

# S M L B I Z N O W

## The Small Business Disconnect:

What Consumers Really  
Think and Feel About  
Small Businesses

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# *Setting the Scene: The Businesses That Fuel Our Lives*

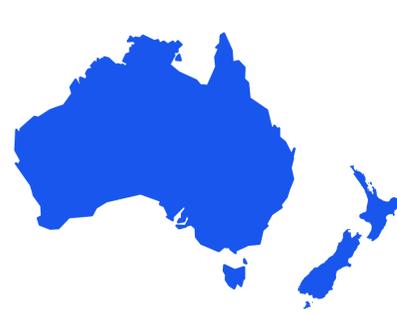
Dunder Mifflin, Cheers, The Rosebud Motel... Small businesses play the main characters in our favorite TV shows. But do consumers see them as simply making cameos in the real world?

We surveyed more than 8,000 consumers across five countries to explore the role small businesses play in our lives and communities – from the way people feel about their favorites to how well they actually understand the sweeping small business landscape.

The plot twist? While our affection for our local watering holes might run deep, the true magnitude and value of the small business ecosystem are still waiting for their turn in the spotlight.



# THE SMALL BUSINESS BLIND SPOT



AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND



CANADA



UNITED STATES



UNITED KINGDOM

**Total small businesses in operation**

**3.1M**

**1.2M**

**33M**

**3.3M**

**% of consumers who correctly identified the total small businesses in their country**

**11%**

**16%**

**19%**

**21%**

What comes to mind when you think of a small business? Maybe it's a local coffee shop, your yoga studio, or that new food truck you saw on TikTok?

Sure, there's the obvious cast of characters. But most people don't realize just how many small businesses are hiding in plain sight. **A blind spot exists** for the businesses that fuel our lives, communities, and economies.

In the United States alone, small businesses account for 99.9% of all enterprises and more than 43% of the annual gross domestic product (GDP).

With this many small businesses in operation, it's likely that nearly half of all the people you know work for one.

Yet, our research shows about **80% of consumers misjudge the number of small businesses in their country** — and many are off by millions.

This small business blind spot isn't just about numbers — **it's about perception.**

When consumers underestimate how many small businesses are operating in their country, they're also underestimating just how much those small businesses contribute to their communities and the economy.

Small businesses are everywhere, and they're essential. But without that widespread recognition, they're at risk of not getting the support they need.



# IT'S PERSONAL: WHY WE SHOP SMALL

When we zoom in, it's a different story. Living without the coffee shop we pop into daily, the barber who gives the best cuts, or the dentist who's been with us since baby teeth seems almost unimaginable.

After all, you want to go where everybody knows your name, right?

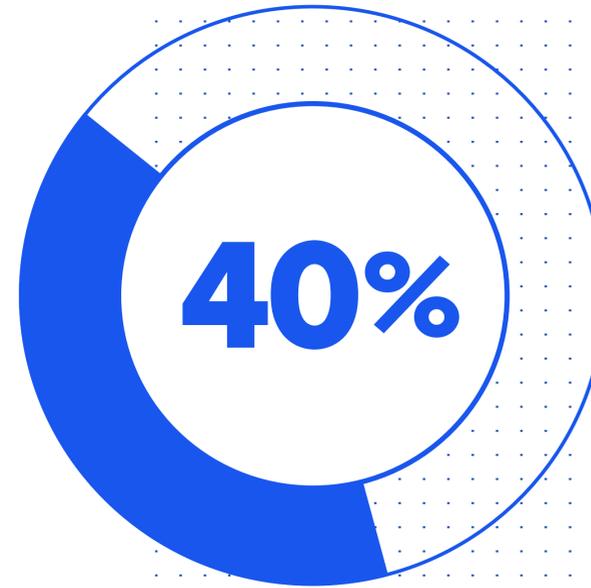
Small businesses aren't just places people shop — they're **spaces where people feel seen, tied into the community, and happy to spend their money.**

