

State and Local Government Statistics: A Progress Report from the U.S. Census Bureau

Presented at the
National Tax Association
101st Annual Conference on Taxation

November 21, 2008

Disclaimer: This report is released to inform interested parties of research and to encourage discussion of work in progress. The views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.

Introduction to Governments Division

- Main purposes of Governments Division programs:
 - Provide economic statistics about governments
 - Are the public counterpart to business, industry, and services economic data
 - Follow the activity of governments over time
- Virtually no confidentiality restrictions
- Response is voluntary

State and Local Government Statistics at a Crossroads

- 2007 report issued by the Committee on National Statistics (CNStat)
- Suggested recommendations for improving existing programs
- Initial response slow due to staff transitions
- Since August 2008, focus on using recommendations to leverage change/improvements within the Division

CNStat Report Themes

- Data Quality, Relevance, and Utility
- Timeliness
- Dissemination

CNStat Theme: Data Quality, Relevance, and Utility

- Recommendation 3-1: Get **feedback from users** on suggested improvements to the detail and classification of data on state and local government finances and employment
- Progress Update:
 - Reaching out to data users through consultations and workshops

CNStat Theme:

Data Quality, Relevance, and Utility

- Recommendations in Chapter 4: **Conduct research** on existing methods to see where efficiencies and improvements can be made (i.e. survey redesign, response, editing and imputation, data revisions)
- Progress Update:
 - Redesigning all aspects of the Quarterly Tax survey (including implementing a new sample in January)
 - Conducted cognitive research in different areas for the annual finance and employment surveys
 - Broad review of each program to assess editing and imputation techniques

CNStat Theme: Data Quality, Relevance, and Utility

- Recommendations in Chapter 4: **Conduct research** on existing methods to see where efficiencies and improvements can be made (i.e. survey redesign, response, editing and imputation, data revisions)
- Progress Update (continued):
 - Revised revision policy
 - Improved communication between methods staff and analysts will improve production efficiencies, thus freeing up time for more research

CNStat Theme: Timeliness

- Recommendation 5-1: Research the benefits/ costs of adopting **earlier release procedures**, i.e. releasing preliminary estimates or releasing estimates as they are compiled
- Progress Update:
 - Successful in moving up the release of several products
 - Some constraints due to data processing and the use of statistical methods; are reviewing existing processes and methods to determine where efficiencies can be made

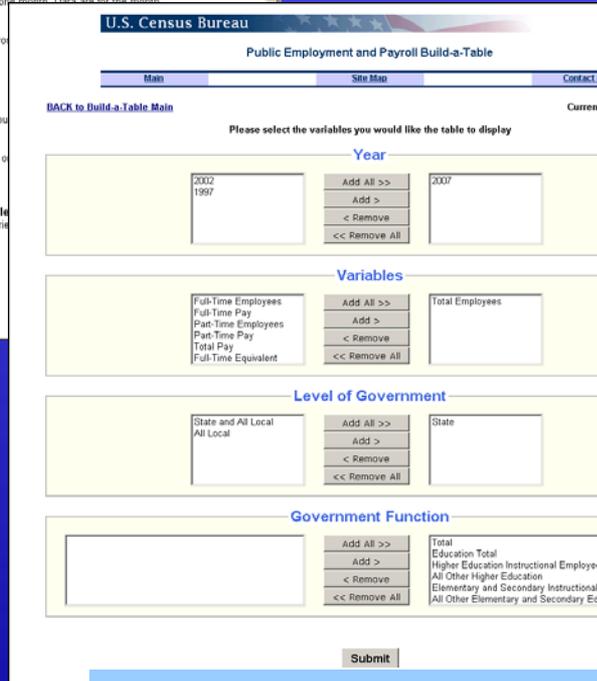
CNStat Theme: Dissemination

- Recommendations 4-1, 4-3, 4-8: Provide users with needed tools and documentation to accurately navigate existing methodologies
- Recommendation 5-2: Redesign and continually improve the Governments website
- Progress Update:
 - Working to position existing areas to focus specifically on user outreach and education
 - Produced an in-house dissemination tool, Build-A-Table
 - Exploring three mechanisms for dissemination: expansion of Build-A-Table, DataFerrett (including hot reports), and the new American FactFinder to debut in 2011
 - Implementing standards that are consistent in the Census Bureau

