

December 10, 2014

Brian Harris-Kotejin

Senior Statistician, Statistical and Science Policy Branch

Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs

Office of Management and Budget

Washington, DC 20503

Dear Mr. Harris-Kotejin:

The U.S. Census Bureau requests your assistance and cooperation in submitting to OMB the attached request for emergency clearance of an information collection request, “Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey (ASEC).” We are requesting OMB conclude its review by January 30, 2015.

This ASEC 2015 data collection will consist of a different treatment structure for income questions from the previous annual collection, which necessitates the need for this emergency request for clearance. The 2014 data collection instrument was redesigned to include a new series of questions relating to 1) income; and 2) health insurance. The income questions were administered using two separate treatments: approximately five-eighths (5/8) of the ASEC sample had income questions administered from the “traditional” design (i.e., the old question series), while three-eighths (3/8) had income questions administered from the “redesigned” ASEC (i.e., the new question series). For the health insurance questions, the entire sample was administered the new question series. Starting in 2015, the entire sample will be administered the new questions for income and health insurance.

For this data collection, information on work experience, personal income, noncash benefits, current and previous year health insurance coverage, employer-sponsored insurance take-up, and migration is collected. The work experience items in the ASEC provide a unique measure of the dynamic nature of the labor force as viewed over a one-year period. The income data from the ASEC are used by social planners, economists, government officials, and market researchers to gauge the economic well-being of the country as a whole, and selected population groups of interest. Government planners and researchers

use these data to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of various assistance programs. Social planners use these data to forecast economic conditions and to identify special groups that seem to be especially sensitive to economic fluctuations. Economists use ASEC data to determine the effects of various economic forces, such as inflation, recession, recovery, and so on, and their differential effects on various population groups.

A prime statistic of interest is the classification of people in poverty and how this measurement has changed over time for various groups. Researchers evaluate ASEC income data not only to determine poverty levels but also to determine whether government programs are reaching eligible households.

With regard to the circumstances necessitating an emergency clearance, in November 2014 the OMB recommended that the Census Bureau submit a full clearance submission for this change, rather than a request for clearance of a previously approved collection with a non-substantive change.

Given the timing of this determination, we are requesting a waiver of the 60-day federal register notice so that OMB clearance is obtained in time to avoid the delay of data collection for this high-profile survey.

We request that your office expedite review and approve of this request. If you have any questions or need more information regarding this request, contact Lisa Clement or Tim Marshall at 301-763-3806.