Addition of Stimulus Questions to the CEQ, Modification of Placement and Pick-up Procedures for CED for the Coronavirus Pandemic

Request for OMB approval

5/2020

Supporting Statement Section A

1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

The Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) requests an emergency 180-day approval of an emergency Information Collection Request (ICR) to add seven questions to the Consumer Expenditure Quarterly (CEQ) survey on the stimulus payment made by the Federal Government in response to the coronavirus pandemic and to modify procedures for the Consumer Expenditure Diary (CED) survey to limit exposure of staff and respondents. These questions will be administered beginning in June and continue through December (as needed).

These questions are necessary to measure the effect of the stimulus payments sent directly to many households in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Addition of the questions described below are needed to facilitate a timely and effective collection of expenditure data resulting from the stimulus. Economic data are used to evaluate the intended effect of the stimulus and to adequately explain changes in expenditure patterns that result from the coronavirus pandemic.

Together, the questions will capture: 1) the receipt of the stimulus payments, 2) by which members of the Consumer Unit (CU), 3) the month the CU received the stimulus, 4) the amount of the stimulus, 5) how the CU received the stimulus (direct deposit or check), 6) the primary use of the stimulus and 7) whether any additional stimulus checks were received by the CU. (See Attachment A for a detailed description of each question.)

Diary placement procedures must also be modified in order to reduce unnecessary travel, and ensure staff and respondent health and safety. For cases where Field Representatives (FRs) have already dropped off Diaries, the FR will call the respondent and ask for permission to transcribe the respondent's expenses into a blank CE-801 by phone.

For cases where Diaries have not been placed, Regional Offices (ROs) will provide FRs with the phone number of the sample address if available. FRs will call respondents, introduce themselves to the person answering the phone, and explain why they are calling instead of visiting in person. The FR will then verify the address and solicit participation in the CED Survey. If the respondent agrees, the FR will then complete the computer assisted personal interview (CAPI) Diary placement interview by phone instead of personal visit; and either 1) send the respondent a web link to the diary on the BLS website by text or email or 2) ship a paper Diary to the respondent. (See Attachment B for the email template that will be sent to respondents with a link to the paper diary.)

FRs will continue to conduct the midweek telephone call with the respondent. During this call, the FR will transcribe expenses and answer any questions. FRs will contact respondents on "Day 15" by phone to perform the last transcription of expenses, and complete the coverage questions that are normally asked in person at pickup.

Beginning in June and continuing through the end of December (as needed), FRs will have the additional option of offering the respondent an online Diary during the telephone placement interview. The following procedures will remain the same as with the Large Scale Feasibility (LSF) test: 1) screening questions will be used to determine if the respondent is eligible to receive an online Diary (respondent must have in-home internet access and must access the internet at least a few times a week); 2) a welcome email will be sent; 3) an email reminder will be sent to respondents who have not logged in or have not entered any expenses by the 8th day after placement; 4) the FR will call the respondent at the end of the recording period and enter any recalled purchases or expenses (not already recorded in the online diary) into the CAPI instrument and then complete the CAPI portion of the pick-up interview.

Additionally, all CEQ interviews will be conducted by telephone for the duration of the coronavirus pandemic period.

Finally, for both CEQ and CED, additional wording will be added regarding receipt of the advanced letter in order to ensure communication of the confidentiality and Paperwork Reduction Act statements to respondents who may not have received the advanced letter. If the respondent indicates that the letter was not received, the FR will offer to email the letter. In the event that the respondent refuses, the FR will be instructed to read the attached confidentiality, Paperwork Reduction act, and burden estimate statements. (See Attachment C - Respondent Contact Procedures and Email Template and Attachment D – Diary Instrument Specifications for additional information on the additional wording and email.)

These changes apply to the currently OMB approved CEQ and CED survey collections with control number 1220-0050 with the current expiration date of September 30, 2022. The authorizing statutes for this collection are available in the current package.

2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection

The purpose of adding these stimulus questions to the CEQ is to facilitate a timely and effective collection of expenditure data resulting from the stimulus payments. Economic data are used to evaluate the intended effect of the stimulus and to adequately explain changes in expenditure patterns that result from the coronavirus pandemic and stimulus.

Diary placement procedures must be modified in order to reduce unnecessary travel, and ensure staff and respondent health and safety.

For additional information, see the currently approved ICR for collection 1220-0550.

3. Use of Improved Information Technology and Burden Reduction

These questions will be added to the current CEQ (CAPI instrument).

For additional information on the use of improved information technology, see the currently approved ICR for collection 1220-0550.

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication and Use of Similar Information

To our knowledge, no other Federal agency is collecting this information. No other Federal survey collects the detail of expenditure information contained in the Consumer Expenditure (CE) surveys.

For additional information on efforts to identify duplication and use of similar information, see the currently approved ICR for collection 1220-0550.

5. Impact on Small Businesses or Other Small Entities

Not applicable: the collection of information on the CE questionnaires involves individuals or households, not small businesses.

See currently approved ICR for the collection 1220-0050.

6. Consequences of Collecting the Information Less Frequently

These questions will be added to the CEQ collection instrument for 180 days after approval. The data will supplement the expenditure and income information already collected by CEQ and help explain changes in expenditure patterns that result from the coronavirus pandemic and stimulus payment receipt. It is necessary to ask the receipt of the stimulus in each quarter in order to collect the universe of stimulus payments received by all CUs.

