

# DATA FOR ACTION

BRIEF  
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## IMPACTS OF THE JANUARY 2025 WILDFIRES ON BUSINESSES: DOCUMENTING BUSINESS DAMAGES IN ALTADENA AND PACIFIC PALISADES

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# About This Data Brief



This brief is the second in a three-part series that examines the impact of the January 2025 wildfires on small businesses in Altadena and Pacific Palisades. The first brief establishes a baseline of the local business landscape before the fires and shows that microbusinesses comprise the vast majority of businesses. This second brief examines the extent of direct physical damage to businesses caused by the January 2025 wildfires. It highlights that microbusinesses were disproportionately represented among those damaged or destroyed structures. The third brief in the series builds on this analysis by examining the short-term disruptions of microbusinesses and non-microbusinesses, with a focus on business delistings and property sales as measures of vulnerability in the months following the fires.





# Introduction

California is home to one of the largest and most diverse small business sectors in the nation,<sup>1</sup> with more than 4.3 million small businesses providing over 7.6 million jobs and accounting for nearly half of the state's private workforce.<sup>2</sup> Los Angeles County alone is home to more than 1.3 million small businesses, accounting for roughly one-third of the state's total, and it hosts more women- and minority-owned businesses than any other county in the nation.<sup>3</sup>

Despite their central role in LA's economy, small businesses often lack the financial safety nets and institutional support needed to withstand major disruptions. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed these weaknesses: many struggled to keep their doors open<sup>4</sup> and faced uneven access to recovery resources.<sup>5</sup> The January 2025 Eaton and Palisades wildfires once again underscored these challenges. The fires destroyed thousands of structures, displaced residents and workers, and tragically claimed lives. Businesses were not spared, as many were directly damaged while others were affected by evacuation orders and a sharp loss in customers.

This brief is the second in a three-part series that examines the impact of the January 2025 wildfires on small businesses in Altadena and Pacific Palisades, the two areas hardest hit by the wave of wildfires that swept through Southern California.

The first brief described the business landscape before the wildfires. This second brief analyzes the structural damages sustained by small businesses during the wildfires. To understand these impacts, we focus on private businesses located in Altadena (ZIP code 91001) and Pacific Palisades (ZIP code 90272), which fall within the core fire-affected areas.

Building on the findings in the first brief in the series, which highlights that microbusinesses make up the vast majority of businesses in the area, this brief focuses on comparing the vulnerability of micro (1-9 employees) and non-micro (10 or more employees) businesses. We link business directories with CalFire's structure-level damage data and Los Angeles County Assessor's parcel data to provide an evidence-based picture of how the fires disrupted the small business and to highlight which segments of the business community may face the most significant barriers to recovery.



