

September 1, 2024

Memorandum for: Reviewer of 1220-0191

CC: Nicholas Johnson

From: Rose Woods
Stephanie Denton

Subject: Fielding the Leave and Job Flexibilities Module in the 2025 American Time Use Survey

The American Time Use Survey (ATUS), conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, included a Leave and Job Flexibilities Module in 2011, 2017-18, and currently in 2024. The module is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Women's Bureau. The purpose of this request for review is to obtain clearance for collection of an additional year of the Leave and Job Flexibilities Module, starting in January 2025.

ATUS Leave and Job Flexibilities Module Background

As part of the ATUS, the 2025 Leave and Job Flexibilities Module will survey individuals ages 15 and over from a nationally-representative sample of approximately 1,990 sample households each month. If approved, the 2025 Leave and Job Flexibilities Module will be asked immediately after the ATUS and will follow up on some of the information ATUS respondents provide in their diary.

The proposed 2025 Leave and Job Flexibilities Module is identical to the 2024 module that is currently in collection. The 2025 ATUS Leave and Job Flexibilities Module will accomplish similar objectives as the 2011, 2017-18, and 2024 modules. As in 2011, data will be collected on employees' access to paid and unpaid leave and their leave activities (e.g., instances of leave taking, leave denials, and non-use of leave). Like the 2017-18 and 2024 Leave Module, the proposed 2025 module will also collect data on job flexibilities and work schedules.

Reasons to Collect Leave and Job Flexibilities Data in the ATUS

The data from the proposed 2025 Leave and Job Flexibilities Module will support the BLS mission of providing relevant information on economic and social issues. The data will provide a richer description of work, specifically workers' access to paid leave, the reasons for which workers are able to take leave, leave activity, and information about the availability and use of flexible and alternative work schedules. The module will also provide more information on the relationships between work schedules, job flexibilities, and time use.

The data from the Leave and Job Flexibilities Module closely support the mission of the module's sponsor, DOL's Women Bureau, to identify, research, and analyze the topics working women care about. The Leave and Job Flexibilities Module data files are intended to be used as a dataset for researchers. These data allow researchers to examine the effects of job flexibility on time spent in childcare, eldercare, and other activities that people seek to balance with the time they spend working. The availability of flexible jobs for eldercare providers has recently become a topic of greater interest. The ATUS allows researchers to directly examine not only the time eldercare providers provide care but also the incidence of flexible jobs and work at home among this population.

Some of the questions that appear in the Leave and Job Flexibilities Module also appear in the Current Population Survey (CPS) Work Supplement Survey (WSS), fielded in September 2024. Because the ATUS samples from households completing their final month of interviews for the CPS, a small number of CPS WSS respondents may be asked the same or similar questions about job flexibilities and work schedules in the ATUS. BLS estimates a maximum of 450 respondents¹ will be asked both the CPS Work Supplement and the ATUS Leave and Job Flexibilities Module questions in 2025. Most of these respondents will be interviewed in January-April 2025. The 2025 Leave and Job Flexibilities Module interviews would be at least 4-7 months after the WSS.

BLS carefully considered several options to reduce respondent burden associated with duplicative questions in 2024, but ultimately realized modifying the questionnaire, collection instrument, data processing, and estimate production processes would be extremely resource-intensive and would drastically increase the cost of the module. Additionally, BLS feels there are benefits to asking some of the same questions on both the WSS and the Leave Module. For example, people's work schedules may be subject to seasonal or other changes even if they have the same job in both surveys. CPS will ask the WSS questions about all eligible persons in the household, allowing proxy respondents, whereas the ATUS does not allow proxy respondents. For all these reasons, responses to a WSS question and a Leave Module question on the same topic may differ in some instances. Asking the questions in both surveys is beneficial, but analyses of the data from both surveys also could yield insight about how stable answers are over time. Further, unlike the CPS WSS supplement, the ATUS Leave and Job Flexibilities module will run for a full year and can be tied to the time diary. Thus, any seasonal fluctuations in workers' access to and use of job flexibilities would be accounted for in the data.

Research using Leave and Job Flexibilities Module Data

The previous Leave Modules have proven to be a rich data source for researchers. Researchers have demonstrated clear value in linking the job flexibilities data from the module to the core ATUS time-use diary. Some recent examples of how the Leave Module data have been used include:

¹ This estimate includes ATUS respondents who are wage and salary workers, complete the CPS on or after September 2024, do not change jobs since the September 2024 CPS interview, and are the CPS respondent in MIS-8.

- The U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy used data from the 2017-18 Leave Module to examine access to paid leave for family and medical reasons among workers with disabilities.²
- Carlson, Jetts, and Pepin used data from the 2017-18 Leave Module to study flexplace work and partnered father’s time in housework and childcare.³ They found fathers who use flexplace benefits report more routine childcare, regardless of the reason for flexplace use or their partners’ employment status.
- Gimenez-Nadal, Molina, and Sevilla used data from the 2017-18 Leave Module to analyze the relationship between workers’ ability to vary or change their start and end time at work and the motherhood wage gap of working parents. They found that temporal flexibility has a U-shaped relationship with the wage rates of both fathers and mothers, and that temporal flexibility has a concave relationship with the motherhood wage gap.⁴
- Pabilonia and Vernon estimated hourly wage differentials for teleworkers and compared how workers allocate their time over the day when they work from home rather than the office. They found that while some teleworkers earn a wage premium, it varies by gender, parental status, and teleworking intensity.⁵
- Jennifer Bennett Shinall used the module data and found that workers in states with paid sick leave mandates were more likely to stay home when sick, even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, likely reducing the spread of infectious disease in the workplace. Combining the ATUS Leave Module and data from the CPS, she further examined workers’ paid sick leave usage and the effects of paid sick leave legislation on wages, employment, and labor market participation rates.⁶

Reasons to extend collection of the Leave and Job Flexibilities Module

Two years of module data would allow a greater sample size for more detailed analyses (much like the 2017-18 Leave Module allowed). An additional year of the Leave and Job Flexibilities Module provides researchers with the ability to use larger samples by pooling data across years. For some purposes, the number of observations needed to make valid statistical inferences exceeds the annual sample size. This is especially true for comparisons of smaller population subgroups. More data are needed to analyze the general trends in work from home and job flexibility. Researchers are interested in determining if work from home reached a new level of equilibrium or if it will trend up as technological improvements, cost savings, and workers’ increased desire for more flexibility spur increases in flexibility and work from home.

² “Access to Paid Leave for Family and Medical Reasons Among Workers with Disabilities.” Office of Disability Employment Policy Report. U.S. Department of Labor. December 2021.

³ Daniel L. Carlson, Richard J. Petts, Joanna R. Pepin. “Flexplace work and partnered fathers’ time in housework and childcare.” *Men and Masculinities*. May 2021.

⁴ J. Ignacio Gimenez-Nadal, José Alberto Molina, and Almudena Sevilla. “Temporal Flexibility, Breaks at Work, and the Motherhood Wage Gap.” IZA DP No. 14578. July 2021.

⁵ Pabilonia SW, Victoria Vernon. “Telework, Wages, and Time Use in the United States.” *Review of Economics of the Household* 2022;20(3):687-734.

⁶ Jennifer Bennett Shinall. “Paid Sick Leave’s Payoff.” *Vanderbilt Law Review Essays*. Volume 75, Number 6. November 2022.