

Protocol for American Housing Survey Contact Materials Testing

Participant ID #: | A | H | S | | | | | | |

Interview Date: | | | | / | | | | / | | | | | | | (mm/dd/yyyy)

Interviewer initials: | | | |

Start Time: _____ AM / PM End Time: _____ AM / PM

Section 1: Interviewer: Read/ Paraphrase the following text:

Greeting: Hello. My name is _____, and I work for the Census Bureau. Thank you for agreeing to participate in our study.

What: In order to help us improve our surveys, we turn to people like you to find out if our contact materials, like letters, make sense and are fairly easy to understand. We have found that the best way to do that is to actually show the materials to people and see how they work for them, so you will be helping us test materials from one of our surveys.

How: [SHOW RESPONDENT STACK OF MATERIALS] These are materials from the American Housing Survey. If this were the real survey, you would receive these materials in the mail. In a couple of minutes I am going to ask you to look at these just as you would if you had received them at home but with one major difference.

Think Aloud: I would like you to think aloud as you look at the materials. I am interested in your feedback on the materials, but I am also interested in the process you go through in your mind when you look at the materials. I would like you to tell me everything that you are thinking and feeling as you look at them. You might have some questions about the survey that come up as you're looking at the materials. You can still ask these questions, but I will wait until the end to answer them. I want to use this time to get your thoughts and opinions.

Practice: Let's do a practice before we start. Please think aloud as you answer this question: How many windows are in your home?

Interruptions: I might stop you at a couple of points and ask you some questions about your feedback, or about the materials themselves. I am also going to ask you some questions at the end. There are no right or wrong answers, because only you know what you are thinking.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Confidentiality: Our session today is completely confidential. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you can decline to answer any particular question.

Recording: So I don't have to rely on my memory later on, I'd like to record this interview. That way, I can focus today on what you're saying rather than having to concentrate on taking notes. Is that ok with you?

**** HAVE PARTICIPANT SIGN CONSENT FORM****

****Begin: **TURN ON RECORDER****

OK, let's begin. Please remember to think aloud as you look at the materials.

Interviewer: **Note** any confusion or difficulties respondents have with the materials.

If respondent is not being talkative, you can ask them to underline things they don't like or find confusing in the materials and circle things they do like.

Letter

Let's say you received an envelope in the mail with this letter inside. Please take a minute to read over this letter, and please tell me anything you are thinking as you read through it.

After respondent finishes reading the letter:

- **Probe:** Which parts of the letter did you read?
- **Probe:** What was the first thing you noticed about the letter?
- **Probe:** In your own words, what is this letter asking you to do?
- **Probe:** What would you do after you finished reading it?
 - *If needed:* Would you go online and take the survey? Would you do it right away?
 - **Probe:** What do you think you would do if you were not able to respond on the Internet?
- **Probe:** Does the letter mention any reasons for taking this survey?
- **Probe:** What kind of questions would you expect to be on this survey? Do you think the questions will be difficult to answer?
- **Probe:** How important do you think it is to complete this survey?
- **Probe:** *Point to incentives sentence.* What did you think about this part of the letter?
- **Probe:** *Point to records sentence [if applicable].* In your own words, what is this sentence saying? What did you think about this part of the letter? What does "recent" mean to you? Would you get your records?
 - *If yes:* which records would you get?
- **Probe:** Is there someone else in your household that you would give this to instead?

FAQs

Now let's flip over the letter. Take a minute to read this over, and please tell me anything you are thinking as you read through it.

- **Probe:** What did you think of this side of the letter?

- **Probe:** Was there anything you read that was confusing? Anything you didn't like?
 - *If confusing:* How do you think this should be worded instead?
- **Probe:** Does this side of the letter mention any reasons for taking this survey?
- **Probe:** How important do you think it is to complete this survey?

Interviewer: Note whether the respondent wants to know specifically what questions the AHS asks.

Data Wheel

Let's say that this was also inside the envelope with the letter we just looked at. Take a minute to look it over.

- **Probe:** Tell me your initial thoughts about this.
- **Probe:** What do you think this is trying to tell you? Does this help you understand what the survey is about?

Postcard #1

If you did not respond to the survey after you saw the first letter we looked at, you would receive this piece of mail next. Take a minute to read this over, and please tell me anything you are thinking as you read through it.

- **Probe:** Tell me what you like and dislike about this piece of mail. Was there anything that was confusing?
 - *If confusing:* How do you think this should be worded instead?
- **Probe:** What do you think about this type of postcard? Would you open it?
- **Probe:** Does this postcard mention any reasons for taking this survey?
- **Probe:** Did you learn anything new about the survey from this piece of mail that you did not know when you read the first letter?
- *If respondent said they would not respond to the first letter:* Would you respond after seeing this piece of mail?

Letter #2

If we still did not hear from you, you would receive this piece of mail next. Take a minute to read this over, and please tell me anything you are thinking as you read through it.

- **Probe:** Tell me what you like and dislike about this piece of mail. Was there anything that was confusing?
 - *If confusing:* How do you think this should be worded instead?
- **Probe:** Did you learn anything new about the survey from this piece of mail that you did not know when you read the first letter and postcard?

- *If respondent said they would not respond to the first letter and postcard:* Would you respond after seeing this piece of mail?

Postcard #2

This piece of mail would be the last piece of mail you would receive if you did not respond to the survey. Take a minute to read this over and please tell me anything you are thinking as you read through it.

- **Probe:** Tell me what you like and dislike about this piece of mail. Was there anything that was confusing?
 - *If confusing:* How do you think this should be worded instead?
- **Probe:** Did you learn anything new about the survey from this piece of mail that you did not know when you read the first letter?
- *If respondent said they would not respond to the first two letters and postcard:* Would you respond after seeing this piece of mail?
- **Probe:** What do you think about the part where we mention having a Census interviewer contact you if you do not respond?

DEBRIEFING:

Overall, would you say the materials were easy or difficult to understand? Tell me more about that.

Do you think there are materials some people would find confusing? Which ones?

In general, would you say you were likely or not very likely to read these materials if they came in the mail to you?

Is there anything else you would like to tell us that you haven't had a chance to mention yet?

Thank you for your feedback today.

****HAVE RESPONDENT SIGN VOUCHER FORM****