

Analysis of the Current Employment Statistics program using customer outreach survey results

The Current Employment Statistics (CES) program of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) conducted a customer outreach survey in early 2014 to evaluate customer satisfaction with the program, which produces monthly estimates of employment, hours, and earnings using payroll records from a sample of business establishments. CES data users reported being most interested in major industry and industry sector employment from the CES program. More users are interested in statewide data than in national data. Additionally, users prefer news releases and BLS databases to obtain CES data and information over other CES products, such as Current Employment Statistics Highlights, Monthly Labor Review articles, and technical notes. The overwhelming majority of CES data providers reported that they are unfamiliar with the CES program and its outputs. Overall, however, CES stakeholders are satisfied with the quality and quantity of the CES data and publications, revisions, and customer service.

The Current Employment Statistics (CES) program of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) was selected by the BLS Division of Management Services to participate in an internal program review. As part of this review, the CES program—which produces monthly estimates on employment, hours, and earnings using payroll records from a sample of business establishments—conducted an outreach survey in early 2014 of its stakeholders to gauge customer satisfaction of the program’s outputs and measurements. This article discusses the survey design and the classification of data users, and focuses on the analysis of data users’ survey responses.



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Survey design

The outreach survey was designed in late 2013 by upper-level CES management and the statistical research methods staff in the BLS Office of Survey Methods Research. The survey was made available to the public on January 6, 2014. It included 34 questions asking users about CES data and outputs as well as the CES program’s customer service. (See appendix table A-1 for a list of survey questions.) The survey was available for public response for approximately 6 weeks; it closed on February 19, 2014. In that time, a total of 8,867 people responded to the survey.

CES prompted both known CES data users and CES data providers¹ via email to take the survey. In addition, a link to the survey was provided on the public CES home page, www.bls.gov/ces. So that we could meaningfully analyze the responses, people who responded to the survey were divided into CES data users and CES data providers.² Because the outreach survey participants were not directly asked whether they were data users or data providers, they were classified into a category on the basis of their responses to the survey questions. We performed additional analysis on the two groups of outreach survey respondents to verify that the results were what was expected given the classification. This classification resulted in 3,083 data users and 5,784 data providers.

Profiling data users

With more than 3,000 survey respondents classified as data users (regardless of whether they use CES data or only other data), we wanted a further distinction between users to aid in analyzing the survey results. So, data users were classified as either basic, intermediate, or super users (explained below) and additionally as state-and-area data users, national data users, or users of both state-and-area and national data.

Classification of data users. The basic, intermediate, or super user classification—or BIS—is a distinct classification, with each user assigned to only one of these classifications. Users answered questions that indicated whether they had characteristics of a basic, intermediate, or super user of CES data. The set of questions used to classify the data users were about types of information accessed, data revisions, historical data, and the use of similar data not produced by BLS. (See appendix table A-2 for detailed question-and-answer classification information.)

We finalized the BIS user classification by assigning the maximum classification identified across each of the question–answer pairings. BIS user status, for each outreach respondent classified as a data user, was identified by each question–answer pairing by the following scale:

- 1 indicates basic users
- 2 indicates intermediate users
- 3 indicates super users

Data users are split fairly evenly across the three different classifications. (See table 1.)

Table 1. User status of respondents to the Current Employment Statistics customer outreach survey

User status	Number	Percent
1: Basic users	1,050	34.1

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 1. User status of respondents to the Current Employment Statistics customer outreach survey

User status	Number	Percent
2: Intermediate users	1,140	37.0
3: Super users	893	29.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

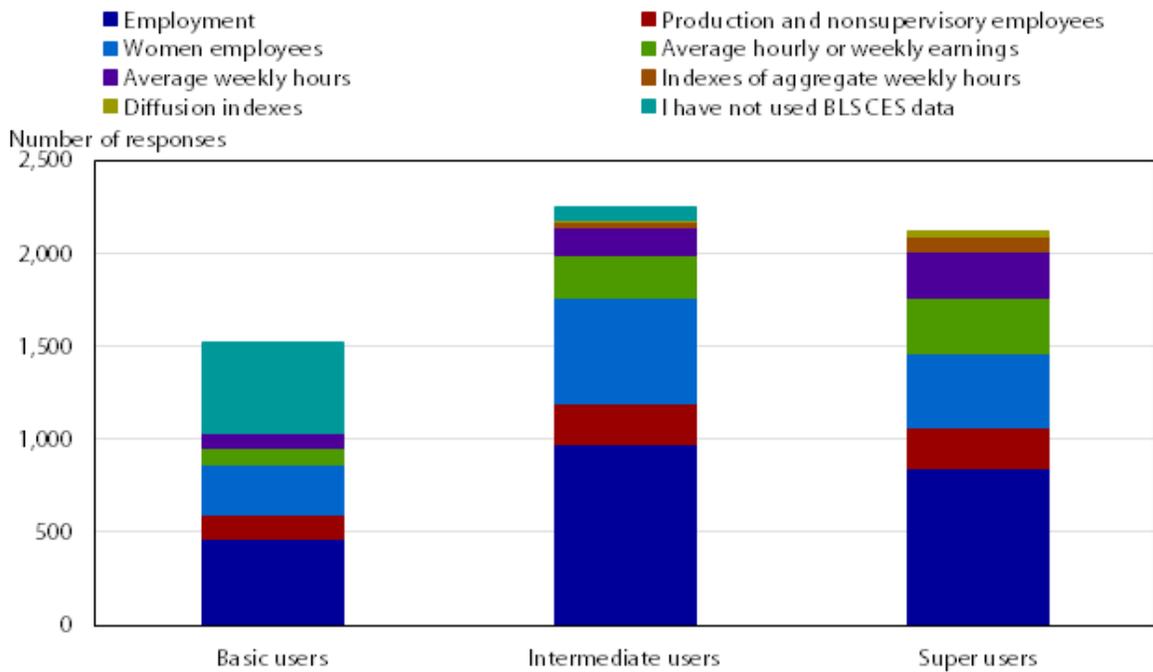
State-and-area and national user classification. In addition to being classified as basic, intermediate, or super users, users were classified into state-and-area data users and national data users. These classifications, unlike the BIS classifications, are not distinct; a user can be classified as a state-and-area data user and as a national data user. State users were identified by keywords in any open-ended response portion of questions and by responses to this question: “Which level of geographic detail do you use for CES data?” National users were identified solely by their responses to the question.

