

Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers - International Roundtable on Business Survey Frames

Country progress report 2015 and future plans

Country:

Canada

Reporter:

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I. Organisation, Population and Usage of the Statistical Business Register

1. Name of the register

Business Register

2. Name of the organisation responsible for holding the register

Statistics Canada

3. Position of the register unit in the organisation

Statistical Registers and Geography Division

4. Number of employees in the register unit (Headcount employees)

70

5. Primary goal and use of the register

The Business Register is used by the economic programs as a frame to determine the in-scope population, to select a sample, to support collection activities, to monitor and control response burden and to support business demographics analysis.

6. Year of establishment of the register

1987

7. Year(s) of the main re-engineering(s) of the register

2006-2008

8. Number of active enterprises* in the register at the end of 2015

*If it is difficult to use Enterprises, you can use Legal units instead.

Enterprises: 6,500,000 currently active enterprises

II. Progress and Developments in the Past Year

Please list main achievements (maximum 3) in the past year (2015) or the problems you have tackled.

1. Short title of work which was done

Complex enterprise profiling procedural review and staff re-structuring

Description of work (max 4-5 sentences)

Continuing the work identified in last year's report, we continued to re-structure the work team that conducts profiling of complex enterprises. A number of new professional positions were created to ensure that the staff who work with enterprises to identify their statistical structures have the accounting or economics background that is appropriate for this type of work. We have also been closely reviewing and making improvements to our profiling procedural documentation and training materials.

2. Short title of work which was done

Quality Assessment Framework

Description of work (max 4-5 sentences)

Over the past two years, we have been working intensively to streamline our quality dashboards and quality assurance reports of the Business Register. In addition we have developed new methods for using the level of corroboration between the various data sources to determine a quality score for the industry codes assigned to business units. We have also begun to develop new metrics to assess the overall coherence and reasonableness of complex enterprise profiles (ex: multi-legals, multi-establishment enterprises). This last step of the project is considered to be of utmost importance given the importance of complex enterprises in Statistics Canada's national accounting and other outputs.

3. Short title of work which was done

Globalization pilot study

Description of work (max 4-5 sentences)

The Business Register is closely involved in work resulting from Statistics Canada's participation on the Globalization Task Force of the OECD. This past year, our enterprise profilers have piloted some test questions to determine whether enterprises are engaged in international 'Factory-Less Goods Production' and 'Merchanting'. The questions seem to have tested very well, and we expect they will be used as 'filtering questions' for a larger set of questions that are being developed to measure the incidence and magnitude of these phenomena.

III. Future plans

Please list themes/projects (maximum 3) which you plan to tackle in the current (2016) and following year(s).

1. Short title of work planned

Establish the Business Register as a centralized resource for Business Demography

Description of work (max 4-5 sentences)

We have formally resourced and launched the project to strengthen the Business Register as a tool for analyzing the life cycles and drivers of success for firms. We are producing a detailed plan to improve the longitudinality of enterprise records. This will entail working with partners in Statistics Canada and also in other countries to closely examine the identification and correction of false births and deaths. We will also be identifying and considering possible data models that would ensure that we provide a solid data infrastructure for coherent and meaningful business demography statistics.

2. Short title of work planned

Integration of the Business Register with international trade statistics frames

Description of work (max 4-5 sentences)

There are a few aspects of international trade and foreign direct investment statistics that we would like to strengthen on the Business Register. The importer-exporter database used to compile international trade statistics is linked to the Business Register, but the level of integration could be improved. We will also be reviewing data from the federal tax agency to ensure that the taxation accounts used to process excises and duties are being optimally used for the Business Register.

3. Short title of work planned

Long-term visioning for business and social registers

Description of work (max 4-5 sentences)

There is an increasing interest in Statistics Canada to move to more integrated and interconnected set of registers across the business, household and institutional sectors. These are very early discussions, but the longer-term vision would be to implement a system similar to the one elaborated by the Wallgren and Wallgren. As a first step, it may be necessary to streamline the registers on the social side, which currently does not have the same level of centralization within Statistics Canada as the Business Register.

IV. Main challenges

Please list main challenges (maximum 3) with respect to development, maintenance and use of your statistical business register.

1. Main challenge 1

Making the best use of the many different administrative and survey data sources

Description of the challenge

The variety and volume of data and system users that are used to maintain the Register also create challenges from a data modelling and processing standpoint. For example the ability to update industry codes using taxation account registrations, tax forms, business survey feedback mechanisms, in addition to updates by the many industry specialists and enterprise profilers at Statistics Canada requires a clear sense of how these various sources should supercede one another to come up with the 'right' code for a business unit. Similarly, updating of business status codes and other key attributes becomes increasingly complex. The availability of more and better data is an opportunity that challenges us to ensure that our data processing models are optimal and robust. It also highlights the need for meaningful quality assessment metrics to support optimized processing rules and data algorithms.

2. Main challenge 2

Ensuring our technology and data archiving keep pace

Description of the challenge

As the volume of data and number of users and processes of the Register expands, we continue to work hard to ensure that our IT infrastructure adapts. Our server and processing capacity requires on-going evaluation and renewal. In recent years, there has been a transition to shared servers and IT management structures with other programs, which requires well-defined service level agreements and collaboration with IT providers. We must also keep a close eye on historical data that is being retained and archive items that are no longer required on the main system. Our Business Register System is used by survey analysts and also business survey interviewers as an integral part of their duties. It is therefore essential that we maintain a high level of performance and service for those using the Register for daily business operations.

3. Main challenge 3

Classification challenges and on-going improvement of enterprise structures

Description of the challenge

As always, there are some specific challenges relating to classification and/or conceptual framework of the Business Register and the units it encompasses. Currently, there are on-going discussions with the National Accounts as to how the wholesaling and distribution activities should be distinguished within the enterprise structures of large manufacturing enterprises. One issue that is coming closer to a resolution is the need to reduce the over-classification of enterprises to the "Holding Company" category. We have nearly completed hypothesis testing for a set of probes that will help to ensure that this classification will be used only once the various defining criteria have been carefully considered. As indicated in the Future Plans section, we also continue to focus on making sure we do the best job possible to ensure the complex enterprise profiles accurately reflect the current allocation of activity to geographic areas and industries.