

Empowering Small Business

The Impact of Technology on U.S. Small Business



About the Chamber Technology Engagement Center

Our nation's future economic success, growth, and competitiveness depends on a thriving and innovative technology sector. Every company is a tech company and data-driven innovation is the foundation of businesses across the country. The Chamber Technology Engagement Center (C_TEC) tells the story of technology's role in our economy and advocates for rational policy solutions that drive economic growth, spur innovation, and create jobs.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is the world's largest business organization representing companies of all sizes across every sector of the economy. Our members range from the small businesses and local chambers of commerce that line the Main Streets of America to leading industry associations and large corporations.

They all share one thing: They count on the U.S. Chamber to be their voice in Washington, across the country, and around the world. For more than 100 years, we have advocated for pro-business policies that help businesses create jobs and grow our economy.

About Teneo

Teneo is a global advisory firm that works with the leaders of the world's largest and most complex companies, providing strategic counsel across their full range of key objectives and issues. Our teams integrate the disciplines of strategic communications, management consulting, business intelligence, talent development, risk management, digital analytics, corporate governance, government affairs and corporate restructuring to solve for the most complex business and reputational challenges and opportunities. The Firm was founded in June 2011 and now has more than 1,500 employees located in 40 offices around the world.

www.americaninnovators.com www.uschamber.com



Introduction

American small business owners have weathered cascading economic storms over the past 5 years; from the impacts of COVID-19 which the Federal Reserve¹ estimates forced many small businesses in the U.S. to close their doors, to the knockon supply chain disruptions, to staffing shortages, to the rapid rise in inflation. But through these challenges, small business owners have found paths to resilience in part due to the edge provided by the technology platforms that empower efficiency, access to customers, deep insights, and the ability to thrive. And this technology-enabled success has made meaningful contributions to communities and the broader U.S. economy.

To measure the effect that a diverse range of technology platforms has had on small businesses and the economy, the Chamber Technology Engagement Center (C_TEC), working with Teneo Research, conducted a nation-wide survey and econometric analysis of the U.S. small business ecosystem to explore:

- How small businesses are currently using various technology platforms
- What the impact of the use of technology is on business operations and key business metrics
- How adoption of technology is setting up small businesses for success in the future
- What are the tangible benefits—in terms of economic activity and the support of American jobs—that small businesses' use of technology has for the broader U.S. economy

1. https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/feds/files/2020089r1pap.pdf



The results found that not only have various technology platforms played a critical role in helping small business owners in the U.S. survive recent economic turbulence, but those small businesses that fully embrace technology are outcompeting their peers and are more optimistic about the future, despite continued headwinds.

- 93% of small businesses are using at least one technology platform
- When small businesses use technology they contribute \$17.7 trillion² to the U.S. economy
- When small businesses use technology they support the jobs of more than 99 million Americans³
- 86% of small businesses say technology helped their business survive during COVID
- 83% of small businesses plan to increase their use of technology platforms
- 63% of small businesses plan to use the most advanced tech, from AI to VR
- 77% of small businesses say they would struggle to survive without access to their technology platforms

- 2. See Methodology for econometric modeling.
- 3. See Methodology for econometric modeling.

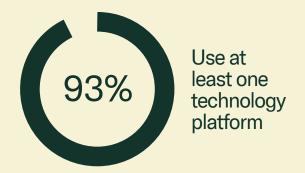


Detailed Analysis of Findings

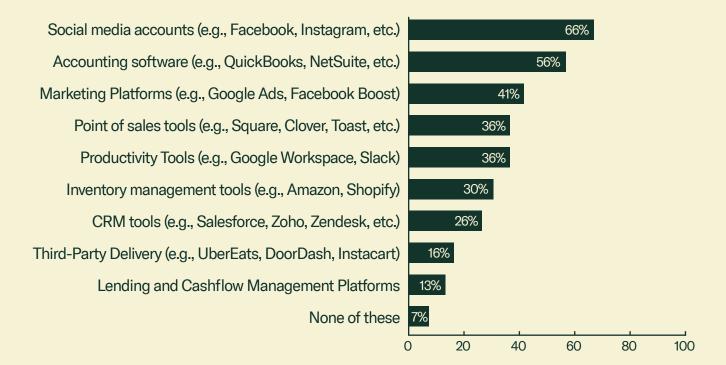
How U.S. Small Businesses Are using Technology Today

Small businesses are nearly universal in their adoption of a wide range of technology platforms. More than 9-in-10 small business owners in the U.S. report using at least one type of technology platform in the running of their business.

The most prevalent use of technology across American small businesses is the use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram that are used by two-in-three small businesses (66%).



This is followed by the use of accounting software applications used by 56% of small businesses, and marketing platforms that are used by 41% of small businesses.



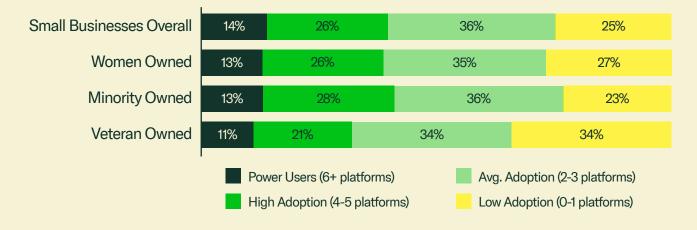
Furthermore, it is rare for a small business owner to employ just one of these platforms; three quarters of small businesses (75%) employ more than just one platform simultaneously. Instead, small businesses exist on a continuum, with small business owners using an average of three technology platforms to power their business, a quarter (26%) are high-adoption users deploying four to five technology platforms, and more than one-in-ten (14%) are power users who are those companies employing six or more different technology platforms to power their businesses.

