

An Overview of the Improved 2017 Economic Census

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The Economic Census

- U.S. Government's official five-year measure of American business and the economy
- Conducted every five years, for reference years ending in "2" or "7"
- Authorized under Title 13 U.S.C., Section 131
 - Response is required by law
 - Responses are kept confidential and only can be used for statistical purposes

Data from the Economic Census

- Provides the nation with the most comprehensive, detailed, and authoritative data about the structure and functionality of the U.S. economy
- Important for industries, communities, and businesses, providing factual support for legislation, policies, and business decisions
- Used by government agencies, policymakers, analysts, and business organizations for planning and development
- Provides the foundation for the National Income and Product Accounts (NIPAs) and supports Gross Domestic Product (GDP) estimates
- Benchmarks, weights, or source data for key indexes of...
 - Producer prices
 - Industrial production

Data from the Economic Census

- Provides critical support for the Census Bureau's other economic programs
- Serves as the benchmark for principal economic indicators and other current business surveys
- Improves business survey frames through comprehensive updates to the Business Register

Components of the Economic Census

Four Key Components

- **The Economic Census**
 - Core Coverage of employer businesses in 18 industrial sectors (950 detailed industries)
 - Total Employer Establishments = 7,490,000
 - Total mailed = 3,850,000
 - Data products cover nearly 21,000 geographic areas, including the 50 States and the District of Columbia, lower geographies, and U.S. territories
 - 7,900 goods and services products to be released under North American Product Classification System (NAPCS)
- **The Economic Census of the Island Areas**
 - Puerto Rico
 - American Samoa
 - The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
 - Guam
 - The U.S. Virgin Islands
- **Survey of Business Owners (included in the Annual Business Survey for 2017)**
 - Selected economic and demographic characteristics of businesses (employers and non-employers) and business owners classified by gender, ethnicity, race, and veteran status
- **Commodity Flow Survey**
 - Statistics on the shipment of commodities in the manufacturing, mining, and wholesale trade sectors and in selected industries in the retail trade and services sectors
 - Co-sponsored by the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Department of Transportation

An Efficient 2017 Economic Census

- Move to 100% electronic collection
- Reduce overall burden for respondents
- Automate operations to increase productivity
- Improve economic census data products to reflect our ever-changing economy

Move to 100% Electronic Collection

- Response will be paperless, with a paper option available only for smaller single-location businesses in the U.S. territories
- Easier and faster way to respond, reducing burden, improving coverage and data quality
- Tested paperless collection strategies across industry sectors in annual programs
- Utilized focus groups, cognitive testing, randomized experiments, and lessons learned

Reduce Overall Burden for Respondents

- All electronic collection reduces reporting burden
 - 800+ different electronic reporting paths, tailored to specific industries
- Account manager program
 - 200 account managers
 - 1,800 large companies
 - 891,000 establishments
- Reduction in the single-location establishment sample size across all industries

Automate Operations to Increase Productivity

- Leveraging Census Bureau enterprise systems for content development, data collection, and data dissemination
 - One-stop shop for businesses to report via secure online portal for a common reporting approach across surveys
 - New electronic instrument
 - Enterprise-level dissemination platform enables data users to do more with the data that the Census Bureau publishes
- Autocoding of write-in responses
- Paradata available to assist in identifying future improvements

Improve Economic Census Data Products

- Utilized public advisory committees, key federal data users, industry associations, and companies to develop questionnaire content to reflect today's economy
- Cognitive testing of new content
- New industry specific content such as self-service technology, retail health clinics, and distance learning
- Efficient methods for data editing and review
- Improved quality measures including new response rate metrics and variances for product estimates

Improve Economic Census Data Products

- Incorporation of North American Product Classification System (NAPCS) product categories
 - Comprehensive, market- or demand-based, hierarchical classification system for products
 - Based on three North American countries' agreement
 - Promotes improvements in the identification and classification of service products
 - Detailed look at goods and services produced by industry and economy-wide
 - Development of Hot Deck Imputation (HDI) methodology for missing product data

Managing Challenges

- Maintain/improve data quality of the 2017 Economic Census
- Improvements impacted time, resources, and scope
 - Utilized project management tools and techniques
 - All aspects of survey life cycle were evaluated and considered for improvement/efficiency; review of the change and impact on quality and cost
 - Formal lessons learned to be conducted for each survey life cycle process

Additional Challenges Arose....

- FY17 and FY18 Funding Levels
- Hurricanes Irma and Maria

Current Status

- Classification letters mailed February 1
 - 320,000 letters to a sample of small businesses
 - Request principal kind of business only
 - Due date of March 15
- Long form letters scheduled to mail on May 1
 - 3.5 million letters mailed to multi-location businesses and some smaller companies
 - Comprehensive data collection
 - Due date of June 12
- First data release (First Look) scheduled for September 2019
- All data releases completed by December 2021

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