

Chapter 5: SME Development Viewed Through Internet Big Data

In 2025, production and business operations among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) progressed steadily, playing an important role in sustaining economic growth and supporting social development. By December, China had 64.69 million registered SMEs [91], with 4.25 million SMEs added during the year.

1 Overall structural distribution

1.1 Regional distribution

By December 2025, the eastern region had the largest number of SMEs, accounting for 54.1% of the national total [92]. Guangdong, Jiangsu, Shandong, Zhejiang and Henan ranked as the top five provinces by number of SMEs, together accounting for 40.7% of all SMEs in China.

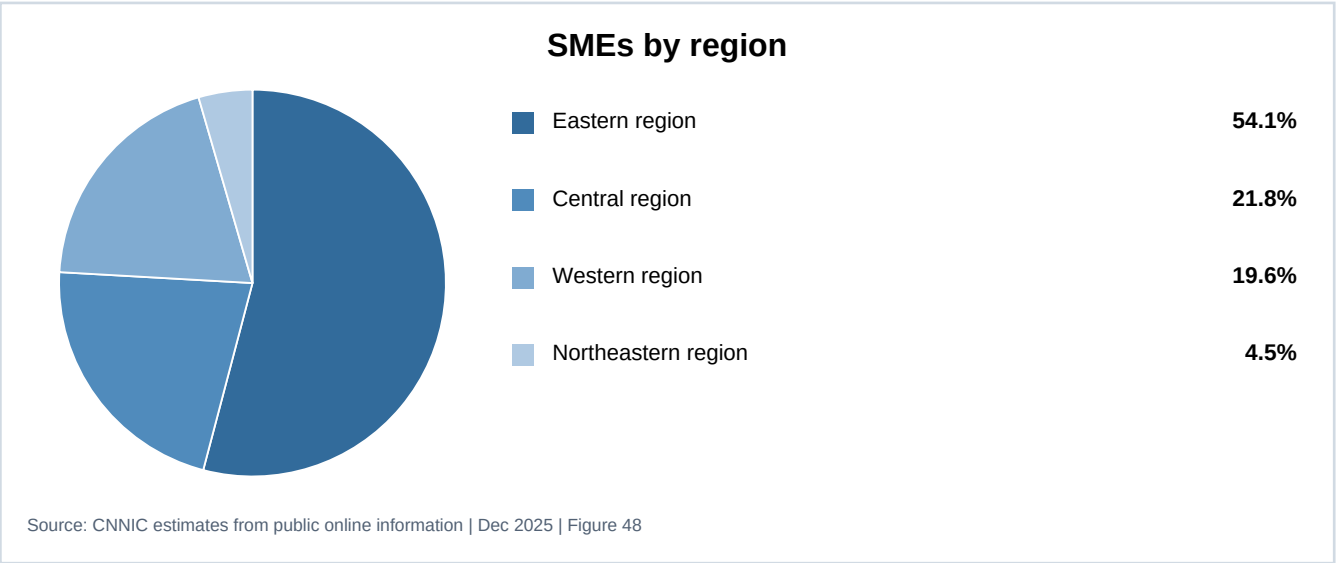


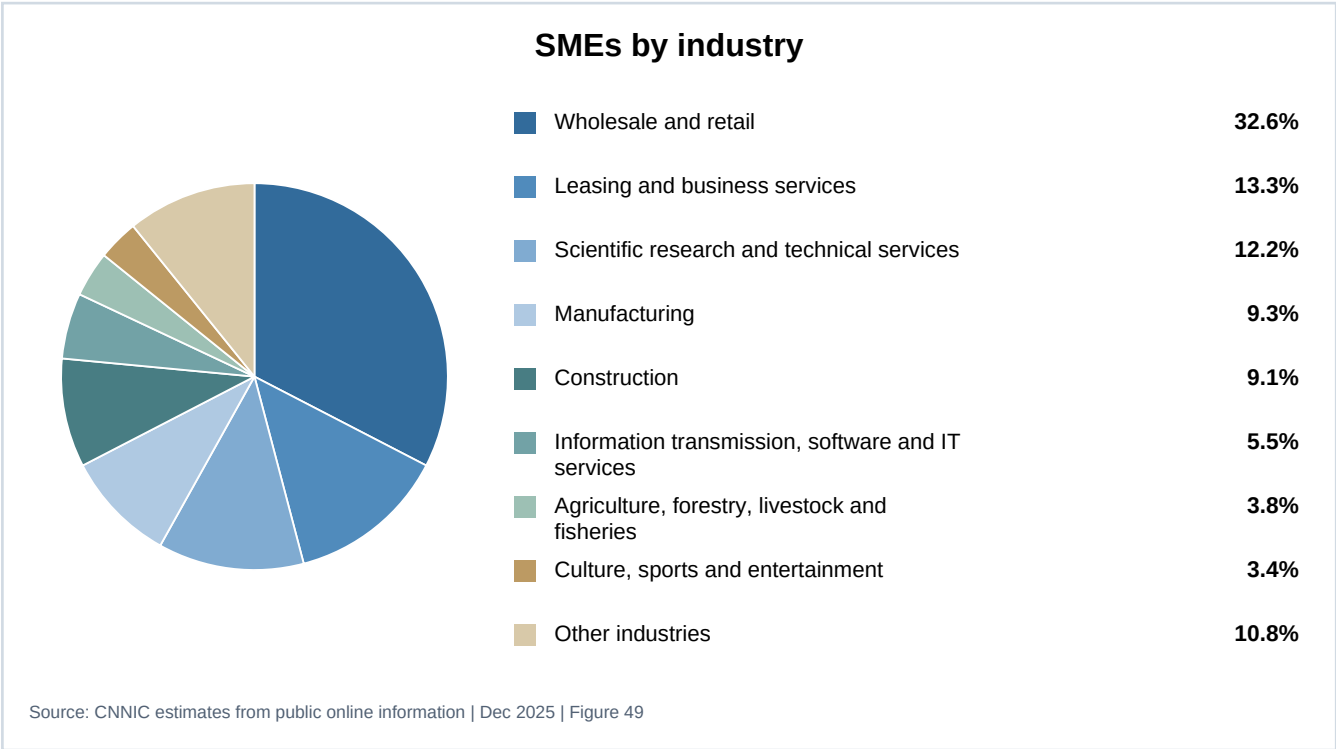
Chart source: CNNIC Institute of Policy and International Cooperation; estimates based on publicly available online information, December 2025.

[91] Unless otherwise stated, registered SMEs in this report are those with normal operating status. Normal operation comprises three statuses: legally existing, operating, and moving into or out of a jurisdiction. Abnormal operation comprises eight statuses: deregistered, licence revoked, registration rescinded, in liquidation, operations suspended, business inactive, struck off the register, or ordered to close.

[92] The eastern region comprises Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Shandong, Guangdong and Hainan (10 provinces and municipalities). The central region comprises Shanxi, Anhui, Jiangxi, Henan, Hubei and Hunan (six provinces). The western region comprises Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Tibet, Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and Xinjiang (12 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities). The northeastern region comprises Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang (three provinces).

