



COVID-19 IMPACT ON WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES



THE ISSUE

Women's participation in the workplace is critical to every community's economic success, but systemic inequity prevents women entrepreneurs from fully contributing. Crisis exacerbates the consequences of inequity but we lack enough specific data to inform targeted solutions.

Barriers

Limited access to critical resources

Disproportionate care-giving burdens

Consequences

COVID-19 permanently closed 26% of women-owned businesses vs 20% of men-owned businesses during Feb-Apr 2020

- National Bureau of Economic Research

Many of the hardest hit and slowest recovering industries have a high proportion of women-owned businesses



We cannot allow this pandemic to set back a generation of entrepreneurial women.

Suzanne Clark
President
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Female founders already do more with less



Nationally, they **receive just 2%** of all venture capital funding.

- Crunchbase 2020



But deliver **2x more** revenue per dollar invested than men.

- BCG 2018



Women leading tech enterprises achieve **35% higher return** on investment than men.

- Forbes 2019

We are under-utilizing female enterprise



Women own **39% of private companies** and **23% of small businesses.**



But can only contribute **4% of national revenue** and **8% of jobs.**

- American Express 2019

THE PROJECT

We surveyed small business owners and leaders statewide to help California decision-makers understand which issues most urgently impacted California's small businesses. Our process was specifically designed to inform targeted actions that break down systemic barriers to equitable success.

THE SAMPLE

Participating Business Characteristics



64% Majority woman-owned / led
47% Majority owned / led by minority participants
10% Majority owned / led by LGBTQIA+ participants



Most Common Types

Sole Proprietor, Partnership, Self-Employed

42% Women

34% Men

S-Corporation

23% Women

29% Men

LLC (Limited Liability Corporation)

17% Women

20% Men



Most Common Industries

9% Education, Restaurants / Food Service, Retail

8% Healthcare

7% Leisure / Hospitality / Tourism, Personal Care

Average Change in Revenue 2019-20
 +\$55,910

Majority Business Age
10+ Years

Change in Total Number of Jobs 2019-20
 -5,635



Remote Work for Employees Since March 2020

More than half of the businesses adopted or continued remote work

15% women moved
76-100% of their company's operation to remote vs **9%** men

28% will allow remote work 3+ days / week

Admin positions most likely to continue working remotely:

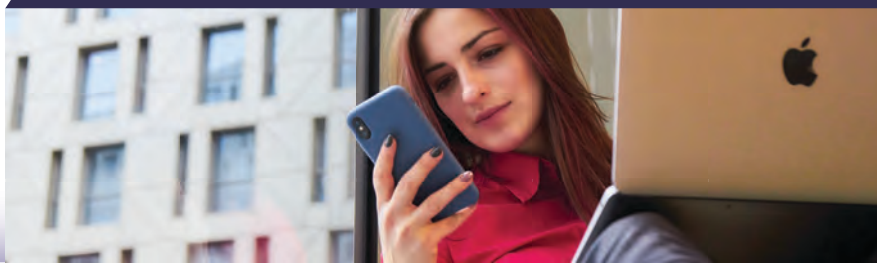
IT / Help Desk

Marketing / Advertising

Legal / Compliance

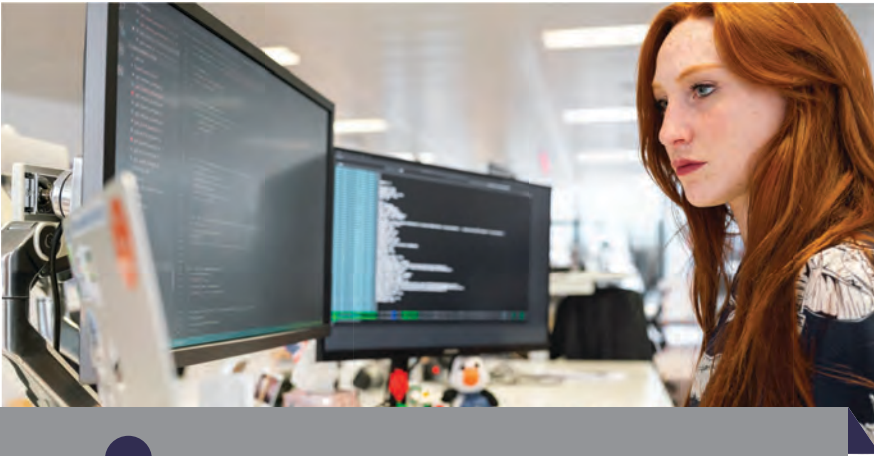
COVID-19 Impact on Jobs Since March 2020

