

Discussion of Testimony: Civil Rights and Policing Practices in Minnesota  
Public Comment  
Future Plans and Actions  
Adjournment

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request; American Community Survey Methods Panel Tests, 2017 Mail Design Test

The Department of Commerce will submit to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for clearance the following proposal for collection of information under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. chapter 35).

*Agency:* U.S. Census Bureau.

*Title:* American Community Survey Methods Panel Tests, 2017 Mail Design Test.

*OMB Control Number:* 0607-0936.

*Form Number(s):* ACS-1, ACS CATI, ACS CAPI, ACS Internet.

*Type of Request:* Non-substantive Change Request.

*Number of Respondents:* 288,000.

*Average Hours per Response:* 40 minutes.

*Burden Hours:* No additional burden hours are requested under this non-substantive change request.

*Needs and Uses:* The American Community Survey (ACS) collects detailed socioeconomic data from about 3.5 million housing units in the United States and 36,000 in Puerto Rico each year. The ACS also collects detailed socioeconomic data from about 195,000 residents living in Group Quarter (GQ) facilities. An ongoing data collection effort with an annual sample of this magnitude requires that the ACS continue research, testing, and evaluations aimed at reducing respondent burden, improving data quality, achieving survey cost efficiencies, and improving ACS questionnaire content and related data collection materials. The ACS Methods Panel is a research program that is designed to address and respond to issues and survey needs.

In the Census Bureau's continuing effort to reduce respondent burden and address concerns about the perceived intrusiveness of the ACS, the Census Bureau seeks to test three candidate changes to the current ACS mail

materials. The three experimental treatments are designed to increase public awareness of the ACS through new messaging and an updated look and feel that increases respondent engagement and self-response, while softening the tone of the mandatory requirement of the survey.

The Census Bureau previously tested the impact of removing or modifying the mandatory messages from the mail materials (see Oliver, B., Risley, M., & Roberts, A. (2016). 2015 Summer Mandatory Messaging Test. Washington DC, U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved on February 10, 2017 from [https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2016/acs/2016\\_Oliver\\_01.pdf](https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2016/acs/2016_Oliver_01.pdf)). This proposed test is aimed at building on that research and improving the results based on additional feedback the Census Bureau obtained from the National Academies' Committee on National Statistics (see Plewes, T.J. (2016). "Reducing Response Burden in the American Community Survey." Proceedings of a Workshop conducted by the Committee on National Statistics Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education).

The three experimental treatments are:

- The Softened Revised Design treatment from the 2015 Summer Mandatory Messaging Test.
- A Partial Redesign treatment that maintains the same wording as used in the Softened Revised Design treatment but includes some methodological changes: A "Why We Ask" brochure in the initial mailing, changes to the cover of the paper questionnaire, and the use of a letter instead of a postcard for the fifth mailing.
- A Full Redesign treatment that includes the same methodological changes as the Partial Redesign treatment but also modifies the wording in most of the mailings to a more personal approach with plain language.

The purpose of this test is to study the impact of these three candidate mail designs on self-response, cost, and the precision of the estimates. To field this test, the Census Bureau plans to use the ACS production sample (clearance number: 0607-0810, expires 06/30/2018). Thus, there is no increase in burden from this test since each treatment will result in the same burden estimate per interview (40 minutes). The ACS sample design consists of randomly assigning each monthly sample panel into 24 groups of approximately 12,000 addresses each. Each group, called a methods panel group, within a monthly sample is representative of the full monthly

sample. Each monthly sample is a representative subsample of the entire annual sample and is representative of the sampling frame.

The Census Bureau proposes to test these mail designs as part of the ACS August 2017 panel, adhering to the same data collection protocols as production ACS. The Census Bureau proposes to use two randomly selected methods panel groups for each treatment. Hence, each treatment will have a sample size of approximately 24,000 addresses. In total, approximately 96,000 addresses will be used for the three experimental treatments and the control treatment (current production). The current production treatment will have the same mail materials as the rest of production, but will be sorted and mailed at the same time as the other treatment materials. The remaining sample will receive production materials.

The Census Bureau proposes to evaluate treatment comparisons by comparing self-response rates at various points in the mailing schedule and by comparing the final response rates. The Census Bureau proposes comparing treatments at points in the mailing schedule where the material differs by design. For each comparison,  $\alpha = 0.1$  and a two-tailed test will be used so that the Census Bureau can measure the impact on the evaluation measure in either direction with 80 percent power. The effective samples were calculated based on the previous year's data for the August panel. The sample size will be able to detect differences of approximately 1.25 percentage points between the self-response return rates of the control and experimental treatments. Additional metrics of interest include overall costs and response rates by subgroups.

*Affected Public:* Individuals or households.

*Frequency:* One-time test as part of the monthly American Community Survey.

*Respondent's Obligation:* Mandatory.

*Legal Authority:* Title 13, United States Code, Sections 141, 193, and 221.

*This information collection request may be viewed at [www.reginfo.gov](http://www.reginfo.gov).* Follow the instructions to view Department of Commerce collections currently under review by OMB.

