



# According to the New US Census Report: RV Retail Sales Activity at RV Dealerships Nears \$15 Billion

by: Jeff Kurowski

The total number of RV dealerships remained fairly constant during the 1997-to-2002 time period, but RV dealers generated a lot more sales revenue in 2002 than they did during 1997, according to just released U.S. Census Bureau statistics.

The census bureau's preliminary 2002 Economic Census Report, issued in November 2004, shows there were 3,088 RV dealership "establishments" in operation at the end of 2002, compared with 3,014 RV dealership sites in business in 1997, a marginal 2.5 percent increase.

"Establishments" are defined by the census bureau as locations with paid employees.

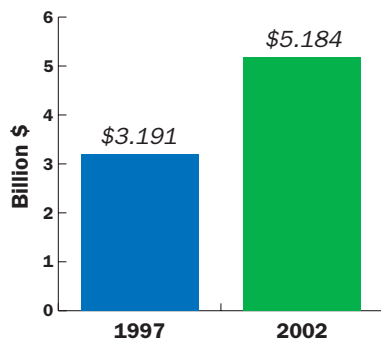
Meanwhile, the census bureau also reported that total RV dealership sales revenue increased by a robust 48.7 percent to \$14.973 billion in 2002, from \$10.069 billion in 1997, not adjusted for inflation. But even after factoring in inflation, which totaled 12 percent during the 1997-to-2002 period, RV dealership sales increased by 32.8 percent.

The census bureau figures show that sales revenue at the average dealership increased 45 percent to \$4.8 million in 2002, from \$3.3 million in 1997, not adjusted for inflation. Adjusting for inflation, the increase in sales revenue at the average dealership location still amounted to a healthy 30 percent.

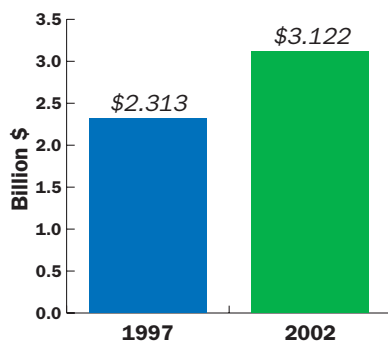
To create apples-to-apples comparisons, the census bureau's 1997 dollar figures were all multiplied by 1.12 to convert them into year 2002 dollar values.

## RV SALES UP IN ALL CATEGORIES

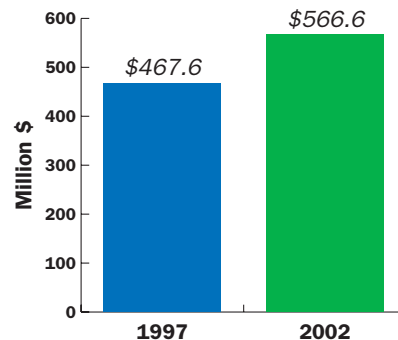
Here is a summary of the other census bureau findings comparing 2002 data with 1997 figures, all adjusted for the 12 percent inflation that occurred during the period:



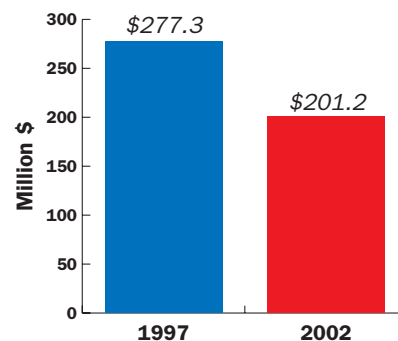
**1. New motorhome sales revenue** increased 62.5 percent to \$5.184 billion in 2002, from \$3.191 billion in 1997. Contributing to this increase was the growth in popularity of diesel engine Class A motorhomes, which are significantly more expensive than their gas engine counterparts. Diesel pushers accounted for only around 20 percent of Class A deliveries in 1997, but diesel units comprised 44 percent of all Class A sales in 2002, according to RVIA.



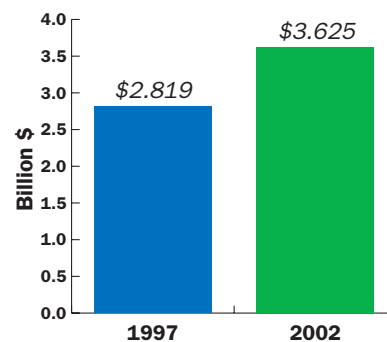
**2. Revenue from the sale of new travel trailers and fifth-wheels** grew by 35 percent to \$3.122 billion in 2002, compared with \$2.313 billion in 1997, a 35 percent increase.



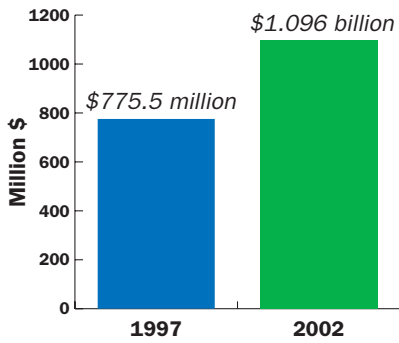
**3. Revenue from the sale of new folding campers** increased 21.2 percent to \$566.6 million in 2002, compared with \$467.6 million in 1997.



