

# 2025 BUSINESS PRESSURES SURVEY REPORT

How business pressures are affecting pharmacy  
professionals' ability to provide quality care



**Ontario College  
of Pharmacists**

Putting patients first. since 1871

May 2026

# Executive Summary

The College continues to hear from pharmacy professionals about business pressures that are impacting their ability to deliver patient care that meets the standards of practice and supports their own well-being.

Following an initial survey and series of town halls conducted in 2024, the College surveyed registrants in the summer of 2025 to gain additional insights. The 2025 survey gauged how business pressures are affecting pharmacy professionals' ability to deliver the care they want to provide their patients. The survey was developed with other provincial pharmacy regulators and pharmacy researchers to allow collective analysis and to contribute to a national picture of business pressures.

In this report from the 2025 survey, the analysis of registrant feedback shows that:

- Nearly two-thirds of pharmacist respondents are still experiencing business pressures.
- More than half of all pharmacist respondents indicated that business pressures affected their ability to meet standards of practice.
- Business pressures are a significant factor affecting the well-being of pharmacist respondents.
- The experience and impact of business pressures differ depending on the type of community pharmacy. Pharmacist respondents working in Corporate/Franchise pharmacies experience significantly higher rates of business pressures and identify more negative effects on patient care and their own well-being versus those working in Independent/Banner pharmacies.

The College intends to conduct future surveys to monitor the ongoing impact of business pressures and support our efforts to advance Strategic Goal 1: Regardless of pharmacy setting, management and business exigencies do not compromise the health and well-being of pharmacy professionals or impede their ability to adhere to the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. It is our hope that the response rate and respondent make-up in the future will allow for a more robust analysis of the experiences of pharmacy professionals working in non-community settings.

## Limitations

*It is important to note that there are limitations with this type of voluntary online survey. Although the number of pharmacist respondents was sufficient to provide meaningful representation for data analysis, demographic differences between the sample and the overall population may limit the ability to generalize the findings to all Ontario pharmacists. Compared to the overall pharmacist population in Ontario, respondents were more likely to be trained in Canada and to work in community settings, and they had also spent fewer years in practice. Given low sample sizes, this report focuses on pharmacist responses with a community pharmacy primary place of practice, unless otherwise noted. For further details on the data shared in this report, [please see the Appendix](#).*

*Aggregate data can hide regional or local variations. Not all Corporate/Franchise pharmacies, for instance, will experience the same type or amounts of corporate pressures. Aggregate data can also only be used to identify trends or patterns. Where comparisons are made between groups, statistically significant differences are identified, and probability values (p-values) are provided. A P-value is used to determine if results are meaningful (significant) or not. Lower values, (typically <0.05) are considered statistically significant and suggest the result is unlikely to have occurred by random chance.*

# Part 1: Quantitative Analysis

For the purposes of this report, community pharmacies were divided into two categories:

- **Corporate/Franchise:** Pharmacies that operate under a central corporate ownership or franchise agreement where key operational decisions — including staffing, workflow, and policy — are largely directed or significantly influenced by a head office or franchisor. Examples of Corporate/Franchise pharmacies include, but are not limited to, Costco, Food Basics/Metro, Loblaw/Drugstore Pharmacy, Rexall, Shoppers Drug Mart, Sobeys/Freshco/Safeway, and Walmart.
- **Independent/Banner:** Pharmacies that are independently owned and retain primary autonomy over staffing, policies, and day-to-day operations, even if they are part of a banner primarily for group buying or branding purposes. Examples of Independent/Banner pharmacies include, but are not limited to, Pharmasave, IDA, Guardian, Whole Health and PharmaChoice.

Researchers and statisticians from Epicore, University of Alberta provided the statistical analysis.

## Who responded to the survey?

There were 1,317 responses, with 1,259 participants providing a valid response regarding primary place of practice (where they provide patient care the most). Given the low sample sizes for pharmacy technicians, students and interns, this report focuses on pharmacist responses with a community pharmacy primary place of practice, unless otherwise noted. As of June 5, 2025, there were 17,153 Part A pharmacists in Ontario. There were 840 pharmacist surveys returned resulting in a response rate of 4.9%.

