

**Department of Commerce
United States Census Bureau
OMB Information Collection Request
Generic Clearance for 2020 Census Field Tests to Automate Field data Collection Activities
OMB Control Number 0607-0971**

Part A – Justification

Question 1. Necessity of the Information Collection

The U.S. Census Bureau is committed to conducting research towards a 2020 Census that costs less while maintaining high quality results. The Census Bureau requests a reinstatement, with change, of our previous OMB approval to conduct a series of small-scale tests to research and evaluate how the use of automation can improve data collection activities. These tests will explore how the Census Bureau can use automated processes to improve efficiency, data quality, and response rates and reduce respondent burden.

Designing and testing innovations are part of the planning of every recent decennial census. A guiding principle stated in the Strategic Plan for the 2020 Census is to have an efficient design to “Support agile decision making by conducting small tests to prove or disprove cost savings methods.” [Strategic Plan for the 2020 Census, September 30, 2011, page 20.] The Census Bureau Director stated in his June 16, 2011 blog, “The sixth principle is to mount many, small tests throughout the decade. We are committing to a faster cycling of ideas and testing, relying on many small tests versus a small number of large, expensive tests. For example, although we cannot know the full features of the Internet option for the 2020 Census, we will have repeated tests of Internet census measurement throughout the decade, using platforms that

will increasingly resemble those available in 2020.” Smaller scale tests can more directly inform specific research projects while keeping respondent burden to a minimum.

This information collection will operate as a generic clearance. The estimated number of respondents and annual reporting hours requested cover both the known and yet to be determined tests. A generic clearance is needed for these tests because though each share similar methodology, the exact number of tests and the explicit details of each test to be performed has yet to be determined. Once information collection plans are defined for upcoming tests, they will be submitted on an individual basis in order to keep OMB informed as these tests progress.

The Census Bureau plans to test the use of different modes of survey notification, including mail, telephone, emails, text messages and other applications for both self-enumeration and interviewer-assisted data collection tasks, all the while following all relevant laws and regulations. The enumeration functions research will focus on using various applications to enumerate households and persons. The research and evaluation may include: developing different automated enumeration questionnaires in a variety of languages; inviting respondents to participate through a variety of modes; reminding them to participate; collecting data through the questionnaire; and following up with debriefing interviews or focus groups. The questions asked in these tasks will be the baseline or experimental content for the 2020 Census operations and forms, along with some attitudinal and satisfaction debriefing questions.

To carry out these tests, the Census Bureau plans to conduct field activities by programming questionnaires for different computing devices, including smartphones and tablets, different software operating systems, and different browsers for online surveys. The tests will inform census planners and stakeholders on their ability to program applications on different

devices. In addition, the tests will measure the accuracy, productivity, and user experience with different combinations of mobile device and applications.

U.S. Code Title 13, Sections 141 and 193 authorizes the Secretary of Commerce to conduct such tests. The Secretary has delegated this authority to the Census Bureau. The Census Bureau plans to conduct these tests in small geographic areas or national samples involving a small number of housing units and persons over the next three years. The specific areas have not yet been determined. We will follow the protocol of past generic clearances: 14 to 30 days before the scheduled start date of each field test, we will provide OMB with a detailed background on the activity, estimates of respondent burden, and samples of pertinent forms and/or questions. We will provide OMB an annual report documenting the activities performed under this clearance at the end of each year.

The Census Bureau has conducted these activities (or similar ones) previously and the individual respondent burden remains relatively unchanged from one time to another.

Question 2. Needs and Uses

All activities described directly support the Census Bureau's efforts to maintain or improve quality while controlling costs in the 2020 Census. The information collected from households during these tests is to research new technologies to plan the 2020 Census and motivating messages to encourage respondents to participate. The Census Bureau will not publish any tabulations or population estimates from the substantive results of tests conducted under this clearance. However, methodological papers may be written that include some tallies

of response characteristics or problems, and responses may be used to inform future research studies building upon the results of these early tests.

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.

Question 3. Use of Information Technology

Census workers will use mobile computing devices, such as laptops, smartphones, GPS devices, tablets, or other devices to collect responses or data in these activities as is relevant and appropriate.

