

# Bureau of the Census **Statistical Brief**

## Who Exports? Who Buys?

*The Exporter Data Base (EDB) provides detailed data on U.S. exporters for the first time. Prior to the compilation of the EDB, the U.S. Department of Commerce had data only on the flow of merchandise exports.*

*This Brief presents just a fraction of the many findings implicit in the data and of value to public and private sector data users. It touches upon the number of U.S. exporting firms and locations, their economic characteristics, and the destinations to which they export merchandise.*

*The EDB is the result of a four-year research project by the U.S. Census Bureau with financial support by International Trade Administration (ITA). Work is currently underway to extend the EDB beyond data collected in the 1987 Economic Census to that collected in 1992, the most recent five-year Economic Census.*

### Who Is in the Exporting Community?

In 1987, the U.S. exporting community consisted of 104,564 firms owning and operating businesses



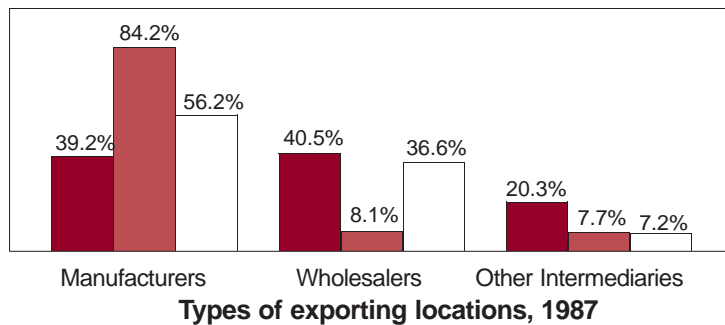
SB/94-23  
Issued January 1995

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

### Distribution of Exporters, Employment, and Dollars

Percent share within total exporter community of:

- 129,883 exporting locations
- 10.3 million exporter community employment
- \$241.4 billion total dollar value of exports



Export manufacturers accounted for over 84 percent of the export sector employment (8.7 million workers), while wholesalers and other intermediaries together accounted for just under 16 percent (1.6 million).

at 129,883 separate locations. During that year these companies employed approximately 10.3 million people, and exported \$241.4 billion in domestic merchandise to 170 foreign countries.

The companies belonged to two major categories:

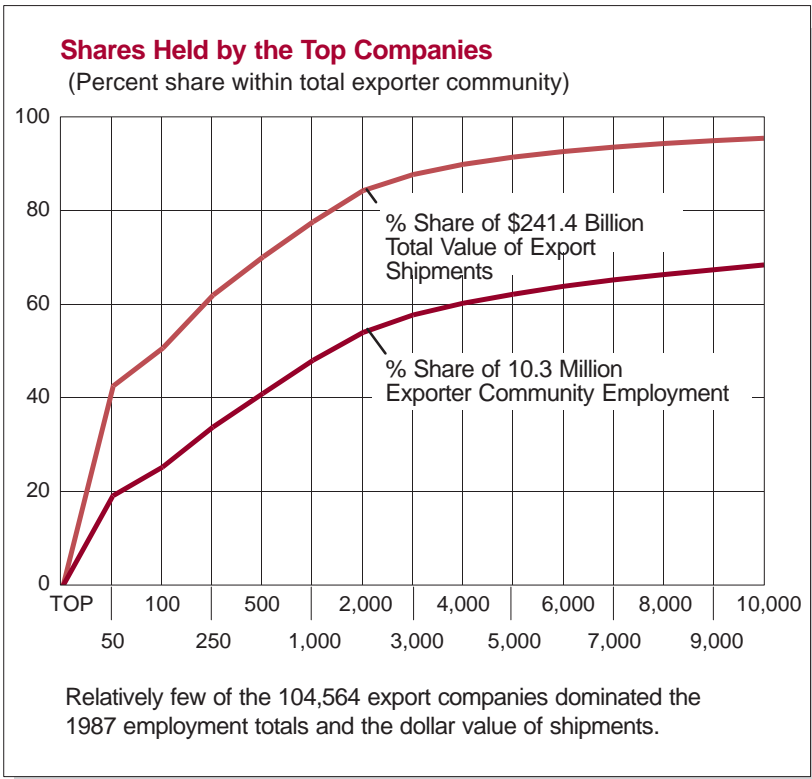
- Export manufacturers
- Intermediaries
  - Wholesalers
  - Other intermediaries (retailers, brokers, freight forwarders)

Export manufacturers produce and sell products for export. Wholesalers and other intermediaries sell products

for export, but do not manufacture them.