A total of 1,564 data users were classified as state-and-area data users and 625 data users were classified as national data users. Throughout the analysis, state-and-area and national user opinions are presented separately when the two diverge.

Analyzing stakeholders’ survey responses

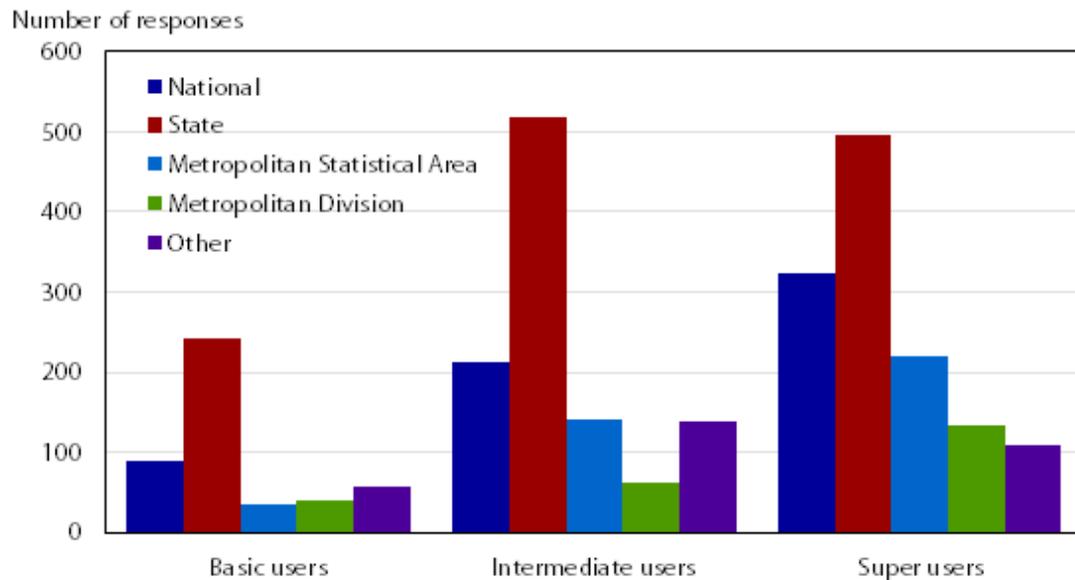
An analysis of responses to the first few survey questions underscores that the surveyed data users use many of the CES data products available to them. The large majority of data users are interested in employment data, with data about women employees used more frequently than data about production employees. Hours and earnings data are used moderately, while diffusion indexes and indexes of aggregate hours are not used often and are mostly used by super users. (See figure 1.) Additionally, major and industry sectors are the most used levels of industry detail across all users.

Figure 1. Responses to the Current Employment Statistics (CES) customer outreach survey question, “Which BLS CES data have you used?”



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Figure 2. Responses to the Current Employment Statistics (CES) customer outreach survey question, “Which level of geographic detail do you use for CES data?”



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In terms of geographic detail, statewide data are the most frequently used; national data are used at about half the frequency of statewide data, and metropolitan-area data are used even less. (See figure 2.) Numerous users commented that they would prefer more granular geographic data, such as at a county or zip code level.

News releases and BLS databases are the most frequently used CES publications or files by all data users. By the criteria we employed to classify users, basic users rarely use other publications or files provided by CES. In addition to using news releases and BLS databases, intermediate users frequently use tables and charts as well as the *Current Employment Statistics Highlights*. Super users use all products frequently with the exception of the strike report. (See table 2.) Some users noted that they use external sources to get CES data, such as the ADP National Employment Report and the St. Louis Federal Reserve Board’s Federal Reserve Economic Data (FRED) database.³

Table 2. Publications and databases used by Current Employment Statistics customer outreach survey respondents

Publication or database	Type of user		
	Basic users	Intermediate users	Super users
News releases	114	258	393
Tables and charts	0	174	260
BLS databases	222	369	415
BLS text flat data files	21	48	98
Technical notes	0	0	80
Special notices	3	30	80
<i>CES Highlights</i>	0	111	155
Strike report	1	1	23
<i>Monthly Labor Review</i> articles	0	0	310
Frequently asked questions	27	67	115
Other	22	37	28

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Data users largely want CES data for personal interest reasons. Intermediate users employ the data for short- and long-term forecasting, economic research, and educational uses. Along with the uses identified by intermediate users, super users often use CES data in business cycle analysis, financial markets modeling and forecasting, economic policy analysis and planning, and news reporting. (See table 3.)

Table 3. How Current Employment Statistics data are used by customer outreach survey respondents

What data are used for	Type of user		
	Basic users	Intermediate users	Super users
Short and long term forecasts	23	163	308
Business cycle analysis	21	83	219
Financial markets modeling and forecasting	6	25	118
Economic policy analysis and planning	6	39	145
Revenue forecasting	10	40	95
News reporting	10	50	114
Economic research	20	107	240
Educational uses	35	116	146
Business location planning	4	36	58
Contract escalation	3	15	22

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 3. How Current Employment Statistics data are used by customer outreach survey respondents

What data are used for	Type of user		
	Basic users	Intermediate users	Super users
Personal interest	44	191	224
Other	88	143	63

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

How and how often are users accessing CES data? The overwhelming majority of data users access CES data from the BLS website. Intermediate and super users also access data via email or phone requests to BLS staff and state labor market information websites. Very few users identified “private data supplier/ repackager” or social media as ways they access the data.

By definition, super users access CES data far more frequently than their intermediate and basic user counterparts. Only 11 percent of super users had not accessed the data from BLS website in the last 12 months. About 58 percent of super users had accessed the data at least six times in the last year. Approximately 80 percent of intermediate users accessed the data at least once in the last year, but none accessed the data more than 12 times. Basic users accessed CES data very infrequently, none more than five times per year and many noting they hadn’t accessed CES data at all in the past 12 months.

