

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Necessity of the Information Collected

The purpose of this request for review is for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) to obtain clearance for the monthly collection of labor force data through the Current Population Survey (CPS) beginning in June 2008. The current clearance expires August 31, 2008.

Collection of labor force data through the CPS is necessary to meet the requirements in Title 29, United States Code, Sections 1 through 9 (Attachment B). Collection of the data is also authorized by Title 13 (Attachment F), United States Code, Section 182.

2. Needs and Uses

The CPS has been the principal source of the official Government statistics on employment and unemployment for over 60 years. The BLS and the Census Bureau share the responsibility for this survey and are submitting two separate clearance requests that reflect the way in which the two Bureaus divide the responsibilities for the analysis and dissemination of the data from the survey. The Census Bureau is submitting a request for clearance of the collection of the basic demographic information on the population being sampled. BLS is requesting Office of Management and Budget (OMB) clearance for the collection of the labor force information that it analyzes and publishes monthly. The basic CPS items booklet, which includes the questions used to collect both demographic and labor force information, is shown in Attachment A.

The labor force information gathered through the survey is of paramount importance in keeping track of the economic health of the Nation. The survey is the official source of monthly data on total employment and unemployment, with the monthly Employment Situation report designated a Primary Federal Economic Indicator (PFEI). The CPS data are used monthly, in conjunction with data from other sources, to analyze the extent to, and with what success, the various components of the American population are participating in the economic life of the Nation.

The labor force data gathered through the CPS are provided to users in the greatest detail possible, consistent with the demographic information obtained in the survey. In brief, the labor force data can be broken down by sex, age, race, and ethnic origin, marital status, family composition, educational level, and various other characteristics. Through such breakdowns, one can focus on the employment situation of specific population groups as well as on the general trends in employment and unemployment. Moreover, the survey yields data on the basic status and characteristics of people who have stopped looking for work because they believe no jobs are available – discouraged workers. Information of this type can be obtained only through demographically-oriented surveys such as the CPS.

Questions have been added to the instrument to gather information on disability status beginning in June 2008. The new questions ask if anyone in the household is deaf or has a serious difficulty hearing; if anyone is blind or has serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses; if anyone has serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition; if anyone has serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs; if anyone has difficulty dressing or bathing; and if anyone has difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition. When an affirmative answer is received, a follow up question is asked to determine which of the household members is/are affected.

These six new questions will be asked of all households in June 2008 to generate baseline data and will thereafter be asked only of households in months one and five of the interview cycle and of replacement households. These questions on disability were adopted from the American Community Survey (ACS). For the ACS definition of disability, see Attachment I. The data generated by these new questions may be used in conjunction with the other demographic and labor force data collected in the CPS to examine the characteristics of the population of persons with disabilities and to make comparisons to the population of persons without disabilities and other groups. For a description of the testing conducted on these questions, see Attachment J.

In addition to being a source of much detailed data at the national level, the CPS provides information that is crucial in examining the employment situation at the sub-national level. For the 50 states, the District of Columbia, New York City, and the Los Angeles-Long Beach metropolitan area, data are produced using estimating equations based on regression techniques. These models combine current and historical data from the CPS with data from other surveys.

The basic CPS data also are used as an important platform on which to base the data derived from the various supplemental questions administered in conjunction with the survey. By coupling the basic data from the monthly survey with the special data from supplements, one can gain valuable insights on the behavior of American workers and on the social and economic health of their families. Recent supplements have produced data on poverty, health insurance, volunteering, displaced workers, and disabled veterans, for example.

The monthly CPS data are first published by means of a news release, The Employment Situation, (Attachment C) and, on the same day, are often discussed by the Commissioner of Labor Statistics before the Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress. There is wide interest in this initial release among Government policy makers, legislators, economists, the media, and the general public. The data are subsequently published in much greater detail on the BLS website and in a variety of publications. Special analyses of data by BLS economists often are reported in the *Monthly Labor Review*, also published by BLS.