### Export Manufacturers Surpass Export Wholesalers and Other Intermediaries in Market Share of Employment and in Dollar Value of Exports

Export manufacturers accounted for most of the employment (84.2 percent) and for most of the total dollar value — i.e., “shipments” — of the exports (56.2 percent, or \$135.5 billion). These figures are consistent with the fact that, in 1987, 87 percent of all merchandise exports were manufactured products, 7 percent were agricultural commodities, and 6 percent were other kinds of goods.



### Small Exporting Locations Distinguish Themselves in Dollar Value of Shipments

Using the EDB, it is possible to identify not only the shares of the market held by the few, but also the shares held by the small. In an economic atmosphere that emphasizes a more active role for small business in international trade, the data on the 129,883 exporting locations are noteworthy.

- 39.3 percent of merchandise exports for 1987 — totaling \$94.8 billion — were shipped by export establishments employing fewer than 100 people at a single location. Over eighty-five percent of the exporting locations were small.
- 23.7 percent of merchandise exports — totaling \$57.2 billion — were shipped by export establishments employing from 100 to 499 people. These comprised just over 11 percent of all exporting locations.
- The remaining 37.0 percent of merchandise exports — totaling \$89.3 billion — were shipped by large exporting establishments employing 500 or more people. However, these large firms were impressive in their performance since they comprised just 2.7 percent of all exporting locations.

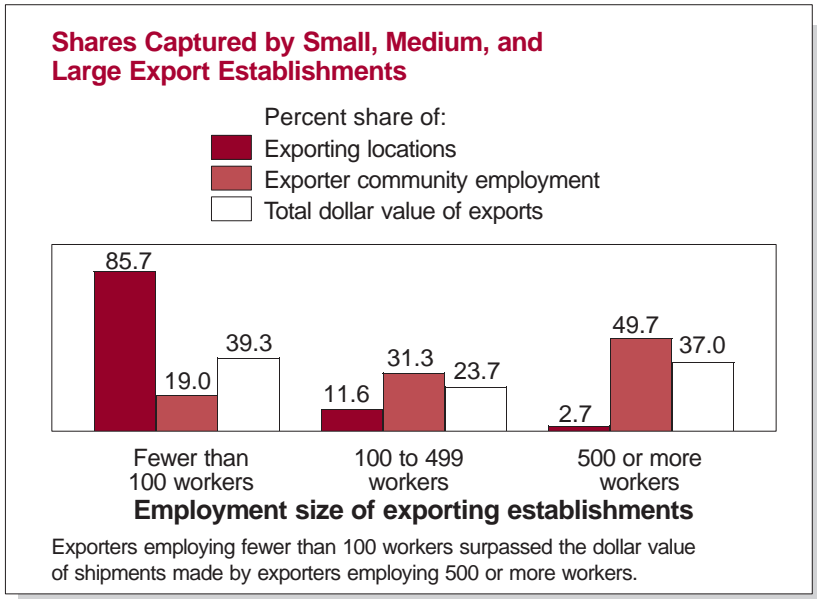
Moreover, large manufacturing establishments — those employing 500 or more persons — accounted for 64.3 percent of the export manufacturing sector's exports with only 6.4 percent of the export manufacturing sector's business establishments. These large export manufacturers accounted for 37 percent of total U.S. exports.

- The top 100 firms accounted for about 35 percent of the employment and 51 percent of shipments.
- The top 10,000 firms (less than 10 percent of all export firms) employed nearly 68 percent of the workers and accounted for an imposing 96 percent of shipments.

### Under Ten Percent of Firms Guzzle Lion's Share of Market

A relatively modest number of the 104,564 export firms (one firm may own more than one business location or establishment) accounted for substantial shares of the both the employment rolls and the shipments in 1987. Of the year's total exporter employment and total dollar value of shipments:

- The top 50 exporting firms employed nearly 20 percent of the workers, and accounted for 43 percent of shipments.