Most users do not need or want to be notified when BLS releases CES data and publications, and those who do want or need to be notified prefer to be notified by BLS News Service emails. CES currently offers an email service to users when updates to the CES program are made; users can sign up on the CES home page by adding their email address in the “Subscribe to the CES update” box on the left side below the navigation links.⁴

Which measures of changes over time are useful? CES data, which is published by level rather than percent, can be used to calculate changes, such as over-the-month changes. Determining which measurements of changes over time are considered useful by data users is important for answering whether CES is providing the most useful calculations. The CES program asked data users about the analytical usefulness of the following measures: over-the-month change in level, over-the-month change in percent, over-the-year change in level, over-the-year change in percent, and current level.

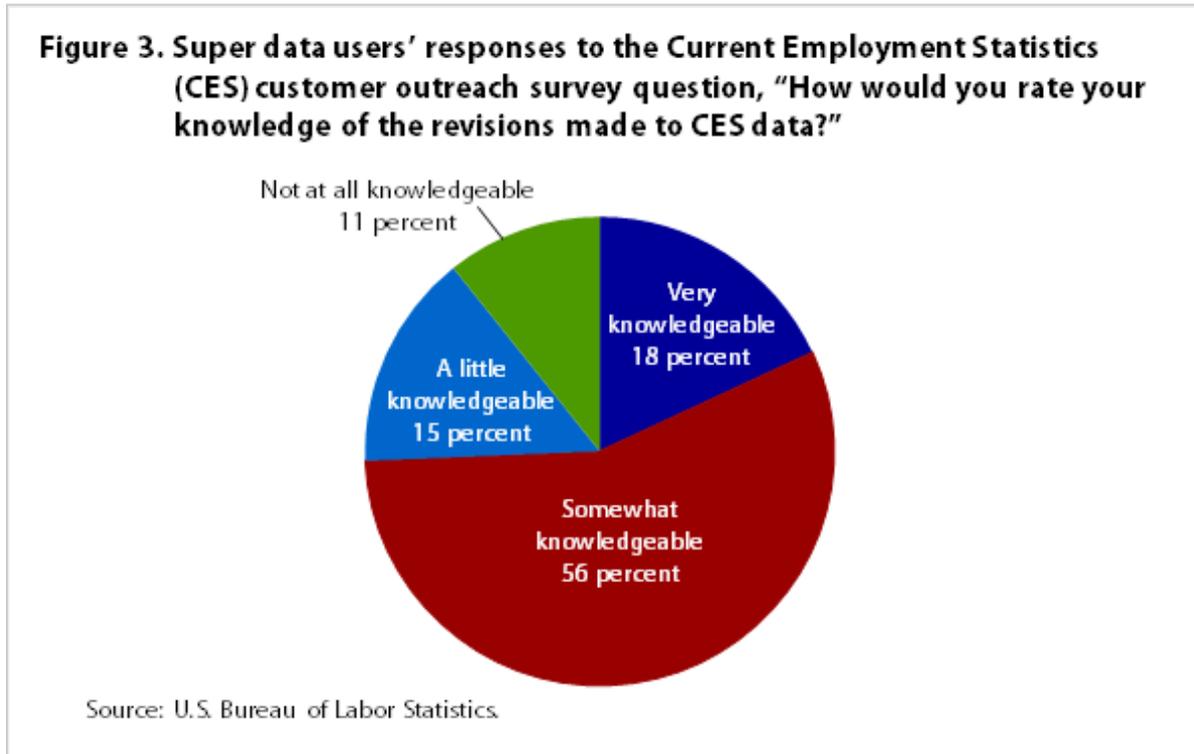
The majority of super users find each of these measures at least somewhat useful. Intermediate users are split between the usefulness of these measures, and most basic users find the measures either not useful or they report having no basis on which to decide.

Additionally, users mentioned they are interested in measures of the change in the data from the most recent peak or trough (or another anchor point) as well as quarterly levels, quarterly changes, and average changes over the past few months.

Are users satisfied with revisions to CES data? To reflect the receipt of additional sample data and other information, the CES program revises each month of data several times. To provide a preliminary estimate of employment, the program publishes initial monthly estimates before all the reports have been sent in by participating businesses. When more reports have been received, a revised or updated set of statistics is

published. Additional revisions are made to adjust the data for seasonal variations and the annual benchmark process, which ties the survey results to the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.⁵

As would be expected, the intermediate and super users are more familiar with the revisions to the CES data than basic users, and super users are the most knowledgeable. (See figure 3.) All basic users either skipped this question or answered that they were “not at all knowledgeable.”



Because basic users are not knowledgeable about the revisions to CES data, the following analysis will focus on the intermediate and super users’ responses to the revisions questions.

Far more data users, both intermediate and super, noted that revisions improve the quality of CES data than the number who noted that revisions lower the quality. Of those that said revisions improve the quality (352 intermediate users and 472 super users), a large portion of the intermediate users (about 70 percent) said the revisions either somewhat improve quality or improve quality a great deal and the vast majority (about 80 percent) of super users noted that the revisions either somewhat improve quality or improve quality a great deal. Both state-and-area users and national users have similar opinions of how the revisions improve data quality.

Of the data users who said it lowers the quality (27 intermediate users and 30 super users), about 75 percent of intermediate users and about 95 percent of super users noted that it lowers the quality somewhat or a great deal. More state-and-area users stated that revisions lower data quality a great deal, somewhat, or a little than did national users.

Data users responded similarly for both seasonally adjusted and not seasonally adjusted data when asked about the acceptability and appropriateness of the number of times each set of data were revised. Most intermediate users neither agree nor disagree that the number of seasonally adjusted and not seasonally adjusted revisions is acceptable and appropriate. The majority of the remainder either agree or strongly agree, with only a few

disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that the number of revisions is appropriate. Over half of super users agree or strongly agree that the number of both seasonally and not seasonally adjusted revisions is acceptable and appropriate as is. A small minority of super users disagree that the revisions are acceptable. (See table 4.)

