



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

September 10, 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: Request for Approval for Non-Substantive Change:
Revisions to the Household Pulse Survey Questionnaire, Phase 2

The Census Bureau is writing to request approval of a Non-Substantive Change related to the Household Pulse Survey (OMB No. 0607-1013). Specifically, the Census Bureau proposes slight revisions to the Household Pulse Survey “Phase 2” questionnaire as approved by OMB on August 19, 2020.

The revisions are as follows:

1) Questionnaire item regarding school enrollment status of children in the household.

Questionnaire item 42 is designed to understand school enrollment status for children living in the household:

Q42 (education)

At any time during **the 2020-2021 school year**, will any children in this household be enrolled in a public school, enrolled in a private school, or educated in a homeschool setting in Kindergarten through 12th grade or grade equivalent? Select all that apply.

- 1) Yes, enrolled in a public or private school
- 2) Yes, homeschooled
- 3) No

Given the number of school districts announcing plans to conduct classes 100% virtually with the start of the 2020-2021 school year, we were concerned that the response option, “Yes, homeschooled” may be confusing for respondents – that is, they may confuse “homeschooled” with “doing school from home” while enrolled in a public or private school.

We edited the response option to clarify what is meant by “homeschooled” to read, “Yes, homeschooled (not enrolled in a public or private school).” This edit minimizes potential confusion for respondents and yields better data for users interested in how households are making decisions to homeschool their children outside of public and private school systems.

The item now reads (change highlighted in yellow):

Q42 (education)

At any time during **the 2020-2021 school year**, will any children in this household be enrolled in a public school, enrolled in a private school, or educated in a homeschool setting in Kindergarten through 12th grade or grade equivalent? Select all that apply.

- 1) Yes, enrolled in a public or private school
- 2) Yes, homeschooled (not enrolled in a public or private school)
- 3) No

2) Questionnaire items relating to spending behaviors

The Census Bureau, in collaboration with cognitive experts at the Bureau of Labor Statistics, tested new response options for two questions relating to the consumer spending. These are currently Items 19b. and 19c. in the Household Pulse Survey Phase 2 instrument.¹ We propose adding new response options in the first question (19b.) aimed at measuring spending changes in the last 7 days related to shopping in-stores, eating at restaurants, attending medical appointments, or resuming/starting housekeeping or caregiving services. The second question (19c.) also includes new response options aimed at measuring the reasons for these spending changes.

A report on the methodology for testing these question items, findings and recommendations can be found in Attachment 1. As an outcome of the testing, we propose revision of these questions to include the new response options, highlighted here in yellow:

Q19b (spending)

In the **last 7 days**, which of the following changes have you or your household made to your spending or shopping? *Select all that apply.*

- 1) Made more purchases online (as opposed to in store)
- 2) Made more purchases by curbside pick-up (as opposed to in store)
- 3) Made more purchases in-store (as opposed to purchases online or curbside pickup)

¹ At the time of testing, these items were sequenced in a draft version of the questionnaire as Items 21d. and 21f., and the attached cognitive testing report references them this way. However, the items currently are sequenced as Items 19b. and 19c. in the Phase 2 questionnaire now in production. The Phase 2 questionnaire is accessible at https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/demo/technical-documentation/hhp/Phase_2_Questionnaire_09_09_2020_English.pdf.

- 4) Increased use of credit cards or smartphone apps for purchases, instead of using cash
- 5) Avoided eating at restaurants
- 6) Resumed eating at restaurants
- 7) Canceled or postponed in-person medical or dental appointments
- 8) Attended in-person medical or dental appointments
- 9) Canceled or postponed housekeeping or caregiving services
- 10) Resumed or started new housekeeping or caregiving services
- 11) Did not make any changes to spending or shopping behavior (SKIP 21F)

Q19c (spending)

(if 19b = 1 through 10) In the **last 7 days**, for which of the following reasons have you or your household changed spending? *Select all that apply.*

- 1) Usual shopping places were closed or had limited hours (e.g., restaurant, doctor/dentist office, health club, hair salon, child care center, etc.)
- 2) Usual shopping places re-opened or increased hours
- 3) Concerned about going to public or crowded places or having contact with high-risk people
- 4) Less concerned about going to public or crowded places or having contact with high-risk people
- 5) Loss of income
- 6) Increased income
- 7) Concerns about being laid off or having hours reduced
- 8) Less concerned about being laid off or having hours reduced
- 9) Working from home/teleworking
- 10) Resumed working onsite at workplace
- 11) Concerns about the economy
- 12) Less concerned about the economy
- 13) Other, specify:

The Census Bureau believes these changes are beneficial to the Household Pulse Survey and provide more accurate, nuanced data to users. We appreciate your consideration and are happy to address any questions or concerns associated with this request.

Attachments

Attachment 1: Census Household Pulse Survey Phase 2 Cognitive Testing