### Registration Status of Respondents

Registration Status	Number
Pharmacist	840
Pharmacy technician	52
Pharmacy student / Pharmacy intern	9
Pharmacy technician student / Intern technician	10
Other (1 resigned, 2 retired, 2 were pharmacy managers)	5
Did not respond to registration status question	343
	1259

## Percent of pharmacist respondents' primary place of practice



N= 840

\*Independently Owned Pharmacy includes PharmaSave, IDA, Guardian, Whole Health, PharmaChoice, etc.

\*\*Corporate or Community Chain Pharmacies includes CareRx, CATP, Lovell Drugs, Rx Drug Mart, SRx Pharmacy and Neighbourly, but excludes pharmacies already listed such as Costco, Food Basics/Metro, Loblaw/Drugstore Pharmacy, Rexall, Shoppers Drug Mart, and Walmart

Of those who work in a community pharmacy as their primary place of practice, 73% of pharmacist respondents are associated with Corporate/Franchise pharmacies, versus 27% for Independent/Banner pharmacies. Of those working in a Corporate/Franchise pharmacy, 56% work at Shoppers Drug Mart, 12% at Loblaw/Drugstore Pharmacy, 11% at Rexall and the remainder at other Corporate/Franchise pharmacies.

## How many pharmacists are affected by business pressures?

Nearly two-thirds of all pharmacist respondents are experiencing business pressures. Business pressures include the use of activities or tactics in the respondent's place of practice such as operational plans, financial pressures, or volume targets that may impede their autonomy to make decisions in the best interests of their patients.

**65%** of pharmacist respondents are experiencing business pressures.

Nearly **80%** of pharmacist respondents working in Corporate/Franchise community pharmacies experience business pressures versus 31% in Independent/Banner pharmacies.

## Where are business pressures happening?

Business pressures are being experienced in all types of pharmacy settings. In community pharmacies, 66% of all pharmacist respondents are experiencing business pressures. It is important to note that pharmacist respondents in other practice settings, such as hospital/healthcare facilities and long-term care, are also experiencing business pressures though the number of responses from these individuals is too low to draw accurate conclusions.

Community pharmacist respondents working in Corporate/Franchise pharmacies were significantly more likely to experience business pressures than those working in Independent/Franchise pharmacies ( $p < 0.0001$ ).

## How often do business pressures impact patient care?

In the community pharmacy setting, more than half of those who responded indicated that business pressures always or often impacted their ability to meet the standards of practice (including the Code of Ethics) in the past year. And significantly more pharmacists working in Corporate/Franchise pharmacies report that patient care is being impacted frequently, versus those working in Independent/Banner pharmacies.

**51%** of community pharmacist respondents said business pressures always or often impacted their ability to meet the standards of practice (including the Code of Ethics) in the past year.

**63%** of pharmacist respondents working in Corporate/Franchise pharmacies report that business pressures impact patient care frequently (either always or often), while 20% of pharmacist respondents working in Independent/Banner pharmacies report the same ( $p < 0.0001$ ).

## Which aspects of patient care are most impacted by business pressures?

In order to determine which aspects of patient care are most impacted by business pressures, pharmacist respondents were asked to identify to what degree they find it difficult to meet the following domains assessed during College pharmacist practice assessments. These domains are grounded in the standards of practice:



**Patient assessment** (e.g., gather relevant information from patients/their profile, identify drug therapy problems or issues that could affect health outcomes)



**Decision making** (e.g., make decisions to optimize patient outcomes, implement and monitor outcomes)



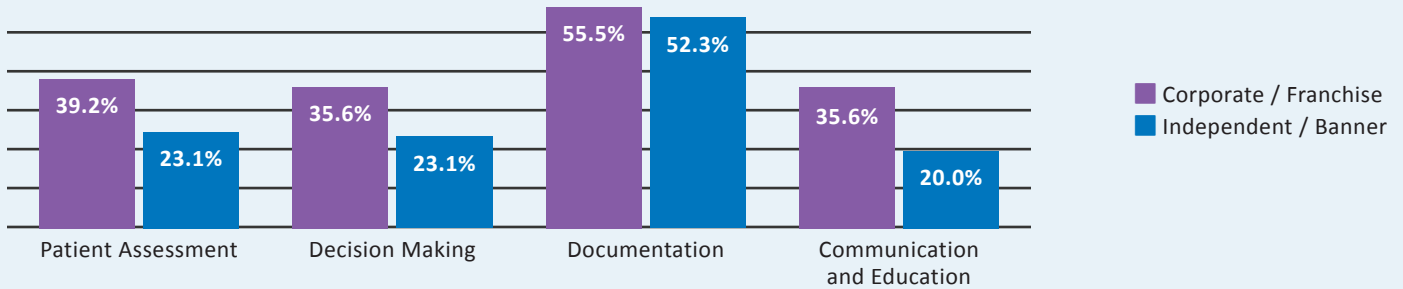
**Documentation** (e.g., document information gathered, decisions made, rationale, follow-up and communication with patients/other healthcare providers)