Table 4. Responses to the Current Employment Statistics (CES) customer outreach survey statement, “The number of revisions to CES data is an acceptable and appropriate amount”

Type of adjustment and user classification	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Not seasonally adjusted revisions	73	439	565	87	10
Intermediate users	8	127	289	27	2
Super users	65	312	276	60	8
Seasonally adjusted revisions	71	495	555	39	4
Intermediate users	8	150	287	8	0
Super users	63	345	268	31	4

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Data users were then asked to identify whether fewer or more revisions to the seasonally adjusted data would be helpful and whether revisions of any kind would be problematic for their analyses. The majority of both the intermediate and super users neither agreed nor disagreed with having additional revisions made to seasonally adjusted data. That said, super users are more interested than intermediate users in having more revisions to CES seasonally adjusted data to assist in data analysis. Similarly, for both groups of users, the majority of users do not have an opinion either way when it comes to fewer seasonally adjusted revisions. However, more super users are interested in fewer revisions than are intermediate users. (See table 5.) Very few users in either classification noted that revisions of any kind would be problematic to their analysis.

Table 5. Responses to the Current Employment Statistics customer outreach statement, “More revisions to the data would be helpful for my analyses”

Type of adjustment and user classification	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Not seasonally adjusted revisions	39	257	724	108	17
Intermediate users	3	60	344	35	0
Super users	36	197	380	73	17
Seasonally adjusted revisions	23	198	757	119	16
Intermediate users	1	55	340	30	0
Super users	22	143	417	89	16

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Overall, CES data users with knowledge of revisions find that the revisions do improve data quality. There was no overwhelming call to have more or fewer revisions to the data; some users would prefer more and some would prefer fewer, but across most responses, users did not have strong opinions either way.

Would users be interested in additional versions of CES data? Currently, the CES program provides data users with only the currently published versions of the data in the LABSTAT databases. In order for data users to access previously published versions of the data (that is, the data prior to the most recent revisions), users must look through old press releases and gather that information release by release.

To determine whether data users would find easier access to previous versions of data useful, the question was posed in the survey. Both intermediate and super users identified that access to data as originally published would be a little useful, somewhat useful, or very useful (about 57 percent of intermediate users, about 76 percent of super users). About 6 percent of intermediate users and about 19 percent of super users responding said that previous versions of data would be very useful. (See table 6.) Clearly, data users are interested in easier access to previous versions of CES data, and BLS plans to release vintage CES data to address this need in 2015.

Table 6. Responses to the Current Employment Statistics (CES) customer outreach survey question, “How useful would it be to you to have access to some, or all, earlier versions of historical CES data as originally published, in addition to the currently available revised data?”

Usefulness	Intermediate users		Super users	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very useful	24	6	135	19
Somewhat useful	88	20	239	34
A little useful	133	31	163	23
Not at all useful	93	21	89	13
No opinion or not sure	96	22	68	10

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Are users satisfied with accessing data and publications? The CES program provides data to its data users via numerous products, including

- data in databases
- research articles
- news releases
- documentation of methods and processes

CES attempts to provide each of these outputs to users in a way that is easy to access and understand. In order to evaluate whether CES is meeting its goal, the outreach survey asked data users about each of these outputs.

Intermediate and super users identified that data are available for the geographic areas they require; basic users did not have a basis on which to decide. Similar results were reported for available industry sectors, ease of downloading, file format availability, and finding data release schedules.

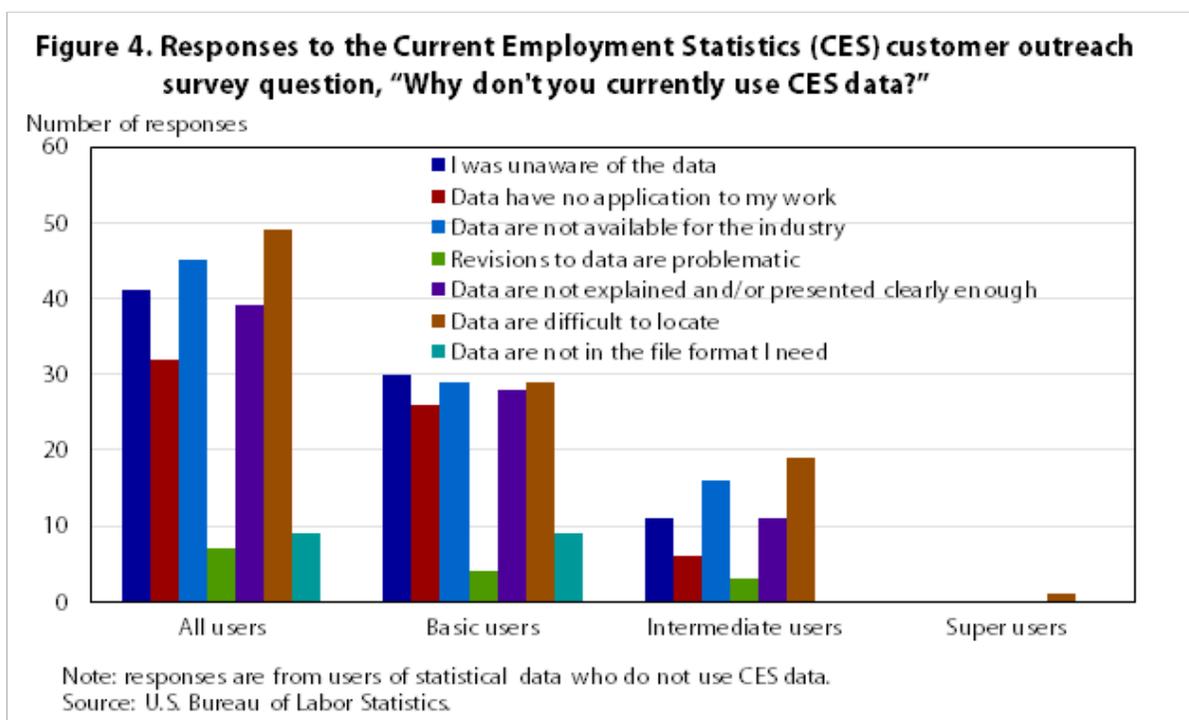
Super users noted that articles and research summaries are available on topics that interest them; basic users did not have a basis on which to decide and intermediate users were unsure. Intermediate users were more unsure (neither agree nor disagree) of whether these articles and research summaries are easy to understand than were the super users.

