

# Increasing Electronic Reporting for the 2012 Survey of Business Owners and Self-Employed Persons

Mary G. Frauenfelder  
Survey Statistician  
Company Statistics Division

*2014 Federal CASIC Workshops  
March 19, 2014*

# Purpose and Objectives

- Provide an overview of the strategy, planning, and implementation efforts to reduce costs by significantly increasing the use of electronic reporting
- Cover the SBO initial mailout and follow-up procedures, online reporting usability testing, preliminary analysis of paradata, and response rates.

# Background

- Part of the Economic Census – Conducted every 5 years under the same budget area
- Collects business and business owner data by
  - Gender
  - Minority status
  - Race
  - Ethnicity (Hispanic origin of any race)
  - Veteran status

- Collects data for business characteristics
  - Year the business was established
  - Source(s) and amount of financing
  - Whether home-based, family-owned, or franchised
  - Types of customers and workers
  - Percent of total sales from exports
  - Operations established or functions outsourced outside the United States
  - Language(s) used in business transactions
  - Employer-paid benefits
  - Internet usage and percent of sales from e-commerce
  - Seasonal or part-time business
  - Business still operating or reason ceased

- Collects data for owner characteristics
  - How and when the owner acquired the business
  - Owner's primary function in the business
  - Average number of hours worked per week
  - Whether the business provided the owner's primary income source
  - Prior experience owning a business
  - Age of the owner
  - Highest level of education completed
  - Whether the owner was born in the United States
  - Veteran's service-disabled status

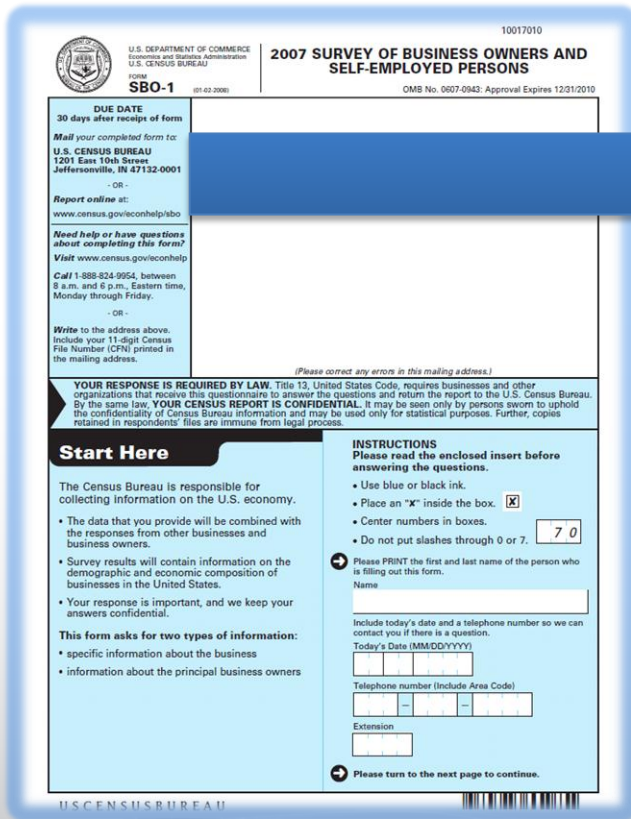
- Combines data from several sources
  - Online reporting and mailout/mailback survey
  - IRS business tax returns
  - Other Economic Census reports
- Conducted on a company or firm basis
- Two-phase mailout (1.75 million firms)
  - Phase I employer firms (850,000) mailed in September 2013
  - Phase II nonemployer firms and new employer firms (900,000) mailed in May 2014
- NAICS coverage similar to the Economic Census

- Publishes data by
  - Geography
    - United States, states, metropolitan areas, counties, places
  - Industry
    - 2- through 6-digit NAICS for selected geographies
  - Size of firm
    - Receipts
    - Employment
- Ten core releases covering races, gender, Hispanic origin, veteran status, and characteristics of businesses and business owners
- Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)

# 2007 SBO

- All businesses received mailback paper forms.

➤ Offered electronic reporting option.



10017010

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

**SBO-1** (01-03-2006) OMB No. 0607-0943; Approval Expires 12/31/2010

**DUE DATE**  
30 days after receipt of form

**Mail your completed form to:**  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
1201 East 10th Street  
Jeffersonville, IN 47132-0001

- OR -

**Report online at:**  
[www.census.gov/econhelp/sbo](http://www.census.gov/econhelp/sbo)

**Need help or have questions about completing this form?**  
Visit [www.census.gov/econhelp](http://www.census.gov/econhelp)  
Call 1-888-824-9954, between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

- OR -

Write to the address above. Include your 11-digit Census File Number (CFN) printed in the mailing address.

*(Please correct any errors in this mailing address.)*

**YOUR RESPONSE IS REQUIRED BY LAW.** Title 13, United States Code, requires businesses and other organizations that receive this questionnaire to answer the questions and return the report to the U.S. Census Bureau. By the same law, **YOUR CENSUS REPORT IS CONFIDENTIAL.** It may be seen only by persons sworn to uphold the confidentiality of Census Bureau information and may be used only for statistical purposes. Further, copies retained in respondents' files are immune from legal process.

**Start Here**

The Census Bureau is responsible for collecting information on the U.S. economy.

- The data that you provide will be combined with the responses from other businesses and business owners.
- Survey results will contain information on the demographic and economic composition of businesses in the United States.
- Your response is important, and we keep your answers confidential.

**This form asks for two types of information:**

- specific information about the business
- information about the principal business owners

**INSTRUCTIONS**  
Please read the enclosed insert before answering the questions.

- Use blue or black ink.
- Place an "X" inside the box.
- Center numbers in boxes.
- Do not put slashes through 0 or 7.

➔ Please PRINT the first and last name of the person who is filling out this form.  
Name

Include today's date and a telephone number so we can contact you if there is a question.  
Today's Date (MMDDYYYY)

Telephone number (Include Area Code)

Extension

➔ Please turn to the next page to continue.

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

**DUE DATE**  
30 days after receipt of form

**Mail your completed form to:**  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
1201 East 10th Street  
Jeffersonville, IN 47132-0001

- OR -

**Report online at:**  
[www.census.gov/econhelp/sbo](http://www.census.gov/econhelp/sbo)



# 2012 SBO

- Instructs using electronic reporting only; no mention of the paper versions of the form.

880-1/2 L1  
7-2013

In an effort to conduct the SBO in a cost-effective manner, we have developed an online reporting system for completing the questionnaire that we are confident you will find easy to use. **To complete the survey online or get assistance from the Business Help Site, go to [econhelp.census.gov/sbo](http://econhelp.census.gov/sbo).** Use the following User ID and Password:

User ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Password: \_\_\_\_\_

FROM THE  
U.S. CENS

You have b  
**Employer**  
and provid  
composition  
characteristics of U.S. businesses and their owners, and **information from your business is critical** to providing reliable data for your industry and geographic area.

