



COVID-19 Threatens Small Business Diversity



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Diversity
Communication
s

Last month I wrote about how the pandemic is impacting women. Now, I want to focus on a different diversity factor- business size.

Small businesses (that employ 500 or less), are called "*the backbone of our economy.*" The U.S. Census Bureau data shows their number dropped from 54.5% in 1988, to 47.1% in 2017.

Small businesses are nimble. They're the last to let people go in a downturn, and deeply enrich local communities. I think this attrition trend is worth highlighting as 2021 begins.

The [Washington Post](#), reported that lock downs wiped out almost one million micro-businesses by last May, and pronounced the end of an era. A Q3 [Mainstreet America survey](#) of over 5000 small businesses, which included rural and metropolitan areas, found equally dire numbers. Statistics from late 2020 are scarce, but the outlook is dire.

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JAN EVENTS

Master Mind Mondays

Black Dot Seattle will sponsor this free event, Mondays at 6 pm. Join the call to discuss 2021 goals, finances, strategies, and wins, or network with small business owners. Register [here](#).

Volunteer for WA DES

The state is looking for women, veteran, or minority business owners to help increase diversity in state contracting and procurement. Learn about *BDAG*, the diversity influencer committee, [here](#).



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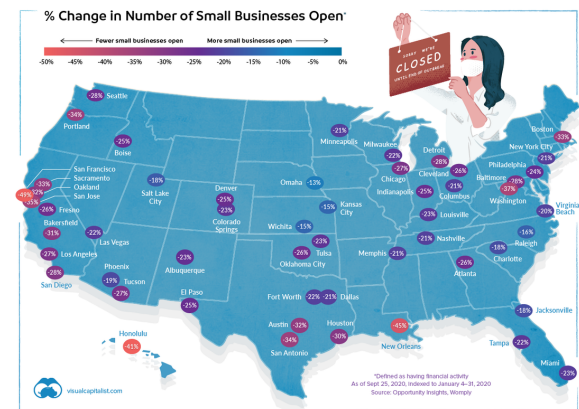
Here's *Opportunity Insights'* metro snapshot of the percentage change in the number of small businesses open last fall. (I wonder if less populated states are small business deserts, or if it's too difficult to gather statistics therein.)

Speculating about when this pandemic will end is futile. So is predicting whether small businesses can bounce back.

Government Can Help Small Business Rebound

I want to offer two solutions. One is simple, immediate, and straightforward. The other is complex and long-term.

- **Money-** Owners need loans to stay afloat. Learn more at [CARES SBA](#).
- **Policy-** Large goods and services contracts can be 'un-bundled', so small businesses can sell more easily to the government. Helping an owner get that foot in the door takes time and skill, but is a win for all stake holders.



Click to [here](#) to enlarge, picture by Visual Capitalist

I got interested in policy after Zena Consulting was OMWBE-certified as a DBE. In 2020, I was accepted as a volunteer on *BDAG*- Washington State's *Business Diversity Advisory Committee*. It's goal is to help the *Department of Enterprise Services, DES*, develop policies that give equal access to small, minority, and veteran-owned businesses- since this agency awards or oversees \$1 billion in contracts every year. See [EVENTS](#) to join *BDAG*, or to certify your business.

January Updates

This month's Zena Consulting focus is a website revamp by a local business, Reformd. I discovered this talented web design firm at Seattle Girl Bosses.

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