

ACS Respondent Burden Moderator's Guide

INTRODUCTION (15 minutes)

Hello, my name is _____ and I will be leading today's group discussion. I want to thank each of you for coming here today. [MENTION OBSERVERS IF NEEDED.]

We will talk about your experiences taking surveys in a group discussion for about two hours. There are no right or wrong answers, because only you know what you are thinking.

This discussion is confidential- we will not use your name in our reports. Your participation is voluntary.

Before we get started, I want to go over a few guidelines that will help this discussion work well. Throughout the focus group I will remind you of these guidelines in order to keep us moving forward, so please do not take offense when I remind you of these guidelines.

- Please speak one at a time.
- Speak in a voice as loud as mine so all can hear.
- Avoid side conversations with your neighbors.
- I want to hear from everyone; however, you do not have to answer every question. I would like everyone to monitor themselves so no one talks too much or too little. Occasionally, I may need to interrupt to ensure that everyone is heard or to ensure we cover all topics.
- We're here to hear your experiences and thoughts, so it's important to know if you've had a similar or different experience than others. If you disagree with someone else's comment, that's ok, but please be respectful.
- I want to give all of you time to talk so I am not going to answer any questions during the discussion. I will be happy to answer questions at the end.
- The restroom is located _____. At any time you can excuse yourself to go to the restroom or to get water. However, I ask that only one person is up or out at a time so the conversation can continue. [MENTION SNACKS IF APPLICABLE].

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Please take a moment to make sure that your cell phone is on silent or turned off.

WARM-UP (15 minutes)

Before we begin, please introduce yourself to the group. Please tell us your first name and one activity that you enjoy doing. **[GO AROUND TABLE. START WITH SELF]**.

Great, thank you. As you read in the form you signed as you arrived this evening, this session is being audio and video recorded so I don't need to take notes while we are talking. We are going to turn on the recorders now. **[MAKE SURE EVERYONE SIGNED THE CONSENT FORM]**.

****TURN ON RECORDERS/CAMERAS****

DISCUSSION (90 minutes)**1. General survey experiences and knowledge (15 minutes):**

- a. First, I'd like to hear about your experience taking surveys. What kinds of surveys have you taken before?
 - i. *If needed to warm up the group:*
 1. What are the surveys about?
 2. How do you respond to them (on paper, on the Internet, by phone, or in person)?
- b. How frequently are you asked to respond to surveys?
- c. Think of a survey that you felt motivated to complete.
 - i. What made you want to complete the survey? *If needed:* How did you decide to respond?
 1. *If needed:* How important is the topic of the survey to your decision to respond or not?
 - a. Does it matter if the survey is interesting or boring?
 - b. What makes a survey interesting?
 2. *If needed:* What about the length of the survey?
 3. *If needed:* How important is it who is conducting the survey?
 - ii. How did you feel afterwards?
- d. Is there a survey that you were asked to respond to and did not? Why not?
- e. Now think about a time where you responded to a survey and had a bad experience.
 - i. What made the experience negative?
 - ii. *If needed:* Did it feel like a hassle or not worth your time?
 1. What are some of the ways in which the survey was a hassle or not worth your time?
 - iii. How would you improve this negative survey experience?
- f. After you respond to a survey, what do you think happens with your answers?

- i. *If needed*: How do you think the data that is collected from surveys is used?
- ii. How can the results of surveys be useful for you personally?

2. ACS experience (25 minutes):

[NOTE: If the majority of the group cannot recall their ACS experience, give them copies of mail contacts and the paper questionnaire. Give respondents a few minutes to look these over, then probe again.]

- a. I'd like to focus now on one survey in particular. Some of you may remember responding to a survey called the American Community Survey, or ACS, recently. This is a survey that is conducted by the Census Bureau.
- b. Tell me what you remember about your experience with the ACS. It is okay to say you don't remember.
 - i. What about the ACS was difficult? What about it was easy?
 - ii. What made the experience worthwhile?
 1. *If needed*: What motivated you to complete it?
 2. *If needed*: What about your experience was fun or interesting?
 - iii. What about the survey did you not like?
 1. *If needed*: What about your experience was frustrating or annoying?
 2. If you could make changes to the survey, what would you keep the same and what would you change?
- c. What do you remember about being contacted to respond to this survey?
 - i. How did the Census Bureau contact you? (*If needed*: By mail? By the phone? In person with an interviewer?)
 - ii. How many times were you contacted?
 - iii. What did the contacts say? What did they tell you to do?
 - iv. How did you decide whether to respond?
 1. Was responding to the survey mandatory or voluntary?
 2. (*If needed*: For those of you who said the survey was mandatory,) If the survey were voluntary, would you have responded?
- d. When you decided to respond to the ACS, how did you respond? (*If needed*: Online? On paper? By the phone? In person with an interviewer?)
 - i. Did you finish the whole survey at one time?
 - ii. Did anyone else in your household help you complete the survey?
- e. What do you remember about the questions on the survey?
 - i. About how many were there?
 - ii. Were there any questions that were difficult to answer?
 1. Tell me more about why these questions were difficult.