While the data from the CPS are used in conjunction with data from other surveys—notably the Current Employment Statistics (CES) survey—in assessing the economic health of the Nation, they are unique in various ways. They provide monthly, nationally representative

measures of total employment, including self-employment, farm workers and unpaid family work. By contrast, establishment surveys are generally restricted to the nonagricultural wage and salary sector. The CPS provides timely and detailed data on all jobseekers, and on all persons outside the labor force, while payroll-based surveys cannot, by definition, cover these sectors of the population and other national surveys that include a few questions on employment (such as the American Community Survey) do not have sufficient space (or legal mandate) to collect information at this level of detail. Finally, the CPS data on employment, unemployment, and persons not in the labor force can be linked separately to the demographic characteristics of the many groups which make up the Nation's population, while data from other surveys are usually devoid of demographic information. Many groups, both in the government and in the private sector, are eager to analyze this wealth of demographic and labor force data for the populations of persons with and without disabilities.

3. Use of Information Technology

The Census Bureau, which conducts the actual collection of the CPS data—designing the sample, training and monitoring the interviewers, conducting a continuing quality control program—is using methods designed to keep respondent burden as low as possible. These interviewing methods, which include the use of computer-assisted interviewing, were improved as part of a complete CPS redesign implemented in January 1994. The redesign was preceded by years of wide-ranging discussions, research, and large-scale field tests aimed at long-range improvements in the survey. The CPS and all of its supplements are collected 100% electronically by using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews and Computer Assisted Personal Interviews (CATI/CAPI). With the collection of data for January 2007, an updated computer-assisted interviewing software, called Blaise, was introduced for running the data collection instrument. Blaise is a Windows-based survey processing system developed by Statistics Netherlands and licensed by Westat in the United States. This software replaced the CASES software used in the survey since January 1999.

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication

As noted above, the labor force data generally obtained through the CPS are not available with the same degree of quality from any other source. This is particularly the case in terms of the timeliness, comprehensiveness, versatility (through supplements), and reliability of the data. There is, therefore, no significant duplication of effort between the CPS and other surveys.

The CPS does not currently contain any questions that were designed to measure the disabled population. There are several other Federal surveys that attempt to identify the disabled population, such as the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), and the American Community Survey (ACS). Since the CPS is the official source of labor force data, particularly monthly employment and unemployment rates for demographic groups, it is the ideal survey for identifying the employment rate of the disabled population.

While other surveys provide data that serve as valuable complements to those obtained in the CPS, these surveys cannot substitute for the CPS, as they are generally much more limited in scope, they are not conducted as frequently, and there is a greater lag between data collection and publication.

5. Minimizing Burden

The data are collected from households; their collection does not involve any small businesses or other small entities.

6. Consequences of Less Frequent Collection

Section 2 of Title 29, United States Code, mandates BLS to publish, at least once a month, complete statistics on levels and month-to-month changes in employment and unemployment.

7. Special Circumstances

The CPS data are collected monthly as part of the requirement in 29 USC, Chapter 1 relating to the Collection, Collation, and Reports of Labor Statistics.

8. Consultation Outside the Agency/Federal Register Notice

Federal Register Notice

Four comments were received as a result of the Federal Register notice published in Volume 72, No. 247 on December 27, 2007. The commenters were supportive of the addition of questions on disability and look forward to having data on the employment status and demographic characteristics of the disabled population. The organizations are interested in using the data to evaluate policy efforts.

Outside Consultation

The following people have been in continuous consultation concerning the development of the survey:

Bureau of the Census

Kathleen Creighton
Demographic Surveys Division
Bureau of Census
Department of Commerce
Washington, D.C. 20233
(301) 763-3814

In addition to the above, a statement soliciting comments for improving CPS data is prominently placed in all Census Bureau publications that cite CPS data. A similar statement is included in the technical documentation that accompanies the microdata files. Additionally, the Census Bureau published a notice of their intent to ask the labor force questions (and the disability questions beginning in June 2008) during the CPS Survey. Finally, the CPS advance letter (Attachment D) provides respondents with an address at the Census Bureau to which they can submit general comments on the survey, specifically those regarding respondent burden.

9. Paying Respondents

The Census Bureau does not make any payments or provide any gifts to individuals participating in the CPS.