In an effort to conduct the SBO in a cost-effective manner, we have developed an online reporting system for completing the questionnaire that we are confident you will find easy to use. **To complete the survey online or get assistance from the Business Help Site, go to [econhelp.census.gov/sbo](http://econhelp.census.gov/sbo).** Use the following User ID and Password:

User ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Password: \_\_\_\_\_

This report is **MANDATORY** and must be completed by **October 29, 2013**.

This report is **MANDATORY** and must be completed by **October 29, 2013**.

Title 13, United States Code, Sections 131 and 224, **requires your response** and Section 9 guarantees that **your response is confidential** and will only be used for statistical purposes. Applicable provisions of the law are provided on the Business Help Site. You may use reasonable estimates if book figures are not readily available.

**THANK YOU** in advance for ensuring that the results of the 2012 Survey of Business Owners and Self-Employed Persons are comprehensive, timely, and reliable.

Sincerely,  
*William D. Bote Jr.*

Visit [econhelp.census.gov/sbo](http://econhelp.census.gov/sbo)  
• To Report Online  
• To Get Help With Reporting

Toll-free help: 1-888-824-9954, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Eastern time.  
Si necesita ayuda, llame libre de cargos: 1-888-824-9954, de lunes a viernes, de 8 a.m. a 6 p.m., hora del Este.

# Online Reporting and Self Service Options through the Business Help Site

- “Survey Log in”
  - Complete in 8-12 minutes
  - Save the form and complete over multiple sessions, if needed
- “Self-Service Login”
  - Grant time extension
  - Check filing status
  - Update mailing address

U.S. Department of Commerce  
United States™  
Census  
Bureau

Home | Blogs

People | Business | Geography | Data | Research | Newsroom

You are here: [Census.gov](#) > [Business Help Site](#) > [Survey of Business Owners and Self-Employed Persons \(SBO\)](#)

## Survey of Business Owners and Self-Employed Persons (SBO)

### Business Help Site

[Main](#) | [About the Survey](#) | [Forms & Letters](#) | [FAQs](#) | [Videos](#) | [Contact Staff](#) | [Other Surveys](#)

**DUE DATE**  
**October 29, 2013**

**TOOLS**

- [Survey Log in](#)
- [Self-Service Log in](#)
- [Secure Messaging Center](#)

**DATA PRODUCTS**

- [Publications and Data](#)
- [Using Economic Data](#)

**ADDITIONAL LINKS**

- [Is this Form Legitimate?](#)
- [Legal/Confidentiality](#)
- [Quotes from Title 13](#)
- [Glossary](#)
- [Site Map](#)

Welcome to the main page for the Survey of Business Owners and Self-Employed Persons. If you are ready to report, please use the "Survey Log in" button below. If you are looking for information about this survey, please browse through the information on this page or use the tabs above to find additional information.

**Ready to start?**  
[Survey Log in](#)  
This survey should take approximately 8-12 minutes to complete. If needed, you can save and complete your survey over multiple sessions.

**Need assistance?**  
[Self-Service Log in](#)  
Wait! Don't call if you need to request a time extension, check your filing status, or update your mailing address. Log in to complete the request(s) yourself.

# Survey Log in Screen

- Re-enter 11-digit SBO User ID and case sensitive Password
- Sessions expires after 50 minutes of inactivity
- Adding OMB Number and Approval Expiration Date for Phase II

AN OFFICIAL WEBSITE OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Survey of Business Owners and Self-Employed Persons

United States Census Bureau Economic Statistics

Welcome to the Survey of Business Owners and Self-Employed Persons

This website provides businesses an opportunity to complete the Survey of Business Owners and Self-Employed Persons online.

- To access electronic reporting, re-enter your User ID and Password issued to you by the Census Bureau, then click "Login".
- Note: Your session will expire if you remain on one screen for 50 minutes without navigating to another screen.

User ID:

Password:  
(case sensitive)

Login

For help, use our [Business Help Site](#) or call 1-888-824-9954, between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

**\*\* WARNING \*\***  
You have accessed a UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT computer. Use of this computer without authorization or for purposes for which authorization has not been extended is a violation of Federal law and can be punished with fines or imprisonment (PUBLIC LAW 99-474). System usage may be monitored, recorded, and subject to audit. Use of this system indicates consent to monitoring and recording.

# Main Menu Screen Dilemmas

AN OFFICIAL WEBSITE OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Survey of Business Owners and Self-Employed Persons

United States Census Bureau Economic Statistics

Logout | Instructions | Contact Us | Help

### Main Menu

Please complete the form listed below. You will have an opportunity to review your responses at the end of the form.

**Company Address**  
TEST COMPANY 079  
79 NOWHERE ST  
NOLPLACE, DC 08409-8140

Action	Status	Form	View/Print PDF
<a href="#">Start</a>	Not Started	SBO-1	

Form: SBO-1 OMB No. 0607-0943 OMB Expiration Date: 11/30/2015


The letters PDF or the  icon indicate a document is in the [Portable Document Format \(PDF\)](#). To view the file you will need the [Adobe® Reader](#), which is available for free from the [Adobe web site](#).

- View/Print PDF icon does not appear until the survey has begun.
- Submitted forms cannot be correct online.

- Access
- Privacy
- Legal/
- Burden
- Security
- About

Notice the change in the Action button and Status:



Action	Status	Form	View/Print PDF
<a href="#">Resume</a>	In Progress	SBO-1	

# Formatting and Navigation Dilemmas Involving a Screener Question

- Improvement needed prior to designing the online reporting system.
- Skip instructions that applied only to in-scope businesses were made much more conspicuous.
- If in-scope businesses answered out-of-scope questions by mistake, they still stay on the intended path leading to the Owner Dashboard.

Please answer the following questions for the person(s) or business named in the mailing label. Answer even if the business has been sold, reorganized, or ceased operation. You may use estimates if this form requests information that is not available in your business records.

**2** On December 31, 2011, how many people owned this business?

- Include yourself if you were a sole proprietor or worked as a consultant or an independent contractor.
- Do not combine two or more owners to create one owner.
- Count spouses and partners as separate owners.

1 person  
 2 - 4 people  
 5 - 10 people  
 11 or more people  
 Business is owned by a parent company, estate, trust, or other entity.  
 Unknown

**3** On December 31, 2011, was this business owned by a government or tribal entity?  
 Yes  No

**4** On December 31, 2011, did any one person own 10% or more of this business?  
 Yes  No - Go to **6** on page 7

**5** For the person(s) owning the largest percentage(s) in this business as of December 31, 2011, please list the percentage owned by each person and his or her position title.