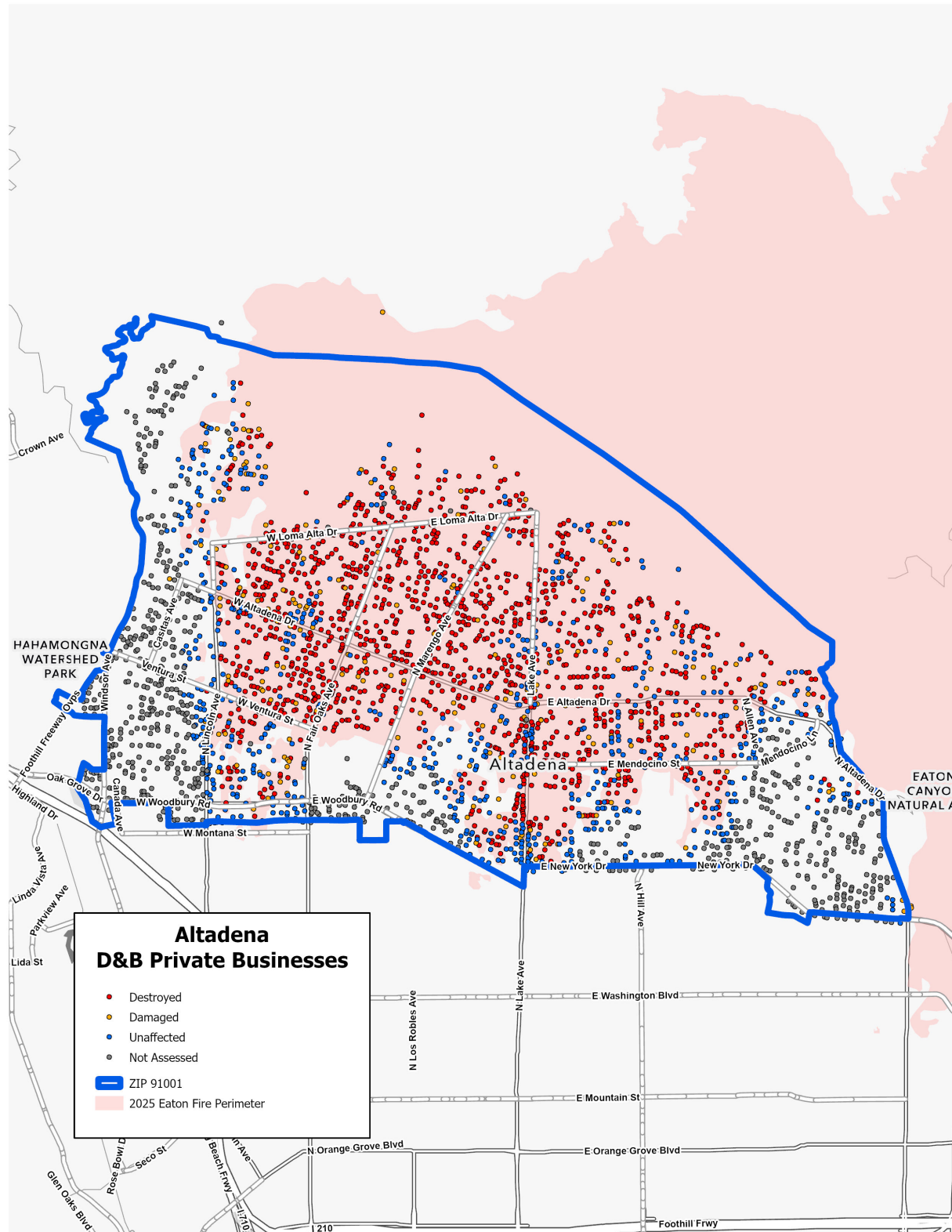
# Data and Methods



No single data source exists to provide a complete or entirely consistent picture of local businesses; as such, we draw on three business directories that capture different segments of the business landscape to give a fuller and more reliable picture: AtoZ Databases, Data Axle, and Dun & Bradstreet. For instance, Dun & Bradstreet identifies a broader range of businesses, including the most extensive coverage of home-based and microbusinesses. AtoZ tends to capture a narrower set of higher-revenue businesses, and Data Axle falls in between.

To examine the extent to which businesses were directly affected by the January 2025 wildfires, we matched these business directory listings with Los Angeles County Assessor parcel-level data and CalFire official structure-level Damage Inspection (DINS) data to identify which private businesses were located inside or outside the fire perimeter and the extent of damage they experienced. CalFire DINS classifies structures based on the level of damage. Destroyed structures are those with 50% or more structural loss, damaged are those with 1% to 49% loss, and unaffected are those with no damage at the time of inspection. Refer to the technical appendix for further details on the methodology. Map 1 and Map 2 show the locations of private businesses in Dun & Bradstreet directories categorized by the level of damage.

