

APPENDIX C. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

The following guide outlines a general flow of facilitated conversation during a focus group session. This guide will be used as a tool for the moderator to ensure that key research objectives are met and an adequate level of consistency across groups is achieved to draw reliable conclusions.

NOTES TO REVIEWER:
The moderator will use the framework outlined as a guide, rather than a formal script. Questions will not be read verbatim.
The moderator will use his/her judgment to determine whether to switch to other sections of the guide as discussion flows, based on the research objectives and to maintain a natural flow of conversation. The discussion guide may contain more content than can be covered in 90 minutes; optional question probes have been <i>italicized</i> to facilitate consistent prioritization of conversation topics across groups.
Bolded text indicates instructions for the moderator and will not be read aloud to participants. Instructions are also highlighted in green. Materials are highlighted in yellow.
Room Setup: Conversation cards (Appendix A.2), “Reasons” activity (Appendix A.4), and a pen to be placed face down in front of each seat until the moderator instructs participants on when and how to use them.

Session Overview: Total time – 90 minutes

SECTION A: Introduction and Icebreaker (10 minutes) Moderator will explain the purpose of the focus group and allow participants to ask any questions.
SECTION B: Community Definitions (15 minutes) The purpose of this section is to warm up conversation, hear in participants’ own words how they think about “community,” and begin a conversation about what is important to their community.
SECTION C: Familiarity and Experience with the Census (15 minutes) The purpose of this section is to learn about current associations with the decennial census and U.S. Census Bureau, to explore any experiences with the census, and to hear from participants how they think about the people who live and stay at their address.
SECTION D: Motivators and Barriers (30 minutes) The purpose of this section is to ask participants to share reasons why they might or might not self-respond to the 2020 Census and to understand what motivators might be leveraged and barriers might be addressed. Discussion will be open, but the moderator will ensure that the conversation covers attitudinal and emotional drivers in this section.
SECTION E: 2020 Census Process (15 minutes) The purpose of this section is to explore the potential logistical or physical barriers and facilitators to self-response that (1) may be new to the 2020 Census <u>and</u> (2) could potentially be addressed by an awareness campaign.
SECTION F: Conclusion (5 minutes) Moderator will thank participants and ensure all questions have been answered.

A. Introduction (10 min.)

SECTION A: Introduction and Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Moderator will explain the purpose of the focus group and allow participants to ask any questions.

NOTE TO REVIEWER: Participants will receive a copy of the consent form in the waiting area when they check in that provides the OMB approval number and contact information for the study (Appendix D).

Before the start of each session, the moderator will brief participants on the structure and the objectives of the focus group. Participants will be briefed as follows:

- Good evening, and thank you all for taking the time to be with us today to share your thoughts and opinions. Before we get started, I want to first mention a few things about our discussion.
- I am an independent market researcher for a firm that conducts hundreds of groups like this each year. That means my job is to listen to you and encourage conversation, and I have no stake in the opinions you share. Love or hate something we talk about, it's all the same to me.
- Your thoughts and opinions are very important to us, there are no right or wrong answers, and your individual responses won't be shared outside of the research team.
- We have 90 minutes together today. Before we jump in, let's go over some important things.
- Your participation is voluntary, and you don't have to answer every question.
- That said, you are here because your opinions are very important, and I do hope to hear from everyone at some point this evening. Please know that anything you share will be kept among the research team, and you will not be personally identified in any reports we prepare based on our conversation. We also ask that we all respect the privacy of everyone in the room, and that you don't share what is discussed with others.
- We are hosting groups like this across the country over many weeks, and there is no way I could remember everything we discuss. To help me and my team write a report, we will be audio and video recording this session. The audio files will be transcribed, but any information that could identify you will be removed from the transcripts, and the audio and video files will be destroyed when the report is complete. These transcripts and recordings will be a reference for me and my team as we write our report and will allow me to focus on our conversation rather than taking notes.
- **As applicable depending on the facility, explain that there are observers behind the glass and via livestreaming.** You may have noticed the glass behind me. I have some team members who are here helping me today who are observing and taking notes. We also have some team members who could not travel to be with us today and are observing remotely. We all want to learn from you, so it is important that you share your honest opinions.
- On the note about your opinions, I want to be sure you all know that the goal of our conversation is not to agree with one another. If you disagree with something that is shared, it's important for us to hear your perspective, because you may represent a lot of people. Similarly, if you agree with something that is said, I'd like to hear that too.
- I think that's just about everything in terms of an introduction. If you need to use the restroom during our session, please feel free to do so.
- Before we get started, please turn off your cell phone or switch it to silent mode.
- Any questions?