The uncertainty seen among intermediate users in the previous analysis is different across the state-and-area and national classification. Looking at the intermediate users within each of these classifications, we see that state-and-area users are more uncertain of the availability of articles and research summaries than are the national users. The difference between those who agree that articles and research summaries are available and those who

neither agree nor disagree is much larger for state-and-area users than national users. A similar pattern is seen regarding the understanding of these articles and research summaries.

Like with articles and research summaries, far more intermediate and super users agree that news releases and documentation explaining industry employment concepts, sources, and methods are easy to understand and provide useful information than disagree, though intermediate users are more unsure (neither agree nor disagree) in both cases than super users are. Basic users report not having a basis on which to decide.

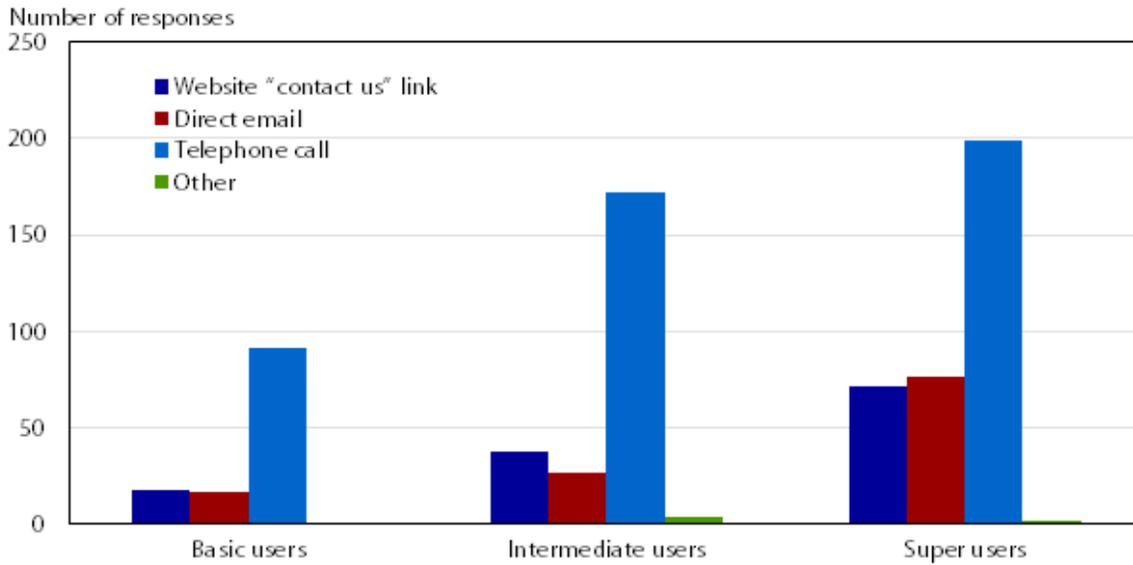
Data users who don't use CES data. In order to increase the number of CES users, we must understand why some people don't use the data. Compared with the entirety of data users who responded to this survey, few marked that they do not use CES data and the majority of these are classified as basic users. Of those who responded to this survey and don't use CES data, some said that the "data are difficult to locate/BLS CES-related web pages are difficult to navigate" or data are not available for the industry or sector they require. Many also said that they were unaware of the data or the data have no application to their work. (See figure 4.)



Are users satisfied with the customer service? The CES office tries its best to respond to user questions by phone and email in a courteous and timely manner. Economists are assigned shifts throughout the month to help answer data users' questions as they come in. To gauge whether the program is succeeding at its goal of good customer service, users were asked about their experience with CES staff.

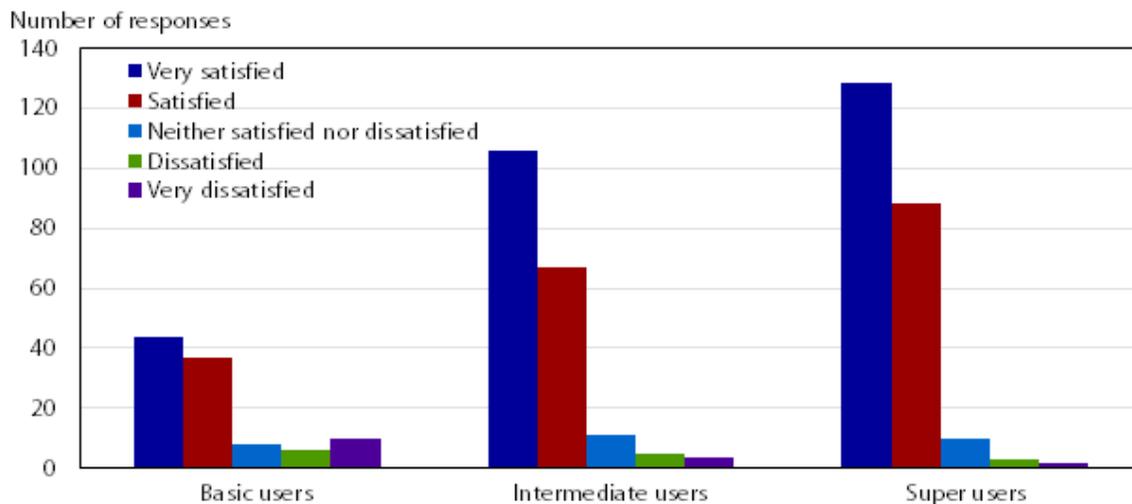
Of the users who answered they had contacted CES staff for help with CES data (which is about a quarter of the users who answered the question), the vast majority contacted CES via telephone call. The website ("contact us" link) and direct email were used fairly equally, though at a much lower rate than telephone call within each user classification. (See figure 5.) The overwhelming majority of those who contacted BLS staff said the response was timely and that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the reply. (See figure 6.)