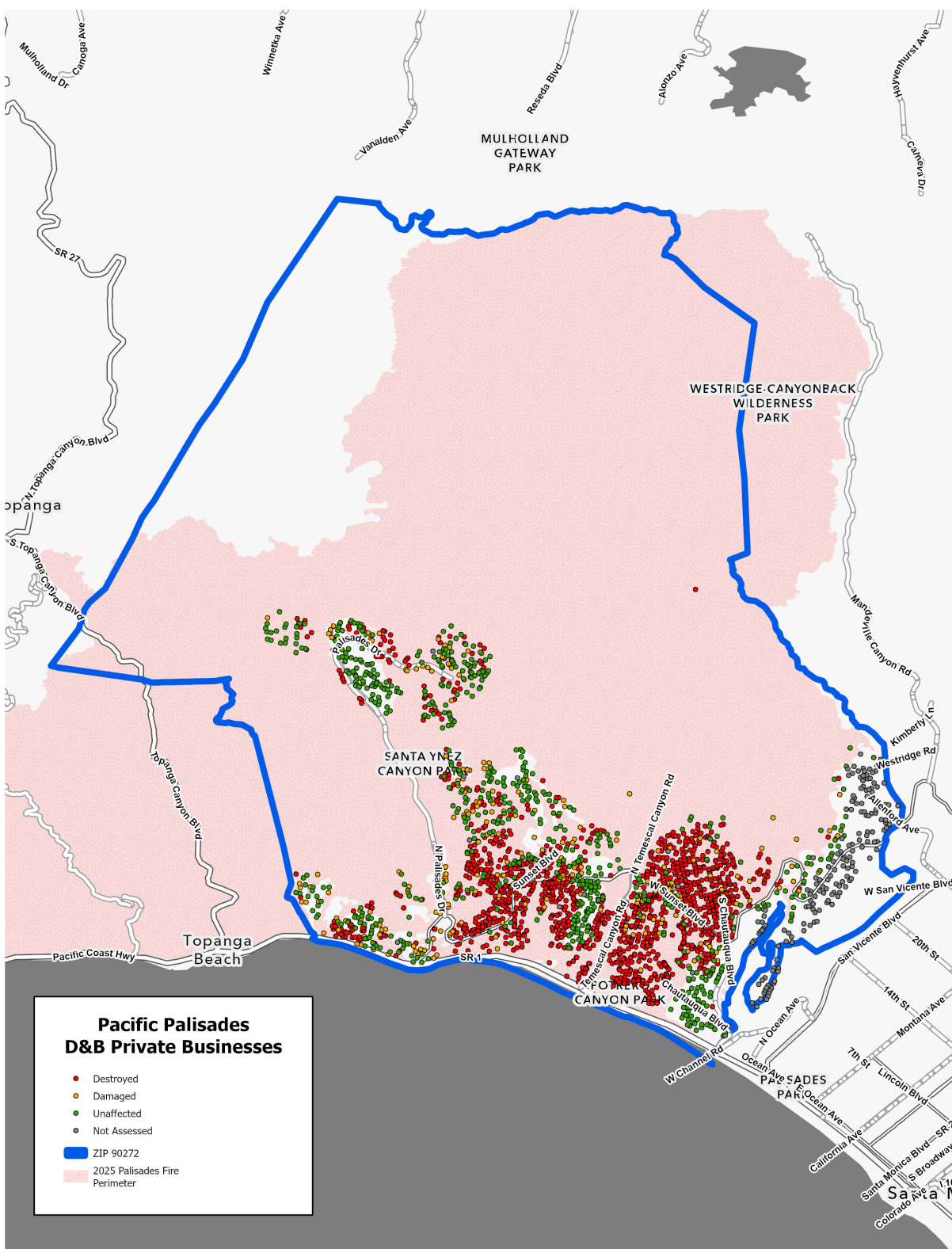
## Map 1. Private Businesses by Damage Category in Altadena's Eaton Wildfire Area, Dun & Bradstreet Directory



**Sources:** Dun & Bradstreet (2024); CalFire fire incident boundaries (2025); ESRI, United States ZIP Code Boundaries (2022).



## Map 2. Private Businesses by Damage Category in Palisades Wildfire Area, Dun & Bradstreet Directory



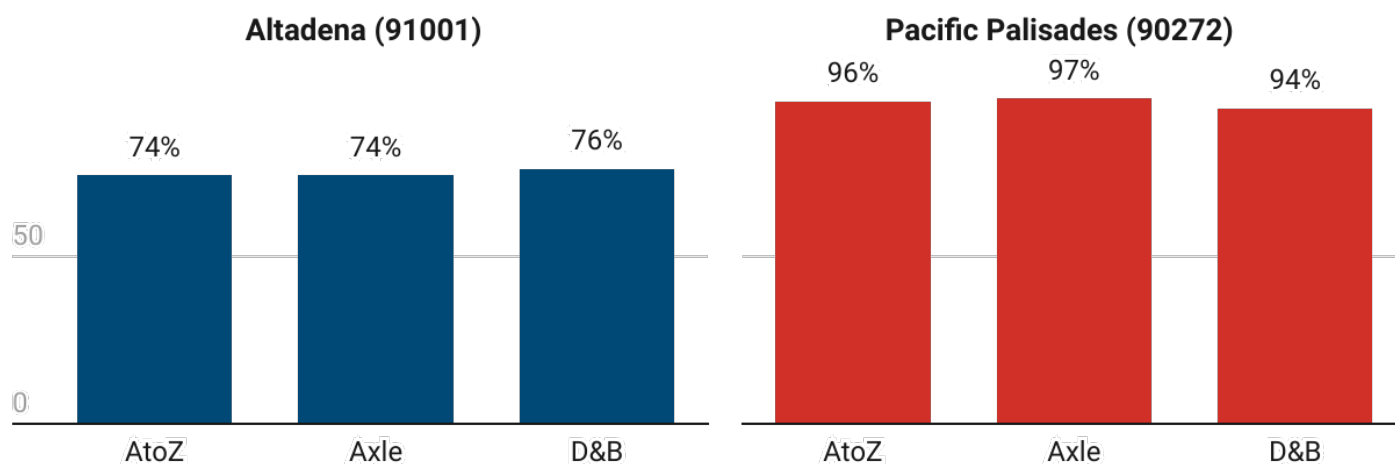
**Sources:** Dun & Bradstreet (2024); CalFire fire incident boundaries (2025); ESRI, United States ZIP Code Boundaries (2022)



