SUPPORTING STATEMENT A

U.S. Department of Commerce

U.S. Census Bureau

Survey of Housing Starts, Sales, and Completions (SOC)

OMB Control No. 0607-0110

Abstract

The U. S. Census Bureau is requesting a revision and extension of the currently approved collection for the Survey of Housing Starts, Sales, and Completions, otherwise known as the Survey of Construction (SOC). The SOC is co-sponsored by the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The SOC collects monthly data on new residential construction from a sample of owners or builders. The Census Bureau uses the Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) electronic questionnaires SOC-QI/SF.1 and SOC-QI/MF.1 to collect data on start and completion dates of construction, physical characteristics of the structure (e.g., floor area, number of bathrooms, type of heating system), and if applicable, date of sale, sales price, and type of financing. The SOC provides widely used measures of construction activity, including the New Residential Construction and New Residential Sales principal federal economic indicators (PFEIs). The current clearance for this survey is scheduled to expire on March 31, 2027.

Justification

1. **Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.**

   The Census Bureau is authorized under Title 13, United States Code, Sections 131 and 182 to collect information, and under Title 13 Section 8(b) to perform survey work for other agencies, including HUD. HUD is authorized under Title 12 U.S.C., Sections 1701z-1 and 1701z-2g to collect or obtain information on new residential buildings (see Attachment E).

   Government agencies and private companies use statistics from the SOC to monitor and evaluate the housing and construction industry. The Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) within the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), has designated the direct results of this survey as two PFEIs: New Residential Construction and New Residential Sales. Additionally, residential data from this survey contributes to another key construction indicator, Value of Construction Put in Place (VIP), which is an input to estimates for the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The survey also produces a number of other statistical series, including information on the physical characteristics of new residential buildings, construction time, and inflation indexes for new building prices.

2. **Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection.**

The Census Bureau uses the information collected in the SOC to publish estimates of the number of new residential housing units started, under construction, completed, and the number of new houses sold and for sale. The Census Bureau also publishes many financial and physical characteristics of new housing units. Government agencies use these statistics to evaluate economic policy, measure progress towards the national housing goal, make policy decisions, and formulate legislation. For example, the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System uses data from this survey to evaluate the effect of interest rates. The Bureau of Economic Analysis uses the data in developing the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The private sector uses the information for estimating the demand for building materials and the many products used in new housing and to schedule production, distribution, and sales efforts. The financial community uses the data to estimate the demand for short-term (construction loans) and long-term (mortgages) borrowing.

These statistics are based on a sample of residential buildings in permit-issuing places. Individual permits are sampled in approximately 1,000 of the 20,000 permit-issuing jurisdictions. Field Representatives in the local area use the Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) electronic questionnaires SOC-QI/SF.1 and SOC-QI/MF.1 to collect and enter data from respondents. Respondents can provide the information to the field representative how they choose (such as via phone or in person), the field representative is responsible for filling in the questionnaire on their Census issued laptop. Respondents generally include the builder, an employee of the builder, or the owner of the project.

The Census Bureau samples approximately 1,613 new buildings each month (approximately 19,353 per year) to inquire about the construction progress and characteristics of each building selected for the sample. A building is removed from the sample once construction is completed or if the project is a single-family house that is built for sale, construction is completed and a sales contract is signed. Interviews are conducted monthly when a project is in sample, however exact interview schedules are driven by what type of information is still needed for the project. For example, for a multi-family project that has a construction start date, all building characteristic data is complete, and a projected completion date is present, interviewing is suspended until the month of anticipated construction completion. Projects missing construction start dates or single-family built for sale projects missing sales dates are interviewed every month for that information. For single-family buildings, the Census Bureau conducts an average of 9.6 interviews, and for multifamily buildings, we conduct an average of 8.5 interviews. The average annual number of interviews conducted from 2023 through 2025 was 120,312 for single-family buildings and 57,390 for multifamily buildings. Each interview takes 5 minutes on average.

