

**2019 American Community Survey
Due Date Test Revised Mailing Materials Cognitive Interviews**

Submitted Under Generic Clearance for the Collection of Routine Customer Feedback

Request: The Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research for the collection of routine customer feedback (OMB number 0690-0030). We will conduct cognitive interviews to evaluate materials proposed for the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) Due Date Test experiment.

Purpose: The Census Bureau is continually looking for ways to increase self-response rates to the ACS in an effort to reduce field follow-up activities. Reduced field follow-up activities decreases data collection costs. To this end, the Census Bureau is planning to conduct a field test to investigate whether providing a due date in the mailing increases self-response.

The ACS currently sends sampled mailable addresses up to five pieces of mail:

1. Initial mailing (all mailable addresses)
2. Pressure seal mailer reminder (all mailable addresses)
3. Questionnaire mailing (only mailable addresses that have not responded to the two first mailings)
4. Reminder postcard (only mailable addresses that have not responded to the two first mailings)
5. Pressure seal mailer reminder (only mailable addresses that have not responded to the previous four mailings)

To investigate this research question, the Census Bureau developed five due date letters for the fifth and final mailing that a sampled address may receive in an effort to obtain a self-response from that household.

The purpose of the cognitive testing is to help refine the language used to convey the implications of not responding by the due date. The 5th mailing piece variations include: 1) the production version with just a due date added, 2) neutral language about a possible in-person visit, 3) being added to a list for a possible in-person visit, 4) being removed from a list for a possible in-person visit, and 5) a slight variation of #4.

Cognitive testing can help clarify the language and make sure the message is easily understood before being used in a field test. Each of the alternatives include the inclusion of a due date "Due: Month XX, 2019" in the respond by internet box. Below is a summary of the additional changes made to the 5th mailing, (all five versions of the 5th mailing can be found in Enclosure 1):

- Version 2- 2nd paragraph was modified to read “Your response is critically important to your local community and to your country. **Respond by Month XX, 2019, or a Census Bureau interviewer may come to your home to complete the survey in person.**”
- Version 3- the 2nd paragraph was modified to read “Your response is critically important to your local community and to your country. A Census Bureau interviewer may come to your home to complete the survey in person. **If you do not respond by Month xx, 2019 we will add you to our schedule for a visit.**”
- Version 4- the 2nd paragraph was modified to read “Because your response is critically important to your local community and to your country, a Census Bureau interviewer may come to your home to complete the survey in person. **If you respond by Month xx, 2019, we will remove you from our schedule for a visit.**”
- Version 5- the 2nd paragraph was modified to read “Your response is critically important to your local community and to your country. **If you respond by Month xx, 2019, we will remove you from our schedule for a visit.** If you do not respond, a Census Bureau interviewer may come to your home to complete the survey in person.”

Population of Interest: The ACS mail materials are sent to a nationally-representative sample of households in the United States.

Timeline: One round of 24 cognitive interviews will be conducted from January 14th- February 22, 2019.

Language: Interviews will be conducted in English only.

Method: Staff from the Center for Behavioral Science Methods will conduct one round of cognitive interviews with 24 respondents. Interviews will be conducted in-person at the Census Bureau headquarter and at locations convenient to interviewees in the local metropolitan area (DC, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia).

Sample and Recruitment: We will recruit respondents using the methods described below. Our recruiting efforts will target respondents who are most likely to handle the mail and react to it in a household; this includes identifying some respondents who receive mail at a post office box. We will recruit respondents who read at different literacy levels, using education as a proxy measure. We will also recruit respondents with diverse demographic characteristics and household composition to the maximum extent possible.

Recruitment: Respondents will be recruited through fliers posted at local community organizations, advertisements on Craigslist.com, and broadcast messages distributed through the Census Bureau’s daily online newsletter. All recruiting materials are attached (see Enclosure 3).

Protocol: We will conduct our cognitive interviews using printed drafts of the 5th mailing. Respondents will be presented with a brief overview of the first 4 mailings (See Enclosure 2). They will not be asked to complete any part of the questionnaire. They will then receive different versions of the 5th mailing in a random order. They will comment on these versions and we will ask specific probes about the materials (see Enclosure 4). Researchers will observe respondents’ interactions with these mailings and as well as ask respondents about their reactions to them. We will ask probes as needed to determine whether respondents noticed the due date messaging and what they would do after reading it.

Consent: We will inform participants that their response is voluntary and that the information they provide is confidential and will be accessed only by employees involved in the research project. The consent form will also indicate that the respondent agrees that the interview can be audio and/or videotaped to facilitate analysis of the results (see Enclosure 5). Participants who do not consent to be video and/or audio-taped will still be allowed to participate.

Incentive: Participants will receive \$40 to offset the costs of participation in this research, such as travel and parking.

Length of Interview: We estimate that each of the 24 interviews will take approximately one hour. This results in a burden of 24 hours.

The pre-approved generic screening questionnaire will take approximately ten minutes per person, and the additional screening questions specific to this research will take two minutes per person (see Enclosure 6). We estimate that we will screen three people for each successful recruit for each of the 24 interviews. Therefore, for the first round of interviewing, we estimate a total of 72 people screened for a total of 2.4 hours (72 people at 2 minutes each).

Thus, **the total estimated burden for the first round of this research is 26.4 hours.**

Table 1. Total Estimated Burden

Category of Respondent	No. of Respondents	Participation Time	Burden
Screening	72	2 minutes	2.4 hours
Cognitive Interviews	24	60 minutes	24 hours
Totals			26.4 hours

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

- Enclosure 1. Modified 2020 ACS mailing materials
- Enclosure 2. 2019 Production ACS mailing materials
- Enclosure 3. Recruitment materials
- Enclosure 4. Cognitive interview protocol
- Enclosure 5. Consent form
- Enclosure 6. Additional screening questions
- Enclosure 7. 2019 Production ACS Survey

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

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