**Communication and education** (e.g., communicate in a way that is appropriate for the patient or other audience and ensures their understanding)

The following figure shows the distribution of responses from pharmacists working in community pharmacies across each aspect of patient care. The differences between Corporate/Franchise and Independent/Banner are significant for patient assessment and communication ( $p=0.0175$  and  $p=0.0192$ , respectively).

### Percent of pharmacist respondents reporting considerable or extreme difficulty in meeting the standards of practice (by domain) as a result of business pressures by type of community pharmacy



*Patient Assessment N=449 for Corporate/Franchise, N=65 for Independent/Banner; Decision Making N=449 for Corporate/Franchise, N=65 for Independent/Banner; Documentation N=452 for Corporate/Franchise, N=65 for Independent/Banner; Communication/Education N=450 for Corporate/Franchise, N= 65 for Independent/Banner. Respondents were able to provide multiple responses.*

## What other working conditions are being experienced?

Pharmacist respondents are also experiencing several other challenging working conditions. The most common is understaffing to meet labour targets, while lack of breaks and/or lack of mealtimes was second.

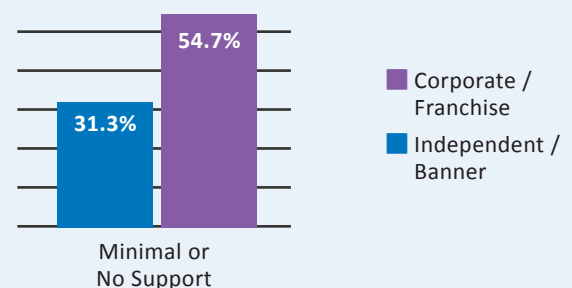
When we look at pharmacies by type of community pharmacy, we see that certain working conditions are being experienced significantly more often in Corporate/Franchise pharmacies than Independent/Banner pharmacies. Key examples include understaffing (in order to meet labour targets) and lack of overlap in professional staff.

## How are business pressures being addressed in pharmacies?

Participants were asked what level of support they receive from their Designated Managers or direct supervisors to manage business pressures.

Almost 55% of pharmacist respondents working in a Corporate /Franchise environment identified that they receive minimal or no support from their Designated Managers/direct supervisors in managing business pressures, compared to 31% of pharmacist respondents working in Independent/Banner environments. Pharmacist respondents working in Corporate/Franchise environments are significantly less likely to report receiving support than those working in Independent/Banner environments ( $p=0.0346$ ).

### Percent of pharmacist respondents indicating minimal or no support from Designated Managers/direct supervisors to manage business pressures by type of pharmacy

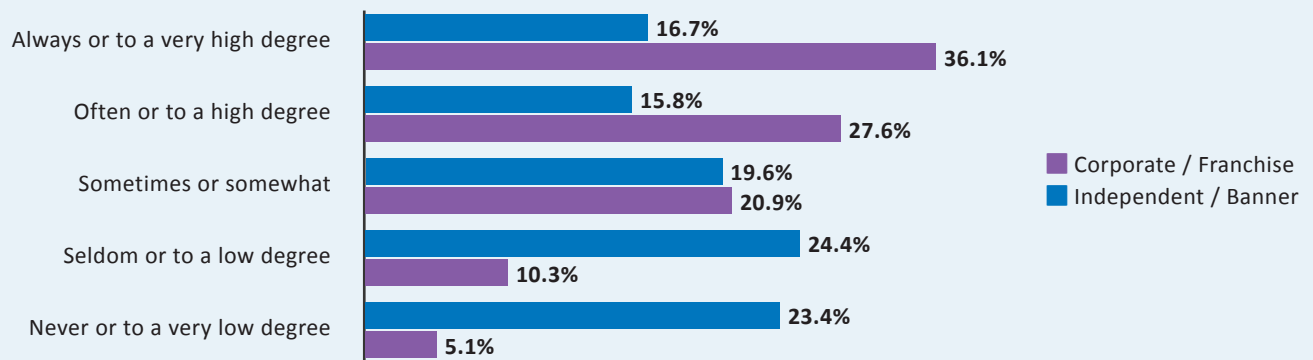


## How are business pressures impacting pharmacy professionals' well-being?

Participants were asked to what degree they are feeling burnt out because of their work. More than half of all pharmacist respondents report feeling burnt out because of their work to a high or very high degree.

