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VOTING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT (VCE) SUPPLEMENT TO CPS: COGNITIVE TESTING (ROUND 1) SUMMARY REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY -will be included in final report. Refer to Section IV-General Information below to determine which sections of the report might require the most discussion at the meeting.

- I. BACKGROUND - will be included in final report
- II. OBJECTIVES - will be included in final report
- III. METHODOLOGY - will be included in final report
 - A. General- will be included in final report
 - B. Protocol for Cognitive Interviewing - will be included in final report
 - C. Administrative Information and Participant Demographics

Fifteen laboratory participants were recruited for the first round of cognitive testing of the proposed Voting and Civic Engagement (VCE) supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS.) They were recruited through newspaper ads, postings on craigslist.com, our database of potential laboratory participants and word-of-mouth. The interviews were conducted by experienced cognitive interviewers (one person from the Statistical Research Division (SRD) and two people from the Demographic Surveys Division (DSD) in late September and early October.

Because the CPS is conducted by telephone and in person, four of the interviews were conducted by telephone and eleven were in-person interviews. Three of the telephone interviews included persons in very rural areas in Colorado, central Pennsylvania and central Virginia. The in-person interviews were conducted with persons in the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area. The interviews took approximately 75 - 90 minutes. All interviews were audio taped (with permission of the participant.) Participants were provided \$40.

Two versions of the VCE questionnaire were used. Eight participants were administered Version A and 7 were administered Version B.

Provided below in Table 1 is summary demographic information about the 15 participants. Table 2 provides information on the household size for each participant.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of VCE Cognitive Interview Participants

Gender		Age		Race		Education	
Male	4	15-24	0	White	12	< high school	1
Female	11	25-34	3	Black	3	H.S. grad	2
		35-44	3			Some college	5
		45-54	5			B.A.	6
		55-64	3			M.A.	1
		65+	1				
TOTAL	15		15		15		15

Table 2. Household Size of VCE Cognitive Interview Participants

Household Size	VCE Participants
1 person	4
2 people	7
3 people	2
4 people	1
Unknown	1
TOTAL	15

In considering the results discussed in the next section, the usual caveat applies regarding cognitive interviews. Participants were not randomly selected and the results are not generalizable to the larger population. It should also be noted that the participants included in this research were older and had a higher educational attainment level than the general population.

IV. RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General Information

In this section, there is a subsection for each question. Within each subsection, the tested question wording is provided. The response distribution is provided alongside the specific response option within the question wording section. Following the question wording, the results are described, followed by a recommendation for round two, if deemed necessary. A justification for the recommendations is provided. And finally there is space allowed for the final decision for each item, once decisions are made about round two.

There were several items that worked well, as evidenced by participants' paraphrases and responses to targeted probes. Some detailed discussion is provided in the section related to the specific item. No revisions to these items for round two testing is recommended. These items include the following questions:

- A (local elections: questionnaire item 1)
- B (family and friends political discussions: questionnaire item 2)
- C (means of obtaining news and information: questionnaire item 3a-3e)
- D (political action: questionnaire item 4a-4e)
- F (served as officer or on committee: questionnaire item 6)
- G (attendance at meeting of group or organization: questionnaire item 7)
- H (eating dinner with household members: questionnaire item 8)
- J (talk with any of neighbors in 10 or 20 closest households: questionnaire item 10)
- K (favors with neighbors: questionnaire item 11)

Items for which revisions for round two testing are recommended and a couple of items for which recommendations are not yet formulated include the following:

- E (participation in groups and organizations: questionnaire item 5a-5f)
- I (communicating with family and friends by Email or Internet: questionnaire item 9)
- L (close friends question series: questionnaire item 12a-12e)
- M (social trust: questionnaire item 13)
- N (social trust: questionnaire item 13R)
- O (knowledge about Federal laws: questionnaire item 14)

Detailed Results

A. Local Elections

1. Question Wording

In any election, some people are not able to vote for various reasons. Thinking about elections for LOCAL government officials over the past two years, have you voted in all of them, most of them, some of them, or none of them?

- All of them 6
- Most of them 2
- Some of them 3
- None of them 4
- DK
- Refused

2. Discussion of Results

From paraphrases and targeted probes it was clear that participants understood this question and were able to answer the question fairly easily. Their interpretation of the phrase “elections for local government officials” was consistent with the intended definition. The types of local electoral offices that participants mentioned, when probed, included sheriffs, judges, county and city elections, local supervisor, school board, mayor, governor, anyone below state level - below congressional level, councilwoman, superintendent of education, county/city - smaller than state, county executives, local judges.

Of those for whom we probed about the timing of local elections compared to national elections, eight of the eleven participants said their local elections are held at the same time as general elections.

Information from the probe asking about how many local elections had taken place in the area during the past two years probably isn't particularly useful because the probe omitted the critical word “local”. Participant's responses to the probe included some discussion of general elections as well as local. Responses ranged from one to six elections during the past two years. In response to the probe about how many of them (local elections) they actually voted in, eight of 9 participants were consistent in the original response they gave to the survey question. One participant reported “some of them” to survey question, but reported “I don't know, maybe none” to the probe question.

In response to the probe inquiring whether a reference period of three years rather than two years would produce any additional election participation, nearly all said “no” or that they didn't think so. Three of the 13 participants receiving the probe mentioned issues related to memory and recall for that long of a time period. Interestingly a three year reference period from when cognitive interviews were conducted would have included the 2004 general election. Given that many participants mentioned that their local elections are held the same

as the general election, additional election participation was expected.

3. Recommendations

Leave question as worded.

4. Justification for Recommendations

Question worked well as designed.

5. Final Decision

To be determined

B. Family and Friends Political Discussion

1. Question Wording

PRE-SUP

Lead-in - **The next set of questions are about people's involvement and communication within their communities.**

In a TYPICAL MONTH, when communicating with family or friends, how often are politics discussed -- basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, once a month or not at all?