Figure 5. Responses to the Current Employment Statistics (CES) customer outreach survey question, “How have you contacted BLS staff about CES data?”



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Figure 6. Responses to the Current Employment Statistics (CES) customer outreach survey question, “How satisfied were you with the reply (when you contacted BLS staff about CES data)?”



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In an open-ended response, the majority of responses were positive, with users mentioning that CES staff were knowledgeable, helpful, and polite during the interaction; few users mentioned negative interactions with staff.

Do CES users also use other industry employment data? About 15 percent of users who responded to this question identified that they do use other sources of industry employment data. The following is a list of other industry employment data sources that were mentioned: ADP, Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, Current Population Survey (particularly the unemployment rate), Business Employment Dynamics, Occupational Employment Statistics, Moody’s, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Labor Market Information, Economic Research Institute, Federal Reserve, Global Insight, Industrial Supply Association,

Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Bloomberg, FRED, County Business Patterns, Haver, Towers Watson, Hay, and Sullivan Cotter.

What is the affiliation of the users? A large majority of the data-user respondents to this survey consider themselves part of private business. In addition, numerous data users categorized themselves as part of “other.” Data users from state and local government and industry and trade association classifications were also well represented. (See table 7.)

Table 7. Responses to the Current Employment Statistics customer outreach survey question, “Which category below best describes the organization at which you work or study?”

Organization or other classification	Type of user		
	Basic users	Intermediate users	Super users
University	10	30	28
Research organization	4	6	31
Financial institution	15	20	32
News media	1	4	4
U.S. government	5	12	34
State government	23	46	116
Local government	92	184	129
Chamber of Commerce	0	1	1
Non-U.S. government or international organization	7	11	12
Industry or trade association	38	74	85
Labor union	3	10	11
Data supplier or repackager	0	1	2
Internet blog	0	2	8
Private citizen	2	16	28
Private business not listed above	237	317	204
Other	153	219	129

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Open-ended feedback. The final question on the survey asked data users to provide additional comments and open-ended feedback. Numerous data users mentioned that the BLS website is difficult to use, especially when it comes to downloading data for multiple series into Microsoft Excel. Some users suggested that templates, tools, or both be provided for obtaining large amounts of data. Furthermore, users are interested in accessing the microdata and in obtaining more information about the month-to-month revisions: what the revisions were, when they occurred, and why the data were revised.

Additionally, some users expressed their desire for more geographic breakouts and for vintage data. Regarding state and area series, users mentioned, for instance, separating mining and logging from construction in all states, adding residential versus nonresidential construction, and benchmarking data quarterly.

Many users commented that they were very satisfied with the work done in CES and thanked BLS and CES for performing the outreach survey. CES has taken all responses into consideration regarding how the program can be improved in the future.

Data providers. In an effort to understand data providers’ knowledge of the CES program, prompts were sent to them to participate in this customer outreach survey. Our analysis finds that the overwhelming majority of CES data providers are unfamiliar with the CES program and its outputs. This, paired with other feedback received from the survey, is being used to improve the data providers’ experience.⁶

Appendix table A-1. Current Employment Statistics (CES) customer outreach survey questions and response options

1. Which BLS Current Employment Statistics data have you used? (Check all that apply)
Employment (all employees) Production and nonsupervisory employees Women employees Average hourly or weekly earnings Average weekly hours Indexes of aggregate weekly hours or payrolls Diffusion indexes I have not used BLS CES data Other (please specify)
2. Which level of industry detail do you use for CES data? (Check all that apply)
Major sectors (total nonfarm, private, government, goods-producing, service-providing) Industry sectors (for example, mining, construction, manufacturing, wholesale trade, retail trade, transportation and warehousing, information, financial activities, professional and business services, education and health services, leisure and hospitality, other services, and government) Detailed industries within industry sectors (for example, motor vehicles and parts, temporary help services, health care, and food services and drinking places) Other (please specify)
3. Which level of geographic detail do you use for CES data? (Check all that apply)
National Statewide Metropolitan Statistical Area (for example, Los Angeles–Long Beach–Santa Ana, Miami–Fort Lauderdale–Pompano Beach, and New York–Northern New Jersey–Long Island) Metropolitan Division (for example Los Angeles–Long Beach–Glendale, Miami–Miami Beach–Kendall, and New York–White Plains–Wayne) Other (please specify)
4. Which CES publications or files do you use? (Check all that apply)
News releases (Employment Situation, Real Earnings, Regional and State Employment and Unemployment, and Metropolitan Area Employment and Unemployment) Tables and charts (including online tables, analytical tables, etc.) BLS databases BLS text/flat data files Technical notes Special notices <i>CES Highlights</i> <i>Strike Report</i> <i>Monthly Labor Review</i> articles Frequently asked questions Other (please specify)
5. How do you use BLS CES data? (Check all that apply)

See footnotes at end of table.

Appendix table A-1. Current Employment Statistics (CES) customer outreach survey questions and response options

<p>Short- and long-term forecasts Business cycle analysis Financial markets modeling and forecasting Economic policy analysis and planning Revenue forecasting News reporting Economic research Educational uses Business location planning Contract escalation Personal interest Other (please specify)</p>
<p>6. How have you obtained BLS CES data? (Check all that apply)</p>
<p>BLS website Email or phone request to BLS staff Private data supplier/repackager News media Social media State labor market information website(s) Other (please specify)</p>
<p>7. How often have you accessed CES data from the BLS website in the past 12 months?</p>
<p>1–5 times 6–12 times I haven't accessed CES data from the BLS website in the past 12 months More than 12 times</p>
<p>8. How would you prefer to be notified when BLS releases CES data and publications? (Check all that apply)</p>
<p>I do not want, or need, to be notified BLS News Service emails BLS online calendar for news releases RSS feeds Twitter Facebook (not currently available) Other (please specify)</p>
<p>9. How useful are each of the following measures to you when you analyze CES data?</p>

See footnotes at end of table.

