

Business Response Survey to the Coronavirus Pandemic

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Data User Advisory Committee

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Can BLS respond quickly to new opportunities for data products?

- Typically new surveys and data products at BLS require significant start up time, staffing, and costs
- Could BLS develop a platform to reduce the time and cost associated with collecting and producing new data products?



Creating the Platform

- The QCEW program fields a large, but short annual survey to 1.2+ million establishments to verify industry and location information.
- This Annual Refiling Survey (ARS) could serve as a platform where additional questions on other topics could be appended.
- This would allow BLS to leverage solicitation, technical infrastructure and staffing resources from the ARS for new survey topics.



Can this Really Work?

- BLS conducted two pilot test in 2018 and 2019 to test this new platform.
- These pilots test confirmed that it is feasible to collect data for additional surveys following the ARS and that we were able to achieve acceptable response rates.

Developing and Testing the Business Research Survey ([PDF](#))

Sharon Stang and Emily Thomas

November 2018



A Real World Example – sooner than expected

- We'd worked to prepare our first “production” survey on this platform asking questions about outsourcing - February 2020
- In March 2020, it became clear that the coronavirus pandemic was going to have a major impact on the US economy
- BLS staff began work to develop a COVID survey using this newly developed platform



Starting the BRS

- BLS sought emergency OMB clearance to conduct an establishment survey asking questions about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on business operations
- Topics would focus on changes that business made *as a result of the coronavirus pandemic*
- The goal was to produce data by state, industry, and size class



Sample and Result Focus

- National data for these questions is not very informative beyond what is widely known
- Focus was on generating data at the state/industry/size levels
- Particularly with the establishment impacts of COVID, these detailed levels are relevant and necessary to better understand overall effects



Survey Questions

- 1. As a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, **which of the following did this business location experience?**
 - ▶ Shortage of supplies or inputs
 - ▶ Decrease in demand for products or services
 - ▶ Increase in demand for products or services
 - ▶ Difficulty in moving or shipping goods
 - ▶ Government-mandated closure of this business location



Survey Questions

- 2. As a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, **what changes, if any, were made to employment or payroll** at this business location?
 - ▶ Hired additional employees
 - ▶ Increased employees' hours of work
 - ▶ Reduced employees' hours of work, employees worked at least some hours
 - ▶ Told employees not to work, with or without pay (for example, laid off or furloughed)
 - ▶ Increased salaries and wages
 - ▶ Reduced salaries and wages



Survey Questions

- 3. Did this business location **continue to pay some or all employees who were told not to work** as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic while they were not working?
- 4. Did this business location **continue to pay a portion of health insurance premiums for some or all employees who were told not to work** as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic?



Survey Questions

- 5. Did this business location **offer more opportunities for employees to telework** as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic?
 - ▶ Yes, offered telework to employees who could not telework prior to the Coronavirus pandemic
 - ▶ Yes, increased number of telework hours for employees already permitted to telework
 - ▶ No change in existing telework arrangements
 - ▶ No telework at this location both before and after the Coronavirus pandemic

Survey Questions

- 6. As a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, did this business location **increase the amount of paid sick leave** provided to employees?
 - ▶ Yes, provided paid sick leave to employees who did not have paid sick leave prior to the Coronavirus pandemic
 - ▶ Yes, increased amount of paid sick leave for employees who already had sick leave prior to the Coronavirus pandemic
 - ▶ No change to paid sick leave or no paid sick leave provided

Survey Questions

Federal and state governments have created loans and grants to help businesses that have been hurt by the Coronavirus pandemic. Sources of these loans and grants, some of which were created under the CARES Act, include the Paycheck Protection Program, Main Street Lending Program, Economic Injury Disaster Loan, and Secondary Market Corporate Credit Facility.

