



ENTREPRENEURIAL MOTIVATIONS AND TRAINING UPTAKE AMONG BLACK ENTREPRENEURS

Research Brief

WHAT THIS RESEARCH IS ABOUT

Is owning a business enough, or do black entrepreneurs need the right training to make it thrive? Black Albertans turn to entrepreneurship because they face systemic barriers, including reduced access to financial capital, racial exclusion, a lack of social support, and structural discrimination in labor and credit markets.

» The Black population in Alberta is the fastest-growing demographic, increasing by **nearly fivefold** from 1996 to 2016.

Entrepreneurial motivations describe the underlying reasons that encourage individuals to pursue business ownership in a specific geographic context. These motivations may arise from aspirations for greater independence, work flexibility, self-fulfillment, and economic prosperity (Solesvik, 2013). They can also affect a business' success by driving its capacity for growth, expansion, and innovation (Caliendo et al., 2023).

Business-related training helps entrepreneurs develop the skills and knowledge needed to improve business performance and long-term success. Understanding what motivates entrepreneurs to pursue training can help policymakers and support organizations increase participation and design more effective programs. Few studies have examined how different motivations influence participation in training among Black entrepreneurs. Predominant research focuses on the impact of education and training on entrepreneurial intentions and start-up activities (Boukamcha, 2015; Hassan et al., 2021; Lyons & Zhang, 2017).



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Black entrepreneurs play an increasingly important role in Alberta's economy but continue to face barriers to business growth. This study examined how different entrepreneurial motivations influence decisions to take relevant business training by conducting an online survey of 215 Black entrepreneurs. The findings showed that entrepreneurs motivated by passion and business opportunities were more likely to pursue training. In contrast, those motivated primarily by wealth or flexibility/independence were less likely to do so. These results can help policymakers, educators, and community organizations design targeted, culturally relevant training programs that improve the success and sustainability of Black-owned businesses.



WHAT THE RESEARCHERS DID



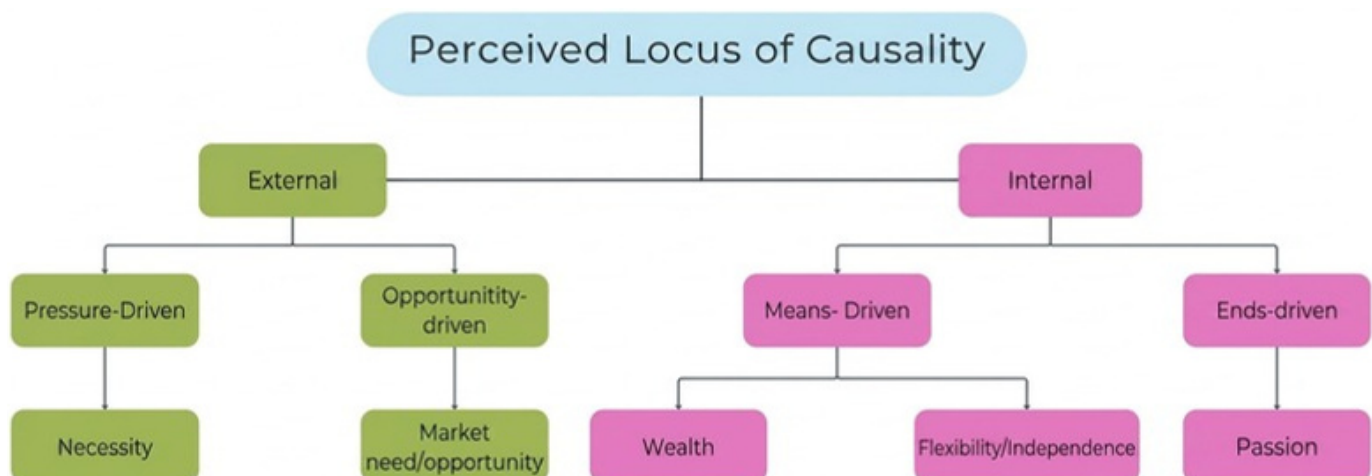
To understand the impacts of entrepreneurial motivations on training pursuit among Black entrepreneurs, the researchers examined existing research and survey data from 215 Black entrepreneurs. The survey data was collected as part of a collaborative project between the Pan African Centre for Collaboration and Africa Centre. Black entrepreneurs in Alberta registered with Africa Centre were eligible to complete the online survey. The findings from the survey complement similar previous studies on Black entrepreneurs. The central question was:

How do the startup motivations of Black entrepreneurs in Alberta influence their decisions to embark on relevant training for their business?

