

The Census Bureau, in collaboration with the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725). The objective of this research is to conduct focus groups, which will lead to questions to add into rotations for the Federal Statistical System Public Opinion Monitoring Survey (FSS POMS). This survey will be fielded as a joint effort among Federal Statistical Agencies and will attempt to monitor the public's trust in official statistics. In addition, the information will inform efforts to develop more standardized informed consent language related to federal agency data sharing and linking. This research also involves cognitive interviews and respondent debriefing, which were approved by OMB on October 21, 2011 and December 16, 2011, respectively.

In January of 2012, staff from the Census Bureau, NCHS and IRS will conduct a maximum of 3 focus groups with respondents in the Washington, DC metro area. Each focus group will have a maximum of 15 people. Therefore, a maximum of 45 individuals will participate in the proposed data collection. In order to test respondents from the general public, both those who are favorable towards and not favorable towards the government, we plan to conduct interviews in neutral locations, for example, non-profit service providers, libraries, and churches. We will recruit a diverse set of respondents, varying on demographics such as age, education, income and race.

The purpose of this collection will be to establish and flesh out the constructs that form the public's basic understanding of administrative data use by the federal government. In particular, it is unclear how the American public understands federal data uses and the protections provided by various statements of confidentiality, privacy, and limitations that the agencies provide at the time of collection or public notices. Furthermore, the public's perception of data ownership or control by the federal government and the limitations to this ownership are not well established.

Focus groups will therefore be used to establish how members of the public approach and understand the cognitive domains/constructs of *data ownership and sharing*, *data protection*, and *federal data use*.

- The domain of *data ownership and sharing* would include how the public views the government and its control over the information they provide. For instance, do individuals believe that once they give data to a collecting agency, that information will be seen and controlled by that agency alone, or by the federal government as a whole? Furthermore, this domain would include whether or not the public thinks that government agencies have the right or obligation to share information or data with other agencies, how this right or obligation changes depending on the type of information that is to be shared (i.e., income data versus race data versus identifying information such as social security number), and how the public views potential risks when presented with more explicit information about how data linking and sharing are operationalized.

- The domain of *data security* would include perceptions of harm that could come from sharing information with the government; what separations, if any, are understood to exist between statistical agencies and administrative/enforcement agencies; and whether these barriers are understood to exist across the government or just in regards to well-known agencies;
- The domain of “federal data use” would include perceptions of how statistical agencies use information differently than administrative agencies; and what the terms “data use,” “statistical purposes,” “administrative records, and “data sharing” mean to the American public in regards to the Federal government.

The protocols for the focus groups (see Appendix A) will draw from the results of the cognitive interviews carried out by Census, NCHS, and the IRS on the administrative data questions proposed for the FSS POMS. By exploring these broad domains through discussions, the focus group data should begin to show the Federal Statistical System how people *actually think* about many of the concepts, such as administrative data and data protection, which members of the statistical system take for granted. The data from the focus groups, alongside the previous cognitive lab work done for the base FSS POMS, will be used to construct a set of questions on administrative data use. A future collection will refine these questions throughout cognitive interviews.

The focus groups will be tape-recorded and transcribed, with the participants' permission, to facilitate summary of the results. All participants will be informed that their response is voluntary and that the information they provide is confidential. Data will be collected under Title 13 of the US Code. Respondents will receive \$75 for their participation.

The estimated time for completion of each focus group is 90 minutes. Thus, the estimated burden for this research is 67.5 hours (3 groups X 15 participants X 1.5 hours).

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

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