

To: Jordan Cohen
Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA)
Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

From: Xiayun Tan
Office of Refugee Resettlement
Administration for Children and Families (ACF)

Date: December 6, 2021

Subject: NonSubstantive Change Request – Annual Survey of Refugees (OMB #0970-0033)

This memo requests approval of nonsubstantive changes to the approved information collection, Annual Survey of Refugees (OMB #0970-0033).

Background

Since the 1980s, the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) has conducted the Annual Survey of Refugees (ASR), which collects information on refugees during their first five years after their arrival in the U.S. ORR uses the ASR results alongside other information sources to fulfill its Congressionally-mandated reporting following the 1980 Refugee Act. ORR is dedicated to continuous improvement of the survey instrument to enhance the quality and representativeness of data available to ACF. In 2020, a new survey questionnaire with major revisions from prior years was OMB approved and was used for the 2020 ASR fielding in Spring 2021. The nonsubstantive changes outlined below are part of ORR's ongoing survey improvement efforts. Revisions are proposed based on 2020 ASR fielding experience and inputs from stakeholders and survey respondents. This includes reduction of the number of questions to reduce burden and to be in line with the estimated time per response, and edits for clarification and reliability.

Overview of Requested Changes

For the Introduction Letter and Postcard, ORR requests minor revisions for language clarity and changes of co-principle investigator of the survey.

For the survey questionnaire, ORR requests to remove 20 existing questions and make minor revisions of existing questions to: 1) improve efficiency and reduce respondent burden and remain within the estimated time per response; 2) clarify and enhance data collection accuracy; 3) ensure information reliability. Finally, all skip patterns have been reviewed and revised accordingly as a result of the revisions made. Some examples are outlined below (please see Appendix for a full list of proposed changes based on existing questions):

1. To improve efficiency and reduce respondent burden, ORR requests removal or minor revisions of existing questions:
 - revise existing screening questions to identify eligible respondents more efficiently;
 - cap the total number of household family members at 10 rather than 15;
 - stop inquiring about marital status of family members and ask about Principle

- Applicant (PA) only;
 - streamline the employment section, both by cutting and revising existing questions;
 - delete questions on English writing ability and on English/ESL classes prior to coming to the U.S to focus on experience after arrival;
 - cut the question on willingness to take the survey in different modes since sufficient data was already collected from previous survey wave.
2. To clarify and enhance data collection accuracy, ORR requests to make minor revisions of the existing question and response options:
- add response options for both race/ethnicity and ethnic origin;
 - add response options for how respondents met someone of a different cultural background based on information collected from previous survey wave;
 - reword the question asking about the reason for moving;
 - reword questions and add response options to include virtual classes;
 - revise questions about English/ESL classes and job preparation classes in the U.S.;
 - revise questions on plans for U.S. citizenship to address comprehension challenges.
3. ORR requests to remove questions that did not produce reliable information due to comprehension challenges, after weighing their potential analytical usage:
- remove questions on daily caregiving; based on previous data collection, these questions did not produce reliable information;
 - streamline the section on employment before arrival to the U.S.;
 - delete or reword questions that deal with the concept of displacement;
 - cut questions in the section on children and school;

As noted above, these changes do not impact the previous burden estimates, but instead bring the information collection in-line with those estimates.

Time Sensitivities

The annual survey has been routinely conducted from mid-January through early April. The introduction letter and postcard will go out in early January and calling of the survey will begin in the second week of January. Without a timely approval on the revised survey instrument, ORR will be unable to print and program the instrument on time and will fail to collect data in a timely manner to produce key findings to be included in ORR's Annual Report to Congress, as mandated by the Refugee Act of 1980.