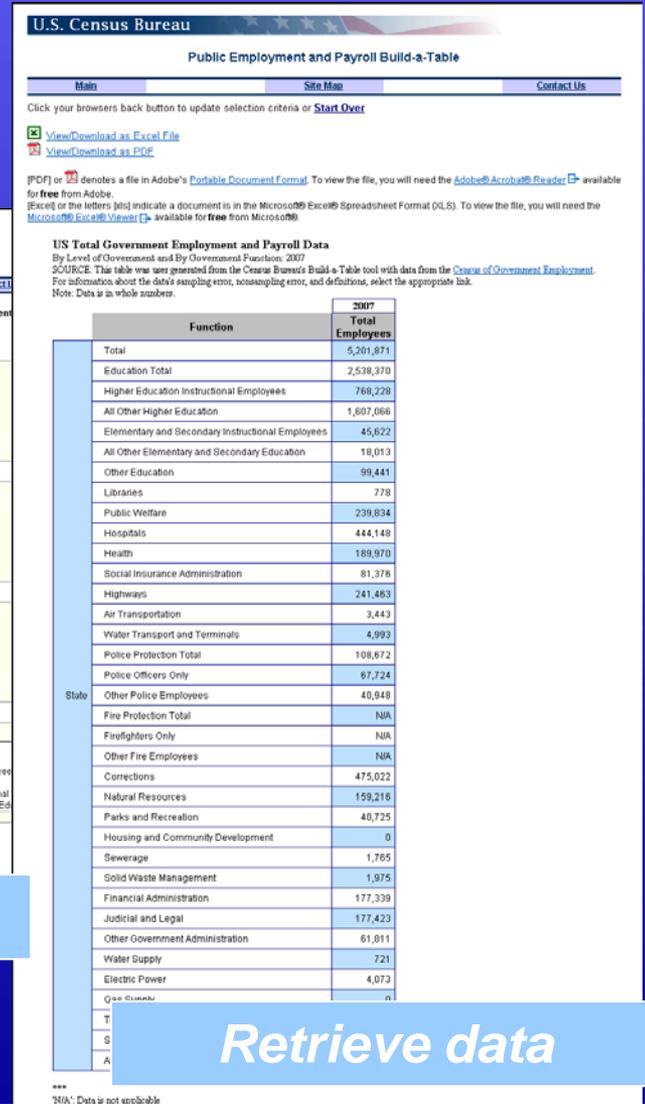
Build-A-Table



Select category



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Retrieve data

CNStat Theme: Dissemination

- Recommendation 5-3: Facilitate **wider dissemination** of products by issuing press releases; add value to existing data by providing simple derived measures
- Progress Update:
 - Regular press releases began in October 2008 with the release of 2007 Census of Employment data
 - Partnering with external users and beginning conversations on how best to approach the potential release of this information

Media Coverage



Forbes.com
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Federal Spending Increased 4.4 Percent in 2007
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State and local governments are flourishing
By **Lee Davidson**
Deseret News
Published: Thursday, Oct. 23, 2008 12:05 a.m. MDT
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Over five years, this type of Utah business added nearly 7 percent more employees. The wa
booming?



AP Associated Press
Slow economy hits state sales tax revenue
By ELLEN SIMON, AP Business Writer
Monday, October 6, 2008

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(10-06) 21:17 PDT New York (AP) --

State tax revenue rose slightly in the second quarter and property tax all dropped compared to a year Tuesday. The report warned that states and cities revenues dropped further.

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Total tax revenue the second quarter year, according to



TAX REPORT | OCTOBER 1, 2008
State, Local Tax Revenue Stagnates

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As economic storm clouds have darkened, state- and local-government budget woes have gone from bad to worse.

This picture emerges from interviews with municipal-finance officials and a recent report by a
which generally has
ending, dip into
raise taxes -- or turn



Thursday, October 2, 2008
Virginia tops list of federal spending per capita
Washington Business Journal - by [Barton Eckert](#) Contributing Writer

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The **Census Bureau** says domestic federal spending rose in fiscal year 2007 to \$2.56 trillion -- up 4.4 percent from 2006.

Data Release Schedule

Release Date	Release	Frequency
October 2008	2007 Census of Employment	Quinquennial
November 2008	Annual State Government Finances	Annual
December 2008	2007 Census of Retirement	Quinquennial
December 2008 (Mar., Jun., Sept.)	Quarterly Tax	Quarterly
March 2009	Annual State Tax Collections	Annual
September 2009	2007 Census of Finance	Quinquennial

Final Thoughts

- Working toward addressing the majority of recommendations by the 2012 Census of Governments
- Have some immediate challenges to overcome
- To be successful we need
 - Your patience and support;
 - Your input as we propose and recommend suggestions; and
 - Your assistance both in terms of input but also in helping to keep our response rates high

Contact Information

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