

Appendix E – 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 *italicized* 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:** A **pen** to be placed in front of each seat until the moderator instructs participants on when and how to use them. **Advertisement review activities (Appendix E.1, E.2, E.3)**, to be placed in front of the moderator (the moderator will pass out advertisement mock ups one at a time). In the corner of the room, there will be a **flip pad (Appendix E.4)** for the moderator to use. The room will also contain a laptop and a projector for the moderator to show video animatic ad stimuli.

Focus Group Breakdown: Total time – 90 minutes

Section A: Introduction & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

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

Section B: Warm Up (5 minutes)

The purpose of this section is to warm up conversation and briefly establish a baseline for past Census experiences.

Section C: Individual Advertisement Testing (65 minutes)

The purpose of this section is to present and review individual advertisements. The order of advertisements presented will be randomized across focus groups.

Section D: Conclusion (10 minutes)

This section provides an opportunity for participants to share final thoughts, including if anything they read or saw affected their opinion or perceptions of the 2020 Census. The moderator will thank participants and ensure all questions have been answered.

Section A: Introduction & Icebreaker – 10 minutes

Moderator will explain the purpose of the focus group and allow participants to ask any questions. 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 E.6**).

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 my team and me write a report, we will be audio [and VIDEO RECORDING IF AVAILABLE] 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.

Depending on the facility, explain that there are observers behind the glass (if applicable) and via livestreaming (if available): 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. 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. **[NON ENGLISH LANGUAGE GROUPS ONLY]: (3)** how long you've been living in the U.S.

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.

Section B: Warm Up: Past Census Experience – 5 minutes

The purpose of this section is to warm up the conversation and explore what previous census ads the participants remember.

Today, our discussion will be about the U.S. decennial census. I'd like to start by sharing some information about what the U.S. decennial census is to be sure we're all thinking about the same thing for the rest of our conversation. **Moderator shows the following definition on the flip pad (Appendix E.4) and reads aloud:** 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 plans to ask questions such as how many people live at your address or place and their age, gender, race, ethnicity, relationships, and citizenship. The next census is in 2020. For the rest of our conversation, please think about this when we say “the census.”

- By a show of hands, have you participated in the census before? Raise your hand if “yes”? How many “no”? How many “not sure”?

READ COUNT OUT LOUD to be captured by the audio recording (e.g., 2 yes, 3 no, and 3 unsure).

Thank you everyone. It is helpful to know a little more about different experiences as we continue our conversation today.

Section C: Individual Advertisement Review – 65 Minutes (10-12 minutes per advertisement)

The purpose of this section is to present and discuss individual advertisements. The order of advertisements presented will be randomized across focus groups. The advertisements will be a mix of static print, video animatic, and radio.

Now, we are going to look at a few different sample advertisements regarding the 2020 Census. These are draft advertisements that the Census Bureau may use to encourage people to participate in the 2020 Census. Some of these ideas may be developed into more complete advertisements you might see on TV, in a newspaper or magazine, or on a billboard. It's really expensive to develop ads, so getting your feedback early on is important. Please keep in mind that these are still ideas that need to be polished. In fact, the video ads I show you today are rough sketches that are animated and not ads as you may be accustomed to seeing on TV.

As you watch and read the different draft ads, pay close attention to the content.

ADVERTISEMENT [COLOR 1] (12 minutes per ad)

Here is the first one. **Moderator will play or hand out the advertisement.**

PRINT AD: Moderator to hand out print advertisement.

VIDEO AD: Moderator to play the video one time and ask participants to simply watch. Moderator to play the video a second time, and ask participants to watch again, this time paying closer attention and thinking about their reactions.

RADIO AD: Moderator will play the audio one time and ask participants to simply listen. Moderator to play the audio a second time, and ask participants to listen again, this time playing closer attention and thinking about their reactions.

Moderator to hand out printed advertisement review activity (Appendix E.1, E.2, E.3). Go ahead and write your unique ID in the top left corner.

On this **review activity (Appendix E.1, E.2, E.3)** I'd like you to complete it based on the ad we just read / saw / heard.

Feel free to write any comments on your sheet. Afterwards, we'll talk about it. **Moderator will provide 2-3 minutes for individual completion.**

- What are the words that caught your attention in a positive way, or the words you circled?
 - o Probe on reasons
 - o Probe on what is relevant or relatable
- What are the words that caught your attention in a negative way, or the words you crossed out?
 - o Probe on reasons
 - o Probe on what is not relevant or relatable

I have a few questions about the ad I'd like to get your opinion on.

Metric	Question
Overall Reaction	First, let's start general. Tell me what caught your attention overall.
Main Message	In your own words, what do you think the ad is trying to convey?
	What questions, if any, come to mind when you see this?
	What did you learn, if anything, from the ad?
	Who do you think this ad is trying to reach? Someone like you or someone else? Describe that person.
Emotion	How does this ad make you feel?
	Does it make you feel differently?
Clarity	What, if anything, was confusing about the ad?
Opinion	How, if at all, does it change your view of the census?
Relevance	Is the ad useful or relevant to you in any sense?
Concerns	Do you have any concerns or doubts after seeing this ad?
Suggestion	What, if anything, is missing from this ad? Moderator to limit "art direction" comments.

Section D: Conclusion – 10 Minutes

This section provides an opportunity for participants to share final thoughts, including if anything they

read or saw affected their opinion or perceptions of the 2020 Census. The moderator will thank participants and ensure all questions have been answered.

