

Department of Commerce
U.S. Census Bureau
OMB Information Collection Request
Quarterly Survey of Plant Capacity Utilization
(OMB Control No. 0607-0175)

A. Justification

1. Necessity of the Information Collection

The U. S. Census Bureau, on behalf of the Federal Reserve Board (FRB) and the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), within the Department of Defense (DOD), requests an extension of approval for the Quarterly Survey of Plant Capacity Utilization (QPC), OMB number 0607-0175. The survey provides information on use of industrial capacity in manufacturing and publishing plants as defined by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). The Survey of Plant Capacity Utilization began in the 1970's as an annual survey that collected fourth quarter data only. The annual survey continued through 2006. In 2007, the FRB requested that the survey be converted to a quarterly survey due to the necessity for quarterly data rather than annual. The survey is the only governmental source of capacity utilization rates at industry levels. Changes in capacity utilization are considered important indicators of investment demand and inflationary pressure. For these reasons, the estimates of capacity utilization are closely monitored by government policy makers and private sector decision makers.

The Census Bureau conducts the survey under the authority of Title 13, United States Code, Sections 8(b); 50 U.S.C., Section 98, *et seq.*; and 12 U.S.C., Section 244. This survey utilizes a multi-mode data collection process that includes internet reporting and telephone. The survey collects the value of quarterly production, the value of production that could be achieved if operating under "full production" capability, and the value of production that could be achieved if operating under "emergency production" capability. The ratio of the actual to the full is the basis of the estimates for full capacity utilization rates and similarly, the actual to the emergency for the emergency capacity utilization rates. The survey also collects information by shift, on work patterns at the actual production level.

Appendix A is a copy of the MQ-C2 worksheet, instructions, and respondent portal flyer. Response to the quarterly survey is voluntary.

2. Need and Uses

The FRB is the primary user of the current QPC data and expressed the need for these quarterly data. FRB publishes measures of industrial production (IP), capacity, and capacity utilization in its G.17 statistical release, which has been designated by the federal government as a Principal Federal Economic Indicator. Utilization rates from the QPC survey are a principal source for the measures of capacity and capacity utilization. The indexes of IP are either estimated from physical product data or estimated from monthly data on inputs to the production process, specifically production worker hours. To maintain the quality of the IP index, the collection of these quarterly data, including the utilization rate data and the workweek of capital, is critical to the indicators of capital input use and industry output.

The FRB uses these data in several ways. First, the QPC data are the primary source of information for the capacity indexes and utilization rates published by the FRB. Second, the QPC utilization rate data are used as indicators of output for some industries in the estimation of monthly IP. Third, the survey responses for reasons operating below capacity are valuable indicators for distinguishing between supply chain bottlenecks versus demand constraints affecting manufacturing. Fourth, the QPC utilization rate data and the workweek data are used to improve the projections of labor productivity that are used to align IP with comprehensive benchmark information from the Economic Census covering the Manufacturing sector and the Annual Survey of Manufactures (ASM). The Census Bureau is launching a new annual survey in 2024, the Annual Integrated Economic Survey (AIES), which will replace the ASM as a source for this benchmark information going forward. Finally, utilization rate data will assist in the assessment of recent changes in IP, as most of the high-frequency movement in utilization rates reflects production changes rather than capacity changes.

The DLA uses the data to assess industrial base readiness and ramp-up time to meet demand for goods under selected national emergency scenarios.

In addition to the FRB and DLA uses, these data are published on the Census Bureau's website, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/qpc.html>.

Information quality is an integral part of the pre-dissemination review of the data published by the Census Bureau (fully described in the Census Bureau's Information Quality Guidelines). Information quality is also integral to the data collection conducted by the Census Bureau and is incorporated into the clearance process required by the Paperwork Reduction Act.

3. Use of Information Technology

The Census Bureau developed a web-based version of the quarterly survey, which is now all electronic. Electronic reporting allows the Census Bureau to receive

the data in a timely manner and allows for data checks within the instrument to verify reported data are accurate, resulting in less follow-up. Screenshots from the online application are shown in Appendix A.

We will also continue to use other options such as telephone to retrieve data from our respondents, and we now send email reminders to respondents.

1. Efforts to Identify Duplication

The Census Bureau maintains ongoing contact with the FRB and DOD, the primary data users of these statistics, to avoid duplication. The QPC data is the only source of detailed information on manufacturing and printing utilization rates and the only source of data on the workweek of capital.

5. Minimizing Burden

All plants with fewer than 5 employees are excluded from the survey. We select a new sample every 5 years. While the total burden is not decreased, the burden on individual plants is decreased. We accept data over the phone and through electronic submission. If respondents do not have all the data available, we will accept what they have, alleviating their burden and maximizing our item response.