- Do not report percentages owned by parent companies, estates, trusts, or other entities.
- If more than 4 people owned this business equally, select any 4 people.
- Round percentages to whole numbers. For example, report 1/3 ownership as 33.0%.

	Percentage Owned (Estimates are acceptable)	Position Title (Example: sole owner, co-owner, shareholder, president, vice president, etc.)
Owner 1:	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> . 0 %	<input type="text"/>
Owner 2:	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> . 0 %	<input type="text"/>
Owner 3:	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> . 0 %	<input type="text"/>
Owner 4:	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> . 0 %	<input type="text"/>

**NOTE: Do not list more than 4 owners.**

**6** A. In 2011, did two or more members of one family own the business? (Family refers to spouses, parents/guardians, children, siblings, or close relatives.)  
 Yes  No → Go to **7**

B. (If Yes) Did spouses jointly own this business?  
 Yes  No → Go to **7**

C. (If Yes) Was this business operated equally by both spouses?  
 Yes, equally operated by spouses  
 No, primarily operated by Owner 1  
 No, primarily operated by Owner 2

FORM SBO-1

# Electronic “Owner Dashboard” Dilemma

- Confused where to go next
- Sole owners did not understand why they needed to see this screen
- Status column confusing

AN OFFICIAL WEBSITE OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

United States Census Bureau  
Economic Statistics

Survey of Business Owners and Self-Employed Persons

Logout | Instructions | Contact Us | Help

### Percent Ownership

For the person(s) owning the largest percentage(s) in this business as of December 31, 2012, please list the percentage owned by each person and his or her position title.

- Do not report percentages owned by parent companies, estates, trusts, or other entities.
- If more than 4 people owned this business equally, select any 4 people.
- Round percentages to whole numbers. For example, report 1/3 ownership as 33.0%.

Percentage Owned (Estimates are acceptable)	Position Title (Example: sole owner, co-owner, shareholder, president, vice president, etc.)
Owner 1: <input type="text"/> .0%	Title: <input type="text"/>
Owner 2: <input type="text"/> .0%	Title: <input type="text"/>
Owner 3: <input type="text"/> .0%	Title: <input type="text"/>
Owner 4: <input type="text"/> .0%	Title: <input type="text"/>

Previous Next

Main Menu

Form: SBO-1 OMB No. 0607-0943

• Accessibility  
• Privacy  
• Legal/Confidentiality

AN OFFICIAL WEBSITE OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

United States Census Bureau  
Economic Statistics

Survey of Business Owners and Self-Employed Persons

Logout | Instructions | Contact Us | Help

### Owners Dashboard

You reported the following percentage(s) owned and position title(s) for the owner(s) owning the largest percentage(s) of the business as of December 31, 2012.

Please use the buttons below to answer questions about each owner reported.

After answering questions for each owner, please click the "Next" button to continue the form.

Owner #	Buttons	Status	Percentage Owned	Title
1	<input type="button" value="Enter"/>	✗ Not Started	50%	Owner Lin
2	<input type="button" value="Enter"/>	✗ Not Started	50%	Owner Deun
3	<input type="button" value="Enter"/>		No Data Entered	No Data Entered
4	<input type="button" value="Enter"/>		No Data Entered	No Data Entered

Previous Next

Main Menu

Form: SBO-1 OMB No. 0607-0943 OMB Expiration Date: 11/30/2015

• Accessibility  
• Privacy  
• Legal/Confidentiality  
• Burden Statement

Business Owner(s)

Please use the action buttons below to answer questions about each owner reported.

Action	Status	Percentage Owned	Title
<a href="#">Answer Questions about Owner 1</a>	Not Started	50%	Owner Un
<a href="#">Answer Questions about Owner 2</a>	Not Started	50%	Owner Deux
<a href="#">Answer Questions about Owner 3</a>			
<a href="#">Answer Questions about Owner 4</a>			

When you finish answering questions about **each owner**, use the **Next** button below to proceed with additional questions about this business.

[Previous](#) [Next](#)  
[Main Menu](#)

Form: SBO-1 OMB No. 0607-0943 OMB Expiration Date: 11/30/2015

- Improved Owner Dashboard for better navigation

# Minimalizing Reporting-related Problems

- Devices, operating systems, and Web browsers affected how the screens loaded in testing.

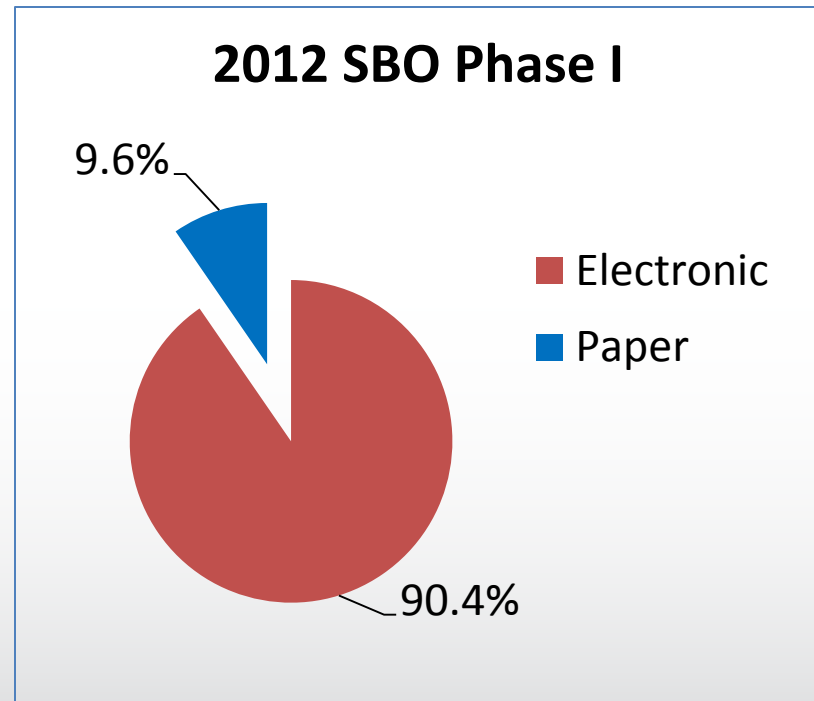
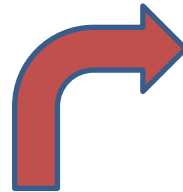
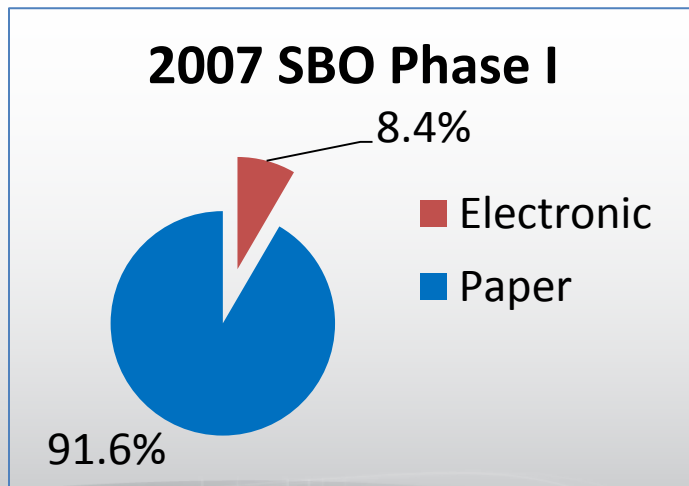
The image displays three screenshots of the United States Census Bureau's online survey interface for the Survey of Business Owners and Self-Employed Persons. Each screenshot shows a different section of the form, with a red border highlighting the content area.

