

**Appendix L.1**  
**Pretest Methods and Summary of Findings**

**MEMORANDUM**

P.O. Box 2393  
Princeton, NJ 08543-2393  
Telephone (609) 799-3535  
Fax (609) 799-0005  
www.mathematica-mpr.com

**TO:** Insight Policy Research

**FROM:** Betsy Santos

**DATE:** 03/09/2016

**SUBJECT:** Survey Pretest Results for the Study of WIC Food Package  
Costs and Cost Containment

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Mathematica Policy Research conducted a pre-test of two instruments for the Study of WIC Food Package Costs and Containment: (1) Participant Survey and (2) Former Participant Survey. This memo summarizes the results from the survey pretest and summarizes the proposed instrument changes based on these results.

The purpose of the pretest was to assess:

- Survey length when administered in English
- Survey flow
- Respondents' interpretation of questions
- Respondents' ability to recall required information
- Completeness of response category options

To obtain timing estimates, the pretest interviews were conducted by telephone using hardcopies of both surveys. At the end of the interviews we conducted a short debriefing to learn whether respondents interpreted questions as intended. If respondents found any questions difficult to answer, we asked why those questions were difficult and how easy or difficult it was to recall the required information.

### **Testing Details and Procedures**

We conducted 5 pretest interviews in English with the Survey of WIC Participants and 4 pretest interviews with the Survey of Former WIC Participants. A survey associate and survey specialist at Mathematica conducted the 9 pretest interviews between February 15 and February 25, 2016.

Mathematica's budget assumed that the Survey of WIC Participants would take 30 minutes to complete on average and that the Survey of Former WIC Participants would take 20 minutes to complete on average.

Respondents were sent a check for \$30 for participating in the pretest.

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## Recruitment and Respondent Profile

In February, Insight Policy Research contacted WIC state offices in Oregon and Florida to explain the purpose of the pretest and request one list of current participants and one list of former participants.

Respondents for the pretest were recruited from the sample files provided by the two WIC state offices. Mathematica staff called potential respondents, explained the purpose of the pretest, and scheduled a convenient time for the interview with those who agreed to participate. During the pretest effort, however, many of the people we scheduled for the interview did not answer the phone at the time of their scheduled interviews (4 current participants and 2 former participants). In order to decrease the likelihood of getting a “no-show”, we revised the procedures and attempted to complete the interview at the time of the recruitment call rather than scheduling an appointment for a later time. This strategy was more successful. Nonetheless, the recruitment effort was challenging overall, particularly for the former WIC participants. Out of the 30 phone numbers in the sample file for the former participants, there were 7 (23%) phone numbers that did not work, and 5 of those were from Florida. Eleven cases did not answer, and 4 cases refused to be interviewed. Moreover, 4 of the sample members in the Florida file only spoke Spanish. Given these challenges with the Florida file, we were only able to complete 2 of the 9 interviews with Florida participants.

We made an effort to recruit various types of respondent to ensure the different instrument paths and fills were tested. These included households with (1) only a pregnant woman was receiving benefits, (2) both the mother and child(ren) were receiving benefits, and (3) only one or more child was receiving WIC benefits. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the individuals who participated in the pretest interviews.

**Table 1. Respondent Characteristics**

		Current	Former	Total
Benefit Type	Pregnant woman only receiving benefit	1	1	2
	Woman and child(ren) receiving benefits	2	0	2
	Only child(ren) receiving benefits	2	3	5
Gender	Male		1	1
	Female	5	3	8
State	Oregon	3	4	7
	Florida	2	0	2

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## **Findings and Suggested Instrument Revisions**

### **Survey of WIC Participants.**

*Survey Timing.* The Survey of WIC Participants averaged 38.6 minutes. This is 29% longer than the estimated time of 30 minutes. Section A, where the respondents had to recall their satisfaction of the available brands and packages sizes of food items that they bought in the previous month, was especially time consuming. Section C was also lengthy, particularly, where the respondents had to recall whether or not they bought all, some or none of the foods they could buy in the previous month and their suggestions for food items that they would like to buy but cannot. The survey length in minutes by section is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Survey Length in Minutes by Section**

Section	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5
Intro/Screenener	1	1	1	1	1
Section A	12	10	11	10	10
Section B	0	0	0	0	0
Section C	10	15	12	12	16
Section D	5	6	5	5	9
Section E	1	1	3	1	2
Section F	3	2	3	4	3
Section G	4	3	3	3	3
<b>Total time</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>45</b>

In order to shorten the time it takes respondents to complete the survey we have proposed some changes and cuts to the survey to help decrease the completion time. Table 3 displays proposed changes that will reduce respondent burden and bring the survey closer to the target response time of 30 minutes.