Okay, let's get started by introducing ourselves to each other. Please tell us: (1) your first name, (2) how long you have lived in (name the city or town), and (3) a couple of your favorite TV shows.

I'll go first. **Moderator will introduce self and then facilitate introductions of others.**

Great, very glad to meet all of you. Let's start our discussion.

B. Community (15 minutes)

SECTION B: Community Definitions (15 minutes)

The purpose of this section is to warm up conversation, hear in participants' own words how they think about "community," and begin a conversation about what is important to their community.

I'd like to start by talking a bit about community. There are a lot of different things we may mean when we say "community," and I'd like to explore that with you.

- Who do you think of as your community?
 - *Is it a mix of family and friends?*
 - *Is it location-specific, more based on who lives near you?*
 - *Does race, ethnicity, national origin, or language play a role in how you define community?*
 - *What term(s) do you use to describe your race, ethnicity, national origin, or language?*
- What's special about your community? What do you value most about it?
- How has your community changed in the past 10 years?

Great. Thank you. That was really helpful. Throughout our conversation, I may ask you to specify who you're thinking of when you talk about your community to be sure I understand. I may also ask you to think about community in a specific way for some questions. But we'll get to that!

C. Familiarity and Experiences (15 minutes)

SECTION C: Familiarity and Past Experience with the Census (15 minutes)

The purpose of this section is to learn about current associations with the decennial census and U.S. Census Bureau, to explore any experiences with the census, and to hear from participants how they think about the people who live and stay at their address.

Now, I'd like to switch topics and learn a little from you about the U.S. census that happens every ten years. Remember, you're the experts here tonight, and I'm not looking for any particular answers to my questions. And, if you don't think you know much about the U.S. census, don't worry, that will help us a lot too.

First, let's brainstorm together. **Moderator uses flip pad (Appendix A.1) to facilitate brainstorming.**

- What are some words or feelings that come to mind when I say "the census?" Just call them out.
 - Would you say most of these words are good, bad, or neither?
 - What about the U.S. Census Bureau? What, if anything, is different about what comes to mind?

To be sure we're all thinking about the same thing for the rest of our conversation, I'd like to share some information about what the U.S. decennial census is. The U.S. census is the count of all the people who live in the United States. It happens every 10 years – which is why it is called the decennial census. The Census asks questions such as how many people live at your address and their age, gender, race, ethnicity,

and relationships. The next census is in 2020. For the rest of our conversation, please think about this when we say “the census.”

Now, you have some **cards (Appendix A.2)** in front of you. After I ask my next question, please hold up the thumbs up for yes, the thumbs down for no, and the person shrugging for unsure. **Moderator will show example cards.**

- Have you ever filled out a U.S. census form? **READ COUNT OUT LOUD to be captured by the audio recording (e.g., 2 yes, 3 no, and 3 unsure).**

Okay, this is a helpful starting point. Let’s talk a little more about personal experience. I’m interested in hearing about all kinds of experiences and will be asking questions for those who have filled out a census form before as well as for those who haven’t.

- For those who have filled out the census before, please tell me about that experience. What do you remember about filling out the form?
 - **Probe extensively on experience, building on participant’s narration:**
 - *When was that?*
 - *How did you hear about the census? (ads, letters, someone showed up at door)*
 - *Do you remember why you took the time to fill out the form? What motivated you?*
 - *How long did it take you?*
 - *Do you recall any questions that you thought were difficult or intrusive to answer?*
 - *Did anyone help you fill it out?*
 - **If non-English:**
 - Does anyone speak a language other than [LANGUAGE OF GROUP DISCUSSION]?
 - What language did you fill out the census form in? Was that your preferred language?
 - What reasons did you have for choosing to complete the form in the language you used?
 - How did that affect your experience?
 - *Would you describe the experience as positive or negative? Neither? What makes you say that?*
- For those who have not filled out a U.S. census form, please tell me a little more about that. Have you had the opportunity but chose not to complete it? Did someone else in at your address fill out the census?
- When you complete the form, you provide some information about yourself and people who live in your house, apartment, or mobile home. What type of questions do you think it asks? What do you think about providing information about yourself and others that live at your address?
- We’ve been talking about people who live in your household. What does that mean to you? Who comes to mind when you think about people who live in your household?
 - What about extended family who live with you?
 - Would you think to include young children and babies who live and stay with you at your address?

