

American Housing Survey (AHS) Contact Cognitive Interviews

Background

In 2017, the AHS will be offering a Web self-response option for the first time, as part of a field test. As a result, new contact materials need to be developed to reflect the change in survey design. In these cognitive interviews, we will explore the clarity and motivating power of new AHS materials. These cognitive interviews follow a set of four focus groups, cleared under a previous OMB submission and conducted earlier this summer.

Purpose of research

The purpose of this cognitive research is to conduct cognitive interviews on potential contacts for the American Housing Survey (AHS). The AHS is sponsored by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The interviews will serve as a continuation of the development of new materials and strategy for AHS contacts. The results of the cognitive interviews will influence the materials that will be implemented as part of the field test. Materials for the field test will be submitted to OMB at a later date.

Timeline and Location

In September 2016, staff from the Demographic Statistical Methods Division (DSMD) will conduct fifteen cognitive interviews in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The interviews will be conducted in public locations convenient to respondents, such as local libraries and community centers.

Sample and Recruitment

We will attempt to interview respondents who are both homeowners and renters. This is because we believe that opinions of the American Housing Survey will differ by owner/renter status. 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 the attachment).

We will attempt to recruit respondents of varying age, sex, education, and race 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.

Methodology

In these cognitive interviews, participants will be asked to look at two letters and two postcards

for the American Housing Survey as well as a set of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and a data wheel. Respondents will look at one of two versions of the first letter. These letters are identical except for a sentence encouraging respondents to gather records before responding. An example Internet instruction card will be included in the materials that respondents will see, but we will not specifically probe respondents on this instruction card. They will be asked about their opinions on the other materials. A copy of the cognitive interview protocol and these AHS contact materials are included as attachments.

Consent and Incentive

All interviews will be 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 \$40 honorarium after the interview concludes.

In general, for Census Bureau staff, it requires four screener conversations to recruit one participant. Each screener conversation lasts approximately three minutes. We estimate it will take 3 hours to screen and recruit 15 respondents. The estimated time for each cognitive interview is one hour. For 15 respondents, the estimated burden for the interviews is 15 hours, bringing the total burden to 18 hours.

In order for us to meet our project deadlines for this work, we need to receive OMB approval no later than August 29, 2016.

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

Aliza Kwiat
Demographic Statistical Methods Division
U.S. Census Bureau
Room 7H160F
Washington, D.C. 20233
(301) 763-1919
aliza.s.kwiat@census.gov