For additional information on consequences of collecting the information less frequently, see the 2020 OMB package submission for collection 1220-0550.

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

Collection of CE data is 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

A. Because this is a request for an emergency clearance, the Department of Labor asks that the 60-day comment period be waived. However, a 60-day Federal Register Notice (FRN) will be submitted as part of a broader 60-day FRN revision which will describe questionnaire changes that will streamline the collection process and keep the survey current with items available in the marketplace, as well as include the request to keep these questions beyond the 180-day approval of this request if needed.

B. During the development of the CE coronavirus pandemic stimulus payment questions, BLS has been in consultation with:

David S. Johnson
Population Studies Center
University of Michigan

Jennifer Epps
Associate Director for Demographic Programs – Survey Operations
Census Bureau

John Gloster
Associate Director for Demographic Programs – Survey Operations
Census Bureau

Richard Schwartz
Associate Director for Demographic Programs – Survey Operations
Census Bureau

Stephen Ash
Demographic Statistical Methods Division
Census Bureau

Susan Hostetter
Demographic Statistical Methods Division
Census Bureau

C. For additional information on consultations outside, see currently approved ICR for 1220-0550.

9. Explanation of Any Payment or Gift to Respondents

There is no change from the currently approved collection 1220-0050.

Please see currently approved ICR for 1220-0050.

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

Data collected through the coronavirus pandemic stimulus payment questions will be protected in the same manner as other data collected for the CE.

See currently approved ICR for 1220-0050 for further information.

11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

The coronavirus stimulus payment questions proposed for inclusion in the CE are not of a sensitive nature and do not concern matters that are commonly considered private. The CE surveys do not include any questions of a sensitive nature.

See currently approved ICR for 1220-0050 for further information.

12. Estimates of Annualized Burden Hours and Costs

Estimates of Burden Hours for 180 Days

CE estimates that it will take approximately 1 minute to answer the additional questions. CE estimates that 33 percent of respondents will have received the stimulus payment during each reference period and answer these additional questions. Thus, across all respondents, CE estimates 20 seconds on average to ask the additional questions on the stimulus in the CEQ. This estimate was calculated by reading the questions aloud with a pause for allowing the respondent to answer. . Additionally, because FRs will no longer pick up completed diaries, respondents must spend additional time on the phone with an FR telling them their responses. While on the phone with the respondent, the FR will transcribe the respondent's answers onto a blank diary in the FRs possession. This process will add approximately 15 minutes of respondent burden. CE estimates that the transcription of these expenses will take approximately 5 minutes for each of the three telephone calls the FR will place.

Type of Respondents	**Form Name**	**Number of Respondents**	**Number of Responses per Respondent**	**Average Burden Per Response (in hours)**	**Total Burden (in hours)**
Household	CEQ CAPI Instrument	5,450	2	.0056 hours	61
Household	CED Paper Diary	3,398	3	.0833 hours	849
Total					910

Estimates of Cost Burden for 180 Days

Type of Respondents	**Form Name**	**Number of Respondents**	**Number of Responses per Respondent**	**Average Burden Per Response (in hours)**	**Total Burden Hours**	**Hourly Wage Rate**	**Respondent Cost**
Household	CEQ CAPI Instrument	5,450	2	.0056 hours	61	$7.25	$442
Household	CED Paper Diary	3,398	3	.0833	849	$7.25	$6,155
Total							**$6,597**

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

There are no other annual costs to respondents or record keepers other than their time to respond.

See currently approved ICR 1220-0050 for further information.

14. Cost to the Federal Government for 180 Days

There are no additional costs for these questions. Funding for these questions will be part of the annual agreement through which the BLS contracts with the Census Bureau to collect CE data.

Please see the currently approved ICR for 1220-0050 for further information on costs.

15. Explanation for Program Changes or Adjustments

The collection is submitted as a new collection.

16. Plans for Tabulation and Publication and Project Time Schedule

As with past special data collections, such as the addition of stimulus questions in 2009, BLS plans to summarize the findings from the coronavirus pandemic stimulus questions and make them available to the public. Analysis will include the change in household spending caused by receipt of the stimulus payments including durable and non-durable goods. A similar analysis was completed following the addition of stimulus questions in 2009. The raw data will also be released to the public and made available through microdata files in the fall of 2021.

The BLS will publish its analysis of the quality of collected data including unit nonresponse, record usage rates, item nonresponse, number of rounded items, edit flag rates, average perceived burden, and average perceived length before and after coronavirus pandemic data collection changes by December 2021.

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

The BLS requests not to display the expiration date of the information collection because the Quarterly Interview and the Diary Household Characteristics instruments are automated; the respondent, therefore, never sees the date. The OMB control number for the CE Surveys is included in the advance letter given to respondents (see Attachment I). For the Diary CE-801 there is a significant costs savings in printing a large quantity of forms at one time due to the set up costs involved in printing for the survey instrument. By not printing the date on the form the BLS will be able to continue to use forms in stock, assuming no form changes, once the OMB clearance date has expired and a new expiration date has been approved. The BLS would save both time and money by not having to destroy the old questionnaires and printing new ones.

18. Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions

There are no exceptions to the certification.