10. Assurance of Confidentiality

The Census Bureau will collect the data in compliance with the Privacy Act of 1974 and OMB Circular A-130. Each sample household will receive an advance letter (Attachment D) approximately one week before the start of the initial CPS interview. The letter includes the information required by the Privacy Act of 1974, explains the voluntary nature of the survey, and states the estimated time required for participating in the survey. Field representatives must ask each respondent if he/she received the advance letter and, if not, must provide a copy of the letter to each respondent and allow sufficient time for him/her to read the contents. Also, interviewers provide households with the pamphlet "How the Census Bureau Keeps Your Information Confidential," which further states the confidentiality assurances associated with this data collection effort (Attachment E). All information given by respondents to Census Bureau employees is held in strict confidence under Title 13, United States Code, Section 9 (Attachment F). Each Census Bureau employee has taken an oath to that effect and is subject to a jail penalty and/or substantial fine if he/she discloses any information given to him/her.

11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

No sensitive questions are asked in this survey.

12. Estimate of Respondent Burden

The total respondent burden for the CPS is estimated at 99,595 hours for 2008. Of this total, the Census Bureau has estimated 18,012 hours to obtain basic demographic data and 81,583 hours for the collection of the labor force information, the main product of the survey. In June 2008, the disability questions will be administered to all households to generate baseline data. This requires 1,833 burden hours. Thereafter, the disability questions will only be asked of households in months in sample 1 and 5 and of replacement households. This will require 2,750 burden hours for the 6 remaining months of 2008, bringing the total 2008 burden hours from the disability questions to 4,583. In 2009, when the disability questions are first asked for a full year, they will generate 5,500 hours of

burden. Burden hours for the labor force section of the survey in 2009 forward will rise to 82,500, and burden for the complete CPS will rise to 100,512. These estimates are based on interviewing 55,000 households on a monthly basis.

The estimated length of the labor force portion of each interview is 7.5 minutes. This is derived from the average respondent time that has been required to complete the labor force questions and reinterview in an average household across all months-in-sample for the past few years and the time required to answer the new questions. The actual respondent burden is dependent on the size of the household and the characteristics of its occupants.

Generally, one respondent answers for the household. Three and a half percent of CPS households are eligible for reinterview each month. These reinterviews are conducted by supervisory interviewers to assure the quality of data collection.

The overall annualized dollar cost to the respondents for collection of the labor force information is \$974,916. This estimate assumes a wage rate of \$11.95 an hour (this figure was the median hourly wage for 2007) for all respondents regardless of whether they are employed, unemployed, or not in the labor force. The annual cost per household would be roughly \$5.98, since an individual household would be in the survey at most 4 times a year for a total of about 30 minutes.

13. Estimate of Cost Burden

- a. Capital start-up costs: \$0
- b. Total operation and maintenance and purchase of services: \$0

14. Cost to the Federal Government

The total estimated cost to the Federal Government for the CPS in fiscal year 2008 will be approximately \$70 million. Of this amount, the BLS will contribute a major portion—approximately \$44 million—through an interagency transfer of funds to the Bureau of the Census. The Bureau of the Census' estimates are based on the proposed size of the sample and the length of the questionnaire.

15. Changes in Respondent Burden

Total respondent burden for the collection of labor force information will increase from 77,000 hours to 81,583 hours in 2008. This is due to the addition of six questions to determine disability status. These questions will be asked of all households in June 2008 to generate baseline data. Subsequently, the questions will be asked only of households that are in months 1 and 5 in sample and of replacement households. Because the new questions will only be asked during half of 2008, burden hours in 2009 and 2010 will be higher than in 2008, at 82,500 hours. The BLS will submit changes for survey years 2009 and 2010 via a Non-Substantive change request to OMB to reflect this increase in hours.

16. Time Schedule for Information Collection and Publication

A large portion of the labor force data obtained through the CPS is published on a monthly basis. Other data from the survey, such as those on earnings, are published on a quarterly basis. Still other data, such as the detailed information on employment and unemployment at the local level, are published on an annual basis. The monthly data are released soon after collection, the usual lag averaging 19 days after the start of interviewing.

17. Request to Not Display Expiration Date

The Census Bureau does not wish to display the assigned expiration date of the information collection because the instrument is automated and the respondent, therefore, would never see the date. The advance letter sent to households by the Census Bureau contains Census's OMB clearance number for the CPS and Census's version of the failure to comply notice (Attachment D). Copies of this advance letter are stockpiled by the Census Bureau for use as needed; changes to the letter would make the current inventory of letters unusable.

18. Exceptions to the Certification

There are no exceptions to the certification.