Beginning in January 2027, the SOC will no longer be covering a sample of non-permit areas. Prior to this change, field representatives in selected non-permit areas would be required to canvas their assigned territory either monthly or quarterly to visually identify new residential construction. If they identified a new residential construction project being built, they would add the project to our sample, and the project would be interviewed in the same manner and for the same information as the projects selected in permit-issuing places.

Prior to 2000, non-permit construction activity was accounted for using a 3.3% adjustment to the

single-family estimates (i.e. Starts, completions) and not directly measured in the sample. Beginning with the 2004 SOC sample redesign, SOC included a sample of about 70 non-permit areas. In 2005, non-permit areas represented about 1.7% of annual single family starts and about 1.4% of total starts. Since 2004, both the amount of construction and the population living in non-permit areas in the U.S. has declined. Non-permit areas also can become permit-issuing over time, and construction activity would be then captured in the Building Permits Survey (BPS). In 2025, non-permit areas only accounted for approximately 0.54% of total starts and 0.40% of total completions. For single-family only, non-permit areas accounted for 0.78% of starts and 0.60% of completions. Non-permit construction is also concentrated in the South region, representing about 1.0% of the total starts and 0.7% of the total completions for 2025. The total cost of this collection for 2025 was approximately $156,000.

Since non-permit estimates have steadily decreased over time and now represent less than 1% of our single-family estimates, the cost and difficulty in collecting the data is no longer worth the benefit. Instead, SOC will note that the estimates for 2027 forward are based only on permit-issuing areas and that as of 2026, construction in non-permit areas made up less than 1% of the total. In addition, in recent years the BPS has increased efforts to have more frequent contact with non-permit areas to better capture jurisdictions changing from non-permit to permit-issuing. Each year, newly issuing permit jurisdictions are added to the permit-issuing universe and captured in the BPS. We anticipate the trend in the U.S. will continue to be for non-permit areas to become permit-issuing if the area experiences an increase in construction, so it is unlikely that non-permit areas will ever make up a significant part of new residential construction in the future. The BPS will be the primary source for data users to obtain data for new permit-issuing jurisdictions annually, and the BPS will continue to maintain a universe of non-permit issuing jurisdictions.

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

3. **Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g. permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also, describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.**

Field representatives (FRs) collect and enter the data using CAPI either by phone or in person. Phone contacts are encouraged to minimize cost. If a respondent cannot be reached by phone, the FR will make a personal visit to the site or to a sales office. FRs mail a printed version of the questionnaire to new respondents to document the questions asked in the interview and to provide the expiration date of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval of the survey. See Attachments A and B.

4. **Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already**

available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Question 2.

The Census Bureau has examined the statistics from the current surveys of the Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the National Association of Home Builders and, to our knowledge, duplication does not exist. Also, Dodge Data & Analytics publishes housing starts, but their definitions are not consistent with the BPS and SOC categories, and their start/completed/sold data is not as timely as SOC requires.

5. **If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities, describe any methods used to minimize burden.**

To reduce respondent burden, we use variable sampling patterns dependent upon monthly construction activity. With this methodology, introduced in 1984, respondent burden remains relatively stable in times of high and low building activity.

The interview is normally conducted by telephone, the number of questions asked is limited, and the questions asked do not require any additional record keeping burden. FRs typically deal with many of the same respondents month after month and may need to obtain information for more than one building from each respondent. To reduce respondent burden and collect the data most efficiently, the interviewers use their familiarity with the respondent's organization to contact the most knowledgeable person and to gather information for all buildings with one telephone call.

Field representatives are also encouraged to use online resources to reduce respondent burden and obtain more complete and timely information. If a respondent interview or site visit is not possible, field representatives may use sources such as real estate web sites to search for sales dates, news articles that may note a construction start, and online permit systems for site plans or inspection information that can inform construction progress and building characteristics.