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**Table 3. Proposed Modifications to Address Issues and Reduce Administration Time of the Survey of WIC Participants**

Question A5	Issue	The list of difficulties in A5 are similar to the problems/difficulties mentioned in A6, A7, and A8, especially items listed in the 2nd and 4th row of A5. It is redundant to ask all of these questions.
	Recommendation	Drop A5 completely to reduce survey time, and keep A6-A8 to capture difficulties. Although our preference is to cut A5 entirely, another alternative is to cut the 2nd and 4th items (finding foods in store and knowing which package sizes add up to right amount) because they are very similar to A8 and A6 respectively. Also, the fourth item should be reworded to say "Knowing which package sizes you can buy" as respondents had trouble understanding the wording with the original phrasing.*
Question A5	Issue	The fourth item in A5 is "Knowing which package sizes add up to the amount you can buy" and respondents had trouble understanding the question.
	Recommendation	Reword to "Knowing which package sizes you can buy."*
Questions D1 and D2/D12 (previously D13)	Issue	It takes a long time for the interviewer to read all of the answer categories.
	Recommendation	Switch the order of questions so that D2 is now D1. The interviewer can ask the name of the store and if the interviewer is familiar with the name of the store then they can code the store type on their own in D2. If the interviewer is not familiar with the store type then they can ask the respondent what type of store it is. Revise D2 and D12 to have an open ended response. The existing list of response categories will be maintained in ALL CAPS so that interviewers can code the answer by selecting from the list.*
Questions D6/D16	Issue	Respondents had difficulty answering because, while they could walk to the place where they buy food, there were often many reasons why they did not (e.g. dangerous, physical barriers, pregnant, etc.)
	Recommendation	Drop this question. D7/D17 and D8/D18 capture distance. And other questions in this section capture burden.
Questions E3/E4	Issue	Respondents had difficulty answering if they knew anyone who could get WIC but didn't because they didn't know if others were eligible. One respondent said that she knew someone who put off getting WIC but when asked E4 she could not say why the person put off getting WIC.
	Recommendation	Drop this question. We are not likely to get anything useful because respondents are asked to provide second-hand information.
Question F1/F4 (now merged into Question F1)	Issue	The questions in Question F1 and F4 have the same question stem.
	Recommendation	We recommend combining both of these questions so that the question stem can be read once.
Question F3	Issue	Interviewers will need to provide definitions of most of the special diets most of the time since many people are not familiar with the diet type.
	Recommendation	We recommend dropping this question because of the time it will take for interviewers to describe each of the special diets.
Question F2	Issue	Most respondents said "yes" to these questions because they try to generally eat healthy, rather than for any particular health reason.
	Recommendation	We recommend dropping this question and rely on F1 and F4 to capture special diets.

*\*These changes were made to the Survey of Former WIC Participants in order to be consistent with the changes that we made to the Survey of WIC Participants.*

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**Survey Content.** Overall, respondents seemed to understand most questions and did not appear to have much difficulty answering them. Some questions, however, did require further clarification. As such, proposed changes were made to question wording and question logic to address any respondent misunderstandings of question intent. Table 4 provides a list of questions where there was some issue during administration, and the suggested modifications.