26% of businesses laid off workers



THE PROJECT

THE SAMPLE (Continued)



Participant Characteristics
1,420 Survey Participants



Most Common Positions

49% Owner / Co-Owner
13% Sole Proprietor
10% CEO

Half derive **76-100%** of their household income from their business

18% manage a disability / chronic physical or mental health condition

6% are veterans



Caregiver Status

Almost half are responsible for dependents

26% for children <18 years old

16% for at least one adult 18+ years old (parent, partner, child, etc.)

Sandwich Generation:

6% care for both (2x as many women (**6%**) as men (**3%**))

57% of women caregivers are women of color



Gender Identities

65% Cis Female

34% Cis Male

1% Non-Binary or Transgender

Most Common Races / Ethnicities

53% White

22% Hispanic or Latinx

12% East / Southeast Asian

12% Black, African American, or South African

Most Common Primary Languages

83% English

8% Spanish



OUR FINDINGS

Since March 2020, women-owned/led businesses have faced significant disadvantages compared to men-owned/led businesses in accessing critical resources for sustainability and success. Women of color and primary caregivers (predominantly women) particularly benefited less from available funding than other groups as well as juggling greater non-work related demands on their time.

ACCESS TO CRITICAL ASSISTANCE



Financial Assistance

80% of participants requested government relief funds since March 2020

Most helpful:

California Venue Operators Grants
Paid Sick Leave & Paid Family Leave Credit
Employee Retention & Rehiring Credits
Paycheck Protection Programs (PPPs)
& Loan Forgiveness
California Relief Grants

However, women of color were less likely to apply than white women or all men

28% women of color didn't know how to apply

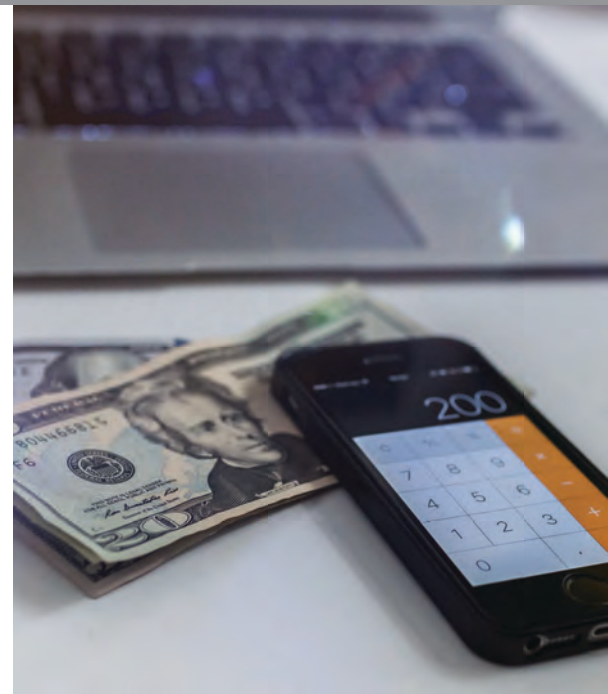
8% didn't trust the validity or legitimacy of the programs

Women of color (13%)

received less assistance from banks or financial institutions than **men (22%)**

Women of color relied more on assistance from **family / friends (58%)** than **white women (38%)** or **all men (40%)**

Community spirit. Many participants refrained from applying for government relief fund because "others need help more."