Adoption is also strong among women, minority and veteran-owned businesses with two-in-five women and minority businesses utilizing four or more platforms, and nearly one-third of veteran-owned businesses (32%) doing the same. Additionally, these groups

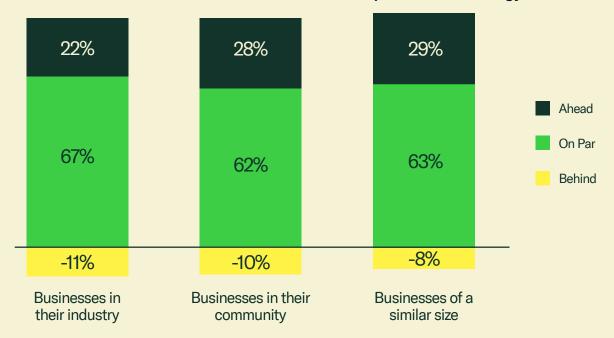
show intense adoption with more than one-inten being power users, employing six or more different technology platforms. However, veteran-owned businesses lag other types of small businesses, with more than one-in-three showing low technology adoption rates. This represents an opportunity for policy makers and the tech industry to stepup and boost the adoption of technology platforms to help small veteran-owned businesses compete on a level playing field.

Most small business owners believe that their use of technology is on par with peers. However, fewer than one-third believe they are ahead of similar sized businesses (29%), other businesses in their industry (22%), or other businesses in their community (28%) indicating there is room for further adoption.

Number of Technology Platforms Used by Small Businesses

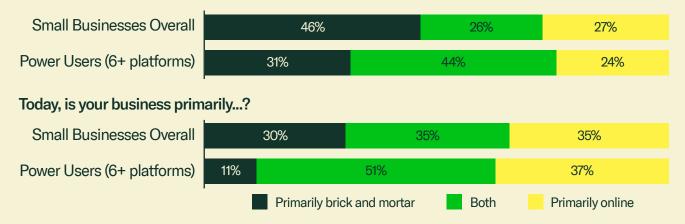


How Small Businesses View Their Adoption of Technology



Technology platforms have allowed small businesses to evolve their business model over time, enabling many to adapt from primarily brick and mortar operations at the time the business was founded, to an online or hybrid approach today. Small businesses who are tech power users (6+ platforms) show the most significant change over time from brick and mortar to omnichannel.

When your business was founded, was it primarily...?



Across subgroups, about four-in-ten high-tech adopters that are woman-owned (38%), minority (37%) or veteran-owned (41%) businesses say they operate primarily online today.

Women and minority-owned businesses that are high-adopters show the sharpest pivot to online or hybrid approaches: 38% of women and 34% of minority-owned businesses were primarily brick and mortar when founded, with fewer than half as many (16%) operating as primarily brick and mortar today. By comparison, their low-adopter counterparts show a less intense shift: for women, 53% of low adopters were primarily brick and mortar when founded, compared to 42% today; among minority-owned businesses, 39% of low adopters were primarily brick and mortar when founded, compared to 25% today.

31% of high-adopter veterans operated as primarily brick and mortar when founded, with only 19% primarily operating this way today. Their low-adopter counterparts show a less significant shift, from 50% when founded to 38% operating as primarily brick and mortar today.

While small businesses may not always see themselves at the vanguard of technology utilization, it is clear they are embracing tech platforms across a wide range of functions within their operations. Small businesses are most likely to be using technology platforms to reach their customers, process sales and assist in back office operations, such as accounting and payroll.

How Small Businesses Use Technology

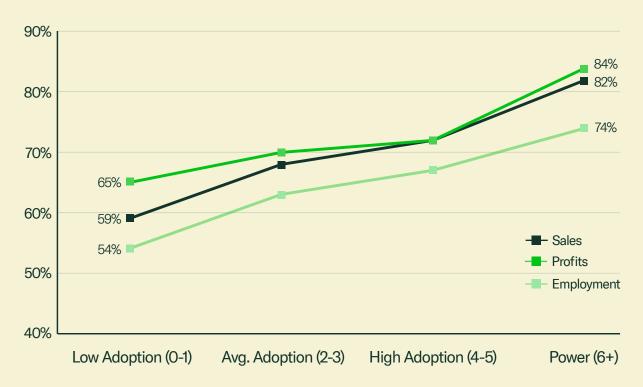


The Impact of Technology on Small Business Growth and the U.S. Economy

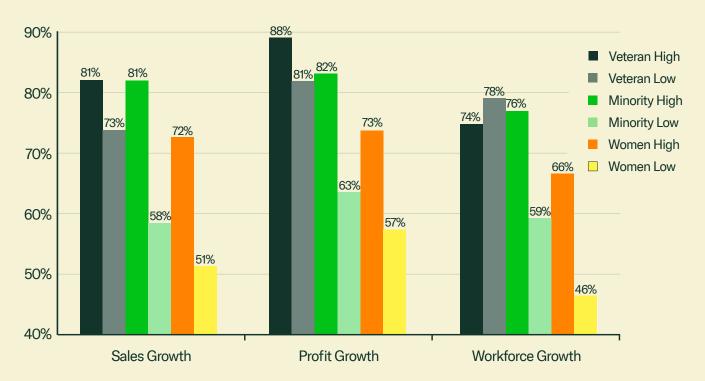
The differential of technology adoption has real and meaningful impact for American small businesses. Small businesses that incorporate more technology platforms in how they operate are more likely to have seen growth in their sales, profits, and employment since 2020.

Similarly, women, minority, and veteran high-adopters show more growth across sales, profits, and workforce since 2020 than their low-adopter counterparts. In fact, veteran-owned small businesses that are high adopters of technology actually outperform the national average for sales, compared to small businesses overall, reinforcing the size of the potential impact boosting tech adoption among veteran-owned businesses could have.