**Table 4. Current Participant Survey Content – Problems Identified and Recommended Changes**

Screener section	Issue	One respondent said that she just started receiving WIC benefits at the end of January. This meant the interviewer could not ask her about her food buying experiences in January.
	Recommendation	Even though we expect to receive a sample file with only participants who have been on WIC for more than one month, we suggest adding a screener question (1a) that asks respondents if they received WIC benefits in the previous 2 months. If they did not then they would skip out of the interview. This would help account for any errors in the sample file with benefit dates.
1b	Issue	Since this is no longer the first question the phrase, “I’d like to begin by confirming some information” is incorrect.
	Recommendation	Omit the phrase “I’d like to begin by confirm some information.”
1b	Issue	A respondent said that she was confused when she was asked to confirm if she and her child received WIC foods. She said that her child did not eat WIC foods, but the child’s name was on the WIC EBT card.
	Recommendation	Change the questions to ask the respondent to confirm who in the household is receiving WIC <i>benefits</i> instead of foods.
A1	Issue	The wording “I’d like to know the types of foods that WIC provided...” may be interpreted as food that the respondent is “getting” from WIC rather than what the respondent is “buying” with WIC.
	Recommendation	Change question wording so that it is clearly asking respondents what they could buy with WIC for the previous month.
A1p	Issue	The respondent said that she cannot buy canned fish until after she has a child. There is no response category for this answer.
	Recommendation	Add a “Not applicable” option for this question.
A1q and A1r	Issue	Respondent commented that they had a 1 month year old and that she couldn’t buy the infant food yet.
	Recommendation	The flag did not differentiate between infant ages 0-5 vs. 6-12 months. Since infants age 0-5 months cannot have cereal or baby food, respondents with these infants should not receive the question. We suggest creating two flags: Infant 1 = 0-5 and Infant 2 = 6-12 so that this question skip can be programmed.*
A1r	Issue	Respondent was confused with “baby food fruits and vegetables.”
	Recommendation	Change to “jars of baby food.” Baby foods with meats is allowed and so it is acceptable to keep this category broad.

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A1b	Issue	Respondents did not understand what was included in our definition of "grain."
	Recommendation	Reword the question to list the grains. It should say: Did you buy bread, tortillas, pasta, or brown rice with WIC last month?
A2b/A3b	Issue	Respondents said that she didn't know if she would be satisfied with the brands or packaging of lactose free milk because she has never purchased this food item.
	Recommendation	Since WIC participants sometimes have a choice of what food item to buy we recommend adding A1_1 and A1_3 and revising A1_2. These questions ask the respondent to specify what type of milk, grain and protein they chose to buy during the previous month. Questions A2 and A3 will be asked only for the types of milk, grain, and legume purchased by the respondent and not for all types of milk, grains, and legumes available for purchase.
A1_2	Issue	A1_2 (previously A1b) asked which grain the respondent bought last month. Respondents did not understand what was meant by "grain."
	Recommendation	Reword the question to list the grains we are asking about.
A3	Issue	In the former participant survey respondents got confused transitioning from A2, which asks about brands, to A3, which asks about packaging. During A3 the respondents asked the interviewer if the question was still referring to brands.
	Recommendation	Add transition sentence to A3 so that it is clear that the respondent should think about packaging.
A4	Issue	A respondent commented that sometimes it is easy to shop for WIC foods and sometimes it is difficult, but it depends on the store.
	Recommendation	Add response option, "Sometimes easy and sometimes difficult."*
A7	Issue	Two respondents said that they have received WIC benefits for less than 6 months.
	Recommendation	Omit the words "in the past 6 months."
B1	Issue	Most respondents already mentioned that they had bought food in January in questions A1_1, A1_2, and A1_3 and so it was redundant to ask this question.
	Recommendation	Add skip logic so that if the respondent indicates in A1_1, A1_2, or A1_3 that they bought a food item then they would not receive B1 and skip to C1.
C2	Issue	Respondents said that they did not buy the item because they chose the alternative for the month.
	Recommendation	Add response option "Could not buy because chose alternative item."  Note: A1 asks "...could you buy [FOOD CATEGORY]" and in section C we ask "did you buy" and reasons why they did not buy. Therefore, we cannot use skip logic to skip over a question when they buy an alternative.

