

2020 Census Evaluation of Privacy and Confidentiality Concerns – Qualitative Research

Request: The Census Bureau plans to conduct research under the generic clearance for 2020 Experiments and Evaluations (OMB number 0607-0971). We propose to conduct a 2020 Census evaluation of privacy and confidentiality concerns, which will have quantitative and qualitative components.

The qualitative component will be the focus of this OMB package. The qualitative component will consist of two subprojects, including:

- Interviews with partner organization staff working in the 2020 Census National Partnership Program (NPP), and
- Focus groups with two types of participants: 1) partner organization staff working in the 2020 Census Community Partnership and Engagement Program (CPEP), and 2) trusted messengers from the local community who help promote the 2020 Census.

Focus groups with 2020 Census respondents will also be part of this evaluation, but will be addressed in a separate OMB package.

The subprojects discussed in the present OMB package will be conducted by Census Bureau staff from the Center for Behavioral Science Methods (CBSM).

Purpose: The purpose of the overall study is to evaluate respondent privacy and confidentiality concerns and their relationship to response mode, item nonresponse, and mismatches between administrative records and self-reported data in a decennial census environment. The quantitative component consists of a survey to assess such concerns with a nationally representative sample of respondents.

Since it is likely that some respondents with privacy and confidentiality concerns will not complete the census or allow entrance to enumerators and observers, we will conduct a qualitative study that leverages the 2020 Census Partnership Program in addition to conducting the quantitative survey. The qualitative study will include three main subprojects: 1) qualitative interviews with partner organization staff from the 2020 Census National Partnership Program (NPP), 2) focus groups with partner organization staff from the 2020 Census Partnership and Engagement Program (CPEP), as well as trusted messengers from the local community who are helping to promote the 2020 Census, and (3) focus groups with respondents. The first two components will be addressed in the present OMB package. The third component (i.e., focus groups with respondents) will be addressed in a separate OMB package.

This qualitative component is not representative research, and the findings will be limited in their generalizability to larger populations. However, since people who do not respond to the 2020 Census are not likely to be captured using quantitative methods, the qualitative component is intended to fill this gap.

Populations of Interest: We are interested in hard-to-count (HTC) populations in the qualitative component of this research. In particular, we are interested in HTC populations where previous research suggests we might find specific privacy and confidentiality concerns. It is likely that some members of these populations who have privacy and confidentiality concerns will not speak directly with government employees or contractors. In order to reach them we plan to leverage the 2020 Census Partnership Program as a proxy for members of these HTC populations.

The Census Partnership Program consists of partnerships between the Census Bureau and third-party organizations who serve hard-to-count (HTC) communities. Partner organizations with a national reach participate in the National Partnership Program (NPP), and partner organizations with a local reach participate in the Census Partnership and Engagement Program (CPEP). In these partnerships, the Census Bureau works with organizations to help them promote the decennial census to their target communities, since the partner organizations have existing relationships with these communities, and are already trusted by these communities. For more details, please see the *2020 Census Integrated Communications Plan*¹ and *2020 Census Partnership Plan*.²

We plan to focus on the following HTC groups:

- Hispanics/Latinos,
- Middle East and North Africans (MENA),
- Asians and Asian Immigrants,
- Migrant workers, and
- Blacks/African Americans

These groups will be served by a number of partner organizations in the Census Partnership Program. Based on previous research, we expect that these populations have specific privacy and confidentiality concerns about the 2020 decennial census.

Timeline:

Interviews and focus groups will take place between May 2020 and September 2020. Recruitment will begin in April 2020.

Language:

This research will be conducted in English.

¹ https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/program-management/planning-docs/2020_integrated_COM_plan.pdf

² <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/partners/2020-partnership-plan.pdf>

Method:

NPP Interviews: Staff from CBSM will conduct 10 interviews with NPP partners. The NPP interviews will be semi-structured, and take place in-person or by telephone when necessary.

NPP partner organization staff will come from organizations with a national reach that is broader than the organizations represented in the CPEP program, which have a local reach. However, like the CPEP partner organizations, NPP partner organizations also have experience working with HTC communities. In depth, qualitative interviews with NPP partner staff will allow us to draw on the experience of those who have successfully reached HTC groups and chose to be part of the Partnership Program. The interview protocol will identify concerns that NPP partners have encountered from people about their participation in the 2020 Census because of the socio-political climate, and will collect information about strategies NPP partners used to increase response, as well as the effectiveness of those strategies.

