

Attachment 3a – Protocol/discussion guide for focus groups

Before we start, I want to make sure that you understand who we are and why you're here.

Introduction (NCHS and our group):

I want to give you a little background on what we do at the National Center for Health Statistics. We are a federal agency, part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (or CDC). One of the key missions of our agency is to monitor the health of people in the United States. And one of the main ways that we do that is through information that people provide on surveys and questionnaires.

Before we collect data with questionnaires, we want to make sure that the questions are clear and make sense to people. This is very important to help make sure that the data coming from responses are of high quality. Our specific work group is in charge of testing how well questions work. One way we do that is to try them out on people like yourselves.

Brief overview NHTSA survey:

The questions that we are working on today will be part of a survey for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The focus of the survey is on driving safety in relation to topics such as cell phone use, speeding, and alcohol.

Our goal: questionnaire evaluation

Our primary goal today is not to collect particular information about *you*—rather, we want to study how well this questionnaire works for people like you. For example, we want to make sure the questions are clear and make sense. In a minute, we are going to ask you to fill out this questionnaire. Then, we will talk to you about your interpretations of various questions and what sorts of things you were thinking about while answering. Though we are asking you to answer the questions as carefully as possible, we are primarily interested in the ways that you arrived at those answers, and the problems you encountered. Therefore, any detailed help you can give us is important. Also, keep in mind that we did not write these questions, so don't worry about hurting our feelings if you criticize them - our job is to find anything that might be wrong with them.

Overview and Ground Rules

Before we fill out the questionnaire, I'd like to go over some general information—we'd like to establish some ground rules for our discussion, tell you about the confidentiality procedures we have in place, and ask you to sign a consent form to ensure that you understand what we've told you.

I would like you to know that in the whole discussion today, you don't have to reveal anything that you are not comfortable revealing. The questionnaire asks about some sensitive issues—for example, there are some questions about drinking alcohol. In our discussion, we're not going to focus on the most sensitive parts, but there is always the chance that the conversation will lead toward something that you don't wish to discuss with others. That's OK. We are actually more interested in your interpretation of questions than what you've actually experienced. If we ask about your actual behavior, it's really just so that we can assess how well the questions are getting at what we hope they are.

For purposes of the group discussion, we'd like you to pick a name that you would like to

be called— a first name is fine, it doesn't even have to be your real name. [Ask them to fill out name cards.]

The consent form you just signed assures you that we will keep your information confidential. We would also like to ask everyone to treat this discussion as confidential. That is, if you learn anything private about another member of the group, we would like to ask you not to discuss that with anyone outside of this room. Although we are required by federal law to keep information private, we cannot guarantee that everyone else will honor your privacy. All we can do is ask that people please agree to that. And again, you should never feel obligated to share any information that you are not comfortable sharing.

My colleague will take notes during the focus group. In addition, we are planning to audiotape this focus group. This is really for note-taking purposes, so that we can concentrate on what is said and not worry about missing something in our notes.

One of the great things about this discussion is “group dynamic” – ideas that one person raises will remind someone else of a related issue. That's great, feel free to speak up. But also don't interrupt each other. We ask that there to be only one speaker at a time. You may have more to say about some topics than others, and that's OK too.

Don't feel like you have to agree or disagree with anyone in this room. We want to hear about your personal experiences and thoughts and it's OK to disagree with someone else. But please be respectful of the opinions or experiences of others in the room.

Sometimes groups veer off on tangents. That's natural; but please don't be offended if we steer the conversation back to the material we most need to cover.

Administer Questionnaire:

To get started, everyone please fill out the questionnaire (Attachment 2). Once you've finished, we'll talk about your answers.

General discussion points:

- Opinions about cell phone use and driving (e.g., what have they observed among their friends; what do they consider acceptable and unacceptable regarding cell phone use and driving?)
- Opinions about drinking alcohol and driving (e.g., do they think a lot of people their age drink; do they think young people drink and drive; how much alcohol is too much; how much before someone is drunk?)
- Opinions about speeding and road racing (how widespread do they think racing is; how much do they think people their age observe or exceed speed limits and under what conditions?)
- Do they think other people their age would find these survey questions too sensitive to answer? If yes, which ones and why?

Some Specific Probes by Section:

Cell Phone Use:

Do the response categories in questions 3 and 4 accurately reflect your answer? Was it easy to pick a category?

Alcohol Attitudes and Behavior:

Does the language make sense in question 6?

For question 9, can they think of other ways people their age might get alcohol?

For questions 19 & 20, are they aware of their parent's drinking behavior?

Speed:

Is question 4 or 4-ALT easier to answer?

Does the definition of racing make sense?

Demographics:

What kind of knowledge do they have of household income? What would be the easiest way to answer that question?