- Basically every day 4
- A few times a week 2
- A few times a month 5
- Once a month 3
- Not at all 1
- DK
- Refused

2. Discussion of Results

From paraphrases and targeted probes it was clear that participants understood this question and were able to answer the question fairly easily. Their interpretation of the terms "communicating" and "politics" were overwhelmingly consistent with the intended definitions.

"Communicating" was interpreted accurately as including discussions face-to-face, by phone, and through Email. When probed about what people they were thinking of when answering the question, eleven of the fifteen said friends and family, two said friends and two said family. When probed whether their response would be different had question been specific to

family, nearly all participants said their response to survey question would have been the same. One participant said response would have been less often and another said it would have been more often. When probed whether response would be different had question been specific to friends, eight participants said their response to the survey question would have been less often.

3. Recommendations

Leave question as worded.

4. Justification for Recommendations

Question worked well as designed.

5. Final Decision

To be determined

C. Means of Obtaining News and Information

1. Question Wording

I am going to read some ways that people get news and information. Please tell me how often you do each of the following in a TYPICAL MONTH:

(a) Read a newspaper in print or on the Internet - basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, once a month or not at all?

- Basically every day 8
- A few times a week 3
- A few times a month 1
- Once a month 3
- Not at all
- DK
- Refused

Results: Participants were clear that question was asking whether they read a newspaper in print or on the internet. Their paraphrases were consistent with intent of question. In response to targeted probe about inclusion of print newspaper and newspaper website, participants said it was clear the question was asking about both. (One participant said it was clear, but thought the question should be split into two questions.) From information obtained after part “e” of this question, it was obvious that participants knew that this question (part “a”) and the part “e” were different questions and there was not duplicate reporting occurring between the two items.

(b) Read news magazines such as Newsweek or Time, in print or on the Internet - basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, once a month or not at all?

- Basically every day 1
- A few times a week 5
- A few times a month 1
- Once a month 2
- Not at all 5
- DK
- Refused

Results: Participants' paraphrases and responses to targeted probes indicated they had a clear understanding of the question and no difficulty responding.

c) Watch the news on television or get news from television internet sites - basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, once a month or not at all?

- Basically every day 8
- A few times a week 2
- A few times a month 2
- Once a month
- Not at all 2
- DK
- Refused

Results: Participants' paraphrases and responses to targeted probes indicated they had a clear understanding of the question and no difficulty responding.

(d) Listen to the news on the radio or get news from radio internet sites - basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, once a month or not at all?

- Basically every day 8
- A few times a week 3
- A few times a month 2
- Once a month
- Not at all 2
- DK
- Refused

Results: Participants' paraphrases and responses to targeted probes indicated they had a clear understanding of the question and no difficulty responding.

(e) Obtain news from any other Internet sources that we have not previously asked about such as blogs, chat rooms, independent news services, etc. - basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, once a month or not at all?

- Basically every day 2
- A few times a week 1
- A few times a month 1
- Once a month
- Not at all 11
- DK
- Refused

Results: Participants' paraphrases and responses to targeted probes indicate they had a clear understanding of the question and no difficulty responding. Participants had a different interpretation of part "e" and part "a" and there did not seem to be duplicate reporting between these two items.

2. Discussion of Results (Entire series a - e)

The question series worked fine. The paraphrases and response to targeted probes indicate no problems with any of the five items ("a"- "e") in the series. We probed whether there were any other means through which people get the news and no one reported anything other than "talking to people." We probed about the participants main media source for civic and political information. In descending order of frequency of main media source was television (7), newspapers (4), Internet (3) and radio (1).

3. Recommendations

Make no revision to question series.

4. Justification for Recommendations

No problems detected.

5. Final Decision

To be determined

D. Political Action

1. Question Wording

I am going to read a list of things some people have done to express their views. Please tell me whether or not you have done any of the following in the last 12 months, that is between September 2006 and now:

(a) Contacted or visited a public official - at any level of government - to express your opinion?	Yes 5	No 10
(b) Attended a meeting where political issues are discussed?	Yes 6	No 9
(c) Bought or boycotted a certain product or service because of the social or political values of the company that provides it?	Yes 5	No 10
(d) Taken part in a march, rally, protest or demonstration?	Yes 1	No 14
(e) Showed support for a particular political candidate or party by distributing campaign materials, fundraising, making a donation or in some other way?	Yes 5	No 10

2. Discussion of Results

Participants' paraphrases and responses to targeted probes indicate they understood the intent of the question and had no difficulty providing a response. Their interpretations of key phrases in the questions were understood as intended. Key phrases that were probed include: "public official," "contacted or visited," "bought or boycotted a certain product or services," "social and political values," "march, rally, protest or demonstration," and "particular political candidate or party."

In response to the probe about "social and political values," it was clear that a few participants were thinking of the terms out of context from the survey question. Their interpretation of the phrase included "your personal, social or moral values that pertain to you, whether it is religion or animal rights," "to me the first thing I thought about was abortion," "social values would be the way we live or react to each other or react to issues that are positive to our particular way of thinking or will benefit society as a whole, and political values is about doing the best for the good of society as a whole."

3. Recommendations

Make no revisions to question series.

4. Justification for Recommendations

No evidence problems with question series.

5. Final Decision

To be determined

E. Participation in Groups and Organizations

1. Question Wording (Version A)

Now I would like to ask about groups or organizations in which people sometimes participate. I will read a list of types of organizations. Please tell me whether or not you have participated in any of these groups during the last 12 months, that is between September 2006 and now:

- | | | |
|---|-------|-----------|
| (a) A hobby, sports, arts, music or other leisure activity group? | Yes 4 | No 4 |
| (b) A service, social welfare, or fraternal organization? | Yes 2 | No 5 Dk 1 |
| c) A youth, parent, or school-support organization? | Yes 3 | No 4 |
| (d) A labor union or professional, trade, farm or business association? | Yes 3 | No 5 |
| (e) A neighborhood, ethnic or political organization? | Yes 3 | No 4 |
| (f) A church, synagogue, mosque or other religious institution or organizations? | Yes 4 | No 3 |

2. Discussion of Results

Both versions of this item had some issues which need to be addressed prior to Phase II testing. Some of the words identifying groups in various categories presented problems for some participants.