## Key Finding 1: Most Businesses in Altadena and Palisades Were Located in the Path of the January 2025 Wildfires

In both Altadena (ZIP 91001) and Pacific Palisades (ZIP 90272), the majority of private businesses were situated inside the fire perimeter (see Figure 1). In Pacific Palisades, at least 9 in 10 businesses fell inside the perimeter, resulting in near-universal exposure. In Altadena, the figure was at least 7 in 10. Across all three data sources, the evidence confirms that most private businesses in both communities were located within the fire-affected area, with a larger share in Pacific Palisades—contextualizing the higher destruction rates observed there compared to Altadena.

**Figure 1. Share of Private Businesses in Altadena and Pacific Palisades Fire Perimeters**



**Source:** Author's analysis of Data Axle, Dunn & Bradstreet, and AtoZdatabases (2024); and latest CalFire fire incident perimeters.

**Note:** Percentages represent the share of all private businesses in each community located inside the fire perimeter.

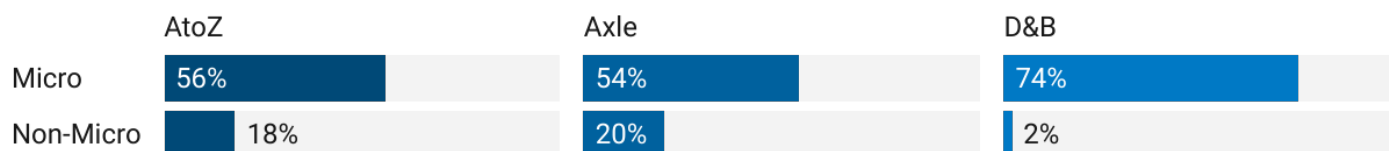
In both Altadena and Pacific Palisades, most businesses located within the fire perimeter were microbusinesses with nine or fewer employees (see Figure 2). In Altadena, microbusinesses made up between 54% to 75% of these fire-exposed businesses, depending on the data source. In Pacific Palisades, the concentration was even higher, ranging from roughly 67% to over 90%. These findings show that microbusinesses not only dominated the local business landscape—as established in Brief 1 in the series—but also made up the majority of businesses directly exposed to the fires.

## Key Finding 2: Most Fire-Exposed Businesses in Altadena and Palisades Were Microbusinesses

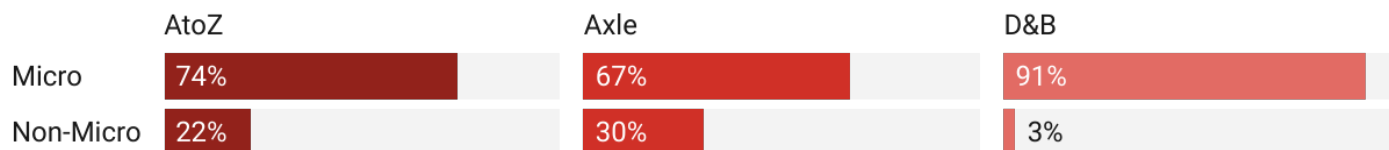
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**Figure 2. Share of Fire-Exposed Private Businesses by Size Category in Altadena and Pacific Palisades Fire Perimeters**

### Altadena (91001)



### Pacific Palisades (90272)



**Source:** Author's analysis of Data Axle, Dunn & Bradstreet, and AtoZdatabases (2024); and the latest CalFire fire incident perimeters.