The researchers began by looking at previous literature on motivations and what different theories exist:

- ▶ **Push-pull theory** suggests that people become entrepreneurs either because they are pushed by necessity, such as unemployment, or pulled by opportunities, such as pursuing a profitable idea.
- ▶ **Mixed embeddedness theory** suggests that entrepreneurship is shaped by both individual characteristics and the broader social, economic, and institutional environment in which entrepreneurs operate (Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Kloosterman et al., 1999).
- ▶ **Necessity vs. opportunity theory** explains that people become entrepreneurs either because they are pushed by limited employment opportunities or pulled by attractive business opportunities and personal aspirations (de Vries et al., 2020).

The researchers group the previous categories into a broader *perceived locus of causality* under the following categories: opportunity-driven (i.e., market need), pressure-driven (out of necessity), means-driven (to increase wealth), and ends-driven (to satisfy a passion). The Locus of Causality synthesizes the above theories into a richer framework that encompasses them.



WHAT THE RESEARCHERS DID



Dependent Variable (Training)

- ▶ Training was measured by whether respondents answered “yes” or “no” to “Have you taken any kind of training or education which could be relevant to your current business?”

Controls

The researchers controlled for individual and business traits linked to entrepreneurial motivations and training:

- ▶ Immigrant status (inferred from area of birth)
- ▶ Gender
- ▶ Age
- ▶ Industry type
- ▶ Operation structure (solo, with a spouse, or with partners).

Independent Variable (Motivations)

- ▶ Respondents were asked to identify the reasons for starting their business. These entrepreneurial motivations were examined using two approaches:

① Motivational types

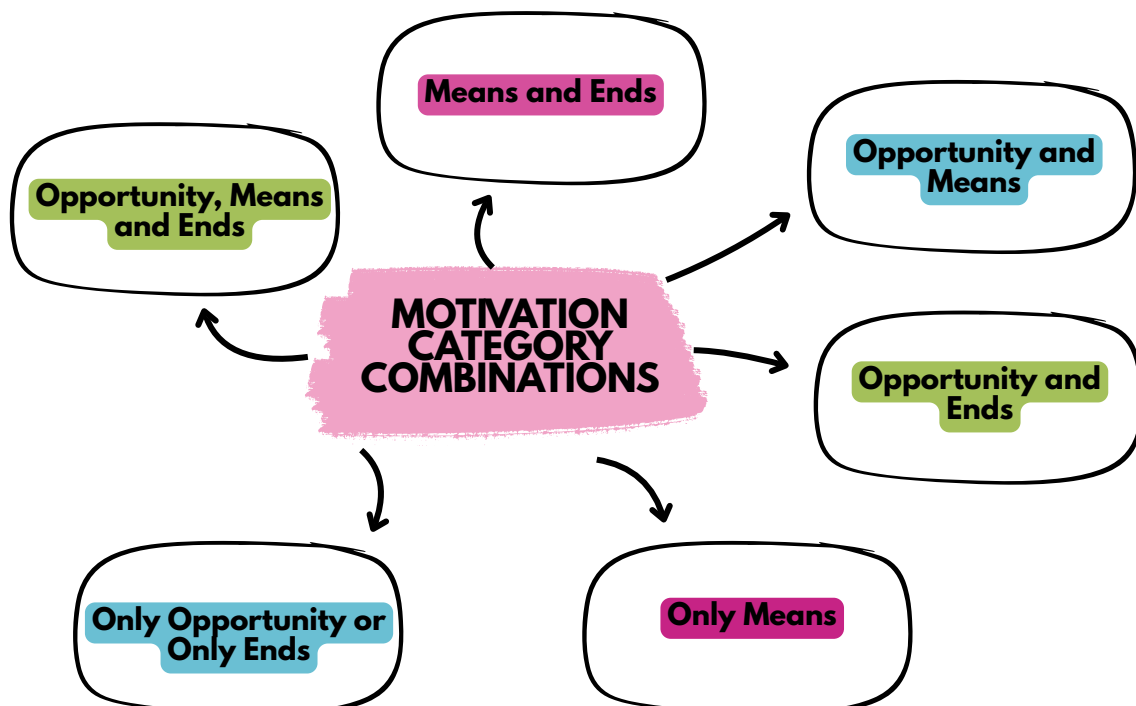
- Necessity motivation
- Market opportunity motivation
- Wealth motivation
- Flexibility/independence motivation
- Entrepreneurial passion

② Mixed Motivational Categories

(most have more than one motivation)

- Opportunity-driven
- Means-driven
- Ends-driven

*The pressure-driven category was excluded due to its small sample size.



