

Supporting Statement A
U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Census Bureau
BC-1294, Field Representative Exit Questionnaire
BC-1294(D), Decennial Field Staff Exit Questionnaire
OMB Control No. 0607-0404

A. Justification

1. Necessity of Information Collection:

Retention of trained field interviewing staff is a major concern for the Census Bureau because of both the monetary costs associated with employee turnover, as well as, the potential impact on data quality. Therefore, in a continuous effort to devise policies and practices aimed at reducing turnover among interviewers, the Census Bureau collects data on the reasons interviewers leave their Census Bureau jobs.

The exit questionnaires are the instruments we use to collect turnover data from a sample of former current survey interviewers (field representatives) and decennial census interviewers (enumerators and listers). The goal or purpose of the exit questionnaires is to determine the reasons for interviewer turnover and what the Census Bureau might have done, or can do, to influence interviewers not to leave. Thus the exit questionnaires seek reasons interviewers quit, inquire about motivational factors that would have kept interviewers from leaving, attempt to identify training program strengths and weaknesses and their impacts on turnover, and explore the impact of pay, working conditions and supervisory styles on employees' reasons for quitting.

As the environment in which surveys take place, the demographics of our labor force and the way surveys are conducted continues to change, it is important that we continue to examine the interviewers' concerns about their job. Information provided by respondents to the exit questionnaire provides insight on the measures the Census Bureau might take to decrease turnover, and is useful in helping us determine if the reasons for interviewer turnover appear to be systemic or localized. The exit questionnaires have shown to be useful and, therefore, we believe it is important to continue to use them to affect program planning and management.

The collection of this data is authorized by Title 5 U.S.C. Sections 301, 2301 and 3101.

Forms BC-1294 and the BC-1294(D) are the instruments we currently use to collect turnover data from a sample of former current survey interviewers, and decennial census listers/enumerators, respectively.

This submission includes changes to the BC-1294, which reflects Census Bureau policy and procedural changes to current surveys since the last request for clearance. For example, two years ago the current survey Field Representative Selection Tools were updated to include an interview phase, which gives the applicant a more complete picture of what the FR position will entail. Therefore, we have submitted changes to the BC-1294 to obtain information that will help us determine if the Census Bureau's new selection process has had any impact on FR turnover.

Currently the Census Bureau is undergoing a major realignment of its Regional Offices – downsizing from twelve to six Regional Offices. With the restructuring and decentralizing of both people and activities, there are major changes in how and/or who will manage current survey field staff and workloads. For example, survey coordinators, managers and clerks in the regional offices have previously provided the majority of the support to the Field Representatives. The newly created supervisory positions -- Field Supervisors (FS) and Survey Statisticians – Field (SSF) -- will not be located in the regional offices; these supervisors will manage the field staff and field work from their homes via a virtual desktop integration system. The Field Supervisor (or FS) will be the FR's first line supervisor. Each FS will directly supervise a team of (10-12) FRs, and manage *all* current surveys being conducted in their geographic area. Since FRs must now channel their questions through their FS/SSF and not directly contact the office survey supervisor, we anticipate there could be an impact on the job satisfaction and/or tenure of some FRs. Therefore, we have submitted additional questions to the BC-1294 to gauge the impact the new infrastructure may have on turnover.

A copy of the current survey form BC-1294, Census Field Representative Exit Questionnaire, and the specific changes to the form, are shown in Attachment 1. We will submit a revised version of the BC-1294 as a non-substantive change once the changes have been approved and the revised form prepared.

This submission does not include changes to the BC-1294(D). For the BC-1294(D), we are requesting an extension of this currently approved collection instrument, which will expire on August 31, 2012. A copy of the current BC-1294(D) is shown in Attachment 2. We are dropping the BC-1294(CM), Coverage Measurement Exit Questionnaire, from this clearance.

2. Needs and Uses:

The costs to the Census Bureau resulting from interviewer turnover are numerous including:

- Loss of time the trainers and supervisors have invested in training the interviewers who leave;
- Training pay given to interviewers who leave while they are learning the job;
- Recruiting costs and fees to find replacements;
- Cost of training replacement interviewers;
- Costs to data quality while replacement interviewers learn the job;
- Disruption to operations due to turnover; and
- Loss of knowledge the leaving interviewers take with them.

To accomplish the goal of reducing interviewer turnover, Census Bureau planners and decision makers must fully understand the relative importance and interaction of possible contributory factors. These factors include, but are not limited too:

- Job factors such as salary and benefits, career advancement and performance expectations;
- Working conditions such as unsafe areas/neighborhoods and direct interaction with the public;
- Work hours and workload;
- Use of computers/automation;
- Training;
- Supervision and training of supervisors; and
- Recruiting methods and selection criteria.

Since the initial implementation, the use of the BC-1294 and BC-1294(D) have helped the Census Bureau identify specific reasons for interviewer turnover. From these forms, we have learned that the causes of interviewer turnover are often a combination of reasons rather than one single reason. We have also learned that there are some reasons for turnover which are within the Census Bureau's control and some which are not. In response to the reasons identified by the exit questionnaires over which the Census Bureau can exercise some control, we have initiated and continue policies and procedures designed to reduce turnover. For example:

- As current surveys moved to a computer assisted interviewing environment and/or new software on the automated instruments, there was concern about the possible impact of these technological changes on interviewer turnover. We learned from the exit questionnaire that neither the conversion to automated interviewing instruments nor new software (e.g., Blaise) had a substantial effect on current survey interviewer turnover.
- Using earlier results from the exit questionnaire, we discovered that interviewer turnover on current surveys often resulted from feelings of isolation. As a result, the regional offices initiated programs to enhance communication between/among interviewers in the field and the office, and

promoted a more nurturing environment through the use of interviewer teams or a “buddy” system approach for new interviewers, in particular.