- a. *If needed*: Did you need to get additional help or look at documents to answer any of the survey questions?
- b. *If needed*: Were they sensitive?
- c. *If needed*: Were they personal?
- iii. About how long did it take you to answer the survey?
- iv. Were there any questions that you did not want to answer?
- v. Were there any questions that surprised you?

[NOTE: If the majority of the group cannot recall their ACS experience, give them copies of mail contacts and the paper questionnaire. Give respondents a few minutes to look these over, then probe again.]

- f. What do you think happened with your answers after you responded to the ACS?
 - i. *If needed*: How do you think the data that is collected in the ACS is used?
 - ii. (*If needed*: Data from the ACS are used to produce statistics about the country.) How do you think these statistics are used once the Census Bureau releases them? How useful do you think the statistics are that come out of the ACS?

3. Burden (50 minutes):

- a. For the next part of the session, I'm going to hand you a piece of paper with several questions. Please take a few minutes to read over these and answer them thinking about your experience with the ACS. It's okay if you can't remember- just answer the questions to the best of your ability [HAND OUT SET 1 OF CE BURDEN QUESTIONS. GIVE RESPONDENTS A FEW MINUTES].
- b. Now I'd like to go through these questions one-by-one. Let's start with the first question. [NOTE: REPEAT FOR EACH QUESTION. IF TIME IS A CONSTRAINT, ASK ABOUT QUESTIONS AS A WHOLE.]
 - i. In your own words, what is this question asking?
 - ii. How easy or difficult was it to answer this question?
 - 1. *If needed*: Was anything about this question confusing?
- c. Now I'd like to give you one more question. Please take a few minutes to read over the question and answer it thinking about your experience with the ACS. [HAND OUT SET 2 OF CE BURDEN QUESTIONS. GIVE RESPONDENTS A FEW MINUTES].
 - i. What were you thinking about when you answered this question?
 - ii. This question used the word "burden." What does it mean for something to be a "burden" or "burdensome"?

1. *If needed*: What are some other words or phrases that mean the same thing as “burden”?
 - iii. *If needed*: What, if anything, did you find burdensome about your experience with the ACS?
- d. Thinking about the set of questions you answered before this one, which of these questions asked about things that seem related to whether the ACS seems burdensome?
 - i. *If needed*: Which ones did *not* seem related to whether the ACS seems burdensome?
- e. Is there anything else you can think of that would contribute to the ACS feeling burdensome?
- f. What kinds of changes, if any, could be made to the ACS to make it less burdensome?

CONCLUSION

We are just about finished with the discussion here today. Does anyone have any additional comments or questions? **[RESPOND TO COMMENTS AND ANSWER QUESTIONS]**

Thank you very much for your time this evening. We will now come around and bring you your money for participating.

Questions for Moderator Reference**Set 1**

1. Do you feel that the length of the American Community Survey (ACS) was too long, about right, or too short?
 - Too long
 - About right
 - Too short

2. How interesting was the ACS to you?
 - Very interesting
 - Somewhat interesting
 - A little interesting
 - Not at all interesting

3. How difficult or easy was it for you to answer the questions in the ACS?
 - Very easy
 - Somewhat easy
 - Somewhat difficult
 - Very difficult

4. Thinking about the contacts you received before the ACS, would you say it was too many, a reasonable number, or not enough?
 - Too many
 - A reasonable number
 - Not enough

5. How sensitive did you feel the questions on the ACS were?
 - Very sensitive
 - Somewhat sensitive
 - A little sensitive
 - Not at all sensitive

6. How agreeable would you be to take another survey like the ACS in the future?
 - Very agreeable
 - Somewhat agreeable
 - Somewhat disagreeable

- Not at all agreeable
7. If we had to extend the ACS for another 15 minutes, how willing would you have been to continue?
- Very willing
 - Somewhat willing
 - Somewhat unwilling
 - Very unwilling
8. Thinking about the amount of effort that you put forth into answering the ACS, would you say that you put forth:
- A lot of effort
 - A moderate amount of effort
 - A little effort
 - No effort
9. How motivated were you to complete the ACS as quickly as possible? Would you say that you were:
- Very motivated
 - Somewhat motivated
 - Somewhat unmotivated
 - Very unmotivated
10. How much do you trust the U.S. Census Bureau to safeguard the information you have provided them on the ACS?
- Strongly trust
 - Somewhat trust
 - Neither trust nor distrust
 - Somewhat distrust
 - Strongly distrust
11. Would you say that the time and effort you put into answering the ACS survey questions was:
- Very well spent
 - Somewhat well spent
 - A little well spent
 - Not at all well spent

12. How important do you think it is for the U.S. Census Bureau to collect the information on the ACS?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Neither important nor unimportant
- Somewhat unimportant
- Very unimportant

Set 2

How burdensome was the ACS to you?

- Very burdensome
- Somewhat burdensome
- A little burdensome
- Not at all burdensome