- Top Left Screenshot: Number of Owners**
  - Section: Number of Owners
  - Text: "Please answer the following questions for the person(s) or business named in the mailing label. Answer even if the business has been sold, reorganized, or ceased operation."
  - Text: "You may use estimates if this form requests information that is not available in your business records."
  - Text: "On December 31, 2012, how many people owned this business?"
  - List of options:
    - Include yourself if you were a sole proprietor or worked as a consultant or an independent contractor.
    - Do not combine two or more owners to create one owner.
    - Count spouses and partners as separate owners.
  - Radio button options:
    - 1 person
    - 2 - 4 people
    - 5 - 10 people
    - 11 or more people
    - Business is owned by a parent company, estate, trust, or other entity.
    - Don't know
  - Navigation buttons: Previous, Next, Main Menu
  - Form ID: Form: SBO-1 OMB No. 0607-0943 OMB Expiration Date: 11/30/2015
- Top Right Screenshot: Business Ownership - Government or Tribal Entity**
  - Section: Business Ownership - Government or Tribal Entity
  - Text: "On December 31, 2012, was this business owned by a government or tribal entity?"
  - Radio button options:
    - Yes
    - No
  - Navigation buttons: Previous, Next, Main Menu
  - Form ID: Form: SBO-1 OMB No. 0607-0943 OMB Expiration Date: 11/30/2015
  - Footer: Accessibility, Privacy, Legal Confidentiality, Business Statement, Security, About
- Bottom Screenshot: Business - 10% or More Ownership**
  - Section: Business - 10% or More Ownership
  - Text: "Did any one person own 10% or more of this business?"
  - Radio button options:
    - Yes
    - No — Select "No" ONLY if no person owned 10% or more of this business
  - Navigation buttons: Previous, Next, Main Menu
  - Form ID: Form: SBO-1 OMB No. 0607-0943 OMB Expiration Date: 11/30/2015
  - Footer: Accessibility, Privacy, Legal Confidentiality, Business Statement, Security, About
  - Page-Footer: Measuring America—People, Places, and Our Economy



# Survey of Business Owners: 2007 vs. 2012

## The Transition to Electronic Reporting

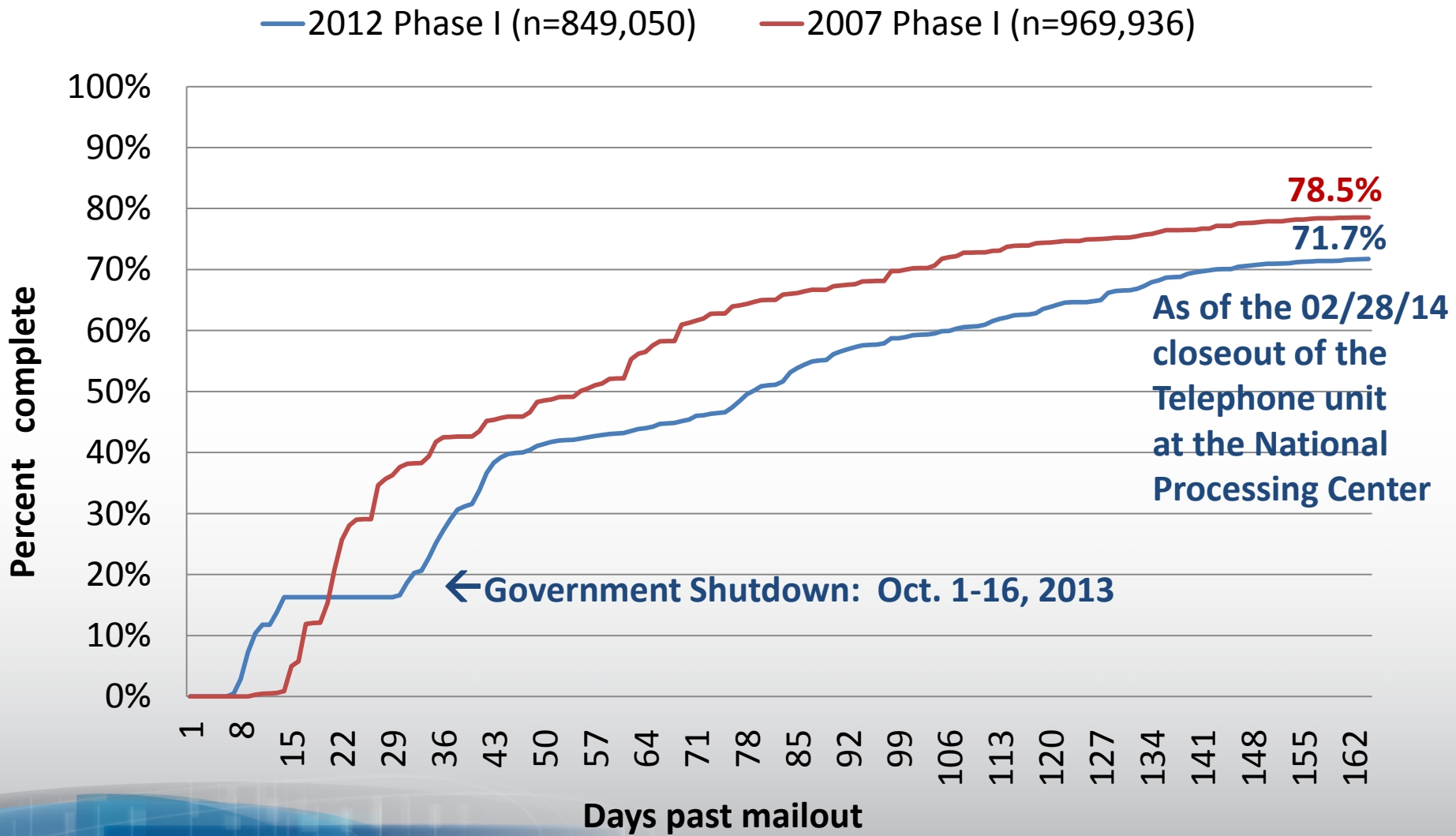


As of March 3, 2014

# Significant Challenges

- Public concerns about SBO's validity and security
- SBO paperwork discarded since 2012 Economic Census (EC) forms were filed
- Failed login attempts at Economic Census BHS site using SBO User IDs and Passwords
- Failed login attempts at SBO BHS site using EC User IDs and Passwords
- Two- week Federal government shutdown prior to due date

