.9 million
5. Public administration and other services: \$576.1 million

Trends

Most of Canada's co-operatives are very small organizations. The contribution to Canadian GDP by co-operatives is driven by a few very large co-ops. Other noteworthy industry trends include:

- Housing co-ops are concentrated where housing costs are highest: the lower mainland of BC and cities in Ontario and Québec.
- Wholesale and retail trends are driven by regional networks of consumer co-ops and a co-operatively owned wholesalers, including the Co-operative Retailing System in western Canada, Arctic Co-operatives Limited in the North, La



Fédération des Coopératives du Nouveau Québec (FCNQ), and Sollio Cooperative Group.

- Manufacturing revenue is mostly attributed to large agri-business, particularly dairy co-ops like Gay Lea Foods, Agropur, and Exceldor cooperative.

How people co-operate, the types of co-operatives they form, and the industries co-operative businesses work in vary considerably. Models that exist in some provinces are not permitted in others, and regulations in one jurisdiction allow a certain type of co-op to excel. This explains some of the following concentrations:

- Multi-stakeholder co-operatives in Québec
- Co-operatively-owned community halls in Saskatchewan
- Infrastructure co-operatives (i.e., electrification and rural water) in Alberta
- Fishing co-operatives in the northern prairies

Indigenous co-operatives in Canada

Research shows there are approximately 123 to 133 Indigenous co-operatives in Canada. The majority are in the territories (the 33 members of the Arctic Co-op network), northern Québec (14 members of the FCNQ), and the prairies (predominantly 20-50 fishing co-ops). Canada's first Indigenous co-operative is the Kinoosao Fishers' Co-op, formed in 1945 by fishers at Reindeer Lake, Saskatchewan.

Recommended resources

The Government of Canada's Resource [Canadian Co-operatives](#)

Fiona Duguid and George Karaphillis' report [*Economic Impact of the Co-operative Sector in Canada*](#)

The Special Committee on Co-operatives report [Status of Co-operatives in Canada](#)