Category “a” (A hobby, sports, arts, music or other leisure activity group?)

Most participants thought this question was asking about community involvement. Two participants were confused by the question. One thought the question was asking “do you hang out and do sports. I really don’t know.” The participant asked for the question to be reread and then said “it’s asking me what kind of hobby you have”. Upon further probing, he said “it’s kind of confusing to me”. Another responded “no” and when asked to paraphrase the question, responded “to be honest with you, I really do not know. I guess the first thing that threw me off was hobby, sports. Yes, I go to sports, but in an actual group am... I am just not familiar with what that would mean... and that would be my answer.” Another participant said he did not know what a “leisure activity group” is.

Category “b” (A service, social welfare, or fraternal organization?)

A few participants mentioned that they did not know what a “fraternal” organization was. One asked if it was like a “fraternities or sororities.” One reported that if “fraternal” had not been included in the grouping in the question, his response might have been different. focused on “welfare” and “fraternal”.

The words “service” and “social welfare” led one participant to think that category was communicating public assistance welfare as opposed to a social service volunteer group. Another also repeated the word “welfare” and asked “is the question did you give to them.” The participant said that “social welfare” makes it sound like do you participate in the welfare of your neighborhoods, like you don’t want no drug dealers or people robbing. It’s more like a neighborhood watch.” Another said this question was a “little more complicated”. One participant said his only thought was firefighters and police associations my wife and I made a donation to them.” His response to the question was “no.”

Category “c”(A youth, parent, or school-support organization?)

Participants seemed to have a fairly clear understanding of that category and didn’t experience problems responding. One participant did respond “yes” and said he is a coach for a recreational soccer league and that he was not sure whether to report that here or under category A. He explained that he thought category “a” had to do with him and things he did for himself and that category “c” had to do with youth and doing things for the youth. So he thought his coaching activity should be reported under category “c.”

Category “d” (A labor union or professional, trade, farm or business association?)

This category was generally understood by participants.

Category “e”(A neighborhood, ethnic or political organization?)

This category was generally understood.

Category “f”(A church, synagogue, mosque or other religious institution or organizations?)

Several participants mentioned in their paraphrases that they thought this question was asking if they going to church (in addition to other church-related) activities. In the hypotheticals we administered asking if a person attends church but does not participate in any other church activities, 4 of 6 participants said attending church should be counted as participating and should be included as a “yes” response to category “f.” This is not what the sponsor intended. The wording of this category should be revised prior to Phase II testing.

Hypotheticals Administered Retrospectively.

To determine whether participants would think involvement with specific groups would count as “participating” and to determine what category they thought would be appropriate for various activities, descriptions of involvement with groups were presented to participants at the end of the interview. Provided below is the name of the group or description of the activity along with the information obtained from participants.

Book club - Five of seven participants thought being in a book club should count and be classified in category “a”. Two participants reported that it should not be counted with one person elaborating by saying “because books, you discuss things, but I don’t know if any changes are made because of those books.”

Rotary Club or Lions Club - Four of seven participants said they thought involvement with a civic organization should count and be classified in “b,” while one participant thought it should be classified in “a.” Two reported “yes,” but did not say which category they thought was most appropriate.

Homeless shelter - All six participants asked about this reported that involvement in activities with homeless shelters should count and should be included in category “b.”

Mothers Against Drunk Driving - All seven participants asked about involvement with this group reported “yes,” it should be considered as participating. However there were different opinions of which category it should be reported. Four different categories were selected which included “b,” “c,” “e,” and “f.”

Neighborhood Watch Group or Neighborhood Advisory Committee - All seven participants asked about involvement with such a group reported that it should count as participating and be included in category “e.”

Going to religious services, but not participating in any other activities in the religious organization - Four of the six participants thought this should be counted as participating and be included in response to category “f.” Two reported that it should not be counted as participating.

Question Wording (Version B)

Now I would like to ask about groups or organizations in which people sometimes participate. I will read a list of types of organizations. Please tell me whether or not you have participated in any of these groups during the last 12 months, that is between September 2006 and now:

- | | | | | |
|---|-----|---|----|---|
| (a) A sport, hobby, arts, cultural or other leisure activity group? | Yes | 4 | No | 3 |
| (b) A child welfare, social service, or public assistance organization? | Yes | 3 | No | 3 |
| (c) An educational, fraternal, alumni, or parent/teacher association? | Yes | 4 | No | 2 |
| (d) A labor union or business, professional, trade, farm or association? | Yes | | No | 8 |
| (e) An ethnic association, political organization, or advocacy group? | Yes | 2 | No | 4 |
| (f) A church, synagogue, mosque or other religious institution or organizations? | Yes | 3 | No | 7 |

Discussion of Results

Category “a” (A sport, hobby, arts, cultural or other leisure activity group?)

Several participants responding to this version mentioned the concept of “formalized groups” when paraphrasing the question. One who gathers with friends regularly either for “trivia night” reported that it wasn’t a “formalized” group, but it’s a group to her and she was trying to decide whether that counted. She again stated that the question sounds like it’s asking if she’s in a leagues of some kinds. She stated that the terms “hobby” and “leisure” are both extremely general. She stated that she didn’t feel qualified to say “yes”, but that she did anyway.

Another participant started to interpret “sport” and “hobby” very generally saying he doesn’t participate, but goes down to the part and watches the local schools play sports. He said “So if that’s participation, then I’ve done that.” Upon further probing, the participant said “meaning was I involved in it and did I go in and ask how did I help? Can I assist you with some of the kids and get involved. That’s what you mean, but I haven’t done that.”

Categories “b,” “c,” “d,” “e” and “f”

No problems indicated through the responses or paraphrases.

