

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

**U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Census Bureau
2012 NATIONAL CENSUS TEST
OMB Control Number 0607-~~XXXX~~**

Part A – Justification

1. Necessity of the Information Collection

The Census Bureau has committed to using the Internet as a primary response option in the 2020 Census. However, much research is needed throughout the next decade to develop and implement a successful, secure, and user-friendly online instrument. The Census Bureau must conduct a series of research projects and tests throughout this decade to fulfill its commitment to provide the public with an option to complete their 2020 Decennial Census questionnaire on the Internet. One of the first tests to support this planning effort is the 2012 National Census Test (NCT).

The 2012 NCT seeks to build on previous Internet data collection research in order to set the stage for the Internet testing cycle for the 2020 Census. The main objective is to test new, dynamic approaches for collecting the number of people in a household, which are not feasible on a paper questionnaire. The anticipated use of the Internet as a primary mode of self-response in the 2020 Census offers the unique opportunity to incorporate conditional residence probes. By making optimal use of electronic data collection for delivery of coverage probes, we can gain a better understanding of who was living in a household on Census Day, thereby greatly reducing (or potentially eliminating) the need for the costly Coverage Followup (CFU) operation. The goal is to optimize the residence rules presentation for the Internet mode and identify validated methods for determining residency. We will utilize a real-time, targeted, probing coverage reinterview conducted by telephone to evaluate the accuracy of within-household coverage by comparing the final household population roster for the Internet Test households to the final reinterview roster for the same households.

As a secondary objective of the 2012 NCT, the Census Bureau aims to study the relative response rates associated with various contact strategies under an Internet Push methodology, in an effort to obtain early response rate indicators for the 2020 Census. The 2012 Internet Test sets the stage for future testing by making important strides in obtaining a select subset of contact strategy options that can be validated in later mid-decade tests. Various contact strategies involving optimizing the Internet Push strategy are proposed, such as implementing relatively less expensive reminders both before and after the questionnaire mailing, which builds off recent American Community Survey (ACS) results. Also included is the removal of the advance letter mailing, new motivational wording and varying the timing of the questionnaire mailing to optimize self-response.

Additionally, without impact to sample size, the 2012 NCT offers the opportunity to gain knowledge about how to optimize the presentation of the race and Hispanic origin questions. Results from the 2010 Alternative Questionnaire Experiment reveal that the combination of the race and Hispanic origin question approach appears to be a promising strategy for collecting

these data items. As an additional secondary objective, the Census Bureau plans to continue this research by implementing two versions of a combined race and Hispanic origin question as part of the 2012 NCT. In addition, this data collection will incorporate the use of predictive text to automate and streamline the race and Hispanic origin coding processes. This component allows for near-real-time data processing by increasing the speed of automated coding, thus reducing and/or eliminating back-end processing.

The materials mailed to the respondents will inform them that the survey is mandatory, in accordance with Title 13, United States Code, Section 141, 193, and 225. This information will additionally be available via a hyperlink in the Internet instrument.

2. Needs and Uses

The 2012 NCT is primarily designed for use by the Census Bureau to inform 2020 Census testing and planning. The intent is to research and validate optimal Internet data collection strategies for the 2020 Census.

The results from the 2012 NCT will influence internal Census Bureau planning decisions that will guide the design of additional 2020 Decennial Census Internet testing later this decade. The results from this test will inform planning for both the 2020 Census as well as the ACS.

Assuming that the 2012 Internet Test results indicate that the use of this coverage strategy would greatly reduce and/or eliminate CFU operations, and then it is critical to know this early in the decade, and before substantial resources and budget are dedicated to the CFU infrastructure development. Failing to test the success of the Internet instrument for substantially scaling back CFU could result in misdirection of valuable resources.

By testing in 2012, we aim to establish a baseline approach for implementation in mid-decade multi-mode testing. The early establishment of a coverage strategy is at less of a risk for dramatically changing over time compared to other operational considerations such as electronic platforms and associated displays. After a strategy is established in 2012, a validated approach can potentially be adopted for administration in electronic modes beyond the Internet as part of further mid-decade testing.

The Census Bureau plans to make the aggregated results of this study available to the general public. 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.

3. Use of Information Technology

This evaluation will examine the use of the Internet as a method for submitting census data. The design and content of the 2012 NCT build off the ACS Internet instrument as well as the 2010 Census Quality Survey (CQS), which was an Internet reinterview study conducted shortly after

the 2010 Census. While the 2012 NCT Internet instrument is generally similar to the 2010 CQS instrument, it has some unique design features which are tailored to the 2012 NCT objectives. The content of the Internet questionnaire has been developed, although minor changes may be made based on results of usability testing.

An important byproduct of the study is the collection of data related to respondent interaction with a census Internet questionnaire such as break-off rates and completion times, i.e. paradata. Paradata results can be used to inform modifications to the instrument for future census Internet tests.

