

SUPPORTING STATEMENT
U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Census Bureau
2008 Panel of the Survey of Income & Program Participation,
Wave 13 Topical Module
OMB Control No. 0607-0944

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 Wave 13 interview for the 2008 Panel of the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). The core SIPP and re-interview instruments were cleared under Authorization No. 0607-0944.

The SIPP represents a source of information for a wide variety of separate topics to be integrated to form a single and unified database in order to examine the interaction between tax, transfer, and other government and private policies. Government domestic policy formulators depend heavily upon the SIPP information to determine the effect of tax and transfer programs on the distribution of income received directly as money or indirectly as in-kind benefits. They also need improved and expanded data on the income and general economic and financial situation of the U.S. population. The SIPP has provided these kinds of data on a continuing basis since 1983, by measuring levels of economic well-being and changes in these levels over time.

The survey is molded around a central "core" of labor force and income questions that remain fixed throughout the life of a panel. The core is supplemented with questions designed to answer specific needs such as estimating eligibility for government programs, examining pension and health care coverage, and analyzing individual net worth. These supplemental questions are included with the core and are referred to as "topical modules."

The topical module for the 2008 Panel Wave 13 is Professional Certificates and Certifications (Attachment A). This topical module has not been previously conducted in the SIPP. Wave 13 interviews will be conducted from September 1, 2012 through December 31, 2012.

No topical modules were used in Wave 12 and none are planned in Waves 14 through 16 of the 2008 Panel. We plan to continue fielding the core and reinterview instruments through December 2013, which is the last rotation of Wave 16. Consequently, we did not submit an OMB package for Wave 12 and do not anticipate future OMB submissions for the 2008 Panel after Wave 13.

The SIPP is designed as a continuing series of national panels of interviewed households that are introduced every few years with each panel having durations of

approximately 3 to 6 years. The 2008 Panel is scheduled for approximately 6 years and four months and includes sixteen waves which began September 1, 2008. Our current OMB clearance allows us to conduct the “core” interviews in the field for 16 waves. The current OMB clearance expiration date from Wave 11 is October 31, 2014 and will be extended 3 years from the date of clearance for Wave 13 (approximately July of 2015). All household members 15 years old or over are interviewed using regular proxy-respondent rules. They are interviewed a total of sixteen times or waves, at 4-month intervals, making the SIPP a longitudinal survey. All household members present at the time of the first interview who move within the country and reasonably close to a SIPP primary sampling unit (PSU) will be followed and interviewed at their new address.

Individuals 15 years old or over who enter the household after Wave 1 will be interviewed; however, if these people move, they are not followed unless they happen to move along with a Wave 1 sample individual.

The Census Bureau developed the Wave 13 Topical Module on Certifications and Certificates through a process with a Federal interagency committee on the Measurement of Certifications and Certificates. This committee was formed by the National Center on Education Statistics in the Department of Education, under the guidance of the Office of Management and Budget, and includes members from the Department of Education (policy), Office of Management and Budget, Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Census Bureau, the Council of Economic Advisors. The committee has undertaken an extensive process of research and testing to design and develop the questions included in the Topical Module. This process included focus group interviews, cognitive testing and interviews, as well as a large scale national study of the design questions. The Committee has reached consensus on some of the critical items for this topic, which form the basis of the Topical Module. These items have also been recommended for inclusion in other federal data collections. The purpose of the module is to provide national level estimates of certifications, as well as to provide further detail on certificate holders, data not available from other routine collections. The questions for the topical module address major policy and program concerns as stated by the subcommittee as a whole, and the member agencies of the committee, including the Office of the White House (via the Council of Economic Advisors).

The SIPP is authorized by Title 13, United States Code, Section 182.

2. Needs and Uses

Information quality, as described by the Census Bureau’s Information Quality Guidelines, is an integral part of the pre-dissemination review of information disseminated by the Census Bureau. Information quality is integral to information collections conducted by the Census Bureau and is incorporated into the clearance process required by the Paperwork Reduction Act.

Data provided by the SIPP are being used by economic policymakers, Congress, state and local governments, and federal agencies that administer social welfare or transfer payment programs such as the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Agriculture.