# Phase I Response Comparison



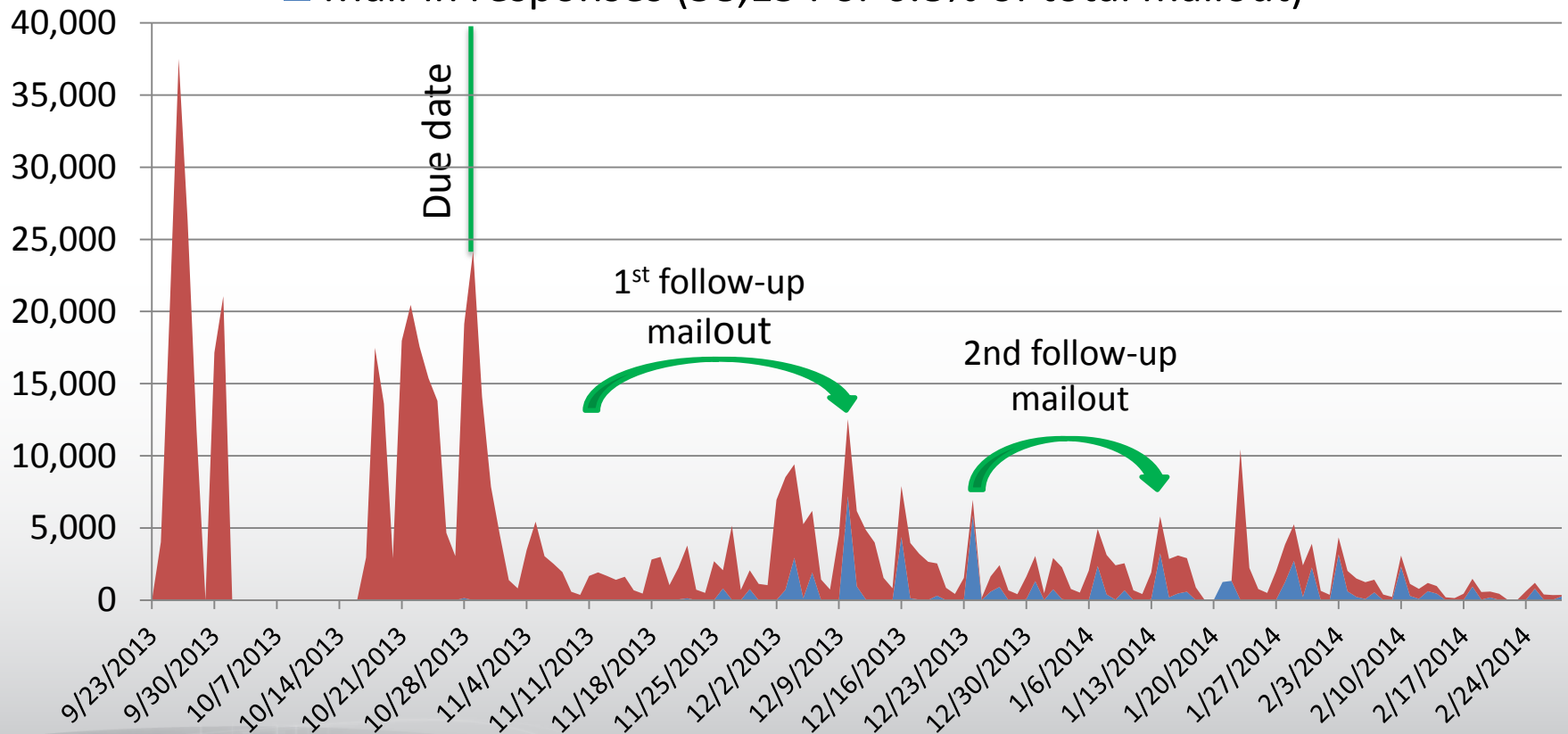
# Top Reasons for Calls to SBO's Toll-Free Number

Primary reason recorded by JCC interviewer	Number
Complete online survey by telephone interview	4,373
Needs inactive, closed, or out-of-business certification letter	2,847
Had a login problem that could be resolved by the interviewer	1,693
Cannot provide business data	1,500
Request for paper report form	1,087
Needs letter acknowledging receipt of form	986
Confused SBO with the Economic Census having an earlier due date	699
Website issue (Able to resolve by phone)	623
Confirm filing status	598
Deceased owner	514

# Daily Online vs. Mail-In Responses

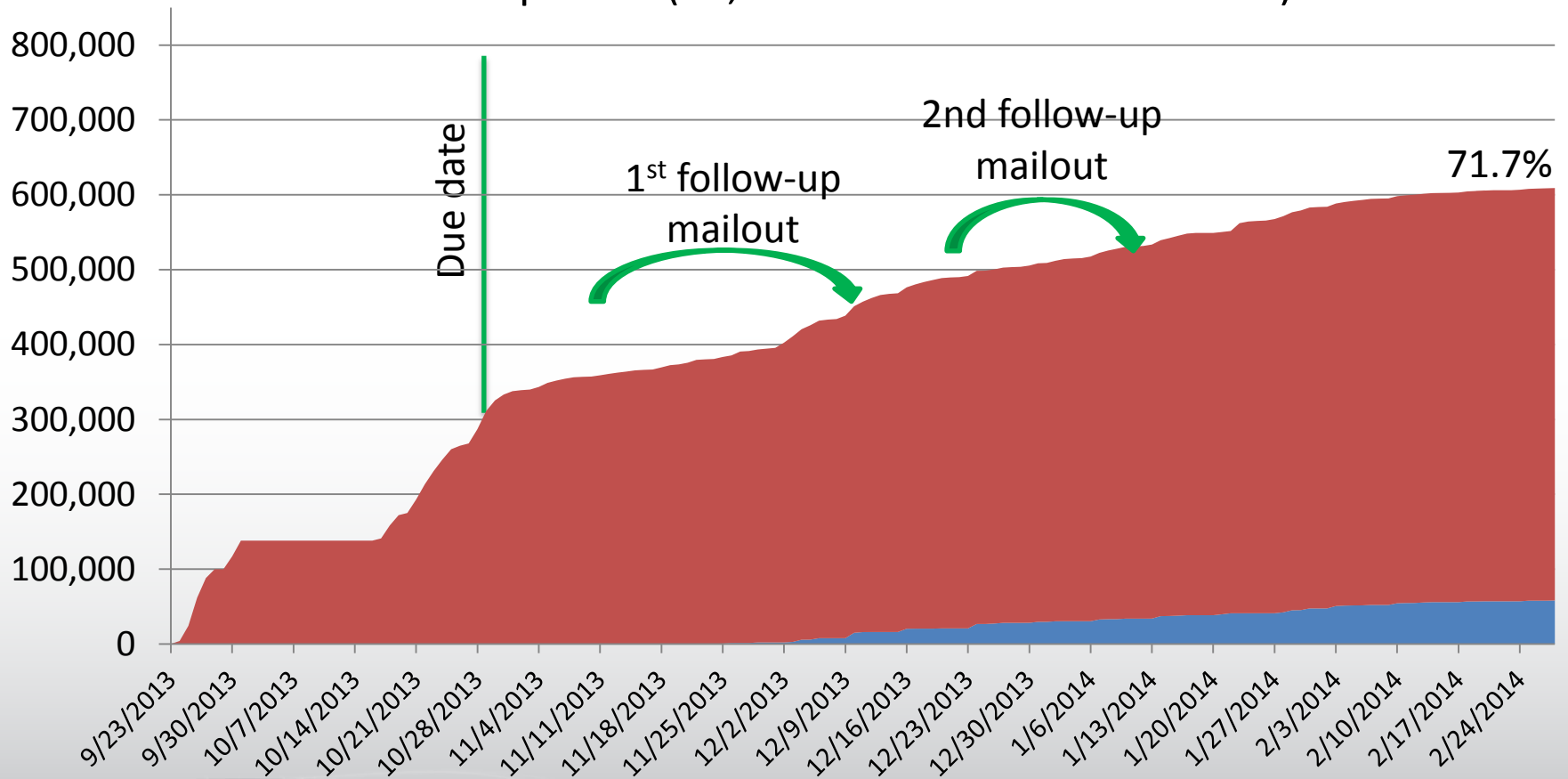
■ Online responses (550,870 or 64.9% of total mailout)