Hypotheticals Administered Retrospectively.

To determine whether participants would think involvement with specific groups would count as “participating” and to determine what category they thought would be appropriate for various activities, descriptions of involvement with groups were presented to participants at the end of the interview.

Book club - Four of five participants thought being in a book club should count and be classified in category “a”. One reported that it should count but did not specify which category to put it in.

Rotary Club or Lions Club - Four of five participants said they thought involvement with a civic organization should count. Classification varied. One person thought category “b” was appropriate, one thought category “c” was appropriate, while two thought category “e” would be appropriate. One responded “don’t know.”

Homeless shelter - All four participants asked about this reported that involvement in activities with homeless shelters should count, but they were split as to which category it should be reported. Two thought it should be category “b” and two thought category “c.”

Mothers Against Drunk Driving - All five participants asked about involvement with this group reported “yes,” it should be considered as participating. All five thought it should be reported in category “e.”

Neighborhood Watch Group or Neighborhood Advisory Committee - All five participants asked about involvement with such a group reported that it should count as participating and be included in category “e.”

Going to religious services, but not participating in any other activities in the religious organization - Four of the five participants thought this should be counted as participating. One thought category “f” was the appropriate place to report such activity. Two other persons identified category “f,” but were a bit tentative about their choice. One other person reported it should count, but did not identify which category such activity should be reported.

3. Recommendations

****Unfortunately I put evaluation of this item off until the end. Therefore in the interest of time, I am sending the report to you without recommendations for this item. I will develop recommendations prior to the November 14 meeting and send them out to everybody.****

4. Justification for Recommendations

5. Final Decision

To be determined

F. Served as Officer or on Committee

1. Question Wording

In the last 12 months, between September 2006 and now, have you been an officer or served on a committee of any group or organization?

- Yes 2
- No 13
- DK
- Refused

2. Discussion of Results

Responses to paraphrases and targeted probes indicate that participants understood the question as intended and had no difficulty providing a response. Phrases for which we probed included “been an officer or served on a committee” and “group or organization.”

3. Recommendations

Make no revisions to question.

4. Justification for Recommendations

No problems detected during testing.

5. Final Decision

To be determined

G. Attendance at Meeting of Group or Organization

1. Question Wording

In the last 12 months, between September 2006 and now, have you attended a meeting of any group or organization?

- Yes 8
- No 7
- DK
- Refused

2. Discussion of Results

From paraphrases and targeted probes, participants seemed to understand the question, key phrases and have no difficulty providing a response. Targeted probes were administered for “attended a meeting,” and “of any group or organization.”

Information obtained from participants about the use of phrase “groups or organizations” versus “clubs or organization” indicate that the word “club” was interpreted more narrowly for those few participants who thought there was a difference between the word “clubs” and “groups.” Most participants did not think there was a difference between the two terms.

The types of group or organizations participants attended included neighborhood advisory groups, horseback riding clubs, social spiritual groups, political groups, alumni organizations, school groups, soccer meetings, church meetings, mentoring committees, church ministries, and alcoholic anonymous meetings. Persons participating in unstructured, informal groups (e.g., farm women getting together when someone dies or gets sick to make sure food is provided) accurately responded “no” to the survey question. Persons whose only participation in a group is with Sunday church services accurately responded “no” to the survey question.

Of the eight persons who answered “yes” to the survey questions, we asked if issues related to the main purpose of the group had been discussed at the meetings they reported attending and they all responded “yes.”

When probing to determine whether participants thought “social gatherings” of groups should be included in response to the original survey question, 5 persons thought they should and 7 persons thought they should not. (Note that it is not clear that participants understood what was being asked in the probe about social gatherings. In Phase II, the probe will be structure differently so it is clear what’s being asked.)

3. Recommendations

No revisions recommended. But we recommend revising the probe about social gatherings so it’s more clear what is being asked.

4. Justification for Recommendations

No problems detected with question

5. Final Decision

To be determined

H. Eating Dinner with Household Members

1. Question Wording

In a TYPICAL MONTH, how often do you eat dinner with any of the other members of your household - basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, once a month or not all?

- Basically every day 8
- A few times a week 2
- A few times a month
- Once a month 1
- Not at all
- DK
- Refused

2. Discussion of Results

There were 4 single person households that were not asked this question. Therefore information about this question is based on responses from 11 participants. The question was well understood by participants as evidenced by their paraphrases and responses to targeted probes.

In response to the probe about “what persons were you thinking of when answering this question,” one participant indicated that in addition to her husband, she was also thinking of her daughter and son (who do not live in the household.). This participant lived in a very rural area on 200 acres outside a small town. She said it was hard not to include them because in her mind they are members of her household even though they have their own places to live.

3. Recommendations

No revisions recommended.

4. Justification for Recommendations

No problems detected during testing.

5. Final Decision

To be determined

I. Communicate by Email or Internet

1. Question Wording

In a TYPICAL MONTH, how often, if at all, do you communicate with family or friends by Email or on the Internet - basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, once a month or not at all?

- Basically every day 4
- A few times a week 4
- A few times a month 1
- Once a month 1
- Not at all 4
- DK
- Refused

2. Discussion of Results

For the most part, participants understood this question. There were a couple of participants who initially responded based on communication only with their family. During the probing, participants became aware that the question was inquiring about communication with friends as well as family. These participants said the response would be more frequent and changed their initial response.

In response to probes, participants indicated that they did think communication on MySpace or Facebook should be taken into account when answering the survey question which is consistent with the sponsors' intent. The majority of participants accurately did not think text messaging should be considered. The four participants who responded that text messaging should be considered did not indicate they were thinking of text messaging when formulating their response to the survey question or in their paraphrase of the question.

3. Recommendations

Revised question wording for Phase II so the current phrase "family or friends" reads "friends or family."