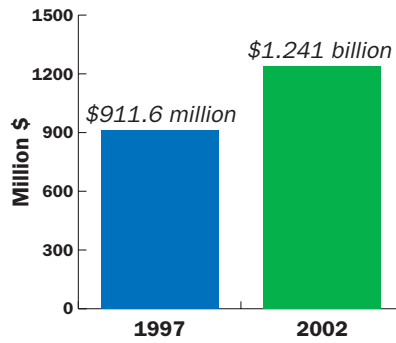
**4. Revenue from the sale of new truck campers** declined \$201.2 million in 2002, compared with \$277.3 million in 1997.



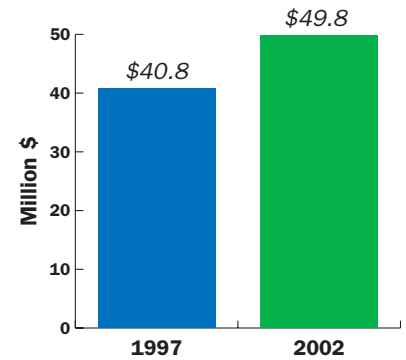
**5. Revenue from the sale of used RVs by dealers** increased 28.6 percent to \$3.625 billion in 2002, compared with \$2.819 billion in 1997.



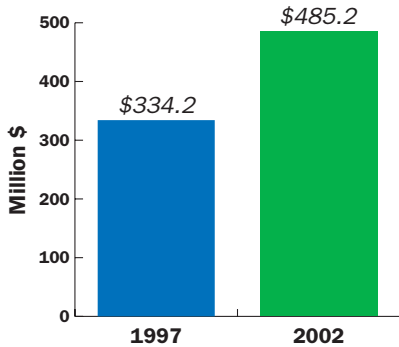
**6. All non merchandise sales revenue** at RV dealerships increased 41.3 percent to \$1.096 billion in 2002, compared with \$775.5 million in 1997.



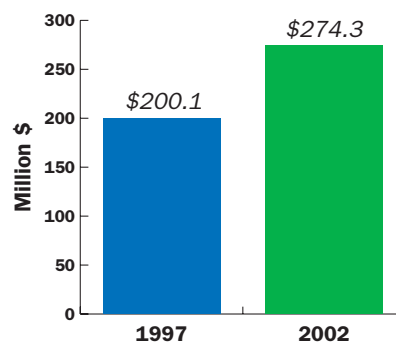
**8. The total payroll at RV dealerships** increased 36 percent to \$1.241 billion in 2002, compared with \$911.6 million in 1997.



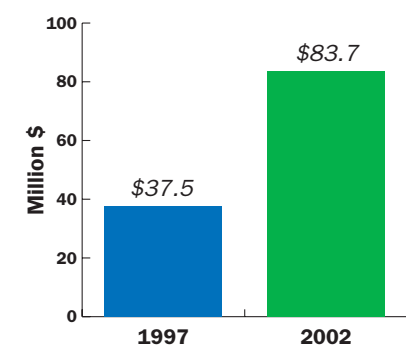
**10. RV dealership revenue from RV rentals and leasing** increased 22.2 percent to \$49.8 million in 2002, compared with \$40.8 million in 1997.



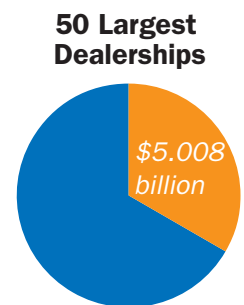
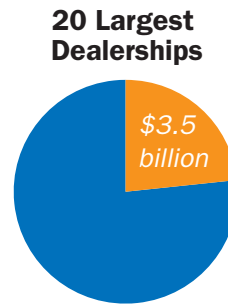
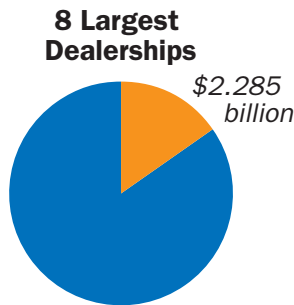
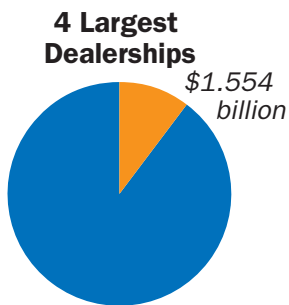
**7. Labor charges for work performed** at RV dealerships increased 45.2 percent to \$485.2 million in 2002, compared with \$334.2 million in 1997.



**9. The value of repair parts installed** at RV dealerships increased 37.1 percent to \$274.3 million in 2002, compared with \$200.1 million in 1997.



**11. The value of service contracts issued** by RV dealerships increased by an astronomical 123 percent to \$83.7 million in 2002, from \$37.5 million in 1997.



**DEALERSHIP SIZE AND PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL SALES**

The census bureau also found in 2002 that the four largest RV dealership companies operated from 14 locations and generated \$1.554 billion in sales revenue, which was equivalent to 10.4 percent of the dealer body's total sales revenue of \$14.973 billion that year.

Meanwhile, the eight largest RV dealership companies operated from

60 locations during 2002 and generated \$2.285 billion in sales revenue, 15.3 percent of the dealer body's total.

The 20 largest dealership companies operated from 114 locations and generated \$3.500 billion in sales revenue, 23.4 percent of the dealer body's total, and the 50 largest dealership companies operated from 177 locations and generated \$5.008 billion in sales revenue, 33.4 percent of the dealer body's total in 2002, the census bureau reported.

**MORE INFORMATION TO COME**

This analysis is from the preliminary report of the 2002 Economic Census, which is conducted every five years.

Data coming in 2005 will include more detailed breakdowns of dealership size by dollar volume and number of employees – including state-by-state information. RVDA will share this information with members as it becomes available.