When the system works

Thanks to tremendous help from SBDC, SBA, and PPP, my business is saved.

Survey Participant

When the system fails

Women of color (18%) were denied relief funds 2-3 times more than men (9%) and white women (6%)

OUR FINDINGS

ACCESS TO CRITICAL ASSISTANCE (Continued)



Other Assistance

(e.g., new health rules, employee safety, new target markets)

A third of participants received other assistance, mostly from Small Business Development Centers

Women particularly relied on Women's Business Centers and Small Business Administration offices, receiving less assistance than men from Small Business Development Centers or business bankers

COVID IMPACT ON OPERATIONS



32% businesses have returned to pre-pandemic operating levels or will recover within 6 months

44% will take 6+ months to recover

19% doubt they will ever recover

Women of color will fall further behind

Almost half of **women of color (47%)** will need **6+ months** to recover vs **38% of white women**

More than half of **women of color (57%)** saw decreased demand for their products / services vs **48% of white women**



RACISM

70% of participants and their businesses have not experienced race-related discrimination or harassment in the pandemic environment

But **10% of women of color** and their businesses were targeted

IMPACT ON CAREGIVERS



Most caregiver participants spent time during their typical workday on children or other dependents during 2020-21

However, half of women caregivers spent **5+ hours / workday** vs **35% men**

Furthermore, **55% women of color** spent **5+ hours / workday** vs **43% white women** and **35% all men**

OUR FINDINGS

IMPACT ON CAREGIVERS (Continued)



Women caregivers had challenges with government relief programs

17% found the Paid Sick Leave and Paid Family Leave Credit *Not At All Helpful* vs **0%** **non-caregivers**

20% found COVID-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) *Not At All Helpful* vs **11%** **non-caregivers**

28% did not know how to apply vs **14%** **non-caregivers**

10% did not apply because they distrusted the validity or legitimacy of the programs vs **2%** of **non-caregivers**

Caregiving owners / leaders (32%) were more likely to have employees who reduced work time to meet greater caregiving demands at home vs **non-caregiver owners / leaders (19%)**

48% caregivers say their businesses will need **6+ months** to return to normal operating levels vs **40% non-caregivers**

RESILIENCE

Women adapted differently from men, being more likely to transition to remote work, increase marketing efforts, and improve safety for customers and employees

Women of color were the least likely to lay off workers vs **white women** or **all men**

48% of women caregivers adjusted their products or services to remain relevant

A third of women caregiver participants are single, increasing their potential for burnout



CONCLUSIONS

We are grateful to be able to provide uniquely actionable data about pandemic hardships endured by small business owners in our own state. The ramifications to California's economy and family well-being are huge, given that 99.8% of our businesses are small enterprises which employ 48.5% of our total workforce (U.S. Small Business Administration 2021), and half of our participants derive 76-100% of their household income from their enterprise.

This study also illuminates how crisis exacerbates existing vulnerability. Women have historically been denied fair access to critical resources for success, especially capital, and are still burdened by society's expectation that they shoulder the lion's share of caregiving responsibilities. Furthermore, they are least likely to receive key information about available resources for sustainability.

Women of color (30%) are less able to invest new owner equity into their businesses than white women (41%) or all men (43%)

COVID-19 starkly demonstrated how these disadvantages limit the sustainability, recovery, and growth of enterprises owned/led by women at multiple intersections of identity, notably women of color who are primary caregivers.

Yet, women-owned businesses have enormous potential to electrify California's economy with new revenue and jobs, considering we have the most women-owned firms in the country (U.S. Census Bureau). Their numbers increased 58% from 2007-18, FIVE times quicker than all U.S. businesses on average (American Express 2018), and Black women's enterprise is growing the fastest (Forbes 2020). Overall workplace gender parity could increase California's GDP by \$272 billion, or 9% (McKinsey 2016).