Pharmacist respondents were significantly more likely to report high or very high degrees of work-related burnout in Corporate/Franchise pharmacies compared with Independent/Banner pharmacies ( $p < 0.0001$ ).

Percent of pharmacist respondents indicating the degree to which they feel burnt out because of their work by type of community pharmacy



*N=209 for Independent / Banner; N=565 for Corporate / Franchise*

## Part 2: Qualitative Analysis

### Overview

To get a deeper understanding of how business pressures are affecting pharmacy professionals, our researchers also analyzed voluntary free-text responses from 373 respondents.

This qualitative analysis provides a unique opportunity to hear from practicing pharmacy professionals about the types of workplace pressures they experience in their daily lives, the effect of those pressures on their health, and their hopes for the profession.

# Themes and What We Heard

Thematically, the feedback received was similar to what we heard from respondents last year:



## Corporate/ volume/ revenue pressures are present

Pharmacy professionals continue to experience business pressures in their daily practice, especially within Corporate/Franchise pharmacies. These business pressures take many forms, including performing specific services and meeting business targets, but all interfere with professional autonomy. Concerns about MedsCheck remain and are a symptom of a broader concern about business pressures to perform various services.



## Role as healthcare professionals is undermined

This theme continues to resonate with respondents who are expressing frustration that their clinical skills and judgment are being devalued, and that business pressures are diminishing trust in their role and getting in the way of their autonomy as healthcare professionals. They feel as though business pressures are forcing them to focus more on volumes and profit than on quality, ethical patient-centred care – something felt even more acutely by the newest members of the profession.



## Quality of care is affected

The demands being placed on pharmacy professionals are resulting in respondents feeling overworked and overwhelmed. There is a concern that understaffing and lack of time to properly perform services and care may lead to greater risk to patient safety or result in complaints to the College. Many respondents have indicated that they have no capacity to safely implement new scope of practice changes, with some expressing they have no capacity to operate safely and effectively within their current scope.



## Pharmacy professional well-being is at risk

Burnout, fear of making mistakes, and employer reprisals leading to job loss are impacting the physical and mental well-being of pharmacy professionals, with some reporting extreme stress, anxiety, depression and exhaustion. Having to choose between meeting the standards of care and their own livelihoods is an ongoing challenge.



## Ethical concerns and professional integrity

Balancing their ethical responsibilities with business pressures is limiting the autonomy of pharmacy professionals to provide the kind of quality care they want to patients. They continue to feel undervalued and undermined when business expectations or policies pit them against their professional standards.



### Impact on patient relationships

Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are trusted members of a patient's healthcare team, yet that trust is being eroded when decisions that prioritize volume over quality care are made that are not in the patient's best interest. This is affecting the relationship between pharmacy professionals and their patients, as well as with other healthcare providers.



### Regulatory oversight and support

Being caught between business pressures and professional expectations and standards has left respondents frustrated about the perceived slow pace of change and lack of support from regulatory bodies, associations and government. The comments suggest an expectation that more needs to be done by these organizations to immediately address business pressures.



### Desire for systemic change

Respondents continue to press for healthcare system changes that promote pharmacy professional well-being and protect their autonomy to prioritize patient-centred care decisions over business pressures.



### Lack of adequate support, resources and communication

Issues related to human resources were one of the most common themes we heard, with understaffing being a cause for burnout and suboptimal care delivery. This understaffing is creating concerns about capacity to take on more expansion of scope. Respondents referred to a lack of adequate breaks, time for staff training and administrative burdens as frequent challenges. A lack of communication, proper systems, and concerns about transparency of decision-making involving pharmacy were also common sources of frustration.



### Fear and retaliation

Respondents remain fearful of, or are reporting, repercussions from employers for speaking out or raising their concerns legitimately and appropriately with pharmacy business decision-makers. They shared that business pressures may hinder their ability to meet standards of practice and the Code of Ethics, and that addressing concerns with their corporate leaders has been identified as a challenge due to fears of retaliation. They also expressed concern that refusing to meet business targets, for example, could lead to loss of their job, with some referring to a culture of fear in large pharmacy corporations.