Small Businesses That Grew Since 2020

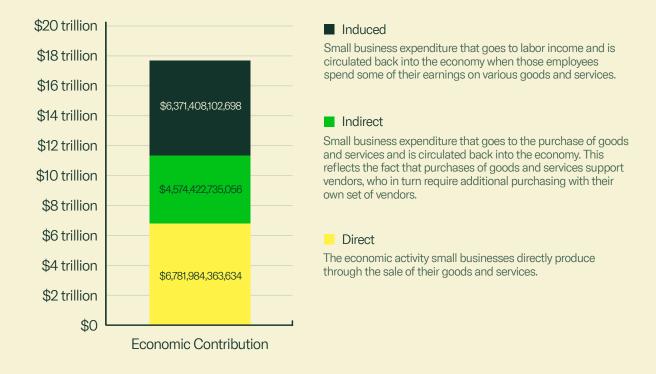


High vs. Low Adopter Growth Across Subgroups Since 2020



Taken together, when small businesses use technology, it delivers real tangible benefits in terms of direct and indirect economic activity, along with the support of a significant number of jobs here in the U.S. Small businesses that deploy technology platforms in the running of their operations directly employ or support the employment of 99,795,364 jobs in the U.S. This includes workers directly employed by these businesses (45,216,072 jobs), as well as supporting 19,797,446 jobs indirectly (through business expenditure going to the purchase of goods and services and circulating back into the economy) and 34,781,847 induced jobs (jobs supported by small business employees' wages circulating back into an economy through their individual spending on various goods and services). These 99+ million jobs help support local communities, fellow small businesses, as well as jobs in larger corporations, creating a virtuous cycle of beneficial job growth.

We see a similarly outsized benefit when we look at the economic activity generated by U.S. small businesses when they utilize technology in the running of companies. In this case, when we look at the economic activity of all U.S. small businesses that deploy technology, we see a total of \$17.7 trillion contribution to the economy annually. This is composed of \$6.78 trillion in direct economic activity, \$4.57 trillion in indirect activity, and \$6.37 trillion in induced economic activity.



Women and minority-owned businesses that utilize technology also show significant contributions to employment and the economy. Women-owned businesses that use technology directly employ or support the employment of nearly 21 million jobs in the U.S. (20,913,772 jobs). Nearly half of this is through direct employment (9,971,491 jobs), with another 3,838,081 jobs supported indirectly and an additional 7,104,200 induced jobs.

Minority-owned businesses using technology show similar employment impact, supporting a total of 18,992,480 jobs. Half of these are through direct employment (9,367,239 jobs), with another 3,404,995 jobs supported indirectly and an additional 6,220,246 induced jobs.

In turn, women and minority-owned businesses that utilize technology show a \$6.64 trillion contribution to the economy, nearly evenly contributed by each: over \$3.5 trillion from women-owned businesses and over \$3.1 trillion from minority-owned.

Americans have increasingly embraced the Gig Economy and during the pandemic the flexibility of opportunities like rideshare as well as grocery and food delivery provided a lifeline. Small businesses that use delivery apps for example supported 16.11 million jobs (7.62 million directly, 3.08 indirectly, and 5.41 induced). The total economic contribution from these small businesses amounted to \$2.76 trillion (\$1.06 trillion directly, \$709 billion indirectly, and \$991 billion induced).

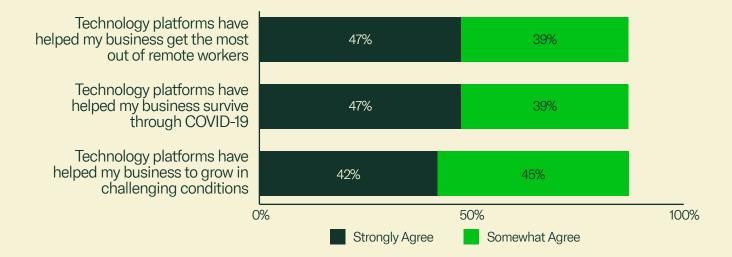
*Economic Contribution from...



^{*}Veteran-owned business econometric projections not available

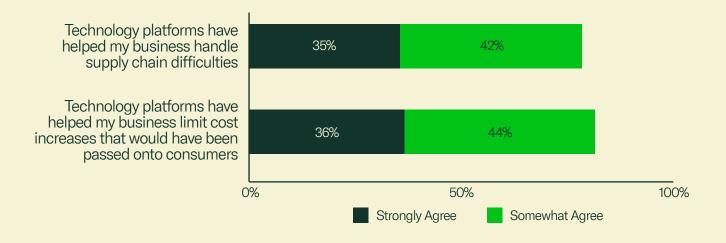
Impact of Technology on Small Business Operations

Beyond these broad economic benefits that technology platforms empower for small businesses, we also see a wide range of positive benefits that accrue directly to the businesses themselves. For example, when it came to navigating their businesses through the COVID-19 epidemic, small business owners widely recognize the ways that technology platforms helped their business get the most from their employees working remotely (86% agree technology helped with this challenge). This rings true especially for veteran small business owners (88% agree) as well as women and minority owners (85%).



This support was so critical that 86% of small business owners in the U.S. believe that technology platforms have helped their business survive through COVID-19 and and 87% believe technology has helped them grow in challenging conditions. Women, minority, and veteran-owned businesses agree technology platforms enabled their businesses to survive the pandemic (86%, 87%, and 90% agree respectively). Again, this is further evidence of the greater benefit that veteran-owned small businesses see from their use of technology.

As the economy began to recover following the initial waves of the pandemic, small businesses continued to leverage technology to weather new disruptions. 77% of small business owners agree that technology platforms have helped their business handle supply chain difficulties. This in-turn has meant that American small businesses—empowered by technology—have been able to be a stabilizing force against rising inflation. This is especially prevalent among veteran (82% agree) and minority small business owners (80%), as well as 75% of women owners.

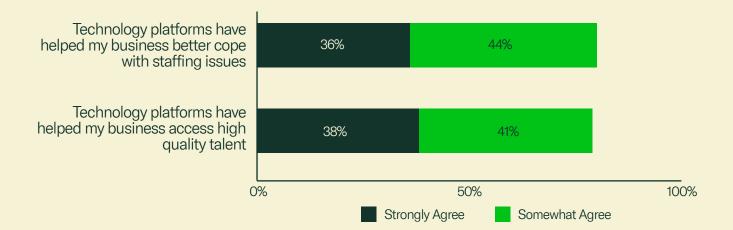


Through technology usage, 80% of U.S. small business owners report being able to limit cost increases and, in turn, pass along those savings to their customers, with many women (78%), minority (82%), and veteran owners (78%) also sharing this sentiment.