- What about other people who might live with you who aren't related to you, like roommates, housemates, or renters? Do you think of them when you hear the word household?
- What about filling out the census form, specifically? Who would you include when asked about people who "live and stay" at your address?
 - What are some examples of people you think shouldn't be included when filling out the census?
 - Is there anything about your living situation that would make it easier or harder to complete the census form? DISCUSS LIVING SITUATION.
 - If not specifically, stated: *can you describe the living situation that would affect your ability to complete the census form?*
 - *How will this living situation affect the ability to complete census form?*
- We've talked a bit about what the census is. What do you think the census is used for?

D. Motivators and Barriers (30 minutes)

SECTION D: Motivators and Barriers (30 minutes)

The purpose of this section is to ask participants to share reasons why they might or might not self-respond to the 2020 Census and to understand what motivators might be leveraged and barriers might be addressed. Discussion will be open, but the moderator will ensure that the conversation covers attitudinal and emotional drivers in this section.

Thank you for sharing your experiences. I've already learned a lot from you. Next, I'd like to try to understand a little more about how people decide whether or not they'll fill out the census form.

First, please grab your cards (Appendix A.2) again. Hold up the thumbs up for yes, the thumbs down for no, and the person shrugging for unsure. **Moderator will show example cards.**

- If the census were held today, do you think you would fill out the census form? **READ COUNT OUT LOUD to be captured by the audio recording (e.g., 2 yes, 3 no, and 3 unsure).**

Thank you. Let's talk a little bit more about why you might or might not fill out the form. **Moderator will use the flip pad (Appendix A.3) to facilitate discussion and create a list of reasons why and reasons why not.**

- What reasons can you think of that you might fill out the form?
 - **Probe extensively on what makes something a reason to fill out the form.**
 - **If the following ideas haven't come up organically, probe on:**
 - *Helps determine funding for community needs (e.g., schools and fire departments).*
 - **Probe on how they are thinking about "community" here.**
 - *Determines the number of elected officials that each state has in Congress (House of Representatives).*
 - *Is used to enforce civil rights laws.*
 - *Provides information for local governments to plan for changes in the community.*

- **Probe on how they are thinking about “community” here.**
 - Shows pride in ethnic heritage.
 - It’s a civic responsibility.
 - Makes our voices heard.
 - Contributes to a better future for the community.
 - Do you think filling out the census form affects you, your family, and your community? If yes, how so? If no, why not?
 - **Probe on what kind of community is affected. Is this different for different types of communities (e.g., location vs. racial-ethnic-based)?**
 - How does it affect your community positively or negatively?
 - How does it affect people who live in your home positively or negatively?
 - How does it affect your extended family positively or negatively?
 - How does it affect you personally positively or negatively?
- What reasons can you think of that might make you decide NOT to fill out the form?
 - **Probe extensively on what makes something a reason not to fill out the form [physical as well as attitudinal barriers].**
 - **If the following potential barriers don’t come up organically, probe on:**
 - Privacy
 - Do you trust that your information will be safe and protected?
 - What does that mean to you, when I say, “information is safe and protected?”
 - How is it safe? Protected from what?
 - Census Bureau employees are required by law to keep information confidential.
 - What does this mean to you?
 - Does knowing this make you more likely to take the census?
 - Were you aware of this before today?
 - How does this requirement make you feel about filling out the census form?
 - It might single out certain racial or ethnic groups.
 - It might be used to find people who have not paid their taxes.
 - It might be used to find people who are in the country illegally.
 - It might help the police and FBI keep track of people who break the law.
 - Answers may be shared with other federal agencies like the IRS, ICE, or the Department of Homeland Security.
 - Natural disasters

- o *Are there unexpected things such as natural disasters that may make it harder to fill out the census form? Can you tell me more about this situation?*
 - o *If you have experienced a natural disaster, were you displaced? Where did you go? [If needed] please tell me more.*
 - o *If you were displaced, where do you think you should be counted? Please tell me more about [where you were displaced/where you should be counted]?*
- - Tell me more about what or who could reduce any concerns you have with completing the census? How would these reduce your concerns? **LISTEN FOR/PROBE on trusted voices in the community and how they could reduce concerns.**
 - What do you think would happen if you did NOT fill out the census form? **LISTEN FOR/PROBE on getting in trouble.**
 - Let's talk about a specific scenario. If you don't fill out the census form, a census worker will come to your door to ask the census questions. What do you think about a census worker coming to your door?

