

Questions about the Report on Occupational Employment and Wages

1. Please clarify who is subject to the mandatory versus voluntary reporting for this collection. There appears to be only one solicitation letter that does not state whether the collection is voluntary or mandatory. Part B of the supporting statement states that it is a voluntary collection (3a.), but voluntary and mandatory forms are included. Also, the “mandatory” forms have the same pledge wording on page ii as the “voluntary” forms that state “Your voluntary cooperation is needed to make the results of this report comprehensive, accurate, and timely.”

Response: There are no *federal* requirements that make the survey mandatory. However, three states -- Oklahoma, North Carolina, and South Carolina -- mandate the survey for at least some of their employers under state regulations. In Oklahoma and North Carolina, response is mandatory for all establishments selected for the survey; in South Carolina, it is mandatory for sampled employers with over 20 employees. In order to keep printing costs down, the same survey forms are used for both mandatory and voluntary states. However, the forms mailed to establishments that are required to respond include an additional statement at the top of the form saying that response is mandatory. Each state has a separate solicitation letter that follows BLS guidelines. The states compose the letters on state letterhead with a state official’s signature. The solicitation letters mailed in Oklahoma, North Carolina, and South Carolina contain a statement that the survey is mandatory. Please see a sample mandatory solicitation letter included with this submission.

2. Please provide the results of the brochure/letter experiment—is a report or ASA paper available?

Response: The brochure/letter experiment is ongoing, and no reports are currently available. However, a preliminary report is currently in production and can be provided to OMB when it is complete.

3. Please provide more information on the status of the software being provided to States that will allow them to tailor the occupation lists to the industries.

Response: This project is currently on hold while we focus our efforts on electronic data collection that will reduce respondent burden on firms of all sizes.

4. From how many establishments was informed consent sought to publish potentially identifiable information in 2006? What percentage authorized publication?

Response: Due to the decentralized nature of the survey, the specific number of informed consent requests is not available. BLS does not make the information about the number of informed consent letters *sought* a reporting requirement. However, we can provide OMB with information on establishments who have *provided* informed or implied (in the case of state governments) consent. The information below refers to the two panels with FY 2006 reference dates. BLS bypassed confidentiality requirements for:

- Federal Government and US Postal Service;
- State government in 43 states plus Guam, Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico;
- 82 local government employers; and
- 4,861 establishments in all other industries.

Each year, BLS generates a list of confidential estimates along with the employer or survey respondent that is causing the estimate to be confidential. This is provided to states so that they can target their efforts for seeking confidentiality waivers.

Anecdotal information suggests that states rarely request confidentiality waivers because they feel it may jeopardize response.

5. What is the range of response rates across states?—if available, please provide a table with State-level response rates.

Response: Please see an attached excel spreadsheet with state-level response rates for the May 2006 estimates, the most recent available.