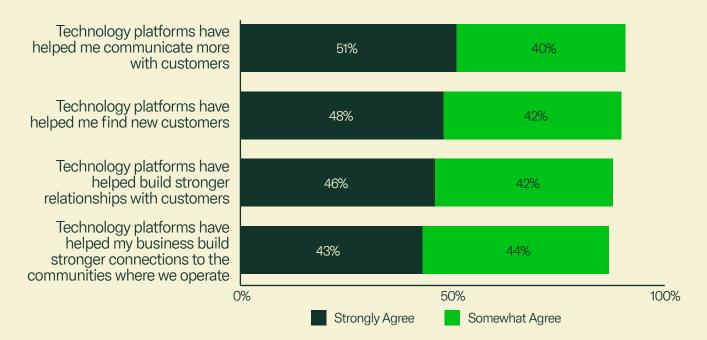
Technology is credited with helping small businesses compete in the war for talent. Eight-in-ten small businesses agree that tech platforms help their businesses better cope with staffing issues (80%) and provide access to finding high quality talent (79%).

Similar levels of women (80%), minority (82%), and veteran owners (77%) agree technology helped with staffing issues and in accessing high quality talent (79% women, 81% minority, 74% veterans).

In addition to keeping rising costs low for their customers, small business owners credit technology with helping them to build their customer base, cultivate and grow customer relationships, and foster strong connections with the broader community. Nine-in-ten small business owners say technology has helped them to find new customers (90%). They also agree that technology platforms allow them to communicate with existing customers more (91%) and build stronger customer relationships (88%). 87% agree that the benefits of technology go beyond their customer base and help them build a stronger connection with their local community.

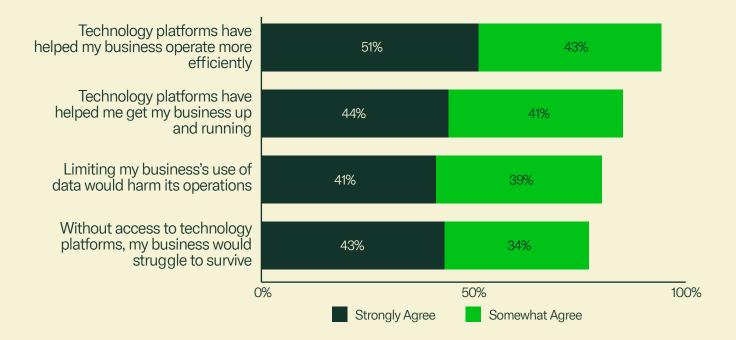


Benefits of Technology Identified by Small Businesses



Even at the earliest stages of a small business's life, we see a pivotal role for technology; 85% of small businesses report that technology platforms helped to get their businesses up and running, and 94%—nearly all small business owners surveyed—report that technology helps them run their businesses more efficiently.

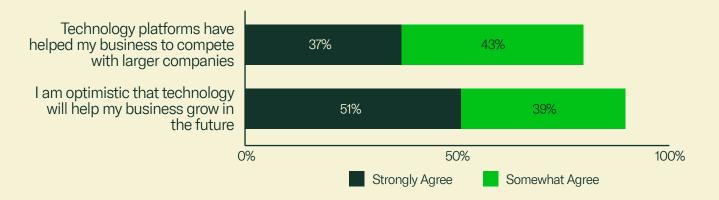
Women, minority, and veteran owners also report technology benefiting the earliest stages of their business life, with most agreeing it helped get their business up and running (85% women, 83% of minority owners, 82% veterans). A majority also agree technology helped their businesses run more efficiently (92% women and veterans, 94% minority).



These platforms have become so essential to how small businesses operate that 80% of U.S. small business owners indicate that, if their use of data were limited, it would harm their operations, and that without access to these technology platforms, 77%—more than three in four—report their business would struggle even to survive.

This critical role of technology holds especially true for women, minority, and veteran owners with most agreeing limited data would harm their operations (80% women and minority owners, 83% veterans). 78% of women and veteran owners and 80% of minority owners agree without access to these platforms, their businesses would struggle to survive.

Technology platforms are not only helping small businesses survive, they are enabling them to thrive. 80% of small business owners credit tech platforms with helping them to compete with larger companies and nine-in-ten (90%) are optimistic that technology will continue to help their business grow in the future.

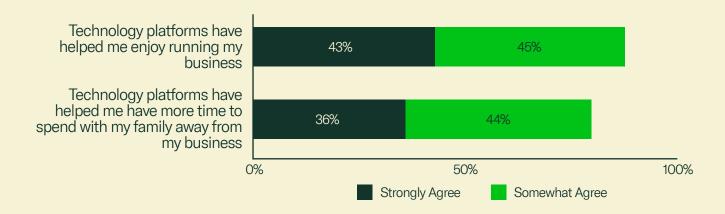


Additionally, 80% of women owners, 81% of minority owners, and 77% of veteran owners agree technology helps them compete with larger companies, with even more agreeing it will help their businesses grow in the future (91% of women, 89% of minority, and 93% veteran owners).

In addition to the benefits technology has to offer their businesses, small business owners are seeing personal benefits of using technology in their effort to find the optimal work-life balance. Nearly nine-inten (88%) business owners say that the use of technology platforms helps them

to find more enjoyment in running their business and 80% agree that it helps them have more time to spend away from their businesses and with their families, instead.

87% of women and veteran owners and 88% of minority owners also say technology has helped increase enjoyment in running their businesses, with most also agreeing the use of such platforms enables them to spend more time with their familiars (80% of women, 86% of minority, and 78% of veteran owners).