4. Justification for Recommendations

A few participants only heard "family" and did not consider the communication they have with friends by Email or through the Internet until the probing questions were asked. The communication with friends was more frequent and changed which response category the participant chose. For Phase II cognitive testing, we recommend reversing the order of "family or friends" to "friends or family" and include probes to determine if participants are including both groups when responding to the question.

5. Final Decision

To be determined

J. Talk with Any of Neighbors in 10 or 20 closest households

1. Question Wording

In a TYPICAL MONTH, how often do you talk with any of the neighbors in the 10 or 20 households that live nearest to you - basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, once a month or not at all?

- Basically every day 4
- A few times a week 4
- A few times a month 6
- Once a month 1
- Not at all
- DK
- Refused

2. Discussion of Results

Participants understood the question as indicated by their paraphrases and responses to probes. There were numerous probes asked both concurrently and retrospectively to ensure that participants understood the question intent, specific terms and phrases, and to determine how participants were defining the “10 or 20 households that live nearest to them.” They correctly understood that “talking” involved more than a casual ‘hello.’ Additionally, participants correctly answered based on how often they speak with any of the neighbors in the 10 or 20 households that live closest to them. One participant in a very rural area said she had to think of a 20 miles radius to get the ten closest households. When probes inquiring about how many of their neighbors they typically talk to, participants responses ranged from none to eight.

Five of the participants thought the question was asking only about “face-to-face” talking and did not include phone conversations. Two of these people don’t ever talk to the neighbors on the phone and the participants acknowledged that affected their response to the probe question.

Only one participant indicated that the people she was thinking of included family members. This was the person in the very rural area who had to think of a 20 mile radius to get ten closest households.

After review of all the responses to the numerous probes, there is evidence to suggest that most participants did not consider the specifics of “10 or 20 households that lives nearest to them” when responding to this question. Rather, participants were responding with regards to how often they talk to their neighbors who live “in my building,” “in my community,” “households

closer than 10-20, fewer,” etc. The range of proximity of how close the neighbors live to them ranged from “across the hall” to “within several acres” to “within a mile.” Only one participant indicated that the frequency depends on the time of year and that in the spring and summer there is more interaction because people are outside more.

3. Recommendations

Despite the suspected lack of adherence the criteria of “10 or 20 households that live closest to you,” participants seemed to be responding in a manner consistent with that desired by the sponsor. No revisions are recommended for this question.

4. Justification for Recommendations

When all information is evaluated, there is not any evidence that revisions are warranted.

5. Final Decision

To be determined

K. Favors with Neighbors

1. Question Wording

In a TYPICAL MONTH how often do you and your neighbors do favors for each other? By favors we mean such things as watching each other’s children, helping with shopping, house sitting, lending garden or house tools, and other small acts of kindness - basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, once a month or not at all?

- Basically every day 2
- A few times a week 1
- A few times a month 6
- Once a month 5
- Not at all 1
- DK
- Refused

2. Discussion of Results

Participants had a clear understanding of the question as evidenced by their paraphrases and responses to targeted probes. They understood terms of “neighbors,” “favors,” and “small acts of kindness,” as intended. All participants understood that favors do not require face-to-face interaction.

3. Recommendations

No revisions recommended

4. Justification for Recommendations

No evidence of any problems during testing.

5. Final Decision

To be determined

L. Close Friends

1. Question Wording

a. **About how many CLOSE FRIENDS do you have, if any? These are people you feel at ease with, can talk to about private matters, or call on for help. Would you say that you have no close friends, one or two, three to five, six to ten, or more than ten?**

- No close friends (Skip to 13)
- One or two
- Three to five 8
- Six to ten 5
- More than ten 2
- DK
- Refused

b. **How many of these close friends have a college degree?** _____

c. **How many did not graduate from high school?** _____

d. **How many are of a different race than you?** _____

e. **How many are from a different social or economic background than you?**

2. Discussion of Results

Question “a” (number of close friends)

Question “a” was generally understood by all participants as evidenced by paraphrases and response to probes. The terms “close friends” and “private matters” were understood by participants in a manner consistent with that intended by the sponsor.

Three of the ten participants probed as to whether the question is intended to include family members who are considered as close responded “no.” Four other participants said they did not include family members in their count, even though they do have some they consider close friends. The sponsor indicated prior to testing that close friends may include family members. In Phase II, we may need to consider an inclusionary phrase for the question, given that most participants with family members who are close friends did not include them in their count.

There were two participants who gave some indication that they were surprised by the question about close friends, but those comments were provided only in response to probes and/or request for paraphrases. One said “Um...I guess my first question was why are they asking this question. It seemed like a strange question for the Census Bureau to be asking. But I think it was pretty straightforward.” Another was: “It’s a strange question to me actually for some reason. Just how many close friends you have and then tells you how to define a close friend.” Upon probing, the participant said the reason she said it was a strange was “because of the context of where we’d been in the survey, and I’m trying to think of what its purpose is as a question. I guess because if you’re going to talk about politics or be engaged, it depends how big your social group is. But I wasn’t expecting it.”

The period of time which participants were thinking about when answering the question varied widely. Several participants reported they were thinking about their entire life. Some reported “now,” “recent, present” Other time periods included “within the last 12 months,” and “last couple of years.”

The number of close friends reported by participants fit within three of the 5 response categories and were skewed toward the higher end of the response scale. (Nobody reported less than three to five close friends.) This may be a function of the scale used. Participants may have been widening their definition of close friends to fit with the scale. For example, since we offer “six to ten” and “more than ten” participants may have counted some people as close friends that they otherwise would not have had the top of our scale been four or more. We may want to test different response categories in Phase II to determine if respondents’ answers are affected by the response scale.

Question “b” (college degree)

Participants understood the question. All but one participant reported that an Associate of Arts degree should count as a “college degree” for the purpose of responding to this question which fits

with the definition provided by the sponsor.