■ Mail-in responses (58,154 or 6.8% of total mailout)



# Summed Online vs. Mail-In Responses

- Online responses (550,870 or 64.9% of total mailout)
- Mail-in responses (58,154 or 6.8% of total mailout)



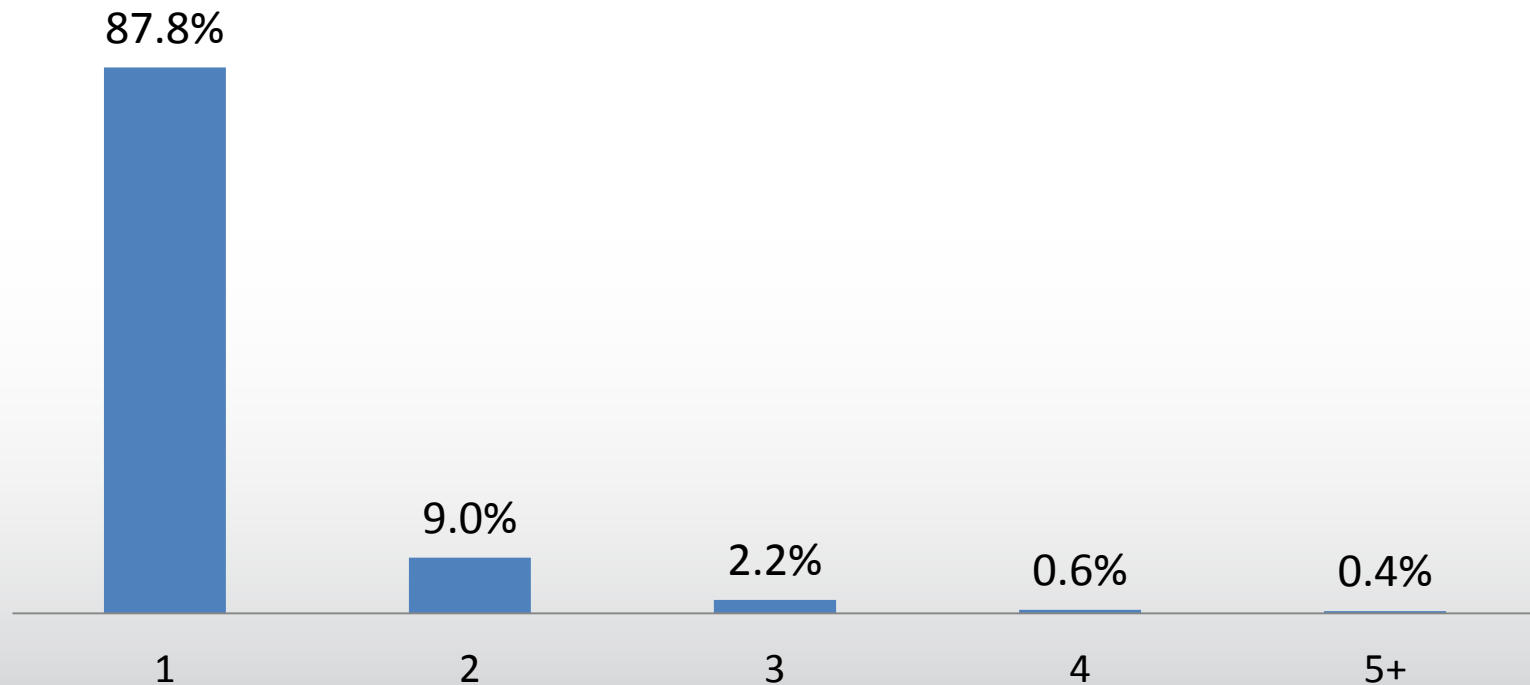
# “Letter Only” vs. Enclosed Paper Form

Mailout stage	Mailing package	Electronic check-in	Paper check-in	Combined check-in
1 <sup>st</sup> follow-up	“Letter only”	30.3%	0.0%	<b>30.3%</b>
	English form enclosed	9.5%	19.8%	<b>29.3%</b>
2 <sup>nd</sup> follow-up	“Letter only”	30.1%	4.7%*	<b>34.8%</b>
	English form enclosed	12.1%	20.0%	<b>32.1%</b>

\* This occurred for respondents who received an English form from the 1<sup>st</sup> follow-up and returned it after receiving the “letter only” mailing package from the 2<sup>nd</sup> follow-up.