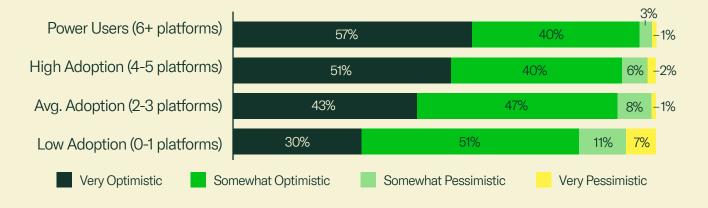
The Outlook from American Small Business Owners

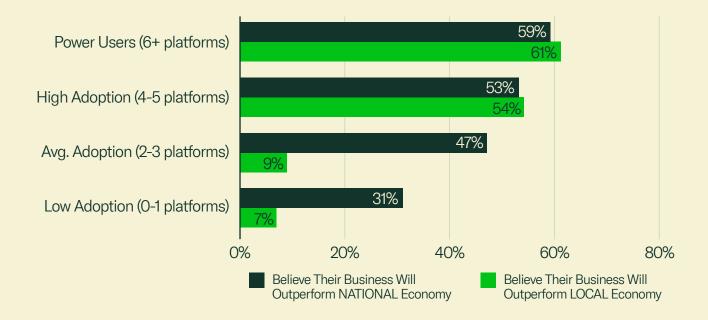
With so much uncertainty around the future of the economy, one essential question is whether utilizing this array of technological tools helps to provide greater clarity and optimism within the small business community.

While small business owners have a generally optimistic outlook for the future of their own businesses over the next two to three years—89% are either very or somewhat optimistic—that faith in their prospects is enhanced based on their utilization of technology; the more technology they employ, the more optimistic they become. Those small businesses adopting technology the most (6 or more platforms) are more than twice as likely as those with low adoption (0 to 1 platforms) to be very optimistic.

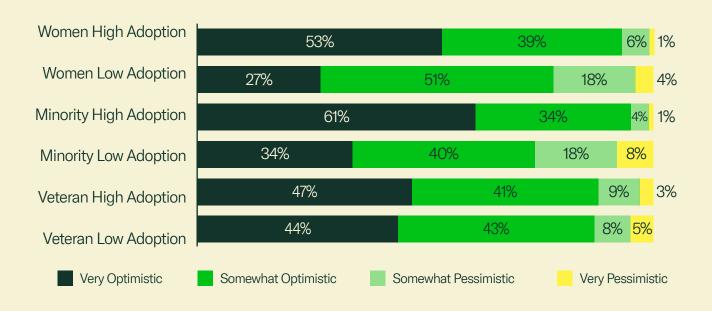
Among small business owners, confidence in their ability to outperform the national and local economy also increases dramatically with their level of tech usage.

Small Business Optimism





In looking at important subgroups, optimism overall remains high. Additionally, women and minority owners who utilize more technology are nearly twice as likely to feel very optimistic for the future of their business, while veteran owners show more consistency between adoption levels and optimism.

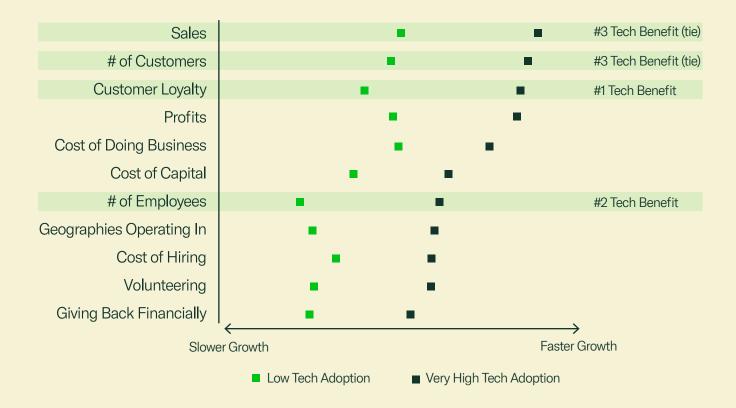


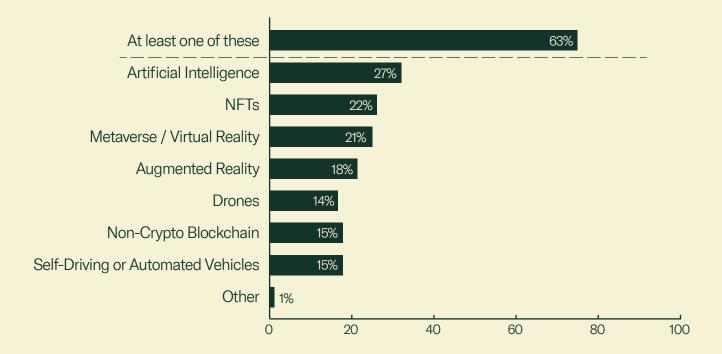
The enhanced optimism expressed by small business owners demonstrate how the use of technology bolsters stronger growth and economic activity from those power users of technology platforms. When we look at projected growth in everything from customer acquisition, to sales, to employment, to profits, we see that small businesses using a wide range of technologies are expecting faster growth over the next two to three years when compared to businesses that have adopted fewer technologies.

The biggest boosts to business owners' outlook come in the areas of customer loyalty and growth, sales, and their knock-on ability to increase their employee base.

As a result, we see that small businesses plan to continue making investments in their use of technology with the majority (83%) reporting they will boost their use of technology platforms across their business in the next two to three years, and similar proportions of women (84%), minority (85%), and veteran owners (82%) saying the same.

This investment extends into some of the most advanced and emerging technologies, ranging from AI to automation. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of small businesses plan to adopt the latest technologies in the future, with AI at the top of their list.





Implications

- Small businesses leveraging technology platforms are reaping the benefits in terms of growth, operational efficiency, and customer relationships.
- U.S. small business owners overall have an optimistic outlook for their business; the use of technology is coupled with higher levels of confidence in their future.
- Recognizing these benefits, small business owners have plans to invest in more technology for their business in the near term.
- Women, minority, and veteran-owned businesses are aligned with the broader small business population on key metrics, with high users especially optimistic about the role technology will play in their businesses' futures.