Question 4. Efforts to Identify Duplication

Because the U.S. census is distinct, these activities do not duplicate information collected by any other agency. Further, there is no similar or current information available that could be used or modified for these purposes. The key purpose for this clearance, that is distinct from other generic clearances for pretesting, is that this clearance alone can collect data using a mandatory authority. This authority has been repeatedly shown to increase response rates.

Question 5. Minimizing Burden

This research is designed as relatively small-scale data collection efforts. This will minimize the number of respondents needed to test improvements to questionnaire design, test

field data collection procedures and new technologies. Small businesses or other small entities are not asked to report information. We will attempt to exclude housing units that have been in sample for ACS or one of the Census Tests for the three years prior to a given data collection.

Question 6. Consequences of Less Frequent Collection

Most responses to each of these activities are on a one-time basis. Responses may be used in future research studies that build upon the results of these early tests. Failure to research and test new methods to conduct field tasks using new technology could result in increased costs and less accuracy.

Question 7. Special Circumstances

There are no special circumstances preventing the meeting of all OMB Guidelines.

Question 8. Consultations Outside the Agency

The Census Bureau regularly consults with outside parties in its 2020 Census planning. For example, these tests are following the National Research Council's (NRC) recommendation to automate field activities. The NRC also endorsed the concept of smaller-scale tactical census tests, relative to the larger "omnibus" tests of previous censuses.

The Census Bureau published a notice in the Federal Register on September 10, 2015, soliciting public comments on our plans to submit this request (80 FR 54518). We received one comment, dated November 16, but it was not relevant to the current request.

Question 9. Paying Respondents

Respondents will not be paid money or provided with gifts.

Question 10. Assurance of Confidentiality

All respondents who participate in research under this clearance will be informed that the information they provide is confidential and that their participation is mandatory. All personally identifiable information will be held in strict confidence according to the provisions of Title 13 United States Code, Section 9. The Census Bureau staff on site will give a notice to each person contacted. This notice explains that any information given to the Census Bureau will be held in strict confidence. A copy of the notice will be provided to the OMB with each individual clearance request.

Question 11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

None of the questions asked during the activities described above are of a sensitive nature and they should not pose any problem for respondents in that respect.

Question 12. Estimate of Hour Burden

The total estimated respondent burden is 6,000 hours per year for the period from March 2016 to February 2019. A variety of activities will be conducted under this clearance and the exact dates and number of households and respondents for all activities are unknown at this time. The earliest time that activities would occur is in March 2016. The estimate of hour burden is based on our experience during the previous census. This chart shows the calculation of the estimated burden for each fiscal year.

<u>Time Period</u>	<u># of Respondents</u>	<u>Avg Time per Respondent</u>	<u>Burden Hours</u>
March 2016 – February 2017	36,000	10 minutes each	6,000
March 2017 – February 2018	36,000	10 minutes each	6,000
March 2018 – February 2019	36,000	10 minutes each	6,000
Totals	108,000		18,000

Question 13. Estimate of Cost Burden

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

Question 14. Cost to Federal Government

The annual costs to the Federal Government associated with each specific test will be provided in the Individual Request for Clearance document submitted to the OMB that will precede the test.

Question 15. Reason for Change in Burden

The increase in burden is attributable to renewing the information collection.

Question 16. Project Schedule

A schedule for completing each activity will be provided in the Individual Request for Clearance document submitted to the OMB that will precede the activity.

There are two types of tests that we have planned for this clearance during the first year. One is tests within Group Quarters settings, including Service Based Enumeration, where we enumerate at soup kitchens, mobile food vans and shelters, and College Housing Enumeration, which may include collection of administrative records. The other type of test is refining our mail communication strategies and still including the possibility of options of text or email

communication. These tests will supplement the large scale testing program for the 2020 Census program and will test specific messages and timing of follow-up communications for households that do not respond to the initial mailing.

Question 17. Request to Not Display Expiration Date

No exemption is requested.

Question 18. Exceptions to the Certification

There are no exceptions to the certification.