1.2 Industry distribution

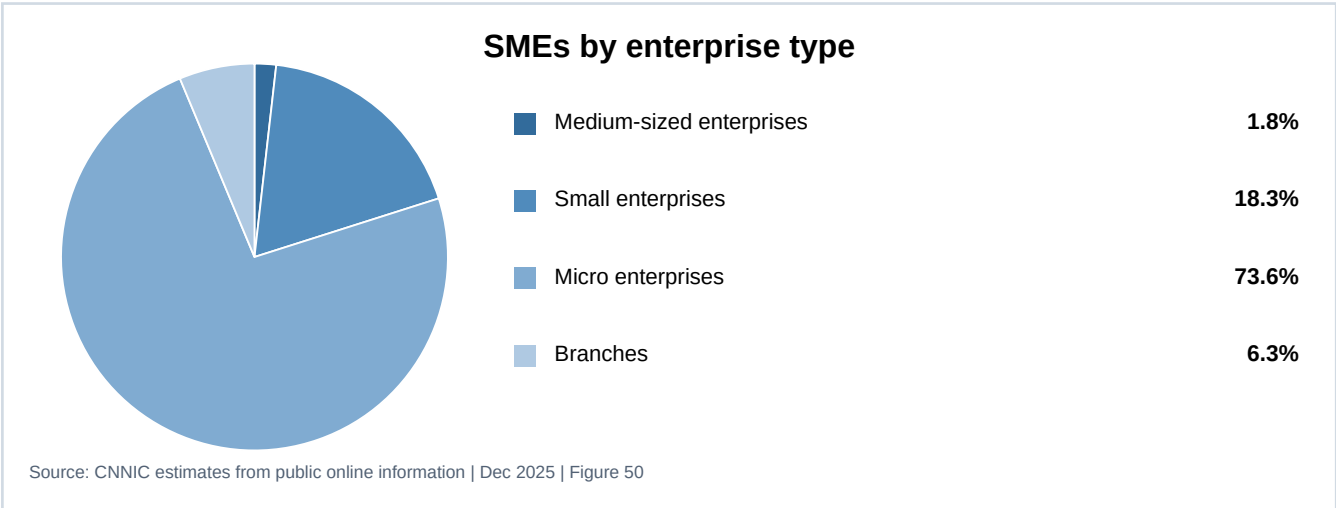
By December 2025, wholesale and retail, leasing and business services, scientific research and technical services, manufacturing, and construction were the five industries with the largest numbers of SMEs. Together, they accounted for 76.6% of all SMEs in China.



Translation note: The five leading industries shown in Figure 49 sum to 76.5%, while the source text reports 76.6%. Both are retained as published; this may reflect rounding.

1.3 Enterprise-type distribution

By December 2025, micro enterprises accounted for 73.6% of SMEs, while small enterprises accounted for 18.3%.



Source for Figures 49 and 50: CNNIC Institute of Policy and International Cooperation; estimates based on publicly available online information, December 2025.

2 Detailed development

In 2025, China continued to promote high-quality SME development. Progress in operations and business development contributed to economic and social development.

2.1 SME operations remained stable

First, more than six in ten SMEs had stable or improving business conditions. The survey found that 62.3% of SME employees said their enterprise's business conditions over the preceding six months had remained stable or improved compared with the earlier period [93].

Second, staffing levels remained stable at nearly eight in ten SMEs. Among SME employees, 79.2% said their enterprise's workforce had remained stable or grown over the preceding six months, and 79.5% said average employee pay had remained stable or increased.

2.2 SMEs gradually strengthened their business capabilities

First, SMEs used technological innovation to strengthen their competitiveness. By December 2025, approximately 1.83 million SMEs held patents and more than 1.27 million held software copyrights, increases of 10.4% and 14.7%, respectively, compared with December 2024.

Second, SMEs continued to expand their business channels. More than 2.43 million SMEs held import/export credit qualifications and were actively pursuing overseas development. Meanwhile, 45.5% of SME employees said their enterprise operated online or through a combination of online and offline channels, actively expanding its online business.

[93] The 57th Statistical Survey on Internet Development in China included more than 10,000 enterprise-employee respondents, of whom 5,687 were SME employees.

Source: CNNIC, The 57th Statistical Report on China's Internet Development, Chapter 5, PDF pages 63-65 (printed pages 55-57). Unofficial English translation. Figures 48-50 are redrawn from the published values; source notes and survey sample sizes are retained.