

**The Office of Management and Budget  
Paperwork Reduction Act Submission**

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Current Population Survey Civic Engagement Supplement

*August 25, 2011*

**Prepared by:**

**THE CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE**

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## **PART A JUSTIFICATION**

Part A of this narrative provides the justification for the proposed data collection. Part B provides detail on the statistical methods for the proposed data collection.

### **A1 Circumstances that Make the Collection of Information Necessary**

The Corporation for National and Community Service (the Corporation) requests authorization from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to conduct the November Civic Engagement Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS). The Corporation has entered into an interagency agreement with the U.S. Census Bureau to conduct the Civic Engagement Supplement. In even-numbered years since 2008, the November CPS has included the Voting Supplement as well as the Civic Engagement Supplement; in odd-numbered years, the November CPS has only one supplement, the Civic Engagement Supplement.

The Corporation uses the Civic Engagement Supplement to collect data for the Civic Health Assessment, an annual report mandated by the Serve America Act that is produced in partnership with the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC). The Civic Engagement Supplement provides information on the extent to which American communities are places where individuals are civically active. It also provides information on the number of Americans who are active in their communities, communicating with one another on issues of public concern, and interacting with public institutions and private enterprises.

The Serve America Act directs the Corporation and NCoC, working in partnership, to revise the indicators used for the Civic Health Assessment and to update its data collection strategies accordingly. To that end, the revised survey, which is shown in Attachment A1, contains several new questions that have been tested by Abt Associates.

Title 13, United States Code, Sections 8(b) and 182, and Title 29 USC, Section 1 authorize the collection of this information by the U.S. Census Bureau.

### **A2 How and By Whom the Data Will Be Used**

#### **A2.1 Project Overview**

The Civic Health Assessment is an annual report that allows the Corporation, in partnership with NCoC, to produce data on a broad range of civic activities for the nation, as well as for states and communities. The report is published annually on the Corporation's website, and the data are used by scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to assess the nation's civic health, and to compare the measures recorded for states and communities to one another, as well as to national measures.

## **A2.2 Purpose of the Data Collection**

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.

The Civic Engagement Supplement provides data on the number of Americans who engage in activities that promote positive relationships with those of equal and differing socioeconomic or professional levels. The Supplement is the only source of nationally representative data on such information as: level of participation in organized groups, extent of political action and knowledge, extent of connections with other community members, and how often individuals get news and information from various media sources.

When combined with demographic characteristics (age, sex, race, education, occupation, income), the data can provide information on the relationship between these characteristics and the level of civic engagement in the United States. Government agency analysts and private, state and local leaders will use this data to compare levels in their area of interest to the national level of civic engagement, and to formulate policies that foster healthy communities.

## **A2.3 Who Will Use the Information?**

The Serve America Act directs the Corporation, in partnership with NCoC, to prepare an annual report containing data on the indicators comprising the Civic Health Assessment. The Act directs the partnership, to the extent practicable, to aggregate the data on the civic health indicators by community, by state, and nationally. The report is designed to enable communities and states to assess their civic health, as measured on each of the indicators comprising the Civic Health Assessment, and compare those measures with comparable measures of other communities and states.

The report is available to the general public on the Corporation's website. The Civic Health Assessment also permits the Corporation and NCoC to hold conferences and forums to discuss the implications of the data and analyses in the report, and to identify further opportunities for public dialogue and input on the Civic Health Assessment.

## **A2.4 Instrument--Item-By-Item Justification**

Four domains characterize the information gathered from the civic engagement supplement: Information, Political Action, Groups, and Social Connectedness. These domains are closely aligned with the categories and domains used on several existing foreign government surveys about civic engagement and social capital, a broad concept which includes civic engagement as one of its

subdomains. The questions themselves are close analogues to those used for years on major surveys devoted to social and civic engagement. These surveys are noted below, preceded by an explanation of how the questions form each domain.

### *Connecting to Information and Current Events*

Access to information is being increasingly recognized as central to helping community members have a stronger voice in matters affecting their well-being. This category of questions explores the ways and means by which people receive information regarding political and economic conditions and public services, and the extent of their access to communications infrastructure. Questions in the Information domain originally included Q2 (discussing politics with family and friends), the Q3 series (sources of political information) and Q19 (political knowledge). Other surveys utilizing these questions include the American National Election Study and the General Social Survey (Canada).

In 2009, the Q3 series of questions was eliminated from the survey due to space considerations, and the Q19 series of questions was also eliminated due to low response rates. In 2011, the Corporation proposes adding a new question regarding using the Internet to express opinions about political or community issues. Internet civic engagement is specifically mentioned in the Serve America Act as an indicator that the Corporation should consider adding to the Civic Health Assessment.

