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# Cognitive Testing of the American Community Survey Content Test Items

## Final Report

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## **Executive Summary**

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a household survey conducted by the United States Census Bureau that is designed to meet the needs of federal government agencies for that require data on the American public. As part of the initial step for the next ACS Content Test, the U.S. Census Bureau developed a Statement of Work designed to pretest new and revised questions that were proposed by Sponsoring Agencies. The Pretest design involved cognitive testing methods to evaluate the current ACS question wording against experimental versions of the questions and to evaluate alternative versions of new questions under consideration for the ACS. The results of the cognitive interviews conducted as part of the pretest were used to inform the decision regarding the versions of the questions that will be tested in a production version in the field in the fall of 2010. This report documents all aspects of the pretest contract, Cognitive Testing of the American Community Survey Content Test Items, which was conducted from March 20, 2009, to August 12, 2009.

The primary objective of the pretest cognitive testing was to evaluate eight question topics as part of the ACS survey. Six of the eight question topics were current questions in the ACS while two were new question topics that were proposed as additions for a future version of the ACS. These question topics that were tested were organized into modules for the cognitive interviews. The modules that were proposed as new questions for the ACS were the following two modules: Computer and Internet Usage and Parental Place of Birth. The modules with revised questions were the following: Veterans Identification, Veterans Period of Service, Food Stamps, Public Assistance Income, Wages and Salary Income and Property Income (Interest and Dividends).

The modules selected by the Census Bureau for the pretest were chosen for a variety of reasons. In general, legislation and quality issues identified during a review of earlier ACS data led to the identification of some of the question revisions that are proposed as well as to the need for additional data to be collected. In the Housing section of the ACS, there were two modules that were identified for testing. The Computer and Internet Use questions are proposed additions because the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is interested in tracking deployment of broadband use and ownership of computers. The food stamps questions are being tested because there was a name change to this program and the new name, Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, was included in the questions in different ways to determine which was most widely recognized and would lead to the most accurate reporting. In the Detailed Person section of the ACS, there were six module tested. The Parental Place of Birth questions have been included in a previous Census questionnaire, but have never been part of the ACS. The Veterans Identification and Period of Service questions were revised because data users wanted to simplify the categories for periods of service. The Wages and Salary Income, Property Income, and Public Assistance questions are being tested to determine the best way to bridge the gap between the ACS reported data and administrative records data.

As part of the pretest, two or three alternate versions of the questions were tested using three different modes (self-administered, interviewer-administered in-person, and interviewer-administered by telephone) and two languages (English and Spanish). In the final recommendations based on the cognitive testing, the best of the alternative versions were

selected to be administered in the next phase of the Content Test, the field test. For modules that are currently included in the ACS, the recommendation made in this report is for the one best alternative version of the questions to be evaluated against the current version. In the case of the new question topics, two versions are recommended for evaluation in the field test.

To implement this pretest of the new and revised questions, the U.S. Census Bureau contracted with RTI International\* (RTI) to conduct the cognitive interviews and make the recommendations for the versions to be tested in the field. In order to maintain the schedule for this work, RTI subcontracted with two other research organizations, Research Support Services (RSS) and Westat. Each organization conducted a specified number of the cognitive interviews and contributed to the analysis and reporting.

The Cognitive Testing of the ACS Content Test Items included a total of 220 cognitive interviews, 115 interviews of which were conducted in English and 105 interviews of which were conducted in Spanish. Cognitive interviews were conducted primarily in May and June 2009 with a small number of interviews conducted in early July 2009.

### ***Methodology and Respondent Characteristics***

The cognitive interview protocols were developed by RTI in consultation with RSS and Westat and in accordance with the U.S. Census Bureau's Statement of Work for the Task Order. As such, the protocols were developed to include nearly the complete ACS interview as well as follow-up probes for specified questions to be tested. The probing was primarily retrospective, but the probes were administered concurrently within a section of the ACS interview; that is, the probes for the housing section were administered after the housing questions and the probes for the detailed person questions were administered following that part of the interview. The only exception to this was for the Food Stamps module because these questions were nearly always paired with the Public Assistance Module, which was part of the detailed person section of the ACS. The protocol began with a scripted introduction and the informed consent for the interview. The administration of the ACS interview was pre-selected for either the self-administered version, the face-to-face interviewer-administered version, or the telephone interviewer-administered version. Probes were scripted as part of the protocol, but the interviewers were also encouraged to administer spontaneous probes as appropriate.

Interviews were conducted in six states (Colorado, Florida, Maryland, North Carolina, Illinois, and Virginia), as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. While this research is based on a non-probability sample, the sites were selected to represent the diversity of the Hispanic population residing in the United States. Among the eight sites selected, respondents who met the recruitment targets for geographical areas (both urban and rural) and for diverse nationalities among Spanish-speaking respondents (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Central and South American descent) could be found. All interviews were conducted by professional staff trained to conduct the interviews and were conducted at a location that assured sufficient privacy. All respondents were asked for their consent to audiotape the cognitive interviews. Respondents were paid \$40 for participation.

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\* RTI International is a trade name of Research Triangle Institute.

Spanish interview respondents were native Spanish-speakers with little or no knowledge of English. English interview respondents were primarily native English-speakers; however, some respondents who spoke English well but as a second language were also interviewed. There were recruitment targets for the overall demographics of all respondents as well as specific target characteristics for each module. The targeted demographic characteristics for the overall recruitment included a mix of categories for gender, age, education level, Hispanic origin or race, and income. In addition to these typical demographic targets for respondents, we also had specific recruitment targets for the individual modules such as Wi-Fi users for the Computer and Internet module, active duty, national guard, and reservists for the Veterans modules, various types of income for salary and property income questions, public assistance and food stamps recipients from multiple states. These module-specific recruitment targets were specified so that the cognitive interview data would include a mix of respondents question-characteristic targets for each of the modules tested.

### **Recommendations by Module**

Overall, the cognitive interview findings revealed that for each module tested, there were specific recommendations that could improve the respondents' understanding of the intent of the questions. A brief summary of each module tested is provided in this section. Detailed descriptions of the findings and recommendations by module are provided in Sections 4 through 11 as well as in the corresponding appendices (10 through 17) of this report.

### **Computer and Internet Module**

A set of new computer and internet questions in the ACS, were tested in three versions in the cognitive interviews, both in interviewer- administered and self-administered modes, in English and Spanish. The questions covered household internet access, internet service, and equipment used to access internet. Of the 84 interviews conducted, 42 were in English, and 42 in Spanish.

The purpose of this sequence of questions is to elicit data on type of computer equipment in the household, internet access, and type of service through which the internet is accessed. In Version 1, the information is elicited in that order, whereas Version 2 first elicits data on devices in the household that can access internet, followed by which service the household has. Finally, in Version 3 the order is internet access, service used, and equipment owned or used. The motivation for inclusion of such questions in the ACS is the FCC's interest in tracking deployment of broadband use and ownership of computers.

The questions in their self-administered English version read as follows:

#### **Version 1**

9. At this house, apartment, or mobile home – do you or any member of this household currently own or use any of the following computers or related devices?

§ Desktop, laptop, netbook, or notebook computer

§ Handheld computer, smart mobile phone, or other handheld wireless computer

§ Some other type of computer

10. At this house, apartment, or mobile home – do you or any member of this household currently access the Internet?

§ Yes, with a subscription to an Internet service

§ Yes, without a subscription to an Internet service -> Skip to Question 12

§ No, Internet access at this house, apartment, or mobile home -> Skip to Question 12

11. At this house, apartment, or mobile home – do you or any member of this household currently subscribe to the Internet using

§ Dial-up service?

§ DSL service?

§ Cable modem or fiber-optic service?

§ Wireless Internet service, including a mobile Internet plan (exclude in-house Wi-Fi)?

§ Satellite service?

§ Some other service?

## Version 2

9. Which of the following devices that could access the Internet are currently owned or used in this house, apartment, or mobile home? Mark (X) one or more boxes.

§ Desktop, laptop, netbook, or notebook computer

§ Handheld computer, smart mobile phone, or other wireless device

§ Some other device: Specify type of device \_\_\_\_\_

§ None

10. How do you or any member of this household subscribe to the Internet at this house, apartment, or mobile home? Mark (X) one or more boxes.

§ No subscription to an Internet Service Provider

§ Dial-up service

§ DSL service

§ Cable-modem or fiber-optic service

§ Wireless Internet service, including a mobile Internet plan (exclude in-house Wi-Fi)

§ Satellite service

§ Some other service: Specify service \_\_\_\_\_

### Version 3

9. Do you or any member of this household subscribe to the Internet at this house, apartment, or mobile home?

§ Yes

§ No

10. What type of Internet service do you or any member of this household have at this house, apartment, or mobile home? Mark (X) one or more boxes.

§ Dial-up service

§ DSL service

§ Cable-modem or fiber-optic service

§ Wireless Internet service, including a mobile Internet plan (exclude in-house Wi-Fi)

§ Satellite service

§ Some other service – Specify service \_\_\_\_\_

11. Do you or any member of this household currently own or use a computer or related device at this house, apartment, or mobile home?

*INCLUDE desktops, laptops, netbooks, smart mobile phones, hand-held computers, or other types of computers.*

*EXCLUDE GPS devices, digital music players, and devices with only limited computing capabilities, for example: household appliances.*

The recruitment of respondents for this module was developed to include a mix of people who would likely answer these questions differently based on their own situations. Specific groups of respondents who were targeted included the following types of respondents:

§ living in urban/suburban areas

§ living in rural areas

§ living in areas where municipal Wi-Fi service is available

§ from a variety of income levels and age brackets (including people over age 60).

Virtually without exception, the main intent of each question in all three versions was clearly understood. Respondents generally realized that these questions were asked at the household level and not at the individual level. (It is worth keeping in mind, however, that most respondents interviewed lived with other family members or by themselves.) The questions on specific equipment owned or used by the household were also interpreted as intended, even if some of the equipment or devices interviewers probed about (e.g. smartphones, handhelds) were not known to respondents. They also understood and were able to answer questions about whether their household had internet access with or without a subscription.

Knowledge of systems and services—and therefore comprehension of related questions—was equally distributed across age groups, income levels, and gender. More of the women mentioned that other members of the household “take care of such things” when asked about internet access and services, and the relatives they mentioned were mostly male. No clear response patterns emerge when we compare the answers of respondents in rural and urban/suburban areas. Systems use and internet access appear—at least in our non-probability sample—evenly distributed across both types of residence.

Some respondents had difficulty answering questions regarding the type of service by which their households access the internet. Some respondents exhibited limited understanding of different services or types of access, and some did not have the information because someone else in the household takes care of such matters. The combined effect of technical confusion and how responsibilities are distributed among household members led some respondents to great uncertainty. These issues were true across versions: the main problem respondents had in answering the questions was due to the lack of knowledge many of them have about the type of internet service the household has. For example, several respondents reported access through a variety of services in rather unlikely combinations. Upon probing, it became evident that they were not certain at all about what they really had. This issue was slightly more prevalent among Spanish-speaking respondents.

Probes on specific types of equipment and their classifications also showed that use of technology by many households is ahead of household members’ understanding of how the technology works and how it should be classified. For instance, in probes about different types of devices, very consistently, one-third of the respondents in each version—28 in total— either considered a videogame system as a computer without further qualifying their answers or defined a videogame as a computer as long as it can access the Internet.

Despite this confusion and uncertainty uncovered in probing, the questions as worded in any version do not require that respondents classify the equipment they have or use—simply that they report having it under one of the lists of devices offered. As we understand it, the aim of the questions is to determine if and how households access the internet. As long as the “other” category is phrased in the most inclusive way, no data should be missed for lack of finding the right place in the lists. For instance, in Version 1, instead of “some other type of computer,” the response choice could read, “some other type of computer or related device.” The one type of internet-access device that might be missed if asking only for computers are cell phones that have internet access but no other computing capabilities and are not classified as smart phones or handheld computers by respondents. Respondents found the lists of equipment to be comprehensive.

Although some respondents reported thinking about computer usage in general, when it came to specific responses, they discussed only their home situation as far as computer equipment and internet access were concerned. Only a handful of respondents mentioned accessing the internet in public places in addition to the home (e.g., public library, coffee shop). Because the ACS specifically asks about internet access at the house, apartment or mobile home, the interpretation of the overwhelming majority of respondents was as intended. Generally, respondents answered not just for themselves but also for all members of the household (as

indicated above, this may have been different if we had interviewed more respondents living with roommates).

The concepts of “access” (in Spanish, “acceso”/“conectarse”) and “subscription” (in Spanish, “suscripción”) to internet were well understood. The terminology employed worked well both in English and Spanish. Respondents made clear distinctions between subscribing and accessing without a subscription. Subscribing was widely defined as paying for the service, whereas accessing without a subscription was generally defined as connecting with internet but without having a paid service. None of the respondents considered that someone who connects to internet through a neighbor should answer that they access internet with a subscription.

Over one-fourth of the respondents (n=24) did not know what Wi-Fi is or how it works, even in very general terms. Even among those who are more familiar with the concept, many did not know what “in-house Wi-Fi” is and how it differs technically from wireless internet service. Respondents did not distinguish between wireless internet service and Wi-Fi.

Ten English-language respondents lived in areas with municipal Wi-Fi. Generally, they were not very knowledgeable about the municipal service. For households who access community Wi-Fi, the question on whether they subscribe to internet or not could be interpreted and answered differently depending on whether they consider themselves subscribers or not. Among our 10 respondents in such areas, only 1 was using community Wi-Fi for internet access. Even within the same area, respondents do not agree on whether the free municipal Wi-Fi would constitute accessing with or without a subscription. Others were not familiar enough with the municipal Wi-Fi in their area to have an opinion.

No specific differences by mode were detected in testing. As for language, the Spanish and English wording exhibited similar problems. However, Spanish-speaking respondents generally had less knowledge of the topics in the questions, as more of them had no computer equipment in the household or had no internet access. The question on internet access was equally non-problematic for Spanish speakers. However, in the internet service questions Spanish speakers were slightly more highly represented among those who were uncertain about the type of service their household subscribes to, which led to response error.

English-language participants did not express a strong liking for any one version. Spanish language respondents did express a preference for Version 2 or Version 3, as they found them clearer than Version 1. Respondents liked the include/exclude lists in Question 11. In Version 2, those with no internet subscription liked that such a choice was explicitly offered. None of the three versions appeared to lead to substantially higher response error or difficulty. In Version 1, the Question 9c response option, however, was confusing to 4 respondents, all English speakers. These respondents were baffled by this question, thinking that 9a and 9b had already covered all possible devices.

Version 3 stood out as working particularly well, and although respondents could not necessarily explain what was meant by “limited computing capability,” many were able to list devices that can be appropriately included there (e.g., i-Pods, GPS devices, stove thermostats). On the basis of the testing, we recommend Versions 2 and 3 be tested for inclusion in the ACS with slight modifications in response options. One modification to Version 2 is to have a “None”

response option as the first choice, to allow those who do not have any computing devices to easily find an answer. The second modification to both versions is to replace the Wireless Internet Service option with 'Mobile broadband plan for a computer or cellular phone' to avoid the confusion with Wi-Fi. The English version, shown here to illustrate, would be:

**Proposed Version 2**

9. Which of the following devices that could access the Internet are currently owned or used in this house, apartment, or mobile home? Mark (X) one or more boxes.

- § None
- § Desktop, laptop, netbook, or notebook computer
- § Handheld computer, smart mobile phone, or other wireless device
- § Some other device: Specify type of device \_\_\_\_\_

10. How do you or any member of this household subscribe to the Internet at this house, apartment, or mobile home? Mark (X) one or more boxes.

- § No subscription to an Internet Service Provider
- § Dial-up service
- § DSL service
- § Cable-modem or fiber-optic service
- § Mobile broadband plan for a computer or cellular phone
- § Satellite service
- § Some other service: Specify service \_\_\_\_\_

**Proposed Version 3**

9. Do you or any member of this household subscribe to the Internet at this house, apartment, or mobile home?

- § Yes
- § No

10. What type of Internet service do you or any member of this household have at this house, apartment, or mobile home? *Mark (X) one or more boxes.*

- § No service
- § Dial-up service
- § DSL service
- § Cable-modem or fiber-optic service
- § Mobile broadband plan for a computer or cellular phone



§ Satellite service

§ Some other service – Specify service \_\_\_\_\_

11. Do you or any member of this household currently own or use a computer or related device at this house, apartment, or mobile home?

*INCLUDE desktops, laptops, netbooks, smart mobile phones, hand-held computers, or other types of computers.*

*EXCLUDE GPS devices, digital music players, and devices with only limited computing capabilities, for example: household appliances.*

§ Yes

§ No

**Table 4-2, Recommendations for Final Versions for Computer and Internet Questions**, in Chapter 4 shows the specific wording of the questions, instructions, and answer categories proposed for self-administered and interviewer-administered wording for both English and Spanish.

### Food Stamps Module

The Food Stamps question in the ACS is being revised with the goal of increasing the accuracy with which households report receiving food stamps. The Census Bureau was interested in testing two versions to determine which would be best to be included in the field test as a comparison to the current question. The two versions of the new Food Stamps questions were tested in English and Spanish and in three interview modes (self-administered, face-to-face interviewer-administered and interviewer-administered by telephone). A total of 87 interviews were conducted with this module, 43 interviews were conducted with Spanish-speaking respondents and 44 were conducted with English-speaking respondents.

Although both test versions incorporated the new name of the Food Stamp program, “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP),” one placed greater emphasis on this new name than the other version. Another difference is that the version giving emphasis to this new program name also explicitly stated that SNAP and Food Stamps are the same program, whereas the other version did not. The two test versions were as follows (only English is shown):

§ Version 1– In the past 12 months, did you or any member of this household receive a government benefit from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—formerly known as the Food Stamp Program—that can only be used to buy food? *Do not include WIC or the National School Lunch Program.*

§ Version 2– In the past 12 months, did you or any member of this household receive a government benefit that can be used to buy food? Include Food Stamps and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Do not include WIC or the National School Lunch Program.

In order to ensure that the revised Food Stamps questions function properly, it was important to recruit respondents with certain characteristics, especially with regard to when they first began receiving food stamps (due to the recent change in the name of the program) and

whether they are receiving other public assistance. Specific groups of respondents that were targeted included respondents from a variety of states who:

- § First received food stamps more than 2 years ago
- § First received food stamps within the past 6 months
- § Received both food stamps and public assistance
- § Received food stamps only

Overall, the results of the cognitive interviews revealed that the test Food Stamps questions were well understood by the most respondents in both Spanish and English. However, of the 87 participants probed on a version of the Food Stamps question, 17 (10 English-speakers, 7 Spanish) experienced noteworthy problems in answering or interpreting it. Twelve participants appeared to have answered the question incorrectly: 6 participants answered “no” (or did not answer) when they should have answered “yes,” whereas 6 participants answered “yes” when they should have answered “no.” The problems observed seemed to be largely independent of interview mode and form version. Furthermore, we observed no problems that were unique to either language of the instrument. The following examples illustrate the types of problems observed with the Food Stamps question:

- § Three respondents reported having received food stamps on the basis of having received food from a food pantry or similar service. Two of these respondents were Spanish-speaking persons and the third (a recent African immigrant) did not speak English well.
- § Three other respondents reported having received food stamps on the basis of other forms of aid. One appeared to have answered “yes” on the basis of SSI because she uses this money to buy food. Another based his “yes” answer on the fact that his daughter receives WIC (he saw the instruction to exclude WIC but did not read it closely). In fact, he said that when he saw the reference to WIC, he assumed he was to count it. A third respondent reported receiving food stamps on the basis of the school lunch program (she neglected to read the instruction to exclude it).
- § Two respondents incorrectly answered “no” due to issues with the reference period. One interpreted “In the past 12 months” to mean all 12 months, incorrectly answering “no” to the target question because she had received food stamps only for the previous 2 months. Another respondent who answered “No” incorrectly did so because she overlooked the phrase “In the past 12 months.” She thought the question was asking if she currently received food stamps, and she had stopped getting food stamps 2 months ago.
- § One respondent incorrectly answered “no,” apparently due to the social stigma of food stamps. Probing revealed that she had, in fact, received food stamps and the interviewer noted that she seemed rather embarrassed about it

Perhaps the most important finding from the cognitive interviews was that there was very little recognition of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) among the participants. Only about one-third indicated that they had heard of the program, and many (even among those claiming to have heard of it) assumed it was something other than food stamps, such as a program devoted to improving nutrition. Furthermore, when asked to compare the two versions, many participants criticized Version 1 specifically for its emphasis on SNAP, although a few did appreciate that it points out that the SNAP and Food Stamps are the same program.

Finally, it should be noted that many participants discussed with us how they receive their Food Stamps benefit on a card which they use at the grocery store. It is our understanding that all states now make use of an Electronic Bank Transfer (EBT) for providing Food Stamp benefits.

The findings lead us to recommend an altered form of Version 2 for the field test (English version shown here to illustrate):

In the past 12 months, did you or any member of this household receive a government benefit card that can only be used to buy food? Include Food Stamps, now known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Do NOT include WIC, the National School Lunch Program, or assistance from food banks.

**Table 5-2, Recommendations for Final Versions for Food Stamps Questions**, in Chapter 5 shows the specific wording of the questions proposed for self-administered and interviewer-administered wording for both English and Spanish.

### **Parental Place of Birth Module**

The Parental Place of Birth questions are newly proposed questions for the ACS. Because these questions had never been included in the survey before, the Census Bureau was interested in testing three versions to determine which two would be best to be included in the field test. The three versions of the Parental Place of Birth questions were tested in English and Spanish and in three interview modes (self-administered, face-to-face interviewer-administered and interviewer-administered by telephone). A total of 67 interviews were conducted with this module, 38 interviews were conducted with Spanish-speaking respondents and 29 were conducted with English-speaking respondents.

Each of the three test versions included the same questions about a person's father's country of origin, his or her mother's country of origin, and the person's own ancestry or ethnic background. The question about ancestry of the person was the same in all three versions. The differences in the versions appeared in the questions about the parents' places of birth. The differences in the wording were as follows (shown in English):

- § Version 1 – In what country was (your/this person's) (father/mother) born?
- § Version 2 – Was (your/this person's) (father/mother) born in or outside of the United States? In what country was (your/this person's) (father/mother) born? (Included a clarification statement about U.S. Territories being considered outside of the U.S.)
- § Version 3 – Was (your/this person's) (father/mother) born in the United States? In what country was (your/this person's) (father/mother) born? (Included a clarification statement about U.S. Territories being considered outside of the U.S.)

In order to ensure that the newly added Parental Place of Birth questions function properly for all types of respondents, it was important to recruit respondents from varying backgrounds. Specific groups of respondents that were targeted included respondents whose:

- § Parents were born in a foreign country
- § Parents were born in the United States

- § Parents were born in a U.S. territory (Puerto Rico, Guam, etc.)
- § Households contained adoptees, step relatives, or foster children.

Overall, the results of the cognitive interviews revealed that the questions about parental place of birth and ethnicity were well understood by the most respondents in both Spanish and English. Of the 67 respondents, 61 were able to answer the questions accurately. Of the six respondents (four in Spanish, two in English) who answered the questions incorrectly, three respondents reported that their parents had been born in the U.S. when in fact they had been born in Puerto Rico; one respondent answered the Ethnic Origin question about his father instead of himself; and the remaining two respondents answered incorrectly because they were adopted and did not have information on their biological parents.

One of the issues that the Census Bureau was interested in testing was the impact of question order for the newly added parental place of birth questions. Specifically, if these questions preceded the ethnicity question, would it cause confusion for the respondents because they might think the third question was also about the parents rather the person. The analysis of these questions indicated that while this was not a wide-spread problem, it was noted by several respondents that they had misinterpreted the ethnicity question to be about their parents.

A second finding that revealed a potential problem with the understanding of the questions was that respondents were somehow confused about whether the U.S. territories should be considered as part of the U.S. or not. While the self-administered versions did include a clarification statement about the U.S. territories, the interviewer-administered version did not so some respondents initially reported that their parents had been born in the U.S. until the interviewer clarified. Without a probe, these responses would have been incorrectly recorded as born in the U.S.

A third significant finding for this module was that respondents who were adopted, had household members who had been adopted, or were foster children or step children did not always understand if they should report the biological parents or the parents with whom they lived. Most reported for their biological parents, but several indicated through the probe questions that they were not certain what the survey expected them to do. Additional probes revealed that some would not have been able to report the place of birth for their biological parents at all because this was not known.

Spanish-speaking respondents preferred Version 1, and English-speaking respondents preferred Version 3. However, all versions of the questions presented problems for respondents, especially for respondents with parents born in a U.S. territory. As a result, we suggest using a revised question for the field test that specifically asks respondents if they were born “in the United States, in a U.S. territory, or outside of the United States.” Providing all three options reduced the ambiguity in deciding how to answer if respondents’ parents were born in a U.S. territory. In addition, for one of the versions to be field tested, we recommend asking the Ethnic Origin question before the Parental Place of Birth question to determine if the question-order impact problem identified in the cognitive interviews can be alleviated with that change. The revised question order and wording for the parents’ place of birth (English interviewer-administered shown as an example), we recommend is:

13. What is (your / [NAME]'s) ancestry or ethnic origin?
- 14a. Was (your / [NAME]'s) father born in the United States, in a U.S. territory, or outside the United States?
- § In the United States – go to Question 15a
  - § In a U.S. territory
  - § Outside the United States.
- 14b. In what (country/U.S. territory) was (your / [NAME]'s) father born?
- 15a. Was (your / [NAME]'s) mother born in the United States, in a U.S. territory, or outside the United States?
- § In the United States – go to 16
  - § In a U.S. territory
  - § Outside the United States.
- 15b. In what (country/U.S. territory) was (your / [NAME]'s) mother born?

Our recommendation is to include Version 3 and the newly revised wording for the field test. **Table 6-2, Recommendations for Final Versions for Parental Place of Birth Questions**, in Chapter 6 shows the specific wording of the questions, instructions, and answer categories proposed for self-administered and interviewer-administered wording for both English and Spanish.

### Veterans Identification Module

The Veterans Identification question is used to determine an individual's veteran status. The Census Bureau was interested in testing two revised versions and the current ACS version of this question. The three versions of the Veterans Identification question were tested in English and Spanish in three interview modes (self-administered, face-to-face interviewer-administered, and interviewer-administered by telephone). A total of 47 interviews, 31 in English and 16 in Spanish, were conducted with this module.

The Veterans Identification question asks individuals if they have ever served on active duty in the military and provides a definition of what is included and excluded in active duty. The interviewer-administered Versions 1 and 2 of this question were identical. The self-administered Versions 1 and 2 were very similar.

- Version 1 - “Has this person ever served on ACTIVE DUTY in.../¿Ha estado esta persona alguna vez en el SERVICIO MILITAR ACTIVO en...”
- Version 2 - “What is this person's ACTIVE DUTY military status in.../¿Cuál es el estatus del SERVICIO MILITAR ACTIVO de esta persona en...”
- Version 3 - differed from the other versions in the clarification of active duty. In Versions 1 and 2 the clarification said what to include first (i.e. federal activation/activación federal) and then what to exclude (i.e. Reserve or National

Guard training/entrenamiento para la Reserva Militar o Guardia Nacional). In contrast Version 3 listed the exclude criteria first and then the include criteria.

To ensure that the Veterans Identification question functions properly for all types of respondents, it was important to recruit respondents from varying backgrounds. For the English interviews, respondents were recruited to meet five different characteristics:

- § Current active military
- § Reserves
- § National Guard
- § Military veterans
- § Non-military individuals who are members of a household containing military/veterans.

The ability to read and write in English is required for U.S. military service, therefore Spanish-speaking respondents were recruited for different categories than were the English-speaking respondents:

- § Non-military individuals who are members of a household with military/veterans
- § Non-military individuals.

One issue that the Census Bureau was concerned about is whether respondents thought active duty included weekend training for the Reserves and National Guard and their understanding of “active duty for training.” Thirteen out of 47 respondents (8 English-speaking and 5 Spanish-speaking) thought that training *was* active duty. Respondents found the clarification confusing and contradictory because the question said to exclude training, but they considered training to be active duty. Despite the confusion, 11 out of these 13 answered the question accurately because they had actually served on active duty. They were either regular military or if they were in the Reserves or National Guard, they had been activated. The two respondents who did answer the question incorrectly had not been activated, and had only received training for the Reserves or National Guard, yet answered that they were active duty. This indicates the question is potentially problematic for individuals in the Reserves or National Guard who received training, but were never activated.

Another issue the Census Bureau was concerned about was the terminology used in the question including “active duty,” “federal activation,” and “U.S. Armed Forces.” Aside from considering training as active duty, most English-speaking and Spanish-speaking respondents understood the terms used in the questions. Five respondents (2 English and 3 Spanish) did have some difficulty with the phrase “federal activation/activación federal.” However, none of these 5 respondents were in the military themselves, and it did not affect how they answered the question.

The Census Bureau was also concerned about the phrase “the military Reserves/la Reserva Militar” versus “the Reserves/la Reserva” and wanted to know which phrase was more clearly understood and preferred by respondents. The English-speaking respondents were fairly evenly split on their preferences. However, Spanish-speaking respondents emphatically preferred

“la Reserva Militar” because the shorter phrase “la Reserva” has several different meanings in Spanish, including “reservations.”

The clarification of active duty was the only part of the question that appeared to be problematic for respondents. As a result, we recommend the clarification for active duty either be removed or revised. In addition, we recommended changing the response category for “Only training for the Reserves or National Guard” to “Only active duty training for the Reserves or National Guard” so it will be less ambiguous to respondents. We also recommend maintaining the use of the phrase “la Reserva Military” as opposed to using the shorter phrase “la Reserva.”

