

## **Alternatives offered to the informant to respond to Economic Censuses questionnaires**

Benito Arciniega Castro (INEGI, Mexico)

*benito.arciniega@inegi.org.mx*

### ***Abstract and Paper***

For the last 90 years, the Economic Censuses have been conducted in Mexico, with a five-year periodicity. They are a key project for updating economic information, the cornerstone of economic statistics, as well as being Mexico's most comprehensive and detailed source of basic economic information.

Micro, small and medium-sized establishments are given a very complete questionnaire through a direct (face-to-face) interview because of the advantages it represents, such as timeliness and low costs. But this also has some disadvantages: the lack of safety in some areas of the country creates mistrust of informants for providing information; sometimes the informant does not have time to respond at that time or does not have the accounting and financial data on hand, so the interview has to be interrupted until the informant gets it with the owner of the establishment, with the company's head office or the accountant; in addition, turning to an accountant is becoming more frequent due to greater fiscal control by the Treasury Department, so new strategies are required.

Provided this background, INEGI has sought alternatives to collect information in those establishments that present the problems described. One of them was the design of a format called "Prepare your answers!" which is administered to the informant before or during the first visit, so that accountants or owners of the establishments can prepare their accounting information for the 2019 Economic Censuses and have it available when filling out the census questionnaire with the interviewer. In addition to direct interviews in which a mobile computing device was used for collecting and validating data at the time, informants could also choose to respond in a printed questionnaire or over the Internet or they were provided with PDF or XLS editable files to fill them out and have them ready for interview.

This document also describes other actions aimed at making future use of some administrative registers to reduce the burden on the informant.

### ***Keywords***

[Keywords]

# Alternatives offered to the informant to answer the Economic Census questionnaires

## **Abstract**

For 90 years in Mexico the Economic Censuses have been held with a five-year periodicity. They are a key project for updating economic information, the cornerstone of economic statistics, as well as being Mexico's most comprehensive and detailed source of basic economic information.

Micro, small and medium-sized establishments are given a very complete questionnaire through a direct (face-to-face) interview because of the advantages it represents, such as timeliness and low costs. But this also has some disadvantages: insecurity in some areas of the country creates mistrust of informants in providing information; sometimes the informant does not have time to respond at that time or does not have the accounting and financial data on hand, so the interview has to be interrupted until the informant gets it with the owner of the establishment, or with the company's head office; in addition, recourse to an accountant is becoming more frequent due to greater fiscal control by the authority, so new strategies are required.

Considering this background, INEGI has sought alternatives to capture information in those establishments that present the problems described. One was the design of a format called "Prepare your answers!" which is given to the informant before or during the first visit, so that accountants or owners of the establishments prepare their accounting information for the 2019 Economic Censuses and have it available when filling out the census information for the interview. In addition to direct interviews using a Mobile Computing Device (MCD) in which information is captured and validated at the time; informants could also choose to respond in a printed questionnaire or online or provide them with files PDF or XLS editable formats to fill them out and have them ready for interview.

The document also describes other actions aimed at making future use of some administrative registers to reduce the burden on the informant.

## **Context**

The most important characteristic that distinguishes the Economic Censuses from other statistical projects is that the information of the entire universe of study is delivered at highly detailed levels for ALL kinds of non-agricultural economic activities and for any geographical section, like states of Mexico, municipalities, cities, localities or for a specific group of blocks.

As of 1930, Economic Censuses are carried out every five years, walking exhaustively around each block to get information on fixed and semi-fixed establishments and households with economic activity.

The objective of the Economic Censuses is to obtain basic statistical information, to refer to the year prior to the census, especially to the suppliers of goods, marketers of goods or service providers, in order to generate the economic results of Mexico at geographical, sectoral and thematic levels.

To succeed in the objectives above, the Economic Censuses are backed up by international norms and recommendations such as the following:

- International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, UN, 2009
- Industrial Statistics – Guideline and Methodology-, UNIDO, 2010
- International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics, UN, 2008
- International Recommendations for Distributive Trade Statistics, UN, 2008
- Manual on Business Demography Statistics, EUROSTAT – OECD, 2007
- System of National Accounts, UN, 2008
- European System of Accounts, EUROSTAT, 2010
- International Recommendations for Industrial Statistics, UN, 2008.

