



Committee on Economic Statistics

Federal Data Collection Comment Opportunity for AEA Members

Survey of Housing Starts, Sales, and Completions

U.S. Census Bureau

Comments Due February 5, 2018

The U.S. Census Bureau asks OMB to approve the Survey of Housing Starts, Sales, and Completions, otherwise known as the [Survey of Construction](#) (SOC). SOC data are used to prepare two principal federal economic indicators: New Residential Construction (housing starts and housing completions) and New Residential Sales. Other statistical series produced include the physical characteristics of new residential buildings and indexes measuring rates of inflation in the price of new buildings. Data collection on housing units sold and completed and physical characteristics is funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Census proposes to add on question to the SOC on ceiling height for single-family dwellings.

Annually, Census samples approximately 19,440 residential buildings. It contacts home builders, real estate agents, rental agents, and new home owners to obtain information about those buildings.

AEA members are encouraged to:

- provide opinions on the value of the SOC for economic research;
- comment on the data collection instruments and methods; and
- suggest changes that would enhance data quality, value, and accessibility and lower respondent burden and federal cost.

Federal Register notice: [December 28, 2017](#) (includes instructions for submitting comments)

- [Information Collection Request](#) (ICR) submitted by Census to OMB, including:
 - [SOC survey instruments](#)
 - [Supporting Statement](#) describing needs, uses, plans, methods, sample, and costs
 - Due date for comments: February 5, 2018
 - More information: Erica M. Filipek, Assistant Division Chief for Construction Indicator Programs, Census Bureau, (301) 763-5161, erica.mary.filipek@census.gov
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Information on ICR Process:

- By law, each data collection carried out by a federal agency must be cleared by OMB. Through the *Federal Register* notice, Census is announcing that it has
- submitted a request to OMB for clearance to conduct the 2017-19 ABS and offers the public a 30-day opportunity to submit comments to OMB.
- After the close of the 30-day comment period, OMB will make its decision.

Guidance to AEA Members on Preparing Comments:

- Can comment on any aspect of the proposed data collection. Possible topics, for instance, include needs, uses, methodology, design, cost, schedule, and consultation with data users.
- May frame comments on specific topics in any way, such as:
 - assessments – identifying what you do and do not like and support
 - suggestions – for how Census might proceed in this or future collections
 - requests – for example, for a change in the design of the survey instrument, to be consulted in the future, to carry out research on an alternative approach
 - observations – for example, implications of the sample size for statistical reliability
- May propose that OMB incorporate a request in its “terms of clearance.” For instance, you could suggest as a term of clearance that Census research the efficacy of an alternative set of questions and report back to OMB in a year on the results.

Additional AEA Resources:

- [A Primer on How to Respond to Calls for Comment on Federal Data Collections](#)
- After reviewing materials, you may provide your observations, critiques, and requests to AEASTat staff Andrew Reamer at areamer@gwu.edu and he will organize them into a draft letter for your review. Prof. Reamer is experienced in crafting comment letters for impact.