The revised wording for the interviewer-administered version of the questions (shown in English as an example), we recommend is:

- 28a. (Has <Name> / Have you) ever served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, military Reserves, or National Guard? Do not include active duty training for the Reserves or National Guard, but do include activation, mobilization, or deployment for service in the United States or overseas.
- 28b. Are you currently on active duty?
- 28c. Have you ever been in the U.S. military Reserves or the National Guard?

The recommended revised wording for the self-administered version of the questions is:

- 28. Has this person ever served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, military Reserves, or National Guard? Do NOT include active duty for training (ADT) for the Reserves or National Guard, but DO include activation, mobilization, or deployment for service in the U.S. or overseas. Mark (X) ONE box.
  - Never served in the military
  - Only active duty for training (ADT) for the Reserves or National Guard
  - On active duty in the past, but not now
  - Now on active duty

### **Veterans Period of Service Module**

Testing a revised version of the Veterans Period of Service question, which included a shorter set of response options, was another topic of interest for the Census Bureau. The two versions of the Veterans Identification question (revised and control) were tested in English and Spanish in three interview modes (self-administered, face-to-face interviewer-administered, and interviewer-administered by telephone). A total of 47 interviews, 31 in English and 16 in Spanish, were conducted with this module.

Both versions of the question asked respondents to select the time periods during which they served on active duty. The difference between the two versions is that the revised question, Version 1, combined some of the response categories used in the control, Version 3. Specifically, the following two periods in Version 3, “May 1975 to August 1980” and “September 1980 to

July 1990” were changed to “May 1975 to July 1990” in Version 1. Similar, these two periods in Version 3, “February 1955 to July 1961” and “March 1961 to July 1964” were changed to “February 1955 to July 1964” in Version 3.

The Veterans Period of Service question was tested with the same respondents who were recruited for the Veterans Identification question. Of the 47 respondents, 38 understood the question as intended and answered accurately. Nine respondents demonstrated some type of confusion or misunderstanding with the question. Of these, five answered incorrectly because they included times when they were in training only; two answered incorrectly because they could not accurately recall the dates; and two answered incorrectly because they did not review the answer choices thoroughly enough before answering.

Overall, respondents reacted very favorably toward the response categories with no differences noted between the two versions. However, several respondents commented that the categories were not formatted consistently—some had dates first and some had verbal descriptions first. In addition, many respondents indicated that they included time spent in training when they selected their answers. If it is important that respondents exclude this time, we suggest adding an instruction to exclude time spent in training. Otherwise, RTI simply recommends reformatting the response categories so they consistently list the dates first with the verbal description in parentheses, which will help ensure respondents notice the dates as well as the names of the categories.

The recommended revision for the interviewer-administered version of the questions (shown in English as an example), is:

29. [Using Card A, please tell me each period in which (<name> / you) served on active duty, even if it was just for part of the period. / Did (<name> / you) serve on active duty during any of the following periods?] Do not include time spent in training for the military Reserves or National Guard.

€ September 2001 or later

€ August 1990 to August 2001 (including Persian Gulf War)

€ May 1975 to July 1990

€ August 1964 to April 1975 (Vietnam Era)

€ February 1955 to July 1964

€ July 1950 to January 1955 (Korean War)

€ January 1947 to June 1950

€ December 1941 to December 1946 (World War II)

€ November 1941 or earlier

The recommended revised wording for the self-administered version of the questions is:

29. When did this person serve on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces? Do not include time spent in training for the Reserves or National Guard. Mark (X) a box



for EACH period in which this person served, even if he or she served just for part of the period.

- € September 2001 or later
- € August 1990 to August 2001 (including Persian Gulf War)
- € May 1975 to July 1990
- € August 1964 to April 1975 (Vietnam Era)
- € February 1955 to July 1964
- € July 1950 to January 1955 (Korean War)
- € January 1947 to June 1950
- € December 1941 to December 1946 (World War II)
- € November 1941 or earlier

### **Salary and Wages Module**

The Salary and Wages questions in the ACS, which include questions about earned income – salary, wages, bonuses, tips and commissions, were tested in two versions in the cognitive interviews. The current ACS question asks about all of these types of earned income in a single question, and the Census Bureau had concerns about order effects caused by the presentation of the list of types of earnings. Therefore, the revised version was designed to ask the question in two steps: first ask about salary and wages, and then ask about additional earned income in bonuses, tips and commissions. In addition, a question on self-employment income was explicitly added to further separate different types of earnings and make sure respondents remembered to mention that income as well. The reason for the proposed change to these earned income questions was to determine if having respondents report the sources of income separately would lead to more complete reporting. Only the two interviewer-administered modes were tested: telephone and fact-to-face. There were two versions of the Salary and Wages module tested in the interviewer-administered mode, with 13 interviews conducted in English and 18 in Spanish for a total of 31 interviews.

Both versions tested included an introduction that established the reference period: “The next few questions are about income DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS...” Following that introductory statement, the current ACS question (Version 2) asks if the respondent received “any wages, salary, tips, bonuses, or commissions” and, if so, how much was received before taxes and other deductions. The alternative questions tested separating the different types of earnings. After the introductory statement questions ask if the respondent received any wages or salary, and if so, how much they received from all jobs before taxes and other deductions. Respondents are then asked whether they received any additional tips, bonuses or commissions during the past 12 months and if so, how much the person received from all jobs before taxes and other deductions.

To ensure that the Salary and Wages questions function properly for all types of respondents, it was important to recruit respondents from varying backgrounds to test the

questions both in English and Spanish. Respondents were recruited for the following characteristics:

- § Earned income includes a significant (at least 10%) portion from tips,
- § Earned income includes a significant (at least 10%) portion from bonuses or commissions,
- § Multiple jobs but no self-employment, and
- § Multiple jobs and self-employment.

Across versions, there was a general tendency for respondents to report what they considered substantial or important, and not to report smaller amounts or earned income from jobs they considered not to be regular jobs. Respondents did not necessarily think of themselves as self-employed when doing small or odd jobs. Among the five respondents with multiple jobs and no self-employment, three included the wages and salary from all of their jobs; the remaining two did not. One of the respondents reported income from her main job only because, as she explained, the series of questions preceding this focused on last week's job, and that form of questioning led her to focus only on her main job. The other respondent also reported only the wages from his "basic" employment. Of the seven respondents screened as having multiple jobs and also engaging in self-employment, six confirmed self-employment and a job. Of these six respondents, five reported their job income, including the self-employment income, collectively under "wages and salary." This is problematic because a separate self-employment question appears later in the questionnaire and there can be double reporting of the self-employment earnings. The Wages and Salary question precedes the question about self-employment. As a result, at least three respondents who were self-employed reported their self-employment income in this section. All three respondents also reported their income under the Self-Employment questions in the ACS survey, effectively double-counting their income.

Respondents who had only one source of income from a regular paycheck did not appear to have difficulty deciding what to include, regardless of version. However, some respondents had a broader interpretation and included bonus, tip, or commission income under wages and salary.

All but a handful of respondents felt it would be much easier to report their earned income if they were interviewed soon after tax-return preparation. This suggests that respondents were thinking of—and possibly reporting about—the prior calendar year rather than the past 12 months. This was confirmed from the probes as we indicate below. In addition, almost all respondents reported it would be easier to report gross income before deductions. This was particularly true of respondents who received a regular paycheck. Only a few respondents indicated it would be easier to report pretax earnings.

For both versions of these questions, some respondents were not thinking of the correct reference period (i.e., the past 12 months) when they provided their responses. Of the 14 respondents in Version 1, only 5 (1 in English and 4 in Spanish) seemed to use the correct reference period. In two other English-language cases, it is not clear whether the respondents were relying on their tax returns or not. A third case refused to answer the Wages and Salary question. Of the 17 respondents in Version 2, only 2 (1 in English and 1 in Spanish) clearly kept

the reference period in mind. When respondents answered incorrectly, they tended to either report for only part of the reference period, report for the 2008 calendar year instead of the past 12 months, or use their current salary information to create an estimate for the past 12 months.

The questions tested in this module were simply worded in both English and Spanish. The English terms such as “salary,” “wages,” “bonus,” “tips,” “commissions,” “taxes,” and “deductions” are clear concepts that respondents did not exhibit problems with, whether or not they received them. The same was true in Spanish for the translated terms (“jornal,” “sueldo salario,” “bonos,” “propinas,” “comisiones,” “impuestos,” and “deducciones”).

While the English-language respondents divided almost evenly in their preference for one version over the other, about two-thirds of the Spanish-language respondents preferred Version 2. Because the Spanish-language respondents typically had lower education levels than the English-language respondents, it is possible their preference was based on the shorter sequence of text to listen to and process. Those who preferred Version 2 particularly liked the fact that it consisted of a shorter sequence of questions. Some felt the early mention of bonuses, commissions, or tips might have helped them remember to report these types of income. Those who preferred Version 1 particularly liked the fact that the sequence of questions asked about the different types of earnings separately. The respondents who received bonuses also had a preference for Version 1.

Of the 14 respondents in Version 1, there were 8 (5 in Spanish and 3 in English) who seemed to understand the questions as intended and to answer them correctly. Five respondents (1 in Spanish, 4 in English) answered the questions inaccurately, and the remaining respondent refused to answer. Those with salary or wages only were more likely to understand the question. While no particular demographic patterns seemed to be associated with the respondents who had problems in all cases, the problems occurred with respondents who had more complicated earnings than just a salary or regular wages. The problems detected included difficulty recalling earnings, reporting commissions or bonuses under wages and salary, double reporting of earnings, and earnings entirely left out.

Of the 17 respondents in Version 2, there were 11 (5 in English and 6 in Spanish) who seemed to understand the questions as intended and to answer them correctly. There were no consistencies across the demographic characteristics of respondents observed in this group. Neither did the group include more of any specific type of income recipient. Six respondents had different types of problems that made them misreport the amounts earned or report them under the wrong category of earnings. In addition, the combination of tips, bonuses, and commissions with wages and salary made some respondents selectively hear only some of these types of income.

For this reason, we recommend keeping Version 1 with some modifications designed to stress the reference period and to reduce double reporting of tips, bonuses, and commissions. One modification is to restate the reference period in each question. A second modification is to add ‘in total from all jobs’ to stress the need to be fully inclusive. The third modification puts parentheses around ‘additional’ so that it is only read to those who answer Yes in 49a1a. These modifications will help both the Spanish-speaking and English-speaking respondents. The English version of the recommended questions, shown here to illustrate, is:

The next few questions are about income DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS. . .

49a1a. Did you receive any wages or salary during the past 12 months?

§ Yes

§ No → Skip to Question 49a2a

49a1b. How much did you receive in total for all wages and salary from all jobs in the past 12 months before taxes and other deductions?

49 a2a. Did you receive any (additional) tips, bonuses, or commissions DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS?

§ Yes

§ No → Skip to Current Question 47b

49a2b. How much did you receive in total for all tips, bonuses, or commissions from all jobs in the past 12 months before taxes and other deductions?

**Table 9-2, Recommendations for Final Versions for Salary and Wages**, in Chapter 9 shows the specific wording of the questions proposed for self-administered and interviewer-administered wording for both English and Spanish.

### Interest and Dividends Module

The property income questions in the ACS, which include questions about interest and dividends as well as net rental income, income from royalties, estates and trusts, were tested as separate questions for the cognitive interviews. The reason for the proposed change to these income questions is to determine if having respondents report the sources of income separately leads to more accurate reporting. Based on previous data collected by the Census Bureau for these questions, the interviewer-administered and self-administered modes were not producing similar results. For the cognitive interviews, only the two interviewer-administered modes were tested: telephone and fact-to-face. There were two versions of the Interest and Dividends module tested in the interviewer-administered mode. A total of 33 interviews were conducted using this module. About half of the interviews were conducted in English (n=17) and about half in Spanish (n=16).

Both of the test versions of the ACS questions included clarification statements following the question asking if income from interest or dividends were received. The clarification statements were included to ensure that even small amounts of income would be recorded. The text in both versions was very similar, but Version 2 had an additional point of clarification added. The Version 1 text read, “Report even small amounts credited to an account.” The Version 2 text read, “Report even small amounts credited to a checking or savings account.”

The recruitment of respondents for this module was developed to include people a mix of people who would likely answer these questions differently based on their own situations. Specific groups of respondents who were targeted included:

§ People who reported having income from interest or dividends only,

- § People who reported receiving income from rental income, royalty income, income from estates or trusts, and
- § People who had none of these types of income.

The majority of respondents could answer, without difficulty, the questions that asked whether they received any interest or dividends and the amount received. Among the respondents who reported having received interest or dividends during the screening process, there was no confusion about the initial question that asks if they receive this type of income. Some of these respondents did, however provide responses to the follow-up question about the amount received that would either cause over-reporting or under-reporting. The two primary reasons for misreporting were related to the 12-month reference period or reporting for other household members.

Respondents expressed some confusion about the 12-month reference period and a number of respondents who had property income to report indicated they would report the annual income for the previous year rather than reporting for the past 12 months as intended. Some were confused about the intention of the questions while other simply said they would report what was on their previous year's taxes for income. Adding the specific months to the questions would help clarify this question for those respondents who were confused. This recommendation is included in the final version proposed for the field test.

While the Spanish-speaking respondents showed more difficulty with these questions, the primary issues for them seemed to be related to familiarity with these types of income rather than the language or accuracy of the translation. This unfamiliarity with the topic of these questions was related to the lower education levels and lower income among the Spanish-speaking respondents who participated in this module. Although there were fewer cases with lower income and education among the English-speaking respondents, they showed the same tendency to express confusion. When these respondents who expressed confusion about the questions explained what they were thinking, it was clear that many of them had a general idea of what was being asked but they did not have this type of income to report. There were a few respondents who seemed not to have a clear idea of the intent of the questions, but they too clarified through the probing that they did not have this type of income to report. Despite apparent confusion for some respondents, most respondents seemed to be able to answer the questions correctly. Most respondents who did not understand the terminology reported no income from interest or dividends, which was correct.

The only terminology that was problematic, “net rental income” (“ingreso neto de rentas”), appeared in the question about types of income such as rent, royalty income, or income from estates and trusts. Respondents mostly believed they understood the term correctly, but many described something altogether different from the intended meaning and would have answered the question incorrectly. This was the case for both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking respondents in this module. A recommendation was made to define the term “net” in the version of this question included for the field test.

For the versions of the question about interest or dividends that were tested, respondents had a slight preference for Version 2 because it provided an example of one type of interest payment to be considered. However, the analysis of the comments revealed that the clarification

caused some respondents to misinterpret the question. The final recommendation for the version to test in the field was a modified Version 2. One modification added clarification that the example included (“checking or savings accounts”) was only an example and that other interest or dividends should also be included. A second modification clarifies the reference period by specifying the time period to be included in the past 12 months. The third modification addressed the confusion about the term “net rental income.” The English version, shown here to illustrate, would be:

- Q49c1a. [The next few questions are about income DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS, which is from <DATE> to <DATE> . .]
- Did [<Name>/you] receive any interest or dividends [DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS]? Report even small amounts. For example, report any interest or dividends credited to a checking or savings account as well as any other income from interest or dividends
- Yes
- No → Skip to Question 49c2a
- Q49c1b. What was the amount received? \_\_\_\_\_
- Q49c2a. Did [<Name>/you] receive any net rental income, royalty income, or income from estates and trusts [DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS]? Net rental income is the amount earned after expenses.
- Yes
- No → Skip to Question 49d1
- Q49c2b. What was the amount received?

**Table 10-2, Recommendations for Final Versions for Interest and Dividends**, in Chapter 10 shows the specific wording of the questions proposed for self-administered and interviewer-administered wording for both English and Spanish.

### **Cash Public Assistance Module**

The Public Assistance question in the ACS is being revised with the goal of increasing the accuracy with which respondents report receiving public assistance (i.e., welfare payments). The Census Bureau was interested in testing two versions to determine which would be best to include in the field test as a comparison against the current question. The two versions of the new Public Assistance questions were tested in English and Spanish and in three interview modes (self-administered, face-to-face interviewer-administered and interviewer-administered by telephone). A total of 75 interviews were conducted with this module, 38 interviews were conducted with Spanish-speaking respondents and 37 were conducted with English-speaking respondents.

Both test versions of the new Public Assistance question included phrasing to encourage respondents to report public assistance as an income source even if they had received it only once during the 12 month reference period. One version did this by stating “even if for only one month.” The other version stated “even if for only one payment.” Within the self-administered

mode, a further variation concerned the ordering of two key phrases within the question: “even if for only one month/payment” and “for this person or any children in this household.” Thus, the two self-administered versions (only English is shown) were as follows:

Mark (X) the “Yes” box for each type of income this person received, and give your best estimate of the total amount during the PAST 12 MONTHS...

Version 1: **49f1.** Any welfare payments or cash assistance from the state or local welfare office, even if for only one month, for this person or any children in this household. *Do not include benefits from food, energy, or rental assistance programs.*

Version 2: **49f1.** Any welfare payments or cash assistance from the state or local welfare office for this person or any children in this household, even if only one payment. *Do not include benefits from food, energy, or rental assistance programs.*

[IF YES] **49f2.** TOTAL AMOUNT for past 12 months: \_\_\_\_\_

In order to ensure the revised Public Assistance question functions properly, it was important to recruit respondents with certain characteristics. Specific groups of respondents that were targeted for the cognitive testing included respondents who:

- § Received public assistance only
- § Received both public assistance and food stamps
- § Received food stamps only
- § Receiving public assistance on behalf of child under age 15.

Overall, the results of the cognitive interviews revealed that the test Public Assistance questions were well understood by most respondents in both Spanish and English. However, of the 75 participants probed on a version of the Public Assistance question, 17 (11 English-speaking, 6 Spanish) experienced noteworthy problems in answering or interpreting it. In our judgment, 12 to 13 respondents appeared to have answered the question incorrectly: 7 respondents answered “yes” (i.e., that they or another household member had received public assistance) when they should have answered “no.” We believe two respondents (possibly three) answered “no” when they should have answered “yes.” The problems observed seemed to be largely independent of interview mode and form version. Furthermore, we observed no problems that were unique to either the Spanish or the English versions of the instrument. The following illustrates the types of problems observed with the Food Stamps question:

- § Four respondents answered “yes” incorrectly on the basis of other unrelated benefits. One did so on the basis of unemployment compensation. One answered “yes” on the basis of SSI payments (unfortunately, the previous SSI item was skipped for this person due to time constraints, so this may have contributed to the misreporting). One reported receiving public assistance on the basis of her son receiving Medicaid, and another because he receives food stamps. Finally, a few other similar problems of interpretation should be noted here. A couple of respondents (who answered correctly) believed that child support may be relevant to the question. Another person asked, after hearing the question, whether it includes unemployment compensation; this respondent specifically pointed to the phrase, “Include all assistance” in the question as making her think she

should perhaps report it as public assistance. One person answered correctly but wondered if her SSI payments were relevant to the question (even though she had reported them in the previous item specifically for SSI).

- § One respondent received public assistance but incorrectly reported that the other two household members received it as well, since the benefit “is for the entire family.” Another person (mentioned previously as reporting public assistance based on her son’s Medicaid) reported that both she and her husband receive public assistance. She noted the question asks whether each person receives assistance for a child, and, as she sees it, they both do.
- § At least two respondents incorrectly reported that they had not received public assistance within the past 12 months when in fact they had. In each case the problem was due to the respondent not realizing that the benefit they receive under a given state program name for welfare (e.g., TANF, Workfirst) was the type of public assistance being asked about in the question

We probed participants on their interpretation of key terms in the target question, including “welfare payments” and “cash assistance” (“pago de bienestar público” and “asistencia en dinero en efectivo” in Spanish). Almost everyone seemed to have an appropriate understanding of these terms.

The findings of this study did not clearly point to one version being a better form of the question than the other. The problems and difficulties we observed were almost evenly distributed across the two versions and unrelated to the wording variations of interest. Our main recommendation is to place more emphasis on the instruction not to include benefits from other programs, and the comments obtained from a few participants voicing their preference between the two versions suggests that referring to “month” would be a safer choice than referring to ‘payment.’ Therefore, our recommendation for the field test is as follows (English only is show):

***Interviewer-administered:***

DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS, did [<Name>/you] receive any welfare payments or cash assistance from the state or local welfare office for [<Name>/yourself] or any children in this household, even if for only one month? Do NOT include benefits from any other type of assistance, such as SSI, food, energy, or rental assistance programs.

***Self-administered:***

Any welfare payments or cash assistance from the state or local welfare office, even if for only one month, for this person or any children in this household? Do not include benefits from any other type of assistance, such as SSI, food, energy, or rental assistance programs.

**Table 11-2, Recommendations for Final Versions for Cash Public Assistance**, in Chapter 11 shows the specific wording of the questions proposed for self-administered and interviewer-administered wording for both English and Spanish.



In addition, since a few respondents did not seem to realize that “TANF” is considered welfare, we suggest creating a show card for interviewers with the name of the TANF program in each state, similar to the card created for food stamps, so that interviewers can determine whether the program the respondent mentions is correct

### ***Conclusion***

The cognitive interviewing and analysis for this task order identified both effective and problematic aspects of the proposed question wordings that were tested across the 115 English interviews and 105 Spanish interviews conducted. The issues that have been identified in this research are highlighted in Sections 4 through 11 of this report, which summarize the specific question series modules that were tested. In many cases, respondents identified problematic wording, which led to the recommendations for possible revisions that could increase comprehension and consistency of understanding for Spanish-speaking and English-speaking respondents for the Field test of the American Community Survey. These recommendations for the versions to be further tested in the field are noted in Sections 4 through 11 as well.

## 1. Introduction

The Cognitive Testing of the American Community Survey (ACS) Content Test Items was designed as an initial step to help the Census Bureau pretest new and revised questions for the ACS. Testing these proposed revisions is part of a continued effort to meet the needs of the federal government agencies that use the ACS data. As required by the Census Bureau guidelines for pretesting, field testing, and implementing new content changes, this task order contract was established to cognitively test both English and Spanish versions of questions before they are implemented in the field.

The Census Bureau contracted with RTI International\* (RTI) through a Task Order Contract that included subcontracts to two other research organizations, Research Support Services (RSS) and Westat. Working collaboratively to complete the cognitive testing, RTI, RSS, and Westat conducted 220 cognitive interviews and provided final recommendations for the question wording to be included in the next phase of the ACS Content Test, which is scheduled to be field tested in 2010.

The goal of the cognitive testing for the content test items was to determine which of the new or revised questions should be used in the subsequent field test. In order to ensure that the revised questions work equally well in all modes of administration for the survey, cognitive interviews were conducted to specifically test the self-administered versions, the face-to-face interviewer-administered version, and the telephone interviewer-administered version. The interviews were also conducted using two different versions of the Spanish interview: stateside Spanish, which is used in the United States, and the Spanish version of questions used in Puerto Rico as part of the Puerto Rico Community Survey (PRCS).

Using cognitive interviewing methodology, eight new or revised question topics, with multiple versions of each question, were tested. With two-to-three versions of each question module, three modes of administration, and three language versions of the instruments, a total of 18 versions of the ACS/PRCS were tested. A unique cognitive interview protocol was developed for each of the 18 versions of the questions. Each protocol included a scripted informed consent, the proposed questions to be tested embedded into the context of the ACS survey, scripted probes to be administered for selected modules, and a final section of general debriefing questions for the respondents. These cognitive interviews provided a means of determining any problems with the questions directly from respondents.

This report documents all aspects of this task order, including the development of the protocol, translation of the protocol, recruitment of appropriate research participants, cognitive testing, analysis of data, a summary of the findings and recommendations by question module, and final conclusions and recommendations for future research. The specific research activities include the following:

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\* RTI International is a trade name of Research Triangle Institute.

- § Preparing cognitive interview protocols in English and two versions in Spanish (stateside and Puerto Rican), including administration details, consent forms, incentive receipts, and other materials required for the cognitive interviews (e.g., interviewer guide)
- § Translating interview protocols, consent forms, and incentive receipts into Spanish once the English protocols were finalized
- § Preparing a recruitment plan in accordance with the criteria provided by the Census Bureau, which included methods of recruiting, assessing, and selecting respondents; number and characteristics of respondents who will be interviewed for each question module; protocol for incentive payment, and the screening questionnaire to be used to recruit respondents
- § Recruiting participants (English- and Spanish-speaking) with diverse levels of educational attainment and diversity by race/ethnicity, age, and gender as well as other recruitment characteristics specific to the modules that were tested
- § Conducting cognitive interview training for English and Spanish interviewers
- § Conducting 45- to 90-minute cognitive interviews in English and Spanish in three modes (paper, face-to-face and telephone modes)
- § Preparing the interview summaries, recommendations briefing reports, and this final research report, based on 220 completed interviews covering 361 question modules.

### **1.1 Items Tested in Cognitive Interviews**

Of the eight question modules tested, six modules included revisions to existing questions and two were new question modules. The cognitive interviews included revised question topics for the following six modules: veterans identification, veterans period of service, food stamps, public assistance income, wages income, and property income (interest and dividends); and new questions for the following two modules: computer and internet usage, and parental place of birth. Two alternative versions of each question were tested for current questions and three alternate versions were tested for new questions. Based on the analysis of the respondent data, recommendations for one test version for revised questions and two test versions for new questions were made for the field test.

### **1.2 Schedule**

Protocol development took place in early April 2009. Interviewers were trained on April 20, 2009. Interviews were conducted primarily in May and June 2009, with a few interviews conducted in early July 2009. A draft recommendations report was submitted on July 6, 2009, with a final recommendations report submitted on July 22, 2009. A final briefing meeting was held on July 23, 2009, to present and discuss the recommendations. This draft Final Report was submitted on July 29, 2009, and the Final Report will be submitted on Aug 12, 2009.

## 2. Methodology

The goal of the Cognitive Testing of the American Community Survey (ACS) Content Test Items task order was to conduct between 174 and 232 cognitive interviews in English and Spanish in order to determine the most effective versions of questions from among two to three alternate versions being tested. In total, 320 questions were tested across the three versions, three modes, and two languages for the eight modules. In order to complete the desired number of interviews per module, more than one module was tested in some interviews.

This chapter outlines the procedures followed by the researchers in order to accomplish the research goals?ranging from the identification of geographic locations for the interviews; to the selection of staff assigned; to protocol development, training, and implementation of the cognitive interviews.

### 2.1 *Initial Planning for Staffing and Interviewing*

Interviews were conducted across eight geographic locations, including Colorado, Florida, Maryland, North Carolina, Illinois, and Virginia, as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Some sites were selected specifically because they are close to the research teams geographically, which helped with logistics and in controlling costs. Other sites were selected to ensure adequate coverage of the recruitment target characteristics, such as Internet Wi-Fi access, rural geographic areas, or sufficient concentrations of Hispanic populations, including Puerto Rican, Mexican, and other Spanish-speaking respondents.

Because all steps in the protocol required extensive knowledge of cognitive interviewing as well as language skills for the Spanish interviews, the first step was to confirm the teams of cognitive interviewers for each subcontractor. As the task order contract was operating under a very tight schedule, identifying the interviewing staff early in the contract period was critical. All staff were required to complete security clearance paperwork and receive special sworn status from the U.S. Census Bureau before conducting interviews. They also completed the Title 13 training before conducting any work on the project. Delays in acquiring security clearance created a challenge for some of the teams, but in the end, the interviews were completed in sufficient time to be included in the Final Briefing Recommendations Report.

The qualifications and experience considered in assembling the cognitive interview teams for Spanish included native-speaker language competence, education and work experience in the target culture, and knowledge of and experience with cognitive interviewing. For English interviewers, education, work experience, and knowledge of and experience conducting cognitive interviews were considered.

RTI, RSS, and Westat operated independently for recruitment and interviewing, but frequent communication took place to ensure that consistency was maintained. Each interview team comprised one lead researcher and a team of Spanish and English interviewers. A total of 18 cognitive interviewers were trained and conducted interviews, including two of the lead researchers who also conducted interviews.

## 2.2 Development of Cognitive Interview Protocols and Forms

The Census Bureau provided all versions of the ACS questionnaires to be tested. Twelve different versions were provided to cover the three versions of the questions, two interview modes (self- and interviewer- administered), and three languages. The new questions to be tested had up to three possible question wordings to be pretested, and the revised questions had up to two possible revised question wordings. **Table 2-1** shows the versions and modes that were tested for each module. For all versions and modes shown, the modules were tested in both English and Spanish.

**Table 2-1. Modules by Version and Mode**

Modules	Self-administered			Interviewer-administered		
	V 1	V 2	V 3	V 1	V 2	V 3
Computer and Internet Use	?	?	?	?	?	?
Food Stamps	?	?	—	?	?	—
Parental Place of Birth	?	?	?	?	?	?
Veterans Identification	?	?	?	?	?	?
Veterans Period of Service	?	—	?	?	—	?
Wages and Salary	—	—	—	?	?	—
Interest and Dividends	—	—	—	?	?	—
Cash Public Assistance	?	?	—	?	?	—

The cognitive interview protocols were initially developed by RTI then reviewed by RSS and Westat before being submitted to the Census Bureau for final review and approval. Scripted cognitive interview protocols were developed in English and reviewed by staff at the U.S. Census Bureau, including members of the ACS language team (see **Appendices 1**, Self-administered English Protocol Guides (**A-F**) and **2**, Interviewer-administered English Protocol Guides (**A-F**) for the three versions of the self-administered and three versions of the interviewer-administered English protocol guides and their corresponding ACS instruments). **Appendix 3**, Crosswalk of Cognitive Interview Probes, provides a crosswalk of the English probes used in each version of the protocol for both the self-administered and interviewer-administered modes. Development of the Spanish versions of the protocols is documented in Section 2.3.

The cognitive interview protocol documented the administration details, consent forms, and materials required for the cognitive interviewing, including a list of standard probes and special instructions to be used, and a guide for the interviewers to follow during interviews and reporting. Because the protocol included scripted instructions to be read to the respondent, it also served as a guide for the administration of consent forms and to confirm the point in time when audio recording of the interview should begin. The protocol was designed to standardize implementation of the cognitive interviews in English and Spanish.

