

EMERGENCY CLEARANCE REQUEST

U.S. Department of Commerce

U.S. Census Bureau

**Supplemental Questions related to the effects of the
COVID-19 Pandemic on businesses to be added to the
following collections:**

Manufacturers' Shipments, Inventories & Orders Survey (M3) (0607-0008)

Building Permits Survey (0607-0094)

Monthly Wholesale Trade Survey (0607-0190)

Monthly Retail Surveys (0607-0717)

Quarterly Services Survey (0607-0907)

April 2, 2020

Supporting Statement Section A

1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

The U.S. Census Bureau requests an emergency 180-day approval of an emergency Information Collection Request (ICR) to add questions to the following surveys designated as Primary Economic Indicators:

- Manufacturers' Shipments, Inventories & Orders (M3) Survey
- Building Permits Survey
- Monthly Wholesale Trade Survey
- Monthly Retail Surveys
- Quarterly Services Survey

The added questions are designed to allow us to measure the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic upon businesses. As Primary Economic Indicators, each of these surveys produce timely and closely-watched statistics about the health of the U.S economy. Given the importance of these indicator surveys and of the statistics they produce, it is imperative we measure to what extent businesses have been impacted in terms of their ability to maintain operations during this turbulent period.

Due to the need to begin collecting this information right away, we are unable to allow for the time periods normally required for clearance under the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA). Therefore, we are seeking approval under the emergency clearance provisions of the PRA. We seek approval for this collection by April 8, 2020.

One fixed question will be added as follows:

During <insert month/quarter>, did this business temporarily close any of its locations for at least one day?

The following questions will also be added on a rotating basis:

Did this business experience any delays in its supply chain that impacted the value of <insert month> inventories?

Did delays in this business' product shipments impact <insert month> Inventories?

Did this business experience any delays in its supply chain that impacted the value of <first quarter> revenue?

For the Building Permits Survey, added questions include:

In the last month, was this office unable to issue permits as a result of a closure, lack of staffing, or any other reason?

- Yes
- No

If yes:

In the last month, were permit backlogs caused as a result of a closure, lack of staffing, or any other reason?

- Yes
- No

If yes:

In the last month, were permit backlogs cleared by the end of the reporting month or delayed into a future month?

- Backlogs were cleared by the end of the reporting month
- Backlogs were delayed into a future month

Screenshots of the questions placed within the collection instruments are at Attachment A.

The following are brief descriptions of each survey:

Manufacturers' Shipments, Inventories & Orders (M3) Survey (OMB control number 0607-0008) Expiration date: 4/31/2021. The M3 survey collects monthly data from domestic manufacturers on shipments, new orders, unfilled orders, and inventories by stage of fabrication. The survey is designed to measure current industrial activity and to provide an indication of future production commitments. The data are used for analyzing short- and long-term trends, both in the manufacturing sector and as related to other sectors of the economy. The survey provides an essential component of the current economic indicators needed for assessing the evolving status of the economy and formulating economic policy. The shipments and inventories data are essential inputs to the gross domestic product (GDP).

Building Permits Survey (OMB control number 0607-0094) Expiration date: 12/31/2021. The Census Bureau conducts the Building Permits Survey (BPS) monthly to collect data on new residential buildings from state and local permit-issuing offices. The key estimates from the survey are the numbers of new housing units authorized by building permits; data are also collected on the valuation of the housing units. We use the data, a component of The Conference Board Leading Economic Index, to estimate the number of housing units authorized, started, completed, and sold (single-family only). In addition, the Census Bureau uses the detailed geographic data in the development of annual population estimates; those population estimates are used by government agencies to allocate funding and other resources to local areas, inform policy, and aid in city planning.

Monthly Wholesale Trade Survey OMB control number (0607-0190) Expiration date: 6/30/2020. The Monthly Wholesale Trade Survey (MWTS) provides the only continuous measure of monthly wholesale sales, end-of-month inventories, and inventories-to-sales ratios. The sales and inventories estimates produced from the MWTS provide current trends of economic activity by kind of business for the United States. The estimates compiled from this

survey also provide valuable information for economic policy decisions by the government and are widely used by private businesses, trade organizations, professional associations, and other business research and analysis organizations.

