

Learn about trends in the car wash industry and find more information on opening your own car wash business. Don't forget you can receive free or low-cost training and free professional business advice, from [your local Small Business Development Center](#)!

View our related business reports here: [Auto Repair Business](#) and [Automotive Industry Research](#).

[Get a free Car Wash business plan template on our Business Plans page.](#)

Car Wash COVID-19 Resources

In response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, shelter-in-place orders and physical distancing measures have affected many businesses. Here is a look at the impact to the car cleaning and detailing industry.

Car Washes are considered essential services, but the carwash owner makes the decision to keep it open or closed. Car Wash businesses that are open should follow [CDC guidelines](#). Revenue has [decreased](#) for car washes since people are working from home and unemployment increased. As with [many other industries](#), there has been a [shift to low and no-contact transaction](#) options for a safer customer experience. For more information and resources, visit the following pages.

- [SBDCNet COVID-19 Small Business Resources](#)
- [SBDCNet's COVID-19 Industry Resources](#)
- [CDC - Cleaning and Disinfection for Non-emergency Transport Vehicles](#)
- [International Carwash Association - COVID](#)
- [Midwest Carwash Association - COVID Resources](#)
- [Washington State Phase 1 Car Wash Industry COVID-19 Requirements](#) (pdf)

Car Wash Business Overview & Trends

NAICS Code: 811192, SIC Code: 7542

This [Car Washes industry summary is from First Research](#) which also sells a full version of

this report.

- “Companies in this industry provide cleaning, washing, and waxing services for cars, trucks, vans, and trailers. Major US companies include Autobell Car Wash, Mister Car Wash, and Zips Car Wash (all based in the US)... There are approximately 80,000 professional carwash locations in North America, and nearly the same number in Europe, according to estimates from the International Carwash Association. Germany is home to a particularly high number of commercial car washes. Global sales of new cars are a key industry growth driver. China, the US, Japan, India, and Germany are the top markets for new car sales by volume, according to the OICS (International Organization of Motor Vehicle Manufacturers).
- The US carwash industry includes about 16,000 establishments (single-location companies and units of multi-location companies) with combined annual revenue of about \$9 billion. The industry includes full- and self-service carwash facilities, as well as truck and bus washes and vehicle detailing services.
- Competitive Landscape: Demand is driven by new car sales and growth in consumer income. The profitability of individual firms depends on favorable location and efficient operations. There are few economies of scale. Chains have advantages in advertising and customer recognition. Small firms can compete successfully by having good locations. The industry is highly fragmented: the 50 largest US companies hold less than 20% of the market.”

Additional resources on industry overview and trends:

- [International Carwash Association Industry Information](#)
- [Car Washes](#) – DataUSA
- [State of the carwash industry in 2018](#)
- [Car Wash and Detailing Industry trends 2020 & Beyond](#)

Car Maintenance Business Customer Demographics

[IBISWorld](#) reports on the major market segments for [Car Wash & Auto Detailing in the US](#). The full version of these reports are available for purchase.

- IBISWorld estimates \$10.3 billion in total industry revenue for 2020.
- Household customers account for the largest share of car wash & detailing industry revenue at approximately 69.7%. Car Wash & Detailing household customers are broadly defined as consumers that have a driver's license, own a car, and are older than 16 years of age. This demographic is further segmented by income brackets, with households in the highest division (those earning over \$150,000) representing the greatest demand for car wash & detailing services.

- Business customers contribute 28.6% of industry revenue. Revenue from this segment is largely derived from servicing delivery vans and taxi cabs. This segment includes businesses that depend on motor vehicles for the daily running of the company, as well as taxi and rental car companies, and truck businesses — many of whom cannot afford in-house repair and maintenance shops.
- Government customers comprise approximately 1.7% of the car wash & detailing industry revenue. This segment includes federal, state, and local government organizations.

