

# Women-Owned Businesses: 1997

## Census Brief: Survey of Women-Owned Business Enterprises

Issued October 2001

CENBR/01-6

### The number of women-owned firms grew almost three times as fast as all firms between 1992 and 1997.

In 1997, there were 5.4 million women-owned businesses in the United States, employing 7.1 million people and generating \$818.7 billion in revenues. (The 1997 Economic Census defines women-owned businesses as privately held firms in which women own 51 percent or more of the firm.) These firms made up 26 percent of the nation's 20.8 million nonfarm businesses (Figure 1), employed 7 percent of the 103 million workers and generated 4 percent of the \$18.6 trillion in receipts.

The number of women-owned firms increased 16 percent from 1992 to 1997, compared to a 6 percent increase for U.S. firms in general (excluding publicly held corporations); their receipts, meanwhile, increased 33 percent over the period, compared with a 24 percent increase for all firms.

In addition to the majority women-owned firms, there were 3.6 million equally owned (male-female) firms, comprising 17 percent of all nonfarm businesses.

### One-third of women-owned businesses were in four states.

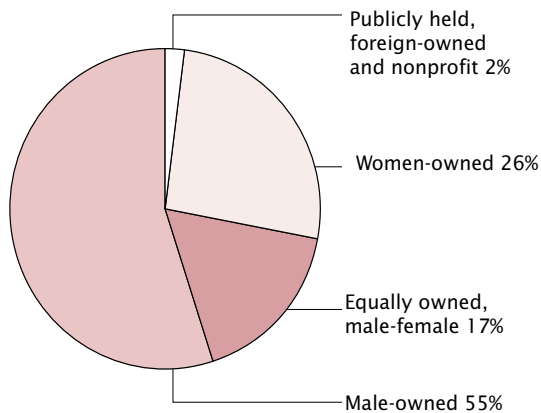
Women-owned businesses in four states — California (700,500), New York (394,000), Texas (381,500) and Florida (337,800) — accounted for 33 percent of all the nation's women-owned firms.

While California had the largest number of women-owned businesses, the District of Columbia had the highest proportion, with

Figure 1.

### Women Own More Than 1 in 4 Businesses

(Percentage distribution of all U.S. firms by sex of owner: 1997)



31 percent of its firms being women-owned. However, six of the 10 states with the highest proportion of firms owned by women were located in the West: New Mexico (where women-owned firms comprised 29 percent of all firms), Colorado, Oregon, Washington, Hawaii (28 percent each) and California (27 percent). Rounding out the top 10 were Maryland (29 percent), Virginia (28 percent) and Michigan (27 percent).

### The West was home to five of the 10 counties with most women-owned businesses.

A short drive on Interstate 5 in southern California will take you through three of the 10 counties with the largest number of firms owned by women — Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego. Two more counties in the West — Maricopa (Phoenix), Ariz.; and King (Seattle), Wash. — also made the

U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

Helping You Make Informed Decisions

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

Figure 2.

**About Half of Women-Owned Firms Have Receipts of Less Than \$10,000**

(Percentage distribution of women-owned firms by amount of receipts: 1997)

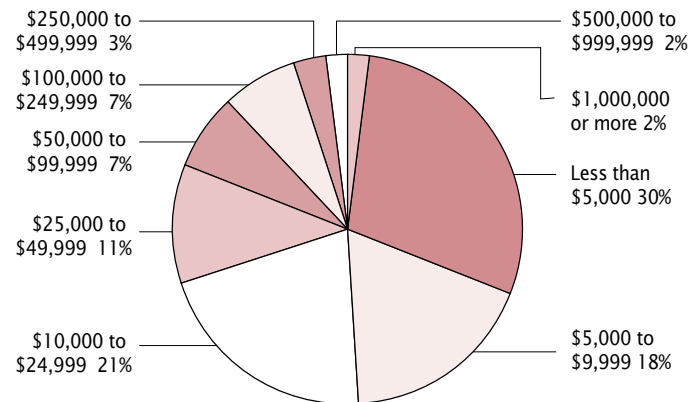
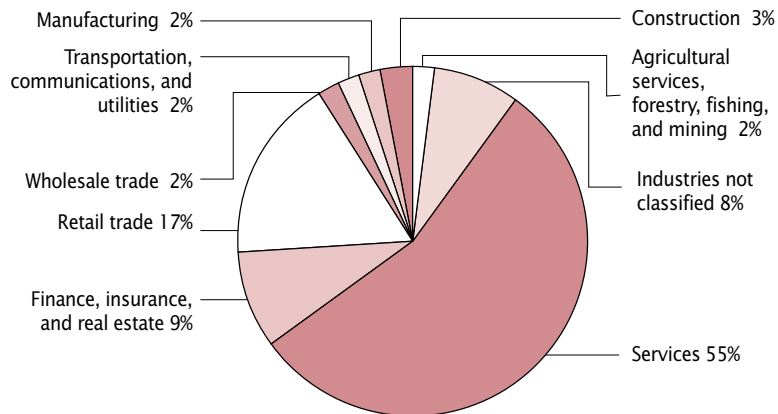


Figure 3.

**Women-Owned Firms Concentrated in Services and Retail Trade**

(Percentage distribution of women-owned firms by industry division: 1997)



top 10. Rounding out the list were Cook (Chicago), Ill.; New York (Manhattan), N.Y.; Harris (Houston), Texas; Miami-Dade, Fla.; and Dallas, Texas.

**Receipts for women-owned firms averaged more than \$150,000 per year.**

Receipts for women-owned firms averaged \$151,100; for male-owned firms, average receipts were \$582,500 and for those owned equally by women and men, they were \$259,200. As shown in

Figure 2, the revenues of women-owned firms varied widely:

- Forty-eight percent of firms had receipts of under \$10,000.
- For 21 percent, receipts ranged between \$10,000 and \$24,999.
- Eighteen percent had receipts of between \$25,000 and \$99,999.
- For more than 13 percent of women-owned businesses, receipts totaled \$100,000 or more. A small subset of these firms — 98,870 or 2 percent of the total —

had receipts of \$1 million or more and accounted for 68 percent of the total receipts of women-owned firms.

**The highest numbers of women-owned firms were in services and retail trade industries.**

As shown in Figure 3, more than seven of every 10 women-owned firms operated in services or retail trade industries. Within retail, women were concentrated in miscellaneous retail stores, such as books, jewelry and sporting goods, where they owned 69 percent of all such firms and accounted for 25 percent of gross receipts.

**More information**

The information in this Census Brief is based on findings from the report titled *1997 Survey of Women-Owned Business Enterprises*. The full report may be found on the Internet at <<http://www.census.gov/csd/mwb>>.

**Contacts**

**Women-Owned Businesses:**

Geoffrey Hill  
301-457-3320  
Valerie Strang  
301-457-3316

**Census Briefs:**

Robert Bernstein  
301-457-8242

*The data were collected in a sample survey and are subject to sampling variability, as well as nonsampling error. Sources of nonsampling error include errors of response, nonreporting and coverage. Further details concerning survey design, methodology and data limitations are contained in the full report. Comparisons with 1992 should be carried out with extreme caution because of changes in tax laws causing inconsistencies between 1992 and 1997 data. Changes in survey methodology also may contribute to inconsistencies.*