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C2 and C4	Issue	One respondent indicated that there was no reason why she did not purchase all of the milk in the previous month. When probed by giving some possible reasons, she was able to answer.
	Recommendation	Add a response category for “no reason” and add a follow up question after “no reason” is selected so that the interviewer can read some possible responses to the question. Having this probe as a separate question allows us to track how often a probe was needed, and whether reading the responses had an impact on response given.
Intro to C3	Issue	The introduction did not read clearly for the scenario where one child is receiving benefits
	Recommendation	Add “your” before “X children.” Add “is a” as a fill so that the sentence will read “...your 1 child is a” WIC participant.
C3 and C4	Issue	The fill did not account for a scenario in which a woman only is receiving the WIC benefits.
	Recommendation	Add “you” as a fill option.
C4	Issue	Respondent should not receive this question if they said in C2 that they “could not buy (the item) because (they) chose alternative item.”
	Recommendation	Add skip logic.
C5a, C5c, C5d, C5e1, C5e2, C5f, C5i, C5j, and C5q	Issue	The interviewer reads the answer options and the “other” option is awkward when read aloud.
	Recommendation	Change the “other” option to “or something else?”
C6d, C6e, C6f, C6i, C6j, C6l, C6q, and C6r	Issue	Referencing the “WIC food list” in the question stem resulted in these respondents taking a long time to answer these questions. Respondents had trouble remembering what foods are on the WIC food list. One respondent had her WIC food list and read through it for each question to make sure that she was giving a food that wasn’t on the list. Moreover, respondents were providing vague statements such as “all of the good stuff”.
	Recommendation	Change the wording of the question to: Are there any specific types or brands of (FOOD) that you would like to buy with WIC but can’t?  Adding “specific types or brands of” helps focus respondents, eliminating the vague responses. Removing “WIC food list” makes the respondent less likely to depend on their WIC list to respond. This will reduce the time it takes to answer these questions.
C5e	Issue	Skip logic indicated that if the respondent answered “cold” then the respondent should go to C9c2.
	Recommendation	Updated logic so that if the respondent answers, “hot” then they should be asked C5e2. If the respondents answers “cold” or “both” then the respondent should continue to C5e1.
D6 (previously D7) and D15 (previously D17)	Issue	The respondent had difficulties providing the miles or blocks. The respondent only provided the time.
	Recommendation	Add interviewer probe: Your best estimate is fine.

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D8 (previously D9) and D17 (previously D19)	Issue	The respondent could only say it takes “less than 10 minutes” in the car to get to the store.
	Recommendation	Add interviewer probe: Your best estimate is fine.
D4	Issue	A respondent said that she goes to the store because “there aren’t any other options because she lives in a small town.”
	Recommendation	Add response option: No other options/Only store available.
D13 (previously D14)	Issue	Respondents said that they go to Trader Joes because there are healthier options and food items with less preservatives.
	Recommendation	Add response option: Healthier foods/organic foods*
D18 (previously D20c)	Issue	Respondent commented that she uses a Walmart shopping app to shop for WIC foods.
	Recommendation	Add a question to ask the respondent to specify the name of the shopping app that they use to buy WIC foods. As part of the data analysis, these names can be matched with a list of shopping apps specifically for shopping for WIC foods rather than a general shopping app.
D18c (previously D20c)	Issue	Respondents commented that they did not own a smartphone and therefore it was difficult to answer the question.
	Recommendation	Add response option: Don’t have a smartphone.  This option should not be read by the interviewer, but coded if the respondents volunteers that he or she does not own a smartphone.
E1	Issue	The question needs the fill to be changed so that it accounts for the plurality of “you” and “your family.”
	Recommendation	Change the fill to be “you have/your family has.”
E2	Issue	Answer categories do not apply to why the respondent did not buy a WIC item. They are answer categories for why the respondent did not go to the WIC store.
	Recommendation	Recommend changing answer categories to apply for why respondent did not buy item.
E3 (previously E4)	Issue	Respondents did not know what the eligibility requirements are for WIC.
	Recommendation	Add probe that clarifies that even if their child is no longer eligible we still want to know if the respondent would apply again.
F1 (previously F4)	Issue	The skip logic after F4 is incorrect.
	Recommendation	Change logic to say: IF “YES” TO “food allergy,” ASK F3. IF “NO” TO “food allergy”, SKIP TO F4.

*\*These changes were made to the Survey of Former WIC Participants in order to be consistent with the changes that we made to the Survey of WIC Participants.*

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**Debriefings.** Pretest respondents were asked five debriefing questions: (1) Did you find any of the questions difficult to answer? If so, why were they difficult? (2) Did I ask you about anything that was confusing or hard to understand? (3) How easy or difficult was it for you to recall, or remember the information I was asking you about? (4) How confident did you feel about your answers? (5) In general, is there anything you would change to improve the questions?