ENTREPRENEURIAL MOTIVATIONS AND TRAINING

LOOKING MORE CLOSELY

SAMPLE AT A GLANCE

215 RESPONSES

70% Male

49% Aged 36-45

48% Canadian-born

41% Operate Alone

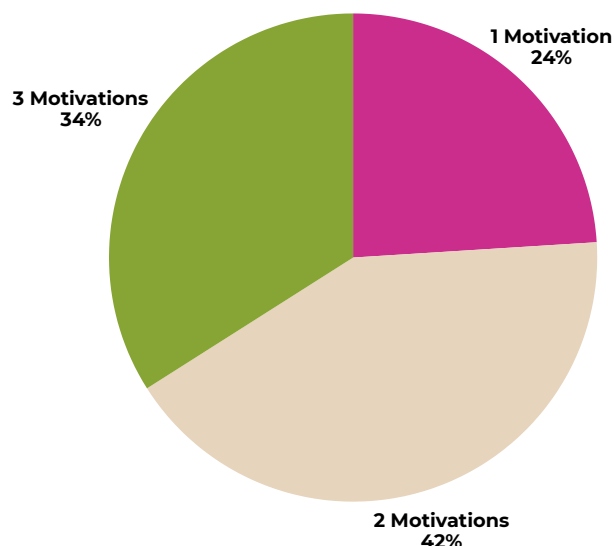


Only **22% (1 in 5)** of respondents report having completed relevant education or training for their current business.

Mixed Motivations

Possessing a mix of startup motivations correlates with higher training engagement. **76%** of respondents identified having 2 or more motivations. These motivations offer broader incentives for entrepreneurs to persist through challenges and build core business competencies.

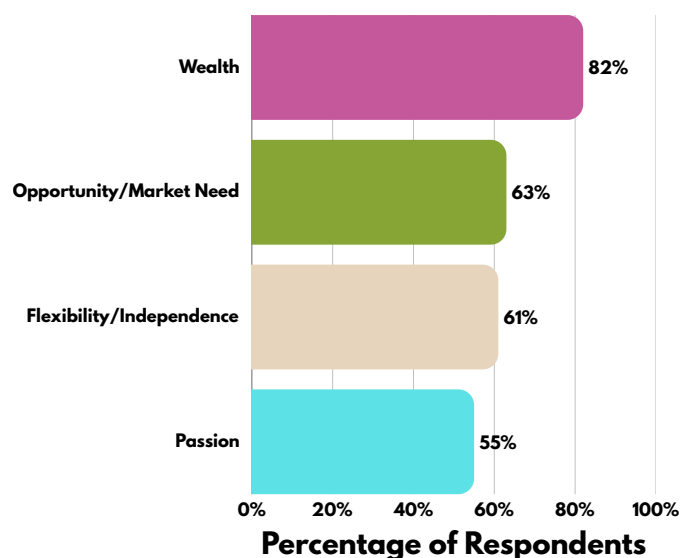
Distribution of motivational categories



Wealth was the Top Motivator for Entrepreneurs

The survey found that entrepreneurs' top motivator was the accumulation of **wealth**. Passion was the lowest motivator, with **55%** of respondents identifying it as a motivator.

Why entrepreneurs started their businesses



LOOKING MORE CLOSELY

Opportunity & Passion Drive Skill Investment

Entrepreneurs motivated by opportunity/market need were **14 percentage points (pp) more likely** to pursue training, while those motivated by passion were **10 percentage points more likely**, after accounting for other characteristics.

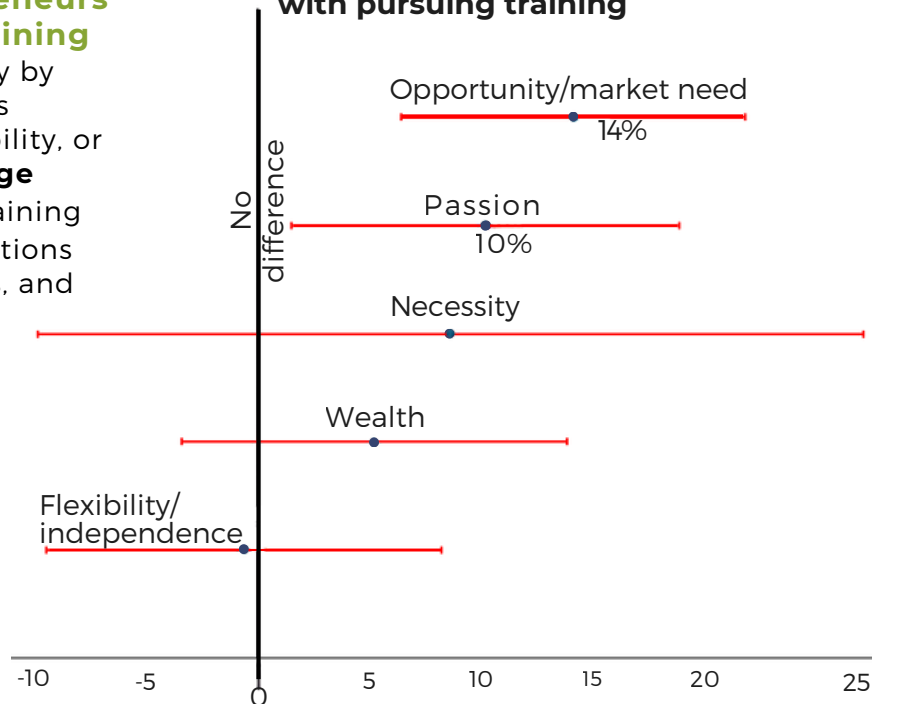
Solely Means-Driven Entrepreneurs were Least Likely to Seek Training

