

September 22, 2015

Memorandum for: Reviewer of 1220-0187

CC: Dori Allard

From: Rachel Krantz-Kent  
Stephanie Denton

Subject: Fielding the Eating and Health module in the 2016 American Time Use Survey

The American Time Use Survey (ATUS), conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, included an Eating and Health (EH) module in 2006-08 and again in 2014-15. The module is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Economic Research Service (ERS). The module is currently being collected under OMB control number 1220-0187, which expires on June 30, 2016. While the clearance expires on June 30, 2016, collection of the data is currently cleared only through December 31, 2015. The purpose of this request is to obtain clearance to continue data collection of the EH module through June 30, 2016, while a full OMB clearance package for the 2016 EH module is prepared and processed.

### **ATUS EH Module Background**

As part of the ATUS, the 2016 EH module will survey individuals ages 15 and over from a nationally-representative sample of approximately 2,190 sample households each month. If approved, the 2016 EH module will be asked immediately after the ATUS and will follow up on some of the information ATUS respondents provide in their diary.

The proposed 2016 EH module is identical to the 2014-15 EH module. As with the 2014-15 EH module, the core of the module consists of questions about secondary eating (eating while doing other activities). It also contains questions about secondary drinking (drinking beverages other than water while doing other activities); grocery shopping and meal preparation; exercise; participation in food and nutrition assistance programs; height and weight; food safety; and household income.

With the exception of asking about secondary child care, the ATUS asks respondents to identify only their primary (or main) activities; however, many Americans eat while doing other things, such as driving or working. Asking respondents to report eating as a secondary activity provides information both for estimating the total time spent eating and also for understanding eating patterns. USDA has considerable research interest in eating behavior, as ERS conducts research to monitor and evaluate food consumption from several different perspectives—what people eat, where people buy their food, and how food consumption choices relate to diet quality and nutrition.

Obesity is the most common food- and nutrition-related health problem in America. Health professionals and economists have been conducting research to determine the extent to which excess caloric intake, insufficient exercise, and other factors are to blame for America's growing obesity problem. The EH module, used in conjunction with the core ATUS, can help identify the types of activities and eating patterns that are associated with obesity, a healthy weight, overall health, and well-being. Data on time spent in sedentary and active pursuits, along with eating patterns (secondary eating and soft drink consumption), demographic characteristics, and labor force information, will provide researchers the ability to analyze time use for various subgroups by Body Mass Index (BMI). Self-rated health status is an inexpensive measure that has been found to provide meaningful information on health and well-being. Self-reported general health status has been found to predict mortality and morbidity and is used in other Federal surveys to assess overall well-being.<sup>1</sup>

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—formerly named the Food Stamp Program—is the Nation's largest food and nutrition assistance program and is administered by USDA. The Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides Federal grants to States for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk. Because of the time constraints that low-income households face, understanding the time-use of both recipients and non-recipients of the SNAP and WIC programs are of particular interest to policymakers and program administrators.

### **Reasons to Collect Eating and Health Data in the ATUS**

The data from the proposed EH module support the BLS mission of providing relevant information on economic and social issues. Time use data allows researchers to analyze the choices people make in how they spend their time, along with the time and income constraints they face. The data from the proposed EH module can be used in research to understand the associations between time use patterns and body mass index (BMI), food assistance participation, grocery shopping, and meal preparation. These data will enhance the understanding of peoples' overall well-being.

The data from the EH module also closely support the mission of the module's sponsor, ERS, to improve the nation's nutrition and health. By analyzing the module data, the association between time-use patterns and nutrition and health can be studied. Some of the questions that can be answered include:

- What is the association between eating patterns and obesity?
- What are the time-use patterns of food assistance program participants and low-income nonparticipants?
- What is the association between time-use patterns, eating, and exercise?
- How does time-use vary by health status?

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<sup>1</sup> See Hennessy, C.H., D.G. Moriarty, M.M. Zack, P.A. Scherr, R. Brackbill, "Measuring Health-Related Quality of Life for Public Health Surveillance," *Public Health Report* 1994; 109: 665-72

## Research using EH Module Data

The previous EH module produced data that has been used to inform policy and programs on eating and other behaviors. Some examples include:

- Time in eating and food preparation among single adults—Senia et al. (2014) used data from the EH module to investigate factors affecting the duration of eating and food preparation among single adult households.<sup>2</sup>
- The connection between working hours and body mass index in the U.S.: a time use analysis—Abramowitz (2014) used EH module and time-use data to explore the mechanisms for the relationship between work hours and body mass index.<sup>3</sup>
- The travel–obesity connection: discerning the impacts of commuting trips with the perspective of individual energy expenditure and time use—Yang and French (2013) used EH module data to examine the connection between travel and obesity from an individual energy-expenditure perspective.<sup>4</sup>
- How Much Time Do Americans Spend on Food?—Hamrick et al. (2011) used data from the EH module to present an overview of Americans' eating and other food-related time use patterns.<sup>5</sup>
- Shopping For, Preparing, and Eating Food: Where Does the Time Go?—Andrews and Hamrick (2009) describe time use patterns of SNAP participants and low-income nonparticipants.<sup>6</sup>
- Who Has Time To Cook? How Family Resources Influence Food Preparation—Mancino and Newman (2007) analyzed how family resources affect food preparation time.<sup>7</sup>

## Reasons to extend collection of the EH Module

An additional year of ATUS EH module data will add significant information beyond what has been collected in 2006-08 and 2014-15. An additional year of the EH module provides researchers with the ability to use larger samples by pooling data across years. For some purposes, the number of observations needed to make valid statistical inferences exceeds the annual sample size. This is especially true for comparisons of smaller population subgroups. More data are needed to study food safety issues in particular, including consumers of raw milk and users of meat thermometers.

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<sup>2</sup> Senia, M, Jensen, H., and Zhylyevskyy, O. (2014). Time in eating and food preparation among single adults, *Review of Economics of the Household*: 1-34.

<sup>3</sup> Abramowitz, J. (2014). The connection between working hours and body mass index in the U.S.: a time use analysis, *Review of Economics of the Household*, DOI 10.1007/s11150-014-9267-4.

<sup>4</sup> Yang, J. and S. French. (2013). The travel–obesity connection: discerning the impacts of commuting trips with the perspective of individual energy expenditure and time use, *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design* 40(4): 617–629.

<sup>5</sup> Hamrick, Karen, Andrews, M., Guthrie, J., Hopkins, D., and McClelland, K. (November 2011). How Much Time Do Americans Spend On Food, *Economic Information Bulletin*, No. (EIB-86).

<sup>6</sup> Andrews, M., and Hamrick, K. (December 2009). Shopping For, Preparing, and Eating Food: Where Does the Time Go? *Amber Waves*, United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. <http://webarchives.cdlib.org/details/sw1tx36512/http://www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/December09/PDF/ShoppingFood.pdf> (accessed June 28, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Mancino, L., and Newman, C. (May 2007). Who Has Time to Cook? How Family Resources Influence Food Preparation, *Economic Research Report*, No. (ERR-40).