

Questions and Answers about the 2012 Economic Census of the Island Areas

Businesses in the Island Areas receive their economic census forms between October and December 2012. The forms are due February 12, 2013.

Why do we need a census every 5 years when surveys provide more timely figures?

The economic census provides more comprehensive detail about the Island Areas economic activity than surveys can provide. Most economic survey results are presented at the island level. The economic census collects information about businesses, summarizes it for each industry and geographic area, and publishes complete and accurate statistics. It is the only recognized source of data at the town level. The economic census presents data for the islands and towns.

How are economic census results used?

Economic census data are used in private business plans, public policy development, and statistical program quality control. Examples of users include:

Individual businesses. Small and large businesses use census statistics to develop business plans, locate facilities, define markets, assess competition, attract investment, manage sales, and evaluate efficiency.

Business organizations. Industry professionals, economic analysts and business reporters use census statistics to assess industry growth and change, prepare economic forecasts, define legislative priorities, and produce educational materials.

Program agencies. Federal and

local agencies use census statistics to design economic development and regulatory programs, evaluate program effects, conduct trade negotiations, and prepare revenue and spending plans. The Bureau of Economic Research uses census data as a benchmark for all economic surveys, while the Bureau of Economic Analysis uses it to compute the Island Areas' Gross Product.

Statistical agencies. Statistical agencies use census statistics to validate and update key performance measures, including measures of production and business productivity.

Are business responses to the economic census kept confidential?

Yes! Business responses are protected by Federal law – Title 13, United States – under penalty of fines or imprisonment. Individual responses are seen only by persons sworn to uphold the confidentiality of Census Bureau information and may be used only for statistical purposes.

Confidential information on census forms is even exempt from the Freedom of Information Act. No business competitors can obtain the responses of another company, and even copies retained in respondents' files are immune from legal process.

What is the penalty for not responding?

United States Code, Title 13, Section 224, stipulates that compliance to the census is mandatory. Penalties ranging from \$5,000 to \$10,000 can be invoked for failure to

respond to the census and for willfully providing false answers.

What should a business person do if his or her business did not receive an economic census form?

Nothing. It is likely that the person did not receive a form for any the following reasons:

- The form was sent to the company headquarters. If the headquarters has all the required figures, managers at individual offices may never see a census form.
- The business is new and was issued an Employer Identification Number (EIN) after June 2012; therefore a form for the establishment could not be included in the December 2012 mailing. In this case, the business should receive the census form in March 2013.
- The business has no employees. The Economic Census forms were sent only to establishments that employ at least one person.
- The business's kind of business is not included in the scope of the census. The economic census does not cover the following industries: agriculture, forestry, and fisheries; schools and colleges; and labor, political, and religious organizations.

Are 2012 Economic Census forms easier to complete?

All forms have been designed to be easier to read, complete, and file. There is a single form for the Island Areas. Respondents will find general inquiries and questions that are relevant to their particular business groups.

A toll-free "help line" (1-800-233-6136) will be available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Eastern time to answer questions that recipients have about filling out the forms.

An Internet-based "Business Help Site" (econhelp.census.gov) is provided to answer many business questions and provide services that businesses often request, including online reporting.

What is new about the 2012 Economic Census of the Island Areas?

The 2012 Economic Census of the Island Areas will include for the first time information about capital expenses for every sector in each island area. Additionally, it will provide information on legally required and voluntarily provided employee benefits.

When and how will the people see the results of the 2012 Economic Census of the Island Areas?

The first census results will be available in 2014. All Island Areas census results will be issued via the Internet, on American FactFinder (AFF).

What is American FactFinder?

AFF is a database system that gives you access to the economic census data and allows you to search directly for the data you want, display data for all available sectors at once, and download the results for further manipulation.

What other information will I be able to get on the Internet for the Island Areas?

- Samples of all 2012 Economic Census forms (econhelp.census.gov)
- Results from the 2002 and 2007 Economic Census of the Island Areas (census.gov/econ/islandareas)

Who should I call if I have questions about the data?

You may contact us by phone or e-mail:

Mr. Lee Wentela (301 / 763-7270)

(lee.r.wentela@census.gov)

Mrs. Lillyana Najafzadeh (301 / 763-6544)

(lillyana.j.najafzadeh@census.gov)

Mr. Geoffrey Hill (301 / 763-6554)

(geoffrey.s.hill@census.gov)

Island Areas staff (301 / 763-3314)