Career Opportunities at the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

John L. Eltinge
Office of Survey Methods Research
BLS
Eltinge_J@bls.gov

I. What the BLS Does

II. Recruiting Details

III. Comprehensive Career Advice in One Sentence and Two Questions
I. What the BLS Does

A. Production Programs

1. Employment and Unemployment Statistics

   Monthly ests of:

   - Unemployment rate
   - Total employment count

2. Wages and Benefits

3. Consumer and Producer Price Indices (Inflation)
B. What BLS Statisticians Do

1. Develop and implement methods for production of monthly estimates

   a. Sample selection

      Balance cost, precision

      Often with limited information

   b. Point estimation
      (outliers, missing data)

   c. Variance estimation

   d. Protect respondent confidentiality
2. Central theme: Statistical science into statistical technology

a. Robustness

Many estimands

Multiple components of risk

b. Use customary statistical criteria (unbiasedness, efficiency, inferential power) with limited parametric structure
c. Robustness/efficiency trade-offs

d. Importance of empirical magnitudes of effects, relative to practical significance

e. Often have limited quantitative information
3. Research areas

a. Theme: Extend, apply statistical tools:
   (Pseudo) likelihood
   Asymptotic normality
   Large sample inference
   Replication

b. Examples:

   Sample design
   Nonresponse adj
   Measurement error
   Price index theory
   Small domain est

c. Behavioral sciences
   (interview process, questionnaires)
II. Recruiting Details

A. Types of Positions

1. BA/BS, MS – Permanent
   - Stat methods divisions

2. Ph.D. – Permanent
   - Office of Survey Methods Research
   - Stat methods divisions

3. Postdoctoral research program (2 years)

4. Summer internships

5. U.S. citizenship required for all BLS positions
B. University Background:

1. Coursework:
   Bayesian theory, methods
   Categorical data analysis
   Experimental design
   Large sample theory
   Linear models, GLIM
   Nonparametrics
   Parametric inference
   Sampling theory
   Statistical computing

2. Collaborative work with non-statisticians

3. Previous coursework, experience in sampling always good, but not required
C. Pay Scales and Benefits

   GS 12, Step 10: $69,099

   GS 9: $36,656 to $47,648

3. Benefits:
   
   Health, life ins options

   Vacation:
   Federal holidays plus:
   New: 13 days/year
   After 3 years: 20 days/year

   Tuition for coursework
III. Comprehensive Career Advice in One Sentence and Two Questions

A. Book Title:

Do what you love, and the money will follow

B. And Two Questions:

Am I doing something important?

Am I learning the skills I need for this job and my next job?