Although the cognitive interview protocol was developed to include the majority of the questions from the ACS, the protocol guide focused on probing the specific question modules that were of interest for this project. For each module tested, a debriefing section was developed

to include questions designed to evaluate the alternative version(s) of the question topics that the respondent was not asked during the interview.

The interview protocols were tested and timed before they were finalized. However, because there was great variability in the length of administration depending on the mode (self- or interviewer-administered), the reading skills of the respondent, the number of household members, and the specific modules selected for an interview, the overall interview time varied significantly. In order to ensure that no interviews were excessively long, interviewers were instructed to reduce the number of household members asked about in the survey or to skip sections of the survey that were not being probed if the interview was running long.

Once finalized, all documentation, including the procedures that were followed for the translation of the protocols into Spanish, was submitted to RTI's Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. The Census Bureau obtained a waiver from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for this work prior to the start of interviewing.

### **2.3 Translation Methodology for the Cognitive Interview Protocols**

The versions of the ACS questionnaires that were tested had been translated previously through another Census Bureau contract. The translation task for this contract was to translate the cognitive interview protocols and interview materials, including the consent form and respondent incentive receipt (see **Appendices 4A-4F and 5A-5F** for the stateside Spanish and **Appendices 6A-6F and 7A-7F** Puerto Rican Spanish protocol guides and ACS instruments). The RSS language team conducted committee translation of the cognitive interview protocols and forms. Once developed, the Spanish protocols were reviewed by RTI and Westat, then submitted to the Census Bureau for review and final approval.

Team or committee approaches to translation have been used since the 1960s (Nida, 1964) and in the translation of data collection instruments (Brislin, 1976; Schoua-Glusberg, 1993; Guillemin, Bombardier, and Beaton, 1993; Acquadro, Jambon, Ellis, and Marquis, 1996). In recent years, survey researchers' and survey translators' dissatisfaction with traditional translation and assessment methods (e.g., back translation) has led to the wider adoption of team approaches. The U.S. Census Bureau Expert Panel on Translation and the Translation Task Force for the European Social Survey have indicated that back translation is not a satisfactory approach. The Census Bureau Guidelines for Survey Translation recommends following a team or committee approach (Pan and de la Puente, 2005).

In addition to the cognitive interview protocols, the language team also translated the interview consent forms and incentive receipts. Finalized and approved versions of the protocol guides and interview materials were submitted to the IRB before interviews were conducted in Spanish.

### **2.4 Cognitive Interview Training**

After finalizing the cognitive testing protocols, a cognitive interviewing training session was held with all of the subcontractor team members. This initial training session was held at the Census Bureau's office in Suitland, MD, on April 20, 2009, and consisted of both methodological and substantive issues and provided the specific cognitive interviewing

methodologies to be used in this research. The following topics were covered in sequence during the one-day training:

- § Welcome and Introductions
- § Background of Project
- § Overview of Protocol
- § Highlights of Protocol Guides
- § Demonstration of Interview (Interviewer-Administered Version 1)
- § Paired Mock (Interviewer-Administered Version #1)
- § Review of Differences for Self-Administered Version #1
- § Paired Mock (Self-Administered Version #1)
- § Question and Answer Session Following Mocks
- § Demonstration of Probing
- § Paired Mock (Interviewer-Administered Version 2)
- § Summary Reports Overview and Exercise
- § Final Gathering/Questions and Answers.

The training was designed to outline the research goals and objectives to review the correct administration of the prepared probes as documented in the protocol guides. For the Spanish language-specific follow-up training, the goal was to cover the specific language/culture wording and Spanish translations. An important part of the training for the Spanish-speaking interviewers involved negotiating appropriate questions and probes in Spanish. During the Spanish follow-up sessions, each team member practiced administering the protocol guides in Spanish. Teams also had an opportunity to discuss the impact of culturally-driven perceptions and topics in the ACS materials. As mentioned previously, all interviewers were experienced in conducting cognitive interviews in Spanish.

Following a round of revisions to the instruments to facilitate the use of the ACS instruments with the protocol guides, a follow-up training session was held locally for each of the subcontractors to review the revisions and allow time for additional practice. The follow-up training for the Spanish-language interviewers was also held locally by each subcontractor once the Spanish protocols were finalized.

## **2.5 Conducting the Cognitive Interviews**

An individual folder was created for each sampled interview respondent. The following materials were included in the interview folder:

- § Two copies of the consent form (one for the respondent and one for records)
- § Protocol guide (mode-specific version that matched other documents)
- § Roster (part of ACS questionnaire – separate document for CAI-administered versions only)

- § ACS survey (mode-specific version)
- § Veterans show card (if Veterans module selected and face-to-face interview only)
- § Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) list (if Food Stamps module selected and face-to-face interview only)
- § Alternate question sheets (only for modules to be probed – mode-specific version)
- § Incentive payment and receipt.

Prior to beginning the interview, each participant was assigned to one of the protocols. The protocol began by providing the participant with an explanation of the research and having the participant review and sign the informed consent document. (See **Appendix 8**, Informed Consent Form.) If the participant agreed, the interviewer tape-recorded the interview. Interviewers observed the participants while they answered the questions, noting any specific signs of difficulty, confusion, hesitation, or annoyance. Interviewers asked probing questions to determine the cause of any observed or spoken confusion or concern on the part of the participants. Following the final debriefing, the interviewers closed out the interviews and provided the incentive payment to the participants.

## **2.6 Reporting Results**

Interview summary reports for each interview were prepared and reviewed by the lead researchers on a flow basis. On June 23, 2009, all summary reports that were completed at the time were compiled by the three subcontractors, and interview data were disseminated to the lead researchers and analysts responsible for preparing the draft reports. Each contractor analyzed the results from all interviews, including English, stateside Spanish, and Puerto Rican Spanish, for a particular module. RTI analyzed four of the eight modules, and RSS and Westat analyzed two modules each. A draft briefing recommendations report was submitted to the Census Bureau on July 6, 2009. As the remaining interviews were completed and documented, the summary reports were forwarded to the analysts on a flow basis to be included in the final briefing recommendations report, which was submitted on July 22, 2009.

A Final Recommendations Meeting was held on July 23, 2009, at the Census Bureau offices in Suitland, MD. Representatives from RTI, RSS, and Westat presented the findings from the interviews as well as recommendations for the selection of the versions of the questions to be included in the field test. In addition to Census Bureau staff from the ACS team and the Statistical Research Division, invited guests from other Federal Agencies with interest in the ACS Content Test Items attended the meeting.



### 3. Recruiting

Participant recruitment for target language interviews was carried out under the responsibility and direction of RTI, RSS, and Westat as specified in Section 3.2, *Recruiting of English-speaking Respondents*, and Section 3.3, *Recruiting of Spanish-speaking Respondents*, below. For both languages, the recruitment process followed the same general process for screening participants. All recruitment information was maintained in a consistent manner, and all team members followed the security protocol developed to protect potential participants. To reach the targeted number of participants, however, each subcontractor's team of recruiters utilized a cadre of recruiting techniques to determine what was most effective for the targeted demographics and other recruitment criteria. This section details the consistently applied—as well as the unique—protocols for recruiting for English and Spanish-speaking respondents.

#### 3.1 Recruiting Targets

As an initial step in the planning process, a Staffing and Recruiting Plan was developed and approved by the Census Bureau. This document, which was submitted as a separate deliverable, outlined the recruiting targets for specific demographics and respondent characteristics for both English and Spanish interviews. As part of the Staffing and Recruiting Plan, three screening forms were developed (see **Appendix 9**, Screening Questions). The screening forms were designed to gather information about respondents' eligibility for each of the modules to be tested as well as information about the respondents' language skills.

Once an interview candidate expressed interest in participating in the cognitive interview, one of the designated recruiters or interviewers used the scripted questions to complete the screening form. The eligibility criteria embedded in the screening questions allowed us to target a mix of age groups, race and ethnicity categories, education levels, income levels, gender distribution, and other specific characteristics relevant for the ACS questions being tested. Candidates for cognitive interviews were asked to self-report their language competency. For Spanish interviews, only those who said they spoke and read Spanish as native-speakers and could read or speak English less than well were eligible for the cognitive testing.

All procedures were developed in accordance with U.S. Census Bureau's Policy Office and Legal Office working plan for the implementation of this task order. All language teams used a paper document to record recruiting information. This document was designed to track basic demographics of the respondents and other eligibility data asked during the screening interview. Each respondent was given an ID number, which was then used in the interview summaries for identification purposes.

In accordance with the requirements of Title 13, respondent name, address, phone number, e-mail address, demographic data, and other personal identifying information (PII) of all household members were not stored in an electronic file. PII from all respondents and all household members were recorded on paper or audiotape, and all appropriate Title 13 requirements were followed when handling these data. In addition, hard-copy documents containing respondent PII were not stored or distributed with corresponding cognitive interview data.

### 3.2 Recruiting of English-speaking Respondents

Recruiting of the English-speaking cognitive interview participants was conducted by RTI in North Carolina and Florida, by RSS in Illinois, and by Westat for the interviews in the Washington, DC metro area, Virginia, Maryland, and Colorado. Typical methods for recruitment, such as posting flyers, posting notices on the Internet, contacting community outreach organizations, and inviting respondents to identify others who may be eligible and willing to participate were used.

To recruit for the specific respondent characteristics required for the modules to be tested, additional means of outreach were required. Such efforts included the following:

- § Posting specific recruitment targets on Craigslist sites for each of the geographic locations where interviewing took place.
- § Contacting community organizations and leaders via e-mail, telephone, and in-person visits.
- § Posting advertisements in local newspapers.
- § Notifications were posted on RTI's internal website for Research Triangle Park, NC; Washington, DC; and Chicago to target RTI employees' friends or family members who might be interested and eligible.
- § Snowballing referrals after the completion of the screening questions and/or the interviews.
- § Conducting intercept recruitment in North Carolina; Florida; Puerto Rico; Maryland; Washington, DC; and Virginia, which involved recruiting respondents in person by going to locations where the targeted groups are likely to be found and completing the screeners in person. Typically, this sort of recruitment was conducted at community centers, local Hispanic or Latino markets, and organizations that assist low income and/or immigrant populations.
- § In-person posting and canvassing at retail outlets and community grocery stores, hair salons, independent restaurants, veterans centers, and local shops.
- § Additionally, Westat used an existing EurekaFacts participant database for potential candidates, and EurekaFacts conducted telephone recruitment with the aid of targeted lists of residents of Cumberland, MD and Washington, DC. Candidates who had recently participated in other research studies were not eligible for the ACS Content Test Items interviews.

Recruiting targets were based on specifications from the Statement of Work. Demographic characteristics for English-speaking respondents were tracked separately from the other characteristics required for the specific questions to be administered in the ACS interview. **Table 3-1** displays the recruiting targets and outcomes for the demographic characteristics for the English interviews. **Table 3-2** displays the recruiting targets and outcomes for the characteristics specific to the questions by module.

**Table 3-1. English Recruiting Targets and Interviews by Demographic Characteristic**

	Target	Interviews Completed
<b>Total</b>		
All cases	90–120	115
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	45–60	49
Female	45–60	66
<b>Age</b>		
18–35	30–40	39
36–59	30–40	59
60+	15–20	17
<b>Education</b>		
Less than high school	10–20	10
High school/some college	40–52	49
College graduate	30–42	56
<b>Race</b>		
White	51–68	62
Black	24–36	36
American Indian/Alaska Native	0–16	3
Asian	0–16	6
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Is.	0–16	0
Other	0–16	8
<b>Income</b>		
Low (< \$30,000)	36–48	51
Medium (\$30,000–\$75,000)	27–36	46
High (> \$75,000)	15–20	18

**Table 3-2. English Recruiting Targets and Interviews by Module**

		Target	Interviews Completed
Computer and Internet	All cases	28	46
	Urban/suburban	9	24
	Rural	9	12
	Wi-Fi	10	10
	18–35	9	12
	36–59	10	18
	60+	9	12
	Low (< \$30,000)	12	16
	Medium (\$30,000–\$75,000)	8	17
	High (> \$75,000)	8	9
Parental Place of Birth	All cases	21–28	29
	Parents born in foreign country	5–7	9
	Parents born in U.S.	5–7	6
	Parents born in U.S. territory	6–7	7
	Household with adoptees, step, foster kids	5–7	7
Veterans	All cases	24–32	31
	Currently active	4	4
	Reserves	6–8	6
	National guard	6–8	6
	Veterans	4–6	7
	Household with veteran/military	4–6	8
Wages and Salary Income	All cases	12–16	17
	Income from tips	3–4	3
	Income from bonuses, commission	2–3	4
	Multiple jobs, no self employment	3–4	5
	Multiple jobs and self employment	2	3
	Other	2–3	2
Property Income	All cases	12–16	17
	From interest or dividends only	6–8	8
	From rental/royalty, etc.	2	5
	Neither	4–6	4

		Target	Interviews Completed
Food Stamps and Cash Public Assistance	All cases	34–44	44
	Receive Food Stamps only (< 6 months)	6–8	12
	Receive Food Stamps only (> 2 years)	6–8	8
	Public Assistance & Food Stamps (any time)	12–16	13
	Public Assistance only	10–12	11
	Child recipient households	8	7
	State = NC	9–11	9
	State = MD	6–8	9
	State = VA	3–5	4
	State = IL	6–8	7
	State = DC	6–8	10
	State = CO	3	4
	State = FL	1	1
All Cases		131–164	184

### 3.3 Recruiting of Spanish-speaking Respondents

Recruitment of Spanish-speaking cognitive interview participants was conducted by RTI in North Carolina, Florida, and Puerto Rico by RSS in Illinois and Florida and by Westat in the Washington, DC metro area, Virginia, and Maryland. Typical methods for recruitment documented above for English-speaking cognitive interview participants were also used for Spanish-speaking respondents; however, the community outreach organizations and word-of-mouth recruitment were the most effective for the Spanish-speaking population.

As with English-speaking participant recruitment, the Spanish-speaking recruiting targets were based on specifications from the Statement of Work. Demographic characteristics for Spanish-speaking respondents were tracked separately from the other characteristics required for the specific questions to be administered in the ACS interview. **Table 3-3** displays the recruiting targets and outcomes for the demographic characteristics for the Spanish interviews. **Table 3-4** displays the recruiting targets and outcomes for the characteristics specific to the questions, by module, for the Spanish-speaking respondents.

**Table 3-3. Spanish Recruiting Targets and Interviews by Demographic Characteristic**

	<b>Target</b>	<b>Interviews Completed</b>
<b>Total</b>		
All cases	84–112	105
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	42–56	35
Female	42–56	70
<b>Age</b>		
18–35	28–37	37
36–59	28–38	50
60+	28–37	18
<b>Education</b>		
Less than high school	36–45	27
High school/some college	36–45	47
College graduate	12–22	31
<b>Place of birth</b>		
Mexico	28–38	32
Puerto Rico	21–28	25
Other	35–46	48
<b>Income</b>		
Low (< \$30,000)	34–46	80
Medium (\$30,000–\$75,000)	25–33	23
High (> \$75,000)	25–33	2

**Table 3-4. Spanish Recruiting Targets and Interviews by Module**

		Target	Interviews Completed
Computer and Internet	All cases	28	42
	Urban/suburban	10	36
	Rural	10	6
	Wi-Fi	8	0
	18–35	9	16
	36–59	10	14
	60+	9	12
	Low (< \$30,000)	12	27
	Medium (\$30,000–\$75,000)	8	14
	High (> \$75,000)	8	1
Parental Place of Birth	All cases	21–28	38
	Parents born in foreign country	6–7	15
	Parents born in U.S.	3–5	1
	Parents born in U.S. territory	9–11	16
	Household with adoptees, step, foster kids	3–5	6
Veterans	All cases	18–24	16
	Non-veteran/military	4–6	6
	Household with veteran/military	14–18	10
Wages and Salary Income	All cases	12–16	20
	Income from tips	3–4	3
	Income from bonuses, commission	2–3	2
	Multiple jobs, no self employment	3–4	6
	Multiple jobs and self employment	2	4
	Other	2–3	5
Property Income	All cases	12–16	16
	From interest or dividends only	4–6	4
	From rental/royalty, etc.	4–6	5
	Neither	4	7
Food Stamps and Cash Public Assistance	All cases	34–44	45
	Receive Food Stamps only (< 6 months)	6–8	8
	Receive Food Stamps only (> 2 years)	6–8	13
	Public Assistance & Food Stamps (any time)	12–16	12
	Public Assistance only	10–12	12
	Child recipient households	8	7
	State = NC	2–4	3
	State = MD	5–6	6
	State = VA	5–6	4
	State = IL	6–8	12
	State = DC	4–5	4
	State = CO	1	2
	State = FL	4	4
	Puerto Rico	8–10	10
All Cases		126–156	177

### 3.4 Recruitment Outcomes

The English recruitment outcomes were met with one adjustment to the original target for child public assistance. (The targeted number of 8 interviews was changed to 7 interviews.) All other targets for demographic and modular respondent characteristics were reached for the English interviews. **Table 3-5** shows the number of candidates screened and interviews for the English interviews.

**Table 3-5. English Screening and Participant Recruitment**

Screening /Recruitment Outcome	Number of Cases
Total cases screened	428
Cases ineligible	0
Cases recruited and scheduled	131
Cases interviewed	115

**Table 3-6** shows the number of candidates screened and interviewed for the Spanish interviews.

**Table 3-6. Spanish Screening and Participant Recruitment**

Screening /Recruitment Outcome	Number of Cases
Total cases screened	327
Cases ineligible (spoke English)	49
Cases recruited and scheduled	130
Cases interviewed	105

For the Spanish interviews, several of the recruitment targets proved to be quite difficult to find and/or to secure the interview. With the exception of municipal Wi-Fi interviews, there were at least one or more respondents with each characteristic. The specific recruitment goals that were not reached for the Spanish interviews are documented below:

- § Male respondents (35 of 42 were completed)
- § Respondents aged 60 or older (18 of 28 were completed)
- § Education less than high school (27 of 36 were completed)
- § High income > \$75, 000 (2 of 25 were completed; 1 of 8 for Computer/Internet module)
- § Rural areas for Internet/computer (6 of 10 were completed)
- § Wi-Fi areas for Internet/computer (0 of 8 were completed)
- § Parents born in the U.S. (1 of 3 were completed)
- § Households with military or veterans (10 of 14 were completed)
- § Child recipient households for cash public assistance (7 of 8 were completed)
- § Food stamp recipients in Virginia (4 of 5 were completed).

In an effort to reach the recruitment goals, the schedule for interviewing was extended by nearly 2 weeks. In light of the tight schedule for final reporting, we did not continue the



recruiting and interviewing beyond the first week in July, so the specific recruitment for each module was not reached for some Spanish targets. The overall number of interviews in Spanish, however, was within the target range. With the exception of the Veterans module, each of the overall modular targets was also reached for Spanish interviews.

## 4. Computer and Internet: Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Three versions of the Computer and Internet module were tested in both self-administered and interviewer-administered modes. A total of 84 interviews were conducted using the Computer and Internet module. Of the 84 interviews, 29 interviews were completed using Version 1, 27 interviews were completed using Version 2, and another 28 were completed using Version 3.

Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish. Of the 84 interviews, 42 were conducted in English, and 42 were conducted in Spanish. Respondents were recruited to meet three different characteristics. Of the 84 interviews, 24 English and 37 Spanish interviews were with respondents living in urban/suburban areas; 12 English and 7 Spanish interviews were with respondents living in rural areas, and the remaining 10 English interviews were with respondents living in areas where municipal Wi-Fi service is available.

Table 4-1 shows the question wording of each version tested.

**Table 4-1. ACS Questions Tested for Computer and Internet**

Version/ Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
Version 1 English	<p><b>9. At this house, apartment, or mobile home – do you or any member of this household currently own or use any of the following computers or related devices? YES/NO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ Desktop, laptop, netbook, or notebook computer</li> <li>€ Handheld computer, smart mobile phone, or other handheld wireless computer</li> <li>€ Some other type of computer</li> </ul> <p><b>10. At this house, apartment, or mobile home – do you or any member of this household currently access the Internet?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ Yes, with a subscription to an Internet service</li> <li>€ Yes, without a subscription to an Internet service ? Skip to current Q12</li> <li>€ No Internet access at this house, apartment, or mobile home ? Skip to current Q12</li> </ul> <p><b>11. At this house, apartment, or mobile home – do you or any member of this household currently subscribe to the Internet using – YES/NO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ Dial-up service?</li> <li>€ DSL service?</li> </ul>	<p><b>9a. At this &lt;house/apartment/mobile home&gt;, do you or any member of this household currently own or use a desktop, laptop, netbook, or notebook computer?</b></p> <p><b>9b. (At this &lt;house/apartment/mobile home&gt;) Do you or any member of this household currently own or use a handheld computer, smart mobile phone, or other handheld wireless computer?</b></p> <p><b>9c. (At this &lt;house/apartment/mobile home&gt;) Do you or any member of this household currently own or use some other type of computer?</b></p> <p><b>10a. At this &lt;house/apartment/mobile home&gt;, do you or any member of this household currently access the Internet?</b></p> <p><b>10b. (At this &lt;house/apartment/mobile home&gt;) Do you or any member of this household currently access the Internet with or without a subscription to an Internet service?</b></p> <p><b>11. At this &lt;house/apartment/mobile home&gt;, do you or any member of this household currently subscribe to the Internet using</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ dial-up service?</li> <li>€ DSL service?</li> <li>€ a cable-modem or fiber-optic service?</li> </ul>

4. Computer and Internet: Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Version/ Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ Cable modem or fiber-optic service?</li> <li>€ Wireless Internet service, including a mobile Internet plan (exclude in-house Wi Fi)?</li> <li>€ Satellite service?</li> <li>€ Some other service?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ wireless Internet service, including a mobile Internet plan but excluding in-house Wi Fi?</li> <li>€ satellite service?</li> <li>€ some other service?</li> </ul>
Version 1 Spanish (stateside and Puerto Rico)	<p><b>9. Actualmente en esta casa, apartamento o casa móvil, ¿tiene o usa usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar alguna de las siguientes computadoras o equipos relacionados? SÍ/ NO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ Computadora de escritorio, computadora portátil, miniportátil (netbook) o computadora personal móvil (notebook)</li> <li>€ Computadora de mano, smartphone o alguna otra computadora de mano inalámbrica</li> <li>€ Algún otro tipo de computadora</li> </ul> <p><b>10. Actualmente en esta casa, apartamento o casa móvil, ¿tiene usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar acceso a Internet?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ Sí, con una suscripción a un servicio de Internet.</li> <li>€ Sí, sin una suscripción a un servicio de Internet ? Pase a la pregunta Q12 actual</li> <li>€ No tiene acceso a Internet en esta casa, apartamento o casa móvil ? Pase a la pregunta Q12 actual</li> </ul> <p><b>11. Actualmente en esta casa, apartamento o casa móvil, ¿se suscribe usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar a Internet usando – SÍ/NO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ Servicio de conexión Dial Up?</li> <li>€ Servicio de DSL?</li> <li>€ Servicio de cable-modem o de fibra óptica?</li> <li>€ Servicio inalámbrico de Internet, incluyend un plan de Internet móvil (excluya servicio WIFI en la casa)?</li> <li>€ Servicio por satélite?</li> <li>€ Algún otro servicio?</li> </ul>	<p><b>9a. Actualmente, en esta [casa, apartamento o casa móvil], ¿tiene o usa usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar una computadora de escritorio, computadora portátil, miniportátil (netbook) o computadora personal móvil (notebook)?</b></p> <p><b>9b. Actualmente, en esta [casa, apartamento o casa móvil], ¿tiene o usa usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar una computadora de mano, smartphone o alguna otra computadora de mano inalámbrica?</b></p> <p><b>9c. Actualmente, en esta [casa, apartamento o casa móvil] ¿tiene o usa usted o algún miembro de este hogar algún otro tipo de computadora?</b></p> <p><b>10a. Actualmente en esta [casa, apartamento o casa móvil], ¿tiene usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar acceso a Internet?</b></p> <p><b>10b. Actualmente en esta [casa, apartamento o casa móvil], ¿tiene usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar acceso a Internet con o sin una suscripción a un servicio de Internet?</b></p> <p><b>11. Actualmente en esta [casa, apartamento o casa móvil], ¿se suscribe usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar a Internet usando</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ servicio de conexión Dial Up?</li> <li>€ servicio de DSL?</li> <li>€ servicio de cable-modem o de fibra óptica?</li> <li>€ servicio inalámbrico de Internet, incluyendo un plan de Internet móvil pero excluyendo servicio WIFI en la casa)?</li> <li>€ servicio por satélite?</li> <li>€ algún otro servicio?</li> </ul>
Version 2 English	<p><b>9. Which of the following devices that could access the Internet are currently owned or used in this house, apartment, or mobile home? Mark (X) one or more boxes.</b></p>	<p><b>9a. Which of the following devices that could access the Internet are currently owned or used in this [house/apartment/mobile home] – a desktop, laptop, netbook, or notebook computer; a handheld computer,</b></p>

Version/ Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ Desktop, laptop, netbook, or notebook computer</li> <li>€ Handheld computer, smart mobile phone, or other wireless device</li> <li>€ Some other device: Specify type of device _____</li> <li>€ None</li> </ul> <p><b>10. How do you or any member of this household subscribe to the Internet at this house, apartment, or mobile home? Mark (X) one or more boxes.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ No subscription to an Internet Service Provider</li> <li>€ Dial-up service</li> <li>€ DSL service</li> <li>€ Cable-modem or fiber-optic service</li> <li>€ Wireless Internet service, including a mobile Internet plan (exclude in-house Wi Fi)</li> <li>€ Satellite service</li> <li>€ Some other service: Specify service _____</li> </ul>	<p><b>smart mobile phone, or other wireless device; some other type of device, or none? Mark (X) one or more boxes.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ Desktop, laptop, netbook, or notebook computer</li> <li>€ Handheld computer, smart mobile phone, or other wireless device</li> <li>€ Some other device _____</li> <li>€ None</li> </ul> <p><b>9b. What is this other type of device?</b> _____</p> <p><b>10a. How do you or any member of this household subscribe to the Internet at this [house/ apartment/mobile home] - no subscription to an Internet Service Provider, dial-up service, DSL service, cable-modem or fiber-optic service, wireless Internet service, including a mobile Internet plan but excluding in-house Wi Fi, satellite service, or some other type of Internet service? Mark (X) one or more boxes.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ No subscription to an Internet Service Provider</li> <li>€ Dial-up service</li> <li>€ DSL service</li> <li>€ Cable-modem or fiber-optic service</li> <li>€ Mobile broadband plan for a computer or cellular phone</li> <li>€ Satellite service</li> <li>€ Some other service _____</li> </ul> <p><b>10b. What is this other service?</b> _____</p>
Version 2 Spanish (stateside and Puerto Rico)	<p><b>9. ¿Cuáles de los siguientes equipos con los cuales pueden obtener acceso a Internet tienen o usan en esta casa, apartamento o casa móvil? Marque (X) una o más casillas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ Computadora de escritorio, computadora portátil, miniportátil (netbook) o computadora personal móvil (notebook)</li> <li>€ Computadora de mano, smartphone o algún otro equipo inalámbrico</li> <li>€ Algún otro equipo</li> <li>€ Especifique el tipo de equipo _____</li> </ul>	<p><b>9a. ¿Cuáles de los siguientes equipos con los cuales pueden obtener acceso a Internet tienen o usan en esta [casa, apartamento o casa móvil]: una computadora de escritorio, computadora portátil, miniportátil (netbook) o computadora personal móvil (notebook); una computadora de mano, smartphone o algún otro equipo inalámbrico, algún otro tipo de equipo o no usa ninguno? Marque (X) una o más casillas.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ Computadora de escritorio, computadora portátil, miniportátil (netbook) o computadora personal móvil (notebook)</li> <li>€ Computadora de mano, smartphone o algún otro</li> </ul>

Version/ Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
	<p>€ Ninguno</p> <p><b>10. ¿Cómo se suscribe usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar a Internet en esta casa, apartamento o casa móvil? Marque (X) una o más casillas.</b></p> <p>€ No tiene suscripción a un proveedor de servicios de Internet</p> <p>€ Servicio de conexión Dial Up</p> <p>€ Servicio de DSL</p> <p>€ Servicio de cable-modem o de fibra óptica</p> <p>€ Servicio inalámbrico de Internet, incluso un plan de Internet móvil (excluya servicio WIFI en la casa)</p> <p>€ Servicio por satélite</p> <p>€ Algún otro servicio: Especifique el servicio _____</p>	<p>equipo inalámbrico</p> <p>€ Algún otro equipo</p> <p>€ Ninguno</p> <p><b>9b. ¿Cuál es este otro tipo de equipo? _____</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>10a. ¿Cómo se suscribe usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar a Internet en esta [casa, apartamento o casa móvil]: no tiene suscripción a un proveedor de servicios de Internet, servicio de conexión Dial Up, servicio de DSL, servicio de cable-modem o de fibra óptica, servicio inalámbrico de Internet, incluyendo un plan de Internet móvil pero excluya servicio Wi Fi en la casa, servicio por satélite, o algún otro tipo de servicio de Internet? Marque (X) una o más casillas.</b></p> <p>€ No tiene suscripción a un proveedor de servicios de Internet</p> <p>€ Servicio de conexión Dial Up</p> <p>€ Servicio DSL</p> <p>€ Servicio de cable-modem o de fibra óptica</p> <p>€ Servicio inalámbrico de Internet, incluyendo un plan de Internet móvil (excluya servicio WIFI en la casa)</p> <p>€ Servicio por satélite</p> <p>€ Algún otro servicio</p> <p><b>10b. ¿Cuál es este otro servicio? _____</b></p>
Version 3 English	<p><b>9. Do you or any member of this household subscribe to the Internet at this house, apartment, or mobile home?</b></p> <p><b>10. What type of Internet service do you or any member of this household have at this house, apartment, or mobile home? Mark (X) one or more boxes.</b></p> <p>€ Dial-up service</p> <p>€ DSL service</p> <p>€ Cable-modem or fiber-optic service</p> <p>€ Wireless Internet service, including a mobile Internet plan (exclude in-house Wi Fi)</p> <p>€ Satellite service</p> <p>€ Some other service – Specify service</p>	<p><b>9a. Do you or any member of this household subscribe to the Internet at this [house/apartment/mobile home]?</b></p> <p><b>10a. What type of Internet service do you or any member of this household have at this [house/apartment/mobile home] - dial-up service, DSL service, cable-modem or fiber-optic service, wireless Internet service, including a mobile Internet plan but excluding in-house Wi Fi, satellite service, or some other type of Internet service? Mark (X) one or more boxes.</b></p> <p><b>10b. What is this service?</b></p> <p><b>11. Do you or any member of this household currently own or use a computer or related device at this [house/apartment/mobile home]? INCLUDE desktops, laptops, netbooks,</b></p>