Since this study focuses on developing and testing content specific to an Internet instrument, the mail questionnaire data will not be captured. However, mail questionnaire check-in data will be captured to inform the contact strategy objective.

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication

This evaluation is an effort unique to the Census Bureau; therefore, duplicate information is not being collected by any other agency. The Census Bureau first implemented a revised approach to within household coverage on the Internet in the 2010 Census Quality Survey, but an evaluation of coverage accuracy was not part of that study. Although some of our proposed contact strategies are similar to strategies recently tested by the American Community Survey (ACS), this study does not duplicate their efforts. We used recent ACS findings to inform our design, however our proposed strategies are tailored to a decennial census data collection and thus differ slightly on specific survey design components. In addition, the primary focus of the 2012 NCT is to test new approaches to collecting the number of people in the household for a static reference day. Conversely, the reference period for the ACS is defined relative to the date of the interview. Thus, the residence rules and approaches differ. Furthermore, differences between the decennial census and ACS (such as survey length, schedule and mode) are known to affect key survey measures. Therefore, independent testing for a census short form is necessary.

Similar research has been conducted at Statistics Canada, however, the Canadian census content and methods differ from the content and methods used in the U.S. Census Bureau's decennial census.

5. Minimizing Burden

The collection of information targets households and should have no effect on small businesses or small entities.

6. Consequences of Less Frequent Collection

Data collections in this request will support 2020 decennial census planning and research. If these data collections were not to occur, the Census Bureau would lack quantitative evidence to improve upon the current decennial census design.

7. Special Circumstances

There are no special circumstances.

8. Consultations Outside the Agency

The notice for public comment, entitled, “Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; 2012 National Census Test,” was published in the Federal Register on March 7, 2012 (Vol. 77, No. 45, pp. 13532 – 13533). One comment was received on the federal register notice. Dr. Mario Marazzi Santiago, Executive Director of the Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics urged the Census Bureau to include residents of Puerto Rico in the 2012 NCT. Unfortunately, the Census Bureau will be unable to do so, since the 2012 NCT is purely a self-response test, and thus limited to Mailout/Mailback areas (Puerto Rico is an Update/Leave area).

Usability participants recruited from outside the Census Bureau will provide their views on the clarity of instructions and ease of use of the Internet application. Marc Hamel and Jamie Brunet of Statistics Canada shared information and research papers about the development process of the 2011 Canadian Census Internet instrument.

9. Paying Respondents

Respondents will not be paid or provided with gifts for participating in this collection.

10. Assurance of Confidentiality

In accordance with Title 13, United States Code, Section 9, the information collected in this test will be protected and kept confidential. This study is in compliance with the requirements of the Privacy Act and the Paperwork Reduction Act. All persons involved with the collection of these data will be either Census Bureau employees or persons appointed to “special sworn status.” All census data will be kept in a secure environment.

The materials mailed to the respondents will inform them that the survey is mandatory, in accordance with Title 13, United States Code, Section 141, 193, and 225. These materials will also notify them of the privacy and confidentiality safeguards. This information will additionally be available via a hyperlink in the Internet instrument.

11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

The content of the 2012 NCT will generally be the same content as the 2010 Census mail questionnaire. The Census Bureau perceives no questions as being sensitive.

12. Estimate of Hour Burden

An estimated 80,000 survey invitations will be mailed out to selected households. Mail respondents will not be selected for reinterview, however all those who respond by Internet will

be selected for reinterview (up to a maximum of 20,000). We estimate a 25% response rate on the Internet and a 45% response rate overall. The burden estimates in the table below are an upper bound and based on a theoretical 100% response, rather than our expected response rate.

	Total # of Respondents	Estimated Response Time	Estimated Burden Hours
Initial Response	80,000	10 minutes	13,334
Telephone Reinterview	20,000	10 minutes	3,334
Total	100,000	--	16,668

13. Estimate of Cost Burden

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

14. Cost to Federal Government

Estimated costs to the U.S. Census Bureau are approximately \$980,000.

15. Reason for Change in Burden

This collection is being submitted as new.

16. Project Schedule

The project schedules are still being developed and depend on receiving OMB Approval of the authorization request. Estimated dates for project milestones are presented below.

Milestone	Date
Internet instrument development begins	3/2012
Initial study plan draft	4/2012
Review of mail materials	4/2012
Select sample of housing units	5/2012
Usability testing	6/2012
Printing and assembly of mail materials begins	6/2012
Final study plan	7/2012
Mailout begins	8/2012
Data collection begins	8/2012
Reinterview begins	9/2012
Initial report draft	5/2013
Final report	9/2013

17. Request to Not Display Expiration Date

None.

18. Exceptions to the Certification

None.