According to our research,

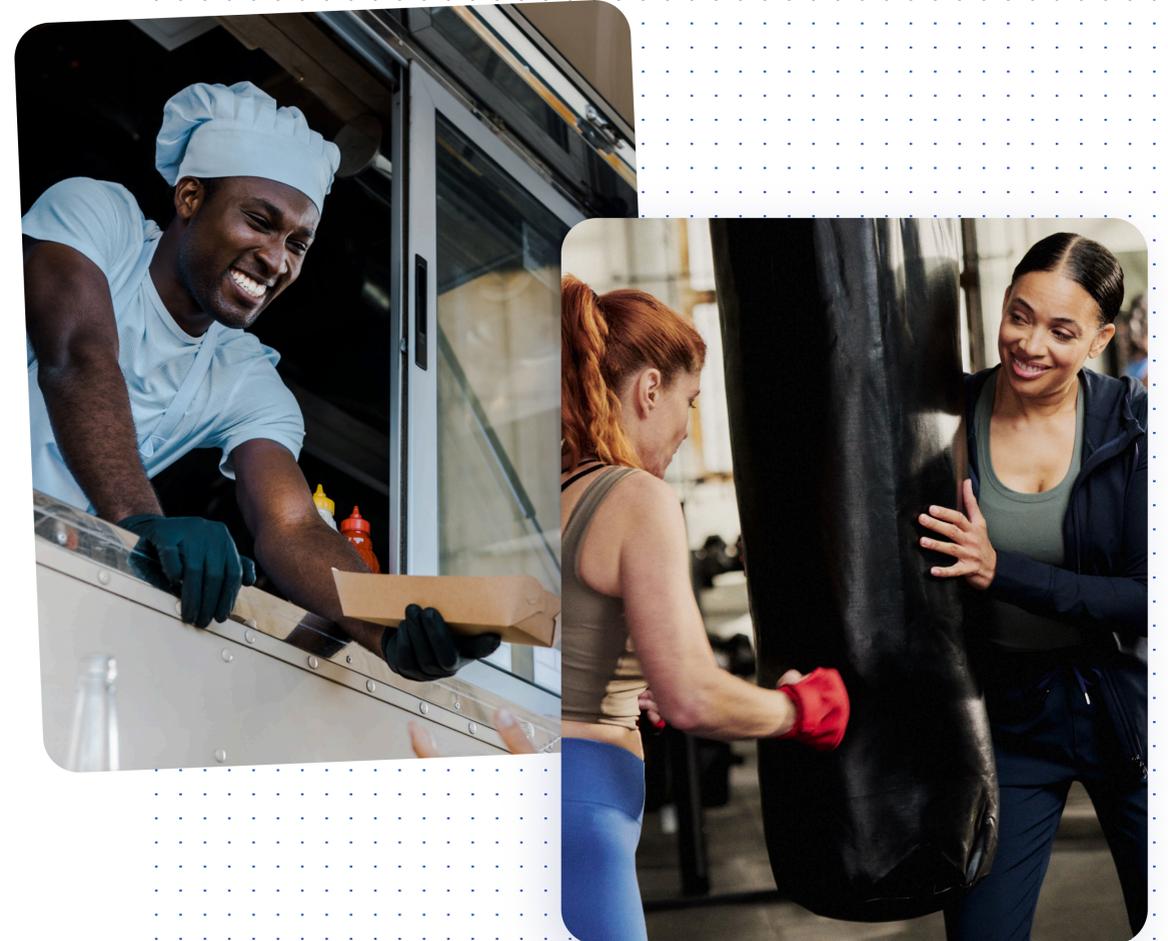
**82% of global consumers say small businesses positively impact their lives, and 83% would be upset if their favorite small business closed.**

Forty percent even say they'd feel devastated.

The motivation to buy from small businesses isn't always about cost or convenience. For most people, it comes down to values — a complex, emotional blend of trust, loyalty, and community.



