

Developments in the OES program

George Stamas
Occupational Employment Statistics
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

NASWA LMI Directors National Conference
October 17, 2008



Topics



- Budget
- Cost savings initiatives
 - New survey packet
 - Reminder postcard
- Distribution of the sample
- OES Policy Council
- Revising SOC
- Web products
- New thoughts on data collection

Value of the data



- Tops in Web hits at BLS
 - # 2 in hits behind Occupational Outlook products
 - 800,000 hits a week not including OO and State pages
 - Occupational data is key to our economic future
 - Meeting needs of the labor force
 - Developing a workforce to meet growth and security needs
 - Economic planning for employers and communities
 - It's not a Primary Federal Economic Indicator
 - Local but timely is what Congress wants.
 - We are local
 - We are not so timely!
 - Not very useful as a time series

Slide 3

j1

Missings a word?
jones_carrie, 10/14/2008

New Uses — Some Examples



- Currently used for BLS Injury rate statistics
- MedPac proposed for Medicare reimbursement payments
- Proposed rule from DOL to use OES for prevailing wage for farm worker visas
- Construction Wages in Guam
- CDC interest in public health workforce
- DoD for pay banding & locality adjustments

FY 2008 Budget



- OEUS took a cut under the FY 2008 Omnibus Appropriations Bill
- OES took a \$1.4 million cut
 - Cut sample in May 2008 panel by 20%
 - Cut noncritical travel, training, equipment, hiring
 - Kept—
 - Regional Office travel for State support
 - Essential program training

FY 2009 Budget



- President's budget request restored the OES cuts and provided some mandatories.
- Under continuing resolution at FY 2008 levels, expires March 6, 2009.
- Operating under the assumption we will get a budget like that submitted by the President.
- If we end up with a budget at FY 2008 levels or below, expect cuts in the program.

FY 2009

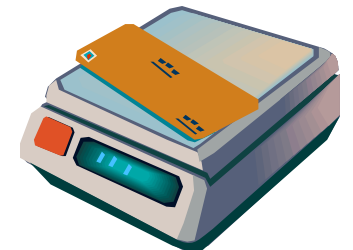


- Preparing two samples for the May 2009 panel—one at full size; one at 80%
- We will watch purchases, travel, noncritical training.

Postage Increases



- Large postage increase May 2007
 - Large increase in the flats that OES has depended on.
 - OES mail costs increased by more than \$325,000 a year with this rate increase.
 - USPS can automatically pass through rate increases that are as much as the CPI each year and did so in May 2008.
- OES has responded—
 - Restructured the OES packet for a lower rate.
 - Study of reminder postcard in place of the first follow-up.



Slide 8

j2

Laurie thought this didn't sound proactive enough.

jones_carrie, 10/14/2008

Central Printing and Mailing



- One year contract has been awarded but is under protest.
- Increased cost—
 - Unstructured form goes from \$56 to \$90 / 100
 - New structure of packets requires a fold for a smaller envelope, as well as recalibration of the inserting equipment.
 - Increased security requirements.
- Contract will be re-bid next summer, possibly with more security requirements.

Postcard Plans



- Two panel test, November 2007 & May 2008.
 - Six states, objectively selected.
 - Each State sample was randomly split into a control and a test panel.
 - Test group received a reminder postcard in place of the first follow-up.
 - OES Policy Council –
 - reviewed the design.
 - provided input on postcard appearance and content.
 - reviewed analysis and results.

Postcards (continued)



- Concept was inspired by States who questioned the value of the first follow-up mailing as currently scheduled.
 - Date stamp analysis shows significant numbers of survey forms arrive at States during the period that address files are forwarded, central processing is carried out and first follow-up forms are in the mail.
 - 1,160 units out of 13,716 in test scope.

Postcards (continued)



Postcards (continued)



REMINDER

Dear Employer:

About one month ago, our office asked you to complete the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) report. If you have already returned it, thank you for your response. If not, please complete and return the report to us at your earliest convenience.

If you have questions, an address change, or if you would like to learn about e-mail and other options for submitting your data, please contact us using the telephone number or e-mail address under the return address on this postcard.