In addition to international recommendations, a Public Consultation process is conducted in order to ensure the relevance of the issues included.

Since the autonomy of INEGI in 2008, all statistic projects of national interest are required by law to undergo a public consultation. The public consultation of the 2019 Economic Censuses took place from September 15th to October 23th, 2017. During this period, citizens had the opportunity to enter the INEGI website and make recommendations, comments or suggestions that fed back the census project to improve it.

## **Methodology**

The Economic Censuses use eighteen different types of questionnaires to gather information on the different activities of the businesses and the different sizes of the establishments. However, about 95% of all observation units are micro, small and medium-sized establishments in the manufacturing, commerce and services sectors; a “Basic” questionnaire is applied to all of them, containing common themes; the same items which are applied to the rest of the questionnaires.

To collect the information, we use four types of media, so that we adapt to the needs of the informants:

- 1) Mobile Computing Device. Most of the small establishments provide us with the information in a direct interview (face to face), which is automatically captured and encrypted, thus protecting the confidentiality of the information.
- 2) Internet. Large establishments answer the questionnaire through this medium and those businesses that have more than 10 establishments have access to spreadsheets (XLS) specially designed for their information requirements.

3) Paper questionnaires. They were used for special cases, either because the informant wishes to do so or because INEGI's interviewer decides not to use the mobile computing device for security reasons.

4) Editable PDF questionnaire. This option was used only in special cases when the owners or establishment managers so requested so, since the interviewers had to capture them later on the mobile computing device or on the Internet.

The use of the mobile computing devices has revolutionized the way of data collection, as well as drastically reducing the printing of paper questionnaires, avoiding the capture of data and allowing the validation of information at the time of the interview, making it is possible to update the cartography, updating the National Statistical Directory of Economic Units (DENU), counting the dwellings and applying the questionnaire to the establishments to capture the census information of each of them.

Once the information is collected, data is transferred in an encrypted form, directly from each area of the country to the headquarters of the INEGI, via the Internet.

As already mentioned, for micro, small and medium-sized establishments in the manufacturing, commerce and services sectors, a questionnaire is applied through a direct interview (face-to-face) due to the advantages it represents, such as timeliness and low costs. But this also has some disadvantages.

During the Pilot Test of the 2019 Economic Censuses that was carried out in 2018, it was observed that in certain areas where there are establishments with a greater degree of "formality" than in previous censuses, and with higher incomes, interviews were frequently interrupted, because the informants said that they didn't have the information they were being asked to.

In Mexico, resorting to an accountant is increasingly frequent, due to greater fiscal control by the tax authority. Greater control by tax authorities leads to a greater degree of formality in the control of the finances of establishments, which means that establishments must resort to hiring the services of an accountant. Thus, informants who did not have the answers on financial aspects had to talk to their accountant to provide them with the information they asked to answer the questions of the economic census, which complicates the interviews, since the questionnaire was designed for a direct interview (face-to-face interview).

Other problem was that sometimes the informant did not have time to respond at that time, so the interview had to be interrupted. It was necessary to leave him a format to fill it out when he had time and then give it information to the census.

It was also common for the interview to be interrupted in establishments belonging to companies, because the manager did not have the information of the establishment and had to request it from the owner or with the enterprise headquarters.

Due to insecurity in some areas of the country, some informants expressed distrust for providing the information. They preferred to answer the questionnaire through INEGI's official website. Although the collecting system was designed to capture information from large companies, it was adapted so that small establishments could also respond by this means. In these cases, a printed form was required to guide them, but there were very few printed questionnaires.

Importantly, the success of a census depends on the response to the questionnaire during the first visit. The following visits involve very high marginal costs, in addition to the mismatches of the initial logistics.

For the reasons described above, INEGI implemented new strategies that would allow information to be captured in those establishments that present the problems described.

