



BUSINESS

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Black business owners on rise

By Elwin Green
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Black Americans are becoming entrepreneurs at a rapidly increasing rate and Pittsburgh is following the trend, a new report issued by the Census Bureau suggests.

The report, "Survey of Business Owners: Black-Owned Firms: 2002," says that between 1997 and 2002, the number of black-owned businesses in the United States rose 45 percent to 1.2 million, while the combined revenue increased 25 percent to \$88.8 billion.

"It's encouraging to see of just the number, but

the sales and receipts of black-owned businesses are growing at such a robust rate, confirming that these firms are among the fastest growing segments of our economy," said Census Bureau Director Louis Kincannon.

Stated for release today, the report also shows a significant if not quite as dramatic increase in local black business ownership. It found 4,363 black-owned firms in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area as of 2002, up 38.8 percent from 3,142 in 1997. Revenue figures for the metro area, which includes Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Washington and Westmoreland counties, were not available.

Doris Carson Williams, president of the African American Chamber of Commerce of Western Pennsylvania, found the Census Bureau figures encouraging but not surprising.

As blacks join the numbers of those being downsized by corporations, she said, "more and more have found that entrepreneurship is a viable option for them. They don't want to go through the corporate menagerie again."

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Number of black-owned businesses by industry

Health care, social assistance	237,671
Other services	210,433
Administrative, support, waste management, remediation services	121,143
Professional, scientific, technical services	115,765
Retail trade	102,123
Transportation and warehousing	99,341
Construction	75,020
Arts, entertainment, recreation	54,430

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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Both local and national figures show the greatest numbers of black-owned businesses in the fields of health care and social assistance.

Other categories with a strong presence of black-owned businesses include retail, professional, scientific and technical services, and transportation and warehousing.

New York City had more black-owned firms than any other city at 36,076, followed by Chicago (39,424), Los Angeles (25,959), Houston (21,226), and Detroit (19,530).

Among states, New York had the greatest number of black-owned firms with 129,324, followed by California (112,873), Florida (102,079), Georgia (90,461), and Texas (88,769). These five states accounted for about 44 percent of all black-owned businesses in the United States. Pennsylvania had 24,757.

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