6. **Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.**

Many national policies, decisions, and analyses for the housing and construction sector are formulated and updated frequently using information collected in the SOC. If the survey was conducted less frequently, the estimates would be quickly outdated and of much less value to the public and private sector data users.

The New Residential Construction and New Residential Sales PFEIs rely directly on SOC data being collected monthly. Additionally, the Value of Construction Put in Place PFEI relies on monthly SOC data for the residential component for construction spending.

7. **Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner:**

- requiring respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly;

- requiring respondents to prepare a response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it;
- requiring respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document;
- requiring respondents to retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in- aid, or tax records for more than three years;
- in connection with a statistical survey, that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study;
- requiring the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB;
- that includes a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is not supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, or which unnecessarily impedes sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use; or
- requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secret, or other confidential information unless the agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information's confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.

The collection of these data is consistent with the OMB guidelines, with the exception of requiring respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly, and to prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt. This survey provides data used to produce two monthly PFEIs, New Residential Construction and New Residential Sales. Per OMB's Statistical Policy Directive 3 governing compilation, release, and evaluation of PFEIs, "The interval between the period to which the data or estimates refer and the date when the data or estimates are released to the public shall be a short as practicable." The PFEI cadence and release timing necessitate collection be conducted more often than quarterly, and for response to be requested in fewer than 30 days after receipt.

8. **If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publications in the Federal Register of the agency's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8 (d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.**

   Consultation with representatives of those from whom information is to be obtained or those who must compile records should occur at least once every 3 years - even if the collection of information activity is the same as in prior periods. There may be circumstances that may preclude consultation in a specific situation. These circumstances should be explained.

   We consult frequently with data users outside the agency to obtain comments regarding the Survey of Construction. Consultations with outside consultants are for the purpose of receiving

individual opinions and not for the purpose of forming a group opinion. The Census Bureau meets regularly with data users from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and the Harvard University Joint Center for Housing Studies.

On July 20, 2026, we published a notice in the Federal Register (Docket Number USBC-2026-0298, pgs. 45237-45238) inviting public comments on our plans to submit this request. Four comments were received during the 60-day comment period. Three comments were in support of the SOC data collection, including one from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), which stated that the BEA strongly supports this data collection because the data collected in this survey are crucial to key components of BEA's economic statistics. One of the remaining comments in support of the collection was from an anonymous user, and the other was from Katelyn Marrs of Camano Island, WA who in addition to her support recommended that, "The Bureau should publish the updated burden analysis and any instrument refinements in the final ICR package so the public can verify that the modest increase is fully justified by the longer project durations now observed." The Census Bureau takes steps to decrease burden as identified on Questions 3 and 5 of this document and a breakdown of the burden estimate is provided in Question 12. An additional comment was received from an anonymous user whose suggestions were either not relevant to the collection of SOC data or outside of the scope of the data being collected to the SOC data collection. All comments have been included as Attachment D.

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

The Census Bureau does not pay respondents nor provide gifts in return for complying with the survey.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy. If the collection requires a systems of records notice (SORN) or privacy impact assessment (PIA), those should be cited and described here.

Field Representatives mail new respondents a letter explaining the purpose of the survey. The letter also states that the survey is voluntary and provides information about the response burden. An example of the letter (Atlanta Regional Office) is provided in Attachment C. The following statement of confidentiality is included in the letter: "Title 13, United States Code (U.S.C.), Sections 131, 182, and 8(b), and Title 12 U.S.C., Sections1701z-1 and 1701z-2g authorizes the Census Bureau to conduct this collection and to request your voluntary assistance. The Census Bureau is required by Section 9 of Title 13 to keep your information confidential and use your responses only to produce statistics. The Census Bureau is not permitted to publicly release your responses in a way that could identify your business, organization, or institution. Per the Federal Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015, your data are protected from cybersecurity risks through screening of the systems that transmit your data."