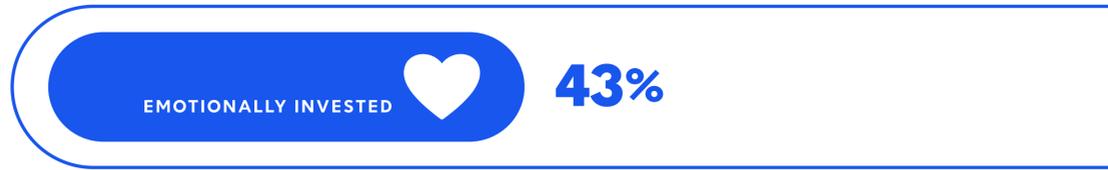
**of consumers would feel "devastated" if their favorite small business closed**



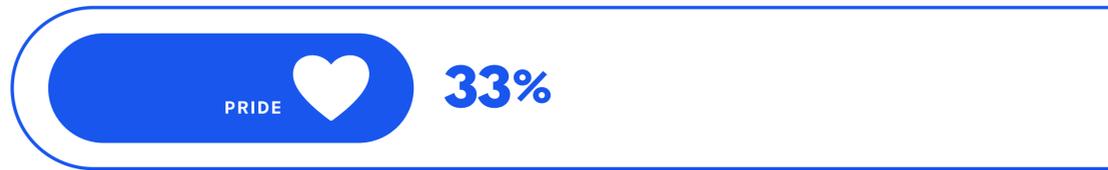
**Consumers say buying from small businesses makes them feel connected, helpful, and proud, with some nuances at play in specific countries.**

At the end of the day, most people shop small because they appreciate the **quality of the products, the personalized customer service, and the positive impact** these businesses have on the local economy. We all want to support our neighbors, friends, and family members, and feel seen in return.

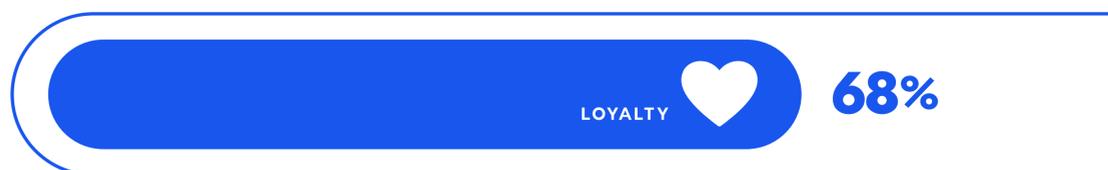
**This emotional investment is undeniable** — even if most people don't fully grasp how wide and deep the roots of the small business ecosystem really run.



Americans are the most emotionally invested, with 43% saying they'd feel devastated if their favorite small business closed — the highest of any country polled.



Canadians are the most likely to feel proud when shopping small (33%), and show slightly higher appreciation for the things that make each small business special.



Australians and New Zealanders lead in putting their loyalty into action, with a strong preference for small businesses over large corporations (68%) and gratitude for the jobs those small businesses create.



UK consumers are more neutral, with convenience (46%) often outweighing emotional drivers, and they're most likely to express no preference between small businesses and larger ones.



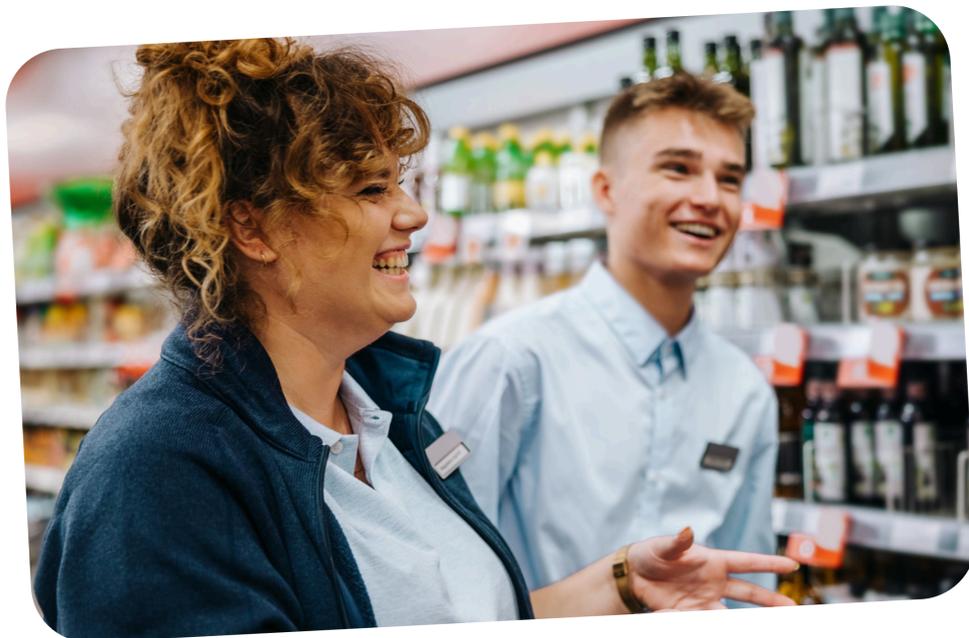
# FROM COFFEE SHOPS TO CORNER STORES:

