

SUPPORTING STATEMENT
U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Census Bureau
Current Population Survey (CPS) Voting and Civic Engagement Supplement
OMB Control No. 0607-0466

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Necessity of Information Collection

The U.S. Census Bureau requests authorization from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to conduct the November 2008 Voting and Civic Engagement supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS). The Voting supplement (Voting and Registration supplement in previous years) continues the biennial collection of data concerning voting and registration that has been asked periodically since 1964. The data yield statistics on voter (and nonvoter) characteristics and current voter trends. The data will also enable policymakers to keep issues up to date, such as changes in participation in the election process by demographic characteristics such as age, sex, race, ethnicity, and educational attainment.

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) has entered into an interagency agreement with the U.S. Census Bureau to conduct the Civic Engagement portion of the supplement, which will appear for the first time in conjunction with the CPS. The civic engagement supplement will provide information on the extent to which American communities are places where individuals are civically active. It will also provide information on the number of Americans who are active in their communities, communicating with one another on issues of public concern, and interacting with public institutions and private enterprises. The information will also provide the number of Americans who engage in activities that promote positive relationships with those of equal and differing socio-economic or professional levels. This survey will be the only source of nationally representative data on such information as: level of participation in organized groups, extent of political action and knowledge, extent of connections with other community members, and how often individuals get news and information from various media sources.

When combined with demographic characteristics (age, sex, race, education, occupation, income), the data can provide information on the relationship between these characteristics and the level of civic engagement in the United States. Government agency analysts and private, state and local leaders will use this data to compare levels in their area of interest to the national level of civic engagement, and to formulate policies that foster healthy communities.

Title 13, United States Code, Sections 8(b) and 182, and Title 29 USC, Section 1 authorize the collection of this information.

This clearance will also cover the collection in November 2010, the Voting supplement, which will consist of the voting and registration questions only. The proposed questions in the Voting and Civic Engagement supplement are shown in Attachment A1.

2. Needs and Uses

Information quality is an integral part of the pre-dissemination review of the information disseminated by the Census Bureau (fully described in the Census Bureau's Information Quality Guidelines). Information quality is also integral to the information collections conducted by the Census Bureau and is incorporated into the clearance process required by the Paperwork Reduction Act.

The primary purpose of collecting the voting data from the November 2008 CPS supplement is to relate demographic characteristics (age, sex, race, education, occupation, and income) to voting and nonvoting behavior. Federal, state, and local election officials; college institutions; political party committees; research groups; and other private organizations will use the voting and registration data collected in the November 2008 CPS supplement. Election officials use these data to formulate policies relating to the voting and registration process. Data obtained on duration of residence will allow policymakers and researchers to better determine the relationships between other demographic characteristics and voting behavior. Previous studies have shown that the voting and registration characteristics of recent movers differ greatly from those of nonmovers. By collecting and presenting data at the state level, we will also obtain information on the effectiveness of increased voter registration drives in different regions.

Discontinuance of the Voting Supplement would disrupt a data series that has been in existence for the past 44 years. Since 1964, these data have provided statistical information for tracking historical trends of voter and nonvoter characteristics in each presidential and congressional election.

The purpose of collecting the civic engagement data from the November 2008 CPS supplement is to provide scholars, government officials and policymakers with official government statistics on the level of civic engagement and social capital in the United States. These indicators will make it possible to promote increased citizen activity in the political sphere, at the national, state, and community levels.

Four domains characterize the information gathered from the civic engagement supplement: Information, Political Action, Groups, and Social Connectedness. These domains are closely aligned with the categories and domains used on several existing foreign government surveys about civic engagement and social capital, a broad concept which includes civic engagement as one of its subdomains. The questions themselves are close analogues to those used for years on major surveys devoted to social and civic engagement. These surveys are noted below, preceded by an explanation of how the questions exhibit each domain.

Information

Access to information is being increasingly recognized as central to helping community members have a stronger voice in matters affecting their well-being. This category of questions explores the ways and means by which people receive information regarding political and economic conditions and public services, and the extent of their access to communications infrastructure. Questions in the Information domain include Q2 (discussing politics with family and friends), the Q3 series (sources of political information) and Q19 (political knowledge). Other surveys utilizing these questions include the American National Election Study and the General Social Survey (Canada).

Political Action

The questions in this domain focus on the respondent's willingness and capacity to influence both local events and broader political outcomes. Political participation, like group participation, is one of the main concepts described under civic engagement. Concepts in the Political Action domain include voting and electoral participation, which is covered by the questions on the biennial November CPS Voting Supplement, and non-electoral, less formal means of participation, which are covered by the Q4 series of questions. All forms of political participation serve as key indicators of the civic engagement of a community's residents. The General Social Survey (Canada) has used a similar line of questioning in its social capital survey.

Groups

The questions in the Groups domain focus on the nature and extent of a household member's participation in various types of social organizations and informal networks. Participation in groups, along with political participation, is generally acknowledged to be a key indicator of civic engagement. In both cases, participation provides an opportunity for people to become personally involved in community affairs, either directly – by working together with others to address a particular problem – or indirectly, by voting or advocating for a candidate or political party. Because group participation often requires or encourages more direct personal activity than political participation does, many scholars argue that group participation is a better indicator of community social capital. Questions in the Groups domain include the Q5 series (types of groups), Q6 (serving as an officer of a group), and Q7 (attending a group meeting). The British Social Attitudes Survey and British Household Panel Survey have included these questions in their surveys.