Appendix table A-1. Current Employment Statistics (CES) customer outreach survey questions and response options

<p>a. Over-the-month change in level</p> <p>A little useful Not at all useful Not sure what this is Somewhat useful Very useful</p>
<p>b. Over-the-month percent change</p> <p>A little useful Not at all useful Not sure what this is Somewhat useful Very useful</p>
<p>c. Over-the-year change in level</p> <p>A little useful Not at all useful Not sure what this is Somewhat useful Very useful</p>
<p>d. Over-the-year percent change</p> <p>A little useful Not at all useful Not sure what this is Somewhat useful Very useful</p>
<p>e. Current level (e.g., of employment)</p> <p>A little useful Not at all useful Not sure what this is Somewhat useful Very useful</p>
<p>10. Do you think the process of revising the data improves or lowers its quality?</p> <p>Don't know Has no effect on quality Improves quality Lowers quality</p>
<p>11. How much do revisions improve the quality of the CES data?</p> <p>A great deal A little Don't know None Somewhat</p>
<p>12. How much do revisions lower the quality of the CES data?</p> <p>A great deal A little Don't know None Somewhat</p>

See footnotes at end of table.

Appendix table A-1. Current Employment Statistics (CES) customer outreach survey questions and response options

13. How would you rate your knowledge of the revisions made to CES data?
A little knowledgeable Not at all knowledgeable Somewhat knowledgeable Very knowledgeable
14. The number of revisions to data that are not seasonally adjusted is an acceptable and appropriate amount.
Agree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Strongly agree Strongly disagree
15. The number of revisions to seasonally adjusted data is an acceptable and appropriate amount.
Agree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Strongly agree Strongly disagree
16. More revisions to seasonally adjusted data—i.e., revising more than 2 months of seasonally adjusted data each month using updated seasonal factors—would be helpful for my analyses.
Agree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Strongly agree Strongly disagree
SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Appendix table A-1. Current Employment Statistics (CES) customer outreach survey questions and response options—continued

17. Fewer revisions to the seasonally adjusted data—i.e., revising less than 2 months of seasonally adjusted data each month using updated seasonal factors—would be helpful for my analyses.
Agree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Strongly agree Strongly disagree
18. Revisions of any kind are problematic for my analyses.
Agree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Strongly agree Strongly disagree
19. How useful would it be to you to have access to some, or all, earlier versions of historical CES data as originally published, in addition to the currently available revised data?
A little useful No opinion/not sure Not at all useful Somewhat useful Very useful
20. What can we do to better meet your needs in the area of revisions to data?
No suggestions Please enter any suggestions in the space below

See footnotes at end of table.

Appendix table A-1. Current Employment Statistics (CES) customer outreach survey questions and response options—continued

<p>21. Based on your experience using BLS CES data and publications, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.</p> <p>a. Data are available for the industry or sector I require</p> <p>Agree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree No basis to decide Strongly agree Strongly disagree</p> <p>b. Data are available for the geographic area I require</p> <p>Agree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree No basis to decide Strongly agree Strongly disagree</p> <p>c. Data are easy to find</p> <p>Agree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree No basis to decide Strongly agree Strongly disagree</p> <p>d. Data are easy to download</p> <p>Agree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree No basis to decide Strongly agree Strongly disagree</p> <p>e. Data are in the file format I need</p> <p>Agree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree No basis to decide Strongly agree Strongly disagree</p> <p>f. Data release schedules are easy to find</p> <p>Agree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree No basis to decide Strongly agree Strongly disagree</p>
<p>22. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about BLS articles and research summaries that describe industry employment.</p>

See footnotes at end of table.

Appendix table A-1. Current Employment Statistics (CES) customer outreach survey questions and response options—continued

<p>a. Articles and research summaries are available on topics that interest me</p> <p>Agree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree No basis to decide Strongly agree Strongly disagree</p>
<p>b. Articles and research summaries are easy to understand</p> <p>Agree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree No basis to decide Strongly agree Strongly disagree</p>
<p>23. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about BLS news releases that describe industry employment.</p>
<p>a. News releases provide useful information</p> <p>Agree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree No basis to decide Strongly agree Strongly disagree</p>
<p>b. News releases are easy to understand</p> <p>Agree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree No basis to decide Strongly agree Strongly disagree</p>
<p>24. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about BLS documentation for the CES survey.</p>
<p>a. Documentation explaining Industry employment concepts, sources, and methods is easy to find</p> <p>Agree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree No basis to decide Strongly agree Strongly disagree</p>
<p>b. Survey concepts, sources, and methods are explained in a way that I understand</p> <p>Agree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree No basis to decide Strongly agree Strongly disagree</p>
<p>25. Why don't you currently use BLS CES data? (Check all that apply)</p>

See footnotes at end of table.

Appendix table A-1. Current Employment Statistics (CES) customer outreach survey questions and response options—continued

<p>I was unaware of the data Data have no application to my work Data are not available for the industry or sector I require Revisions to data are problematic for my work Data are not explained and/or presented clearly enough Data are difficult to locate/BLS CES-related web pages are difficult to navigate Data are not in the file format I need Other (please specify)</p>
<p>26. What can we do that would enable you to use CES data?</p>
<p>No suggestions Please enter your suggestions in the space below</p>
<p>27. Have you ever contacted BLS staff for help with CES data?</p>
<p>No Yes</p>
<p>28. How have you contacted BLS staff about CES data? (Check all that apply)</p>
<p>Website (“contact us” link) Direct email Telephone call Other (please specify)</p>
<p>29. Did you receive a timely reply?</p>
<p>No Yes</p>
<p>30. How satisfied were you with the reply?</p>
<p>Dissatisfied Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied Satisfied Very dissatisfied Very satisfied</p>
<p>31. Do you have any additional comments, positive or negative, regarding your interaction with BLS staff about CES data?</p>
<p>No additional comments Please enter your comments in the space below</p>
<p>32. Do you use other sources of industry employment data?</p>
<p>No Yes, please list the source(s) in the space below</p>
<p>33. Which category below best describes the organization at which you work or study?</p>
<p>University Research organization Financial institution News media U.S. government State government Local government Chamber of Commerce Non-U.S. government or international organization Industry or trade association Labor union Data supplier/repackager Internet blog Private citizen Private business not listed above Other (please specify)</p>
<p>34. We appreciate any additional comments or feedback you may have about BLS CES data.</p>
<p>Please enter your comments in the space below</p>

See footnotes at end of table.