Monthly Retail Surveys (OMB control number 0607-0717) Expiration date: 6/30/2020. The Monthly Retail Surveys (MRS) is comprised of two surveys known as the Monthly Retail Trade Survey (MRTS) and the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey (MARTS). The MRTS provides estimates of monthly retail sales, end-of-month merchandise inventories, and quarterly e-commerce sales of retailers in the United States. In addition, the survey also provides an estimate of monthly sales at food service establishments and drinking places. The MARTS, a subsample of MRTS, began in 1953 as a monthly survey for activity taking place during the previous month. The MARTS was developed to provide an early indication of current retail trade activity in the United States. The estimates produced in the MRS are critical to the accurate measurement of total economic activity.

Quarterly Services Survey (OMB control number 0607-0907) Expiration date: 7/31/2021. The Quarterly Services Survey (QSS) provides estimates of quarterly revenue and other data items from businesses or other for-profit organizations and not-for-profit institutions, in several industries. The primary estimates produced from the QSS are quarterly estimates of total operating revenue and the percentage of revenue by source. The Bureau of Economic Analysis uses the survey results as input to its quarterly Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and GDP by industry estimates. The estimates provide the Federal Reserve Board and Council of Economic advisors with timely information to assess current economic performance. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services use the QSS estimates to develop hospital-spending estimates for the National Health Expenditure Accounts. Other government and private stakeholders also benefit from a better understanding of important cyclical components of our economy

The Census Bureau intends to add the supplemental questions to the regular monthly/quarterly collections of each of the surveys included in the scope of this clearance over the upcoming 180 days. If we decide that the questions should remain on the collections for a period longer than 180 days, we will submit the paperwork required to either formally extend this clearance or to revise each of the individual collections.

Each of these collections is authorized under Title 13 United States Code, Sections 131 and 182.

2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection

The purpose of adding the questions to these 5 key Economic Indicator Programs is to provide an understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on American businesses. This would not be possible with the data typically captured through the regular collection of monthly and quarterly surveys. It is critical during this time to understand if the companies/organizations are open to provide data, if their organizations have access to the data, if there are impacts to the supply chain, and/or impacts to the shipments, etc. The COVID-19 pandemic will have extenuating circumstances on data provided to the Census Bureau on our surveys of businesses. This data is critical for

understanding response and quality of the data being provided by companies. This information is critical for understanding the trends of data in the current and upcoming collection cycles due to COVID-19. The monthly and quarterly indicator programs are the most timely collection vehicles within the Census Bureau, making this the most efficient manner to collect the data from American businesses.

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR for each survey detailing information about each survey's purpose and uses.

3. Use of Improved Information Technology and Burden Reduction

The primary method of collecting information in these surveys is electronically through our Centurion online reporting system. We deem this the most efficient and least burdensome way to collect the information.

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR for each survey detailing information about the use of technology to collect data.

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication and Use of Similar Information

The Census Bureau has communicated broadly across the Federal Statistical Community (Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Small Business Administration, and Minority Business Development Agency) to discuss the concern and impact of COVID-19. The Census Bureau has shared the question content as well as the intent and usage of the data collected. We have ensured this data is not being collected from other public sector entities. This collection extrapolates information already collected on stable sample or panel surveys. This provides a level of quality and certainty that is not available from other private or public sector entities.

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR for each survey detailing information about our efforts to identify duplication in each survey.

5. Impact on Small Businesses or Other Small Entities

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR for each survey detailing information about its impact on small businesses.

6. Consequences of Collecting the Information Less Frequently

The Census Bureau intends to add the supplemental COVID-19 questions to the regular monthly/quarterly collections of each survey over the upcoming 180 days. If we decide that the questions should remain on the collections for a period longer than 180 days, we will submit the paperwork required to either formally extend this clearance or to revise each of the individual collections.

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR for each survey detailing information about the consequences of conducting the survey less frequently.

7. Special Circumstances Relating to the Guidelines of 5 CFR 1320.5

The collection of information on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on businesses will be conducted in a manner consistent with the guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.5.

