

Urban/Regional Economics

UMBureau of Business and Economic Research

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Go online for new U.S. Economic Census information

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The UMD Bureau of Business and Economic Research is a census data center. We receive census data when it is available. This helps us to keep track of the most recent census publications. However, many people may not be aware of the Economic Census. It is an important source of information provided by the United States Census Bureau. It is administered once every five years, the last being in 1997. Much of the data is now available by logging on to their website at www.census.gov and choosing Economic Census under the business heading or by going directly to the 1997 census at <http://www.census.gov/epcd/www/econ97.html>.

The following information is taken from the guide to the 1997 Economic Census to give an understanding of what data are available.

INTRODUCTION

The Economic Census provides a detailed portrait of the Nation's economy once every five years, from the national to the local level.

The 1997 Economic Census covers nearly all of the U.S. economy in its basic collection of establishment statistics. There also are several related programs, including statistics on minority- and women-owned businesses. Censuses of agriculture and governments are conducted at the same time.

Results from the census on CD-ROM and on the Internet were issued starting in early 1999 and will continue for more than 2 years. Only summary reports will be issued in print.

WHAT'S NEW FOR 1997?

New Industry Classification System

The 1997 Economic Census will publish data primarily on the basis of the new North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Only limited data will be published according to the old Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) system: preliminary national totals in the Advance report, a detailed "bridge table" showing

the relationships between NAICS and SIC categories, and state level statistics based on SIC after the publication of geographic area data by NAICS. (A few programs based on administrative records or sample surveys, such as the surveys of minority- and women-owned businesses, will be available by SIC only.)

Faster publication via the Internet

Census results will become available on the Internet faster than they have ever before been published.

Fewer printed reports

Only highlights of the Economic Census will be published in paper reports. Nonetheless, software on both CD-ROM and the Internet include the ability to print out any of the detailed data.

Better software

Access software on both CD-ROM and the Internet is easier to use and has more capabilities than the software on 1992 CD-ROMs.

Greater integration of data economy-wide

Data for all sectors are being integrated in the Core Business Statistics reports and key CD-ROM files. Those statistics that are published separately by sector have a more consistent look and feel.

Less geographic detail for certain industries, more for others

Due to budget cuts, metropolitan area data are no longer available for construction industries, and county data no longer produced for mining. State and metro area data will appear for fewer sectors in "miscellaneous subjects" reports. Industry detail for counties and places is more variable, but as such better reflects concentrations of locally significant industries.

Elimination of preliminary reports

Industry series reports for manufacturing, mining and construction, previously issued in both preliminary and final form, are being issued only once for 1997.

Terminology

All reports are titled as Economic Census

reports, no longer treated as if each sector had a separate census, e.g., the census of manufactures.

HOW THE DATA ARE COLLECTED

The 1997 Economic Census measures activity during calendar year 1997. Census forms were mailed to more than 5 million companies in December 1997, with a due date of February 12, 1998. There are nearly 500 versions of the census form, each customized to particular industries. Some very small companies were not sent a census form.

The Economic Census is mandated by law under Title 13 of the United States Code (sections 131, 191, and 224). The law requires firms to respond and specifies penalties for firms that fail to report.

The law also requires the Census Bureau to maintain confidentiality. Individual responses may be seen only by sworn Census Bureau employees. No data are published that could reveal the identity or activity of any business.

HOW THE DATA ARE CLASSIFIED

Economic Census statistics are collected and published primarily by "establishment." An establishment is a business or industrial unit at a single physical location that produces or distributes goods or performs services, for example, a single store or factory.

Many companies own or control more than one establishment, and those establishments may be located in different geographic areas and may be engaged in different kinds of business. By collecting separate information for each establishment, the Economic Census can include detailed data for each industry and area.

Industrial Classification

The statistics issued by industry in the 1997 Economic Census are classified primarily on the 1997 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), and, to a lesser extent, on the 1987 Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) system used in previous censuses. Both NAICS and SIC categorize establishments by the principal activity in which they are engaged.

NAICS, developed in cooperation with Canada and Mexico, classifies North America's economic activities at 2-, 3-, 4-, and 5-digit levels of detail, and the U.S. version of NAICS further defines industries to a sixth digit. The Economic Census takes advantage of this hierarchy to publish data at successive levels of detail.

GEOGRAPHIC CLASSIFICATION

The most detailed data are provided for the U.S. as a whole. Key statistics, albeit progressively fewer, are available for states, metropolitan areas (MA's), counties, and places with 2,500 or more inhabitants. Only limited data are provided for ZIP Codes.

Statistics for smaller areas are more frequently withheld to avoid disclosing information about individual firms.

CENSUS CONTENT

Several key statistics are tabulated for all industries covered in the Economic Census:

- Number of establishments (or companies)
- Number of employees
- Payroll
- Measure of output (sales, receipts, revenue, value of shipments, or value of construction work done).

INTERNET

www.census.gov delivers the data more quickly than any other medium. All 1997 Economic Census numbers on the site are available free. Data are available in two formats:

- "Database" format, with functions similar to the CD-ROMs, including export to ASCII and other formats, through the "American FactFinder." See sample quick report.
- "Viewable" formats (primarily PDF-portable document format) that allow you to view or print tables just like the detailed printed reports available from previous censuses.▲▲