

Survey Non-Response: A Progress Report from BEA

Federal Economic Statistics Advisory Committee, December 9, 2022



Where do the data come from?

- BEA produces its economic statistics using multiple data sources
 - Notably the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the U.S. Census Bureau
- BEA also collects data directly via business surveys
 - International trade in services
 - Direct investment and activities of multinational enterprises
- Data are collected via mandatory benchmark, annual, and quarterly surveys
 - Enterprise-level reporting

- Benchmark surveys
 - Census-type surveys
 - Conducted every 5 years
 - No exemption thresholds
 - Basis of the universe for annual and quarterly surveys
- Quarterly and annual surveys
 - Sample surveys – size cutoff samples
 - Non-sample estimated based on prior reporting (benchmark) and current trends in the reported data

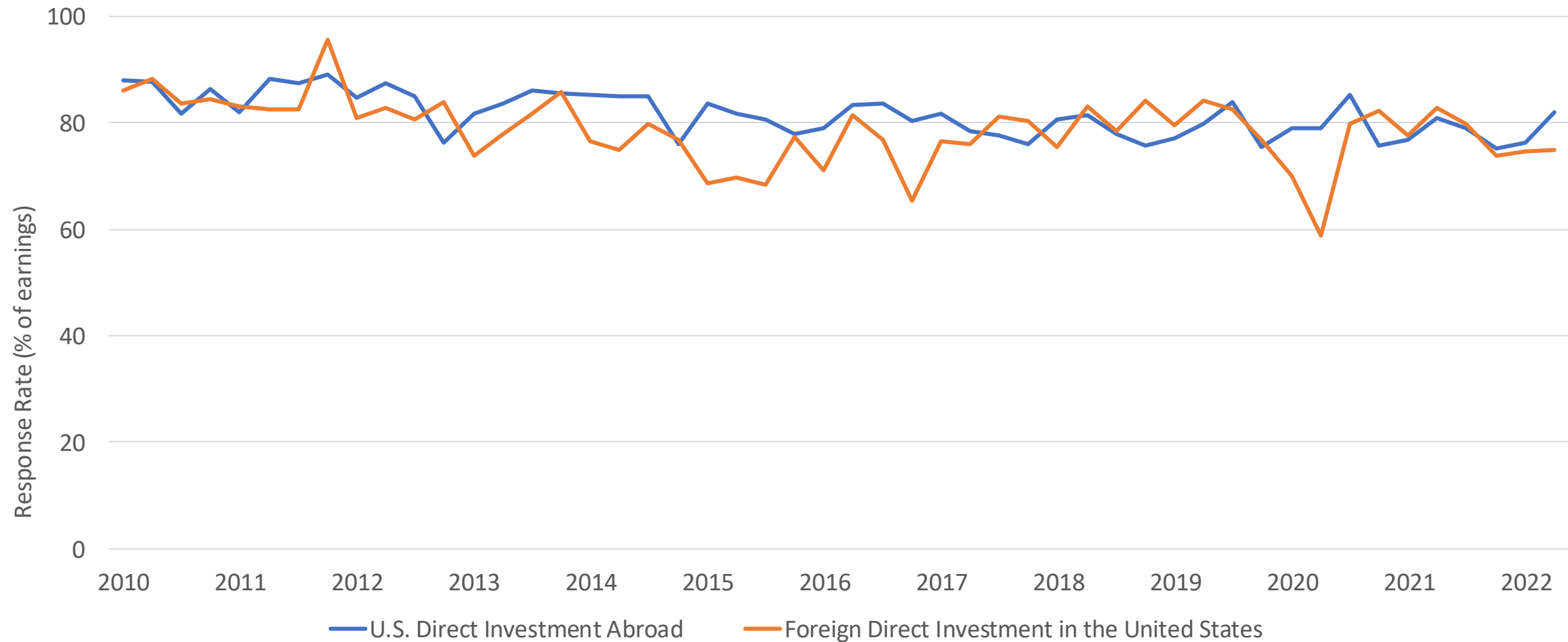
Response Rates

- Response rates are calculated as the percent of a certain metric (depending on the survey) accounted for by companies that reported

| | Number of companies | Percent of companies | Percent of assets |
|------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| | | | |
| Universe | 33,200 | 100% | 100% |
| | | | |
| Total sample | 6,100 | 18% | 95% |
| | | | |
| Total nonsample | 27,100 | 82% | 5% |
| | | | |
| Expected response rate | | | 92% |

- There have been many challenges
 - Empty offices
 - “Great resignation”
- Solutions
 - Prioritize resources
 - Capitalize on integrated survey processing system
 - COVID-related language in respondent notification materials
- Response rates have been relatively stable over time
 - Mandatory nature
 - Long-standing participation

Quarterly Direct Investment Survey Response Rates (Earnings)*



*Response rate at the first revised vintage, response rates typically continue to increase with later vintages

- Continue periodic outreach to respondent population
 - Work with trade groups
 - Webinars
 - Step-by-step guidance documents and FAQs
- Currently exploring new electronic filing system that would improve user experience
- Collaborate with colleagues at other Federal statistical agencies to exchange experiences