6. Consequences of Less Frequent Collection

Less frequent collection would result in the inability to monitor short term effects on growth rates, productivity changes, and price changes.

7. Special Circumstances

To meet the timely release of the quarterly estimates (75 days from mailing) and allow for follow-up, we request response to this quarterly survey within 20 days. Based on historic response, respondents can provide these data in 20 days.

8. Consultations Outside the Agency

The Census Bureau announced its intention to conduct the quarterly survey in the Federal Register on January 16, 2024 (volume 89, page 2582-2583) inviting the public to comment on our plans to submit this request. We received no comments in response to the notice.

We are in continuous contact with the FRB and the DOD to discuss the scope and content as it relates to their needs. Within the Department of Defense, we are in contact with two agencies; the DLA, the funding agency, and the Institute for Defense Analysis (IDA), the agency that analyzes and uses the data.

During the data collection process, we consult with respondents to determine how well they can provide the information requested, where any potential reporting problem may lie, and the amount of time needed to complete the survey.

Consultations with outside consultants were for the purpose of receiving individual opinions and not for the purpose of soliciting a consensus group opinion.

9. Paying Respondents

We do not pay respondents or provide them gifts.

10. Assurance of Confidentiality

We inform respondents in a letter signed by the Director of the Census Bureau, on both the electronic reporting instrument and the survey website, that responses are confidential. Appendix B includes a copy of the cover letter, the follow-up letter, the reminder email, and the follow-up email. We inform the respondents in the cover letter that the survey is voluntary.

11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

There are no sensitive questions.

12. Estimate of Hour Burden

The number of quarterly respondents will be approximately 7,500. The estimated time per response is 20-40 minutes, with an average of 30 minutes, for a total annual burden of 15,000 hours. The 20-40 minutes (average of 30 minutes) estimate is based on the evaluation of para data from our online instrument and informal contact with respondents who verified that this burden was a reasonable estimate.

The estimated annual cost to the respondents is \$625,500. This estimate is based on the mean hourly wage of \$41.70 for an accountant multiplied by the total annual burden hours. (Occupational Employment and Wages - Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2022 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates; \$41.70 represents the mean hourly wage of the full-time wage and salary earnings of accountants and auditors, SOC code 13-2011.)

13. Estimate of Cost Burden

We do not expect respondents to incur any costs other than their time to respond. The information requested is of the type and scope normally 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.

14. Cost to Federal Government

The total annual cost to the Federal Government for fiscal year 2022 was \$980,003 and \$1,003,448 for 2023. Much of the cost is covered by the FRB and includes costs for mail out, data collection, overhead, support staff, data review, publication, and dissemination.

15. Reason for Change in Burden

There is no change from the current OMB inventory.

16. Project Schedule

The Census Bureau will mail a letter at the end of each quarter requesting respondents to complete on-line within 20 days. Establishments that do not respond within that time receive a follow-up.

The following is a tentative schedule for data collection, processing, and publication for the quarterly survey.

Data Collection and Publication Schedule

Activity	Date
1 st quarter mailing	March current year
1 st quarter reminder email	15 days after mailout
1 st quarter follow-up	20 days after mailout
1 st quarter robocalls	35 days after mailout
1 st quarter follow-up email	50 days after mailout
1 st quarter release of data	June current year
2 nd quarter mailing	June current year
2 nd quarter reminder email	15 days after mailout
2 nd quarter follow-up	20 days after mailout
2 nd quarter robocalls	35 days after mailout
2 nd quarter follow-up email	50 days after mailout
2 nd quarter release of data	September current year
3 rd quarter mailing	September current year
3 rd quarter reminder email	15 days after mailout

3 rd quarter follow-up	20 days after mailout
3 rd quarter robocalls	35 days after mailout
3 rd quarter follow-up email	50 days after mailout
3 rd quarter release of data	December current year
4 th quarter mailing	December current year
4 th quarter reminder email	15 days after mailout
4 th quarter follow-up	20 days after mailout
4 th quarter robocalls	35 days after mailout
4 th quarter follow-up email	50 days after mailout
4 th quarter release of data	March of subsequent year

17. Request to Not Display the Expiration Date

The expiration date and OMB number are displayed on the electronic instrument login page, and on the survey's website.

18. Exceptions to the Certification

There are no exceptions.

19. Industries Affected

The survey covers all manufacturing and publishing industries defined by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) with industry groups being represented. These are NAICS industries or combinations thereof. These industry groups were defined by the FRB. Emphasis is placed on priority industries as defined by the FRB. See Supporting Statement- Part B, Section B: Collection of Information Employing Statistical Methods for a more comprehensive breakdown of scope and sampling strategy.