

Native American/Alaska Native Women and Entrepreneurship

Minority women-owned businesses are a growing force in the U.S. economy. Firms owned by women of color now represent 20% of all privately-held, majority-owned firms in the U.S. and they are growing in numbers at four times the rate of all U.S. firms.¹ In recognition of American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month (November), the National Women's Business Council has compiled the following facts about Native American and Alaska Native women business owners.

- As of 2002, there are an estimated 77,483 majority-owned, privately-held firms owned by Native American and Alaska Native women in the U.S., employing nearly 88,000 people and generating \$8.7 billion in sales.¹
- Between 1997 and 2002, the number of Native American and Alaska Native women-owned firms increased by 45%, employment grew by 18%, and sales rose by 29%.¹
- Six percent (6%) of minority women-owned firms are owned by Native American and Alaska Natives. Firms owned by Native American and Alaska Native women represent 1% of all privately-held, majority-owned women-owned firms in the U.S.¹
- Small Business Administration (SBA) guaranteed loans to Native American small businesses increased by 18% between FY2002 and FY2003, and loans to women-owned small businesses increased by 33%.²
- On a national basis, 9.3% of Native American and Alaska Native women are entrepreneurs – that is, more than one in eleven adult Native American and Alaska Native women in the U.S. is a business owner, compared to just one in eighteen (5.7%) of all adult women in the U.S. Native American and Alaska Native women have the highest rate of ownership among the major ethnic groups (Asian and Pacific Islander – 8.5%; Caucasian – 6.0%; Hispanic – 4.2%; African American – 2.8%).³
- The greatest growth by industry in the number of Native American and Alaska Native women-owned firms from 1997 to 2002 has come in: agriculture/forestry/fishing (70% growth); transportation/communications/public utilities (56% growth); and services (39% growth).¹
- The 10 states with the greatest number of Native American and Alaska Native women-owned firms as of 2002 are: 1) Oklahoma; 2) California; 3) Texas; 4) Florida; 5) New Mexico; 6) Arizona; 7) North Carolina; 8) Alaska; 9) Michigan; and 10) Kentucky.¹
- The states where Native American and Alaska Native women-owned firms comprise the greatest share of all women-owned firms are: 1) Oklahoma (18%); 2) Alaska (16%); 3) New Mexico (11%); 4) Montana (8%); 5) South Dakota (5%); 6) Maine, Arizona and Wyoming (tied – 4%); and 9) Kentucky, Vermont and Idaho (tied – 3%).¹
- Firms owned by Native American and Alaska Native women are just as likely as women-owned firms overall to have employees. Sixteen percent (16.3%) of Native American and Alaska Native women-owned firms employ at least one person other than the owner, similar to 15.6% of women-owned firms overall.⁴
- Among women-owned firms with employees, Native American and Alaska Native firms employ an average of 8.5 workers, compared to 8.1 employees among African American, 6.0 employees among Hispanic, and 5.4 employees among Asian and Pacific Islander women-owned employer firms. Overall, women-owned employer firms employ an average of 8.4 workers.⁴

¹ From Center for Women's Business Research (www.womensbusinessresearch.org/MinorityReports.html)

² From U.S. Small Business Administration (www.sba.gov/news/03-72.pdf)

³ Calculated using data from the U.S. Census Bureau and Center for Women's Business Research

⁴ Calculated using data from the U.S. Census Bureau (www.census.gov/csd/mwb/Americanp.htm)