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior or attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. This justification should include the reasons why the agency considers the questions necessary, the

specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

The survey contains no sensitive questions.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information.

- **Indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden, and an explanation of how the burden was estimated. Unless directed to do so, agencies should not conduct special surveys to obtain information on which to base hour burden estimates. Consultation with a sample (fewer than 10) of potential respondents is desirable. If the hour burden on respondents is expected to vary widely because of differences in activity, size, or complexity, show the range of estimated hour burden, and explain the reasons for the variance. Generally, estimates should not include burden hours for customary and usual business practices.**
- **If this request for approval covers more than one form, provide separate hour burden estimates for each form and aggregate the hour burdens.**
- **Provide estimates of annualized cost to respondents for the hour burdens for collections of information, identifying and using appropriate wage rate categories. The cost of contracting out or paying outside parties for information collection activities should not be included here. Instead, this cost should be included under 'Annual Cost to Federal Government' (Item #14).**

Annual Respondent Burden

(Using averages from 2023-2025)

Forms	Number of Buildings	Average Number of Annual Contacts per Building	Total Number of Contacts	Average time to Complete One Contact (hours)	Estimated Total Burden Hours
SOC-QI/SF.1	12,562	9.6	120,312	5 mins.	10,026
SOC-QI/MF.1	6,791	8.5	57,390	5 mins.	4,783
Total	19,353		177,702		14,809

We sample approximately 19,353 new buildings a year. A builder or owner may be contacted several times based on the number of buildings he/she has in the sample and how long the construction project takes. Using data from our files, we estimated the number of times we need to contact the builder or owner to obtain the data. This is shown as the average number of annual

contacts per building. We estimated the average length of time it takes for each contact using our knowledge of the amount of information requested and the time required to obtain that information. Using this information and the total number of responses, we calculated the annual respondent burden.

The estimated annual cost to the respondents is $885,430. We calculated this annual cost by multiplying the total burden hours by the average hourly wage of $59.79. (Occupational Employment and Wage statistics - Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2025. $59.79 represents the mean hourly wage of the full-time wage and salary earnings of Construction Managers, SOC code 11-9021.) http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes119021.htm

13. Provide an estimate for the total annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden already reflected on the burden worksheet).

We do not expect respondents to incur any costs other than that of their time to respond. The information requested is the type and scope normally carried in office 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. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information.

The estimated total cost for FY 2026 for the Survey of Construction program of which this questionnaire is a part was $10,876,000. Of this amount, $5,438,000 is borne by the HUD, and $5,438,000 is borne by the Census Bureau. This estimate includes the cost for such things as data collection, processing, review of tabulated data, publication, equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff.

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in ROCIS.

The annual burden estimate has been adjusted upward. Compared to the period 2020-2022, sampled construction projects are taking longer to start, complete, and sell. Since projects are interviewed until the project is completed or sold for the single-family for sale category, this is leaving projects in sample for longer, resulting in a higher average interview amount for 2023-2025. While the amount of sampled projects has decreased, the increase in average interviews per case increasing results in a modest increase in total annual burden for this collection.

16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of

information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.

Data from the SOC are collected in the first week of the month following the reference month. On or about the 12th workday of the month, the preliminary estimates of housing starts and housing completions are published for the prior month. Estimates of new residential sales are published on or about the 17th workday. The quarterly price index of new single-family houses sold is published with the new residential sales data. Annual estimates of physical and financial characteristics of new housing are released about six months after the end of the reference year. Data are available on the Internet at www.census.gov/construction/nrc/ and www.census.gov/construction/nrs/.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

A printed version of the questionnaire displaying the expiration date is mailed to new respondents to document the questions that are asked in the interview and to provide the expiration date of the OMB approval of the survey. The printed version of questionnaires is shown in Attachments A and B.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions."

The agency certifies compliance with 5 CFR 1320.9 and the related provisions of 5 CFR 1320.8(b)(3). There are no exceptions to the certification.