The following is a description and uses of the Wave 13 topical module data:

Professional Certificates and Certifications

The Professional Certificates and Certifications topical module contains questions on the measurement of educational certificates, professional certifications, and licenses. Accurate counts of this information will enable valuable analyses of the relationship between certification and employment, occupation, and earnings. The data will be used as part of the ongoing measurement strategy to get better estimates of certifications and licenses, as well as certificate holders. Since these questions constitute our best state of the knowledge in this area at this point, we will be able to triangulate these estimates off others (such as those from the revised NHES).

Our expectation is that Census and NCES will use the data from the Professional Certificates and Certifications topical module in a series of methodology papers as well as a report that will provide general population estimates of certification holders and their labor force activities.

3. Use of Information Technology

The survey is administered using computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) methodologies. The Census Bureau field representatives (FR) collect the data from respondents using laptop computers and the data are transmitted to the Census Bureau Headquarters via high-speed modems. Automation significantly enhances our efforts to collect high quality data with skip instructions programmed into the instrument and with information obtained in earlier interview segments fed back to the respondent. Response burden can be minimized by incorporating design features that make it easier to collect and record respondent information. Appropriate screening and lead in questions, which serve to skip respondents out of sections of the questionnaire that are not relevant or applicable, are built into the automated instrument.

Preliminary analysis from an Internet field test conducted by the SIPP Methods Panel in August and September 2000 indicated that using the Internet as a mode of collection for a complex demographic survey such as SIPP is not feasible. The conclusions of the test indicated that Internet survey technology is not currently sophisticated enough to handle the complexity of the SIPP survey and the complicated skip pattern and rostering requirements. A low response rate combined with technological challenges and limitations indicate that the costs of converting a complex questionnaire to an online survey far outweigh the benefits even in a multimode environment. The final report is available upon request.

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication

The demographic data collected in the SIPP must be collected in conjunction with the labor force and program participation data in order for the information to be most useful; therefore, although we collect demographic data in conjunction with almost all surveys, we need to continue its present collection in the SIPP. There is no other current data source available that provides a comprehensive set of statistics for analysis as described in question 2 above.

5. Minimizing Burden

The Census Bureau uses appropriate technology to keep respondent burden to a minimum. Examples of technology used to minimize respondent burden include: use of appropriate screening and lead in questions that serve to skip respondents out of sections of the CAPI instrument that are not relevant or applicable to them; use of flash cards to aid respondents with multiple response categories; and arrangement of questions and sections of the CAPI instrument that facilitate the flow of administration from one topic area to another.

6. Consequences of Less Frequent Collection

The SIPP is designed as a continuing series of national panels of interviewed households that are introduced every few years, with each panel having durations typically of 3 to 6 years. The 2008 Panel is scheduled for approximately 6 years and includes sixteen waves which began September 1, 2008. The survey uses a 4 month recall period with approximately one-fourth of the sample households being interviewed each month. A less frequent data collection schedule could cause a reduction in the accuracy of reporting due to memory decay. Also, a major feature of the SIPP is that it produces a time series of data as described above. Breaks in the series arising from cessation of the interviewing would limit the data's usability.

7. Special Circumstances

There are no special circumstances associated with this clearance request.

8. Consultations Outside the Agency

The OMB established an Interagency Advisory Committee to provide guidance for the content and procedures for the SIPP. That committee along with the subcommittee on the topical modules has worked actively with the Census Bureau to assure that the SIPP content and procedures collect the appropriate data and that duplications between surveys are minimized to the extent possible.

We published a notice in the *Federal Register* on December 22, 2011, Vol. 76, No. 246, page 79,650, inviting public comment on our plans to submit this request. We received one comment generally opposing collection.

9. Paying Respondents

The Census Bureau's plans are to continue the Incentive Test during the remaining waves of the 2008 Panel as described in the Memorandum from Ruth Ann Killion to Brian Harris-Kojetin dated July 2, 2008, with the subject "SIPP 2008: Incentive Test (ALYS-4)." During Wave 1, 25 percent of the respondents were sent a \$20 incentive with the Advance Letter, 25 percent were eligible for a \$40 discretionary incentive, and 50 percent were assigned to the control group and not eligible for an incentive. In Wave 2+ the same 25 percent of respondents continue to be eligible for the \$40 discretionary incentives at each wave. The incentive is in the form of a debit card with a unique PIN number which can be cashed at any ATM machine. The discretionary incentive is offered by the FR at the point the respondent is clearly planning to leave the survey and is used to persuade them to respond. The FR makes clear at the time the incentive is offered that a complete interview is required before the debit card and unique PIN number is given.