# Paradata: 2012 SBO Phase I (Compiled from Centurion)

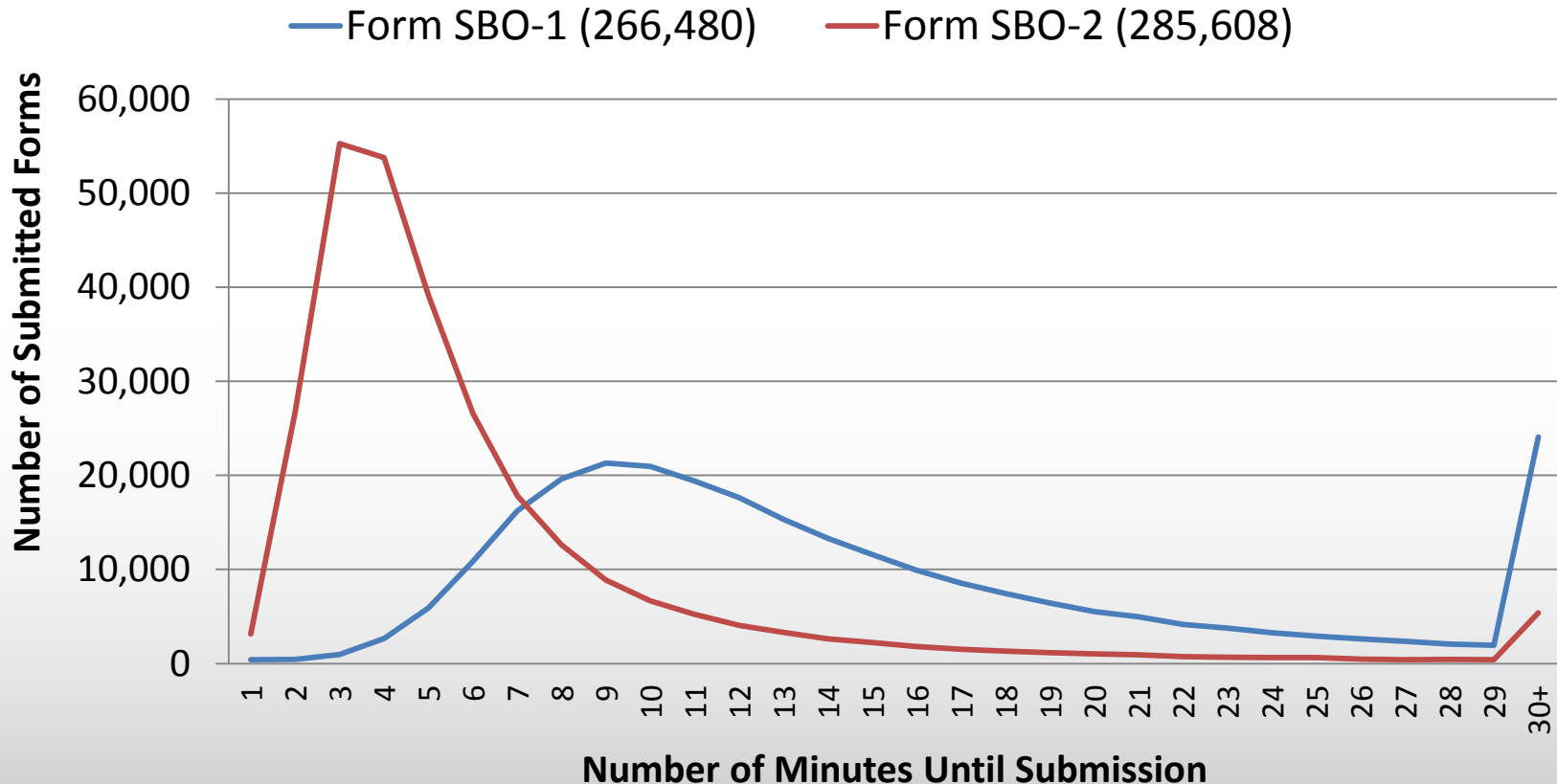
Number of Log-ins before Submission  
(552,088)





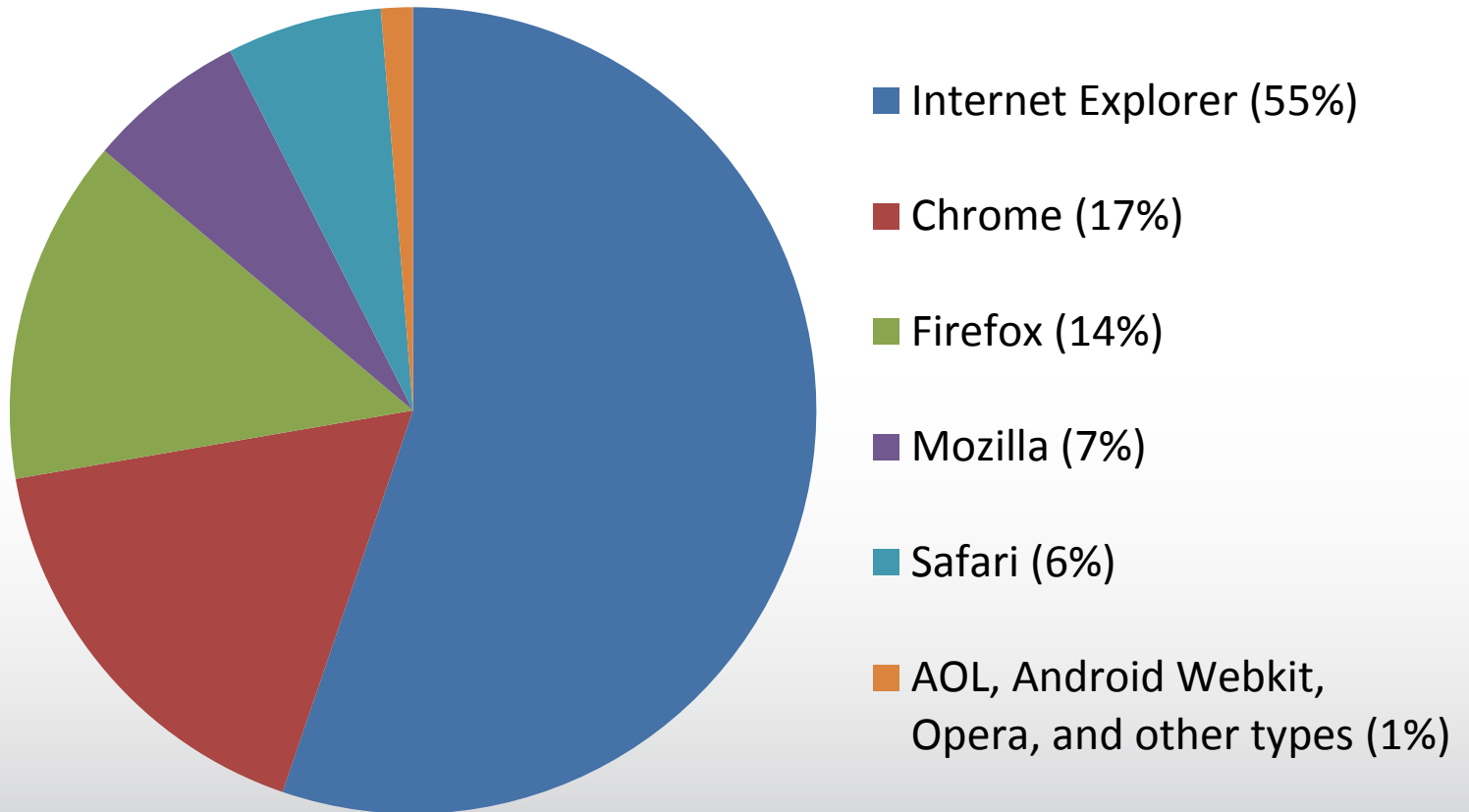
# Paradata: 2012 SBO Phase I Time Logged into Centurion