The Small Businesses We Can't Live Without

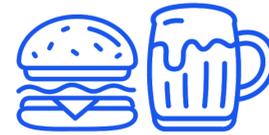
We might not all agree on politics or playlists, but most of us know the name of the local bakery we just can't quit.

Across every country we polled, consumers were clear about which types of small businesses they cherish most. It's the places that fuel our mornings, keep our shelves stocked, feed our families, boost our fitness, and help us find that perfect last-minute gift.

These aren't just businesses. They're staples in our routines — part of the fabric of our lives. The places with familiar faces and orders that are ready before you even get there.



**TOPPING THE LIST OF SMALL BUSINESSES GLOBAL CONSUMERS LOVE ARE:**



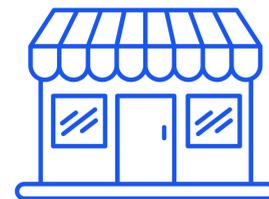
**1. Restaurants, bars, and other food-and-beverage spots**



**2. Grocery stores**



**3. Retail and specialty shops**



**4. Locally owned franchises**



**5. Personal care and wellness facilities**

**About 40% of global consumers say they visit a favorite small business at least once a week.**

These frequent visits go beyond convenience. They're a reflection of loyalty, habit, and comfort.

No matter the country, the takeaway is the same: Small businesses shape our routines, our neighborhoods, and our sense of place. And **while many consumers don't truly understand the scale of the small business economy, they rarely underestimate the personal significance of their favorite spots.**

THE TYPES OF BUSINESSES PEOPLE FAVOR VARY SLIGHTLY BY REGION:



**Americans** lean toward home and auto services and independent restaurants.



**Canadians** gravitate toward grocery stores and locally owned franchises.



**Australians and New Zealanders** are especially engaged with specialty retail, personal care, and professional services.



**UK** consumers show a preference for wellness and retail shops.

# BRINGING SMALL BUSINESSES INTO THE SPOTLIGHT

Small businesses surround us, influencing and supporting our day-to-day wants and needs. But for most global consumers, that big-picture view is fuzzy at best – and we don't always recognize a small business when we see one.

Still, on a personal level, we feel the value, meaning, and human connection small businesses bring to our lives. We feel it when a barista remembers our order, or in the thank-you note slipped into our package from a shop down the street.

Consumers around the world consistently choose small businesses not just for what they sell, but for what they represent: **quality, character, and community.**

So, whether you're a consumer choosing where to spend, a business owner wondering what matters most, or a journalist looking to capture the spirit of local economies, the main message is simple: **Small businesses matter more than most people realize – and much more than they're often given credit for.**

### CONSUMERS CHOOSE SMALL BUSINESSES FOR:

- ✓ **Quality**
- ✓ **Character**
- ✓ **Community**





## **STUDY METHODOLOGY**

Research for [Constant Contact's Small Business Now](#) report was conducted in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Results were aggregated to determine global trends. The report features insights from more than 8,000 consumers (age 18 and older) in those regions. All statistics are representative of their associated demographics. The survey was conducted by [Ascend2 Research](#) in March 2025.

## **CONSTANT CONTACT**

Constant Contact makes digital marketing easy and effective for small businesses and nonprofits around the world. Whether just starting out or managing complex multi-channel campaigns, small businesses benefit from our powerful SaaS platform that delivers a simplified, time-saving marketing experience and better results. With cutting-edge technology, best-in-class deliverability, and award-winning customer support, we help small businesses stand tall.

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