8. Comments in Response to the Federal Register Notice and Efforts to Consult Outside the Agency

Because this is a request for an emergency clearance, the Census Bureau asks that the 60-day comment period be waived. However, a 60-day Federal Register Notice (FRN) will be published in the *Federal Register* not more than 30 days after approval of this request. That notice will describe our plans either to extend this clearance or revise the individual survey clearances to add these questions on a permanent basis.

The Census Bureau has communicated broadly across the Federal Statistical Community (BLS, BEA, SBA, and MBDA) to discuss the concern and impact of COVID-19. The Census Bureau has shared the question content as well as the intent and usage of the data collected. We have ensured this data is not being collected from other public sector entities.

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR for each survey detailing information about our efforts to consult outside the agency.

9. Explanation of Any Payment or Gift to Respondents

There are no payments or gifts provided to respondents.

10. Protection of the Privacy and Confidentiality of Information Provided by Respondents

With the exception of the BPS, the information to be collected is protected under the confidentiality provisions of Title 13 U.S.C. Data collected in the BPS are from public records and are not afforded this protection. Respondents are informed of the nature and extent of the confidentiality of the information they report in the initial contact letters and emails they receive and on the information collection instruments.

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR for each survey detailing information about the confidentiality of the data collected in the survey.

11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

The information to be collected is not of a sensitive nature and does not concern matters that are commonly considered private.

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR for each survey detailing information about any sensitive questions.

12. Estimates of Annualized Burden Hours and Costs

Estimates of Burden Hours for 180 Days

Survey	Number of Respondents	Collection Periods	Total Number of Responses	Average Burden Per Response	Total Burden (in hours)
M3	5,000	6 (monthly)	30,000	5 min.	2,500
BPS	20,325	6 (monthly)	121,950	5 min.	10,163
MWTS	4,200	6 (monthly)	25,200	5 min.	2,100
MRS	12,000	6 (monthly)	72,000	5 min.	6,000
QSS	22,150	2 (quarterly)	44,300	5 min.	3,692
Total	63,675		293,450		24,455

Estimates of Cost Burden for 180 Days

Survey	Total Burden Hours	Hourly Wage Rate	Respondent Cost
M3	2,500	36.89	92,225
BPS	10,163	24.91	253,160
MWTS	2,100	33.89	71,169
MRS	6,000	33.89	203,340
QSS	3,692	36.89	136,197
Total			\$756,091

The estimate of average burden per response is based on expert review of the COVID-19 questions. The hourly wage information is taken from BLS publications.

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR for each survey detailing information about the burden and cost of each survey.

13. Estimate of Other Total Annual Cost Burden to Respondents or Record Keepers

We do not expect respondents to incur any costs other than that of their time to respond.

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR for each survey detailing information about the cost burden of each survey.

14. Cost to the Federal Government for 180 Days

The governmental cost to add these COVID-19 questions to the surveys is approximately \$26,766, all paid from Census Bureau appropriations. This estimate includes the cost for such things as data collection, processing, review of tabulated data, publication, equipment, overhead, printing, support staff, etc.

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR for each survey detailing information about the cost governmental cost of each survey.

15. Explanation for Program Changes or Adjustments

This collection is submitted as a new collection.

16. Plans for Tabulation and Publication and Project Time Schedule

The data will be aggregated within each indicator program at the industry level. This information will be used by analysts to explain the impact and trends of data within their industries, provide insight to current and future state of the data for the industries because of COVID-19, and assist the mathematical statisticians on the application of seasonal adjustment and imputation methodologies.

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR for each survey detailing information about the tabulation and publication plans for each survey.

17. Reason(s) Not to Display OMB Expiration Date

We request permission to not display the expiration date of the supplemental COVID-19 questions. The questions will be asked as part of the regular monthly/quarterly survey collection and will be integrated into the collection. Displaying a separate expiration date will be confusing and distracting for respondents. The expiration date for each base survey will be displayed on the survey collection instrument. Additionally, the OMB approval number for the collection of

COVID-19 questions will be displayed along with the approval number of the base survey on the collection instrument.

18. Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions

There are no exceptions to the certification.