One of these strategies was the design of a document named "*Prepare your answers!*", which is given to the informant before or during the first visit from the interviewer, so that the accountants or owners of the establishments manage to prepare their accounting information for the 2019 Economic Censuses, and they had it at hand when filling the census information with the interviewer.

### **Prepare your answers!**

This is a document that summarizes the basic questionnaire that, in addition to the identification data of the questionnaire (Identification keys and location of the establishment) contains the chapters of Employed Personnel, Remuneration, Expenses, Income, Production Value, Stocks, Fixed Assets, Credit and Bank Accounts, some characteristics about management of the business, in addition to other variables with which the INEGI intends to continue developing the use of administrative records, that is: Registration Number in the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS, its Spanish acronym), number of Federal Taxpayers Registry (RFC, its Spanish acronym) of the tax authority in Mexico, and the electricity meter number of the Federal Electricity Commission in our country.

**RESUMEN DEL CUESTIONARIO BÁSICO**

**económicos** **¡Prepare sus respuestas!**

Entidad Federativa: \_\_\_\_\_ Municipio: \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha de llenado: \_\_\_\_\_ Localidad: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Nombre del establecimiento: \_\_\_\_\_ Régimen de capital: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Razón social: \_\_\_\_\_

La información estadística corresponde al periodo del 1 de enero al 31 de diciembre de 2018, salvo en las cosas en que se especifique alguna fecha en particular. Los otros totales son en pesos. **Todos los servicios relacionados con los censos económicos son gratuitos.**

**PERSONAL OCUPADO**

Total de personas que trabajaron en este establecimiento	Hombres	Mujeres	Total
1. Proprietarios sin sueldo fijo			
2. Familiares, becarios o voluntarios sin sueldo o salario fijo			
3. Trabajadores asalariados de producción, ventas o servicios			
4. Empleados administrativos, contables y de dirección			
5. Trabajadores por honorarios o comisiones			
6. Personas contratadas y proporcionales por otra razón social			
7. Nombre de la razón social que le suministró el personal:			
8. ¿El proveedor del personal es filial de esta razón social?			
9. Porcentaje del personal que labora en enero y continúa trabajando todo el año			
10. Personas que recibieron capacitación durante 2018: Personal de producción, ventas o servicios: _____ Personal administrativo, contable o de dirección: _____			
11. Personas ocupadas de acuerdo con rangos de edad: Hasta 20 años: _____ De 21 a 30 años: _____ De 31 a 40 años: _____ De 41 o más años: _____			
12. Promedia anual de personal por nivel de estudios: Sin instrucción: _____ Educación media superior: _____ Educación básica: _____ Educación superior: _____			

**REMUNERACIONES**

Total de remuneraciones	
13. Salarios pagados al personal de producción, ventas o servicios	
14. Sueldos pagados a empleados administrativos, contables y de dirección	
15. IMSS, INFONAVIT, SAR y otros pagos por seguridad social	
16. Otras prestaciones sociales	

17. Reparo de utilidades \_\_\_\_\_  
 18. Indemnización o liquidación \_\_\_\_\_

**GASTOS POR CONSUMO DE BIENES Y SERVICIOS**

Total de gastos	
19. Mercaderías compradas para reventa	
20. Materias primas y auxiliares	
21. Materiales para la prestación de servicios	
22. Consumo de envases y empaques	
23. Compra de papelería y artículos de oficina	
24. Servicios de maquila	
25. Pagos a otra razón social que le proporcionó personal al establecimiento	
26. Cargas en honorarios o comisiones	
27. Servicios legales, contables, de administración, de ingeniería, diseño e investigación	
28. Regalías	
29. Platos de productos vendidos	
30. Agua	
31. Energía eléctrica	
32. Combustibles y lubricantes	
33. Publicidad	
34. Mantenimiento corriente de edificios, maquinaria y otros bienes	
35. Rentas y alquileres	
36. Servicios de comunicación	
37. Capacitación del personal	
38. Otros conceptos como vigilancia, jardinería, uniformes, entre otros	