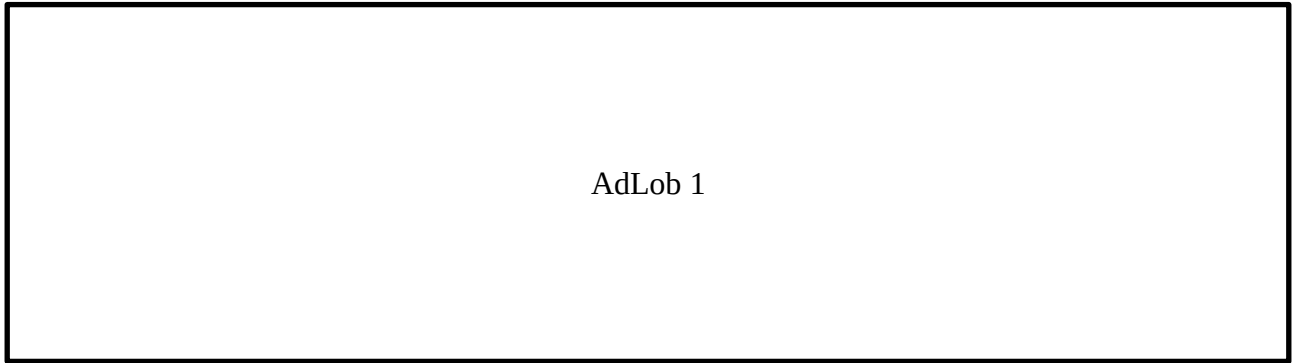
Thank you for sharing your thoughts today! As we conclude our discussion, I have a few final wrap-up questions.

- What, if anything, did you see or hear today that made you feel differently about filling out the census form? Tell me about that.
- What would you tell your families, friends, and colleagues to encourage them to fill out the 2020 Census?
- Is there anything else that you would like to share that we haven't touched on during the study?

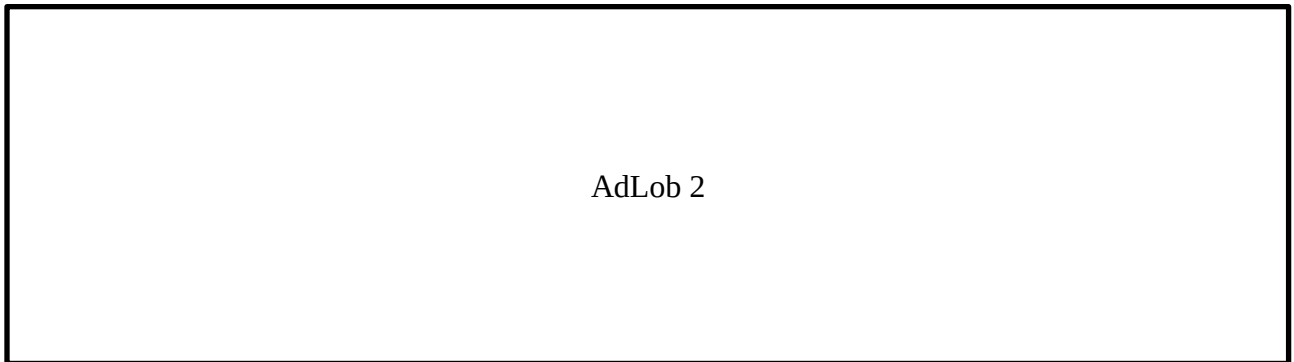
[If time allows] If you don't mind, I'm going to step out for just a moment to see if my team has any additional follow-up questions. **[Ask follow-ups]**

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.

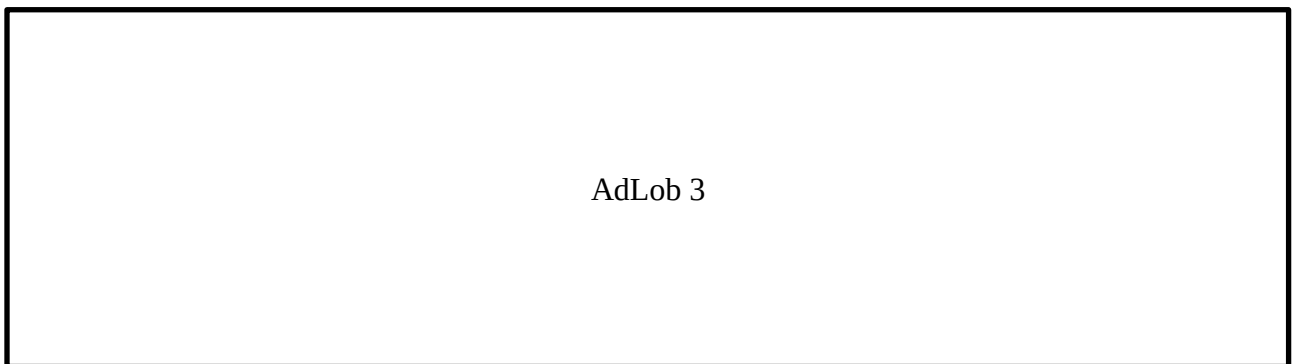
Appendix E.1 – AdLob 1



Appendix E.2 – AdLob 2



Appendix E.3 – AdLob 3



Appendix E.3 – Flip pad

