
U.S. Small Businesses Suffer Supply Chain Disruptions



Census Bureau's Small Business Pulse Survey Reveals Delays From Domestic, Foreign Suppliers

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Written by: Jane Callen

Which U.S. small businesses are being hardest hit by supply chain disruptions during the pandemic and has that changed since earlier this year?

The U.S. Census Bureau's Small Business Pulse Survey (SBPS) [<https://www.census.gov/data/experimental-data-products/small-business-pulse-survey.html>], designed to measure how COVID-19 is affecting small businesses, captures the extent of some of these business disruptions.

The survey shows that 38.8% of U.S. small business respondents reported *domestic* supplier delays in the most recent and final week (7/12-7/18) of the SBPS's Phase 5. That's up from the 30.9% portion during the last week (4/12 – 4/18) of Phase 4.

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The percentage of businesses by sector that reported domestic supplier disruptions the last week of phase 5:

- Manufacturing, 64.6%.
- Retail, 59.8%.
- Construction, 58.5%.
- Accommodation and Food Services, 51.4%.

The share of businesses that reported *foreign* supplier delays increased from 12.2% at the end of Phase 4 (ended in April) to 15.9% at the end of Phase 5. Wholesale small business respondents showed the highest impact at 41.7%.

In addition, 17.7% of respondents indicated they would need to identify new supply chain options in the next six months, compared with 14.0 % at the end of Phase 4.

A 39% slice of manufacturing small business respondents said they would need to identify new supply chain options within the next six months.

Delivery and shipping delays also increased: 22.7% of respondents indicated delivery and shipping delays at the end of phase 5 compared to 18.5% at the end of Phase 4.

Impact of Supply Chain Delays

The survey also measures how hard it was for small businesses to find alternative *domestic* suppliers: 18.9% reported difficulty at the end of Phase 5 and 13.0% at the end of Phase 4.

Finding alternative *foreign* suppliers was an issue for 7.2% of respondents at the end of Phase 5, compared with 4.7% at the end of Phase 4.

The share of small business respondents reporting *production* delays also rose, from 9.5% at the end of Phase 4 to 12.4% at the end of Phase 5.

The SBPS also asks whether the availability of other supplies or inputs used to provide goods or services affected operating capacity. Here, too, the percentage who said "yes" went up, from 10.9% at the end of Phase 4 to 15.0% at the end of Phase 5.

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This article was filed under:

Business and Economy

Construction

NAICS Sector 31-33 Manufacturing

NAICS Sector 72 Accommodation and Food Services

Retail Sales

Small Business

Supply Chain

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America Counts Story

Video Game Consoles: From Manufacturing to Players' Hands

July 14, 2021

Census Bureau's Economic Indicators data capture earliest measurements of newest generation video game console supply chain.

[<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/07/video-game-consoles-from-manufacturing-to-players-hands.html>]

America Counts Story

Think Online Retail Is the Largest E-Commerce Sector? Think Again

June 01, 2021

Manufacturing ranked first in e-commerce shipments in 2018, making up \$4.0 trillion of the \$6.0 trillion in total value of manufacturing shipments.

[<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/06/think-online-retail-is-largest-e-commerce-sector-think-again.html>]

America Counts Story

Consumers Turn To Biking for Safe Fun and Exercise During Pandemic

June 03, 2021

Stay-at-home orders and shuttered fitness clubs amid COVID pandemic up demand for bicycles, leading to bike shortages and higher prices.

[<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/06/consumers-turn-to-biking-for-safe-fun-exercise-during-pandemic.html>]

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[<https://www.census.gov/library/stories.html>]

Education

Beyond Diplomas: Nondegree Credentials Linked to Higher Earnings

September 22, 2026

High school graduates and even those with college degrees earned more with nondegree credentials targeting specific work skills.

[<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2026/09/nondegree-credentials.html>]

Emergency Preparedness

Calm Atlantic Hurricane Season Could Mean Active One in the Pacific

September 17, 2026

Census Bureau data tools can help communities prepare for and recover from hurricanes and other disasters wherever they are.

[<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2026/09/atlantic-hurricane-season.html>]

Income and Poverty

Hispanic Poverty Rate Reached Historic Low in 2025

September 15, 2026

The Hispanic population's poverty rate fell to 13.9%, down 1.2 percentage points from 2024 — still disproportionately high despite being the lowest on record.

[<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2026/09/hispanic-poverty.html>]

Income and Poverty

Supplemental Poverty Rate Tops Official Rate in 26 States, DC

September 15, 2026

Louisiana had among the nation's highest poverty rates by both the official poverty measure and the Supplemental Poverty Measure.

[<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2026/09/comparing-opm-spm.html>]