

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

Country progress report 2015 and future plans

Country:

USA

Reporter:

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Institution:

U.S. Census Bureau

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

1. Name of the register

Business Register (BR)

2. Name of the organisation responsible for holding the register

U.S. Census Bureau, Economic Statistical Methods Division (ESMD)

3. Position of the register unit in the organisation

The register is supported and maintained by multiple branches and divisions organized along functional lines,

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

80

5. Primary goal and use of the register

The primary functions of the register are to serve as a sampling frame and source of administrative data for the Census Bureau's economic statistical programs.

6. Year of establishment of the register

1974

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

2002

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: ~35 million (including non-employers)

Legal units:

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

Economic Census Feedback

Description of work (max 4-5 sentences)

The extensive data review and publication cycle for the 2012 Economic Census (EC) was finally concluded in December of 2015. With the completion of this effort, the final industrial classification (NAICS) codes assigned to establishments during EC processing were applied to the BR. This update significantly improved the quality and reliability of NAICS codes on the BR, particularly those of single units currently assigned classifications based on administrative records.

2. Short title of work which was done

Internet-only Data Collection for Single Units

Description of work (max 4-5 sentences)

For the 2015 Report of Organization and the Annual Survey of Manufactures, single-establishment companies were offered only one reporting mode via the internet. This was an initial step toward phasing in 100% electronic data collection for the 2017 Economic Census.

3. Short title of work which was done

BR-based Data Product for Congressional Districts

Description of work (max 4-5 sentences)

For the 2014 reference year, the County Business Patterns (CBP) program released tabulations at the Congressional District (CD) level. This represents the first CD-level statistical product created using establishment data derived from the Business Register. The physical location addresses of establishments were assigned CDs based on geocoding software and then payroll and employment values were aggregated accordingly. These data are expected to be a useful complement to CD data derived from household surveys.

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

Continued Phase-in of Electronic-only Data Collection

Description of work (max 4-5 sentences)

The electronic-only data collection strategy will be expanded to include multi-establishment companies for the 2016 Report of Organization and Annual Survey of Manufactures. The elimination of paper forms as a reporting mode is expected to not only yield a savings in terms of data collection costs but also lead to improved BR data quality.

2. Short title of work planned

Economic Census Classification Pre-Canvass

Description of work (max 4-5 sentences)

The 2016 BR processing reference year will include a pre-canvass of approximately 175,000 single-establishment companies. These businesses will be identified on the BR as having incomplete or low-reliability industrial classification (NAICS) codes. The primary purpose of the pre-canvass is to update the NAICS codes prior to questionnaire assignment for the Economic Census.

3. Short title of work planned

Administrative Net Receipts Quality Indicator

Description of work (max 4-5 sentences)

At present, net receipts measures that are derived from business income tax records are applied to the BR with virtually no editing or even indicators of quality. For the 2016 BR processing reference year a new indicator will be introduced that describes the quality of the administrative net receipts values. This indicator will be set based on the Hidioglou-Berthelot (H-B) method of outlier detection using the ratio of net receipts to annual payroll. It will help survey areas in determining whether or not net receipts can be used as a reliable measure of size when selecting samples from the BR.

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

Size, Scope, and Complexity

Description of the challenge

The Business Register (BR) serves many roles beyond being a sampling frame and administrative records repository. It is also the operational control system for the Economic Census (EC), the central repository of captured EC data, and the source of key data products. While there are certainly advantages to having a multi-purpose BR this, by definition, makes it complex and often difficult to understand in total. The perpetual challenge is in finding resources to work on the BR and in providing support to the user community.

2. Main challenge 2

"Big Data" Integration

Description of the challenge

The statistical structures and classification systems upon which the BR is based do not always lend themselves to the ready ingestion of "big data" whether structured or unstructured. The "matching problem"-- trying to correlate big data or 3rd party data to individual BR statistical units-- is still a very time-consuming and resource intensive exercise.

3. Main challenge 3

Interoperability and Communication

Description of the challenge

The BR serves as an originating data source for many other systems. For example the database that services the outward-facing "Business Help Site"-- a self-service portal for survey respondents-- is populated and refreshed from the BR. Similarly, subject-matter areas retrieve response data and status updates from the BR. Typically, these interactions are carried out through proprietary and disparate "extract, transform, and load" (ETL) operations. These operations require careful scheduling and must be re-tested if the underlying BR data structures change or if there is a need to add something to the extraction. There are also issues of having to "map" data elements in the BR to those in the target systems when non-standard nomenclature is used.