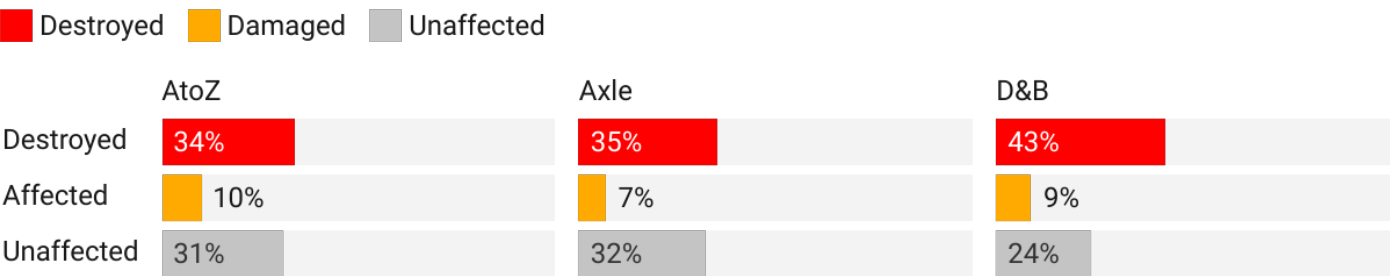
**Note:** Percentages represent the share of all private businesses in each community located inside the fire perimeter, broken out by micro (1–9 employees) and non-micro (10 or more employees).

# Key Finding 3: Up to Half of Fire-Exposed Businesses Were Destroyed in Altadena and Pacific Palisades

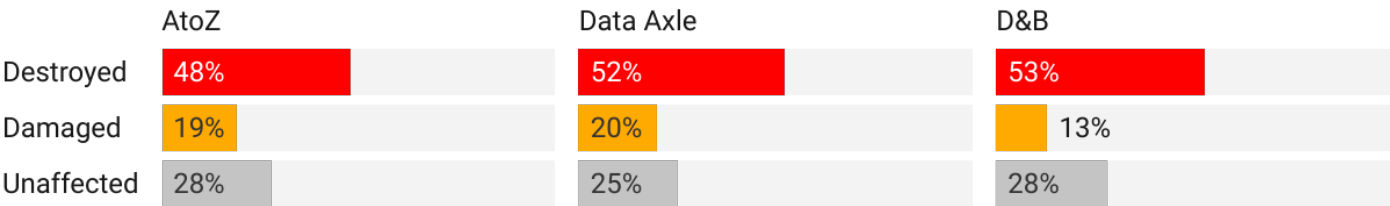
Across the three business directories, between one-third and one-half of private businesses located inside the fire perimeter were destroyed (see Figure 3). In Altadena, 34 to 43 percent of businesses were destroyed, and an additional 7 to 10 percent were affected. In Pacific Palisades, 48 to 53 percent of businesses were destroyed, and 13 to 20 percent were affected. The remainder were recorded as unaffected, ranging from approximately one-quarter to one-third in Altadena, and about one-quarter in Pacific Palisades. Overall, Pacific Palisades had the highest share of destroyed businesses, with roughly half of those inside the perimeter lost compared to about one-third to two-fifths in Altadena.

Figure 3. Share of Businesses Destroyed, Damaged, or Unaffected in Altadena and Pacific Palisades Fire Perimeters

## Altadena (91001)



## Pacific Palisades (90272)



**Source:** Authors' tabulations based on Dun & Bradstreet; Data Axle; AtoZ Databases; CalFire DINS; and Los Angeles County Assessor parcel data.

**Note:** Percentages represent the share of all private businesses inside the fire perimeter classified as destroyed, affected, or unaffected, based on CAL FIRE's parcel-level structure damage assessments.



# Key Finding 4: Microbusinesses Accounted for Most of the Losses, and They Face Greater Challenges in Recovery

Within the fire perimeter, both micro and non-micro businesses sustained heavy losses; however, microbusinesses made up the majority of those destroyed, reflecting their dominance in the local business base (see Figure 4). In Altadena, one-third to two-fifths of microbusinesses inside the perimeter were destroyed, while in Pacific Palisades, the share was closer to one-half. Non-micro businesses were also hit hard, with destruction rates ranging from about one-quarter to more than half, depending on the community and data source.