Social Connectedness

This domain contains questions pertaining to everyday forms of social interaction with people in the respondent's family and community. These questions are devoted to the most common forms of social interaction with others. Scholars of civic engagement

argue that regular social interaction with others breeds trust in others, which leads to increased civic engagement. Regular social interaction also allows individuals to share information about social, political and economic events. Questions in the Social Connectedness domain include Q8 (dinner with others in household), Q9 (communication with family or friends via email or the Internet), Q10 (talk with neighbors), Q11 (reciprocal favors for neighbors), and Q12 (number of close friends). The British Household Panel survey has included a question similar to Q10. The World Bank has asked a question similar to Q12 in their surveys to gauge social capital in developing countries. The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) has asked a question similar to Q8.

3. Use of Information Technology

Since January 1994, we have collected the CPS data using computer-assisted interviewing. We designed the supplemental questions to obtain the required information with minimal respondent burden.

The proposed items and interviewer procedures have been developed over years of consultation among the Census Bureau, the BLS, and other government agencies. The use of computer-assisted personal and telephone interviewing is deemed the most appropriate collection methodology, given existing available information technology. We have examined the Internet as a reporting option, but have determined that for a complex demographic survey such as the CPS, the Internet is not feasible.

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication

The Voting and Civic Engagement supplement's comprehensive set of questions does not duplicate any other single information collection with respect to scope, timeliness, or population of interest. There are no comparable data that can be replicated, substituted, or modified for use as described in section A2 above.

5. Efforts to Minimize Burden on Small Business

The collection of the voting and civic engagement information does not involve small businesses or other small entities.

6. Consequences of Less Frequent Collection

We must collect voting and registration data at the time of presidential and congressional elections, which are conducted biennially. These are the only elections that are held on the same date throughout the country. Less frequent collection would reduce the ability to track changes over time and lessen the quality of the voting data time series.

7. Special Circumstances

There are no special circumstances.

8. Consultations Outside the Agency

The Census Bureau published a notice in the *Federal Register* on April 7, 2008, Vol. 73, No. 67, pp. 18738-18739, inviting public comment on our plans to submit this request. We received one comment in response to that notice. In summary, the comment opposed the collection of this information.

The Census Bureau was in frequent consultation with the following people concerning the development of the supplement:

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The result of these consultations is the final set of questions. Furthermore, a statement soliciting comments for improving the CPS data is prominently placed in all the Census Bureau publications that cite the CPS data. We include a similar statement in the technical documentation that accompanies the microdata files. Finally, the CPS advance letter (see Attachment B) provides respondents with an address at the Census Bureau and at the OMB 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 supplement data in compliance with the Privacy Act of 1974 and the OMB Circular A-130. Each sample household receives an advance letter approximately one week before the start of the CPS initial interview (see Attachment B). 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. Interviewers must ask if the respondent received the letter and, if not, provide a copy and allow the respondent sufficient time to read the contents. Also, interviewers provide households with the pamphlet, *The*

U.S. Census Bureau Respects Your Privacy and Keeps Your Personal Information Confidential, which further states the confidentiality assurances associated with this data collection effort and the Census Bureau's past performance in assuring confidentiality (see Attachment C).

All information given by respondents to the Census Bureau employees is held in strict confidence under Title 13, United States Code, Section 9. Each of the Census Bureau employees has taken an oath to that effect and is subject to a jail penalty or substantial fine if he/she discloses any information given to him/her.

11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

The November 2008 Voting and Civic Engagement Supplement does not include any questions of a sensitive nature.

12. Estimate of Hour Burden

Since the eligibility for the voting questions differs from the civic engagement questions, an estimate of hour burden is calculated separately for each. Due to age and citizenship requirements for the voting questions, approximately 52,000 households are actually interviewed for this portion of the supplement. With each household interview, on average, being one and a half minutes long, this amounts to an hour burden of 1,300 hours for these questions.

For the civic engagement questions, approximately 54,000 households are actually interviewed. With each household interview being seven minutes long, this amounts to an hour burden of 6,300 hours for the civic engagement questions. Thus, the combined estimate of hour burden for the full Voting and Civic Engagement supplement is 7,600 hours. We base these estimates on cognitive testing results conducted with the Voting and Civic Engagement supplement. The actual interview time is dependent upon the size of the household.

13. Estimate of Cost Burden

There are no costs to the respondents other than that of their time to respond.

14. Cost to Federal Government

The estimated cost to the government for the CPS program is about \$63 million in fiscal year 2008. The costs are to be borne by the Census Bureau and the BLS. The Voting and Civic Engagement supplement is estimated to cost \$650,000, which will be covered by the CNCS.

15. Reason for Change in Burden

The increase in burden is attributable to the information collection being submitted as a reinstatement, with change.

16. Project Schedule

The Census Bureau will conduct the CPS, of which this supplement is a part, during the week of November 16-22, 2008. Processing of this supplement will commence in December 2008. A public use file will be released approximately 12 months later, with voting and registration tabulations released by the U.S. Census Bureau, and civic engagement information released by the CNCS.

17. Request to Not Display Expiration Date

The Voting and Civic Engagement supplement is administered as part of the CPS monthly interview. However, the supplement (as well as all the CPS supplements) bears the OMB control number and expiration date, which is different from the CPS Basic interview. The OMB control number and expiration date for the CPS basic interview is included in the advance letter we give respondents (see Attachment C). Because of the difficulties and anticipated respondent confusion involved with expressing a separate control number and expiration date to respondents for the supplement questions, we do not wish to display the OMB control number and expiration date for the CPS November supplement.

18. Exceptions to the Certification

There are no exceptions to the certification.