CALL TO ACTION

Stakeholder Groups Include:

Business associations
Trade groups
Policymakers
Banking institutions
Investment fund managers

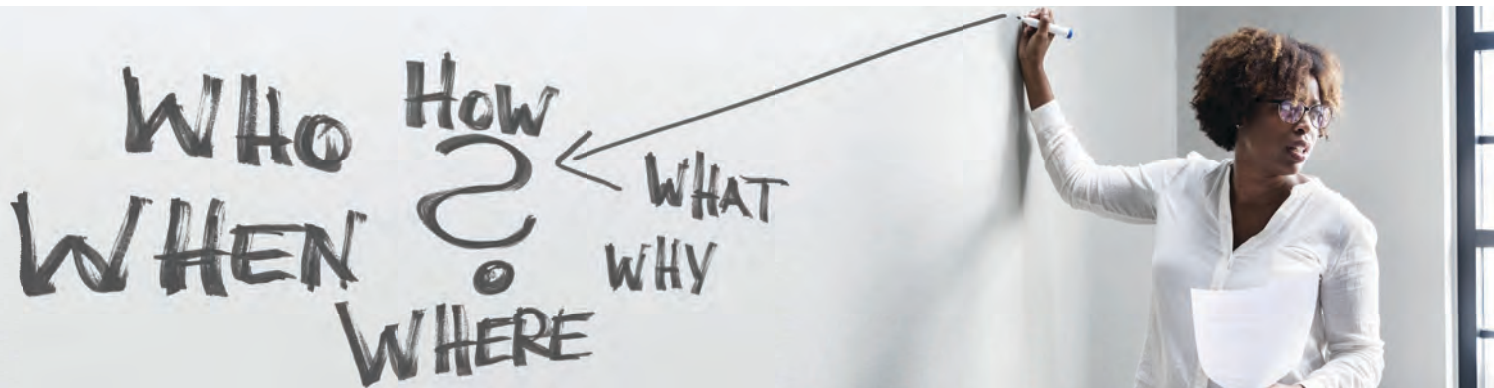
Goals Include:

Make sure women at all intersections of identity get fair consideration for business capital

Rebuild social expectations and support structures for caregivers

Increase / improve communication channels about resources to women of color and caregivers

Policymakers, small business advocates, and other stakeholder groups have a pivotal opportunity to heighten the resilience and innovation of California's small business ecosystem by elevating cultural transformation to a statewide priority. In doing so, we can establish California as an economic and social powerhouse on the national scale. Our success depends on working together to dismantle discriminatory systems and rebuild our culture to level the playing field for all deserving populations.



ABOUT PARTNERS



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The California Office of the Small Business Advocate (CalOSBA) within the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development supports economic growth and innovation and ensures that ALL California small businesses and innovative startups have the information and direct support they need to better navigate resources, programs, and regulations. CalOSBA serves as the voice of small businesses, representing their views and interests across the state and advocating for equitable access to capital, markets, and networks so that all California small businesses successfully start, manage, grow, and become more resilient.

Tara Lynn Gray
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calosba.ca.gov



California's Women's Business Centers (WBCs) work to secure economic justice and entrepreneurial opportunities for women by supporting and sustaining a statewide network of WBCs. These centers help women succeed in business by providing training, mentoring, business development, and financing opportunities to thousands of women entrepreneurs each year.

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The Kim Center is transforming San Diego into a trailblazing model of economic and social leadership that can be replicated in other regions throughout the nation. Collaborative local action informed by local data is essential to cultural transformation, so we unite key stakeholders around our LEAPS Assessment, Playbook, and national Accreditation.

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The California Small Business Development Center (SBDC) is five regional networks with over 45 small business service centers leading the charge in providing tools and guidance needed to help entrepreneurs realize their potential. California's SBDC network is devoted to helping all industries and all levels of businesses with accessing capital, human resources, marketing efforts, e-commerce, financial management, pivoting strategies, or any other business need.

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OUR METHOD

Online survey sent by email and social media

60 questions, including 1 open-ended question

Participants recruited from members/followers of partner organizations

Analyses compare responses of all women to all men, and women of color to white women to all men

