

Generic Information Collection Request

Request: The Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for the collection of routine customer feedback (OMB number 0690-0030). We propose to conduct and seek approval for focus group research on respondents' perceptions of burden in the American Community Survey (ACS), conducted by staff in the Center for Survey Measurement (CSM).

Purpose: The ACS has also been a "target of criticism for...excessive burden" and "generates a small but continuous stream of complaints to members of Congress" (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016). In response to these concerns, the American Community Survey Office (ACSO) has studied several possible methods of reducing burden, including but not limited to: softening the mandatory response messaging, reducing the number of Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) and Computer-Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) contact attempts, and removing questions from the survey. However, it is unclear if or how these changes have affected how burdened respondents feel about participation in the ACS. This research will explore respondents' perceptions of burden.

This research will use qualitative methodologies to answer the following questions:

1. What is respondents' overall level of perceived burden in being contacted by and responding to the ACS?
2. Which features of the ACS contribute to or affect respondents' level of perceived burden? How much does each of these features contribute to respondents' perceived burden?

Population of Interest: The planned focus group research will focus on assessing the experience of previous ACS respondents. The ACS samples households from the general U.S. population.

Timeline: Testing will be conducted over several weeks in the month of March and April. Recruiting will start in February.

Language: Focus groups will be conducted in English only.

Sample: Census Bureau staff will sample respondents who responded to the ACS one to three months prior to the focus groups for three different areas of the country that will be selected based on the amount of sample available.

Focus groups will be stratified by mode of response, though some focus groups may include respondents from two different modes, depending on available sample.

Recruitment: Participants will be recruited by telephone by staff in the Census Bureau telephone centers. They may also receive an email reminder about the focus group after they agree to participate. We will provide the telephone center with the sample, a telephone script,

and training. A copy of the script is included in Enclosure 1. This is a voluntary research study. Respondents can decline participation at any time.

Method: Participants will be invited to participate as described above, and assigned to attend a focus group at a specific date and time.

We will hold both small and large focus groups: small focus groups will consist of 3-4 participants, while large focus groups will consist of 6-8. We expect to recruit 12 respondents for the large focus groups and 6 respondents for the small focus groups to account for possible no-shows.

CSM staff will moderate the focus groups and will collect no personally identifiable data. The questions asked of respondents are shown in Enclosures 3 and 4.

Protocol: The majority of the time spent in the focus group will be an open discussion on the questions shown in Enclosures 3 and 4. Respondents will also be asked to answer demographic questions on a piece of paper (see Enclosure 5). Their names and contact information will not be linked to this demographic information.

Consent: Participants will be informed of the OMB number and the voluntary nature of the study. Participants will also complete a consent form upon their arrival to the focus group (see Enclosure 2).

Use of Incentive: We plan to offer an incentive of \$75 to offset the costs of participation, such as travel and parking.

Below is a list of materials to be used in the current study:

1. Telephone recruitment script (Enclosure 1)
2. Consent form (Enclosure 2)
3. Focus group moderator's guide (Enclosure 3)
4. Focus group sample questions (Enclosure 4)
5. Demographic questionnaire (Enclosure 5)

Length of interview: We estimate 2 hours per respondent in the larger focus groups, and 1.5 hours per respondent in the smaller focus groups.

The contact person for questions regarding data collection and statistical aspects of the design of this research is listed below:

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