

BLS-Census Research Workshop— Washington, DC

Director's remarks as prepared for delivery

May 31, 2024

- Good afternoon, everyone.
- What a pleasure it is to be here with my colleagues from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). I so appreciate that we could come together for this interagency workshop.
- Hey, did you realize that today's gathering represents a milestone for us?
- It's our tenth workshop together! Woo hoo! A decade of productive partnership, cooperation, and coordination!
- Now, I've heard that this workshop got its start thanks to the Business List Comparison (BLC) Project, back in the day.
- It was a large collaborative research project about 25 years ago.
- There was a BLS economist who suggested to his Census Bureau counterpart that just maybe we could find a way to build on the great partnership that grew from working together on the BLC project.
- And that's the genesis of our BLS-Census Research Workshop.
- Since its inception, our workshop has provided an invaluable opportunity for our researchers to convene in the spirit of pursuing areas of mutual interest to advance our missions through impactful research.
- And thanks to its success, our partnership has flourished.
- Of course, we have critical collaborations between the Census Bureau and BLS for programmatic purposes.
- But we also have many ongoing research collaborations that cover improvements to our products and processes.
- Here are a few examples:
 - First, we have the Collaborative Micro-Productivity Project team which produced multiple research papers and a joint BLS-Census Bureau data product providing statistics on productivity dispersion in the manufacturing sector.

The team is expanding their work to encompass the retail sector. It also has begun exciting new work linking BLS' Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics data to Census Bureau business data.

That will allow us to better understand drivers of productivity dispersion in our nation.

- Next, there's the research project comparing Job-to-Job (J2J) Flows to BLS's Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey aka JOLTS. The research team is investigating the feasibility of using the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) data to improve state-level JOLTS and to model substate JOLTS estimates.

BLS will use the data for research on hires and separations, and employment dynamics and geographic mobility after natural disasters.

For our part, the Census Bureau staff will use the JOLTS microdata to study the correspondence between quits and layoffs in JOLTS and separations in J2J Flows data.

This will help us to better understand how many J2J transitions in the LEHD data are driven by quits versus layoffs.

- Another project that's just starting involves combining information on management practices from the Census Bureau with information of workers' illnesses and injuries.

This will help show whether manufacturing plants that adopt more structured management practices are safer.

- We've also conducted research on incorporating IRS administrative records as input to imputation models for the Consumer Expenditure Survey quarterly files.
- And the last example includes our colleagues from the Bureau of Economic Analysis as well as experts from Opportunity Insights.

Here, the team is evaluating the potential uses of payroll data to complement employment statistics.

- OK, so all these efforts will ultimately provide important data for our data users, including policymakers, businesses, community leaders, and the public at large.
- And these new data and new improvements would simply not be possible without close collaboration between BLS and the Census Bureau.
- So, thank you for helping us serve the public better.
- On a more personal level, the workshop is a great way for researchers from our agencies to get to know each other better.
- Fostering interpersonal networks and collegiality is especially invaluable in this day and age.
- It's my hope that our experiences today will foster even more research collaborations in the future.
- And I think our upcoming co-location in the same building will supercharge those efforts.
- We look forward to welcoming our BLS colleagues to Suitland very soon! It's going to be great!
- In closing, I want to thank the organizers of this workshop, including Benjamin Raymon, Jay Stewart, and Richard Uhrig from BLS and Lawrence Warren and Moises Yi from the Census Bureau.
- I know this wonderful gathering represents a lot of hard work and effort on their part.
- And special thanks to Commissioner McEntarfer, to today's participants, and all of the staff from both agencies who have supported this event.