Policies to Promote a Thriving Tech-Enabled Small Business Ecosystem

Technology in part has enabled small businesses to stay competitive and survive recent economic challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic, inflation, and supply chain disruptions. Without the right policies in place to encourage a virtuous cycle of technology development and adoption, small businesses could lose their ability to adapt and confront the new challenges of the 21st century economy. C_TEC offers the following recommendations to policymakers to ensure America's small businesses fully realize their potential through digital tools and platforms.



Enacting Smart National Data Privacy Legislation

With four-in-five small businesses stating that limiting access to data could be harmful to their operations, it is vital that Congress pass a national privacy law that protects all Americans equally and preserves the benefits of a modern digital economy. A recent report by ITI highlighted that a fifty-state patchwork of privacy laws could cost the economy \$1 trillion and specifically \$200 billion for small businesses. Small businesses are disproportionately impacted by compliance costs associated with a confusing and potentially conflicting state-by-state regime of privacy obligations.

Congress must pass a national privacy law that provides strong preemption of state privacy laws to provide a clear set of rules of the road for businesses to follow.

A national privacy law should also provide adequate protections for small business who could have difficulty competing against larger, more sophisticated entities. Data protections laws should grant consumers robust rights but restrictions or bans on the use of broad categories of data as well as allowing for abusive class action lawsuits against tech companies and end users could deprive small businesses of the benefits of digital tools like advertising.



Preventing Overexposure to Liability

In 1996 Congress enacted Section 230 of the Communications Act, which generally prevents interactive computer services from being liable for the activities of third-party content. Since 1996, the internet and data-driven economy has thrived. Congress should reject calls to outright repeal this landmark law.

4. https://itif.org/publications/2022/01/24/50-state-patchwork-privacy-laws-could-cost-1-trillion-more-single-federal/



Fair Competition Policy

There are some who contend that America's longstanding antitrust laws should be used to specifically target America's technology sector. Congress should refrain from passing competition legislation that singles out particular companies for enforcement and those that deprive the companies that offer small business the tools that are making them competitive of due process.



Promoting the Gig Economy

As outlined in the report, small businesses using third-party delivery platforms have benefited in terms of growth, employment, and revenue. Governments should avoid unnecessarily imposing limitations on flexible work arrangements or preventing app-based delivery companies from communicating valuable, flexible earnings opportunities to the public.



A National Artificial Intelligence Strategy

Artificial intelligence and machine learning systems are also tools that provide the necessary and important data analytics small businesses use to compete through tasks like hiring and tailoring services. For small businesses to fully see the benefits of the technology, the United States must adopt a robust national Al strategy that addresses the workforce, rules for Al, and global competition.



Upskilling the Digital Workforce

Government must promote a 21st century workforce that includes small business owners, such as making investments in STEM and computer science education to prepare the next generation of digital tool developers.



Connecting All Americans

Broadband access is essential for small businesses to utilize many digital tools and connect with consumers across the country. Policymakers must make targeted investments in high-speed broadband in unserved areas and appropriately address broadband affordability for low-income Americans. To maximize federal investments, policymakers should streamline permitting requirements and avoid costly regulatory mandates such as public-utility style rules for broadband and domestic content requirements.

Methodology

Working closely with C_TEC, Teneo Research conducted a two-part study of U.S. small business owners comprising a survey followed by econometric analysis to build on the survey results.

The national survey was fielded online between February 22 and March 23, 2022 among 1,755 owners of small businesses in the U.S., including oversamples in: AZ, CA, FL, GA, OH, PA, and WA. For the purposes of this study, a small business is defined as having fewer than 250 employees, and not in the agricultural sector. The survey has a credibility interval of ±2.3% at the 95% confidence interval.

The econometric study extrapolated the survey findings using input-output modeling and IMPLAN approaches to demonstrate the direct, indirect, and induced effects of technology to empower economic benefits by small businesses.

The role of input-output models is to determine the linkages across industries in order to model out the magnitude and composition of the spillover impacts to all industries of technology adoption in any single industry. Thus, the total economic impact of a firm is the sum of its own direct economic footprint plus the indirect and induced effects generated by that direct footprint.

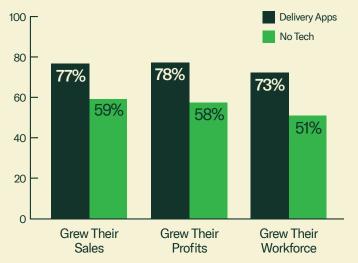
IMPLAN represents an industry standard approach to assess the economic and job creation impacts of economic development projects, the creation of new businesses, and public policy changes. IMPLAN is one of several popular choices for regional input-output modeling. Each system has its own nuances in establishing proper location coefficients. IMPLAN uses a location quotient to determine its regional purchase coefficient (RPC). This represents the proportion of demand for a good; this assessment helps determine the multiplier for the U.S. and select states. Additionally, IMPLAN also accounts for inter-institutional transfers (e.g. firms to households, households to the government) through its Social Account Matrix (SAM) multipliers. IMPLAN takes the multipliers and divides them into 440 industry categories in accordance to the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) codes. For more information on IMPLAN, please go to http://www.implan.com/.

Appendix A: Small Business Scorecards Based on Tech Platform Usage



Key Numbers Among Small Businesses Using Delivery Apps

Small businesses that make use of delivery apps are more likely to have experienced growth in sales, profits, and employees over the past year.



The biggest benefits small businesses that use delivery apps realize from technology:



Technology helps the business operate more efficiently



Technology helps the business communicate more effectively with their customers



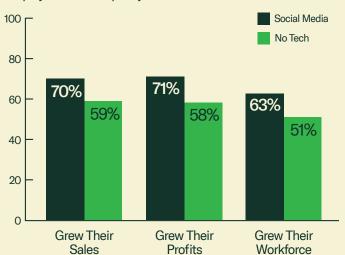
Technology helped the business survive during COVID-19



Technology helps the business find new customers

Key Numbers Among Small Businesses Using Social Media

Small businesses that make use of social media are more likely to have experienced growth in sales, profits, and employees over the past year.