Version/ Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
	<p>11. Do you or any member of this household currently own or use a computer or related device at this house, apartment, or mobile home?  <b>INCLUDE</b> desktops, laptops, netbooks, smart mobile phones, hand-held computers, or other types of computers.  <b>EXCLUDE</b> GPS devices, digital music players, and devices with only limited computing capabilities, for example: household appliances.</p>	<p>smart mobile phones, hand-held computers, or other types of computers. <b>EXCLUDE</b> GPS devices, digital music players, and devices with only limited computing capabilities, for example: household appliances.</p>
<p>Version 3 Spanish (stateside and Puerto Rico)</p>	<p>9. ¿Se suscribe usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar a Internet en esta casa, apartamento o casa móvil?</p> <p>10. ¿Qué tipo de servicio de Internet tiene usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar en esta casa, apartamento o casa móvil? <i>Marque (X) una o más casillas.</i></p> <p>€ Servicio de conexión Dial Up</p> <p>€ Servicio de DSL</p> <p>€ Servicio de cable-modem o de fibra óptica</p> <p>€ Servicio inalámbrico de Internet, incluyendo un plan de Internet móvil (excluya servicio Wi Fi en la casa)</p> <p>€ Servicio por satélite</p> <p>€ Algún otro servicio: <i>Especifique el servicio</i></p> <p>11. Actualmente, ¿tiene o usa usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar una computadora o equipo relacionado en esta casa, apartamento o casa móvil? <b>INCLUYA</b> computadoras de escritorio, computadoras portátiles, miniportátiles (netbooks), smartphones, computadoras de mano, u otros tipos de computadora. <b>EXCLUYA</b> Sistemas de posicionamiento global (GPS), reproductores digitales de música y otros equipos con capacidad limitada de computación, por ejemplo, enseres eléctricos.</p>	<p>9a. ¿Se suscribe usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar a Internet en esta &lt;casa, apartamento, casa móvil&gt;?</p> <p>10a. ¿Qué tipo de servicio de Internet tiene usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar en esta &lt;casa, apartamento, casa móvil&gt;: servicio de conexión Dial Up, conexión DSL, servicio de cable-modem o de fibra óptica, servicio inalámbrico de Internet, incluso un plan de Internet móvil (excluya servicio WIFI en la casa), servicio de satélite, algún otro servicio. <b>Marque (X) una o más casillas.</b></p> <p>10b. ¿Cuál es este servicio?</p> <p>11. Actualmente, ¿tiene o usa usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar una computadora o equipo relacionado en esta &lt;casa, apartamento, casa móvil&gt;? <b>INCLUYA</b> computadoras de escritorio, computadoras portátiles, miniportátiles (netbooks), smartphones, computadoras de mano, u otros tipos de computadora. <b>EXCLUYA</b> Sistemas de posicionamiento global (GPS), reproductores digitales de música y otros equipos con capacidad limitada de computación, por ejemplo, enseres eléctricos.</p>

## 4.1 Findings from the Computer and Internet Module

### Overview

Three versions were tested in the Computer and Internet module. The purpose of this sequence of questions was to elicit data on type of computer equipment in the household, internet access, and type of service through which the internet was accessed. The sequence in Version 1 is type of computer equipment, internet access and internet service. Version 2 first asks about devices in the household that can access internet, followed by type of service the household has. Finally, in Version 3 the order of questions is internet access, service used, and equipment owned or used.

Virtually without an exception, the main intent of each question across the three versions was clearly understood. Respondents generally realized that these questions were asked at the household level and not at the individual level. However, most respondents lived with family members or by themselves and we suspect if we had interviewed more respondents who lived with unrelated roommates, they might have answered just for themselves rather than for the whole household.

The questions on specific equipment owned or used by the household were also interpreted as intended, even if some of the equipment or devices interviewers probed about (e.g. smartphone, handheld computer) were not known to respondents. They also understood and were able to answer questions about whether their household had internet access with or without a subscription.

Knowledge of systems and services—and therefore comprehension of related questions—was equally distributed across age groups, income levels, and gender. More of the women mentioned that other members of the household “take care of such things” when asked about internet access and services, and the relatives they mentioned were mostly male. A couple of the male respondents stated that they had a technical background and therefore understood things better than others. No clear response patterns emerged when we compared the answers of respondents in rural and urban/suburban areas. Systems use and internet access appeared—at least in our non-probability sample—evenly distributed across both types of residence. A discussion of differences by language appears below.

### Internet Service

Some respondents had difficulty answering questions regarding the type of service through which their households accessed the internet. Some respondents exhibited limited understanding of different services or types of access, and some did not have the information because someone else in the household was taking care of such matters. The combined effect of technical confusion and distribution of responsibilities among household members lead some respondents to great uncertainty. These issues were true across versions: the main problem for respondents in answering the questions was the lack of knowledge or understanding many of them have about the type of internet service the household. For example, several respondents reported access through a variety of services in rather unlikely combinations. Upon probing, it became evident that they were not certain at all about what they really had. This issue was slightly more prevalent among Spanish-speaking respondents.

## Computer Equipment

Probes on specific types of equipment and their classifications also showed that use of technology by many households was ahead of individual household members' understanding of how the technology worked and how it should be classified. For instance, in probes about different types of devices, very consistently, one-third of the respondents in each version (28 in total) either considered a videogame system a computer without further qualifying their answers or defined a videogame as a computer as long as it could access the internet.

Despite the confusion and uncertainty uncovered in probing, the questions as worded in any version did not require respondents to classify the equipment they had or used, but simply to report having it under one of the lists of devices offered. As we understand it, the aim of the questions was to determine if and how households accessed the internet. As long as the "other" category is phrased in the most inclusive way, no data should be missed. For instance, in Version 1, instead of "some other type of computer," the response choice could read, "some other type of computer or related device." The one type of internet-access device that might be missed if asking only for computers are cell phones that have internet access but no other computing capabilities and are not classified as smart phones or handheld computers by respondents.

Respondents found the lists of equipment to be comprehensive. Hard pressed by the probing to come up with "other" devices, a few respondents were able to suggest something else. This included videogames, GPSs, DVRs, TV (digital TV, Web TV), home phones, regular cell phones that can access the internet, and e-books. However, these were not – except for rare exceptions – devices they reported under 'Other' in the equipment question; thus, the probe may simply have 'forced' them to try to report something that they would not naturally volunteer in their answer.

## Internet Access

Although some respondents reported thinking about computer usage in general, when it came to specific responses about computer equipment and internet access, they discussed only their home situation. Only a handful of respondents mentioned accessing the internet in public places in addition to the home (e.g., public library, coffee shop). Because the ACS specifically asks about internet access *at* the house, apartment or mobile home, the interpretation of the overwhelming majority of respondents was as intended.

Generally, respondents answered not just for themselves but also for all household members (as speculated above, this may have been different if we had interviewed more respondents living with roommates). The exceptions were parents of young children who reported their children did not yet have access to computers or internet, and a few respondents who were not familiar with their roommates or boarders' computer and internet access.

The concepts of "access" (in Spanish, "acceso"/"conectarse") and "subscription" (in Spanish, "suscripción") to the internet were well understood. The terminology worked well in both English and Spanish. Respondents made clear distinctions between subscribing and accessing without a subscription. Subscription was widely defined as paying for a service, whereas accessing without a subscription was defined as connecting to the internet without having a paid service. Some respondents did not think it was possible to access without a



subscription. Many felt that accessing without a subscription was the equivalent of stealing. In a few and rare cases, respondents who did not use computers or accessed the internet had vague notions and could not define these terms when probed; nonetheless, they had no difficulties correctly answering the survey questions.

None of the respondents considered that someone who connected to internet through a neighbor should answer that they accessed the internet with a subscription. This included the three respondents who acknowledged connecting through a neighbor. However, many participants did not understand how it would be possible to connect to the internet through a neighbor. Some felt that such a way of connecting would be illegal, like stealing, and therefore someone accessing internet that way would not be reported it on the questionnaire.

Over one-fourth of the respondents (n=24) did not know what Wi-Fi was or how it worked. Even among those who were more familiar with the concept, many did not know what “in-house Wi-Fi” was and how it differed technically from wireless internet service. That is, participants might have known that they accessed the internet wirelessly, but did not realize there was an in-home router that received the internet signal through such media as DSL, cable, fiber optics, and telephone lines, and distributed it wirelessly inside the home. Because so many respondents were unfamiliar with the concept of Wi-Fi and confused it with the wireless signal they had at home, it was not surprising that the concept of wireless internet service was also unclear. Those who seemed to understand these concepts were still unable to comprehend why the response category for wireless internet service instructed respondents to “exclude in-house Wi-Fi.” The small group that understood the meaning of the response categories were able to answer without error.

### **Municipal Wi-Fi**

Ten English language respondents lived in areas with municipal Wi-Fi: four in Florida, one in North Carolina, and five in Maryland. Three completed a self-administered interview (one in Version 1 and two in Version 3) and seven were assigned to an interviewer-administered mode (two respondents received Version 1, one received Version 2 and four received Version 3).

Generally, respondents in these areas were not very knowledgeable about the municipal service. For those who accessed community Wi-Fi, the question on whether they subscribed to internet or not could be interpreted and answered differently depending on whether they considered themselves subscribers or not. Among the 10 respondents in such areas, only 1 was using community Wi-Fi for internet access. She reported that she did not subscribe to internet, and clarified that she was using community Wi-Fi. Even within the same area, respondents did not agree on whether the free municipal Wi-Fi would constitute accessing with or without a subscription. Other participants were not familiar enough with the municipal Wi-Fi in their area to have an opinion. Overall, the respondents did not exhibit different response patterns in any of the three versions.

### **Differences by Mode**

The main differences detected by mode were due to self- or interviewer-administration rather than question interpretation. That is, questions were left unanswered or were mismarked on the self-administered form, which could not happen in the interviewer-administered mode.

Otherwise, there was no indication that the questions in one mode created more confusion, were misinterpreted more often, or led to misreporting more than the other mode.

### **Differences by Language**

The Spanish versions displayed the same issues as the English versions. No specific translation issues were detected. The Spanish and English wording exhibited similar problems. However, Spanish-speaking respondents generally had less knowledge on the topic, as more of them did not have computer equipment in the household or internet access. Nonetheless, and despite their difficulty with some probes, Spanish-speaking participants (12 out of 13 without computer equipment) were able to answer the question about computer equipment easily and correctly.

The question on internet access was equally non-problematic for Spanish and English speakers. In terms of internet service, Spanish speakers were slightly more uncertain about the type of service their household subscribed to than were English speakers.

No specific problems were found with the terminology in Spanish. The questions used English terms rather than translation (e.g. “dial-up”, “DSL”), but this did not impair understanding as these terms are used by Spanish speakers. None of the Spanish respondents volunteered new terms for services that were not already mentioned in the questions, nor they used such terms during the cognitive interview.

### **Differences by Version**

The problems encountered in testing were common to all versions; as described above, problems included the respondents’ lack of technical understanding about the equipment and services in their households. While in the case of computer equipment and internet access this did not cause serious difficulty or misreporting, in the case of internet service used by the household it led to incorrect responses.

Because of the complexity and length of the sequence of questions, alternate version cards were not designed for the interviewer administered mode. Although the self administered alternate version cards were designed and distributed, their use was limited, to a great degree because the interviewers were unaccustomed to using cards for these questions in their previous interviews that were not self-administered. Only 60% of the self-administered cases used the cards for this module. When they were used, English language participants did not express a strong liking for any of the versions. Spanish language respondents did express a preference for Version 2 and Version 3, as they found them clearer than Version 1. Respondents liked the include/exclude lists in Question 11, Version 3. Those with no internet subscription liked that Version 2 explicitly offered such a choice.

None of the 3 versions appeared to lead to substantially higher misreporting or comprehension difficulty. However, in Version 1, Question 9, response option “c” was confusing to 4 respondents, all English speakers. These respondents were baffled by this question, as they thought response options “a” and “b” had already covered all possible devices.

Version 3 stood out as working particularly well. First, Question 9 was a very simple “Yes/No” question, and respondents understood it well, knew their household situations, and

could reply without hesitation. Question 10 asked about the same types of services as Versions 1 and 2, but respondents had far fewer problems in selecting an answer. Question 11 also worked very well; respondents had no problems in providing an answer. The “Yes/No” structure of this question and the examples of what to include and what to exclude were found to be very helpful in answering. The include/exclude lists were cited by respondents across versions who selected Version 3 as their preferred one. Although respondents could not necessarily explain what was meant by “limited computing capability,” many were able to list devices that could appropriately be included there (e.g., i-Pods, GPS devices, stove thermostats).

**Appendix 10**, Computer and Internet Module: Final Briefing Recommendations, provides additional detail on the findings from this section.

#### **4.2 Version Preference and Recommendations for the Computer and Internet Module**

We recommend keeping Versions 2 and 3 with no substantive wording changes. In the self-administered formats, because we observed that some respondents did not follow skip instructions, we recommend that the first option on the response lists is the answer that indicates the respondent arrived to a given question by mistake (e.g., in Version 2, Question 9, move “None” up to the top of the list; in Version 3, Question 10, add “No service” at the top of the list).

To avoid the confusion about “wireless internet service,” we suggest modifying only this response option. Respondents seemed to key in on the word “wireless.” However, most respondents were familiar with wireless only as it relates to Wi-Fi and were consequently confused by the instruction to “exclude in-house Wi-Fi.” We suggest replacing this response category with either of the following response options: *Mobile broadband plan for a computer or cellular phone*, or to be more specific, *Mobile broadband plan for a computer or cellular phone that allows access to the Internet outside of your home*. The phrase “mobile broadband” is used by the three major providers: AT&T, Verizon, and Sprint. In Spanish, these carriers use “banda ancha móvil”, phrasing we recommend for the Spanish version.

The other problems in interpreting the questions about service or subscription were due to lack of understanding of technology rather than the format or wording of the questions. Nonetheless, because much of the terminology is technical and new to respondents, we recommend “unbundling” the concepts as much as possible. Therefore, a “Yes/No” approach such as the one employed in Version 3 may lead to the least amount of error.

While no issues with the multiple response options were detected during the cognitive interviews, we recommend the field test to include clear specifications for the interviewer-administered versions of these questions to ensure that each category is read and a response is provided. Questions 9a and 10a of Version 2 and Question 10 of Version 3 should be considered for this clarification.

The recommended modified Versions 2 and 3 appear in **Table 4-2**.

**Table 4-2. Proposed Alternate Wordings for the Computer and Internet Question**

Version/ Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
Version 2 English	<p><b>9. Which of the following devices that could access the Internet are currently owned or used in this house, apartment, or mobile home? Mark (X) one or more boxes.</b></p> <p>€ None</p> <p>€ Desktop, laptop, netbook, or notebook computer</p> <p>€ Handheld computer, smart mobile phone, or other wireless device</p> <p>€ Some other device: Specify type of device _____</p> <p><b>10. How do you or any member of this household subscribe to the Internet at this house, apartment, or mobile home? Mark (X) one or more boxes.</b></p> <p>€ No subscription to an Internet Service Provider</p> <p>€ Dial-up service</p> <p>€ DSL service</p> <p>€ Cable-modem or fiber-optic service</p> <p>€ Mobile broadband plan for a computer or cellular phone</p> <p>€ Satellite service</p> <p>€ Some other service: Specify service _____</p>	<p><b>9a. Which of the following devices that could access the Internet are currently owned or used in this [house/apartment/mobile home] – a desktop, laptop, netbook, or notebook computer; a handheld computer, smart mobile phone, or other wireless device; some other type of device, or none? Mark (X) one or more boxes.</b></p> <p>€ Desktop, laptop, netbook, or notebook computer – <i>Go to 10a</i></p> <p>€ Handheld computer, smart mobile phone, or other wireless device – <i>Go to 10a</i></p> <p>€ Some other device</p> <p>€ None – <i>Go to 10a</i></p> <p><b>9b. What is this other type of device?</b> _____</p> <p><b>10a. How do you or any member of this household subscribe to the Internet at this [house/apartment/mobile home] – no subscription to an Internet Service Provider, dial-up service, DSL service, cable-modem or fiber-optic service, Mobile broadband plan for a computer or cellular phone, satellite service, or some other type of Internet service? Mark (X) one or more boxes.</b></p> <p>€ No subscription to an Internet Service Provider</p> <p>€ Dial-up service</p> <p>€ DSL service</p> <p>€ Cable-modem or fiber-optic service</p> <p>€ Mobile broadband plan for a computer or cellular phone</p> <p>€ Satellite service</p> <p>€ Some other service</p> <p><b>10b. What is this other service?</b> _____</p>

Version/ Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
Version 2 Spanish (stateside and Puerto Rico)	<p><b>9. ¿Cuáles de los siguientes equipos con los cuales pueden obtener acceso a Internet tienen o usan en esta casa, apartamento o casa móvil? Marque (X) una o más casillas</b></p> <p>€ Ninguno</p> <p>€ Computadora de escritorio, computadora portátil, miniportátil (netbook) o computadora personal móvil (notebook)</p> <p>€ Computadora de mano, smartphone o algún otro equipo inalámbrico</p> <p>€ Algún otro equipo</p> <p>€ Especifique el tipo de equipo _____</p> <p><b>10. ¿Cómo se suscribe usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar a Internet en esta casa, apartamento o casa móvil? Marque (X) una o más casillas.</b></p> <p>€ No tiene suscripción a un proveedor de servicios de Internet</p> <p>€ Servicio de conexión Dial Up</p> <p>€ Servicio de DSL</p> <p>€ Servicio de cable-modem o de fibra óptica</p> <p>€ Plan de banda ancha móvil (<i>mobile broadband plan</i>) para computadora o teléfono celular</p> <p>€ Servicio por satélite</p> <p>€ Algún otro servicio: Especifique el servicio _____</p>	<p><b>9a. ¿Cuáles de los siguientes equipos con los cuales pueden obtener acceso a Internet tienen o usan en esta [casa, apartamento o casa móvil]: una computadora de escritorio, computadora portátil, miniportátil (netbook) o computadora personal móvil (notebook); una computadora de mano, smartphone o algún otro equipo inalámbrico, algún otro tipo de equipo o no usa ninguno? Marque (X) una o más casillas.</b></p> <p>€ Computadora de escritorio, computadora portátil, miniportátil (netbook) o computadora personal móvil (notebook)</p> <p>€ Computadora de mano, smartphone o algún otro equipo inalámbrico</p> <p>€ Algún otro equipo</p> <p>€ Ninguno</p> <p><b>9b. ¿Cuál es este otro tipo de equipo? _____</b></p> <p><b>10a. ¿Cómo se suscribe usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar a Internet en esta [casa, apartamento o casa móvil] : no tiene suscripción a un proveedor de servicios de Internet, servicio de conexión Dial Up, servicio de DSL, servicio de cable-modem o de fibra óptica, servicio inalámbrico de Internet, incluyendo un plan de Internet móvil pero excluya servicio Wi-Fi en la casa, servicio por satélite, o algún otro tipo de servicio de Internet? Marque (X) una o más casillas.</b></p> <p>€ No tiene suscripción a un proveedor de servicios de Internet</p> <p>€ Servicio de conexión Dial Up</p> <p>€ Servicio DSL</p> <p>€ Servicio de cable-modem o de fibra óptica</p> <p>€ Plan de banda ancha móvil (<i>mobile broadband plan</i>) para computadora o teléfono celular</p> <p>€ Servicio por satélite</p> <p>€ Algún otro servicio</p> <p><b>10b. ¿Cuál es este otro servicio? _____</b></p>

Version/ Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
Version 3 English	<p><b>9. Do you or any member of this household subscribe to the Internet at this house, apartment, or mobile home?</b></p> <p><b>10. What type of Internet service do you or any member of this household have at this house, apartment, or mobile home? Mark (X) one or more boxes.</b></p> <p>€ No service</p> <p>€ Dial-up service</p> <p>€ DSL service</p> <p>€ Cable-modem or fiber-optic service</p> <p>€ Mobile broadband plan for a computer or cellular phone</p> <p>€ Satellite service</p> <p>€ Some other service – <i>Specify service</i></p> <hr/> <p><b>11. Do you or any member of this household currently own or use a computer or related device at this house, apartment, or mobile home?</b></p> <p><b>INCLUDE desktops, laptops, netbooks, smart mobile phones, hand-held computers, or other types of computers.</b></p> <p><b>EXCLUDE GPS devices, digital music players, and devices with only limited computing capabilities, for example: household appliances.</b></p>	<p><b>9a. Do you or any member of this household subscribe to the Internet at this [house/apartment/mobile home]?</b></p> <p><b>10a. What type of Internet service do you or any member of this household have at this [house/apartment/mobile home]</b></p> <p>€ Dial-up service</p> <p>€ DSL service</p> <p>€ Cable-modem or fiber-optic service</p> <p>€ Mobile broadband plan for a computer or cellular phone</p> <p>€ Satellite service</p> <p>€ Some other type of Internet service? Mark (X) one or more boxes.</p> <p><b>10b. What is this service?</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>11. Do you or any member of this household currently own or use a computer or related device at this [house/apartment/mobile home]?</b></p> <p><b>INCLUDE desktops, laptops, netbooks, smart mobile phones, hand-held computers, or other types of computers.</b></p> <p><b>EXCLUDE GPS devices, digital music players, and devices with only limited computing capabilities, for example: household appliances.</b></p>

Version/ Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
Version 3 Spanish (stateside and Puerto Rico)	<p><b>9.</b> ¿Se suscribe usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar a Internet en esta casa, apartamento o casa móvil?</p> <p><b>10.</b> ¿Qué tipo de servicio de Internet tiene usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar en esta casa, apartamento o casa móvil? <i>Marque (X) una o más casillas.</i></p> <p>€ Ningún servicio</p> <p>€ Servicio de conexión Dial Up</p> <p>€ Servicio de DSL</p> <p>€ Servicio de cable-modem o de fibra óptica</p> <p>€ Plan de banda ancha móvil (<i>mobile broadband plan</i>) para computadora o teléfono celular</p> <p>€ Servicio por satélite</p> <p>€ Algún otro servicio: <i>Especifique el servicio</i></p> <hr/> <p><b>11.</b> Actualmente, ¿tiene o usa usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar una computadora o equipo relacionado en esta casa, apartamento o casa móvil? <b>INCLUYA</b> computadoras de escritorio, computadoras portátiles, miniportátiles (<i>netbooks</i>), smartphones, computadoras de mano, u otros tipos de computadora. <b>EXCLUYA</b> Sistemas de posicionamiento global (GPS), reproductores digitales de música y otros equipos con capacidad limitada de computación, por ejemplo, enseres eléctricos.</p>	<p><b>9a.</b> ¿Se suscribe usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar a Internet en esta &lt;casa, apartamento, casa móvil&gt;?</p> <p><b>10a.</b> ¿Qué tipo de servicio de Internet tiene usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar en esta &lt;casa, apartamento, casa móvil&gt;:</p> <p>€ Servicio de conexión Dial Up</p> <p>€ Conexión DSL</p> <p>€ Servicio de cable-modem o de fibra óptica</p> <p>€ Plan de banda ancha móvil (<i>mobile broadband plan</i>) para computadora o teléfono celular</p> <p>€ Servicio de satélite</p> <p>€ Algún otro servicio Marque (X) una o más casillas.</p> <p><b>10b.</b> ¿Cuál es este servicio?</p> <hr/> <p><b>11.</b> Actualmente, ¿tiene o usa usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar una computadora o equipo relacionado en esta &lt;casa, apartamento, casa móvil&gt;? <b>INCLUYA</b> computadoras de escritorio, computadoras portátiles, miniportátiles (<i>netbooks</i>), smartphones, computadoras de mano, u otros tipos de computadora. <b>EXCLUYA</b> Sistemas de posicionamiento global (GPS), reproductores digitales de música y otros equipos con capacidad limitada de computación, por ejemplo, enseres eléctricos.</p>

## 5. Food Stamps: Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Two versions of a proposed new ACS question about household receipt of food stamps were tested. Although both versions incorporated the new name of the Food Stamps program, “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP),” Version 1 placed greater emphasis on the new name than did Version 2. Furthermore, Version 1 explicitly stated that SNAP and Food Stamps are the same program. **Table 5-1** presents the question wording of each Food Stamps question version tested across modes and languages (English and Spanish).

A total of 87 participants (43 Spanish-speaking, 44 English-speaking) were probed on the Food Stamps question. Participants were residents of Illinois (19), Maryland (15), District of Columbia (14), North Carolina (12), Virginia (8), Colorado (6), and Florida (5). In addition, 8 participants were residents of Puerto Rico.

**Table 5-1. ACS Questions Tested for Food Stamps Module**

Version/ Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
Version 1 English	15. <u>IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS</u> , did you or any member of this household receive a government benefit from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—formerly known as the Food Stamp Program—that can only be used to buy food? <i>Do not include WIC or the National School Lunch Program.</i>	15. IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS, did you or any member of this household receive a government benefit from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—formerly known as the Food Stamp Program—that can only be used to buy food? Do NOT include WIC or the National School Lunch Program.
Version 1 Spanish (stateside and Puerto Rico)	15. EN LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES, ¿recibió usted o algún miembro de este hogar algún beneficio del gobierno por medio del Programa de Asistencia Nutricional Suplementaria (SNAP)—antes conocido como el Programa de Cupones de Alimentos—que sólo se puede usar para comprar alimentos? NO incluya WIC o el Programa Nacional de Almuerzos Escolares.	15. EN LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES, ¿recibió usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar algún beneficio del gobierno por medio del Programa de Asistencia Nutricional Suplementario (SNAP)—antes conocido como el Programa de Cupones de Alimentos—que sólo se puede usar para comprar alimentos? NO incluya WIC o el Programa Nacional de Almuerzos Escolares.
Version 2 English	<u>IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS</u> , did you or any member of this household receive a government benefit that can be used to buy food? Include Food Stamps and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Do not include WIC or the National School Lunch Program.	14. IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS, did you or any member of this household receive a government benefit that can only be used to buy food? Include Food Stamps and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Do NOT include WIC or the National School Lunch Program.
Version 2 Spanish (stateside and Puerto Rico)	14. EN LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES, ¿recibió usted o algún miembro de este hogar algún beneficio del gobierno que sólo se puede usar para comprar alimentos? <i>Incluya Cupones de Alimentos y el Programa de Asistencia Nutricional Suplementaria (SNAP). NO incluya WIC o el Programa Nacional de Almuerzos Escolares.</i>	14. EN LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES, ¿recibió usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar algún beneficio del gobierno que sólo se puede usar para comprar alimentos? Incluya Cupones de Alimentos y el Programa de Asistencia Nutricional Suplementario (SNAP). NO incluya WIC o el Programa Nacional de Almuerzos Escolares.



## 5.1 Findings from the Food Stamps Module

### Overview

Of the 87 participants probed on the food stamps question, 17 (10 English-speakers, 7 Spanish-speakers) experienced problems answering or interpreting the question. Twelve participants answered the question incorrectly: 6 participants answered negatively (or did not answer) when they should have answered positively, and 6 participants answered positively when they should have answered negatively. For the most part, the observed problems seemed independent of interview mode and form version. There were no language-specific problems. The following examples illustrate the types of problems observed with the Food Stamps question:

- § **Food from food pantry.** Three respondents incorrectly reported having received food stamps on the basis of having received food from a food pantry or similar service. Two of these respondents were Spanish speakers and the third (a recent African immigrant) did not speak English well. At least one other English-speaking participant (who answered the question correctly) believed that such services are government programs and thus are relevant for the question. On the other hand, one Spanish-speaking participant was incorrectly recruited as a food stamps recipient on the basis of aid from a food bank, yet correctly excluded this aid and answered “no” to the target ACS question.
- § **Other aid.** Three respondents incorrectly reported having received food stamps on the basis of other forms of aid. One answered “Yes” on the basis of SSI because she used this money to buy food. Another based his “Yes” answer on the fact that his daughter received WIC (he saw the instruction to exclude WIC but did not read it closely). Actually, he explained that when he saw the reference to WIC, he assumed he was to count it. A third respondent reported receiving food stamps on the basis of the school lunch program (she neglected to read the instruction to exclude it).

One respondent answered “No” incorrectly because she knew her benefits mostly as “TANF”, or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (she received both food stamps and TANF). In response to probing, she remembered that part of the benefit she received on her electronic bank transfer (EBT) card could only be used for food. It is worth noting that a few other respondents who received both food stamps and public assistance referred to those benefits as “TANF” during the probing, even though they did realize the difference between food stamps and welfare payments.

It should also be noted, however, that the 4 respondents who screened into the study as having received food stamps on the basis of either WIC (3 persons) or the school lunch program (1 person), correctly excluded such programs when responding to the target question during the interview.