Most respondents said that they didn't find any questions confusing or hard to understand. And they all expressed having a lot of confidence in their responses. When asked about recall, one respondent said that since it was February 25th it was hard for her to recall the food items she bought and ate in January. No respondents said that there was anything they would change to improve the questions. However, a couple of respondents mentioned that they still used the vouchers rather than the EBT card. Since we expect that all states will be using the EBT cards, we did not suggest any revisions to the survey based on this feedback.

**Next Steps for the Current Participant Survey.** After implementing the proposed changes to the questionnaire, we expect the Survey of WIC Participants to average between 35-37 minutes, still longer than the 30 minutes that was budgeted. Administering the survey via CATI should also streamline administration, but additional cuts are needed to ensure the survey stays within 30 minutes. We look to Insight and FNS for feedback on what additional cuts can be made to reduce the survey's overall length. Once the proposed changes are reviewed and the survey is finalized, we will translate the surveys into Spanish.

### **Survey of Former WIC Participants**

**Survey Timing.** The Survey of Former WIC Participants survey averaged 26.25 minutes. This is longer than the estimated time of 20 minutes. However, this average time is skewed because one respondent took 47 minutes to complete the interview. This respondent was unusually talkative and therefore this interview is not an accurate measure of the survey's timing. If this interview is removed, then survey averaged 19.3 minutes, which is consistent with the proposed estimate of respondent burden

**Survey Content.** Overall, respondents seem to understand most questions and did not appear to have much difficulty answering them. Nonetheless, some questions required further clarification. Table 5 provides a list of questions where there was some issue during administration, and suggested modifications.

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**Table 5. Former Participant Survey Content – Problems Identified and Recommended Changes**

A1c	Issue	Respondents were male and they were asked A2a.
	Recommendation	Add question to the survey so that the interviewer codes the respondent's gender (male or female) based on their name and speaking voice. If the interviewer is unsure of gender then the interviewer will ask.
A2a	Issue	It does not make sense to ask this question if there is a male respondent.
	Recommendation	Add skip if the respondent is male.
B9, B11, and B12	Issue	The wording of these items are not in the same tense as B2-B8.
	Recommendation	Change wording of questions to match the tense of the previous questions.
B16	Issue	Wording is inconsistent with the Current Participant survey.
	Recommendation	Change wording to say "...and been sent back for a different item..."
C1 (introduction)	Issue	A respondent had previously received WIC with older son (before most recently receiving WIC with younger daughter) and responded to some question thinking about both times.
	Recommendation	Add text to the introduction that emphasizes that if the respondent received WIC in the past then they should think about their most recent enrollment.
C1, C2, C3	Issue	The food categories are not consistent with the food categories in the Current Participant Survey.
	Recommendation	Add Lactose-free or lactose-reduced milk, dry beans, whole wheat bread, whole wheat pasta, and brown rice. Change "cow's milk" to milk. Combine categories of hot and cold breakfast cereal so that there is just one category of "breakfast cereal." Combine categories of frozen, canned, and bottled juice so that there is just one category of "Juice."
C2	Issue	Respondents got confused transitioning from C1, which asks about brands, to C2, which asks about packaging. During C2 the respondents asked the interviewer if the question was still referring to brands.
	Recommendation	Add transition text to C2 so that it is clear that the respondent should think about packaging.

**Debriefings.** The debriefing questions were the same as the Survey of WIC Participants (*see above*).

Most respondents said that they didn't find any questions confusing or hard to understand and they expressed having a lot of confidence in their responses. One respondent said that repeating the question stem in Questions C1 and C2 was unnecessary and caused her to lose focus. The interviewers will be trained to read the full stem initially for the first 2 to 3 items and then just read the food category for the remaining items in the series. Similar to the Current

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Participant survey, a couple respondents mentioned that they still used the vouchers rather than the EBT card. Since we expect that all states will be using the EBT cards, we did not suggest any revisions to the survey based on this feedback. All respondents said that it was easy for them to recall information that was necessary to answer the survey.

*Next Steps for the Survey of Former WIC Participants.* Revisions are not needed to reduce the burden of this survey. We do need to ensure that revisions made to the Survey of WIC Participants are also implemented for this survey. Once the proposed changes are reviewed and the survey is finalized, we will translate the surveys into Spanish.

cc: Nancy Cole and Rachel Sutton-Heisey