### *Political Action*

The questions in this domain focus on the respondent's willingness and capacity to influence both local events and broader political outcomes. Political participation, like group participation, is one of the main concepts described under civic engagement. Concepts in the Political Action domain include voting and electoral participation, which is covered by the questions on the biennial November CPS Voting Supplement; and non-electoral, less formal means of participation, which are covered by the Q4 series of questions. All forms of political participation serve as key indicators of the civic engagement of a community's residents. The General Social Survey (Canada) has used a similar line of questioning in its social capital survey.

In 2009, three of the five items in the Q4 series of questions were eliminated from the survey due to space considerations. In 2011, the Corporation proposes adding a new question about voting in local elections, which has been a mainstay of national surveys such as the General Social Survey and the National Election Survey.

### *Participating in a Group*

The questions in the Participating in a Group (Groups) domain focus on the nature and extent of a household member's participation in various types of social organizations and informal networks. Participation in groups, along with political participation, is generally acknowledged to be a key indicator of civic engagement. In both cases, participation provides an opportunity for people to become personally involved in community affairs, either directly – by working together with others to address a particular problem – or indirectly, by voting or advocating for a candidate or political party. Because group participation often requires or encourages more direct personal activity than political participation does, many scholars argue that group participation is a better indicator of community social capital.

Questions in the Groups domain include the Q5 series (types of groups), Q6 (serving as an officer of a group), and Q7 (attending a group meeting). The British Social Attitudes Survey and British Household Panel Survey have included these questions in their surveys. In 2009, question Q7 was eliminated from the Civic Engagement Supplement.

### *Social Connectedness*

This domain contains questions pertaining to everyday forms of social interaction with people in the respondent's family and community. These questions are devoted to the most common forms of social interaction with others. Scholars of civic engagement argue that regular social interaction with others breeds trust in others, which leads to increased civic engagement. Regular social interaction also allows individuals to share information about social, political and economic events. Questions in the Social Connectedness domain include Q8 (dinner with others in household), Q9 (communication with family or friends via email or the Internet), Q10 (talk with neighbors), Q11 (reciprocal favors for neighbors), and Q12 (number of close friends). The British Household Panel survey has included a question similar to Q10. The World Bank has asked a question similar to Q12 in their surveys to gauge social capital in developing countries. The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) has asked a question similar to Q8.

In 2009, question Q12 was eliminated from the survey. In 2011, the Corporation proposes adding a question about contact with friends or family members not living in the same household.

### *Trust*

Trust in others is almost always described as a key dimension in civic engagement, and has been used to describe the relationship between civic health and other desirable outcomes in many studies. Trust in others is usually measured

by a single question that has been used in countless surveys: “We’d like to ask you a question about how you view other people. Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?” In 2011 the Corporation tested a different trust question – about trust in one’s neighbors – that has correlated very closely with the standard question in previous research, but which performed much better under cognitive testing. The Corporation also proposes adding a new question about confidence in several key societal institutions, a concept that is closely related to trust in others.

### *Potential Outcomes of Civic Engagement*

Many studies have examined the relationship between civic engagement and positive life outcomes such as personal health and life satisfaction. The Corporation proposes adding questions that measure each outcome. These measures will be used to test the relationship between civic engagement and positive life outcomes, both at the individual level and across communities and states.

#### **A3 Use of Improved Technologies**

Since January 1994, the Census Bureau has collected CPS data using computer-assisted interviewing. The Corporation, in conjunction with the BLS and the Census Bureau, designed the questions on the Civic Engagement Supplement to obtain the required information with minimal respondent burden.

The proposed items and interviewer procedures have been developed over years of consultation among the Census Bureau, the BLS, and other government agencies. The use of computer-assisted personal and telephone interviewing is deemed the most appropriate collection methodology, given existing available information technology. The Census Bureau and the BLS have examined the Internet as a reporting option, but have determined that for a complex demographic survey such as the CPS, the Internet is not feasible.

#### **A4 Efforts to Identify Duplication**

The CPS Civic Engagement Supplement's comprehensive set of questions does not duplicate any other single information collection with respect to scope, timeliness, or population of interest. There are no comparable data that can be replicated, substituted, or modified for use as described in section A2 above.

#### **A5 Involvement of Small Entities**

The collection of the voting and civic engagement information does not involve small businesses or other small entities.

#### **A6 Consequences of Less Frequent Data Collection**

Since the Serve America Act directs the Corporation and NCoC to release the Civic Health Assessment annually, collecting data less often would impair the Assessment's usefulness for its intended audiences. In particular, less frequent data collection would result in significantly less reliable statistics for states and communities, since data are usually pooled across successive years to produce statistics for states and local areas.

**A7 Special Circumstances**

There are no special circumstances.