- § **Reference period.** Two persons incorrectly answered “No” due to issues with the reference period. One interpreted “In the past 12 months” to mean “All 12 months” and incorrectly answered she did not receive food stamps because she had received them only for the previous 2 months. The other respondent overlooked the phrase “In the past 12 months” and thought the question was asking whether she was currently receiving food stamps. She answered negatively because she had stopped receiving food stamps 2 months before the interview.

- § **Social stigma.** One respondent answered that she did not receive food stamps due to the social stigma associated with them. Probing revealed that she had, in fact, received food stamps and the interviewer noted that she seemed rather embarrassed about it.

### Food Stamps and SNAP Terminology

There was very little recognition of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) among the participants, regardless of ethnicity or language spoken. Only about one-third indicated that they had heard of the program, and many (even among those claiming to have heard of it) assumed it was something other than food stamps. For example, some participants assumed SNAP was a program meant specifically to improve nutrition:

- § “It’s just called food stamps, because I’ve never heard of SNAP.” A minute later: “I mean, food stamps is just, you get an amount and you can buy food. If it’s not nutritious or whatever, they don’t care. But the SNAP program sound like something that’s focused on nutrition.”
- § “I consider them to be different. I know what food stamps is exactly—what it means to me, and how I implement it. I’m familiar with the term, this SNAP thing—I have no idea as a function of how it works. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance, I would assume is some sort of giving specific foods which would then imply specific nutrition, like infant formula, milk . . . food for pregnant women, whatever they might need. When it says ‘nutrition,’ I assume it means they’re targeting certain population groups or, and I don’t know what it is, I’ve never received it, I just know the term.”

Version 1’s emphasis on the “SNAP” terminology almost led two English-speaking respondents to misreport on the Food Stamps question. Both were responding to the interviewer-administered form of the question, and initially answered “No” upon hearing the reference to “SNAP.” However, both changed their responses after hearing the reference to food stamps later in the question. When asked to compare Versions 1 and 2 of the Food Stamp question, some participants specifically pointed to Version 1’s emphasis on SNAP as a reason for preferring Version 2. Some suggested that that it would be easy to answer Version 1 incorrectly. One food stamps recipient stated:

“With that first one, I heard SNAP and I thought right away, that’s not me.”

A few participants noted that they preferred Version 1 *because* it made clear that SNAP and Food Stamps were the same program.

Overall, the most commonly used term by English-speaking participants when referring to food stamps was “food stamps.” This was true for both those who began receiving food stamps within the past few months and those who had been receiving them for some time.

The Spanish-speaking participants used the terms “cupones de alimentos” or “estampillas de comida” almost equally, though several were also familiar with the English terms. One respondent said she was more familiar with the English terms than the Spanish terms and suggested to include the English term “food stamps” in Spanish version of the question. One Spanish-speaker who used the term “estampillas” noted that she was not certain it meant the same as “cupones” (the term used in the question), but assumed so when answering the question.

Another respondent did not recognize the terminology “cupones de alimentos”—she knew her food stamps benefits only by the state’s name for the EBT card (Link card). It is significant that virtually everyone receiving food stamps noted that they received this benefit on a card, describing it as “a debit card,” or “a credit card.” Many referred to the state’s specific name for the card (e.g., Link card). A number of participants (particularly those living in Puerto Rico) indicated having heard of a program called “PAN,” which was an acronym for a former name of the Food Stamps program.

### **Instructions Not to Include WIC or School Lunch Programs**

The instructions not to include WIC or school lunch programs appeared to have been read (or heard) and understood by the vast majority of participants. The instructions effectively kept several people from misreporting. As one participant put it:

“They [the instructions] clarified it a little bit because I probably would have assumed WIC was a part of it [the Food Stamps program].”

However, when probed, a small number of participants took issue with these instructions. They did not see the logic in including the Food Stamps program but excluding others because the programs are related. One respondent stated:

“It just ran through my mind why only food stamps and not WIC as well? WIC is a government aid as well—help, for formula or anything like that for kids.”

Although these respondents understood and followed the instructions, their sentiments are worth noting, as some respondents may be inclined to ignore such instructions.

### **Differences by Language**

Very few (if any) of the observations from these interviews indicate that the processes of comprehending and answering the Food Stamps question differed between the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking respondents. One possible exception is the knowledge of government benefit programs. As noted above, a small number of Spanish-speaking respondents assumed that receiving food from a food pantry was relevant for the Food Stamps question. Probing of these participants revealed that they were simply unfamiliar with the Food Stamps program. It can be expected that recent immigrants to the United States and ineligible persons would have relatively little knowledge of government benefit programs.

### **Differences by Version**

Of the 43 persons (21 English-speakers, 22 Spanish-speakers) who were administered Version 1 of the Food Stamps question, 37 (16 English-speakers, 19 Spanish-speakers) answered correctly and did not have problems understanding what the question asked. Of the 44 persons (23 English-speakers, 21 Spanish-speakers) who were administered Version 2 of the Food Stamps question, 35 (18 English-speakers, 17 Spanish-speakers) answered correctly and did not have problems understanding what the question asked. In this respect, the two versions appeared quite comparable. But as noted above, many participants did not like Version 1’s emphasis on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and two persons almost incorrectly answered “No” to the Food Stamps question due Version 1’s emphasis on SNAP.

## 5.2 Version Preference and Recommendations for the Food Stamps Module

The findings from the cognitive interviews do not strongly favor one version of the Food Stamps question over the other. The problems we observed were about evenly distributed across versions. In fact, when we asked participants which of the two versions they preferred, they were about evenly split between Version 1 and Version 2. However, the problems and reactions of a number of participants who did not recognize SNAP (including many who assumed it was something other than food stamps) suggest that the question should *not* give emphasis to this new program name at least that was the finding at the time of these cognitive interviews. Nonetheless, given that the name change has already been rolled out, it will become more recognizable among the recipients and the general population with time.

The recommendation for the version of the question to use for the field test is a modified Version 2. While this version does refer to a card, it makes clear that SNAP and Food Stamps are the same program. Since all states have converted the food stamps benefit to an EBT card, we believe that it is important to include the term “government benefit card” as part of the question. Another addition that we believe will help minimize misreporting is the addition of the “assistance from food banks” in the exclusion statement at the end.

**Table 5-2** shows the recommended version to be tested in the field test.

**Table 5-2. Proposed Versions for Food Stamps Question**

Language	Self-administered and Interviewer-administered
Modified Version 2 English	In the past 12 months, did you or any member of this household receive a government benefit card that can only be used to buy food? Include Food Stamps, now known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Do NOT include WIC, the National School Lunch Program, or assistance from food banks
Modified Version 2 Spanish	En los últimos 12 meses, ¿recibió usted o algún otro miembro de este hogar una tarjeta de beneficios del gobierno que sólo se puede usar para comprar alimentos? Incluya beneficios del programa de cupones de alimentos o estampillas de comida que ahora se llama Programa de Asistencia Nutricional Suplementario (SNAP). NO incluya WIC, ni el Programa Nacional de Almuerzos Escolares, ni ayuda de bancos de alimentos.

## 6. Parental Place of Birth: Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Three versions of the Parental Place of Birth module were tested in both self-administered and interviewer-administered modes. A total of 67 interviews were conducted using the Parental Place of Birth module. Of the 67 interviews, 23 were completed using Version 1, 24 were completed using Version 2, and another 20 were completed using Version 3.

Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish. Of the 67 interviews, 29 were conducted in English and 38 were conducted in Spanish. Respondents were recruited to meet four different characteristics. Of the 67 interviews, 24 (9 in English, 15 in Spanish) were with respondents whose parents were born outside of the United States; 7 (6 in English, 1 in Spanish) were with respondents whose parents were born in the United States; 23 (7 in English, 16 in Spanish) were with respondents whose parents were born in a U.S. territory; and the remaining 13 (7 in English, 6 in Spanish) were with respondents who were adopted, step, or foster children.

See **Table 6-1** for the question wording of each version tested. While the question wording was the same for stateside and Puerto Rico Spanish, the instructions on the self-administered version for Puerto Rico were different. The instruction to write the name of the country listed Puerto Rico first before other countries.

**Table 6-1. ACS Questions Tested for Parental Place of Birth**

Version/ Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
Version 1 English	<p>13. In what country was this person's FATHER born?</p> <p>14. In what country was this person's MOTHER born?</p> <p>15. What is this person's ancestry or ethnic origin? (For example: Italian, Jamaican, African Am, Cambodian, Cape Verdean, Norwegian, Dominican, French Canadian, Haitian, Korean, Lebanese, Polish, Nigerian, Mexican, Taiwanese, Ukrainian and so on.)</p>	<p>13. In what country was your FATHER born?</p> <p>14. In what country was your MOTHER born?</p> <p>15. What is your ancestry or ethnic origin? (For example: Italian, Jamaican, African-American, Cambodian, Cape Verdean, Norwegian, Dominican, French Canadian, Haitian, Korean, Lebanese, Polish, Nigerian, Mexican, Taiwanese, Ukrainian and so on.)</p>
Version 1 Spanish (stateside and Puerto Rico)	<p>13. ¿En qué país nació el PADRE de esta persona?</p> <p>14. ¿En qué país nació la MADRE de esta persona?</p> <p>15. ¿Cuál es la ascendencia u origen étnico de esta persona? (Por ejemplo: italiana, jamaicana, africana americana, camboyana, de Cabo Verde, noruega, dominicana, franco-canadiense, haitiana, coreana, libanesa, polaca, nigeriana, mexicana, taiwanesa, ucraniana y así por el estilo.)</p>	<p>13. En qué país nació [su PADRE / el PADRE de PERSON'S NOMBRE]?</p> <p>14. En qué país nació [su MADRE /la MADRE de PERSON'S NOMBRE]?</p> <p>15. ¿Cuál es la ascendencia u origen étnico de usted? (Lea si es necesario: Por ejemplo, italiano, jamaicano, africano americano, camboyano, de Cabo Verde, noruego, dominicano, franco-canadiense, haitiano, coreano, libanés, polaco, nigeriano, mexicano, taiwanés, ucraniano y así por el estilo.)</p>

6. Parental Place of Birth: Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Version/ Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
Version 2 English	<p><b>13. Was this person's FATHER born in or outside the United States?</b></p> <p>€ Born outside the United States – Print name of foreign country, or Puerto Rico, Guam, etc. _____</p> <p><b>14. Was this person's MOTHER born in or outside the United States?</b></p> <p>€ Born outside the United States – Print name of foreign country, or Puerto Rico, Guam, etc. _____</p> <p><b>15. What is this person's ancestry or ethnic origin? (For example: Italian, Jamaican, African Am, Cambodian, Cape Verdean, Norwegian, Dominican, French Canadian, Haitian, Korean, Lebanese, Polish, Nigerian, Mexican, Taiwanese, Ukrainian and so on.)</b></p>	<p><b>13a. Was your FATHER born in or outside the United States?</b></p> <p><b>13b. In what country was your FATHER born?</b></p> <p><b>14a. Was your MOTHER born in or outside the United States?</b></p> <p><b>14b. In what country was your MOTHER born?</b></p> <p><b>15. What is your ancestry or ethnic origin? (For example: Italian, Jamaican, African-American, Cambodian, Cape Verdean, Norwegian, Dominican, French Canadian, Haitian, Korean, Lebanese, Polish, Nigerian, Mexican, Taiwanese, Ukrainian and so on.)</b></p>
Version 2 Spanish (stateside and Puerto Rico)	<p><b>13. ¿Nació el PADRE de esta persona en los Estados Unidos o fuera de los Estados Unidos?</b></p> <p>€ Nació fuera de los Estados Unidos – Escriba en letra de molde el nombre del país extranjero o Puerto Rico, Guam, etc. _____</p> <p><b>14. ¿Nació la MADRE de esta persona en los Estados Unidos o fuera de los Estados Unidos?</b></p> <p>€ Nació fuera de los Estados Unidos – Escriba en letra de molde el nombre del país extranjero o Puerto Rico, Guam, etc. _____</p> <p><b>15. ¿Cuál es la ascendencia u origen étnico de esta persona? (Por ejemplo: italiana, jamaicana, africana americana, camboyana, de Cabo Verde, noruega, dominicana, franco-canadiense, haitiana, coreana, libanesa, polaca, nigeriana, mexicana, taiwanesa, ucraniana y así por el estilo.)</b></p>	<p><b>13a. ¿Nació su PADRE en los Estados Unidos o fuera de los Estados Unidos?</b></p> <p><b>13b. ¿En qué país nació su PADRE?</b></p> <p><b>14a. ¿Nació su MADRE en los Estados Unidos o fuera de los Estados Unidos?</b></p> <p><b>14b. ¿En qué país nació su MADRE?</b></p> <p><b>15. ¿Cuál es la ascendencia u origen étnico de usted? (Lea si es necesario: Por ejemplo, italiano, jamaicano, africano americano, camboyano, de Cabo Verde, noruego, dominicano, franco-canadiense, haitiano, coreano, libanés, polaco, nigeriano, mexicano, taiwanés, ucraniano y así por el estilo.)</b></p>

Version/ Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
Version 3 English	<p><b>13. Was this person’s FATHER born in the United States?</b></p> <p>€ No – Print name of foreign country, or Puerto Rico, Guam, etc. _____</p> <p><b>14. Was this person’s MOTHER born in the United States?</b></p> <p>€ No – Print name of foreign country, or Puerto Rico, Guam, etc. _____</p> <p><b>15. What is this person’s ancestry or ethnic origin? (For example: Italian, Jamaican, African Am, Cambodian, Cape Verdean, Norwegian, Dominican, French Canadian, Haitian, Korean, Lebanese, Polish, Nigerian, Mexican, Taiwanese, Ukrainian and so on.)</b></p>	<p><b>13a. Was your FATHER born in the United States?</b></p> <p><b>13b. In what country was your FATHER born?</b></p> <p><b>14a. Was your MOTHER born in the United States?</b></p> <p><b>14b. In what country was your MOTHER born?</b></p> <p><b>15. What is your ancestry or ethnic origin? (For example: Italian, Jamaican, African-American, Cambodian, Cape Verdean, Norwegian, Dominican, French Canadian, Haitian, Korean, Lebanese, Polish, Nigerian, Mexican, Taiwanese, Ukrainian and so on.)</b></p>
Version 3 Spanish (stateside and Puerto Rico)	<p><b>13. ¿Nació el PADRE de esta persona en los Estados Unidos?</b></p> <p>€ No – Escriba en letra de molde el nombre del país extranjero o Puerto Rico, Guam, etc. _____</p> <p><b>14. ¿Nació la MADRE de esta persona en los Estados Unidos?</b></p> <p>€ No – Escriba en letra de molde el nombre del país extranjero o Puerto Rico, Guam, etc. _____</p> <p><b>15. ¿Cuál es la ascendencia u origen étnico de esta persona? (Por ejemplo: italiana, jamaicana, africana americana, camboyana, de Cabo Verde, noruega, dominicana, franco-canadiense, haitiana, coreana, libanesa, polaca, nigeriana, mexicana, taiwanesa, ucraniana y así por el estilo.)</b></p>	<p><b>13a. ¿Nació su PADRE en los Estados Unidos?</b></p> <p><b>13b. ¿En qué país nació su PADRE?</b></p> <p><b>14a. ¿Nació [su MADRE / la MADRE de PERSON'S NOMBRE] en los Estados Unidos?</b></p> <p><b>14b. ¿En qué país nació su MADRE?</b></p> <p><b>15. ¿Cuál es la ascendencia u origen étnico de usted? (Lea si es necesario: Por ejemplo, italiano, jamaicano, africano americano, camboyano, de Cabo Verde, noruego, dominicano, franco-canadiense, haitiano, coreano, libanés, polaco, nigeriano, mexicano, taiwanés, ucraniano y así por el estilo.)</b></p>

### 6.1 Findings from the Parental Place of Birth Module

#### Overview

Overall, respondents seemed to understand the Parental Place of Birth questions very well and were able to answer them with very few issues. Of the 67 respondents, 61 were able to answer the questions accurately and without difficulty. Of the six respondents (four in Spanish, two in English) who had difficulty or seemed to answer the questions incorrectly, three respondents answered “U.S.” instead of providing a U.S. territory. There was no indication that this was related to the version of the questionnaire, as this occurred once in each of the three versions. Two of these respondents were interviewed in Puerto Rico, and both were interviewer-assisted cases. The interviewer-assisted interviews, in contrast to the self-administered

questionnaires, did not have specific instructions as to how to record U.S. territories, which may have led to this error since the interviewers can only clarify if the respondent asks for assistance before answering. The third case was an English language interview, and the respondent thought that the territory was considered part of the U.S. However, once he re-read the self-administered instructions, he changed his response to “outside the U.S.” and indicated that he was not paying attention when he first answered.

Of the remaining three respondents who had difficulty or seemed to answer the Parental Place of Birth question incorrectly, one respondent answered the Ethnic Origin question about his father instead of himself. This was because he misinterpreted who the phrase “this person” was referring to in the self-administered questionnaire. One respondent answered about her adoptive parents because she was adopted at birth. She stated that she based her response on “what the survey might want to know.” She did not consider that the question might be asking about biological parents. The last of the six respondents who had difficulty indicated that she was not 100% certain about her biological father’s place of birth but she was told by her adoptive parents that he was from another country.

Nearly all respondents indicated that they knew where their parents were born or, when answering for other household members, where those individuals’ parents were born. The few instances of confusion mostly arose when the respondent simply did not have this information (either because they were adopted or did not know the father of their biological child’s place of birth). We would expect that situations with households with roommates or boarders might exhibit more difficulty answering these questions, but there was only one case in the analysis that mentioned a roommate situation and that person was able to answer the question about the roommate’s parental place of birth and ethnicity.

### **Parents Born in U.S. Territory**

One of the primary probes for this module was, “How do you think people who are from U.S. territories, such as Puerto Rico or Guam, should answer this question? Should they put U.S. or should they put something else?” Nearly all respondents said that this was an easy question to answer, and indicated that they “just knew” where their parents were born. However, when respondents were asked how they would report the place of birth had their parents been born in a U.S. territory, responses were somewhat split. The majority responded that they would be inclined to write in the name of the territory just for the sake of clarity, although some respondents also indicated that they would consider the territory as part of the United States.

With this module, a particular concern was whether respondents whose parents were born in U.S. territories would provide the name of the respective territories or simply say “U.S.” Therefore, respondents were probed on this set of questions to determine how they thought someone should answer if a parent was born in a territory. The majority of both English- and Spanish-speaking respondents indicated that they would provide the name of the territory rather than simply stating that their parents were born in the United States. Of the 29 English-speaking respondents, 21 said they would provide the territory name. Of the 30 Spanish-speaking respondents, 22 said they would provide the territory name. An additional eight Spanish-speaking respondents were not asked.



A total of 23 respondents actually had parents born in a U.S. territory (7 English, 16 Spanish interviews). All of the English-speaking respondents with parents born in a U.S. territory ultimately gave a response of having parents born “outside the U.S.” and specified Puerto Rico. Of the Spanish-speaking respondents, 14 out of 16 responded by specifying the name of the territory. Two interviewer-administered respondents, whose parents were born in a U.S. territory, answered that they were born in the United States; they considered Puerto Rico to be part of the United States.

Additionally, the self-administered instrument’s instructions for this module included a specific example as to how to handle a birthplace such as Puerto Rico and Guam. The interviewer-administered versions did not contain this instruction and resulted in more confusion as to whether or not a given territory should be specified. Only two respondents had problems answering these questions in the self-administered versions. One had problems because she was adopted at birth, and was unsure how to respond; the other respondent simply read the instructions too quickly and answered in error. All other problems encountered in the self-administered versions were issues with Question 15 regarding ethnic origin. Five respondents reported issues with the interviewer-administered versions due to the fact that the question did not clarify whether the U.S. territories should be included as part of the United States or considered to be outside of the United States (with the other countries).

Among the interviews conducted in English, the majority of respondents for all recruitment groups (i.e., parents born in the United States, parents born in a territory, parents born outside the United States, and those who qualified for adopted/step/foster family) said they would list the name of the territory. However, respondents whose parents were born outside of the United States were the least likely to answer that way, with only 6 of 10 respondents indicating that they would give the name of the territory. All six of the English-speaking respondents with parents born in a U.S. territory ultimately responded as having parents born “outside the U.S.” and specified Puerto Rico. However, two of the six expressed some confusion when answering about their parents’ place of birth and initially answered that their parents were born inside the United States.

Similarly, among the interviews conducted in Spanish, the majority of respondents for all recruitment groups said they would list the name of the territory, or actually reported the territory name. This was particularly true for respondents whose parents were born in a U.S. territory. Of these respondents, 14 of 16 responded by specifying the name of the territory when asked for their parent’s place of birth in the ACS question. The two Spanish-speakers who said that they were born in the United States were both from Puerto Rico and indicated that Puerto Rico was part of the United States. Because the intention is to have the respondents list U.S. territories as being “outside the U.S.,” these two respondents were considered to have answered incorrectly.

English-speaking respondents who did not—or said they would not—provide the territory name did so typically because they considered the territory to be part of the United States and therefore considered an answer of “U.S.” to be accurate.

### **Issues Related Adopted, Foster, or Step Parents**

Of the 13 respondents in this recruitment category, only one respondent answered for her adoptive parents because she did not know her biological parents’ country of origin. Another 6

responded that they were thinking of their (or their stepchild's, foster child's, or adopted child's) biological parents. For the remaining 6 cases, it was not clear which parents were considered for this question.

### **Ethnic Origin**

Some additional confusion surrounded the idea of “ethnic origin.” The problems seem to point to the use of the phrase “this person” when inquiring about ethnic origin. A different wording was used in the interviewer administered versions, so this question did not present the same problems in that mode. Additionally, the reference to “this person” appearing immediately following questions about the parent's place of birth caused some respondents to answer the Ethnic Origin question about their parents' heritage rather than their own.

When probed about who they were thinking about when they responded to this question, respondents were divided between responding about themselves and responding about their parents and family. Still a few other respondents indicated that they thought about their race or the color of their skin when answering this question. Of the 31 individuals who completed the self-administered versions, 6 respondents (4 English and 2 Spanish) had difficulty answering Question 15; 24 respondents had no difficulty; and this probe was missing in the one remaining interview. Overall, the terminology in the questions about ethnic origin was found to be easily understood and straightforward. The answers and probes reveal this question was interpreted equivalently by both Spanish-speakers and English-speakers.

### **Differences by Mode**

Very few differences were noted between the modes (i.e., in-person interviewer-administered, phone interviewer-administered, and self-administered). Respondents across both languages and across all eligibility qualifications seemed to be able to respond to the questions with only a few problems, and these problems did not seem related to the interview mode, with the exception that the self-administered version offered additional written instructions that specified how to enter the information if respondents' parents were born in Puerto Rico or Guam. Respondents seemed to have fewer problems answering about parents born in a U.S. territory in the self-administered version, due to the fact that there was an instruction indicating how to record the responses in such situations.

### **Differences by Language**

The only language-specific problems noted for the Spanish-speaking respondents were with regard to the Ethnic Origin question (i.e., ACS Question 15), as noted previously, and the phrase, “letra de molde,” or “print.” Respondents were asked the probe: “What did this mean to Respondent: “print name of country, or Puerto Rico, Guam, etc.” / “Escriba en letra de molde el nombre del país o Puerto Rico, Guam, etc.?” Although able to answer the question, some respondents indicated they were unsure what the term meant for sure. When probed, some did understand it to mean not to write in cursive (“letra pegada”). Others thought it mean to write in all capital letters or to write in block letters. Because there was no evidence that respondents were unable to answer the questions accurately because of the term “letra de molde” we do not recommend a change. No other terminology was a specific problem in the parental place of birth module in either English or Spanish

**Appendix 12**, Final Recommendations for Parental Place of Birth, provides additional detail on these findings.

## **6.2 Version Preference and Recommendations for the Parental Place of Birth Module**

Fewer issues were noted with the Version 3 questionnaire than with the other versions. However, many of the issues observed in Versions 1 and 2 were not specific to the wording in those versions.

A majority of 23 respondents preferred Version 1; 19 respondents preferred Version 3, and 18 respondents preferred Version 2. Another seven respondents noted that they had no preference, claiming either that they did not see much difference between the versions or that they would have no problem answering questions from any of the three, regardless of wording and style differences. Although all three versions of the questions performed nearly equally for the cases tested, with only two problem-cases reported for each (as previously documented in Section 6.1), Version 3 seemed to be easier for respondents to answer accurately. Of the two cases that were reported problems, one respondent said he was simply moving too quickly and didn't pay attention and the other respondent self-corrected before moving to the next question. Respondents who said they preferred Version 3 felt that it would be easier to complete because most respondents will have parents born in the United States. Other reasons cited for preferring Version 3 were that it was more specific because it narrows down the choices, while the other options were more complicated. Some respondents also favored the "Yes/No" design of the question, as compared with the other versions.

A difference in preference was observed between English and Spanish speakers. The majority of Spanish-speaking respondents preferred Version 1, while English speakers showed a slight preference for Version 3. This is likely because most of the Spanish speakers we interviewed had parents born in a foreign country, and these respondents find it is easier to simply write in the name of the country, as opposed to having to check a box and then also write in the name of the country. In contrast, English speakers prefer to quickly check a box if their parents were born in the United States and to skip writing in the name of the country.

Because problems were observed in all versions of the questions, we recommend testing revised questions for the Parental Place of Birth questions. The recommended versions include a re-organization of the order of the questions, beginning by first asking about ethnic origin. Additionally, the proposed test version gives the respondent three specific response options instead of two. By including "in a U.S. territory" as a response option, the respondent would no longer have to make the decision regarding whether to include that as part of the U.S. or not.

**Table 6-2** shows the recommended versions to be tested in the field test, including an unmodified Version 3 and an alternate wording that addresses the two major points of confusion in the cognitive interviews.

**Table 6-2. Proposed Versions for Parental Place of Birth and Ethnicity Questions**

Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
Version 3 English	<p><b>13. Was this person’s FATHER born in the United States?</b></p> <p>€ No – Print name of foreign country, or Puerto Rico, Guam, etc. _____</p> <p><b>14. Was this person’s MOTHER born in the United States?</b></p> <p>€ No – Print name of foreign country, or Puerto Rico, Guam, etc. _____</p> <p><b>15. What is this person’s ancestry or ethnic origin? (For example: Italian, Jamaican, African Am, Cambodian, Cape Verdean, Norwegian, Dominican, French Canadian, Haitian, Korean, Lebanese, Polish, Nigerian, Mexican, Taiwanese, Ukrainian and so on.)</b></p>	<p><b>13a. Was your FATHER born in the United States?</b></p> <p><b>13b. In what country was your FATHER born?</b></p> <p><b>14a. Was your MOTHER born in the United States?</b></p> <p><b>14b. In what country was your MOTHER born?</b></p> <p><b>15. What is your ancestry or ethnic origin? (For example: Italian, Jamaican, African-American, Cambodian, Cape Verdean, Norwegian, Dominican, French Canadian, Haitian, Korean, Lebanese, Polish, Nigerian, Mexican, Taiwanese, Ukrainian and so on.)</b></p>
Version 3 Spanish	<p><b>13. ¿Nació el PADRE de esta persona en los Estados Unidos?</b></p> <p>€ No – Escriba en letra de molde el nombre del país extranjero o Puerto Rico, Guam, etc. _____</p> <p><b>14. ¿Nació la MADRE de esta persona en los Estados Unidos?</b></p> <p>€ No – Escriba en letra de molde el nombre del país extranjero o Puerto Rico, Guam, etc. _____</p> <p><b>15. ¿Cuál es la ascendencia u origen étnico de esta persona? (Por ejemplo: italiana, jamaicana, africana americana, camboyana, de Cabo Verde, noruega, dominicana, franco-canadiense, haitiana, coreana, libanesa, polaca, nigeriana, mexicana, taiwanesa, ucraniana y así por el estilo.)</b></p>	<p><b>13a. ¿Nació su PADRE en los Estados Unidos?</b></p> <p><b>13b. ¿En qué país nació su PADRE?</b></p> <p><b>14a. ¿Nació [su MADRE / la MADRE de PERSON’S NOMBRE] en los Estados Unidos?</b></p> <p><b>14b. ¿En qué país nació su MADRE?</b></p> <p><b>15. ¿Cuál es la ascendencia u origen étnico de usted? (Lea si es necesario: Por ejemplo, italiano, jamaicano, africano americano, camboyano, de Cabo Verde, noruego, dominicano, franco-canadiense, haitiano, coreano, libanés, polaco, nigeriano, mexicano, taiwanés, ucraniano y así por el estilo.)</b></p>

6. Parental Place of Birth: Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
<p>English Wording Alternate Test Version</p>	<p><b>13. What is this person’s ancestry or ethnic origin?</b></p> <p><b>14. Was this person’s father born in the United States, in a U.S. territory, or outside the United States? Mark (x) one box.</b></p> <p>€ In the United States</p> <p>€ In a U.S. territory – Print name of territory (e.g., Puerto Rico, Guam): _____</p> <p>€ Outside the United States – Print name of foreign country: _____</p> <p><b>15. Was this person’s mother born in the United States, in a U.S. territory, or outside the United States? Mark (x) one box.</b></p> <p>€ In the United States</p> <p>€ In a U.S. territory – Print name of territory (e.g., Puerto Rico, Guam): _____</p> <p>€ Outside the United States – Print name of foreign country: _____</p>	<p><b>13. What is (your / [NAME]’s) ancestry or ethnic origin?</b></p> <p><b>14a. Was (your / [NAME]’s) father born in the United States, in a U.S. territory, or outside the United States?</b></p> <p>€ In the United States – Go to Question 15a</p> <p>€ In a U.S. territory</p> <p>€ Outside the United States</p> <p><b>14b. In what (country/U.S. territory) was (your / [NAME]’s) father born?</b></p> <p><b>15a. Was (your / [NAME]’s) mother born in the United States, in a U.S. territory, or outside the United States?</b></p> <p>€ In the United States – Go to Question 16</p> <p>€ In a U.S. territory</p> <p>€ Outside the United States</p> <p><b>15b. In what (country/U.S. territory) was (your / [NAME]’s) mother born?</b></p>
<p>Spanish Wording Alternate Test Version</p>	<p><b>13. ¿Cuál es la ascendencia u origen étnico de esta persona?</b></p> <p><b>14. ¿Nació el padre de esta persona en los Estados Unidos, en un territorio de los EE.UU., o fuera de los Estados Unidos? Marque (X) UNA casilla.</b></p> <p>€ En los Estados Unidos</p> <p>€ En un territorio de los EE.UU. – Escriba en letra de molde el nombre del territorio (Por ejemplo, Puerto Rico, Guam): _____</p> <p>€ Fuera de los Estados Unidos – Escriba en letra de molde el nombre del país extranjero: _____</p> <p><b>15. ¿Nació la madre de esta persona en los Estados Unidos, en un territorio de los EE.UU., o fuera de los Estados Unidos? Marque (X) UNA casilla.</b></p> <p>€ En los Estados Unidos</p> <p>€ En un territorio de los EE.UU. – Escriba en letra de molde el nombre del territorio (Por ejemplo, Puerto Rico, Guam): _____</p> <p>€ Fuera de los Estados Unidos – Escriba en letra de molde el nombre del país extranjero: _____</p>	<p><b>13. ¿Cuál es (su/la) ascendencia u origen étnico (de NAME)?</b></p> <p><b>14a. ¿Nació (su/el) padre (de NAME) en los Estados Unidos, en un territorio de los EE.UU., o fuera de los Estados Unidos?</b></p> <p>€ En los Estados Unidos – Go to 14</p> <p>€ En un territorio de los EE.UU.</p> <p>€ Fuera de los Estados Unidos</p> <p><b>14b. ¿En qué (país/territorio de los EE.UU) nació (su/el) padre (de NAME)?</b></p> <p><b>15a. ¿Nació (su/la) madre (de NAME) en los Estados Unidos, en un territorio de los EE.UU., o fuera de los Estados Unidos?</b></p> <p>€ En los Estados Unidos – Go to Question 14</p> <p>€ En un territorio de los EE.UU.</p> <p>€ Fuera de los Estados Unidos</p> <p><b>15b. ¿En qué (país/territorio de los EE.UU) nació (su/la) madre (de NAME)?</b></p>

## 7. Veteran Identification: Summary of Findings and Recommendations

A total of 47 interviews were conducted using the Veterans Identification module. Three versions of the Veterans Identification module were tested in both self-administered and interviewer-administered modes. However, the interviewer-administered Version 1 and Version 2 questions were identical; they differed only in the self-administered questions. Of the 47 interviews conducted, 15 were conducted with Version 1, 16 with Version 2, and 16 with Version 3.

Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish. A total of 31 of 47 interviews were conducted in English. Respondents were recruited to meet five different characteristics. Of the 31 English respondents, 4 were current military personnel, 6 had been in the Reserves, 6 had been in the National Guard, 7 were military veterans, and the remaining 8 respondents had a household member who had been in the military.

A total of 16 of 47 interviews were conducted in Spanish. Because the ability to read and write in English is required for U.S. military service, Spanish-speaking respondents were recruited for different categories than were the English-speaking respondents. Ten respondents with a household member in the military were recruited; two of these respondents had actually served in the military themselves while living in Puerto Rico. The remaining six Spanish-speaking respondents were not in the military and did not have a household member in the military.

See **Table 7-1** for the question wording of each version tested.

**Table 7-1. ACS Questions Tested for Veteran Identification**

Version/ Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
Version 1 English	<p><b>28. Has this person ever served on ACTIVE DUTY in the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard? Active duty includes federal activation of the Reserves or National Guard for service in Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere but does NOT include Reserve or National Guard training. Mark (X) ONE box.</b></p> <p>€ Never served in the military</p> <p>€ Now on active duty</p> <p>€ On active duty in the past, but not now</p> <p>€ Training for the Reserves or National Guard only</p>	<p><b>28a. (Has &lt;Name&gt; / Have you) ever served on ACTIVE DUTY in the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard? Active duty includes federal activation of the Reserves or National Guard for service in Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere but DOES NOT include Reserve or National Guard training.</b></p> <p><b>28b. (Are you / is &lt;Name&gt;) now on ACTIVE DUTY?</b></p> <p><b>28c. (Has &lt;Name&gt; / Have you) ever been in the military Reserves or National Guard?</b></p>

Version/ Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
Version 1 Spanish (stateside and Puerto Rico)	<p><b>28. ¿Ha estado esta persona alguna vez en el SERVICIO MILITAR ACTIVO en las Fuerzas Armadas, la Reserva Militar o la Guardia Nacional de los Estados Unidos? El servicio activo incluye activación federal de la Reserva Militar o la Guardia Nacional para servicio en Irak, Afganistán o en otro lugar, pero NO incluye entrenamiento para la Reserva Militar o Guardia Nacional. Marque (X) UNA casilla.</b></p> <p>€ Nunca estuvo en el servicio militar</p> <p>€ En servicio activo ahora</p> <p>€ En servicio activo en el pasado, pero no ahora</p> <p>€ Entrenamiento para la Reserva Militar o la Guardia Nacional solamente</p>	<p><b>28a. ¿Ha estado usted alguna vez en el SERVICIO MILITAR ACTIVO en las Fuerzas Armadas, la Reserva Militar o la Guardia Nacional de los Estados Unidos? El servicio activo incluye activación federal de la Reserva Militar o la Guardia Nacional para servicio en Irak, Afganistán o en otro lugar, pero NO incluye entrenamiento para la Reserva Militar o Guardia Nacional.</b></p> <p><b>28b. ¿Está usted ahora en SERVICIO ACTIVO?</b></p> <p><b>28c. ¿Ha estado usted alguna vez en la Reserva Militar o la Guardia Nacional?</b></p>
Version 2 English	<p><b>28. What is this person's ACTIVE DUTY military status in the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard? Active duty includes federal activation of the Reserves or National Guard for service in Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere but does NOT include Reserve or National Guard training. Mark (X) ONE box.</b></p> <p>€ Never served in the military</p> <p>€ Now on active duty</p> <p>€ On active duty in the past, but not now</p> <p>€ Training for the Reserves or National Guard only</p>	<p>For the interviewer-administered mode, Version 1 and Version 2 were identical.</p>
Version 2 Spanish (stateside and Puerto Rico)	<p><b>28. ¿Cuál es el estatus del SERVICIO MILITAR ACTIVO de esta persona en las Fuerzas Armadas, la Reserva Militar o la Guardia Nacional de los Estados Unidos? El servicio activo incluye activación federal de la Reserva Militar o la Guardia Nacional para servicio en Irak, Afganistán o en otro lugar, pero NO incluye entrenamiento para la Reserva Militar o Guardia Nacional. Marque (X) UNA casilla.</b></p> <p>€ Nunca estuvo en el servicio militar</p> <p>€ En servicio activo ahora</p> <p>€ En servicio activo en el pasado, pero no ahora</p> <p>€ Entrenamiento para la Reserva Militar o la Guardia Nacional solamente</p>	<p>For the interviewer-administered mode, Version 1 and Version 2 were identical.</p>

Version/ Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
Version 3 English	<p><b>28. Has this person ever served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, military Reserves, or National Guard? Active duty does NOT include training for the Reserves or National Guard, but DOES include activation, for example, for service in Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere.</b></p> <p>€ No, never served in the military</p> <p>€ Yes, on active duty in the past, but not now</p> <p>€ No, training for the Reserves or National Guard only</p> <p>€ Yes, now on active duty</p>	<p><b>28a. (Has &lt;Name&gt; / Have you) ever served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, military Reserves, or National Guard? Do not include training for the Reserves or National Guard, but do include activation, for example, for service in Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere.</b></p> <p><b>28b. (Are you / is &lt;Name&gt;) currently on active duty?</b></p> <p><b>28c. (Have you / has &lt;name&gt;) ever been in the U.S. military Reserves or the National Guard?</b></p>
Version 3 Spanish (stateside and Puerto Rico)	<p><b>28. ¿Ha estado esta persona alguna vez en el servicio militar activo en las Fuerzas Armadas, la Reserva militar o la Guardia Nacional de los Estados Unidos? El servicio activo NO incluye entrenamiento para la Reserva Militar o la Guardia Nacional, pero SÍ incluye activación, por ejemplo, para servicio en Irak, Afganistán o en otro lugar.</b></p> <p>€ Sí, en servicio activo ahora</p> <p>€ Sí, en servicio activo en el pasado, pero no ahora</p> <p>€ No, entrenamiento para la Reserva Militar o la Guardia Nacional solamente</p> <p>€ No, nunca estuvo en el servicio militar</p>	<p><b>28a. ¿Ha estado usted alguna vez en el servicio militar activo en las Fuerzas Armadas, la Reserva Militar o la Guardia Nacional de los Estados Unidos? No incluya entrenamiento para la Reserva Militar o Guardia Nacional, pero sí incluya activación federal para servicio en Irak, Afganistán o en otro lugar.</b></p> <p><b>28b. ¿Está usted ahora en servicio militar activo?</b></p> <p><b>28c. ¿Ha estado usted alguna vez en la Reserva Militar o la Guardia Nacional de los Estados Unidos?</b></p>

## 7.1 Findings from the Veteran Identification Module

### Overview

The purpose of this question is to determine a respondent’s veteran status. A key distinction for determining veteran status for individuals who are in the Reserves or National Guard is determining whether that person had been activated or whether they received training only. Consequently, Versions 1 and 2 of the questions included the following clarification:

Active duty includes federal activation of the Reserves or National Guard for service in Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere but DOES NOT include Reserve or National Guard training.

Version 3 included a similar clarification:

Do not include training for the Reserves or National Guard, but do include activation, for example, for service in Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere.



Of the 47 respondents, 32 understood the question as intended and answered accurately. Sixteen respondents demonstrated some type of confusion or misunderstanding with the question. Of these 16 respondents, only 2 answered the question inaccurately for their situations. Both respondents answered that they were on active duty when they had only been in training for the National Guard. The remaining 14 had some type of difficulty with the question but were able to answer accurately for their situations. Most of the errors and confusion that occurred was due to the clarification phrase provided in all versions of the question. The specific problems with this question are discussed in more detail below.

### **Active Duty**

Respondents were probed on their understanding of “active duty” or “servicio militar activo” as used in the survey question. Out of the 47 respondents, 13 (8 English and 5 Spanish) indicated during probing that training was active duty, which contradicts the clarification statement. Despite the confusion, most answered accurately because they had actually served on active duty. Had they only participated in training they may have considered this active duty and may have answered the question inaccurately. Five of the recruited respondents had been in the National Guard, six had been in the Reserves and one respondent had a son who was in the Reserves. Of these 12 respondents, six had been activated at one point and provided an answer to the ACS question that confirmed that. The other six had not been activated yet. Four out of the six answered accurately by indicating that they had been in training only or had not served in active duty military. Two respondents, one who was in the Reserves and one whose son was in the Reserves, both answered that this person had been activated. During probing, it was revealed that these two people had not been activated and had only received training for the Reserves, and thus answered this question incorrectly.

### **“Federal Activation” and “Activation”**

The clarification phrase used in this question also contained the phrase “federal activation” (activación federal) in Versions 1 and 2 and “activation” (activación) in Version 3. Respondents who were not in the Reserves or National Guard were asked if they were familiar with the term and how they understood it. Of the 29 respondents who received this probe, many were not familiar with the term, but only 5 could not understand what it meant as used in the question. None of these 5 respondents were in the military themselves. Three were Spanish-speaking respondents, one of which said that it referred to helping other countries by building houses, bridges, or highways—going to another country to help rather than to make war.

Respondents who were in the Reserves or the National Guard were asked about the difference between “state” and “federal” activation and their understanding of the term in general. Of the 5 National Guard participants, 4 understood the difference. One participant, did not understand the term “activation” in general; however, he had difficulty with the entire cognitive interview process. Of the 6 Reservists, all understood the term “activation” but only 3 knew the difference between state and federal activation. The other three were unsure of the difference, although they knew what “federal activation” meant; however, because “state activation” applies only to the National Guard and not to the Reserves, this lack of distinction seemed unproblematic.

Although the respondents unfamiliar with the term were evenly split among the three versions of the instrument, the responses to the probe for Version 3 were more precise and confident than the responses for the other two versions.

In addition, participants who understood the term “activation” frequently used other terms to describe activation, such as “called up,” “called to serve,” “deployed,” “deployment,” “mobilize” or “mobilization.”

### **Service in “Iraq, Afghanistan, or Elsewhere”**

Another problem with the clarification instruction was that 4 out of the 47 respondents focused on the locations, “Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere,” that are listed in the question. All four respondents were English-speakers. These respondents thought that the question was asking just about those specific locations and did not realize that they were just examples. All four respondents who reported such problems were using Versions 1 and 2. Version 3 includes the phrase “for example” before listing the locations, which may have helped to abate the problem in that version.

### **“Reserves” versus “Military Reserves”**

The Census Bureau was also concerned about the phrase “military Reserves/La Reserva Militar” versus “Reserves/La Reserva” and wanted to know which phrase was more clearly understood and preferred by respondents. The English-speaking respondents were fairly evenly split on their preferences. Both the Reserves and the National Guard respondents had a slight preference for “Reserves,” whereas the remaining English-speaking respondents preferred “military Reserves.” When asked why they preferred “Reserves,” those respondents said that they thought people would understand it, and that “military Reserves” was redundant. When asked why they preferred “military Reserves,” those respondents reported that there are other types of reserves, such as police reserves, and therefore “military Reserves” would be more clear.

Spanish-speaking respondents emphatically preferred “La Reserva Militar.” Thirteen respondents preferred “La Reserva Militar” compared with one who preferred “La Reservas.” Respondents indicated that the phrase “la Reserva” has several different meanings in Spanish, including “reservations.”

### **Differences by Mode**

The use of the clarification instruction was more problematic in the self-administered version of the instrument because the clarification was provided in italics. Five of the 22 respondents who received the self-administered survey said they did not read it. Reading the clarification changed two respondents’ understanding of the question. Additional respondents did read the clarification but did not fully understand it, primarily because they considered training to be active duty.

The interviews conducted with the self-administered surveys elicited an additional problem related to the issue of training and active duty. The self-administered mode listed four response options, which varied slightly in Version 3: *Never served in the military*; *Now on active duty*; *On active duty in the past, but not now*; *Training for the Reserves or National Guard only*.

The interviewer-administered versions were phrased as “yes” or “no” questions. As a result, respondents in the self-administered mode noted some confusion between the category “Training for the Reserves or National Guard” compared with either of the active duty categories, “Now on active duty” or “On active duty in the past, but not now.” Although this problem was more evident in the self-administered version, it would most likely be just as problematic in the interviewer-administered version. Respondents who received training only were unsure how to answer. It was unclear to them whether they should indicate that they were on active duty or not.

### **Differences by Language**

Overall, there were fewer issues with the Spanish-speaking respondents because the questions did not apply to the majority of them directly. Only 2 of the 16 Spanish-speaking respondents had actually been in the military themselves; therefore, they were often not as knowledgeable about the question subtleties that were confusing for some of the English respondents. Only one respondent misunderstood the question completely and thought that it was asking about the military helping other countries in need (as opposed to war or other military operations). Spanish respondents did not appear to have any difficulties with the translation of the question with the exception of the use of “La Reservas” as noted above.

### **Differences by Version**

Overall, there were not any issues that could be attributed with certainty to the version of the question. In particular, Versions 1 and 2 were very similar in wording and only differed in the self-administered version.

Although two respondents answered incorrectly in Version 3, and none answered incorrectly in Versions 1 or 2, the potential to answer incorrectly existed in all versions. A respondent who received Version 1 and a respondent who received Version 2 misunderstood “active duty” to include their training, but both of these respondents had also been activated. Consequently, their answers, that they had been on active duty in the past, were correct. If they had not been activated, they likely would have answered erroneously in the way that the respondents in Version 3 did. In all three versions, respondents expressed confusion over how to treat training and whether it should be considered “active duty” for this question. This was particularly problematic for respondents who are in or were in the Reserves or National Guard.

When asked which version they preferred, 22 of 47 respondents chose Version 3. This choice was fairly consistent across mode and language, with the exception of self-administered Spanish, for which 3 out of 6 respondents chose Version 1.

When asked why they preferred the version they selected, most said that it was simpler, clearer, or easier to understand. For Version 3, there were 5 respondents who specifically said that they preferred the way the “include / do not include” information was presented. In this version, the “do not include” information was before the “include” information; the sequence is opposite in Versions 1 and 2.

Two respondents preferred Version 2 in self-administered mode because this version asked, “What is this person’s active duty status,” instead of “Has this person ever served on active duty?” However, two other respondents particularly disliked Version 2 for the same

reason. The additional reasons that respondents gave for preferring Version 1 or 2 were inconsistent and not necessarily specific to these versions.

**Appendix 13**, Final Recommendations for Veteran Identification, provides additional detail on the findings from this section.

## **7.2 Version Preference and Recommendations for the Veteran Identification Module**

We recommend using a revised Veterans Identification question in the field test because Version 3, the control, was preferred over either Versions 1 and 2. In addition, it was preferred for reasons that were pertinent and convincing. Few differences were observed between Versions 1 and 2 and those versions presented issues similar to those emerging from Version 3. Specific recommendations are as follows:

- § Respondents noted that the question was confusing because it says that “active duty” does not include training, yet respondents noted that training *is* active duty. In addition, the question says to exclude people who only had training, but only being in training is a response option. We recommend excluding the clarification phrase because it does not appear to help. If you must include the clarification phrase, we recommend that instead of clarifying “active duty,” we tell respondents specifically what to exclude (e.g., “Do NOT include active duty for training”) before indicating what to include.
- § Some respondents focused on the locations “Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere” and were not thinking of the United States or other locations overseas. We recommend changing the location to refer to “the United States or overseas.”
- § Although most respondents seemed to understand the term “activation,” they frequently used other terms, including “called up,” “mobilization,” and “deployment.” We recommend using these additional terms to ensure that the question is understood by as many respondents as possible.
- § Several respondents did not read the clarification for active duty because they felt confident that they knew what “active duty” meant. To increase the likelihood that the instruction will be read, we recommend that it not be italicized but that it instead use the same typeface as the rest of the question.
- § Particularly in Spanish, respondents preferred the term “military Reserves” to “Reserves.” We recommend using the phrase “la Reserva Militar” in all instances for the Spanish question. In Version 3 of the English question, the first reference is to “military Reserves,” and the remaining references are to “Reserves.” We recommend preserving this approach because it clarifies the term “Reserves” upon introduction but then shortens it for the rest of the question.

We recommend changing the response options for the self-administered questionnaire in the following ways:

- § Change the option, “no, training for the Reserves or National Guard only,” to “only active duty for training (ADT) for the National Guard or Reserves.” Placing the “only active duty for training (ADT) for the National Guard or Reserves” option before either

of the “active duty” options also may encourage more respondents to appropriately select the “active duty training” response. Please note that the phrase “active duty for training” and the acronym “ADT” are English-specific phrases without an equivalent in Spanish. The phrase can be translated, but the acronym is not meaningful in Spanish and thus was not included.

- § Change the sequence of response options by placing the two “no” responses together, followed by the two “yes” responses, but remove the “yes” and “no” because they may encourage respondents to skip reading some of the options.

**Table 7-2** shows the recommended alternate wording that can be tested against the control (Version 3).

**Table 7-2. Proposed Alternate Wordings for the Veteran-Identification Question**

Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
English Wording	<p><b>28. Has this person ever served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, military Reserves, or National Guard? Do NOT include active duty for training (ADT) for the Reserves or National Guard, but DO include activation, mobilization, or deployment for service in the U.S. or overseas. Mark (X) ONE box.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ Never served in the military</li> <li>€ Only active duty for training (ADT) for the Reserves or National Guard</li> <li>€ On active duty in the past, but not now</li> <li>€ Now on active duty</li> </ul>	<p><b>28a. (Has &lt;Name&gt; / Have you) ever served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, military Reserves, or National Guard? Do not include active duty training for the Reserves or National Guard, but do include activation, mobilization, or deployment for service in the United States or overseas.</b></p> <p><b>28b. Are you currently on active duty?</b></p> <p><b>28c. Have you ever been in the U.S. military Reserves or the National Guard?</b></p>
Spanish Wording	<p><b>28. ¿Ha estado esta persona alguna vez en el servicio militar activo en las Fuerzas Armadas, la Reserva Militar o la Guardia Nacional de los Estados Unidos? NO incluya servicio activo para entrenamiento (ADT, por sus siglas en inglés) para la Reserva Militar o la Guardia Nacional, pero INCLUYA activación, movilización o despliegue para servicio en los EE.UU. o en el extranjero. Marque (X) UNA casilla.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ Nunca estuvo en el servicio militar</li> <li>€ Servicio activo para entrenamiento para la Reserva Militar o la Guardia Nacional solamente (ADT)</li> <li>€ En servicio activo en el pasado, pero no ahora</li> <li>€ En servicio activo ahora</li> </ul>	<p><b>28a. ¿Ha estado (&lt;Name/ usted) alguna vez en el servicio militar activo en las Fuerzas Armadas, la Reserva Militar o la Guardia Nacional de los Estados Unidos? No incluya servicio activo para entrenamiento para la Reserva Militar o Guardia Nacional, pero incluya activación, movilización o despliegue para federal de la Reserva Militar o la Guardia Nacional para servicio en Irak, Afganistán o en otro lugar para servicio en los EE.UU. o en el extranjero.</b></p> <p><b>28b. ¿Está usted ahora en servicio activo?</b></p> <p><b>28c. ¿Ha estado usted alguna vez en la Reserva Militar o la Guardia Nacional de los EE.UU.?</b></p>

## 8. Veteran Period of Service: Summary of Findings and Recommendations

A total of 47 interviews were conducted using this module. Three versions of the Veterans Period of Service module were tested in both self-administered and interviewer-administered modes. However, Version 1 and Version 2 questions were identical and will therefore be discussed collectively. Of the 47 interviews conducted, 35 were conducted with Versions 1 and 2, and 16 were conducted with Version 3.

Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish. A total of 31 of 47 interviews were conducted in English. Respondents were recruited to meet five different characteristics. Of the 31 English respondents, 4 were current military personnel, 6 had been in the Reserves, 6 had been in the National Guard, 7 were military veterans, and the remaining 8 respondents had a household member who had been in the military.

A total of 16 of 47 interviews were conducted in Spanish. Because the ability read and write in English is required for U.S. military service, Spanish-speaking respondents were recruited for different categories than were the English-speaking respondents. Ten respondents with a household member in the military were recruited; two of these respondents had actually served in the military themselves while living in Puerto Rico. The remaining six Spanish-speaking respondents were not in the military and did not have a household member in the military.

Respondents received only the Veteran Period of Service question (i.e., ACS question 29) if they answered Veteran Identification question (i.e., ACS question 28) as having served in active military duty. However, all respondents were shown the question and asked to review it and provide comments.

See **Table 8-1** for the question wording of each version tested.

**Table 8-1. ACS Questions Tested for Veteran Period of Service**

Version/ Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
Version 1 English	<p><b>29. When did this person serve on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces? Mark (X) a box for EACH period in which this person served, even if just for part of the period.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ September 2001 or later</li> <li>€ August 1990 to August 2001 (including Persian Gulf War)</li> <li>€ May 1975 to July 1990</li> <li>€ Vietnam Era (August 1964 to April 1975)</li> <li>€ February 1955 to July 1964</li> <li>€ Korean War (July 1950 to January 1955)</li> <li>€ January 1947 to June 1950</li> <li>€ World War II (December 1941 to December 1946)</li> <li>€ November 1941 or earlier</li> </ul>	<p><b>29. [Using Card A, tell me each period in which you served on active duty, even if it was just for part of the period. / Did you serve on active duty at any time during the following periods:]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ September 2001 or later</li> <li>€ August 1990 to August 2001 (including Persian Gulf War)</li> <li>€ May 1975 to July 1990</li> <li>€ Vietnam Era (August 1964 to April 1975)</li> <li>€ February 1955 to July 1964</li> <li>€ Korean War (July 1950 to January 1955)</li> <li>€ January 1947 to June 1950</li> <li>€ World War II (December 1941 to December 1946)</li> <li>€ November 1941 or earlier</li> </ul>
Version 1 Spanish (stateside and Puerto Rico)	<p><b>29. ¿Cuándo estuvo esta persona en el servicio militar activo en las Fuerzas Armadas de los Estados Unidos? Marque (X) una casilla para CADA período durante el cual esta persona estuvo en servicio militar, aunque fuera sólo por parte del período.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ Septiembre del 2001 ó después</li> <li>€ Agosto del 1990 a agosto del 2001 (incluye la Guerra del Golfo Pérsico)</li> <li>€ Mayo del 1975 a julio del 1990</li> <li>€ Época de Vietnam (agosto del 1964 a abril del 1975)</li> <li>€ Febrero del 1955 a julio del 1964</li> <li>€ Guerra de Corea (julio del 1950 a enero del 1955)</li> <li>€ Enero del 1947 a junio del 1950</li> <li>€ Segunda Guerra Mundial (diciembre del 1941 a diciembre del 1946)</li> <li>€ Noviembre del 1941 ó antes</li> </ul>	<p><b>29. [Usando la Tarjeta A, dígame en cuál período estuvo usted en servicio activo, aunque fuera sólo por parte del período. / Usted ha estado en servicio militar activo durante alguno de estos periodos:]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ Septiembre del 2001 ó después</li> <li>€ Agosto del 1990 a agosto del 2001 (incluyendo la Guerra del Golfo Pérsico)</li> <li>€ Septiembre del 1980 a julio del 1990</li> <li>€ Mayo del 1975 a agosto del 1980</li> <li>€ Época de Vietnam (agosto del 1964 a abril del 1975)</li> <li>€ Marzo del 1961 a julio del 1964</li> <li>€ Febrero del 1955 a febrero del 1961</li> <li>€ La Guerra de Corea (julio del 1950 a enero del 1955)</li> <li>€ Enero del 1947 a junio del 1950</li> <li>€ Segunda Guerra Mundial (diciembre del 1941 a diciembre del 1946)</li> <li>€ Noviembre del 1941 ó antes</li> </ul>
Version 2 English	For self-administered, Version 1 and Version 2 were identical.	For interviewer-administered, Version 1 and Version 2 were identical.
Version 2 Spanish (stateside and Puerto Rico)	For self-administered, Version 1 and Version 2 were identical.	For interviewer-administered, Version 1 and Version 2 were identical.

8. Veteran Period of Service: Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Version/ Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
Version 3 English	<p><b>29. When did this person serve on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces? Mark (X) a box for EACH period in which this person served, even if just for part of the period.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ September 2001 or later</li> <li>€ August 1990 to August 2001 (including Persian Gulf War)</li> <li>€ September 1980 to July 1990</li> <li>€ May 1975 to August 1980</li> <li>€ Vietnam Era (August 1964 to April 1975)</li> <li>€ March 1961 to July 1964</li> <li>€ February 1955 to July 1961</li> <li>€ Korean War (July 1950 to January 1955)</li> <li>€ January 1947 to June 1950</li> <li>€ World War II (December 1941 to December 1946)</li> <li>€ November 1941 or earlier</li> </ul>	<p><b>29. [Using Card A, please tell me each period in which (&lt;name&gt; / you) served on active duty, even if it was just for part of the period. / Did (&lt;name&gt; / you) serve on active duty during:]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ September 2001 or later</li> <li>€ August 1990 to August 2001 (including Persian Gulf War)</li> <li>€ September 1980 to July 1990</li> <li>€ May 1975 to August 1980</li> <li>€ Vietnam Era (August 1964 to April 1975)</li> <li>€ March 1961 to July 1964</li> <li>€ February 1955 to July 1961</li> <li>€ Korean War (July 1950 to January 1955)</li> <li>€ January 1947 to June 1950</li> <li>€ World War II (December 1941 to December 1946)</li> <li>€ November 1941 or earlier</li> </ul>
Version 3 Spanish (stateside and PR)	<p><b>29. ¿Cuándo estuvo esta persona en servicio activo en las Fuerzas Armadas de los Estados Unidos? Marque (X) una casilla por CADA período durante el cual esta persona estuvo en servicio militar, aunque fuera sólo por parte del período.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ Septiembre del 2001 ó después</li> <li>€ Agosto del 1990 a agosto del 2001 (incluyendo la Guerra del Golfo Pérsico)</li> <li>€ Septiembre del 1980 a julio del 1990</li> <li>€ Mayo del 1975 a agosto del 1980</li> <li>€ Época de Vietnam (agosto del 1964 a abril del 1975)</li> <li>€ Marzo del 1961 a julio del 1964</li> <li>€ La Guerra de Corea (julio del 1950 a enero del 1955)</li> <li>€ Segunda Guerra Mundial (diciembre del 1941 a diciembre del 1946)</li> <li>€ Febrero del 1955 a febrero del 1961</li> <li>€ Enero del 1947 a junio del 1950</li> <li>€ Noviembre del 1941 ó antes</li> </ul>	<p><b>29. [Usando la Tarjeta A, por favor, dígame cada período en el cual usted estuvo en servicio activo, aunque sólo fuese parte del período. / ¿Estuvo usted en servicio militar activo durante:]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ Septiembre del 2001 ó después</li> <li>€ Agosto del 1990 a agosto del 2001 (incluyendo la Guerra del Golfo Pérsico)</li> <li>€ Septiembre del 1980 a julio del 1990</li> <li>€ Mayo del 1975 a agosto del 1980</li> <li>€ Época de Vietnam (agosto del 1964 a abril del 1975)</li> <li>€ Marzo del 1961 a julio del 1964</li> <li>€ Febrero del 1955 a febrero del 1961</li> <li>€ La Guerra de Corea (julio del 1950 a enero del 1955)</li> <li>€ Enero del 1947 a junio del 1950</li> <li>€ Segunda Guerra Mundial (diciembre del 1941 a diciembre del 1946)</li> <li>€ Noviembre del 1941 ó antes</li> </ul>



### **8.1 Findings from the Veterans Period of Service Module**

Of the 47 respondents, 38 understood the question as intended and answered accurately. Nine respondents demonstrated some type of confusion or misunderstanding with the question. Of these, five answered incorrectly because they included times when they were in training only; two answered incorrectly because they could not accurately recall the dates; and two answered incorrectly because they did not review the answer choices thoroughly enough before answering.