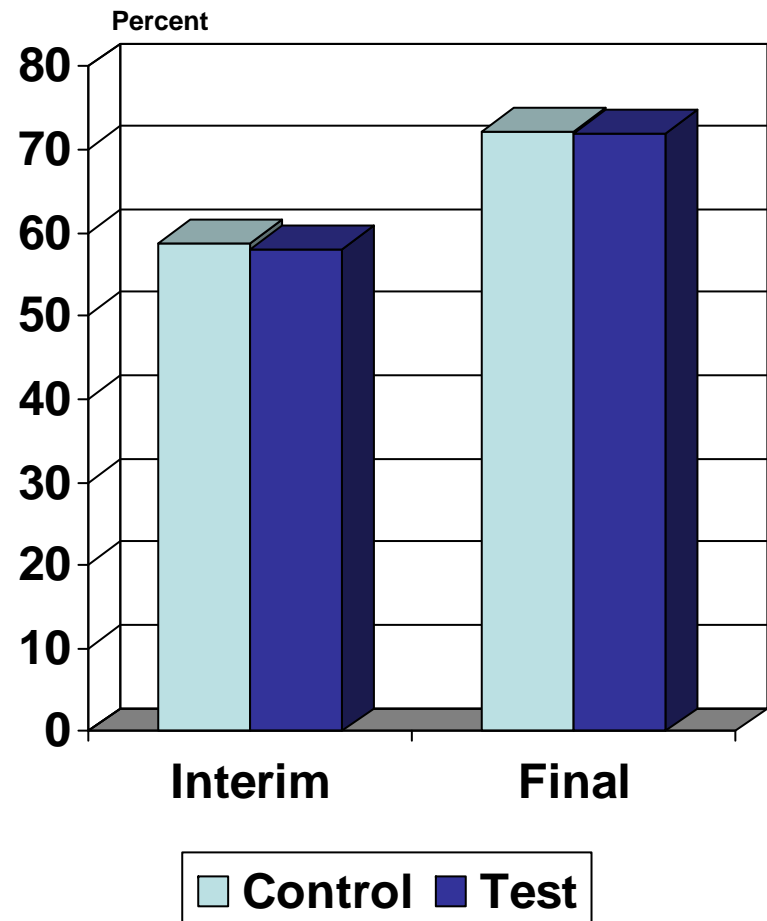
Occupational employment and wage information is used by employers like you to hire and train their workforce and to help set competitive wages. Businesses like yours are our only source of occupational information. Individual locations are typically surveyed no more than once every three years. To view national survey results as well as learn more about OES including options for submitting data, visit our website at <http://www.bls.gov/respondents/oes/>.

Thank you for completing the OES survey!

The information you provide will be used for statistical purposes only.

Postcard Test Response Rates

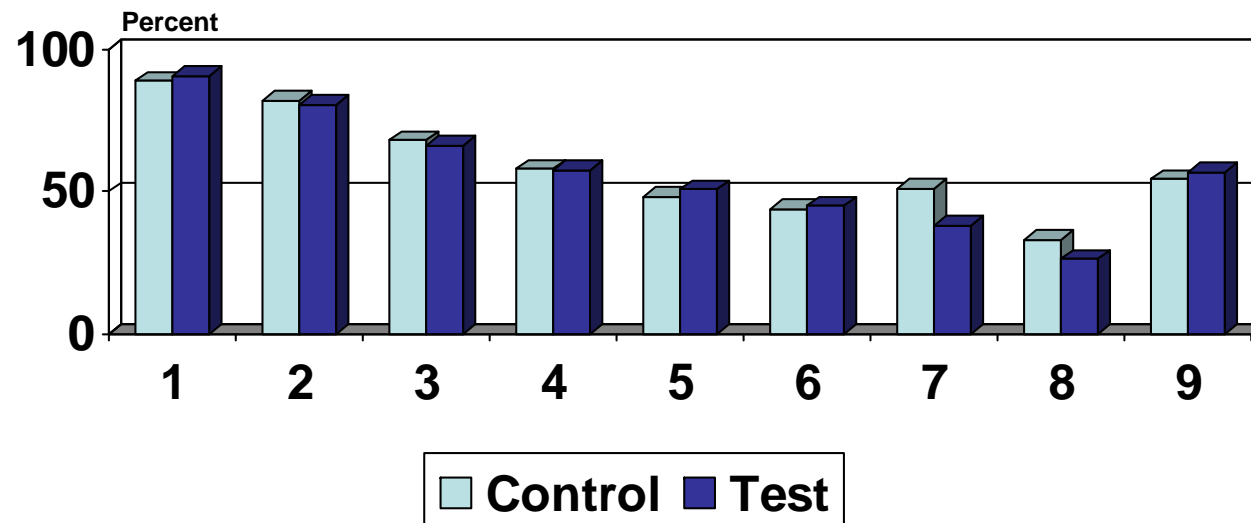
- Differences in response rates overall and by State were small and not statistically significant.
- Control v Test
 - Interim 58.5% v 58.0%
 - Final 72.3% v 72.0%