The biggest benefits small businesses that use social media realize from technology:



Technology helps the business operate more efficiently



Technology helps the business communicate more effectively with their customers



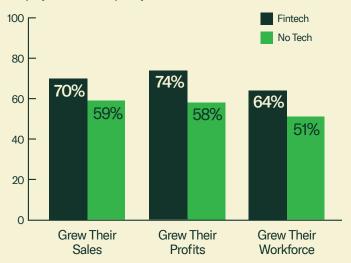
Customers appreciate having access to technology when interacting with the business



Technology helps the business find new customers

Key Numbers Among Small Businesses Using Fintech

Small businesses that make use of fintech platforms are more likely to have experienced growth in sales, profits, and employees over the past year.



The biggest benefits small businesses that use fintech realize from technology:



Technology helps the business operate more efficiently



Technology helps the business communicate more effectively with their customers



Customers appreciate having access to technology when interacting with the business



Technology helps the business find new customers

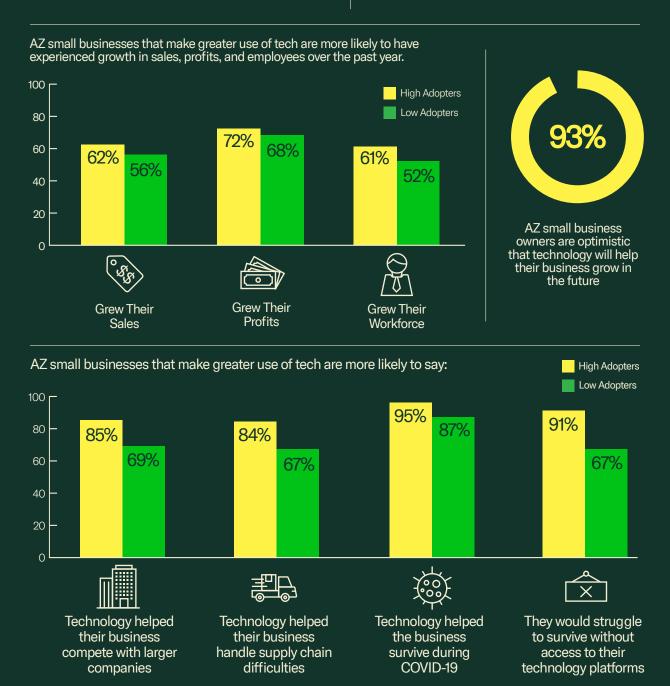
Appendix B: State-Specific Small Business Scorecards



Key Numbers in Arizona



AZ small businesses that make use of technology contribute \$232 billion to the U.S. economy AZ small businesses that make use of technology support more than 1 million jobs



Key Numbers in California

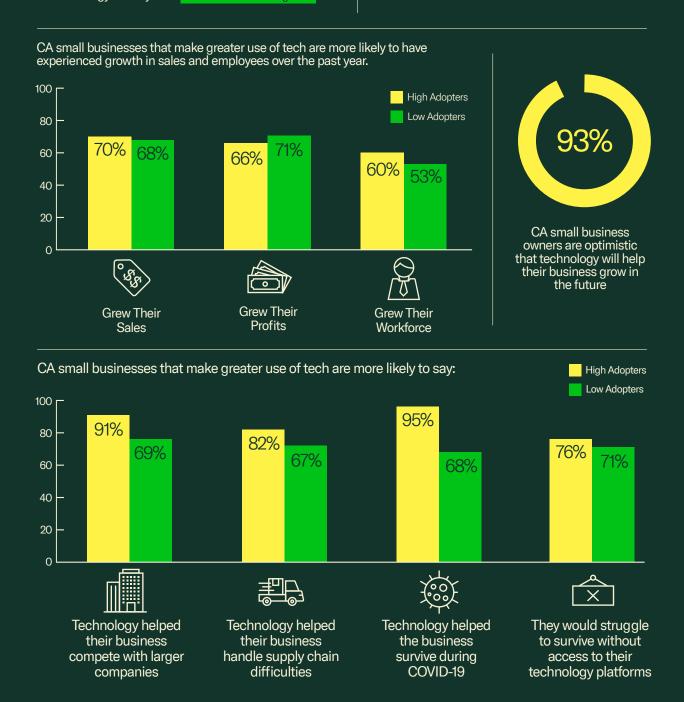
95% of CA small businesses
currently use at least 1
technology platform

84% plan to increase their
use of technology in 2-3 years

California 95%
National Avg. 93%

California 84%
National Avg. 83%

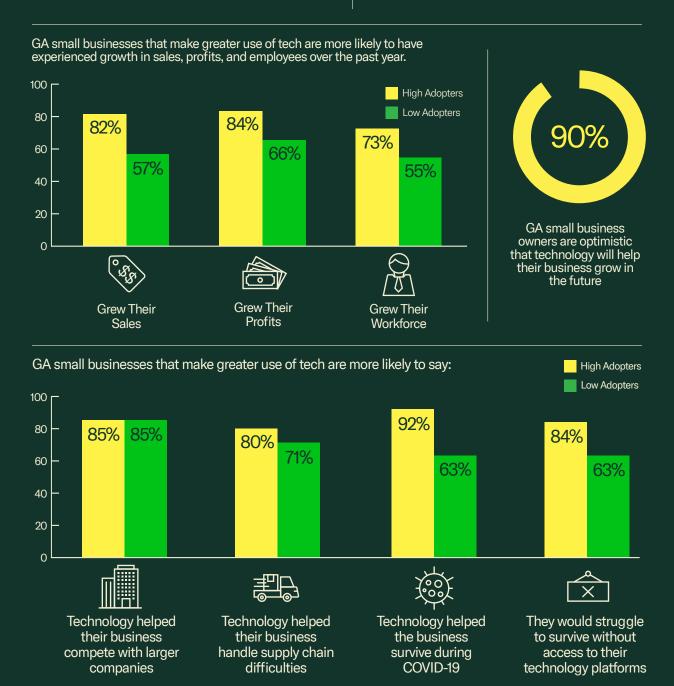
CA small businesses that make use of technology contribute \$1.9 trillion to the U.S. economy CA small businesses that make use of technology support more than 10.9 million job