Overall, respondents reacted very favorably toward the response categories. One respondent especially liked that the response categories included “nonwar” periods. She contrasted these answer options with the typical options she sees that cover only war periods: “Again because it’s kind of hard, because my time period, when I was in, no one really pays much attention to that time period. They only mark times where actually the country’s at war.” Respondents also liked that the categories showed dates and labels.

Nonetheless, two respondents initially answered incorrectly because they focused on the “era” rather than on the dates. During probing, they realized that years for another category fit as well. In addition, most respondents indicated that recalling when they or a household member served was easy; however, two respondents did have difficulty recalling the specific dates of service. For one respondent this was because he got out of the service over 40 years ago. The other respondent was answering for her spouse and just could not recall whether he got out of the service before or after “September 2001,” the more recent response category.

Although the response categories were not problematic for the remaining respondents, two respondents found that the presentation of the dates and time periods was somewhat confusing and suggested that they be better organized, for example, by listing the dates first and then the eras in parentheses. Currently, for some options, the date is first; for other options, the era is first.

A consistent problem for the Veteran Identification question (Section 7) was whether training was considered active duty; this was also an issue for the Veteran Period of Service question. Five respondents indicated that they did not exclude time spent in training only. The first three participants were in the Reserves or National Guard (or answering about someone who was) and included the time the person was in the Reserves or National Guard, even when the person was not on active duty. Several other respondents indicated during probing that they were thinking about their time in training when they answered this question, but it was during a time period when they were also active.

Overall, there were not any issues that could be attributed with certainty to the version of the question. Versions 1 and 2 of this question were identical. Version 3 was very similar to Versions 1 and 2, except that Version 3 contained 11 timer periods in the response options instead of 9. Few problems were identified with this question across all versions, and those problems that did occur (e.g., including time spent while in training) were observed in all versions of the question.

Similarly no issues were observed with regard to language. As mentioned previously, because the U.S. military service requires the ability to speak and read English, many of the Spanish-speaking respondents did not have to answer this question because they were not in the service themselves. However, all respondents were shown this question and none of the Spanish-speaking respondents exhibited in difficulties in understanding the question as it was written.

**Appendix 14**, Final Recommendations for Veteran Period of Service, provides additional detail on these findings.

## 8.2 Version Preference and Recommendations for the Veterans Period of Service Module

Although most respondents had no difficulty with any version of this question, like the Veteran Identification question, it is unclear as to how to treat time spent in training. For regular military respondents, it was unclear whether basic training or other periods of training should be included. This issue is not a major one, however, because basic training or other training periods tend to be brief. It was a more significant issue for Reserves and National Guard respondents because they did serve on active duty. While none of the respondents voiced confusion over whether they should include training or not, respondents were inconsistent in whether they included or excluded training. It was unclear whether their active duty *training* should be included as “active duty.” Currently, the question does not instruct the respondent to exclude any training. If it is important that they exclude time spent in training, we suggest adding an instruction to exclude training for the Reserves or National Guard. The results of the field test can be used to determine whether fewer response options are chosen for the question with the instruction than for the control, Version 3.

Although the majority of respondents reacted very favorably toward the response options, two respondents suggested that the response options be open-ended. Two other respondents found the categories somewhat confusing because the dates and categories were blended. For example, some options have the date first, and others have the era first. In addition, two respondents initially failed to select all of the periods that applied because they focused on the “era” and did not review the dates. Consequently, we also recommend that all response options be listed with the dates first and the era in parentheses (**Table 8-2**).

**Table 8-2. Proposed Alternate Wordings for the Veteran-Identification Question**

Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
English Wording	<p><b>29. When did this person serve on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces? Do not include time spent in training for the Reserves or National Guard. Mark (X) a box for EACH period in which this person served, even if he or she served just for part of the period.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ September 2001 or later</li> <li>€ August 1990 to August 2001 (including Persian Gulf War)</li> <li>€ May 1975 to July 1990</li> <li>€ August 1964 to April 1975 (Vietnam Era)</li> <li>€ February 1955 to July 1964</li> <li>€ July 1950 to January 1955 (Korean War)</li> <li>€ January 1947 to June 1950</li> <li>€ December 1941 to December 1946 (World War II)</li> <li>€ November 1941 or earlier</li> </ul>	<p><b>29. [Using Card A, please tell me each period in which (&lt;name&gt; / you) served on active duty, even if it was just for part of the period. / Did (&lt;name&gt; / you) serve on active duty during any of the following periods?]</b></p> <p><b>Do not include time spent in training for the military Reserves or National Guard.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ September 2001 or later</li> <li>€ August 1990 to August 2001 (including Persian Gulf War)</li> <li>€ May 1975 to July 1990</li> <li>€ August 1964 to April 1975 (Vietnam Era)</li> <li>€ February 1955 to July 1964</li> <li>€ July 1950 to January 1955 (Korean War)</li> <li>€ January 1947 to June 1950</li> <li>€ December 1941 to December 1946 (World War II)</li> <li>€ November 1941 or earlier</li> </ul>

8. Veteran Period of Service: Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
Spanish Wording	<p><b>29. ¿Cuándo estuvo esta persona en servicio militar activo en las Fuerzas Armadas de los Estados Unidos? No incluya el tiempo que haya pasado en entrenamiento para la Reserva Militar o la Guardia Nacional. Marque (X) una casilla para CADA periodo durante el cual esta persona estuvo en servicio militar, aunque fuera sólo por parte del periodo.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ Septiembre del 2001 ó después</li> <li>€ Agosto de 1990 a agosto del 2001 (incluyendo la Guerra del Golfo Pérsico)</li> <li>€ Mayo de 1975 a julio de 1990</li> <li>€ Agosto de 1964 a abril de 1975 (Época de Vietnam)</li> <li>€ Febrero de 1955 a julio de 1964</li> <li>€ Julio de 1950 a enero de 1955 (Guerra de Corea)</li> <li>€ Enero de 1947 a junio de 1950</li> <li>€ Diciembre de 1941 a diciembre de 1946 (Segunda Guerra Mundial)</li> <li>€ Noviembre de 1941 ó antes</li> </ul>	<p><b>29. [Usando la Tarjeta A, dígame en cuál periodo estuvo (&lt;name&gt;/usted) en servicio activo, aunque fuera sólo por parte del periodo. ¿Ha estado (&lt;name&gt;/usted) en servicio militar activo durante alguno de estos periodos?]</b></p> <p><b>No incluya el tiempo que haya pasado en entrenamiento para la Reserva Militar o la Guardia Nacional</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€ Septiembre del 2001 ó después</li> <li>€ Agosto de 1990 a agosto del 2001 (incluyendo la Guerra del Golfo Pérsico)</li> <li>€ Mayo de 1975 a julio de 1990</li> <li>€ Agosto de 1964 a abril de 1975 (Época de Vietnam)</li> <li>€ Febrero de 1955 a julio de 1964</li> <li>€ Julio de 1950 a enero de 1955 (Guerra de Corea)</li> <li>€ Enero de 1947 a junio de 1950</li> <li>€ Diciembre de 1941 a diciembre de 1946 (Segunda Guerra Mundial)</li> <li>€ Noviembre de 1941 ó antes</li> </ul>

## 9. Wages and Salary: Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Two versions of the Wages and Salary module were tested in interviewer-administered mode only. A total of 31 interviews were conducted using the Wages and Salary module. Of the 31 interviews, 14 interviews were completed with Version 1, and 17 interviews were completed using Version 2. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish. Of the 31 interviews, 13 were conducted in English and 18 were conducted in Spanish.

Respondents were recruited to meet four different characteristics. Of the 31 interviews, 3 English and 3 Spanish interviews were with respondents whose earned income includes at least 10% in tips; 4 English and 2 Spanish interviews were with respondents whose earned income includes at least 10% in bonuses or commissions; 5 English and 6 Spanish interviews were with respondents with multiple jobs but no self-employment; 3 English and 4 Spanish interviews were with respondents with multiple jobs with self-employment; and the remaining 2 English and 5 Spanish respondents had none of the above characteristics.

**Table 9-1** shows the question wording of each version tested.

**Table 9-1. ACS Questions Tested for Wages and Salary**

Version/ Language	Self- administered	Interviewer-administered
Version 1 English	<i>Self- administered Version 1 was not tested</i>	<p><i>The next few questions are about income DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS</i></p> <p><b>49a1a. Did you receive any wages or salary?</b></p> <p>€ Yes</p> <p>€ No à Skip to Q49a2a</p> <p><b>49a1b. How much did you receive from all jobs before taxes and other deductions?</b></p> <p><b>49 a2a. Did you receive any additional tips, bonuses, or commissions DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS?</b></p> <p>€ Yes</p> <p>€ No à Skip to Current Q47b</p> <p><b>49a2b. How much did you receive from all jobs before taxes and other deductions?</b></p>

Version/ Language	Self- administered	Interviewer-administered
Version 1 Spanish (stateside and Puerto Rico)	Self- administered Version 1 was not tested	<p><i>Las siguientes preguntas son sobre ingreso DURANTE LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES</i></p> <p><b>49a1a. ¿Recibió usted algún jornal, sueldo o salario?</b></p> <p>€ Yes</p> <p>€ No à Skip to Q49a2a</p> <p><b>49a1b. ¿Cuánto recibió usted de todos los empleos antes de impuestos y otras deducciones?</b></p> <p><b>49a2a. ¿Recibió usted alguna propina, bonificación o comisión adicional DURANTE LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES?</b></p> <p>€ Yes</p> <p>€ No à Skip to Current Q47b</p> <p><b>49a2b. ¿Cuánto recibió usted de todos los empleos antes de impuestos y otras deducciones?</b></p>
Version 2 English	Self- administered Version 2 was not tested	<p><i>The next few questions are about income DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS</i></p> <p><b>49a1. Did you receive any wages, salary, tips, bonuses, or commissions?</b></p> <p>€ Yes</p> <p>€ No à Skip to Current Q49b</p> <p><b>49a2. How much did you receive before taxes and other deductions?</b></p>
Version 2 Spanish (stateside and Puerto Rico)	Self- administered Version 2 was not tested	<p><i>Las siguientes preguntas son sobre ingreso DURANTE LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES</i></p> <p><b>49a1. ¿Recibió usted algún jornal, sueldo o salario, propina, bonificación o comisión?</b></p> <p>€ Yes</p> <p>€ No à Skip to Current Q49b</p> <p><b>49a2. ¿Cuánto recibió usted antes de impuestos y otras deducciones?</b></p>

## 9.1 Findings from the Wages and Salary Module

### Overview

The purpose of this sequence of questions is to elicit earned income, whether this income is coming from wages, salary, tips, bonuses, or commissions. In Version 1, this information is elicited by first asking about whether the person has received any wages or salary income; if the answer is “yes,” the follow-up question asks how much. This is followed by a question on tips, bonuses, or commissions; if the answer is “yes,” the follow-up question asks for the amount received. In contrast, Version 2 asks about wages, salary, bonuses, tips, or commissions in a single question. For those who report having received any such earnings, the follow-up question asks for the amount received.

### **Single versus Multiple Jobs and Self-employment Income**

Respondents who had only one source of income from a regular paycheck did not appear to have any difficulty deciding what to include, regardless of version. However, some respondents had a broader interpretation and included bonus, tip, or commission income under wages and salary.

Across versions, there was a general tendency among respondents to report what they considered substantial or important, and there was also a tendency among respondents not to report smaller amounts or earned income from nonregular jobs. These respondents did not necessarily think of themselves as self-employed when doing small or odd jobs. Only 5 of the 11 respondents screened and recruited as having multiple jobs (without self-employment) in the past year verified through their answers that they had actually held more than one job at the same time. Among those five respondents, three included the wages and salary from all of their jobs; the remaining two did not. One of the respondents reported income from her main job only because, as she explained, the series of questions preceding question 49a1 focused on last week's job, and that form of questioning had made her focus only on her main job. The other respondent also reported only the wages from his "basic" employment. Of the seven respondents screened as having multiple jobs and also engaging in self-employment, six confirmed self-employment and a job. Of these six respondents, five reported their job income, including the self-employment income, collectively under "wages and salary." This is problematic because there is a separate self-employment question later, and there can be double reporting of the self-employment earnings.

The "wages and salary" question precedes the question about self-employment. As a result, at least three respondents who were self-employed reported their self-employment income in this section. All three respondents also reported their income under the self-employment questions in the ACS survey, effectively double-counting their income.

### **Reference Period**

All but a handful of respondents felt it would be much easier to report their earned income if interviewed soon after tax-return preparation. This suggests that respondents were thinking of—and possibly reporting about—the prior calendar year rather than the past 12 months, which was confirmed in the probes as we indicate below. Only a few indicated that they calculated their answers by adding or multiplying monthly or hourly amounts. In addition, almost all respondents indicated that it would be easier to report gross income before deductions. This was particularly true of respondents who received a regular paycheck. As one respondent commented, the withholdings change from year to year and make it difficult to recall the exact amount of the paychecks, making gross income easier to report. However, a few respondents did indicate that it would be easier to report pretax earnings.

For both versions of these questions, respondents were not thinking of the correct reference period (i.e., the past 12 months) when they provided their responses. Of the 14 respondents in Version 1, only 5 (1 in English and 4 in Spanish) seemed to use the correct reference period. In two other English-language cases, it is not clear whether the respondents were relying on their tax returns or not. A third case refused to answer the wages and salary question. Of the 17 respondents in Version 2, only 2 (1 in English and 1 in Spanish) clearly kept

the reference period in mind. In three other cases, it is not clear whether the respondents were relying on their tax returns or not. When respondents answered incorrectly, they tended to either report for only part of the reference period, report for the 2008 calendar year instead of the past 12 months, or use their current salary information to create an estimate for the past 12 months.

### **Differences by Language**

The questions tested in this module were very simply worded in English. There were no terminology issues with English respondents, and the same was the case with Spanish speakers. Terms such as “salary,” “wages,” “bonus,” “tips,” “commissions,” “taxes,” and “deductions” are clear concepts that respondents did not exhibit problems with, whether or not they received them. The same was true in Spanish for the translated terms (jornal, sueldo salario, bonos, propinas, comisiones, impuestos, deducciones).

Five of six respondents who had different types of problems that made them misreport the amounts earned or report them under the wrong category of earnings were Spanish speakers. Nonetheless, the probing did not reveal any reasons why the Spanish versions of the questions could have created more difficulties than the English.

Spanish-speaking respondents expressed a stronger preference for one version of the questions (Version 2) than English speakers. However, as discussed below, we believe other demographic characteristics may have been responsible for this preference, rather than a language version or translation issue.

### **Differences by Version**

While the English-language respondents divided almost evenly in their preference for one version over the other, about two-thirds of the Spanish-language respondents preferred Version 2. Because the Spanish-language respondents typically have lower education levels than the English-language respondents, it is possible that their preference is based on the shorter sequence of text to listen to and process. While each group felt that the version it preferred was simpler and clearer, those who preferred Version 2 particularly liked the fact that it consisted of a shorter sequence of questions. Some felt that the early mention of bonuses, commissions, or tips might have helped them remember to report these types of income. Those who preferred Version 1 particularly liked the fact that the sequence of questions asked about different types of earnings separately. The respondents who received bonuses also had a preference for Version 1.

Of the 14 respondents in Version 1, there were 8 (5 in Spanish and 3 in English) who seemed to understand the questions as intended and to answer them correctly. Five respondents (1 in Spanish, 4 in English) answered the questions inaccurately, and the remaining respondent refused to answer. Those with salary or wages only were more likely to understand the question. While no particular demographic patterns seemed to be associated with the respondents who had problems, the problems all occurred with respondents who had more complicated earnings than just a salary or regular wages. The problems detected included difficulty recalling earnings, reporting commissions or bonuses under wages and salary, double reporting of earnings, and earnings entirely left out.

One respondent was confused by the fact that the follow-up questions to both the wages and salary and the bonus/tips/commission questions were worded identically. Another

respondent, who had no wages or salary to report, was confused by the word “additional” in the bonus/tips/commission question.

Of the 17 respondents in Version 2, there were 11 (5 in English and 6 in Spanish) who seemed to understand the questions as intended and to answer them correctly. No particular demographic characteristics were observed in this group. The group did not include more of any specific type of income recipient. Six respondents (5 in Spanish and 1 in English) had different types of problems that made them misreport the amounts earned or report them under the wrong category of earnings. Although almost all were Spanish speakers, it is unclear why the Spanish version of the question could have created more difficulties than the English. No other particular demographic patterns seemed to be associated with these problems. The types of problems detected were similar to those reported for Version 1. In addition, the combination of tips, bonuses, and commissions with wages and salary made some respondents selectively hear only some of these types of income. For instance, two respondents recalled hearing only the question asked about tips.

**Appendix 15**, Final Recommendations for Wages and Salary, provides additional detail on the findings from this section.

## **9.2 Version Preference and Recommendations for the Wages and Salary Module**

Because the preference for one version over the other was not so strong, and the reasons provided were not persuasive enough, we must base our recommendations on factors other than respondent preference. On the basis of this analysis, there is no clear evidence that one version worked better than the other. In both Version 1 and Version 2, just over half of the respondents answered without error and interpreted the questions as intended. Nonetheless, we are inclined to recommend using Version 1 with some changes because separating wages and salary from the other types of compensation (e.g., tips, bonuses, commissions) avoids some confusion. In Version 2, three respondents lost track of all of the types of earnings that the question specifies, and they did not hear the earnings that they needed to report.

The following changes are recommended:

- § Put the term “additional” in parentheses in Question 49a2a.
- § Add an indication that an *annual* figure is expected in Questions 49a1b and 49a2b; several respondents wondered if they should provide a weekly, monthly, or annual figure.
- § Because a large number of respondents across versions were not reporting totals for the past 12 months but rather for the last calendar year, we recommend reconsidering the period of reference used for these questions. If ACS can consider a change in reporting period, we strongly recommend asking about the prior calendar year, as a large number of respondents already answered these questions with that time frame in mind and indicated it would be easier to do so. If ACS cannot consider such a change in reference period, the questions need to stress the desired period, as in the questions below.



- § Respondents with self-employment income tended to report it under the wages and salary question and frequently under the self-employment question as well. To avoid this, we recommend moving the self-employment question before the wages and salary question.
- § Because Question 49a1b uses the term “wages and salary,” Question 49a1b should use that phrase as well. Similarly, the terms “tips, commissions, and bonuses” should be used in 49a2b to differentiate it from 49a1b.

**Table 9-2** shows the recommended alternate wording that can be tested against the control (i.e., Version 3).

**Table 9-2. Proposed Alternate Wording for the Wages and Salary Question**

Spanish version	English version
<i>Las siguientes preguntas son sobre ingreso DURANTE LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES . . .</i>	<i>The next few questions are about income DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS. . .</i>
<b>49a1a. ¿Recibió usted algún jornal, sueldo o salario en los últimos 12 meses?</b>	<b>49a1a. Did you receive any wages or salary during the past 12 months?</b>
€ Sí	€ Yes
€ No à Skip to Q49a2a	€ No à Skip to Q49a2a
<b>49a1b. ¿Cuánto recibió usted en total de sus jornales, sueldos o salarios de todos los empleos en los últimos 12 meses antes de impuestos y otras deducciones?</b>	<b>49a1b. How much did you receive in total for all wages and salary from all jobs in the past 12 months before taxes and other deductions?</b>
<b>49a2a. ¿Recibió usted alguna propina, bonificación o comisión (adicional) DURANTE LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES?</b>	<b>49 a2a. Did you receive any (additional) tips, bonuses, or commissions DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS?</b>
€ Sí	€ Yes
€ No à Skip to Current Q47b	€ No à Skip to Current Q47b
<b>49a2b. ¿Cuánto recibió usted en total de todas las propinas, bonos o comisiones de todos los empleos en los últimos 12 meses antes de impuestos y otras deducciones?</b>	<b>49a2b. How much did you receive in total for all tips, bonuses, or commissions from all jobs in the past 12 months before taxes and other deductions?</b>

## 10. Interest and Dividends: Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Two versions of the Interest and Dividends module were tested in the interviewer-administered mode only. A total of 33 interviews were conducted using this module. Of the 33 interviews conducted, 16 were conducted with Version 1, and 17 were conducted with Version 2.

Interviews were also conducted in both English and Spanish. A total of 17 of 33 interviews were conducted in English, and 16 were conducted in Spanish. Respondents were recruited to meet three different characteristics. Of the 33 interviews, 8 in English and 4 in Spanish were conducted with respondents who received interest and/or dividends; 5 in English and 5 in Spanish were conducted with respondents who received rental income or income from royalties, estates or trusts; and 4 in English and 7 in Spanish were conducted with respondents who did not receive any type of property income.

See **Table 10-1** for the question wording of each version tested.

**Table 10-1. ACS Questions Tested for Property Income**

Version/ Language	Self- administered	Interviewer-administered
Version 1 English	<i>Self- administered Version 1 was not tested</i>	<p><b>Q49c1a. [The next few questions are about income DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS. . .]</b></p> <p><b>Did [&lt;Name&gt;/you] receive any interest or dividends [DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS]? Report even small amounts credited to an account.</b></p> <p>€ Yes</p> <p>€ No à Skip to Q49c2a</p> <p><b>Q49c1b. What was the amount received? _____</b></p> <p><b>Q49c2a. Did [&lt;Name&gt;/you] receive any net rental income, royalty income, or income from estates and trusts [DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS]?</b></p> <p>€ Yes</p> <p>€ No à Skip to Q49d1</p> <p><b>Q49c2b. What was the amount received? _____</b></p>

10. Interest and Dividends: Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Version/ Language	Self- administered	Interviewer-administered
Version 1 Spanish (stateside and Puerto Rico)	<i>Self- administered Version 1 was not tested</i>	<p><b>Q49c1a. [Las próximas preguntas tienen que ver con el ingreso DURANTE LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES. . .]</b></p> <p><b>¿Recibió [&lt;Name&gt;/usted] algún interés o dividendo [DURANTE LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES]? Informe cantidades acreditadas a una cuenta aunque sean cantidades pequeñas.</b></p> <p>€ Si</p> <p>€ No → Pase a la pregunta Q49c2a</p> <p><b>Q49c1b. ¿Cuál fue la cantidad recibida? _____</b></p> <p><b>Q49c2a. ¿Recibió [&lt;Name&gt;/usted] algún ingreso neto de rentas, ingreso por derecho de autor o ingreso de herencias o fideicomisos [DURANTE LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES]?</b></p> <p>€ Si</p> <p>No → Pase a la pregunta Q49d1</p> <p><b>Q49c2b. ¿Cuál fue la cantidad recibida? _____</b></p>
Version 2 English	<i>Self- administered Version 2 was not tested</i>	<p><b>Q49c1a. [The next few questions are about income DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS. . .]</b></p> <p><b>Did [&lt;Name&gt;/you] receive any interest or dividends [DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS]? Report even small amounts credited to a checking or savings account.</b></p> <p>€ Yes</p> <p>€ No → Skip to Q49c2a</p> <p><b>Q49c1b. What was the amount received? _____</b></p> <p><b>Q49c2a. Did [&lt;Name&gt;/you] receive any net rental income, royalty income, or income from estates and trusts [DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS]?</b></p> <p>€ Yes</p> <p>€ No → Skip to Q49d1</p> <p><b>Q49c2b. What was the amount received? _____</b></p>

Version/ Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
Version 2 Spanish (stateside and Puerto Rico)	<i>Self-administered Version 2 was not tested</i>	<p><b>Q49c1a. [Las próximas preguntas tienen que ver con el ingreso DURANTE LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES. . .]</b></p> <p>¿Recibió [&lt;Name&gt;/usted] algún interés o dividendo [DURANTE LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES]? Informe cantidades acreditadas a una cuenta de cheques o de ahorro aunque sean cantidades pequeñas.</p> <p>€ Si</p> <p>€ No → Pase a la pregunta Q49c2a</p> <p><b>Q49c1b. ¿Cuál fue la cantidad recibida? _____</b></p> <p><b>Q49c2a. ¿Recibió [&lt;Name&gt;/usted] algún ingreso neto de rentas, ingreso por derecho de autor o ingreso de herencias o fideicomisos [DURANTE LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES]?</b></p> <p>€ Si</p> <p>€ No → Pase a la pregunta Q49d1</p> <p>Q49c2b. ¿Cuál fue la cantidad recibida? _____</p>
Version 3 English	<i>Self-administered Version 3 was not tested</i>	<p><b>Interviewer-administered question Version 3</b></p> <p>Question series #49c was not included in Version 3</p>
Version 3 Spanish	<i>Self-administered Version 3 was not tested</i>	<p><b>Spanish IA question text Version 3</b></p> <p>Question series #49c was not included in Version 3</p>

## 10.1 Findings from the Interest and Dividends Module

### Overview

The majority of respondents could answer, without difficulty, the questions regarding whether the respondent received any interest or dividends (Question 49c1a) and the amount received (Question 49c1b). The Spanish-speaking respondents expressed more difficulty with these questions than did the English-speaking respondents. However, the primary difficulty that Spanish-speakers had was in knowing whether a small amount of interest was worth reporting for these questions. Based on the cognitive interview data, there were no differences in respondents' understanding of the questions or their ability to report accurately based on the mode of interview when comparing the telephone and face-to-face interviews. (No self-administered version of these questions was tested in the cognitive interviews.)

Education and income seemed to be correlated with respondents' understanding of the property income questions. A higher percentage of respondents with college degrees were included in the Property Income module due to the screening process required to recruit people who were eligible. Those people with property income tended to have higher education levels than some of the other respondents. However, there were some respondents with less than a high school education who were included in the Interest and Dividends analysis, and those people tended to have more difficulty with these questions regardless of the language spoken.

### **Reporting Interest and Dividends Received (Question 49c1a)**

The primary goal of the cognitive interviews for this module was to determine if the respondents understood that they should report any amount of income from interest or dividends, no matter how small the amount may have been. The two versions of the ACS questions both included clarification statements to ensure that even small amounts of income were included. The text in both versions was very similar, but Version 2 had an additional point of clarification added. The Version 2 text read, “Report even small amounts credited to a checking or savings account.” Where the Version 1 text only referred to “an account,” the Version 2 text added the words “checking or savings account.”

Based on a review of the comments and explanations among the 14 respondents who reported having received interest or dividends, it was clear that those who received such income understood and reported accurately. Confusion was primarily expressed by respondents who did not receive income from property income. Six respondents, who did not report having interest or dividends income, did not understand the concept of reporting small amounts of interest. The respondents thought it had to do with reporting small amounts of money in the bank, having small saving accounts, if one uses direct deposit; and one respondent thought that it might also include small bonuses received. They did not demonstrate a working understanding of interest-bearing accounts and the interest accrued. These respondents did not mention dividends at all when they explained the meaning of the question during the probing part of the interview.

Twenty-one of 33 respondents were able to understand the question regarding income from interest and dividends (Question 49c1a), and they seemed to answer correctly. Only 6 of 33 respondents outwardly exhibited any difficulty in answering the question; however, 12 respondents (8 in Spanish and 4 in English) reported confusion at some point during the probes or they provided responses that indicated they did not completely understand the question. Despite apparent confusion for some, only six respondents (three in Spanish and three in English) actually answered the questions incorrectly. Although the other respondents stated that they did not understand the terminology, they reported no income from interest or dividends, which was correct.

Of the six respondents who exhibited difficulty answering Question 49c1a, five were Spanish-speaking respondents, while only one was an English-speaking respondent. The difficulties noted, however, were not related to language issues. Three of the respondents expressed that it would be difficult to report an amount so small. The one English-speaking respondent had no difficulty for himself but could not answer for another household member. The other two Spanish-speaking respondents were not familiar with the terminology, “interés o dividendo” (“interest or dividends”) in the question. Through probing, it was determined that these respondents did not have a clear understanding of the terms. One thought that “dividendo” (“dividend”) had to do with a disability payment. Another thought the question had to do with reporting one’s salary.

### **Reporting Amount of Interest and Dividends Received (Question 49c1b)**

Three of 33 respondents exhibited difficulty answering Question 49c1b, which asks about the amount of funding received: 1 of 16 Spanish-speaking respondents and 2 of 17 English-speaking respondents. For 7 of 33 respondents, Question 49c1b was not applicable or had no

response. For these seven respondents, six reported that they received no interest or dividends and one indicated that he did but the amount was so little that he did not count it. Of the seven with no response to Question 49c1b, four expressed difficulty with the previous question (49c1a), which asked if the respondent had received any interest or dividends.

### **Reference Period, “The Past 12 Months”**

Numerous respondents who reported having interest and dividends acknowledged that they provided their response to the question based on the previous calendar year (e.g. January 2008 to December 2008) rather than the past 12 months. Four respondents reported this way because they had recently completed their 2008 taxes. These respondents indicated that it would be more difficult to report this information if it were not “tax time.” However, other respondents were not clear that the 12-month reference period was intended to be a rolling time period. They thought that it meant the previous calendar year. Because of this confusion by respondents, the recommendation to revise the reference period to include the specific dates for the computer-assisted interviewer-administered versions is documented in the final recommendations for this module.