10. Assurance of Confidentiality

We are conducting this survey under the authority of Title 13, United States Code, Section 182. Section 9 of this law requires us to keep all information strictly confidential. Each wave, a letter from the Director of the Census Bureau is sent to each household. This letter informs respondents of the confidentiality of their responses and the voluntary nature of the survey. (Attachments B and C)

11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

The sources of income and assets are among the kinds of data collected and may be considered to be of a sensitive nature. The Census Bureau takes the position that the collection of these types of data is necessary for the analysis of important policy and program issues and has structured the questions to lessen their sensitivity.

12. Estimate of Respondent Burden

Based on our experience with the 1996, 2001, and 2004 SIPP panels and in-house testing, the burden estimates for FY 2012 are as follows:

2008 SIPP PANEL FY 2012 BURDEN HOUR SUMMARY

	Respondents	Waves	Responses	Hours Per Response	Total Hours
Interview	94,500	3	283,500	.50	141,750
Re-interview	3,100	3	9,300 ¹	.167	1,553
Totals	94,500	3.09 ²	292,800	.49 ³	143,303

We will obtain interviews from approximately 45,000 households, yielding about 94,500 individual interviews (2.1 individuals 15 years old or over per household). The household interviews are conducted at 4 month intervals

The total number of burden hours requested for Wave 13, inclusive of the core, topical module sections of the instrument and re-interview is 47,767. The total number of burden hours for the 2008 SIPP Panel in FY 2012 is 143,303.

13. Estimate of Cost Burden

There are no direct costs to respondents participating in the survey, other than the time involved in answering the survey questions.

14. Cost to Federal Government

- 1 The 3,100 cases in re-interview will be contacted twice during the same wave. Therefore, the total number of **respondents** is 94,500 per wave (included in original interview sample).
- 2 The weighted average for waves is determined by taking the number of respondents interviewed once during a wave (91,400 contacts) plus the number of households that will be interviewed twice during a re-interview (6,200 contacts) and dividing this sum by the number of total respondents in sample (94,500 respondents) times three waves; this comes out to 3.09 (weighted average).
- 3 The weighted average for hours per response is determined by multiplying the number of interview responses by the response hours (283,500 * .50) plus the number of re-interview responses multiplied by the response hours (9,300 * .167) and dividing this sum by the total number of responses per fiscal year (292,800); this comes out to 0.49.

The production costs of all parts of this survey are approximately \$50,096,000 in FY 2012. That amount is included in the estimate of total costs to the federal government of the Census Bureau's current programs supplied to the OMB.

15. Reason for Change in Burden

There is no change in burden.

16. Project Schedule

The Census Bureau will release a series of cross-sectional and topical module reports from the 2008 Panel. Edited cross-sectional core files as well as topical module files will be released.

As previously mentioned, our expectation is that Census and NCES will use the data from the Professional Certificates and Certifications topical module in a series of methodology papers as well as a report that will provide general population estimates of certification holders and their labor force activities.

Wave-based data can be used to create a basic set of statistics from the SIPP core. These statistics can be used to evaluate the survey, to profile the participants in various programs, to examine the characteristics of the population in need, and to examine how the economy is changing. Such statistics can include average monthly estimates of:

- Median household income
- Number of workers and their median earnings
- Number of people in poverty
- People with labor force activities
- People who spent time looking for work or on layoff
- Participants in government programs, such as:
 - Public Assistance
 - Social Security and Supplemental Security Income
 - School lunches
 - Food Stamps
 - Medicare and Medicaid
 - Public or subsidized housing
 - Unemployment and workers' compensation

These statistics from each SIPP wave are crossed by race, age, and other characteristics and could be the basis for a report or fact sheet on the economic situation of Americans and their families.

These data products will enable us to examine issues such as:

- Annual income and poverty estimates based on different definitions of income.
- Estimates of people experiencing unemployment and median unemployment spells.
- The characteristics of people ever participating in government programs and people who participated in each month.
- Median program participation spells.
- The characteristics of people with lapses in health insurance coverage.
- Median spells without health insurance.
- Family and household transitions.

In addition, as our observation length grows, we will be better able to examine issues such as long-term versus short-term poverty and program participation.

17. Request Not to Display Expiration Date

We request not to display the expiration date to avoid unnecessary respondent confusion arising from the fact that the OMB approval lasts for three years and respondent participation in the SIPP often lasts for longer periods.

18. Exceptions to the Certification

There are no exceptions to the certification.