Key Numbers in Georgia



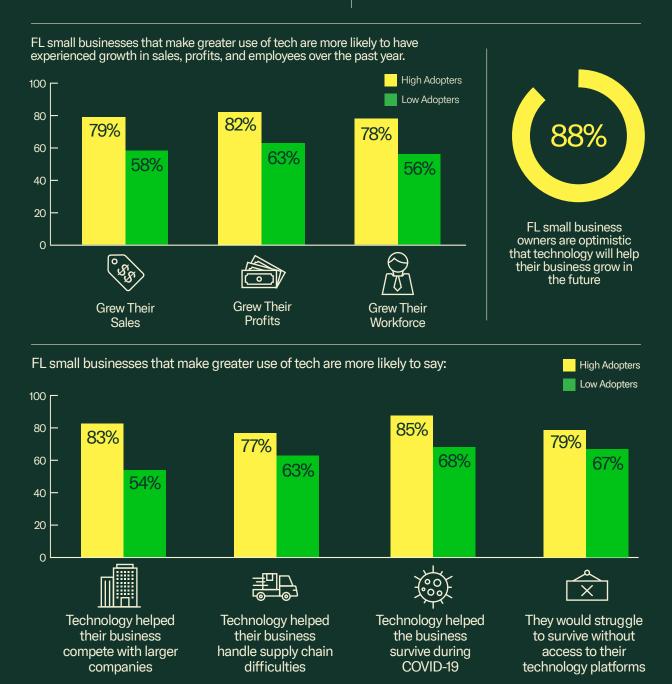
GA small businesses that make use of technology contribute \$375 billion to the U.S. economy GA small businesses that make use of technology support more than 2 million jobs



Key Numbers in Florida



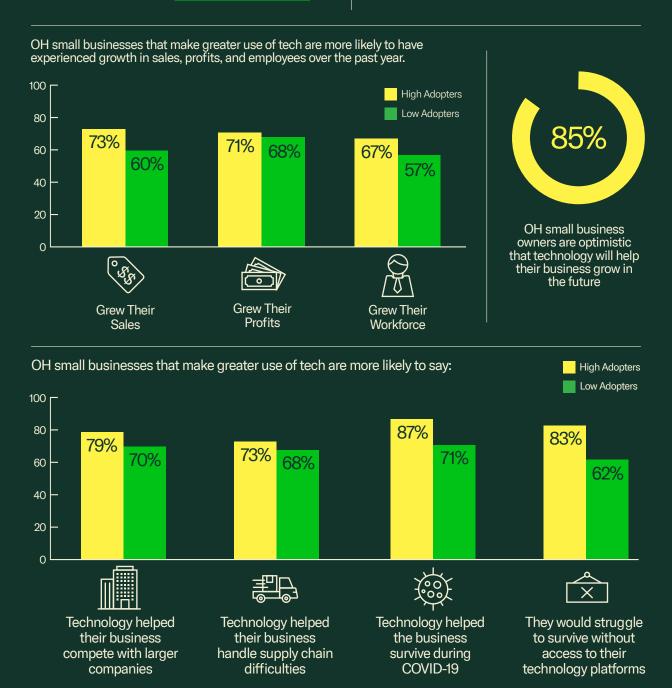
FL small businesses that make use of technology contribute \$783 billion to the U.S. economy FL small businesses that make use of technology support more than 5 million jobs



Key Numbers in Ohio



OH small businesses that make use of technology contribute \$403 billion to the U.S. economy OH small businesses that make use of technology support more than 2.5 million jobs



Key Numbers in Pennsylvania

93% of PA small businesses currently use at least 1 technology platform

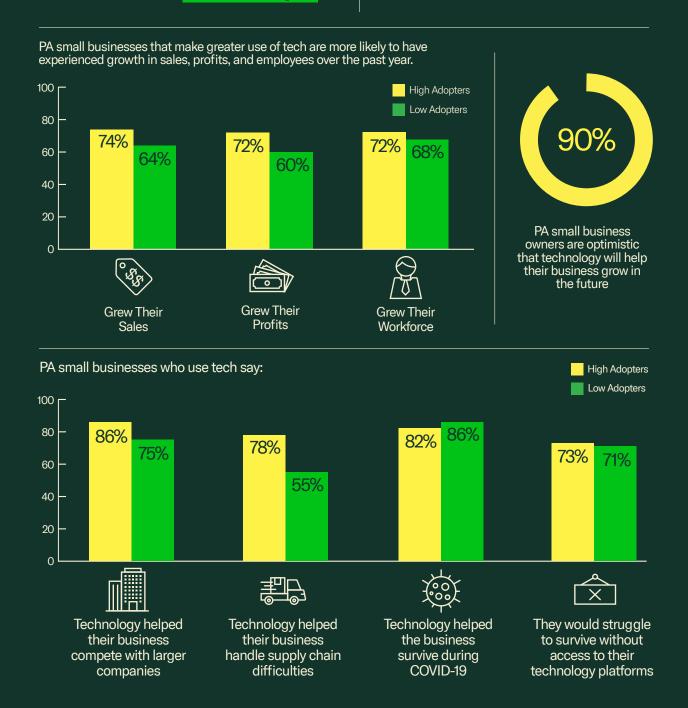
84% plan to increase their use of technology in 2-3 years

Pennsylvania 93%

National Avg. 93%

National Avg. 83%

PA small businesses that make use of technology contribute \$470 billion to the U.S. economy PA small businesses that make use of technology support more than 2.8 million jobs



Key Numbers in Washington

96% of WA small businesses currently use at least 1 technology platform

Washington 96%
National Avg. 93%

87% plan to increase their use

Washington 87%

WA small businesses that make use of technology contribute \$343 billion to the U.S. economy WA small businesses that make use of technology support more than 1.9 million jobs

