

**2010 Census Alternative Questionnaire Experiment Focus Groups  
Individual Request for Clearance  
January 14, 2011**

The U.S. Census Bureau plans to conduct the 2010 Census Alternative Questionnaire Experiment (AQE) Focus Groups under the Generic Clearance for the 2010 Census Program for Evaluations and Experiments (OMB approval number 0607-0952). The plans for this follow-on data collection remain consistent with the Census Bureau's description of them in a non-substantive change request to the Generic Clearance for the 2010 Census Program for Evaluations and Experiments that OMB approved on July 30, 2010, with two important exceptions. First, the moderator guide development process resulted in the addition of questions that collect information deemed as sensitive. Second, the focus group recruitment screener collects data on race and origin in a way that deviates from the OMB standards for doing so.

This Individual Request for Clearance provides OMB with the final focus group moderator guides, the final respondent consent form, and the final recruitment screener for its review and approval. In addition, the Census Bureau provides justifications for asking sensitive questions during this data collection and for departing from OMB's established classification for collecting data on race and origin.

**Background on the 2010 AQE Focus Groups**

The overall goal of the 2010 AQE study is to continue efforts to improve a user-friendly mailout questionnaire that can be accurately completed by respondents. More specifically, the 2010 AQE will test different strategies to collect race and Hispanic origin data from Census respondents. While the mailout/mailback portion of the 2010 AQE will quantitatively demonstrate how respondents answer various race and Hispanic origin treatments, the focus group portion will provide information on why they respond as they do.

The Census Bureau has hired the research firm JBS/Aguirre International to conduct 67 focus groups with numerous race and ethnic groups for the purpose of exploring quantitative results from the 2010 AQE as well as racial and ethnic identity. JBS/Aguirre International, in collaboration with the Census Bureau, has prepared moderator guides for the focus group sessions (See Attachments A through P for 2010 Census AQE Focus Group Moderator Guides). These guides are based on preliminary 2010 AQE quantitative results and pilot tests, as well as identity and research issues for each particular race or ethnic group.

The focus groups will be broken down by race and ethnic origin so that issues that impact specific racial and ethnic groups can be explored. Each focus group participant will answer the race and Hispanic origin question(s) from one of the experimental forms for each household member. Sex, relationship, and age will also be reported for each household member. Respondents may also be shown one or more other treatments. Respondents will then discuss the treatments as well as racial and ethnic identity issues.

These focus groups serve four main purposes:

- Help determine why respondents answer a certain way to gain insight into why certain treatments may perform well or not;
- Help explain patterns observed in 2010 AQE quantitative data;
- Target small race and ethnic groups that may not be well represented in the 2010 AQE; and
- Explore areas of research that may require further examination during the 2020 testing cycle.

### **Justification for Sensitive Questions**

There are two potentially sensitive topics in the Middle Eastern / North African moderator guide, which the Census Bureau proposes exploring within these focus groups: (1) the centrality of religion in racial identity for the Middle Eastern and North African population; and (2) how the topic of 9/11 impacts the racial identification of Middle Eastern and North African communities in the United States. The Census Bureau provides a detailed justification for asking about these topics in an attachment to this request (See Attachment S: Written Justification for Sensitive Questions).

Dr. Howard Hogan, the Census Bureau's Associate Director for Demographic Programs, provided an update on these two sensitive topics in the AQE Focus Group research to the Census Bureau's Data Stewardship Executive Policy Committee, which serves as the focal point for decision-making and communication on policy issues related to privacy, security, confidentiality and administrative records. The importance of exploring these topics in the AQE research was understood. The Census Bureau believes that small focus groups are precisely the place to begin to explore these sensitive topics and questions with the Middle Eastern and North African community.

In addition, the 2010 AQE Focus Group Respondent Consent Form (See Attachment Q) provides information on how respondents are informed about the voluntary nature for providing this information with the following guidance:

Your participation in the discussion group is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you can refuse to answer any question you do not wish to answer. Participation in this discussion group will involve some loss of privacy. We will ask for a name at the discussion group for identification purposes only and request that all participants use only first names during the group session. We will also ask you not to tell anyone outside the group what any particular person said in the group. However, we cannot guarantee that participants will keep the discussion private. All names will be kept confidential by our research staff.

