

Homebuyer Survey Cognitive Testing Interview Guide

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Interviewer instructions:

This is a guide for CDC and partner investigators to help guide them through the process of getting feedback on the homebuyer survey for the study entitled *Measuring the effects of state and local radon policies*. This approach follows pilot-testing guidance as discussed by Presser et al. The introduction letter will be mailed to prospective participants with a separate sealed envelope containing the survey. The participants will contact investigators to set up thirty minutes to conduct an interview. After reading through the instructions, the interviewer will start recording, ask the participant to open the sealed envelope, and proceed through the questions. Participants will be asked to interpret the questions and interviewers will note both what the person says as well as hesitations or other indications of confusion.

It is imperative that interviewers fully understand the homebuyer survey prior to conducting the cognitive testing interview. The following guide contains narrative sections to be read to participants and instruction sections for the interviewer. These responses will help investigators assess how respondents comprehend questions, interpret questions, and report answers to questions. Investigators will refine the survey instrument based on the results of this cognitive testing. Please follow the instructions in a sequential manner.

Narrative to be read to participants:

Thank you for participating in this interview today. Your participation is very important. My name is **(interviewer name here)** from **(or representing)** the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The purpose of the *Environmental contamination laws affecting single-family home sales* study is to see how laws related to the environmental contaminants of radon and lead affect the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of homebuyers and real estate agents engaged in the sale or purchase of single-family homes. The results of this study will help us better understand how radon and lead laws affect homebuyers and real estate agents, identify future research needs, and

provide information to decision-makers about the effect of these policies on reducing exposures to radon and lead.

First, we want to confirm that you are the owner of the home that we sent this survey to, are you the owner of that property?

Interviewer instructions:

Only proceed if the answer is “yes.”

If the answer is “no.” (that person is not the owner) try to find out who the owner is and how to contact them. Then, let the participant know that the survey is intended only for homebuyers of specific properties and we must, unfortunately, stop the interview. Thank the person for their time and finish the interview.

Narrative (continued):

Secondly, we want to ask if the home buying process for the home this invitation was sent to involved any paperwork required by a townhome or condominium association?

Interviewer instructions:

Only proceed if the answer is “no.”

If the answer is “yes.” - The home sale involved paperwork for a townhome, or condominium association. Verify that this involved paperwork beyond the normal forms associated with a home sale. If this is correct (i.e. it did involve extra paperwork), let them know that the survey is intended only for single-family homes and we must, unfortunately, stop the interview. Thank the person for their time and finish the interview. If it did not involve extra paperwork please continue the interview.

Narrative (continued):

Your thoughts and suggestions about the questions that we sent you are very important to the study, and we appreciate your taking the time to take the survey and talk with us. Our talk today will look at how you interpreted the questions from the survey that was sent to you earlier. Your input will help us refine this survey so that we can make sure we are correctly interpreting the responses we get when we send the survey out to other participants.

Our interview should take no more than thirty minutes.

I would like to make sure you are aware of a few ground rules before we start. First of all, I want to make sure you know that your participation in this interview is voluntary and you can stop at any time. Please let me know if at any time you need to stop or take a break.

Next, anything you say here will not be released. Your name, address, and phone number will not be given to anyone, and no one will contact you about this interview after you and I are done talking. When we write our report, we will not refer to you by name.

Also, I will be recording the interview so that I can go back through it again to make sure I fully understood your responses. This recording will be deleted once we are finished revising our survey.

Finally, there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. We want to know about how you are interpreting the questions in this survey. You are the expert here.

I now want to go over the information that we mailed to you.

Do you have the letter and survey we sent you in front of you?

Interviewer instructions:

Make sure participant has survey in front of them and do not start until they do.

Narrative (continued):

First of all, did you complete the survey already?

Interviewer instructions:

- If yes, ask about how long it took for them to take the survey and note this.
- If no, ask them to open the survey, located in the second envelope that the invitation was mailed with.

Narrative (continued after participant has taken the survey):

We will now go through each question and I will ask you to tell me what you thought each question meant.

Interviewer instructions:

- Read through the following list of questions and use the probes in the right column to assess for any specific thoughts about each question.