**The EDB's "Top Ten"**

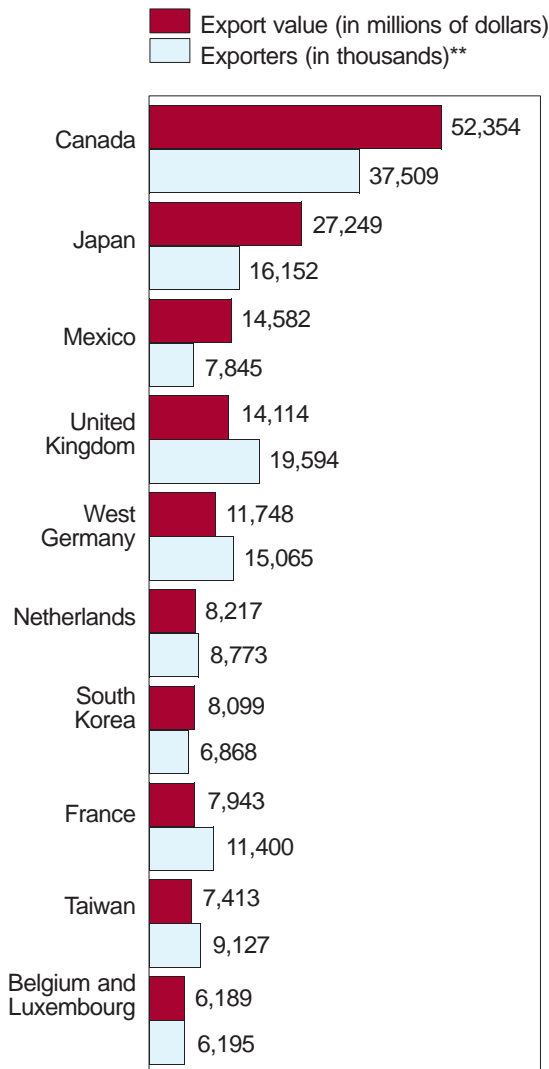
- Export destinations.
  - By value of shipments.
  - By number of exporting locations.
- Exporting states by value of shipments.
  - New York and California lead the top ten states in shipments with, respectively, 17 percent and 14 percent shares of the total dollar value of 1987 U.S. exports.
  - U.S. metropolitan areas.
  - The New York, NY-NJ-CT metropolitan area leads the top ten

metro areas in number of exporting locations.

**Both Public and Private Sectors Will Welcome Exporter Detail**

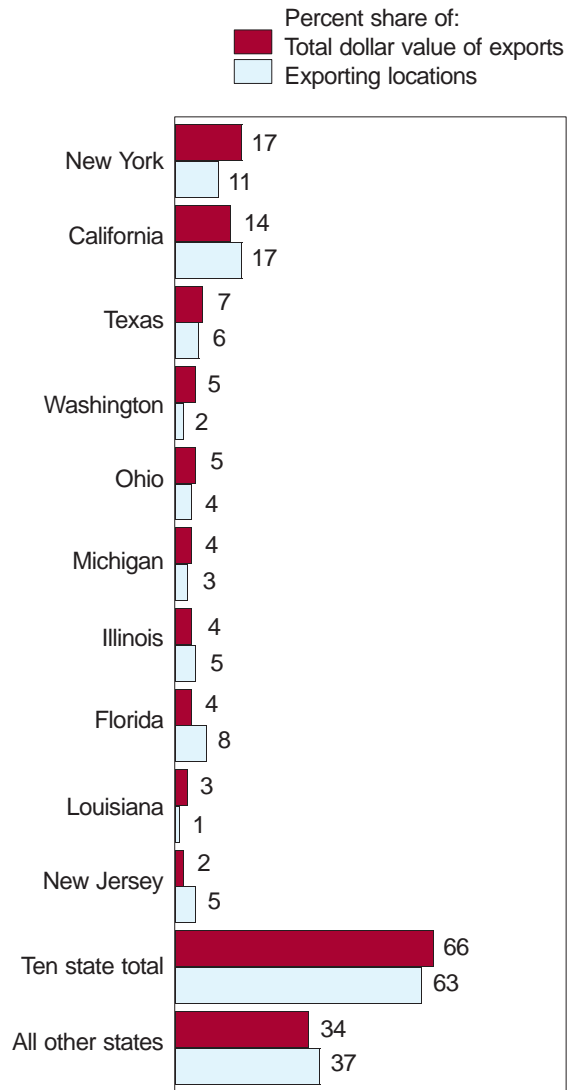
Information at this level of detail will be especially useful to official U.S. trade promotion agencies as well as to private sector providers of produc-

**Top Ten Countries of Destination of U.S. Exports: 1987\***



\* The ordering of the destinations is based upon export value.  
 \*\* These data show *minimum numbers* of U.S. exporters, i.e., *at least* 37,500 exporters export to Canada, *at least* 16,150 to Japan, *at least* 6,195 to Belgium & Luxembourg, etc.

