

The Coronavirus Impact on Women and Small Businesses

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The pandemic has had a major impact on small businesses and resulted in an increased number of closings across the United States. Stores, restaurants, and factories are shutting down at astronomical rates due to government policies, decreased consumer demand for goods, and health concerns. Demographics by race and residential areas are affected disproportionately by decreased business activities such that African Americans closed 41% and females closed 25% of their businesses.

Since February when the pandemic first hit, job losses have skyrocketed and schooling has transitioned online. The pandemic has affected women and men of all ages, but it has been brought to light that women, especially women of color, have been hit the hardest. Women are faced with many disadvantages such as the increased probability to be poor, earn less (which is proven by the gender wage-gap analysis), and are less likely to have savings. These inequalities have been intensified and unveiled by Covid-19. "Women overrepresented in some of the hardest hit industries, such as leisure and hospitality, health care and education, but women - especially black and hispanic women - lost jobs in those sectors at disproportionate rates" [1]. This has essentially wiped out many of the important gains women have made over the past decade.

For the last 20 years, there has been an influx of women starting their own business. Currently, 40% of businesses in the US are owned by women and 64% of new women-owned businesses were started by women of color last year [2]. Through these new ventures, women have found their own role and identity- creating more growth within the business world. In fact, it has been concluded that firms are more profitable when there is the presence of women leadership because of the skill diversity that women bring [3].

Through Forté's embodiment of diversity, empowerment, and support, we have grown and learned from each other. With Forté's driving culture for improvement through increasing diversity and inclusion, Forté women are made more aware of different perspectives. By hearing from inspirational women leaders who have navigated their businesses through the pandemic, we not only grow our understanding of the different business fields, but also show our support for each other and those we know who were impacted by COVID-19. In these pressing times, Forté members find it essential to support women and minority owned businesses.

Even through these tough times, we can continue to support and help small businesses. By increasing the usage of online platforms and services, we can bring greater attention to the small businesses that are suffering. From giving social media shoutouts, leaving positive reviews, shopping local for online deliveries, to simply being patient, we can help to drive the success of minority owned small businesses.

[1] Samantha Schmidt, "Women Have Been Hit Hardest by Job Losses in the Pandemic. And It May Only Get Worse.," The Washington Post (WP Company, May 11, 2020), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2020/05/09/women-unemployment-jobless-coronavirus/>.

[2] Women-Owned Businesses: Statistics and Overview (2020)," Fundera, accessed November 13, 2020, <https://www.fundera.com/resources/women-owned-business-statistics>.

[3] Victor Lipman, "The Best Reason Yet To Increase Women In Business Leadership," Forbes (Forbes Magazine, February 24, 2016), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/victorlipman/2016/02/23/the-best-reason-yet-to-increase-women-in-business-leadership/>.