

EMERGENCY CLEARANCE REQUEST

U.S. Department of Commerce

U.S. Census Bureau

Emergency Clearance Request for:

Adding supplemental questions to the Annual Business Survey (0607-1004) to capture a baseline of work from home options of businesses in 2019

May 8, 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 three questions on work from home content to the 2020 Annual Business Survey (ABS).

The additional questions are designed to measure work from home operations of businesses in 2019 to capture a baseline. If deemed warranted, next year's ABS would propose adding the same or similar questions to understand work from home operations of businesses during the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020. ABS is designed to allow for incorporating new content each survey year based on topics of relevance. The ABS includes all nonfarm employer businesses filing Internal Revenue Service (IRS) tax forms as individual proprietorships, partnerships, or any other type of corporations, with receipts of \$1,000 or more.

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 May 29, 2020.

The questions will be added at the end of Section A - Company Information. The questions will measure three concepts, specifically for 2019 (prior to the Coronavirus pandemic):

- (1) Does the firm allow work from home?
- (2) To what degree are employees of the firm engaging in work from home?
- (3) What are the limiting factors for work from home?

See attachment 1: 2020 ABS Work from Home

The following is a brief description of the ABS:

Annual Business Survey or ABS (OMB control number 0607-1004) Expiration date: 6/20/2022. The ABS provides information on selected economic and demographic characteristics for businesses and business owners by sex, ethnicity, race, and veteran status. ABS also measures research and development for microbusinesses, new business topics such as innovation and technology, as well as other business characteristics. The ABS is sponsored by the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) within the National Science Foundation (NSF) and conducted by the Census Bureau for five years (2018 – 2022). The ABS has variety of uses. For example,

- The Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) to assess business assistance needs and allocate available program resources.
- Local government commissions on small and disadvantaged businesses to establish and evaluate contract procurement practices.

- Federal, state and local government agencies as a framework for planning, directing and assessing programs that promote the activities of disadvantaged groups.
- The National Women’s Business Council to assess the state of women’s business ownership for policymakers, researchers, and the public at large.
- Consultants and researchers to analyze long-term economic and demographic shifts, and differences in ownership and performance among geographic areas.
- Individual business owners to analyze their operations in comparison to similar firms, compute their market share, and assess their growth and future prospects.

Title 13 United States Code, Sections 8(b), 131, and 182; Title 42 United States Code, Section 1861-76 (National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended); and Section 505 within the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010 authorize this collection. Sections 224 and 225 of Title 13 United States Code require response from sampled firms.

2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection

The purpose of adding the questions to the ABS is to establish a baseline for the status of work from home prior to the coronavirus pandemic. These data are not available from any other source. The ABS is uniquely positioned to create these estimates, and we may want to ask these questions again in the future to see if the coronavirus pandemic has an immediate effect (in 2020) or longer run effect (in 2021) on businesses offering work at home options to their employees. The goal of adding work from home content would be to:

- Create estimates of the number of businesses that provide work from home options for their employees by business characteristics (for example: size, age, geography, industry)
- Create percent of workers who are working from home by business characteristics (for example: size, age, geography, industry)
- Determine if businesses ability/willingness to offer expanded work from home options to employees changed during the pandemic and if those options were temporary or appear to be more permanent conditions of employment within those businesses.

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR detailing information about the purpose and use of the collected information.

3. Use of Improved Information Technology and Burden Reduction

The ABS is primarily collected via an electronic instrument 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 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 within the Census Bureau and National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) as well as outside with researchers in academia to discuss the concern and impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. The Census Bureau has shared the question content as well as the intent and usage of the data collected. We have ensured these data are not being collected from other public sector entities. The questions extend the 2015 Management and Organizational Practices Survey (MOPS) content to measure additional concepts. The proposal is also informed by other data sources, including the American Time Use Survey (ATUS), Current Population Survey (CPS), and the National Compensation Survey (NCS). Nick Bloom, a subject matter expert and one of the sponsors of the MOPS, provided input. These new questions will provide a critical benchmark of conditions prior to the Coronavirus pandemic from the perspective of businesses. We are not aware of any other data source for this benchmark estimate prior to the Coronavirus pandemic. Furthermore, 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 detailing information about our efforts to identify duplication in the survey.

5. Impact on Small Businesses or Other Small Entities

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

6. Consequences of Collecting the Information Less Frequently

The Census Bureau intends to add the supplemental work from home questions to the regular 2020 ABS collection covering the reference year 2019. If we decide that the questions should remain on the 2021 and 2022 collections, which is likely, they will be included in the regular ABS ICR submission next year.

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR 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 changes to businesses work from home options in 2019 will be conducted in a manner consistent with the guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.5.

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR detailing information about the special circumstances relating to the guidelines of 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 to announce this emergency collection of information and it will also describe our plan to add these questions to 2021 and 2022 collections, should we determine the need to continue this collection.

The Census Bureau has communicated broadly within the Census Bureau, NCSES, and outside with researchers in academia to discuss the concern and impact of the Coronavirus pandemic including those conversation around the development of Small Business Pulse Survey (SBPS).

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR 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.

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR detailing information about the explanation of any payment or gift to respondents.

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

The information collected in this survey is confidential under Title 13, United States Code, Section 9. Sections 224 and 225 of Title 13 require businesses to report.

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR 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 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)
ABS	300,000	1	300,000	3 min.	15,000
Total	300,000	1	300,000	3 min.	15,000

Estimates of Cost Burden for 180 Days

Survey	Total Burden Hours	Hourly Wage Rate	Respondent Cost
ABS	15,000	\$37.89	\$568,350
Total	15,000	\$37.89	\$568,350

The estimate of average burden per response is based on expert review of the work from home questions. The hourly wage for accountants is from the May 2018 Occupational Employment Statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) website.

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR detailing information about the burden and cost of the 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. The information requested is of the type and scope normally known by respondents or carried in company records and no special hardware or accounting software or system is necessary to provide answers to this information collection. Therefore, respondents are not expected to incur any capital and start-up costs or system maintenance costs in responding. Further, purchasing of outside accounting or information collection services, if performed by the respondent, is part of usual and customary business practices and not specifically required for this information collection.

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR detailing information about the estimate of other total annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers.

14. Cost to the Federal Government for 180 Days

The estimated cost to the Federal Government to add the work from home questions is minimal as ABS is designed to allow for incorporating new content each survey year based on topics of relevance.

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

15. Explanation for Program Changes or Adjustments

The increase in burden is attributable to adding the supplemental questions to the 2020 ABS.

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR detailing information about the explanation for program change or adjustments.

16. Plans for Tabulation and Publication and Project Time Schedule

The data will be aggregated to:

- Create estimates of the number of businesses that provide work from home options for their employees by business characteristics (for example: size, age, geography, industry)
- Create percent of workers who are working from home by business characteristics (for example: size, age, geography, industry)
- Create estimates for 2019 of the number of businesses that provide work from home options for their employees by business characteristics (for example: size, age, geography, industry).

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

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

The assigned expiration date will be included on the collection instrument.

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR detailing this information.

18. Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions

There are no exceptions to the certification.

Please refer to the most recently approved ICR detailing this information.