Response rates by size



- Differences by size — not statistically significant
- Apparent higher response in control for large sizes—7 & 8
- Conservative recommendation for postcards in 1-6; survey packet for 7, 8 ,9



Estimated Savings--



- Restructured survey package and reminder postcard.
- Savings with current printer estimated at—

\$375,000

Distribution of OES Sample



- OES has allocated to the same fixed State sample sizes since the start of the wage survey.
- Economies change
- Minimums and certainties
 - 57% of OES sample is allocated to meet minimums and certainties
 - Wide range across States—35% to 94%, leaving some States with very little sample allocated “statistically”

Slide 17

j3

From Laurie: is this the range of certainties?

jones_carrie, 10/14/2008

Distribution of Sample (more)



- OES mission of area data
 - Foreign Labor Certification
 - Other labor market information products
- Area-based design
 - State portion of each MSA plus multiple Balance-of-State areas.
 - Power allocation to allow for more similar sampling error across large and small areas.
- Impact on products
 - Expect more estimates; sample goes where needed.

Distribution of Sample (more)



- Process is dynamic but stable over time.
 - Possible exceptions requiring planning—
 - Redefinitions of Metropolitan Areas
 - Addition of new areas between revisions
- Some large shifts in sample across States.
- Smaller shifts expected in funding.
 - Result of base positions in funding formulas
- Expect to implement with the FY 2010
LMI CA

OES Policy Council



- OES consults with the Policy Council on a full range of program issues including these.
- Over the next year expect the Policy Council to develop action plans for—
 - New product development
 - Improved microdata quality
 - Improved estimates quality
 - Developing cost and quality benchmarks
 - Improved communications
 - Cost savings in data collection
 - Marketing plans
 - Meeting staff development needs

Training



- Web Ex Training
 - NAICS — 7 sessions, trained about 200 people
 - Processing State Benchmark File — 4 sessions, trained about 100 people
 - Estimates Review — 6 sessions, trained about 100 people
 - Introduction to QCEW — 3 sessions, trained about 120 people
 - Introduction to Autobatch — 6 sessions, trained about 120 people

Other Training



- Schedule Review Workbook released September.
- PowerPoints for Web Ex and other presentations available on StateWeb.
- Classroom training
 - OES Overview
 - Occupational Coding



Web Products



- New look on the BLS Web page
- On-line OES Chartbook
 - Thanks for the help
 - A new edition is nearing completion
- New Products in development
 - On-line replacement for the Occupational Employment and wages bulletin.
 - Away from the hard copy look, in with user-designed output.
- Active State Web pages, too

Research using OES data



September MLR article

- Uses OES micro data to analyze **Occupations and Ownership Change**.
 - Examines the difference in occupational employment (and wages) changes in firms that changed ownership between the two responses, using the other establishments as a control.

Scheduled November MLR article

- Occupational employment and **wages at for profit and not for profit establishments**.
 - Not for profits have higher overall wages due mainly to the types of occupations in not for profits.
 - Not for profits do not have many of the very low paying occupations such as cashiers and food service workers.
 - Occupation by occupation, for-profits tend to have higher wages for most occupations, but not-for profits have higher wages for the lowest paid occupations

Revising the SOC



- October 2005 — Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) Revision kicked off with an SOC Policy Committee meeting.
 - OES solicited State staff comments months earlier.
- May 16, 2006—Federal Register Notice
 - Announced revision and proposed scope
 - Solicited public comment



Revising the SOC (more)



- May 22, 2008—FRN announces the proposed structure for public comment.
- Title changes, code changes, definition changes, new titles, dropped titles
 - Only about 10% had substantial change
- About 1,200 comments received
 - Many address the same occupations or topics
 - Green jobs, energy jobs
 - Some “thank you”s