- 7. Did this business location **receive a Coronavirus-related loan or grant tied to re-hiring** or maintaining employees on the payroll?
 - ▶ Yes
 - ▶ No
 - ▶ Don't know

Data Collection

- We condensed the normal cognitive review period and utilized an in-house review by survey methodologist and 9 cognitive interviews with firms of various industries and size
- BLS used a slightly modified version of the original platform created for the quick survey
- Data collection took place from late July through September 30th and consisted only of a series of email blasts and printed solicitations
- Response rate goals were met so we are able to produce the data at the levels of detail we'd hoped (state, industry, size class or large/small)



BRS Response Rates

- BRS in-scope sample size – 595,370
 - ▶ BRS Responses – 160,776
 - ▶ BRS Partial Responses – 2,746
 - ▶ BRS Total Responses – 163,522 --- 27.5%

- BRS in-scope sampled employment – 32,831,810
 - ▶ BRS Empl Response – 7,508,193
 - ▶ BRS Empl Partial Response – 228,172
 - ▶ BRS Total Empl Response – 7,736,365 --- 23.6%



Publication Plans

- BLS is currently preparing and validating final composite estimates
- Goal is for initial publication November 17th
 - ▶ Initial publication will include tables, maps and charts for
 - ▶ Subsequent publications will follow with more detailed data and
- Data will be published at www.bls.gov/brs



BRS Web Page



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The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has developed data on how U.S. businesses changed their operations and employment from the onset of the novel coronavirus through September 2020. This information, in combination with data collected by current BLS surveys, will aide in understanding how businesses responded during the pandemic. Other BLS statistics collected and published during the pandemic provide indications of changes in employment, wages, job openings and terminations, employer-provided benefits, and safety and health. By asking employers directly what they experienced, and how they responded to the pandemic, data users will be able to draw meaningful conclusions.

Data for the Business Response Survey to the Coronavirus Pandemic are scheduled to be released in **November 2020**. You can [subscribe](#) to receive updates and additional information about the data release.

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Planned Tables for Web Release

1. Experienced Coronavirus Pandemic **Impacts On Their Business Operations** by

Establishments	Employment
<u>State</u>	<u>State</u>
<u>Industry</u>	<u>Industry</u>
<u>Size Class</u>	<u>Size Class</u>

2. Made **changes to their Employment or Payroll** by
3. **Continued to Pay** Employees during the Coronavirus Pandemic Even Though **They Were Not Working** by
4. **Continued to pay health insurance premiums** for some or all employees who were told not to work during the coronavirus pandemic by
5. **Offered telework** (work remotely) to employees by
6. **Increased the amount of paid sick leave** provided to employees by
7. Received a **coronavirus-related loan or grant tied to re-hiring or maintaining employees on the payroll** by



Finalizing BRS

- Development, fielding and finalization of BRS data have been very rapid for BLS, but not as fast as some other data sources
- We are building the sampling and estimation modules from scratch for this version.
- With a developed template, we could speed up the process somewhat for subsequent surveys



Original Concept vs. First Production Case

- As originally envisioned, this platform was intended to create an establishment version of the CPS supplement that we'd open up to outside sponsors.
- Leveraging the existing technology and solicitation of the ARS would allow it to be significantly less expensive than a CPS supplement
- This platform could be speedier than a typical new survey start up at BLS, but not built specifically for speed



Looking forward

- The impact of COVID on businesses is something that BLS wanted to produce high quality data in a timely manner
- This platform was used for this purpose, which is different than originally envisioned
- How should we focus for the future?



Trade Offs for Survey Potential

- Keeping in mind BLS resources and quality standards, how can we align BLS strengths with the priorities of data users for these types of projects
- There will need to be trade offs between:
 - ▶ Volume – Variety - Velocity – Veracity – Value
 - ▶ BLS wants to focus on the dimensions that are the most important to data user



Questions

- What is an optimal direction for BLS to focus resources on one-time surveys going forward?
- What are future topics or sources for topics BLS should consider?
- Are there any cross question tabulations or other specific data items (beyond the data tables) that we should attempt to publish, if possible, from this survey?



Contact Information

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