

**Generic Clearance Collection Request:
Cognitive Testing for Additional Questions on the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey –
Insurance Component**

Request: This letter is to inform you of our plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725). The Census Bureau plans to conduct telephone respondent pretest interviews on additional proposed questions for the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey – Insurance Component (MEPS-IC). The MEPS-IC is a self-administered mail out/mail return survey conducted by the Census Bureau for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) on an annual basis. This survey is collected under the authority of Title 13, United States Code (U.S.C.), and Section 8(b) and Section 913 of the Public Health Service Act (Title 42, U.S.C., Section 299b-2(a)). The protocol for this pretest was developed by the US Census Bureau with input from AHRQ. Further information regarding the MEPS-IC can be found at this website:

https://meps.ahrq.gov/survey_comp/Insurance.jsp

Purpose: The purpose of this pretest is to determine the respondent's interpretation of and ability to answer proposed questions that would collect additional data from businesses and government units. The pretest, which is sponsored by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), will include questions about the availability of critical illness insurance, how broad or narrow the provider networks are for the health insurance plans offered, and whether employees' contributions to health care costs varied for lower-wage employees. Respondents will be asked these questions for a plan they reported on their original response to the 2018 MEPS-IC form. The Census Bureau will prepare a report that outlines the findings of the pretest and discusses the possibility of adding new questions in subsequent survey years. This report will be used internally by the Census Bureau and AHRQ.

Population of Interest: The population of interest is are respondents to the MEPS-IC survey. The MEPS-IC is an annual sample survey, with the sample consisting of approximately 40,000 private industry establishments and 4,000 state and local governments. Data from the survey are used to create national and state level estimates on employer sponsored health insurance coverage. These estimates are used to track industry trends and examine how these trends have changed health insurance coverage over time. Policymakers at the national and state level use the data to assess the status of employer-sponsored health insurance throughout the U.S. and monitor the impact of laws governing health insurance. Researchers, policy analysts, and other government agencies also use the data for a variety of analyses.

Timeline: Testing will occur in April of 2019.

Language: Testing will be conducted in English only.

Method: Staff from the Health Surveys Branch (HSB) will conduct a target of 50 telephone interviews, with a maximum of 60 interviews, from the Census Bureau Headquarters in Suitland, MD. Training of the HSB staff will be conducted by Susanna Winder, a survey statistician, who will oversee the work of the HSB staff and will also conduct pretest interviews.

Sample: We plan to conduct 50 interviews. HSB will sample from the 2018 MEPS-IC for recruiting. This sample will include contact information and a size indicator for the organization. We will contact potential participants via phone, explain the nature of our research, and ask them to participate in our study. The sample of participants will be those who are able to be contacted and who agree to participate in the study. Efforts will be made to sample respondents with a variety of sizes and types (i.e., industries) of organizations, though the sample will ultimately be dependent on who chooses to participate in the research. Participants will be informed that their response is voluntary and that the information they provide is confidential and will be seen only by Census Bureau employees and those with special sworn status. Respondents who are interested in participating will be given the choice of scheduling the interview for a future date, or having the interview take place at that moment.

Recruitment: Cases to be selected for this pretest will include responding units from the 2018 MEPS-IC that offered health insurance. Cases will be selected to cover both private industry establishments and government establishments. Respondents will be informed that their participation is voluntary. The interviews will not be audio recorded.

Use of incentives: Monetary incentives for participation will not be offered.

Length of interview: We expect that each interview will last no more than 20 minutes (60 cases x 20 minutes per case = 20 hours). Additionally, to recruit respondents we expect to make up to 5 phone contacts per completed case. The recruiting calls are expected to last on average 3 minutes per call (5 attempted phone calls per completed case x 60 cases x 3 minute per case = 15 hours). Thus, the estimated burden for this project is 35 hours (20 hours for interviews + 15 hours for recruiting).

Enclosures: Enclosed are a copy of the current MEPS-IC questionnaires, and a copy of the respondent pretest protocol (Attachment A), which includes the proposed new questions.

Contact: The contact person for questions regarding data collection and analysis of the pretest is listed below:

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