

The Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725). The objective is to conduct cognitive interviews to test alternative versions of relationship and marital status questions for the census and other demographic surveys. The questions were developed based on the results of focus groups conducted nationwide to identify alternative terms, definitions, categories and/or questions that would most accurately measure relationship status and partnership situations. (The focus group research was submitted for OMB approval on January 4, 2010.) This research is necessitated by recent legal changes regarding same-sex marriage, civil unions, and domestic partnerships.

Based on the focus group research, two versions of relationship and marital status questions have been developed. The two versions are described below.

Relationship Question

Version 1:

- a. Make the first category more inclusive by changing husband/wife to husband/wife/spouse;
- b. Provide functional equivalence by moving “unmarried partner” category from near the bottom of the second column to the first column following husband/wife.

Version 2:

- a. In addition to the changes in Version 1, provide separate categories for same-sex and opposite-sex married and unmarried partners.

Marital Status Question Series

Version 1:

- a. In the marital status question, add a category to capture reports of people in registered domestic partnerships or civil unions;
- b. Add a separate question to collect information about non-marital relationships between household members who are not related to Person 1;
- c. In the question asking about changes in marital status in the past year, add a category to collect reports of people in registered domestic partnerships or civil unions;
- d. In the question asking about number of times married, add a “never” response category.

Version 2:

- a. Add a separate question to collect reports of people in registered domestic partnerships or civil unions;
- b. Add a separate question to collect information about non-marital relationships between household members who are not related to Person 1.

These two versions of the relationship and marital status questions are crossed, resulting in four versions of the questionnaire. Copies of all four questionnaire versions are enclosed.

In February and March, 2010, staff from the Center for Survey Measurement, Director's Office, and Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division will conduct approximately 40 cognitive interviews with members of cohabitating couples. Approximately 14 will be conducted in the Washington, DC metropolitan area and 26 will be conducted in Ohio, Nevada, and North Carolina. These areas have been selected because they represent geographic diversity, cultural differences, and differences in the legal statuses of same sex couples. While most of the interviews will be conducted with same-sex couples, some will be conducted with opposite-sex couples to elicit information about potential backlash. Recruiting will target respondents who are married, domestic partners, and have no legal status. Respondents will also include a variety of demographic characteristics including gender, age, race/ethnicity, education and income. Respondents in the Washington, DC metropolitan area will be recruited through contact with local LGBT organizations, flyers placed in predominantly LGBT establishments, at places of work, and via emails sent to LGBT metro-area residents known to one of the Principal Researchers. Interviews will be held at the Census Bureau's cognitive laboratory and at places more convenient to respondents. Respondents in Ohio, Nevada, and North Carolina will be recruited by a contractor using a national database of LGBT persons and other sources. The contractor will identify the specific cities where the interviews will take place and the sites, such as public libraries or hotel rooms.

Interviews will be conducted using a retrospective method. Respondents will be asked to complete one of the four versions of the form. After completing the form the interviewer will debrief the respondent about their interpretation and understanding of the relationship and marital status questions, along with personal information to permit verification of whether the questions were answered accurately. Then the interviewer will give the respondent a form that contains the alternative version of both the relationship and marital status questions. Respondents will be asked to complete the questions and provide feedback including which version of the questions they prefer. A copy of the protocol is enclosed.

The data collection will be managed so that equal numbers of respondents complete each version of the form.

1Participants will receive follow-up telephone reminders about their appointments. They will be informed that their participation is voluntary and that the information they provide is confidential and will be seen only by people associated with the project. Respondents will receive \$40 for their participation in this research.

The estimated time for completion of each cognitive interview is one hour. Thus, the maximum estimated burden for this research is 40 hours.

The contact person for questions regarding this data collection is:

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