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Appendix table A-2. Current Employment Statistics (CES) customer outreach survey questions used to classify respondents as basic, intermediate, or super data users

Question	Answer	Classification	Reasoning
4. Which CES publications or files do you use?	Technical notes, <i>Monthly Labor Review</i> articles	3: Super user	Using the technical notes or accessing <i>Monthly Labor Review</i> articles indicates the respondent is interested in deeper analysis and understanding of CES data.
4. Which CES publications or files do you use?	Tables and charts (including online tables, analytical tables, etc.), <i>CES Highlights</i>	2: Intermediate user	Using tables and charts or <i>CES Highlights</i> indicates the respondent is familiar enough with CES data to find and access these items and wants to review some basic analysis of the data.
4. Which CES publications or files do you use?	Checked off 7 or more publications or files	3: Super user	Using 7 or more publications or files indicates the respondent is interested in many aspects of CES data and is interested in a deeper understanding of the data.
4. Which CES publications or files do you use?	Checked off between 3 and 6 publications or files	2: Intermediate user	Using between 3 and 6 publications or files indicates the respondent is interested in some analysis and explanation but not necessarily as in-depth an understanding as those who use 7 or more.
4. Which CES publications or files do you use?	Checked off 0–2 publications or files	1: Basic user	Using between 0 and 2 publications or files indicates the respondent is interested in CES data but not necessarily any further analysis or understanding.
7. How often have you accessed CES data from the BLS website in the past 12 months?	More than 12 times	3: Super user	Frequently accessing the data indicates the respondent is very interested in and is likely knowledgeable of CES data.
7. How often have you accessed CES data from the BLS website in the past 12 months?	6–12 times	2: Intermediate user	Accessing the data between once every other month and once every month indicates the respondent is interested in and is likely moderately knowledgeable of CES data.
7. How often have you accessed CES data from the BLS website in the past 12 months?	1 – 5 times	1: Basic user	Accessing the data fewer times than once every other month is an indication that the respondent is not very interested in or knowledgeable of CES data.
7. How often have you accessed CES data from the BLS website in the past 12 months?	I haven't accessed CES data from the BLS website in the past 12 months	1: Basic user	Not accessing the data likely means the respondent is not a very interested data user.
10. Do you think the process of revising the data improves or lowers its quality?	Improves quality/has no effect on quality/ lowers quality	2: Intermediate user	Having an opinion on whether revisions improve or lower data quality likely means the respondent uses CES data enough to know what revisions are and how it impacts their analysis.
10. Do you think the process of revising the data improves or lowers its quality?	Don't know/no response	1: Basic user	Having no opinion on whether revisions improve or lower data quality likely means the respondent is not very familiar with CES data.
13. How would you rate your knowledge of the revisions made to CES data?	Very knowledgeable/ somewhat knowledgeable	3: Super user	Classifying oneself as having high knowledge of CES revisions indicates the respondent is a high level user.
13. How would you rate your knowledge of the revisions made to CES data?	A little knowledgeable	2: Intermediate user	Classifying oneself as having a little knowledge of CES revisions indicates the respondent is not a high level user but is more than a basic user.
13. How would you rate your knowledge of the revisions made to CES data?	Not at all knowledgeable/no response	1: Basic user	Having no knowledge of CES revisions likely indicates the respondent does not use CES data often.

See footnotes at end of table.

Appendix table A-2. Current Employment Statistics (CES) customer outreach survey questions used to classify respondents as basic, intermediate, or super data users

Question	Answer	Classification	Reasoning
19. How useful would it be to you to have access to some, or all, earlier versions of historical CES data as originally published, in addition to the currently available revised data?	Very useful/somewhat useful/a little useful/not at all useful	2: Intermediate user	Having an opinion on access to earlier versions of data likely means the respondent uses CES data enough to know that the original data are not currently available on the BLS site.
19. How useful would it be to you to have access to some, or all, earlier versions of historical CES data as originally published, in addition to the currently available revised data?	No opinion/not sure/no response	1: Basic user	Not having an opinion on access to earlier versions of data likely means the respondent is not familiar with what is currently available.
32. Do you use other sources of industry employment data?	Yes, please list the source(s) in the space below	2: Intermediate user	Knowledge and use of another form of industry employment likely means the respondent is a higher level user.
32. Do you use other sources of industry employment data?	No/no response	1: Basic user	No knowledge or no use of another form of industry employment means the respondent isn't likely to be a higher level user.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Jennifer Chi and Kerrie Leslie, "Analysis of the Current Employment Statistics program using customer outreach survey results," *Monthly Labor Review*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 2015, <https://doi.org/10.21916/mlr.2015.2>

NOTES

¹ Throughout this paper, the term CES data users refers to the people who use CES data in analysis or otherwise. The term CES data providers refers to the people or businesses that report data to be used in the calculation of CES data.

² CES sent prompts to CES data providers to gauge the data providers' knowledge of the program they provide data to. The goal of this paper is not to analyze the data providers' responses, but the data users' responses.

³ Although it was noted as a way to retrieve CES data by respondents of this outreach survey, the ADP National Employment Report does not use actual CES data, but instead uses data compiled and published by ADP. FRED is a database maintained by the St. Louis Federal Reserve Board and contains actual CES published data.

⁴ Additional BLS subscriptions are available, including news release alerts, at www.public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDOLBLS/subscriber/new.

⁵ For more information on revisions to CES data, see www.bls.gov/ces.

⁶ Because of the customer satisfaction focus of this paper, further analysis of responses from data providers' was not presented.

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