### **Procedures for Data Collection and Special Circumstances**

JBS/Aguirre International will select focus group participants to represent groups within OMB race and ethnic categories (The Census Bureau will not require participants to have responded to the 2010 AQE to be in a focus group). For example, in the 'White' category, JBS/Aguirre International will conduct separate focus groups with people of

Middle Eastern, North African, or European descent. JBS/Aguirre International will also recruit respondents from geographically diverse areas to account for possible geographic differences in racial and ethnic identification (See Attachment R for 2010 AQE Focus Group Recruitment Screener).

The Census Bureau believes that the recruitment of potential participants for the 2010 AQE Focus Groups requires a departure from OMB’s Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity. The 2010 AQE Focus Group Recruitment Screener collects data on race and origin using open-ended questions (See questions 3a and 3b in Attachment R). The Census Bureau is employing this approach to avoid influencing the ways in which people respond to questions on race and origin because the ways in which people respond to these questions are the focal points of the 2010 AQE Focus Group interview questions themselves. Furthermore, the Census Bureau has cognitively tested this open-ended question sequence for the 2010 AQE Reinterview Survey. These questions performed well in obtaining respondent feedback without leading them to answers. As the Census Bureau aims to elicit detailed responses from potential participants, this approach will enable the successful collection of these responses and will ensure the required racial and ethnic diversity for each focus group session.

Each focus group will consist of 10-12 participants and will last approximately two hours. The Census Bureau expects JBS/Aguirre International to conduct a total of 67 focus groups. Focus groups will occur from mid-January 2011 through the end of April 2011. Respondents will be paid a maximum of \$75 for their participation in the focus groups. Video and audio recordings of focus group sessions will be made to create transcripts of the sessions that will be used for analysis (See Attachment Q for 2010 AQE Focus Group Respondent Consent Form).

**Assurance of Confidentiality**

Information collected during the focus groups will not be Title 13 confidential data. Recruitment information will be treated as Personally Identifiable Information and will have handling restrictions. All report summaries will provide respondent anonymity, using designators such as ‘Participant 1, Participant 2’. All data will be returned to the Census Bureau at the conclusion of the contract.

**Estimate of Burden Hours**

<b>Experiment/Evaluation</b>	<b>Total # of Respondents</b>	<b>Estimated Response Time</b>	<b>Estimated Burden Hours</b>
AQE Focus Groups	804	2 hours	1608

**Project Schedule**

Focus group data collection will begin on January 19, 2011 and will continue through April 30, 2011. The initial draft of the report will be delivered to the Census Bureau on

June 1, 2011, with the final report delivered on August 31, 2011. The final presentation of the results will occur prior to September 30, 2011.

### **Costs to Federal Government**

The estimated cost to the Federal Government for the 2010 AQE Focus Groups project is approximately \$1.4 million. The Census Bureau is the only agency bearing this cost.

### **Contacts for Data Collection**

For questions on the design or implementation of the data collection described above, please contact Karen Humes (301-763-4875 or [karen.humes@census.gov](mailto:karen.humes@census.gov)) or Nicholas Jones (301-763-2440 or [nicholas.a.jones@census.gov](mailto:nicholas.a.jones@census.gov)) of the Population Division or Jason Machowski (301-763-4173 or [jason.d.machowski@census.gov](mailto:jason.d.machowski@census.gov)) of the Decennial Management Division at the Census Bureau.

### **List of Attachments**

- Attachment A: African American Moderator Guide
- Attachment B: African Moderator Guide
- Attachment C: Afro-Caribbean Moderator Guide
- Attachment D: Alaska Native Moderator Guide
- Attachment E: American Indian Moderator Guide
- Attachment F: Ancestry Differs From Place of Birth Moderator Guide
- Attachment G: Asian Moderator Guide
- Attachment H: European North American Moderator Guide
- Attachment I: Hispanic Moderator Guide
- Attachment J: Hispanic PR Moderator Guide
- Attachment K: Middle Eastern North African Iranian Moderator Guide
- Attachment L: Multiracial Moderator Guide
- Attachment M: Native Hawaiian Moderator Guide
- Attachment N: Pacific Islander Moderator Guide
- Attachment O: Parents of Multiracial Children Moderator Guide
- Attachment P: South and Central American Indigenous Moderator Guide
- Attachment Q: 2010 AQE Focus Group Respondent Consent Form
- Attachment R: 2010 AQE Focus Group Recruitment Screener
- Attachment S: Written Justification for Sensitive Questions