## Number of Minutes Spent Logged Into the System



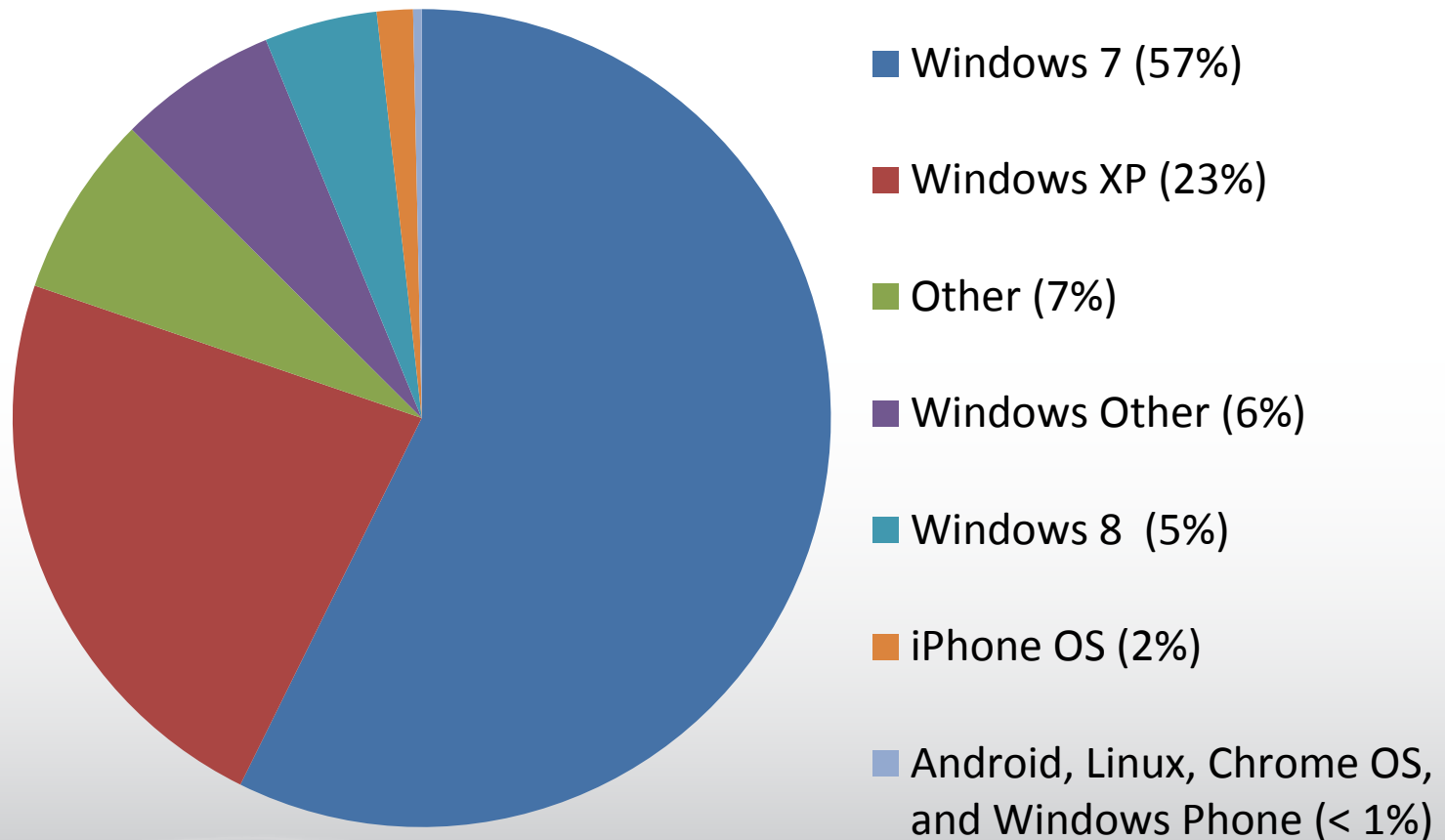
# Paradata: 2012 SBO Phase I

## Type of Web Browser



# Paradata: 2012 SBO Phase I

## Type of Operating System



# Next Steps - Phase II

## Mailout to nonemployers and employer births

Mailout Operation	Approximate Date in 2014	Estimated No. in Sample	Estimated No. of Letters Mailed w/o Forms	Estimated No. of Letters Mailed w/ Forms
Initial mailout	May 27 - 30	900,000	900,000	0
Reminder letter	June 18	1,000	1,000	0
Due date	July 10			
1 <sup>st</sup> follow-up	July 22 - Aug. 15	603,000	401,600	201,400
2 <sup>nd</sup> follow-up	Aug. 22 - Sept. 11	450,000	299,700	150,300
Closeout	Nov. 14			

# Future Plans

## 2012 SBO Release Schedule

Data Products	Release Dates
Women-Owned Businesses	June 2015
Hispanic-Owned Businesses	July 2015
Black-Owned Businesses	August 2015
American Indian- and Alaska Native-Owned Businesses	September 2015
Asian-Owned Businesses	October 2015
Native Hawaiian- and Other Pacific Islander-Owned Businesses	October 2015
Veteran-Owned Businesses	November 2015
Company Summary	December 2015
Characteristics of Businesses	December 2015
Characteristics of Business Owners	December 2015
Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) file	2016

# Contact Information

- General SBO inquiries  
Phone: 888.225.4022 or 301.763.3316  
Email: [csd.sbo@census.gov](mailto:csd.sbo@census.gov)
- Carol V. Caldwell, Assistant Division Chief – Research and Methods, 301.763.3390 / [Carol.V.Caldwell@census.gov](mailto:Carol.V.Caldwell@census.gov)
- Lee Wentela, Chief, Economic Census Branch – Surveys and Programs, 301.763.7270 / [Lee.R.Wentela@census.gov](mailto:Lee.R.Wentela@census.gov)
- Katherine Russell, SBO Project Manager, 301.763.7094 / [Katherine.Russell@census.gov](mailto:Katherine.Russell@census.gov)
- Anthony Caruso, SBO Project Manager, 301.763.3319 / [Anthony.M.Caruso@census.gov](mailto:Anthony.M.Caruso@census.gov)