Although question “b” asks “how many...”, several participants did not provide a number, but responded by saying “most,” “all,” “majority,” “half,” or “50%”. This may be due to context effects, since the prior question only requires the participant to provide a “range” as their answer for number of close friends. For the subsequent questions, participants, may not have expected to be required to give an exact number. Consideration may need to be given to restructuring the question and have a response scale with percentages rather than asking for an exact number of friends with a particular characteristic.

Question “c” (did not graduate from high school)

Question “c” was generally understood by participants. Several participants responded by saying, “No, they all graduated from high school,” or “they all did.” If the question remains in its current form, interviewer instructions will need to alert interviewers about the potential for these types of responses. Verification of the response by the interviewer may be necessary to ensure the interviewer should enter “0” indicating that the respondent has no friends who did not graduate from high school.

Question “d” (different race)

Question “d” was understood by participants. No comments were provided by participants about this question except for one participant who expressed that she was surprised that her answer was zero and that it is somewhat embarrassing since you like to think you have diversity among your friends.”

Ten of the 15 participants reported “none” or “zero” to this question. The other five responses were “ 1, 1, 2, 3, 10% (of the 6-10 close friends).” No one expressed any sensitivity or offensiveness about this question.

Question “e” (different social or economic background”

Participants’ responses to this question were varied, both in response to the survey question and in response to the probe inquiring about the phrase “from a different social or economic background than you.” The majority included a reference to income or finances when responding.

One participant focused on “social” background and was thinking about the sexual orientation of his close friends and that it was different than his. Another participant reported that he had grown up on a farm and about three of his close friends were like him and the other two weren’t. For him “growing up on farm” was the “dividing line.” One participant could not answer, responding “I guess I can tell the difference between a really rich person and a really poor person... but everything else in-between really blurs... so I can’t really answer that question.” Three participants mentioned race or ethnicity when responding to the probe.

Question difficulty

When retrospective probes were administered about whether any of the questions in the survey were difficult to answer, three of the fifteen participants mentioned the “friends” questions. But the responses weren’t necessary negative. One participant said “The most difficult were the ones about my friendships and their backgrounds and things like that. Difficulty was just in terms of how specific I needed to be to get what you needed.” Another said “Some of them are thought provoking. I think the friends section....how many people you consider your best friends. And if they’re educated, that’s not a requirement for my friendship so I had to think about who had what. And the ethnic one.” Another said “Friends’ question took a little more time, the one who you can tell anything to because some people almost fit that category and I had to think through that question.”

Question sensitivity or offensive

There was no outward indication of question sensitivity or offensiveness other than what is noted above, with one exception. During retrospective probing, when asked if any of the question were sensitive or offensive, one participant said “yes” and responded “That one I was upset about was if my friends are of a different ethnic background. No other ones.”

When asked if other people might find the questions sensitive or offensive, one participant said “maybe the one about the different races of your friends. Maybe people would have the same reaction I did which was surprise that they couldn’t come up with any. I don’t know if it would be sensitive as much as embarrassing or something. You expect diversity in your friends is something some people prize.”

3. Recommendations

Question “a”. For round two, use a different response scale for the number of “close friends” with the highest category being four or more. Suggested response scale: None, one, two, three, four or more.

Question “b” through “d”. For round two, use a response scale with percentages rather than asking for an exact number of friends with a specific characteristic. Suggested response scale: 0%, 10%, 25 %, 50%, 75%, 90%, 100%. (Relevant literature will be reviewed to determine if there is information about response scales using percentages as options.)

Question “e”. Alternative wording needs to be developed for round two testing, but that has not yet been done.

4. Justification for Recommendations

Question “a.” Responses to the current Question “a” were skewed toward the higher end of the response scale. We do not know if that was due to desirability effects given the structure of the response scale. Therefore, we propose testing a response scale with a smaller number of close

friends as the highest category during round two..

Question “b - d”. Responses to the current Question “b” through “d” were frequently not answered in a format which fit with the format requested in the question. (E.g. Percentages reported rather than exact number of close friends with the characteristic of interest.)

Question “e”. There was not clear understanding of this question. Consideration need to be given to developing an alternative question wording for this item for round two testing.

5. Final Decision

To be determined.

M. Social Trust (Single Question - Version A)

1. Question Wording

We would like to ask a question about how you view other people generally, that is, those people other than your immediate family and close friends. Would you say most people can be trusted or that you cannot be too careful in dealing with people?

- Most people can be trusted
- You cannot be too careful in dealing with people
- It depends
- DK
- Refused

N. Social Trust (Two-part question - Version B)

1. Question Wording

We would like to ask a question about how you view other people generally, that is, those people other than your immediate family and close friends.

(a) How much do you agree with the following statement: “Most people can be trusted.” Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with that statement?

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- DK
- Refused

(b) How much do you agree with the following statement: “You cannot be too careful in dealing with people.” Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with that statement?

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- DK
- Refused

2. Results

Two versions (Versions A and B) of the “social trust” question were administered to all participants. The Version A “social trust” question contained two extreme positions and participants were requested to choose between the two. There was an “it depends” response option which was not read to the participant and was only used if the person could not choose between the two stated positions and responded that “it depends.” The Version B “social trust” question contained two items. These items were derived from the single item Version A question. The first position offered to participants was “most people can be trusted.” Participants were then provided with an five-point agree/disagree response scale. The second item of the two-part question provided the second position which was “You cannot be too careful in dealing with people.” Again, a five-point agree/disagree response scale was provided to participants. The two-part item was developed to allow participants to choose categories other than just the two extreme positions offered by the single item question.

Eight of the 15 participants received the Version A “social trust” question (single question) during the “core” survey and were administered the Version B questions (two-part question) at the end of the survey when retrospective probes and questions were included. Seven of the 15 participants received the Version B “social trust” two-part question in the “core” survey and received the single item Version A “social trust” question in the retrospective section. Summary results for both versions of the “social trust” question are provided below in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3 displays responses to the single question version of the “social trust” question. Table 3 provides data for all 15 participants and shows the distribution of responses by when the question was administered (core survey versus retrospectively.) The distribution is virtually the same with the exception of the one case for which an “It depends” response was volunteered by the participant.