Question	Special probes (beyond interpretation of the question)
The following section asks questions about the property	

State, county, and zip code the property was purchased in	
Month/year home was bought	
Year house was built	
Were you the first owner of this home? (i.e., Was it newly built?)	
Did the sale of this home involve special paperwork related to a homeowners association?	
Factors associated with radon decisions	
Have you heard about health issues related to radon?	
If yes, you have heard about radon as a health issue, please place a check next to all the sources of your information	See if participant knew they could select more than one
Did your understanding of the health issues related to radon affect your decisions at any point during the home buying process? (For example, did you consider radon issues when looking for and deciding on which home to buy?)	See if participant knew to select just one box
Please tell us more about how it affected your decision...	Probe to see whether write-in responses here could fit into the other categories and why they did not.
Did any real estate agent discuss radon with you during the home buying experience that led to the purchase of this property?	
Did you or the sellers have to sign any paperwork just about radon during the negotiation or closing to indicate whether they tested for radon?	
Did you receive any brochures about radon during the home inspection or closing?	
Has the home you bought been tested for radon since you became interested in purchasing this home?	
If yes, who was the first to recommend testing for radon? (Check one)	Make sure respondent only selected one.

	Probe to see whether write-in responses were similar to the categories and why they chose to write-in a response instead of select a category
If it was elevated (> 4 pCi/L) was it fixed?	
If yes, who fixed it?	Make sure respondent only selected one. Probe to see whether write-in responses were similar to the categories and why they chose to write-in a response instead of select a category
Do you know if there are people who test for and fix radon issues in your area?	
Radon professionals can be certified by an exam to test for and fix radon issues but it depends on state law. If yes, there are people who test and fix radon issues in your area, do you know if they are certified by the state or a national organization?	
Assume you needed someone to test for or fix a radon problem in the home you just bought. Please rank the factors that you would consider in choosing them with 1 being the most important criteria and 4 being the least important.	Make sure respondent understood to rank all responses. See if a write-in response would have allowed them to better tailor their response and why the others don't fit.
Factors associated with lead-based paint decisions	
Have you heard about health issues related to lead-based paint?	
If yes, please place a check next to all the sources of your information.	See if participant knew they could select more than one
Did your understanding of the health issues related to lead-based paint affect your decisions at any point during the home buying process? (For example, did you consider lead-based paint issues	See if participant knew to select just one box

when looking for and deciding on which home to buy?)	
Please tell us more about how it affected your decision...	Probe to see whether write-in responses here could fit into the other categories and why they did not.
Did any real estate agent discuss lead-based paint with you during the purchase of this property?	
Has the home you bought been tested for lead-based paint?	
If yes, who was the first to recommend testing for lead-based paint? (Check one)	Make sure respondent only selected one.
Did your home inspector test for lead-based paint?	
Did you or the sellers have to sign any specific paperwork during the closing to indicate whether lead-based paint was present?	
Did you receive any brochures about lead-based paint during the negotiation or closing?	
Are contractors who work on lead-based paint available in your area?	
Contractors should be certified to work on homes that have lead-based paint. If yes, contractors who work on lead-based paint are available, do you know if they are certified by the state or a national organization?	
Assume you needed a contractor to fix a lead-based paint problem in the property you just bought please rank the factors that you would consider in choosing them with 1 being the most important criteria and 4 being the least important.	See if a write-in response would have allowed them to better tailor their response and why the others don't fit.
The following section asks questions about the homebuyer	
Age of person (at the time of purchase) who bought this property	Could this be clearer in some way?
How many total properties have YOU bought in your lifetime? (including this one)	Make sure that instructions are clear for the main buyer of the home.

Sex	
Please place a check next to the group that you would say best represents your race	
What is the highest grade or year of school you completed?	

Narrative:

We are almost finished. I just have a few more questions about the survey over all.

1. In this survey we have places where people can circle the answer, is that okay or is there a better way to help you know you need to select one of the responses?
2. Did you feel like the survey questions really captured what you understood and did about radon or lead in your home?
3. If not, are there questions you would like to see added or taken away?
4. Which ones?
5. Would you change the order of the survey questions? If so, how?

Finally, is there anything else you can think of that will help us better collect this information?

Thank you again for all your help with refining this survey. Your time today has helped us better understand how to capture the information needed to see how radon and lead-based paint laws affect you. We will send out the \$15 pre-paid credit card within one week, if you have not received it within two weeks please let us know.