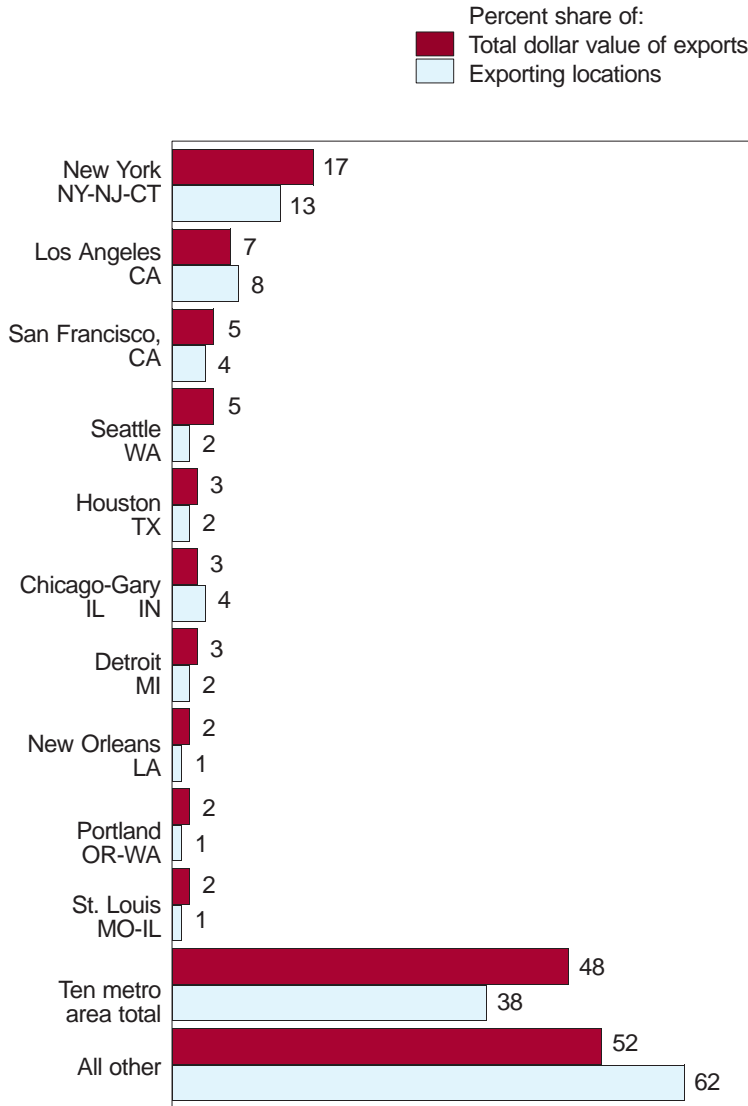
**Top Ten Exporting States: 1987\***



The combined value of the top ten exporting states, with their access to major waterways and coastlines, surpassed the combined total of all the other states in dollar value of exports (66 percent vs. 34 percent).  
 \* The ordering of the states is based upon export value.

**Top Ten Exporting Metropolitan Areas: 1987\***

Thirteen percent of the 129,883 U.S. exporting locations are in the New York, NY-NJ-CT metropolitan area. These exporters account for 17 percent of the total dollar value of exports.



\* The ordering of the metro areas is based upon export value.

tion supplies, export services including banks, transportation companies, telecommunications firms, and other businesses that facilitate exports. All need reliable data on exporters to design and target their products.

Additional commodity and country of destination information, profiles of exporters by state, consolidated met-

ropolitan area, and three-digit ZIP is available from ITA.

*This is one of a series of occasional reports from the Census Bureau that provide data on specific policy-oriented issues. The Bureau collects a variety of data from the Economic Censuses and Surveys of businesses and from the millions of merchandise trade documents — Shippers' Export Declarations (SEDs) — filed each*

month by exporting entities and individuals. More information on the methodology of the EDB and the technical documentation, entitled "Building and Using an Exporter Data Base," is available from Michael Risha, Foreign Trade Division.

*This Brief presents statistics from one or more of several data collections. Statistical data are subject to certain errors, such as data errors, and data processing mistakes. The Bureau has taken quality control measures to reduce reported data errors, and data in this Brief have been tested and are in accord with applicable statistical standards. However, caution should be used when comparing these and other data sets.*

**Data Sources**

Commerce Announces Statistical Data Available on Exporters, ITA 92-40, June 1992.

A Profile of United States Exporters: Initial Findings from the Exporter Data Base, ITA, August 1993.

Also, import and export data on a commodity flow basis are available from the U.S. Census Bureau's Foreign Trade Division, Trade Data Inquiries and Controls Section, 301-457-3041.

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