The majority (10 of 15) of participants indicated that “most people can be trusted” when the single question option was used and participants had to choose between two extremes of “most people can be trusted” or “You cannot be too careful in dealing with people.”

Table 3. Social Trust Question (Single Question - Version A)

Social Trust Question (Single question)	Core Questionnaire	Retrospective Question	Total
Most Can Be Trusted	5	5	10
Cannot Be Too Careful	2	2	4
It Depends (volunteered response)	1	0	1
TOTAL	8	7	15

Table 4 displays responses to the two-part version of the “social trust” question. Table 4 provides data for 14 participants and shows the distribution of responses by when the question was administered (core versus retrospectively.) It is interesting that all 7 participants receiving the two-part item in the core questionnaire responded “somewhat agree” for part “a” of the two-part item. Their responses to part “b” varied. Those participants who received the two-part question in the retrospective section of the questionnaire had more varied responses to both part “a” and part “b.”

The lack of variability in the part “a” responses is interesting and could be due to social desirability. It might be worthwhile in round two testing to reverse the order of the two-part item, presenting the statement “you cannot be too careful in dealing with people” first, and the “most people can be trusted” statement second and continue to use the five point agree/disagree scale. Consideration might also be given to reversing the order of the scale so “the disagree options are presented before the agree options.)Note when looking at the “total” column in Table 4 below, that the majority of participants agree with both items in the two-part question.

Table 4. Social Trust Questions (Two-part question - Version B)

Social Trust (Two-part question)	Core Questionnaire	Retrospective Question	Total
a. Most Can Be Trusted			
Strongly Agree		2	2
Somewhat Agree	7	3	10
Neither Agree nor Disagree			
Somewhat Disagree		1	1
Strongly Disagree		1	1
TOTAL	7	7	14
b. Cannot Be Too Careful			
Strongly Agree	4	2	6
Somewhat Agree	1	1	2
Neither Agree nor Disagree		1	1
Somewhat Disagree	2	2	4
Strongly Disagree		1	1
TOTAL	7	7	14

Tables 5 and 6 below, track by Case ID, the responses a participant gave to the core “social trust” item(s) they received and the responses they provided to the retrospective item(s). This is probably most valuable to CNS as they decide how (and if) they might analytically use the data from the two-part question and what consistency exists between responses to the two versions of the “social trust” question. The cases are ordered somewhat according to consistency of responses.

Table 5. Social Trust Question - Responses to Core and Retrospective Question(s) by Case

Case ID	Core Question (Version A) Single Question Response	Retrospective Question Part A - Most People Can Be Trusted	Retrospective Question Part B - Cannot be too careful in dealing with people
A5	Can be trusted	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree
A1	Can be trusted	Strongly agree	Somewhat disagree
A4	Can be trusted	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree
A6	Can be trusted	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree
A2	Can be trusted	(missing)	(missing)
A9	Cannot be too careful	Strongly disagree	Strongly agree
A8	Cannot be too careful	Somewhat disagree	Strongly agree
A3	It depends	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree

Table 6. Trust Question - Responses to Core and Retrospective Question(s) by Case

Case ID	Core Question Version B Part A - Most People Can Be Trusted	Core Question Version B Part B - Cannot be too careful in dealing with people	Retrospective Question Single Question Response
B2	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Can be trusted
B7	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Can be trusted
B5	Somewhat agree	Strongly disagree	Can be trusted
B6	Somewhat agree	Strongly disagree	Can be trusted
B3	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree	Can be trusted
B1	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Cannot be too careful
B4	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Cannot be too careful

3. Recommendations

It might be worthwhile in round two testing to reverse the order of the two-part item, presenting the statement “you cannot be too careful in dealing with people” first, and the “most people can be trusted” statement second and continue to use the five point agree/disagree scale. Consideration might also be given to reversing the order of the scale so “the disagree options are presented before the agree options.

For the single response item, it could also be interesting to see if response distributions would be different by switching the order of the two statements.

4. Justification for Recommendations

The majority of responses for both the single item and the two-part item leaned heavily in the “most people can be trusted” category rather than the “cannot be too careful in dealing with people.” It is unknown whether there is a social desirability effect or order effect. Switching the order of the two statements as well as the order of the agree/disagree scale in the two-part item may provide some useful data.

5. Final Decision

To be determined.

O. Knowledge about Federal Laws

1. Question Wording

The last two questions are about federal laws. If you don't know the answers, just tell me and we'll go on.

(a) What individual or group of individuals has the responsibility to make the final decision on whether a law is constitutional or not - is it the Congress, the Supreme Court, or the President of the United States?

- Congress 3
- Supreme Court 8
- President of the United States 2
- DK 2
- Refused

(b) Do you happen to know how much of a majority is required for the U.S. Senate and House to override a presidential veto? Is it 51 percent, 60 percent, 67 percent or 80 percent?

- 51 percent 2
- 60 percent 1
- 67 percent 8
- 80 percent 1
- DK 3
- Refused

2. Discussion of Results

Participants understood the question being asked as indicated by their paraphrases and responses to probes. However, only eight of the fifteen participants had the correct answer. And several of those with the correct answer expressed uncertainty in their response by using qualifiers such as "I think" or by indicating that they guessed at their answer when they were asked how they arrived at their answer. Three participants volunteered that they did not know the answer.

During discussion of the item, a few participants expressed a bit of embarrassment that they might not know the correct answer.

3. Recommendations

There is not enough data to determine whether or not the questions are problematic. They are "test-like" questions which may cause some discomfort. The questions should be tested further in round two

4. Justification for Recommendations

Some participants expressed embarrassment at their lack of knowledge needed to answer the questions correctly. To determine if this might present problems in the field, the questions should be included in round two. Perhaps some additional probes should be added to gain more insight into what participants think about these questions.

5. Final Decision

To be determined.