### **Reporting Income from Rent, Royalties, Estates, or Trusts (Question 49c2a)**

Most of the respondents could answer the questions regarding whether they had received any net rental income, royalty income, or income from estate and trusts (Question 49c2a) and what the amount of income was (Question 49c2b). Overall, both versions tested were well understood by the respondents, including those who actually had this type of income to report as well as those who did not. The only problematic term in this question was “net” rental income (“ingreso neto de rentas”). This term was misunderstood by both English- and Spanish-speaking respondents. (Additional detail about the terminology issues is documented in the subsequent section.)

Most respondents had no difficulty articulating the types of income that would be included in Question 49c2a. Among those respondents who reported having received rent, royalties, estate income, or trusts, their comments were directed more to their own personal situations, with a focus on the type of income they receive. Other respondents who did not report receiving income in Question 49c2 provided adequate explanations of the intent of the question with only a few exceptions

Two of 33 respondents exhibited difficulty answering Question 49c2a; both respondents were English-speakers. None of the 16 Spanish-speaking respondents showed difficulty. There were 2 additional respondents among the 33 who had no recorded response to the interviewer-observed question about the difficulty in reporting income from rental properties, royalties, estates, or trusts, however neither of these respondents reported having any such income to report.

Two of 33 respondents exhibited difficulty answering Question 49c2b; both were English-speaking respondents. Fourteen of 33 respondents correctly answered “Not Applicable” for Question 49c2b because they reported having no income in their answers to Question 49c2a. One case was missing a response to the interviewer-observed question about the level of difficulty, but this respondent did not report having income at Question 49c2a either.

### Difficulty with Terminology

One of the probes in the interview asked specifically if respondents understood the term “net income” from rental properties (“ingreso neto de rentas”). This proved to be quite problematic for many respondents. A variety of both correct and incorrect responses were provided by both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking respondents. Most of the respondents were confident in their understanding (regardless of whether they were correct or not), but a few were uncertain and changed their minds as they contemplated the intended meaning:

- § Eight respondents thought that “net income” from rent was clear and would be understood by all.
- § Four respondents thought that “net income” from rent would *not* be clearly understood.
- § Six respondents thought that “net income” from rent meant “all,” “total,” or “total income” (“ingreso total”).
- § Nine respondents thought that “net income” from rent was income after expenses or after taxes. (Some, but not all of these respondents were also included in the count of respondents who reported they thought the term “net” was clear.)
- § Two respondents thought that “net income” from rent meant “true value.”
- § Two respondents thought that “net income” from rent meant “gross” (“en bruto”) or before expenses.

Based on the cognitive interview data for this question about “net rental income,” one of the versions recommended for the field test includes an additional clarifying statement to explain what is intended for the term “net” in this question.

### Differences by Language

For Question 49c2a, which asks about income from trusts, two Spanish-speaking respondents indicated that the word “fideicomiso” (trusts) might be difficult for some people to understand. One respondent said that this word was used more in Mexico, though she did understand it and she was not from Mexico. The term as it is written in the question is correct, and it is not a regional term, but a legal term. Most respondents seemed to understand enough of what it meant to be able to understand if they did or did not receive income from trusts (“fideicomiso”). Although these two terms (“trusts and “fideicomiso”) were not specifically probed as part of this cognitive interview, we believe that the English-speaking respondents would have similar difficulty defining a trust in accurate legal terms, but the English word itself is a simple word that does not attract attention in the question whereas the term in Spanish is a multi-syllable word that stands out in the sentence more and was noticed by two of the respondents as being difficult to understand.

**Appendix 16**, Interest and Dividends Module: Final Briefing Recommendations, has additional detail on these findings.

## **10.2 Version Preference and Recommendations from the Interest and Dividends Module**

The differences between Version 1 and Version 2 for the Property Income questions were relatively minor. The difference was only found in Questions 49c1a, which asks about receiving income from interest or dividends. For Version 1, the clarification statement after the question was, “Report even small amounts credited to an account.” The Version 2 text read, “Report even small amounts credited to a checking or savings account.”

When asked which version they preferred for the Interest and Dividends questions, 16 of 33 respondents preferred Version 2, whereas 11 respondents preferred Version 1. Six respondents had no preference. Of the 16 respondents who received Version 1 of the ACS instrument, the same number of respondents preferred Version 1 as preferred Version 2 (n=7 for each). However, the 17 respondents who received Version 2 of the ACS were more than twice as likely to prefer Version 2 (9 of 17 preferred Version 2, whereas 4 of 17 preferred Version 1). Also, of the 17 who received Version 2 of the ACS, more respondents had no preference for either version (4 of 17), whereas of the respondents who received Version 1 of the ACS, only 2 of 16 had no preference.

When asked to explain their preference for one version over the other, about half (n=6) of the 11 respondents who selected Version 1 preferred it because it is more general. The respondents did not like that Version 2 specifically mentioned “checking/savings” because they felt it would narrow the focus too much and could cause other respondents to interpret the question in a more limited way (i.e., to include only checking and savings accounts).

Even though more respondents preferred Version 2 because it might help people know to include even small amounts of interest from checking or savings accounts, several respondents noted that they thought only interest from checking or savings accounts should be included. They did not understand that the reference to including even small amounts from checking and savings was just an example. These respondents’ answers indicated that they thought the reference to reporting “even small amounts credited to a checking or savings account” meant that the question was intended to limit the reported amount only to the interest earned from bank accounts. They did not understand that the examples included were only to illustrate the types of small amounts of income that might be included. Similarly, respondents who preferred Version 1 indicated that they thought other people might misinterpret the wording in Version 2 to mean only report income from savings or checking accounts.

Based on specific explanations for preferences, it was clear that some respondents felt that the addition of “checking or savings” would help reduce underreporting in the amounts of interest and dividends. However, there were also respondents who felt that the addition of the terms “checking and savings” only seemed to help clarify but would actually cause some respondents to underreport income from interest and dividends because they would report only income from checking and savings and not from stocks, bonds, or business accounts that might provide income. This observation was based both on the actual types of income reported for each version as well as the comments from the probing questions. Both Spanish-speaking and English-speaking respondents had similar observations and understandings of the intentions of the questions.



**Specific recommendations for Revised Question 49c1a**

Based on the observations documented in this report, RTI recommends using a modified Version 2 for the field test. The (modified version of the alternate wording) should make it clear that interest earned from checking and savings accounts is just an example of the types of interest to be included. For the interviewer-administered versions of these questions, which are computerized, we suggest filling the months whenever the phrase “the past 12 months” is used. For example: “The next few questions are about income DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS, which is from <DATE> to <DATE>.”

**Specific recommendations for Revised Question 49c2a**

As noted in the specific observations for question 49c2a, there was some confusion about the term “net rental income.” RTI recommends clarifying this term and testing respondents’ understanding. From the probed responses, many respondents think of “net” only in terms of salary and taxes. They are not accustomed to thinking of “net rental income” and had difficulty understanding and explaining what it meant.

**Table 10-2** shows the recommended versions to be tested in the field test.

**Table 10-2. Proposed Question Wordings for the Interest and Dividends Questions**

Language	Interviewer-administered
English Version to be Tested	<p><b>Q49c1a.</b> [The next few questions are about income DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS, which is from &lt;DATE&gt; to &lt;DATE&gt; . .]</p> <p><b>Did [&lt;Name&gt;/you] receive any interest or dividends [DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS]? Report even small amounts. For example, report any interest or dividends credited to a checking or savings account as well as any other income from interest or dividends</b></p> <p>€ Yes</p> <p>€ No à Skip to Q49c2a</p> <p><b>Q49c1b.</b> What was the amount received? _____</p> <p><b>Q49c2a.</b> Did [&lt;Name&gt;/you] receive any net rental income, royalty income, or income from estates and trusts [DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS]? Net rental income is the amount earned after expenses.</p> <p>€ Yes</p> <p>€ No à Skip to Q49d1</p> <p><b>Q49c2b.</b> What was the amount received? _____</p>

Language	Interviewer-administered
Spanish Version to be Tested	<p><b>Q49c1a.</b> [Las próximas preguntas tienen que ver con el ingreso DURANTE LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES, es decir desde &lt;FECHA&gt; hasta &lt;FECHA&gt; . . .]</p> <p>¿Recibió [&lt;Name&gt;/usted] algún interés o dividendo [DURANTE LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES]? Mencione cantidades, aunque sean pequeñas, por ejemplo intereses o dividendos que le hayan acreditado a una cuenta de cheques o de ahorros así como cualquier otro ingreso por intereses o dividendos</p> <p>€ Si</p> <p>€ No à Pase a la pregunta Q49c2a</p> <p><b>Q49c1b.</b> ¿Cuál fue la cantidad recibida? _____</p> <p><b>Q49c2a.</b> ¿Recibió [&lt;Name&gt;/usted] algún ingreso neto de rentas, ingreso por derecho de autor o ingreso de herencias o fideicomisos [DURANTE LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES]? Ingreso neto de rentas es la ganancia que queda después de descontar los gastos.</p> <p>€ Si</p> <p>€ No à Pase a la pregunta Q49d1</p> <p><b>Q49c2b.</b> ¿Cuál fue la cantidad recibida? _____</p>

## 11. Cash Public Assistance: Summary of Findings and Recommendations

We tested two versions of proposed new ACS questions about public assistance as a source of income. Both versions included phrasing to encourage respondents to report public assistance as an income source even if they had received it only once during the 12-month reference period. One version did this by stating “even if for only one month;” the other version stated “even if for only one payment.” Within the self-administered mode, a further variation concerned the ordering of the two key phrases within the question: Version 1 stated “...even if for only one month, for this person or any children in this household,” while Version 2 stated “... for this person or any children in this household, even if only one payment.” **Table 11-1** presents the question wording of each Public Assistance question version tested across modes and languages (English and Spanish).

**Table 11-1. ACS Questions Tested for Public Assistance**

Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
Version 1 English	<p><b>49.</b> Mark (X) the “Yes” box for each type of income this person received, and give your best estimate of the total amount during the PAST 12 MONTHS...</p> <p><b>49f1.</b> Any welfare payments or cash assistance from the state or local welfare office, even if for only one month, for this person or any children in this household. <i>Do not include benefits from food, energy, or rental assistance programs.</i></p> <p>[IF YES] 49f2. TOTAL AMOUNT for past 12 months:</p>	<p><b>Q49c1a.</b> [The next few questions are about income DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS....]</p> <p><b>49f1.</b> Did [&lt;Name&gt;/you] receive any welfare payments or cash assistance from the state or local welfare office, for [&lt;Name&gt;/yourself] or any children in this household <u>during the past 12 months</u>? Include all assistance, even if for only one month. Do NOT include benefits from food, energy, or rental assistance programs.</p> <p>[IF YES] 49f2. What was the amount? _____</p>
Version 1 Spanish	<p><b>49f.</b> Algún pago de bienestar público o asistencia en dinero en efectivo de la oficina estatal o local de bienestar, aunque sólo sea por un mes, para esta persona o cualquier niño de este hogar. <i>no incluya beneficios de programas de asistencia para alimentos, energía o alquiler.</i></p> <p>[IF YES] CANTIDAD TOTAL para los últimos 12 meses:</p>	<p><b>Q49c1a.</b> [Las próximas preguntas tienen que ver con el ingreso DURANTE LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES....]</p> <p><b>49f1.</b> ¿Recibió usted algún pago de bienestar público o asistencia en dinero en efectivo de la oficina estatal o local de bienestar, para usted mismo o cualquier niño de este hogar DURANTE LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES. Incluya toda la asistencia recibida, aun si fuera sólo por un mes. NO incluya beneficios de programas de asistencia para alimentos, energía o alquiler.</p> <p>[IF YES] 49f2. ¿Cuál fue la cantidad? _____</p>
Version 2 English	<p><b>49.</b> Mark (X) the “Yes” box for each type of income this person received, and give your best estimate of the total amount during the PAST 12</p>	<p><b>Q49c1a.</b> [The next few questions are about income DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS....]</p> <p><b>49f1.</b> Did [&lt;Name&gt;/you] receive any welfare payments or cash assistance from the</p>

Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
	<p><b>MONTHS...</b></p> <p><b>49f1.</b> Any welfare payments or cash assistance from the state or local welfare office for this person or any children in this household, even if only one payment. <i>Do not include benefits from food, energy, or rental assistance programs.</i></p> <p>[IF YES] 49f2. TOTAL AMOUNT for past 12 months:</p>	<p>state or local welfare office, for [&lt;Name&gt;/yourself] or any children in this household DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS? Include all assistance, even if for only one payment. Do NOT include benefits from food, energy, or rental assistance programs.</p> <p>[IF YES] 49f2. What was the amount? _____</p>
<p>Version 2 Spanish</p>	<p><b>Spanish SA question text Version 2</b></p> <p><b>49f.</b> Algún pago de bienestar público o asistencia en dinero en efectivo de la oficina estatal o local de bienestar para esta persona o cualquier niño de este hogar, aunque sólo sea un pago. <i>No incluya beneficios de programas de asistencia para alimentos, energía o alquiler.</i></p> <p>[IF YES] CANTIDAD TOTAL para los últimos 12 meses:</p>	<p><b>Spanish IA question text Version 2</b></p> <p><b>Q49c1a.</b> [Las próximas preguntas tienen que ver con el ingreso DURANTE LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES....</p> <p><b>49f1.</b> ¿Recibió usted algún pago de bienestar público o asistencia en dinero en efectivo de la oficina estatal o local de bienestar, para usted mismo o cualquier niño de este hogar DURANTE LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES. Incluya toda la asistencia recibida, aun si fuera sólo por un pago. <b>NO</b> incluya beneficios de programas de asistencia para alimentos, energía o alquiler.</p> <p>[IF YES] 49f2. ¿Cuál fue la cantidad? _____</p>

Forty-eight participants (24 English, 24 Spanish) were recruited specifically for the public assistance module on the basis of having received public assistance. However, during the interviews, we learned that slightly more than half (28 respondents) had not received the type of public assistance of interest (i.e., welfare payments). The key screener item that identified persons on public assistance during the recruiting was, “Are you currently receiving state or local public assistance or welfare?” Many people answered “Yes” to this question during the screening on the basis of having received benefits from other government programs, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI); Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); Medicaid; unemployment compensation; Food Stamps; and, in one case, a child tax credit. In two cases, it was unclear what happened because the participants indicated no one in the household had received any government assistance of any kind in the past year. On a more encouraging note, the vast majority of these participants (25) answered “No” correctly in response to the target question in the cognitive interview. The 3 persons who incorrectly answered “Yes” are discussed in more detail below.

In addition to the 48 respondents specifically recruited to test the public assistance question, we probed 27 people who screened into the study as having food stamps. Thus, the public assistance question was tested with a total of 75 respondents.

## 11.1 Findings from the Cash Public Assistance Module

### Overview

Of the 75 respondents probed on the key public assistance question, 17 (11 English-speaking, 6 Spanish-speaking) experienced noteworthy problems in answering or interpreting it. In our judgment, 12 to 13 respondents appeared to have answered the question incorrectly: 7 respondents answered positively when they should have answered negatively; and 2 respondents (possibly 3) answered negatively when they should have answered positively. Finally, 3 respondents neglected to answer the question. The problems observed seemed largely independent of interview mode, form version, or language of administration. The following is a detailed description of the major problems we observed:

- § **Other benefits.** Four respondents answered “Yes” incorrectly on the basis of other unrelated benefits. One did so on the basis of unemployment compensation; another on the basis of SSI payments (unfortunately, the previous SSI item was skipped for this person due to time constraints, so this may have contributed to the misreporting). One reported receiving public assistance because her son was receiving Medicaid; another reported receiving public assistance because he received food stamps.

A couple of respondents (who answered correctly) believed that child support may be relevant to the question. One person, after hearing the question, asked whether it included unemployment compensation; she specifically pointed to the phrase, “Include all assistance” and noted it made her think she should perhaps report it as public assistance. One person answered correctly but wondered if her SSI payments were relevant to the question (even though she had reported them in the previous question specifically asking for SSI). Another person correctly answered “No,” but later noted that she was unsure whether the tax credit for her children was relevant to the question. Finally, one respondent (who correctly excluded WIC when answering) suggested that the question should be reworded to include the “correct” examples (e.g., unemployment, retirement). This person noted, “It’s confusing because ‘public assistance’ includes a lot of different things, like help with the rent, with food, unemployment.”

- § **Subjective interpretation.** One respondent received public assistance, but incorrectly reported that the other two household members received it as well, since the benefit was “for the entire family.” Another person (mentioned previously as reporting public assistance based on her son’s Medicaid) reported that both she and her husband received public assistance. She noted that the question asked whether each person received assistance for a child, and, as she saw it, they both did. We should note that virtually all of the study participants who reported receiving public assistance had received it themselves. In only 1 or 2 cases, the report was based on someone else in the household.

At least two people incorrectly reported that they had not received public assistance. One mentioned in the probing that she had received “TANF” (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) up until recently. She did not realize that TANF was the type of public assistance we were asking about and seemed to think the question was asking strictly about payments in cash. Similarly, another person failed to report receiving public assistance; probing revealed that she had received TANF during the year, but last

received what she considered “public assistance” several years before. We are unsure about a third person who screened in as receiving public assistance, but answered “No” to the target question. During probing, she said that she had been on WorkFirst (a state name for welfare), but it had been a bit over a year since she had been on the program. Thus, her negative response might have been correct; however, we are not sure that the respondent recognized WorkFirst as public assistance. Finally, one person hesitated before answering “yes” (correctly), noting that she received TANF and was not sure if TANF was relevant to the question.

### **Key Terminology**

We probed participants on their interpretation of key terms in the target question, including “welfare payments” and “cash assistance” (“pago de bienestar público” and “asistencia en dinero en efectivo” in Spanish). Almost everyone seemed to have an appropriate understanding of these terms. A small number (perhaps 4–5) seemed to interpret “cash assistance” too literally, not realizing it could include a check or money provided on an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. For example, three people (neither of whom received public assistance) discussed how they found the question to be odd because the government did not actually hand out cash to people. However, the vast majority of participants interpreted the terms more broadly:

- § “Any kind of cash from government [Would] include cash given: not cash in hand, but cash in the form of check or put on a card which is given to individuals who only receive welfare and that’s [the card] how they access the funds, not a cash handout.”
- § “Welfare checks. Any kind of aid that’s cash—not medical, food. Nothing else.”

### **Reporting the Amount of Public Assistance Received**

Several problems were observed with respect to reporting the amount of public assistance among the 22 cases where public assistance was received either by the respondent or another household member, six people reported a monthly amount rather than the full amount received over the previous 12 months. Four of these cases were in the interviewer-administered mode, and in at least two of them, the persons explicitly stated that they were reporting a monthly figure. The reason why the question was misinterpreted is not entirely clear, but we suspect that respondents simply found the mathematical calculations involved in reporting an annual amount to be too daunting. One participant explained that reporting an annual amount was too difficult because her benefit was adjusted every so often based on the number of hours worked at her job.

At least three people included items that they should have excluded from the reported amount. For example, one respondent had a roommate who received both food stamps and public assistance. Probing revealed that she had reported the amount her roommate received for both benefits combined—she said she considers the benefits to be essentially the same thing and was unable to report the public assistance amount by itself. Another person combined her child support with the public assistance amount. Yet another person combined his public assistance with the social security death benefit that his stepson received.

Other problems we encountered included a respondent in the self-administered mode leaving a zero off the number she entered on the form, thus reporting only one-tenth of the public

assistance amount she had received, and a respondent whose family received public assistance for only a few months trying to forecast the amount for a 12-month period.

### **Differences by Language**

We observed no notable differences between English- and Spanish-speaking respondents with respect to interpretation or difficulties in answering the target public assistance question. Problems and underlying causes were similar between the two language versions.

### **Differences by Version**

Of the 39 respondents (19 English-speakers, 20 Spanish-speakers) probed on Version 1 of the public assistance question, 31 (13 English-speakers, 18 Spanish-speakers) answered correctly and appeared to have no problems understanding what the question was asking. Almost every respondent experiencing a problem with Version 1 was discussed in an example above. There were 2 respondents who simply needed to read (or hear) the question more than once, as they found the question rather long. We observed no problems related to the specific instructions “even if for only 1 month” in Version 1.

Of the 36 persons (18 English-speakers, 18 Spanish-speakers) probed on Version 2 of the public assistance question, 31 (15 English-speakers, 16 Spanish-speakers) seemed to have answered correctly, with no problems understanding what the question was asking. All respondents who answered incorrectly were discussed in the examples above. We observed no problems related to the specific instructions “even if for only one payment” in this version.

When asked to compare the two versions of the question and state a preference, respondents were evenly split. In fact, many did not seem to notice the true difference between the two versions, and said they did not have a preference. One person suggested that combining “past 12 months” with “just one month” (Version 1) might be confusing. A more important finding is that a small number of respondents indicated they preferred the wording of Version 2, where the question specified “even if for only one payment” because it acknowledged that not all benefits were paid on a monthly basis.

The additional variation within the self-administered mode (ordering of the phrases “even if for only one month/payment” and “for this person or any children in this household”) was also a negligible factor in the findings of this study. Respondents in this mode were almost evenly split as to which version of the question was better, and only one person pointed to the order of the phrasing as a reason for her preference. This participant noted that Version 1 was “detaching the payments from the people,” and she found that “disruptive.” But many did not articulate a clear reason for their preference, and when they did, they usually pointed out the “month” versus “payment” difference.

## **11.2 Version Preference and Recommendations for Cash Public Assistance**

The findings of this study do not clearly point to one question version being better than the other. The problems and difficulties we observed were almost evenly distributed across the two versions and unrelated to the wording variations of interest. Our main recommendation is to place more emphasis on the instructions not to include benefits from other programs, and use

“month” rather than “payment.” Therefore, our recommendation is a modified version of the question.

**Table 11-2** shows the recommended version to be tested in the field test.

**Table 11-2. Proposed Versions for Cash Public Assistance Question**

Language	Self-administered	Interviewer-administered
Modified Version English	49f1. Any welfare payments or cash assistance from the state or local welfare office, even if for only one month, for this person or any children in this household? Do not include benefits from any other type of assistance, such as SSI, food, energy, or rental assistance programs.	49f1. DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS, did [<Name>/you] receive any welfare payments or cash assistance from the state or local welfare office for [<Name>/yourself] or any children in this household, even if for only one month? Do NOT include benefits from any other type of assistance, such as SSI, food, energy, or rental assistance programs.
Modified Version Spanish	49f1. Algún pago de bienestar público del programa o asistencia en dinero en efectivo de la oficina estatal o local de bienestar, aunque sólo sea por un mes, para esta persona o cualquier niño de este hogar. NO incluya beneficios de ningún otro tipo de programas de asistencia, como por ejemplo SSI, ayuda para alimentos, energía o para pagar el alquiler.	49f1. DURANTE LOS ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES, ¿recibió [<Name>/usted] algún pago de bienestar público o asistencia en dinero en efectivo de la oficina estatal o local de bienestar, para [<Name>/usted mismo] o cualquier niño de este hogar, aunque sea sólo por un mes? NO incluya beneficios de ningún otro tipo de programas de asistencia, como por ejemplo SSI, ayuda para alimentos, energía o para pagar el alquiler.

Because a few respondents did not realize that “TANF” was considered welfare, we suggest creating a show card with the name of the TANF program in each state (similar to the card created for food stamps) so that interviewers can determine whether the program the respondent mentions is correct.



## 12. Conclusions, Lessons Learned, and Recommendations for Future Research

Overall, the primary objectives of the Cognitive Testing of the American Community Survey Content Test Items pretest, which was to evaluate eight question topics as part of the ACS survey, were met. Through the cognitive interviewing and analysis of 115 English interviews and 105 Spanish interviews, final recommendations for proposed questions to be tested in the field test in 2010 were identified. Any issues that were identified were documented in draft and final recommendations briefing reports. The cognitive interview respondents identified both questionnaire wording that worked well and some problematic wording of some questions. The Lead Researchers and analysts from RTI, RSS, and Westat proposed recommendations for possible revisions based on the feedback from the interviews. Ultimately, the recommendations are believed to help increase comprehension and consistency of understanding for Spanish- and English-speaking respondents for the Field Test of the American Community Survey.

### 12.1 Lessons Learned

#### Lessons Learned

The scope of the ACS Content Test task order was quite ambitious given the number of interviews, the multiple versions of the instruments and the schedule. The Census Bureau understood this from the outset and encouraged multiple research contractors to collaborate on the effort in order to meet the project goals on schedule. The collaboration both resolved issues, making it possible to complete the work on schedule, and created other challenges that had to be overcome in an expeditious manner. The significant lessons learned from this effort are documented below:

- Collaboration among multiple contractors and across locations – Overall, the subcontracting worked well and ensured that the overall schedule deadlines were met. With the number of cognitive interviews that were required in a relatively short time period, it was necessary to divide the work among different research organizations. An example of one aspect of the collaboration that worked well was the development of the detailed recruiting spreadsheets that were shared online and were updated weekly initially then daily as the recruitment targets were met. Using these tools, the three subcontractors were able to manage the overall goals reasonably well. There were a few target cells that were over-recruited due to multiple interviewers working simultaneously but this was a known risk given the compressed schedule. This might have been an issue even with multiple interviewers working for a single organization. A recommendation for future research would be to allow additional time in the schedule to better ensure that procedures and protocols can be implemented to maximize communication across sites.
- Recruitment of highly specified respondent characteristics – From the initial contract discussions, all parties were aware that a number of the specific types of respondents would be difficult to identify and recruit. As documented in **Chapter 3, Recruiting**, there were some recruitment targets that fell short of the goals, but nearly all of the

targets had some respondents. (The exceptions were both for monolingual Spanish-speakers for the two target groups, municipal Wi Fi users and parents born in the US.) Although there was a large overall number of interviews to be completed, many of the individual cells of recruitment characteristics by instrument version and mode of interview made the task of assigning a version and mode a challenge. While the initial plan was to recruit heavily at the beginning and then make selections, the actual schedule of activities did not allow for this due to the delays in finalizing the versions of the instruments and protocols.

- Recruitment of Spanish-speaking respondents – With the recent political climate and policies directed toward immigrant populations, we have observed significant resistance to recruitment efforts over the past years. One exception to this is the recruitment in locations such as Chicago, which is considered to be a sanctuary city, and Puerto Rico. In order to reduce the impact of such resistance, additional time is required for the recruitment of Spanish-speaking respondents and more personal recruitment efforts are required.
- Planning for cognitive interviews and protocol development - The estimated time for completing the ACS questions before beginning the cognitive interview probing section was 38 minutes. This was based on the administration of the ACS by interviewers using a computerized instrument rather than paper and pencil, as was used for the cognitive interviews. We found during the cognitive interviews that the time for the administration for the ACS itself was significantly longer. This was due in part to the paper and pencil administration but also due to the nature of the cognitive interview itself. The fact that the respondents knew their task was to identify problems with the questions and possibly spent more time thinking about their responses meant that many times they did spend more time with the initial ACS questions. In some cases, this led the interviewer to have to move more quickly through the probing sections of the interview. As a result the quality of some of the interviews suffered in that the richness of the probes was not as high a quality as it could have been without a time constraint. A recommendation for future research would be to limit the scope of the ACS questionnaire administration to the questions that are relevant to the probed questions.
- Ensuring adequate time for instrument development – While the initial schedule seemed to allow adequate time for the protocol development, we underestimated the complexity of the instruments that would be included for this research. The development of the initial six interviews in English, then the translation and development of the six stateside Spanish instruments did not allow sufficient time in the schedule for adequate testing of the instruments before training. As a result, the instruments were revised following the initial day of training and each contractor then conducted a retraining locally several weeks later. If future research could allow more time between the project kick-off meeting and the initial training, it would allow more time for adequate testing of the instruments. Alternately, less complex instruments would have made the initial schedule more feasible.
- Training – While the training model that was used for this project was based on other similar research, the time allowed for the practice interviews was not sufficient due to the

overall length of the cognitive interview. As mentioned previously, additional time in the schedule would allow for more sufficient testing of the instruments before training. Quite a significant amount of time in training was spent answering questions about the use of the paper and pencil versions of the ACS, which led to less time for actual practice for the interviewers.

- Security clearance – The process for getting new staff cleared through the eQip systems varied quite a bit from individual to individual but the overall impact on the staffing and interviewing plans were consistent for the contractors who had new staff assigned. Our recommendation for future research is to assume a worst-case scenario for the security clearances so that there is less likelihood of a negative impact on the schedule.
- Quality of Spanish translation of the tested questions – One positive finding from this experience was that the feedback from cognitive interview respondents was much more positive about the quality of the Spanish translations. There were very few instances of translations problems with the questions tested. We believe that this is partly due to the fact that even the “new” questions tested were based on existing versions of questions that had vocabulary that has been well translated and tested prior to this research effort.

## **12.2 Recommendations for Future Research**

The following are possible topics for future research related to the ACS:

- § As the Census Bureau expands the number of languages for which it produces translated materials, there is a continuing need to review the translations to ensure that they meet the standards and guidelines for cultural appropriateness as well as accuracy.
- § Additional research is needed that targets a better understanding as to which ACS materials are most useful for these linguistically isolated populations.
- § Research is needed into effective communication protocols used with translation contractors to better understand how to facilitate two-way communication with Census Bureau methodologists and translators to improve the cognitive equivalence of the intended messages. There is also a need to better understand how constraints of matching English in both sentence structure and format can impact the cultural sensitivity of the messages.
- § An investigation into how these non-English speakers are motivated to complete the ACS forms and how they actually complete the forms is needed. For example, do they complete the forms themselves or do they have an English-speaking family member or friend complete the forms for them?
- § An investigation is needed that will provide insight on reasons for response/non-response to the ACS.