Although losses were widespread, the impact on microbusinesses is especially concerning. Existing studies show that microbusinesses often struggle the most after disasters due to limited resources, less insurance coverage, and greater barriers in accessing recovery aid.

Figure 4. Share of Private Businesses Destroyed, Damaged, or Unaffected by Size in Altadena and Pacific Palisades Fire Perimeters

	Altadena				Pacific Palisades		
	AtoZ	Axle	D&B		AtoZ	Axle	D&B
Micro				Micro			
Destroyed	37%	34%	43%	Destroyed	50%	51%	53%
Damaged	11%	7%	9%	Damaged	18%	21%	13%
Unaffected	30%	31%	24%	Unaffected	29%	25%	28%
Non-Micro				Non-Micro			
Destroyed	24%	37%	33%	Destroyed	42%	55%	47%
Damaged	7%	7%	6%	Damaged	26%	18%	19%
Unaffected	31%	35%	33%	Unaffected	26%	23%	28%

**Source:** Authors' tabulations based on Dun & Bradstreet; Data Axle; AtoZ Databases; CalFire DINS; and Los Angeles County Assessor parcel data.

**Note:** Percentages are calculated within each group (micro or non-micro), not as a share of all private businesses.

A photograph showing three construction workers on a large, flat roof. One worker in the foreground is wearing a white cap and a grey long-sleeved shirt, leaning over and working. Another worker in the middle ground is wearing a grey hoodie and is also leaning over. A third worker is partially visible in the background, wearing dark clothing. The roof surface is covered with various materials, including wooden planks and metal sheets. A red horizontal bar is positioned below the workers.

# Conclusion

The January 2025 wildfires devastated the business base of Altadena and Pacific Palisades. Most businesses in these communities were located within the fire perimeters, and between one-third and one-half of them were destroyed. While microbusinesses suffered the greatest numerical losses due to their prominence in the local business landscape, larger employers also sustained substantial damage. Although data sources varied somewhat, the overall pattern of vulnerability was broadly consistent across both communities.

The fires disrupted not only buildings, but also the core of community economic life. Small businesses are more than storefronts—they provide essential services, jobs, and economic stability for residents. When they disappear, recovery becomes harder for families, workers, and neighborhoods. The overlap between homes and businesses exacerbates the crisis, as many microbusinesses operate from residential premises. Losing a home often means losing a livelihood as well.

These findings point to urgent policy challenges. Microbusinesses, which already face barriers in accessing aid and capital, struggle the most to recuperate. Without targeted recovery efforts, many may never reopen, leaving lasting gaps in the local economy. Understanding these vulnerabilities is critical for shaping recovery strategies that support both immediate rebuilding and long-term resilience.

The analysis in this brief provides the foundation for understanding how the fires reshaped local business landscapes in Altadena and the Pacific Palisades. The third brief in the series builds on the analysis by examining the short-term disruptions and early recovery trajectories of micro- and non-microbusinesses, with a focus on business delistings and property sales as measures of vulnerability in the months following the fires.

# Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Small Business Administration, 2024. Office of Advocacy, "New Advocacy Report Shows Small Business Total Reaches 34.8 Million, Accounting for 2.6 Million Net New Jobs in Latest Year of Data," press release, November 19, 2024. <https://advocacy.sba.gov/2024/11/19/new-advocacy-report-shows-small-business-total-reaches-34-8-million-accounting-for-2-6-million-net-new-jobs-in-latest-year-of-data/>

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Small Business Administration, 2025. 2025 Small Business Profile: California (June), [https://advocacy.sba.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/California\\_2025-State-Profile.pdf](https://advocacy.sba.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/California_2025-State-Profile.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>Los Angeles County, LA County by the Numbers, current as of October 2024, <https://lacounty.gov/by-the-numbers>

<sup>4</sup>S. R. González, P. M. Ong, and Y. Marín, *Post-Pandemic Small Business Recovery amid Headwinds* (September 11, 2025), UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute, <https://latino.ucla.edu/research/postpandemic-small-business-recovery-amid-headwinds/>.

<sup>5</sup>M. Belitski, C. Guenther, A. S. Kritikos, et al., "Economic Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Entrepreneurship and Small Businesses," *Small Business Economics* 58 (2022): 593–609, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-021-00544-y>.



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