P. Retrospective Probes About the Survey Questions

Once the survey questions were completed, there were additional retrospective questions administered to participants in order to gauge their overall opinion of the survey questions, get a sense of whether there were any issues related to question difficulty, sensitivity, and appropriateness of questions for a Census Bureau survey. We also inquired about participants' thoughts on proxy reporting for other household members. An entire series of questions was administered to determine participants' understanding of the reference period "typical month" which was used in six of the survey questions.

1. Overall Opinion about the Survey Questions

The 15 participants were asked the overall opinion about the survey questions. Responses were overwhelmingly positive. Responses included the following:

"They really made me think. I was really thinking hard about what you were asking me."

"This is... I've done one before. Their question was a little more mind boggling and confusing. I think it was pretty cut and dry."

"Seemed fine."

"Uh.. As I said, there were some points of embarrassment that this is information (the last two questions) that I should know from going to school. I think people might be embarrassed and just go look things up."

"Those were nice questions. Those were questions that should be everyday questions to people. Basically about governments, schools and organizations, which everyone should get involved basically."

"They were great."

"It was easy."

"The were pertinent and directly related to the topic."

"I liked the survey. It was interesting. I thought it covered a variety of topics. I thought the questions were very clear overall. I didn't...it was more struggling with my own retention if I didn't have it in front of me rather than trying to interpret the question."

"I thought they were very interesting. It made me kind of think about how there's maybe more to explore out there than I have explored."

"Interesting... I appreciate the opportunity to help you guys do this so that you can narrow the questions down... so that there can be a precise as then can be for the wide group of people that would be answering these questions."

“I thought they were fine. I thought some of them were pretty clear cut.”

“I think they were excellent questions and I enjoyed the survey myself. I am not sure everybody else will.. But it depends on who you are.”

“Very interesting. First of all it makes me think about what and what I don’t know about politics.”

“I thought it as pretty simple. I do not think there was anything complex.”

2. Sensitivity Issues

Only one of the fifteen participants responded that they did find the questions sensitive or offensive. When probed about which questions were offensive, the participant responded “The one I was upset about was if my friends are of a different ethnic background...no other ones.”

When asked if other people might find the questions sensitive or offensive, the following responses were provided by 4 of the 13 participants:

“Um, I mean maybe the ones about the different races of your friends. Maybe people would have the same reaction I did which was surprise that they couldn’t come up with any. I don’t know if it would be sensitive as much as embarrassing or something. You expect diversity in your friends is something some people prize. “

“Uh, Maybe when people are overly religious, they may have questions about why you’re asking how often they go to church or something like that. But I think that’s a very small percentage. “

“Delineating between church meetings and church attendance might be sensitive for some people. But everything else no.”

“Not offensive. Sensitive maybe”

3. Difficulty Issues

Four of the fifteen participants indicated that they found some of the questions difficult to answer. When probed about which questions were difficult, the questions about federal laws and friendships were mentioned..

4. Proxy Issues

Of the 10 participants administered the retrospective question inquiring if they would be able to answer the survey questions about everyone that lives in their household, eight of the ten said they would. One of these participants did state that the “opinion questions” would be guess work if he responded for other household members.

One participant who stated that he would not be able to answer the survey questions about everyone in

the household indicated that the questions which may be problematic were the questions about “politics, the social clubs and the topic on trust.”

When asked if they thought one household respondent would be able to answer the questions about everyone who lived there, four reported yes and four reported no.

5. Willingness to Respond

Of the ten participants asked if they thought other people in their household would be willing to answer the survey questions, **three of the ten indicated other people probably wouldn't be willing, but the reasons were not specific to this survey.** Reasons given had more to do with other people in the household not interested in participating in general.

6. Participation in Census Bureau Surveys

All fifteen participants responded “no” when asked if there was anything about the questions that might cause you not to want to participate in Census Bureau surveys.

7. Appropriateness for a Census Bureau Survey

When asked if they thought the questions were appropriate for a Census Bureau survey all responded “yes.”

8. Reference Period Issues

a. Typical Month

Six of the survey questions used a reference period of “typical month.” During retrospective probing, participants were asked how they interpreted that time frame. Several of the participants didn't understand the probe and just reported what a typical month is (e.g. From the 1st to the 30th or 31st.) Some participants thought of “last month”. One who mentioned last month said that had last month been atypical in some way, she would have provided different answers. Another participant thought about the questions about neighbors and stated that he was thinking of months when you see your neighbors so he was reporting for months like May and June. Another said she thought about the last year and divided it up.

Participants were asked if the reference period wording had been “During a TYPICAL MONTH in the past year,” if that would produce a different understanding. Four participants stated it would change their answers, three said it would not change their answers and one said he/she didn't know, stating it would be situational. However when they explained their answers it was again clear that several participants did not understand what was being asked as they responded “any month during that timeframe. 30 days,” “ I kind of think 30 days.” **Clearly the probes attempting to get at participants' understanding of the reference periods need to be improved!**

b. Number of Days Corresponding to Response Options for Typical Month Questions.

To determine participants' interpretation of the response options used in the six questions which asked about activities in a typical month, participants were asked to state the number of days they think of when they heard the various response options.

The response options used in the questions about "typical month" activities included the following:

- Basically every day
- A few times a week
- A few times a month
- Once a month
- Not at all

Participants seemed to have a relatively common understanding of the response categories.

Basically every day - This response option was interpreted as low as five days a week to a high of seven days a week.

A few times a week - Interpretations of this response option ranged from a low of two days a week to a high of "4 or 5" days a week.

A few times a month - Interpretations ranged from two - six times per month. One participant was outside this range with a response of "10 - 12, a couple days each week."

Once a month - Interpretations were exact and consistent - once a month.

Not at all - Interpretations were exact and consistent - none.

While the probes administered to obtain information about the reference period "typical month" were not designed well enough for participants to articulate their interpretations, the extensive discussions about the survey items and participants' responses to them provide no information to lead us to think the "typical month" reference period was problematic.