Written comments and recommendations for the proposed information collection should be sent within 30 days of publication of this

notice to *OIRA\_Submission@omb.eop.gov* or fax to (202) 395-5806.

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request; State & Local Government Finance Collections

The Department of Commerce will submit to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for clearance the following proposal for collection of information under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. chapter 35).

*Agency:* U.S. Census Bureau.

*Title:* State & Local Government Finance Collections.

*OMB Control Number:* 0607-0585.

*Form Number(s):* F-5, F-11, F-12, F-13, F-28, F-29, F-32.

*Type of Request:* Revision of a currently approved collection.

*Number of Respondents:* 26,447.

*Average Hours per Response:* 2 hours and 51 minutes.

*Burden Hours:* 75,150.

*Needs and Uses:* The State & Local Government Finance program is the only known comprehensive source of state and local government finance data collected on a nationwide scale using uniform definitions, concepts, and procedures. The Census Bureau implements this program through conducting a full census every five years (years ending in 2 and 7) and annual sample surveys in the interim years. The Census Bureau has conducted the Census of Governments every five years since 1957 and phased in the annual surveys over the subsequent years.

Currently, we are requesting approval to conduct the 2017 Census of Governments: Finance component and the 2018 and 2019 Annual Survey of State Government Tax Collections, Annual Survey of State Government Finances, the Annual Survey of Local Government Finances, and the Annual Survey of Public Pensions. These surveys collect data on state government finances and estimates of local government revenue, expenditure, debt, assets, and pension systems nationally and within state areas. Data are collected for all agencies, departments, and institutions of the fifty state and approximate 77,000 local governments (counties, municipalities, townships, and special districts) during the census years, and for a sample of the local

governments (approximately 11,000) for the survey years. An additional 13,000 units of school districts are covered in a separate request.

Over the past several years, the programs covered by this request have moved towards eliminating collection by paper form as much as possible. The only exception to this is the F-13 form, which is still sent as a paper form because the small number of respondents does not justify the cost of converting it to an electronic form. Below is a short description of each the forms utilized in our general collection methods:

*F-5.* State governments provide detailed data on their tax collections using a spreadsheet that they receive via email. Much of this detail is not available in the state's primary source document. An attachment is included with the email providing the respondent with the OMB approval number, authority and confidentiality statements, and burden estimate.

*F-11 and F-12.* State and local government pension systems provide data on their receipts, payments, assets, membership, and beneficiaries. The actuarial content of the F-11 and F-12 forms is in the process of being reviewed to remove outdated questions and replace them with questions that are more relevant based on current accounting standards and data user interest. The current burden estimates of 2 hours for F-11 and 2.5 hours for F-12 are not expected to change because of these updates. These forms are completed online via electronic collection instrument.

*F-13.* State agencies provide data not included in the audits, electronic files and other primary sources the Census Bureau uses to compile state government financial data. Form F-13 is used to collect data from state insurance trust systems. Respondents to this survey receive a paper form.

*F-28.* Counties, cities, and townships provide data on revenues, expenditures, debt, and assets. These forms are completed online via electronic collection instrument.

*F-29.* Multi-function special district governments provide data on revenues, expenditures, debt, and assets. These forms are completed online via electronic collection instrument.

*F-32.* Single-function special district governments and dependent agencies of local governments provide data on revenues, expenditures, debt and assets. These forms are completed online via electronic collection instrument.

In addition to these more traditional collection methods, the Census Bureau also collects electronic data files

through arrangements with state governments, central collection arrangements with local governments, and using customized electronic reporting instruments.

These data are widely used by Federal, state, and local legislators, policy makers, analysts, economists, and researchers to follow the changing characteristics of the government sector of the economy. The data are also widely used by the media and academia.

More specifically, the Census Bureau provides its state and local government finance data annually to the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) for use in measuring and developing estimates of the government sector of the economy in the National Income and Product Accounts. The Census Bureau also provides these data to the Federal Reserve Board for constructing the Flow of Funds Accounts.

Additionally, the state and local government data are also needed as inputs into the Justice Expenditure and Employment Extract Series, produced by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, and the National Health Expenditure Accounts produced by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The data are also published annually in the Digest of Education Statistics produced by National Center for Education Statistics, the Economic Report of the President produced by the Council of Economic Advisors, and the source data are used as input into the State and Local Governments Fiscal Outlook published by the Government Accountability Office. In addition, the data are used by the National Science Foundation as inputs into the state government R&D expenditures.

In recent years, state and local government financial information has garnered significant media attention and policy coverage. As such, timely state and local government finance data are critical in light of current financial conditions of state and local governments, as they provide insight into the complex nature and fiscal health of state and local government finances.

Beginning with the 1993 annual data series, all data, summary tables, and files have been released on the Internet. At the Internet site, ([census.gov/govs/](http://census.gov/govs/)) users will find documentation, summary tables and files.

*Affected Public:* State, local or Tribal government.

*Frequency:* Annually.

*Respondent's Obligation:* Voluntary.

*Legal Authority:* Title 13 U.S.C., Sections 161 and 182.