39. ¿Qué porcentaje del total de gastos se realizó por internet? \_\_\_\_\_

40. De este porcentaje cuánto correspondió a:  
 Páginas web de proveedores: \_\_\_\_\_ Redes sociales: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Páginas web de intermediarios: \_\_\_\_\_ Comercio electrónico: \_\_\_\_\_ Otra modalidad: \_\_\_\_\_

**41. Gastos fiscales, financieros y donaciones**

**INGRESOS POR SUMINISTRO DE BIENES Y SERVICIOS**

Total de ingresos	
42. Rotoras de moxandadas	
43. Comisiones sobre ventas	
44. Rentas y alquileres	
45. Prestación de servicios	
46. Alquilar o transformar materias primas propiedad de terceros	
47. Ventas de productos elaborados o fabricados	
48. Regalías	
49. Otros ingresos como publicidad, entre otros	
50. ¿Qué porcentaje del total de ingresos se realizó por internet?	
51. De este porcentaje cuánto correspondió a: Páginas web del establecimiento: _____ Redes sociales: _____ Páginas web de terceros: _____ Comercio electrónico: _____ Otra modalidad: _____	

**52. Intereses cobrados, subsidios y donaciones**

**GANANCIA O PERDIDA**

53. Ganancia del establecimiento (en valor o en porcentaje)	
54. Productos elaborados con materias primas propias	
55. Activos físicos producidos para uso propio	

**EXISTENCIAS O INVENTARIOS**

Valor de existencias en 2018	1 de enero	31 de dic.
56. Mercaderías compradas para reventa		
57. Productos en proceso		
58. Otros bienes		

**ACTIVOS FIJOS**

Valor de activos fijos en 2018	31 de dic.	Adquisición	Ventas
59. Maquinaria y equipo de producción			
60. Bienes inmuebles			
61. Unidades y equipo de transporte			
62. Equipo de cómputo y periféricos			
63. Equipo para la generación de energía eléctrica			
64. Mobiliario, equipo de oficina y otros activos fijos			

**CREDITOS Y CUENTAS BANCARIAS**

65. ¿Obtuvo crédito, préstamo o financiamiento para la operación del negocio?  
 66. ¿De dónde proviene el crédito, préstamo o financiamiento?  
 67. ¿Cuáles fueron los usos del crédito, préstamo o financiamiento recibidos?  
 68. ¿Cuáles fueron las causas por las que canceló crédito bancario?  
 69. ¿Este establecimiento tuvo alguna cuenta bancaria (de cheques, ahorro o inversión) pero su operación?  
 70. ¿Cuáles fueron los motivos por los que este establecimiento no tiene alguna cuenta bancaria?  
 71. ¿Qué medio de pago se utilizaron en este establecimiento para realizar sus compras y ventas?

**TECNOLOGIAS DE LA INFORMACION Y LAS COMUNICACIONES**

72. ¿Contó con equipo de cómputo, tabletas o teléfonos celulares para el desarrollo de las actividades del establecimiento?  
 73. ¿Utilizó servicio de internet?  
 74. En el desarrollo de las actividades de este establecimiento utilizó internet para:  
 Donaciones bancarias y financieras  
 Ventas y gestiones gubernamentales  
 Búsqueda de información para bienes y servicios  
 Realizar la gestión del negocio

**CARACTERISTICAS Y MANEJO DEL NEGOCIO**

75. ¿El personal del establecimiento realizó propuestas de mejora?  
 Indique la principal propuesta:  
 76. ¿A través de qué mecanismo o sistema lleva al control de sus gastos e ingresos?  
 77. ¿Cuáles son las problemáticas que enfrenta este establecimiento? Indique las problemáticas:

Nombre de RFC: \_\_\_\_\_ Número de Medidor CFE: \_\_\_\_\_ Número de Registro IMSS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Informante: \_\_\_\_\_ Puesto: \_\_\_\_\_ Cargo: \_\_\_\_\_

## Strategy with accountant colleges

Of course, the strategy of implementing the questionnaire summary should be accompanied by a strategy in which accountants could effectively participate.

