



NATIONAL WOMEN'S  
BUSINESS COUNCIL



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# News Release

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## **More Patents Granted to Women in Recent Years**

*New Study Examines Patent Applications by Gender,  
Link to Women Entrepreneurs*

**WASHINGTON** – The number of women obtaining patents has grown at an accelerating rate over the past 35 years and in numbers considerably higher than previously reported, a new study commissioned by the National Women's Business Council (NWBC) has found.

The largest spike came in 2010, when 22,984 patents were granted to women, a 35 percent jump over the previous year, according to the NWBC study. In 2009, women received 17,061 patents, a 4.5 percent increase over the 16,321 issued in 2008.

The details are part of the preliminary findings from an extensive review of patents granted between 1975 and 2010 by the U.S. Patents and Trademarks Office. NWBC commissioned a private research company, Delixus, Inc., to conduct the study to determine the rates of women who apply for and receive patents. The study, which also will examine data on women with trademarks, is the first of its kind to explore this issue in depth, mainly because federal patent and trademark applicants did not ask for gender information. Newly-passed legislation will allow USPTO to start tracking gender data this year.

Research on intellectual property can help better understand the potential growth of women-owned businesses, said NWBC Chair Donna James.

“Patent and trademark ownership often is an indicator of entrepreneurial activity – historically, women have not been a large segment of this activity. A bump in IP ownership could indicate strong growth in women-owned companies,” James said. “NWBC actively sought out this study because little research has specifically examined women business owners and intellectual property.”

NWBC researchers examined the names of all patents granted over a 35-year period, determining gender by using the applicant's name. To do this, researchers relied upon multiple sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Social Security Administration, which compiles a list of the 10,000 most common American names for men and women. Because of the nation's changing population demographics over the last quarter century, researchers also relied on commercially available data of the most common names in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indian, Spanish, German and French. Uncommon names from other foreign countries, as well as unisex names, also were examined. Just under 6 percent of the names in patent disclosures could not be identified as male or female.

Details of the full report, which will include numbers on women, patents, trademarks over time and by industry, will be released during an upcoming news event at the USPTO headquarters in early March. NWBC will commemorate a 35-year history of women inventors by featuring a new female inventor every day on its website during March, which is Women's History Month.

The NWBC is a nonpartisan federal advisory council created to serve as an independent source of advice and policy recommendations to the president, Congress and the U.S. Small Business Administration on economic issues of importance to women business owners.

NWBC is the government's only independent voice for women entrepreneurs. It is made up of 15 prominent women business owners and leaders of women's business organizations. Each member is appointed to a three-year term.

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