- The Census Bureau’s ability to retain a competent, motivated and representative staff of local census-takers is one of the most important factors affecting the quality, length of time required, and overall costs of the field data collection phase of the decennial census. Thus we were also able to use the results of the Census 2000 exit questionnaire to justify the use of localized pay rates, and in many large urban areas we now have pay rates that are more closely tied to the local labor market. Through the years, exit results have also led to improvements in recruiting methods and techniques, and training protocols and materials.

We require more than one version of the form because the nature of decennial interviewing differs from current survey interviewing. For example, decennial interviewing is short term, intensive and concentrated where current survey interviewing is continuous and more diverse. Although the BC-1294(D) largely covers the same topics as the BC-1294, the questions and response choices on the BC-1294(D) have been tailored to decennial operations and are more in-depth.

The information collected via these Exit Questionnaires will help the Census Bureau develop plans to reduce turnover in its current survey and decennial interviewing staff. This, in turn, will allow for better informed decisions regarding the field workforce and implementation of more effective pay plans, selection procedures, interviewer training, and retention strategies for all interviewers.

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:

Exit interviews will be conducted by telephone. No automated collection techniques will be employed to gather data for this questionnaire. The forms have been designed to allow for in-depth probing, when/where necessary, during interviews, while facilitating data capture by limiting the amount of hand written comments/information through the use of predefined codes.

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication:

We will collect data from interviewers who have recently resigned from the Census Bureau. This data is not available from any other source. While similar studies concerned with identifying causes of interviewer turnover have been done by the Census Bureau in the past, and the information has been used to improve management policies, the content and nature of the surveys used to collect data today, the methods of data collection (e.g., automation), the composition of our field workforce, and the climate in which we now conduct both current survey and decennial interviews are ever-changing, making past information less relevant for current management decisions.

5. Efforts to Minimize Burden:

Efforts to minimize burden include the use of telephone methodology, in lieu of a mail out/mail back strategy, and the relative brevity of the questionnaire. The use of sampling and predefined response options, based on previously administered exit interviews, also contributes to reducing respondent burden.

6. Consequence of Less Frequent Collection:

This will be a one-time request for information.

7. Special Circumstances:

There are no special circumstances.

8. Consultation Outside the Agency:

A pre-submission notice was published in the Federal Register on September 2, 2011. We received one response to our solicitation. The comments did not seriously address the issues included in the Federal Register, Section IV. "Request for Comments" and, therefore, are not addressed in this document.

9. Paying Respondents:

Respondents, all of whom are former Census Bureau interviewers, will not be paid.

10. Assurance of Confidentiality:

The information collected is voluntary. Each former interviewer contacted will be told that his/her participation is voluntary, and that the information obtained from him/her will be protected from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act to the extent provided by law.

11. Justification for Sensitive Questions:

None of the questions in the BC-1294, nor the BC-1294(D), are sensitive in nature.

12. Estimate of Hour Burden:

On average, the respondent burden for the BC-1294 should not exceed seven (7) minutes. The estimated number of current survey field representatives to be contacted, by telephone per fiscal year, should not exceed 500. Therefore, the maximum estimated annual burden for the BC-1294 is approximately 59 hours.

While the 2020 inter-decade census testing has not been finalized, there are currently no plans for decennial site tests in the inter-decade census testing plan. Therefore, we do not anticipate using the BC-1294(D), Decennial Field Staff Exit Questionnaire. Should the 2020 testing plans change, however, we are requesting approval to contact an average of 150 enumerators and/or listers annually. The telephone interviews with former decennial listers/enumerators should take no more than (10) minutes. Therefore, the maximum estimated annual burden for the BC-1294(D) is 25 hours.

13. Estimate of Respondent Cost Burden:

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

14. Estimate of Agency Cost Burden:

The total time and material costs for forms design and data collection, analysis and reporting are expected to be approximately \$13,000.00 per year. These costs, which are based on burden and staff hours, will be borne by the Census Bureau and would not have been incurred without this collection of information.

15. Reason for Change in Burden:

With the completion of the 2010 decennial census and the current 2020 testing plans, we do not anticipate contacting decennial respondents. Should the 2020 testing plans change, however, we are requesting approval to contact an average of 150 former decennial employees (i.e., enumerators and/or listers) annually. Therefore, the estimated annual burden for the decennial exit questionnaire (i.e., BC-1294(D)) is approximately 25 hours. The maximum estimated annual burden for the current survey exit questionnaire (i.e., BC-1294) is approximately 59 hours. The current OMB inventory is 393 burden hours. The estimated inventory number for this clearance is 84 burden hours.

16. Project Schedule:

The BC-1294 data will be collected approximately every quarter from a sample of one-half of all current survey interviewers who voluntarily resign within the sampling period covered. Respondents will be contacted by telephone to complete a questionnaire.

Based on the current 2020 Census inter-decade testing plan, we do not anticipate the conduct of decennial site tests, which would warrant the use of the BC-1294(D).

The Census Bureau does not plan to publish results or conclusions derived from the information obtained from the exit questionnaire(s). All analyses and conclusions are for internal use only.

17. Request Not to Display Expiration Date:

We will display the assigned expiration date on the information collection instrument. During the introduction that we read to the respondents, we inform them of the OMB control number and its expiration date.

18. Exceptions to the Certificate:

There are no exceptions.