



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
U.S. Census Bureau
Office of the Director
Washington, DC 20233-0001

December 22, 2020

TO: Desk Officer for the U.S. Census Bureau
Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs/OMB

FROM: Victoria Velkoff, Associate Director for Demographic Programs
U.S. Census Bureau

SUBJECT: Non-Substantive Change Request for the Household Pulse Survey, Phase 3

On October 31, 2020, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) provided clearance to the Census Bureau to conduct Phase 3 of the Household Pulse Survey (OMB No. 0607-1013, expiration 10/31/2023). A condition of that clearance was that the Census Bureau would continue the survey using the Phase 2 instrument through December, 2020, and then take a hiatus in data collection to evaluate the questionnaire content. During the hiatus, the Census Bureau would work with the other Federal agencies who have contributed content to the questionnaire (and other agencies wishing to add new content) to ensure that the Household Pulse Survey continued to produce relevant and meaningful data given the ongoing circumstances of the pandemic. The Census Bureau anticipated a break of approximately two months to determine what changes were needed to the instrument; what content should be eliminated and/or added to maximize data utility in these rapidly changing circumstances; conduct pretesting, if needed; and submit an Information Collection Request (ICR) revision through formal channels for OMB review and approval.

Given current information about the trajectory of the pandemic, however, it may be imprudent to take the hiatus as planned at the end of December, 2020. Doing so would mean that Household Pulse Survey would not be collecting data in the months of January or February, 2021 when the pandemic is still in an acute stage – and when the data produced by the Household Pulse continues to be useful to the public in understanding how American households are faring during this period.

The Census Bureau therefore requests approval to continue administering the current Phase 3 instrument through January and February, 2021. While the survey continues, the Census Bureau will proceed with the efforts requested by OMB as part of the October 31, 2020 clearance.

Specifically, the Census Bureau will evaluate the continued utility of items on the Phase 3 instrument as described above. Further, it will execute a thorough non-response bias analysis to supplement the Source & Accuracy Statements that accompany each bi-weekly data release (a current example of which is included in Attachment A). This non-response bias work will further the Census Bureau's commitment to transparency in helping data users understanding the quality and limitations of the Household Pulse Survey.

Additionally, we propose adding a brief series of questions to the Phase 3 instrument as soon as possible regarding individuals' intention to receive the Covid-19 vaccine. Given that time is of the essence for these items, we request approval to include them immediately, effective the data collection period starting January 6, 2021. To maintain balance with regard to the estimated burden to the public, we would remove questions from the current survey for which we find utility has declined over time. The Intent to Vaccinate questions proposed for inclusion, along with the questionnaire items proposed for removal are included in Attachment B.

Finally, we note here that there will be a brief break in Household Pulse Survey data collection from December 21, 2020 – January 6, 2021. This break is necessary to facilitate acquisition of additional SMS texting capacity. The Census Bureau experimented with the use of texting for the first time on the Household Pulse Survey and we currently observe that more than 60% of the response has been elicited through SMS. Given this positive effect on response, we consider it prudent to take this break and restart the survey with the ability to continue texting.

The Census Bureau appreciates OMB's consideration of these changes and believes they are in the best interests of the public at this time. We would be happy to address any questions or concerns associated with this request.

Attachments

Attachment A: Source & Accuracy Statement for Data Collection Period November 25 – December 7, 2020

Attachment B: Proposed Intent to Vaccinate Questions / Current Survey Questions Proposed for Deletion