**A8 Consultations Outside the Agency**

The Corporation published a notice in the *Federal Register* on June 17, 2011, Vol. 76, No. 117, pp. 35418-35419, inviting public comment on our plans to submit this request. No comments were submitted in response to that notice.

The Corporation was in frequent consultation with the following people concerning the development of the supplement:

David Smith  
Executive Director  
National Conference on Citizenship  
202-331-2098

Kristen Cambell  
Director, Programs & New Media  
National Conference on Citizenship  
202-729-8308

Lisa Clement  
Chief, Current Population Surveys Branch  
Demographic Surveys Division  
U.S. Census Bureau  
301-763-3806

Tim Marshall  
Survey Statistician  
Current Population Surveys Branch  
Demographic Surveys Division  
U.S. Census Bureau  
301-763-3806

Tom Nardone  
Bureau of Labor Statistics

Department of Labor  
202-691-6383

The result of these consultations is the final set of questions. Furthermore, a statement soliciting comments for improving the CPS data is prominently placed in all the Census Bureau publications that cite the CPS data. The Census Bureau includes a similar statement in the technical documentation that accompanies the microdata files. Finally, the CPS advance letter (see Attachment B) provides respondents with an address at the Census Bureau and at the OMB to which they can submit general comments on the survey, specifically those regarding respondent burden.

**A9 Payments to Respondents**

The Census Bureau does not make any payments or provide any gifts to individuals participating in the CPS.

**A10 Arrangements and Assurances Regarding Confidentiality**

The Census Bureau collects the supplement data in compliance with the Privacy Act of 1974 and the OMB Circular A-130. Each sample household receives an advance letter approximately one week before the start of the CPS initial interview (see Attachment B). The letter includes the information required by the Privacy Act of 1974, explains the voluntary nature of the survey, and states the estimated time required for participating in the survey. Interviewers must ask if the respondent received the letter and, if not, provide a copy and allow the respondent sufficient time to read the contents. Also, interviewers provide households with the pamphlet, *The U.S. Census Bureau Respects Your Privacy and Keeps Your Personal Information Confidential*, which further states the confidentiality assurances associated with this data collection effort and the Census Bureau's past performance in assuring confidentiality (see Attachment C).

All information given by respondents to the Census Bureau employees is held in strict confidence under Title 13, United States Code, Section 9. Each of the Census Bureau employees has taken an oath to that effect and is subject to a jail penalty or substantial fine if he/she discloses any information given to him/her.

**A11 Sensitive Questions**

The November CPS Civic Engagement Supplement does not include any questions of a sensitive nature.

**A12 Estimate of Annualized Burden Hours**

For the Civic Engagement Supplement, approximately 54,000 households are actually interviewed. With each household interview being about nine minutes

long, this amounts to an hour burden of 9,000 hours for the civic engagement questions. The actual interview time is dependent upon the size of the household.

**A13 Estimated Recordkeeping and Reporting Cost Burden on Respondents**

There are no costs to the respondents other than that of their time to respond.

**A14 Estimated Cost to the Federal Government**

The estimated cost to the government for the CPS program is about \$64 million in fiscal year 2011. The costs are to be borne by the Census Bureau and the BLS. The Civic Engagement supplement is estimated to cost \$750,000, which will be covered by the CNCS.

**A15 Reasons for Changes in Burden**

The original clearance was for the combined Voting and Civic Engagement Supplement, which was conducted in 2008 and 2010, and is designed to be conducted in even numbered years each November. In 2009, a revised version of the Civic Engagement Supplement, which contained a subset of the questions used in 2008, was administered as a pilot to outgoing CPS households. The proposed additional questions on the November Civic Engagement Supplement will only be part of the survey in odd-numbered years, when the Voting Supplement is not conducted. As a result, there is no increase in burden compared to the previously cleared version of the Supplement.

**A16 Tabulation Plans, Statistical Analysis, and Study Schedule**

The Census Bureau conducts the CPS Civic Engagement Supplement in November of each year. Processing of this supplement begins in December of that year. A public use data file and accompanying documentation, including unweighted counts for selected items from the Supplement, is released approximately six months later.

**A17 Expiration Date Display Exemption**

The Civic Engagement Supplement is administered as part of the CPS monthly interview each November. However, the supplement (as well as all the CPS supplements) bears the OMB control number and expiration date, which is different from the CPS basic interview. The OMB control number and expiration date for the CPS basic interview is included in the advance letter we give respondents (see Attachment C). Because of the difficulties and anticipated respondent confusion involved with expressing a separate control number and expiration date to respondents for the supplement questions, the Census Bureau does not wish to display the OMB control number and expiration date for the CPS November supplement.

**A18 Exceptions to Certification**

There are no exceptions to the certification.