Business owners motivated strictly by means-driven motivations, such as generating wealth, personal flexibility, or independence, were **23 percentage points less likely** to engage in training than entrepreneurs whose motivations encompassed opportunity, means, and ends.

Entrepreneurs with motivations in only one category were less likely to pursue training

Entrepreneurs with only one motivational category were **20 percentage points less likely** to pursue training than entrepreneurs motivated by all three categories.

Opportunity and passion were associated with pursuing training



Change in likelihood of pursuing training (percentage points)



Other factors associated with pursuing training

- +15 pp Female compared with male
- +12 pp Finance/services/transport compared with retail/wholesale
- +29 pp Other industries compared with retail/wholesale
- -30 pp USA-born compared with African-born
- -32 pp Canada-born compared with African-born.

MAKING SENSE

- ▶ The study demonstrates that traditional models, such as "push vs. pull" or "necessity vs. opportunity," are insufficient to capture the complex realities of Black business owners. The perceived locus of causality offers a richer framework for understanding how an entrepreneur's underlying mindset shapes strategic choices, such as human capital investment.



- ▶ The higher rate of training among African-born immigrant entrepreneurs compared to Canadian- and US-born peers suggests African-born owners often leverage business training to overcome structural barriers.



- ▶ The study supports previous research (Cardon et al., 2013; Cardon et al., 2009) by finding that passion-driven entrepreneurs were more likely to pursue business-related training. This reinforces the idea that passionate entrepreneurs are more committed to their businesses and more willing to invest in activities that promote long-term growth and success.



- ▶ Training uptake varies significantly depending on the operational environment. Entrepreneurs in finance, services, and transport show greater training participation due to the fast-paced, highly regulated nature of these sectors.



- ▶ Female Black entrepreneurs are more likely to pursue training than their male counterparts. This trend suggests that women actively use targeted skill-building and formal education to navigate gender- and race-based inequities in venture capital, business networks, and credit markets.
- ▶ The study reinforces previous research by demonstrating that opportunity-driven entrepreneurs are more inclined than pressure-driven entrepreneurs to pursue business training (Block & Wagner, 2010; van Stel et al., 2018.) Proving how opportunity-based motivations encourage greater investment in entrepreneurial development.

ACTION ITEMS

FUTURE RESEARCH

- ▶ Researchers should gather data over a long period of time to investigate how Black entrepreneurs' motivations evolve and to test for causal relationships with training.
- ▶ Differentiate between formal training (i.e. educational credentials and experience) and informal training such as the knowledge and expertise you gain through work and familial experiences.
- ▶ Explore challenges Black entrepreneurs face, such as structural discrimination in labor and credit markets, and how these challenges can be overcome through training opportunities.
- ▶ Directly connect startup motivations and training pursuits to business outcomes, e.g. revenue growth. Demonstrating this would provide business owners and policymakers alike with a compelling, evidence-based business case for continuous training.
- ▶ Research should utilize larger sample sizes to properly evaluate niche categories like "pressure-driven" (necessity) motivations.

SUPPORT FOR TRAINING

- ▶ **Provincial and federal governments** should increase funding for organizations that provide culturally relevant entrepreneurship training and subsidize business development programs for Black entrepreneurs, particularly newcomers and other BIPOC small business owners.
- ▶ Entrepreneurship **training providers**, **community organizations**, and the **Alberta government** should prioritize funding and scaling targeted training and mentorship programs specifically for Black female entrepreneurs.



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SOURCE

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ABOUT PRAN

PRAN is a partnership of universities, community-based organizations, and government organizations interested in the experiences of Sub-Saharan African immigrants and refugees (SSAIs) in Canada. PRAN members are posing new questions and approaches grounded in non-Western ways of knowing to develop valuable evidence-based resources to support SSAIs to thrive in Canada. PRAN is co-funded provided by SSHRC & PRAN partners. www.pran-network.ca



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