

BTOS One Year Performance Evaluation

Attachment D

July 20, 2023

Document Purpose

OMB approved the Business Trends and Outlook Survey (BTOS) on May 2, 2022, with the understanding that the Census Bureau will submit a performance evaluation through the nonsubstantive change request process one year after the BTOS data collection commenced. The performance evaluation includes information on the quality of the survey, how to adjust/improve methods, and other issues relevant to the performance of the BTOS of the BTOS collection. The scope of this document covers the performance of the first year of BTOS data collection.

BTOS High Level Purpose and Use

The BTOS data series provides insight on the state of the economy, prior to and during an event (including but not limited to natural disasters or economic crises) and assists in monitoring the recovery from the event. It is also useful in understanding aggregate and sub-aggregate changes in economic trends throughout the business cycle. BTOS data can be used by policy makers, industry leaders, economic and social analysts, business entrepreneurs, business and economic news organizations, and domestic and foreign researchers in academia, business, and government.

The BTOS provides data products that are complementary to the Census Bureau's existing monthly and quarterly economic indicator programs which provide national estimates of contemporaneous economic activity at the sector level as well as the outlook of businesses.

BTOS Survey Quality

Burden Estimate

Based on previous BTOS cognitive testing, the respondent burden was estimated at six minutes. For the first year of data collection, our online reporting tool, Centurion, has the BTOS estimate of completion at 349 seconds or 5.8 minutes.

Response Rates

The average response rate for BTOS respondents contacted via email is around 31%. A non-response bias study will begin fall 2023.

Adjust/Improve Methods

Mail

The first time each biweekly panel is in sample, businesses are contacted either by email or letter with an invitation to respond to the survey based on whether we have a valid email address. Businesses contacted by letter are able to provide a valid email address when responding to the survey. Both letter and email invitations describe the purpose of the survey collection, include the link to the online reporting tool, and contain the access code.

Respondent Email Expansion

Respondent contact information is stored in a central contact table in our Business Register (BR contact table). Updates from the Economic Census 2022 are applied to the BR contact table on a weekly basis. Updates from our annual surveys are placed in the BR contact table on a quarterly basis. This database is used to create a hierarchy of contacts when creating a collection strategy for BTOS.

Data User Community

The Small Business Administration (SBA) Office of Advocacy references BTOS data extensively due to the data timeliness. Part of the SBA Advocacy office conducts research while the other half work on policy and regulatory analysis. The BTOS data is used in both areas of the advocacy office. Most recently, the BTOS data were used to prepare anticipated questions that may have been asked by congress or small business advocates. Areas of interest include but are not limited to hiring difficulties, supply chain impact, prices, and inflation.

Additionally, in post-disaster situations, the utilization of BTOS data has proven to aid agencies in facilitating effective response and recovery efforts. Agencies managing the disasters such as the Economic Development Administration (EDA) have been able to gain critical insights and make informed decisions to alleviate the impact of disasters and expedite the restoration process. The Census Bureau is currently working with EDA on additional requirements to assist with their post disaster efforts.

Scope Change

Also included in this package are statements describing BTOS plans to expand to include multi-unit locations and change content during the sample refresh planned for September 2023, pending OMB approval. The BTOS team plans to preserve small business data products to meet current data user needs. An OMB package covering the scope changes will arrive at OMB the first week in August.

Paper

[Measuring Business Trends and Outlook through a New Survey - American Economic Association \(aeaweb.org\)](https://www.aeaweb.org/)