Find additional information on customers in a variety of trade associations and publications, including:

- [2020 Car Ownership Statistics](#)
- [Customer Service Tips and Best Practices](#)

Car Wash Business Startup Costs

Startup costs for a carwash business may vary based on equipment required and services offered. Entrepreneur Magazine estimates that the cost to start a [exterior-conveyor car wash](#) begins around \$100,000. Other estimates place [startup costs for construction and equipment](#) up to \$80,000 per car wash bay. Some [common startup costs](#) include:

- Land
- Bays and washing equipment
- Vacuum units
- Soap
- Signage

Many car washes are part of a franchise. This will have a large impact on your startup costs as the franchisor will likely have certain amounts of equipment/investments required to open. Contact your prospective franchisor or view their website for details. For more information on franchise businesses, see our [Franchise Small Business Help Topic](#).

The following resources have additional business startup costs information:

- [Carwash Equipment 101](#)
- [How Much Money Is Needed for a Car Wash Business? – Chron](#)
- [What Supplies do you need for Car Detailing?](#)
- [How Much Money Does a Car Wash Make?](#)

Car Wash Business Plans

- [Sample Car Wash Business Plan Template](#)
- [Car Wash Business Plan](#)
- [Car Cleaning & Detailing Business Plan](#)
- [Self-Serve Car Wash Business Plan](#)

Car Wash Business Associations

Trade associations often are excellent sources of information on an industry. Here are some relevant industry associations:

- [International Carwash Association](#)
- [International Detailing Association](#)
- [Southwest Car Wash Association](#)
- [Midwest Carwash Association](#)
- [Western Carwash Association](#)
- [South Eastern Car Wash Association](#)

Relevant Business Regulations

The section provides a general awareness of regulations and agencies to consider when starting a car cleaning business. Check with your state and municipality for rules and regulations that may impact the business in your area.

- [Carwash regulations you need to know](#)
- [Automotive Sectors EPA Regulatory Information](#)
- [The Pillars of Car Wash Safety](#)

Related Business Publications

- [Car Wash Magazine](#)
- [Wash Trends Magazine](#)
- [Carwashing & Detailing Magazine Archive](#)
- [Auto Laundry News](#)

Car Cleaning Business Employment Trends

The US Census Bureau reports on the size of the [car washes industry](#) (NAICS 811192) in the United States as of 2018:

- Approximately 16,697 establishments in the US
- 165,280 total employees across the nation

ZipRecruiter identifies the national average salary for a [car washer](#) at \$12 per hour and \$24,568 per year. The primary function of this role is to clean customers' cars and to provide excellent customer service. Additional job responsibilities include vacuuming floor and seats, polishing surfaces, pre-soak, soap, rinse, and dry the car. Other services include applying wax

to the car and cleaning tires.

Here is the [Hand Laborers and Material Movers labor market summary](#) from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which includes laborers who clean cars. A more specific breakdown of [automotive repair and maintenance occupations](#) is also available from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Quick Facts: Hand Laborers and Material Movers	
2019 Median Pay	\$28,710 per year \$13.80 per hour
Typical Entry-Level Education	No formal educational credential
Work Experience in a Related Occupation	None
On-the-job Training	Short-term on-the-job training
Number of Jobs, 2019	4,231,600
Job Outlook, 2019-29	3% (As fast as average)
Employment Change, 2019-29	121,300

- “Pay: The median annual wage for hand laborers and material movers was \$28,710 in May 2019. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$20,800, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$46,050.”
- “Work Environment: Hand laborers and material movers held about 4.2 million jobs in 2019... Hand laborers and material movers lift and carry heavy objects, and their work is usually repetitive and physically demanding. They bend, kneel, crouch, or crawl in awkward positions.”
- “Job Outlook: Overall employment of hand laborers and material movers is projected to grow 3 percent from 2019 to 2029, about as fast as the average for all occupations. Projected employment change will vary by occupation... Demand for automotive repair and maintenance services, as well as a growing automobile dealers industry, is expected to contribute to employment growth of cleaners of vehicles and equipment.”

Additional Resources

Already in business or thinking about starting your own small business? Check out our various small business resources:

- View more business reports here: [Small Business Snapshots](#)
- View small business help topics here: [Small Business Information Center](#)
- View industry-specific research here: [Market Research Links](#)
- View business plans samples here: [Sample Business Plans](#)

Remember, you can also receive free professional business advice and free or low-cost business training from your [local Small Business Development Center](#)!

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