Now I'd like to get a sense of how important these different ideas are to each of you as you think about why you would fill out the census form. You have a paper (Appendix A.4) in front of you along with some highlighters. Please flip over the paper now. First, your name card has a number on it; please write that number in the top left corner of the page. This will help us keep your information private, as we discussed earlier. You'll see that many of the ideas we've discussed are represented. **Moderator will read and explain each reason on the paper.** I'd like you to please circle the three reasons that would be most likely to motivate you to fill out the census form. For example, if [REASON] is really important to you, circle it. If not, just leave it blank. You can also write in something we forgot, or just circle the "other" square in the middle and we'll talk about it.

Moderator will provide time for individual completion.

Probe on particularly popular as well as particularly unpopular topics. We're seeing some overlap and some different perspectives. That's fantastic. I'd like to understand this a little better.

- I see a lot of people choose [REASON]. Anyone want to share what made that one stand out?
 - o Does anyone have a different perspective?
- [REASON] wasn't circled by many/any of you. Tell me more about that. Who wants to share their thoughts?
 - o Does anyone have a different perspective?
- [NAME], it looks like you chose [REASON]. Will you please tell us a little about your thoughts on that?
- Did anyone circle the "other" box? Please tell us about that. **Probe on all "other" responses.**

E. 2020 Census Process (15 minutes)

SECTION E: 2020 Census Process (15 minutes)

The purpose of this section is to explore the potential logistical or physical barriers and facilitators to self-response that (1) may be new to the 2020 Census and (2) could potentially be addressed by an awareness campaign.

This is very helpful. Thank you. Next, I'd like to talk a little bit about the census process.

- How would you expect the Census Bureau to contact you when it is time for the census?
- What would you want to know before you were asked to fill out the census?
- What, if anything, could someone tell you that might make you more likely to fill out the form?
 - Who might you talk to about filling out the census?
 - We talked about extended family earlier. Would those of you with extended family talk to family members about filling out the census?
- What about ads you might see on TV or in a magazine, or at a bus shelter? Could you learn any of the things you mentioned wanting to know about the census from an ad? Tell me more about that.

OK, let's say you received a letter from the Census Bureau asking you to complete the census form.

- What would you be thinking?
- What would you be feeling?
- What questions would you have?
- What do you think you would do?
- *What if the letter did not contain a form to complete but asked you to go online to complete the census? Would any of your initial reactions or questions be different? How so?*
- If you didn't fill out the form right away, what sort of reminders would be most helpful?
 - *Reminder by mail? Reminder from a community leader in your area? An advertisement on TV or on your mobile phone?*
 - **Probe on who a "community" leader would be.**
- Now imagine that you've seen an ad that says you can go online right now and fill out the census, even on your phone.
 - What would you be thinking?
 - What would you be feeling?
 - What questions would you have?
 - What do you think you would do? What would make you want to fill out the form?

F. Conclusion (5 minutes)

SECTION F: Conclusion (5 minutes)

Moderator will thank participants and ensure that all questions have been answered.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts today! As we conclude our discussion, I have a few final wrap-up questions.

- And, grab those **cards** one more time. **(Moderator will show cards.)** After our discussion, if the census were held today, do you think you would fill out the census form? **Moderator will show example cards and then read the count out loud to be captured by the audio recording (e.g., 2 yes, 3 no, and 3 unsure).**
 - o Did anything we discussed today make you feel differently about filling out the census form? Tell me about that.

[If time allows] If you don't mind, I'm going to step out for just a moment to see if my team has any additional follow-up questions. **[Ask follow-ups]**

Okay, thank you so much. I've enjoyed meeting you all. Is there anything else that you would like to share that we haven't touched on yet? Are there any final questions? If not, please leave all your materials on the table and have a lovely evening. On your way out, you may take additional information about the census from the front desk if you would like.

