Testing Contact and Response Strategies to Improve Response in the 2012 Economic Census

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U.S. Census Bureau*
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*The views expressed in this presentation are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau
Outline

• Economic Census Overview
• Contact Strategies
• Preliminary Results
• Conclusions and Next Steps
Economic Census

• Conducted every five years in order to get a measure of American businesses and the economy
• Includes companies of all sizes in most economic industries with employees
• Contact strategy based on the size of the company
Economic Census (cont.)

- Multi-Unit
  - More than one establishment
  - More complex
- Single-Unit
  - Only one establishment
- Response Modes
  - Mail
  - Surveyor Software (Multi-Units)
  - Internet (Single-Units)
Contact Strategies

• Previous research on households
• Six tests originally planned, one additional test
• Conducted throughout Economic Census mailout
Contact Strategies

1. Industry Classification Refile
2. Contact Exchange Form
3. Targeted Advanced Mailing
4. Reminder Phone Call
5. Letter-Only First Follow-up
6. Certified Mailing
7. Third Quarter Birth Letter-Only Follow-up
Economic Census Mailout

2012 Economic Census
Single-Unit Mailout

- **Advance Letter**: September 2012
- **Reminder Phone Call**: Late Jan. 2013
- **1st Follow-up Form**: Mar. 2013
- **3rd Follow-up Form**: May 2013
- **Industry Classification Refile with Follow-up**: November - December 2011
- **Initial Form Mailout**: December 2012
- **Due Date**: Feb. 12, 2013
- **2nd Follow-up Form**: Apr. 2013
- **4th Follow-up Letter**: July 2013
2012 Economic Census
Multi-Unit Mailout

Contact Exchange Form
April 2012

Initial Form Mailout
October 2012

Due Date
Feb. 12, 2013

1st Follow-up Letter
Mar. 2013

2nd Follow-up Letter and Calls
Apr. 2013

3rd Follow-up Letter and Form
June 2013

4th Follow-up Letter
July 2013
Results

• As of August 31, 2013 – \textbf{NOT FINAL}
• Methods
  – Differences in check-in rates
  – Mean response time
• Not generalizable to the population
Industry Classification Refile

2012 Economic Census
Single-Unit Mailout

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Industry Classification Refile with Follow-up
November - December 2011

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4th Follow-up Letter
July 2013
Industry Classification Refile

- Identify company industry
- Letter-only to half non-responding companies in first follow-up
- Response over phone accepted
## Industry Classification Refile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Mode</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letter-only</td>
<td>Form and Letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>23.83%</td>
<td>12.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>2.99%</td>
<td>1.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail</td>
<td>7.36%</td>
<td>19.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>34.19%</td>
<td>33.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Mailed</td>
<td>14,583</td>
<td>14,582</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Represents the difference was significant
2012 Economic Census
Multi-Unit Mailout

Contact Exchange Form
April 2012

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Contact Exchange Form

• Updated contact information
• Exclude 2,000 companies
## Contact Exchange Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Mode</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contact Exchange Form</td>
<td>No Contact Exchange Form</td>
<td>Difference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>83.6%</td>
<td>83.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Mailed</td>
<td>607,992</td>
<td>17,964</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Targeted Advanced Mailing

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Single-Unit Mailout

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Industry Classification Refile with Follow-up
November - December 2011
Targeted Advanced Mailing

• Historically low responding industries
• Sent letter to 5,000 companies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Mode</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Received Mailing</th>
<th>Did Not Receive Mailing</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail</td>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
<td>-0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
<td>77.1%</td>
<td>-0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Mailed</td>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>3,467</td>
<td>3,509</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reminder Phone Call and Letter-Only First Follow-up

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Single-Unit Mailout

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Reminder Phone Call and Letter-Only First Follow-up

- Phone call reminding companies Census is due soon
- Letter-only follow-up pushing internet
- Four treatment options (~37,500 each)
  - Phone call and letter
  - Phone call and form
  - No phone call and letter
  - No phone call and form (no treatments)
Reminder Phone Call and Letter-Only First Follow-up

• Evaluated in two groups
  – Received letter-only treatment
  – Received letter and inadvertent form

• Used mean response time in days for each of the two groups
Reminder Phone Call and Letter-Only First Follow-up

Mean Response Time for Companies in Industries that Received Letter-Only with 95% Confidence Limits

Mean Response Time in Days

Phone Call/Letter | Phone Call/Form | No Phone Call/Letter | No Phone Call/Form
Reminder Phone Call and Letter-Only First Follow-up

Mean Response Time for Companies in Industries that Received Letter and Inadvertent Form with 95% Confidence Limits

- Phone Call/Letter and Form
- Phone Call/Form
- No Phone Call/Letter and Form
- No Phone Call/Form
Certified Mailing

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Certified Mailing

- Signature required form
- Expensive
- Low responding industries
  - Half received certified mailing in 2\textsuperscript{nd} follow-up
  - Other half received certified mailing in 3\textsuperscript{rd} follow-up
Certified Mailing

Overall Check-in Rates by Date
Second and Third Follow-up Certified Mailing

Treatment:  □□ 2nd Follow-up Certified Mailing  ○○ 3rd Follow-up Certified Mailing
Third Quarter Birth Letter-Only Follow-up

- New single-unit companies
- Letter-only follow-up pushing internet
- 10,000 companies

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>Letter-Only 31.8%</td>
<td>Form 22.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Conclusions and Next Steps

• Currently see some differences
• Cause of differences researched
• Cost analysis
• Additional rates
• Detailed analysis
Contact Information

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