Support was requested from the Colleges of Accountants, in order to ask them to prepare the data of their clients using the document *Prepare your answers!* and sending it back to its customers before the census.

The message for the accountants was aimed at letting them know that they were a fundamental part of the 2019 Economic Censuses, because they are the ones who manage and know the information of the establishments for which they provide their service. They were requested to:

- Have the information of the establishments for which they provide their services ready.
- Prepare the accounting information of their clients to be provided to INEGI staff when they visit them.
- Receive the interviewers and advisors who would visit them to apply the questionnaire at the establishment of the accountant.
- Raise awareness among owners, administrators or managers of economic units that refuse to provide information about the importance of providing their data.

Products such as the following were developed during the communication strategy with the accountants:

**Censos económicos 2019**  
TU NEGOCIO CUENTA PARA MÉXICO

Si eres el contador de un negocio, ¡esto te interesa!  
A partir del 7 de febrero, y hasta el mes de julio se llevarán a cabo los Censos Económicos 2019.

Te invitamos a sumarte a este gran proyecto nacional, que posteriormente le servirá a las empresas para conocer cómo es su sector de actividad.

**Te solicitamos:**

- Preparar la información contable de tus clientes para que la proporcionen al INEGI cuando los visite en el establecimiento.
- Recibir a los entrevistadores y entrevistadoras del INEGI y apoyar al propietario, administrador o encargado del establecimiento para que proporcione su información.

**¿Qué información solicitará el personal del INEGI?**

- Remuneraciones
- Ingresos
- Ganancia o pérdida
- Valor de la producción
- Existencias o inventarios
- Gastos
- Activos fijos

Tu colaboración es muy importante ¡Participa!

Para mayor información llama al 01 800 111 46 34

www.inegi.org.mx

INEGI INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE ESTADÍSTICA Y GEOGRAFÍA

When walking around each of the country's blocks, the interviewers used the summary of the questionnaire under the following conditions:

1. As support when the appropriate informant was absent (owner or manager), to previously fill in the information and set an appointment date for the complete filling.
2. In establishments where the accountant could fill in the economic data and the owner or manager—would complete the qualitative information of the questionnaire.
3. Establishments where refusals were received due to lack of time to answer the questionnaire.

This alternative was very efficient in establishments that did not have the data at hand; it was applied in approximately 30% of the interviews and the results were very good, since the interviewers consulted reported 90% success in applying this instrument.

The document served as a prior support and the questionnaire was completed in the presence of the informant in the mobile computing device.

As advantages, interviewers also mentioned that:

- The simplicity of the instrument reduced the stress of the informant.
- It provided an overview of the data contained in the questionnaire.
- It improved the accuracy of the answers.

- The response time improved.
- It supported effectively and accurately obtaining specific information when the appropriate informant was missing.

The disadvantages were:

- Summarizing a 32-page questionnaire in just two, involved dispensing with definitions that contributed to the understanding of the variables. The document *Prepare your answers!* did not contain the definitions of the variables.
- Due to the lack of space in the document, no instructions were available to support it.
- The basic questionnaire allows different alternatives to capture the data, being able to capture the semiannual, quarterly, bimonthly, monthly and even daily information and the mobile computing device converts to the annual data. The summary format only allowed for annual data to be captured.

### **We are getting ready for new challenges**

As mentioned in the introduction, another aspect that is being worked is the preparation of the path for a future use of administrative registers in order to reduce the burden for the informant. In that sense, in the 2019 Economic Censuses questionnaire we included some additional data such as the Federal Taxpayer Registry (RFC), the Employer Registry with the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS) and the meter number from the electric supply company (CFE). Once the data is obtained it will be analyzed to determine its usefulness to link our Business Register with databases from these federal offices in order to take advantage of business data that is updated on a regular basis in those records. That way, INEGI will be able to use them to fill in the questionnaires, instead of asking informant to do it.

This aspect is still under development, since it is necessary to analyze the data obtained in the censuses, and, if this strategy works we could reduce the burden for informant.