Revising the SOC (more)



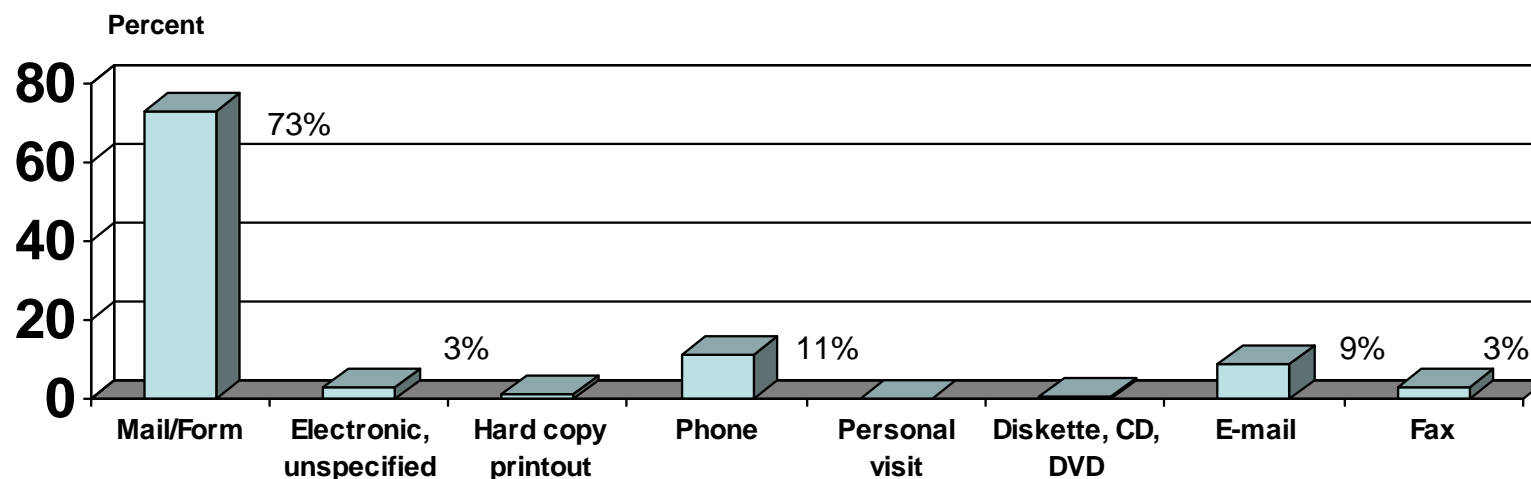
- Policy Committee is reviewing all recommendations and preparing responses.
- January 2009 — Expect publication of final FRN
- March 2009—Edit and review of SOC manual completed
- November 2009 — Implementation of 2010 SOC in OES sample
 - Revised survey materials
 - Revised training
- May 2011—Publication using SOC 2010

New Ideas for Data Collection

We need them!



- The OES wage survey form was developed in the late 1980's.
- The collection concept has changed little, while technology has changed by leaps and bounds.



Internet Collection



- Web-lite—a secure, but streamlined means of Internet file transfer.
 - Respondent only needs a schedule number.
 - Fillable form available to download, complete and attach to Internet session.
 - Reduces return postage charges.
- Still looking for practical means for on-line data collection.
 - OES is a long, intimidating form
- Expect Web-lite from OES this year

Survey Endorsements



- OES is working with BLS National Compensation Survey staff to collect endorsements from organizations.
 - These are from organizations that use our data, value it, and might not realize we have difficulty collecting the information.
- Some States have similar programs.
 - Scan to make these accessible to State and BLS OES staff
 - OES respondent page
- Doesn't really change how we do business.

Software Providers



- BLS has made several efforts to leverage popular payroll and human resources software.
- What do we know about these products?
- BLS contacts with providers, but—
 - What do the Regional office staffs know?
 - What do State staffs know?
- Scan the community; put it on the OES Respondent page.

Vendor Software



- Easier to respond—higher response rate.
- More establishments? Reduced burden?
 - Can we identify locations, industry?
- Additional data items?
 - To help with data validation.
 - To expand product line?
 - Hours, frequency of pay, FT/PT, gender, union status?



Questions?

stamas.george@bls.gov