

The Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725). The purpose of this cognitive research is to conduct focus groups on potential contacts and incentives for the American Housing Survey (AHS). The AHS is sponsored by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

In 2017, the AHS plans to test a Web self-response option for the first time in a field test. As a result, existing contact materials such as pre-notice letters need to be modified to reflect the change in survey design and new contact materials need to be created (e.g., reminder letters or postcards). In these focus groups, we will explore perceptions towards contacts in modes other than postal mail as well as the clarity and motivating power of revised AHS materials. Additionally, we are interested in exploring the feasibility of incentives in the AHS as well as perceptions of the U.S. Census Bureau and HUD as agencies. These focus groups will serve as a starting point for developing new materials and strategies for AHS contacts. The focus groups will be followed by cognitive interviews on the new materials and a subsequent field test. Materials for these research efforts will be submitted to OMB at a later date.

From May to July 2016, staff from the Demographic Statistical Methods Division (DSMD) will conduct four focus groups in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The groups will be conducted in public locations convenient to respondents, such as local libraries and community centers.

We will attempt to differentiate the groups by owner/renter status and socioeconomic status (SES). This is because one of the materials we will be testing in the focus groups asks about homeowner information such as mortgages. Additionally, we believe that opinions of HUD, uses of the data, and materials referencing income will differ by SES. To capture owner/renter status, we will add one additional question to the existing preapproved generic screener. This question is from the American Community Survey (ACS) and is included as an attachment. We would also like to make a slight change to the approved income question to add an additional category (also included in an attachment). The groups will be organized as follows:

1. Owners, lower SES
2. Owners, higher SES
3. Renters, lower SES
4. Renters, higher SES

We will attempt to recruit respondents of varying ages, genders, and races to the maximum extent possible. We will use a multi-pronged strategy to recruit the respondents needed for this study, such as posting ads on Craigslist, distributing flyers, contacting local associations, and using personal networks.

Each group will consist of 8-10 participants, for a total of 32-40 respondents. We plan to recruit 12 participants for each group in case some participants do not show up, but we will cap the group at 10 participants. Participants who arrive after the maximum number of participants is met will be paid the honorarium and excused.

In these focus groups, participants will be asked about their opinions on surveys generally, the U.S. Census Bureau, and HUD. Participants will then be shown draft AHS contact materials, including an envelope, letter, FAQs, and checklist worksheet. Respondents will be asked about incentives in surveys. Finally, respondents will be asked to rank a short list of statements about AHS findings. A copy of the focus group moderator's guide and these AHS contact materials are included as attachments.

All interviews will be video and audio-recorded to facilitate a summary of the results. Participants will be asked to sign consent forms and give permission to be recorded. A copy of the consent form is attached. All participants will be informed that their response is voluntary and that the information they provide is confidential. Respondents will receive a \$75 stipend after the group concludes.

In general, for Census Bureau staff, it requires three screener conversations to recruit one participant. Each screener conversation lasts approximately three minutes. We estimate it will take 7.2 hours to screen and recruit 48 respondents. The estimated time for each focus group is two hours. For 40 participants, the estimated burden for the groups is 80 hours, bringing the total burden to 87.2 hours.

In order for us to meet our project deadlines for this work, we need to receive OMB approval no later than May 13, 2016.

The contact person for questions regarding data collection and study design is:

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