

Generic Information Collection Request: Respondent Debriefings for the Coordinated Contact Pilot Experiment

Request: The Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725). We will be conducting debriefing phone calls lasting no longer than 30 minutes on respondents' experiences with and feedback on coordinated contact efforts for economic surveys.

The Census Bureau's Economic Directorate asked the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to convene an expert panel to review their appropriated annual economic surveys and recommend improved methodologies for conducting and processing them. The panel started work in July 2015 and [the final report was released in May 2018](#). From these recommendations, the Economic Directorate is determining research needs for harmonizing and simplifying the design and production process for these surveys and the Economic Census.

The Economic Directorate is currently conducting a pilot test to explore consolidated data collection. This investigation furthers efforts to minimize respondent contacts and burden, a recommendation found in the NAS report. A sample of 600 companies has been selected from the Annual Retail Trade Survey (ARTS), the Annual Wholesale Trade Survey (AWTS), and the Services Annual Survey (SAS)¹. Companies that are in two or more of these selected surveys will be divided into two panels: coordinated collection versus staggered collection. Those in the coordinated collection group will receive one contact point along with one overall due date for the surveys they are responsible for. Those in the staggered collection group will continue to receive separate contacts and due dates for each of the surveys they are responsible for.

Researchers from the Census Bureau's Economic Survey Methods Division (ESMD) will be conducting debriefing telephone interviews with respondents from both panels to identify the benefits and potential hazards of consolidating contacts per the NAS report recommendation.

Purpose: These debriefing interviews will be conducted to gain a better understanding of the process of completing or non-compliance of Census Bureau surveys of multiply-sampled companies. We will use the company's answers to the surveys, as well as paradata on their response or non-response and past patterns of survey response, to frame our points of discussion. During these interviews, we will seek the following information:

- Understanding how respondents comprehend specific contact materials
- Identifying respondents' use of the respondent portal for accessing and delegating surveys
- Assessing the impact the consolidated collection may have on companies that have a single point of contact versus multiple contacts
- Assessing the respondents' process for making a decision whether or not to participate in the survey

¹ Three nonsubstantive change requests were submitted to OMB (ARTS, AWTS & SAS). The OMB approval numbers for these three surveys are 0607-0013, 0607-0195 and 0607-0422, respectively. The requests were submitted to OMB on 11/4/19 and were approved on 12/18/19.

- Identifying difficulties in completing the questionnaire(s)

Staff from the Data Collection Methodology & Research Branch in the Economic Statistical Methods Division (ESMD) of the Census Bureau will be conducting debriefing interviews for this testing.

Population of Interest: Respondents and non-respondents representing firms selected in at least two of the following surveys: ARTS, AWTS, and SAS.

Timeline: Testing will be conducted from March through July 2020.

Language: Testing will be conducted in English only.

Method: The method of research will be respondent debriefing interviews, which are interviews aimed at understanding how a respondent recently reported to a survey. Paradata may be used to inform questions. For the purposes of this research, the debriefing questions will be focused on the respondents' experiences in answering the survey (or not) and their evaluation of contact materials and strategies. All interviews will be conducted over the telephone. The interviews will follow a semi-structured interview protocol (Attachment A). Subject area specialists from the Census Bureau may participate in some of the debriefing interviews in order to observe the interview.

Attachment A contains the protocol for the respondent debriefings. Attachment B contains the various letters and an informational sheet that we will ask respondents to evaluate. Attachment C contains screenshots of the online survey portal to guide the discussions.

Sample: We plan to conduct a maximum of 90 interviews. We plan to conduct interviews with a variety of sizes and types (i.e., industries) of businesses, as well as response status (completed/non-completed), contact type (single/multiple), and due dates (staggered/combined). This number of interviews was selected because it is a manageable number of interviews for the time period allotted, it should adequately cover target companies, and should be large enough to provide reactions to the questions in order to identify meaningful findings.

Recruitment: Participants will be recruited using the sample file from the coordinated contact experiment sample frame.

Protocol: A copy of a draft interview protocol is enclosed. Respondent debriefings will be conducted via telephone.

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

Below is a list of materials to be used in the current study:

Attachment A: Draft protocol outlining intended questions to guide the interviews

Attachment B: Letters and informational page

Attachment C: Screenshots from the online survey portal

Attachment D: Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA)/Privacy Act (PA) Notification

Length of interview: For respondent debriefings, we expect that each interview will last no more than 30 minutes (90 cases x 30 minutes per case = 45 hours). Additionally, to recruit respondents we expect to reach out via email and to make up to 5 phone contacts per completed case. The recruiting emails and calls are expected to last on average 3 minutes per call (5 attempts per phone call per completed case x 90 cases x 3 minutes per case = 22.5 hours). Thus, the estimated burden is 67.5 hours (45 hours for interviews + 22.5 hours for recruiting).

The contact person for questions regarding data collection and statistical aspects of the design of this research is listed below:

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