CPEP Focus Groups: Staff from CBSM will conduct six focus groups of staff from CPEP partner organizations. Two focus group will be conducted in each of three cities: Detroit, Michigan, El Paso, Texas, and Los Angeles, California. The cities are known to have relatively high concentrations of the populations we hypothesize as having privacy and confidentiality concerns regarding the 2020 Census. Each focus group will have eight participants.

If social distancing is required, the focus groups will be conducted remotely via conference call. The focus groups will still have eight participants, and these participants will still be from the three cities mentioned above.

The target participants for these focus groups are CPEP partner organization staff and local community members (referred to as “trusted messengers”) who worked with the CPEP partner organizations to help promote the 2020 Census. These trusted messengers are influential in their local communities and may affect others’ decisions about when, how, and whether to respond to the census or other surveys. In the context of the decennial census, CPEP aims to engage local community partners to increase decennial participation of those who are less likely to respond or are often missed. The CPEP plans to leverage messengers acting as trusted voices in the community to help increase response from hard-to-count populations.

The focus group protocol will identify the concerns that partner organization staff and trusted messengers may have about respondent participation in the 2020 Census, how they addressed these concerns with respondents, and their opinions of whether the strategies were effective.

Recruitment: For the NPP interviews, organizations that work with our populations of interest will be selected for participation. Internal Census Bureau staff have existing relationships with national partnership organization staff who are working on decennial census issues. We will leverage this relationship for recruiting and ask Census staff to contact selected participants for a potential interview.

For the CPEP focus groups, partnership staff will be emailed advertisements about the project to elicit interested staff (see Enclosure 1). To recruit trusted messengers, the advertisements will be posted in local community organization buildings and on social media (see Enclosure 1). People who respond to the email notices will be screened with the attached recruitment screener (see Enclosure 2) and selected based on the HTC population of focus for each city, and having diversity in gender, race/ethnicity, age, expertise, and other demographic characteristics to the maximum extent possible. See the Table 1 for the city locations and their respective populations of interest.

Table 1. City and Populations of Interest for Focus Groups

City	Populations of Interest
Detroit, Michigan	Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) and Blacks/African Americans
Los Angeles, California	Asians, Asian Immigrants, Hispanics
El Paso, Texas	Hispanics, Migrant Workers

Participants will be screened by telephone or in person and may receive a reminder about the interview or focus group appointment after they agree to participate.

Protocol: For this proposed research, each of the subprojects will have their own data collection protocol, consisting of a protocol for the interviews with NPP partners (see Enclosure 3), and a moderator guide for the CPEP partner focus groups (see Enclosure 4). These data collection protocols include several topics:

- General work participants did in support of the 2020 Census,
- The impact of the coronavirus pandemic on their work,
- 2020 Census-related concerns (including privacy and confidentiality concerns) expressed by the communities that participants work with,
- Opinions about what factors motivate their communities to respond or not respond to the Census,
- Strategies they use to address concerns, and
- Their opinions of how well the strategies work

To avoid biasing participant responses towards the privacy and confidentiality topic, an additional feature for both data collection protocols is talking about concerns generally at first before directly discussing privacy and confidentiality concerns. However, because the coronavirus pandemic will likely be a major topic of discussion, we will quickly address this issue first and move on to other topics. Finally, and specifically for the focus groups, the moderator guide includes an activity to brainstorm concerns as a group.

Consent: For the interview and focus group projects, 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 participant agrees that the interview can be audio-taped to facilitate analysis of the results (see Enclosure 5 and Enclosure 6 for the focus groups and interviews, respectively).

For the interviews and focus groups (if done remotely), participants will be mailed a consent form and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to send back a signed consent form. If the focus groups done are in person, participants will sign and submit the consent forms in person.

Use of Incentive: If the focus groups are conducted in person, we plan to offer an incentive of \$75 to offset the costs of the 120-minute focus groups, including travel, childcare, parking, and time away from other duties like work. If done remotely, the focus group incentive will be \$40 to offset the cost of time away from other duties.

For the interviews, participants will not be paid an incentive.

Length of Data Collections: We estimate that each NPP partner interview will take approximately one hour (i.e., 10 hours total). We estimate that each focus group will take approximately two hours (i.e., 12 hours total). The screening questionnaire will take approximately six minutes per person. For the focus groups, our goal is eight participants per group. To reach this goal, we will recruit and invite 12 potential participants to account for no shows. All participants over the goal of 8 will be paid the incentive but will not participate in the focus group.

We expect to screen five people for each successful recruit. In total, we will screen about 360 people to arrive at 72 successful recruits for the six focus groups (36 hours). **Thus, we estimate the burden for this research is 142 hours: 10 hours for interviewing (1.0 hours X 10 interview participants), 96 hours for the CPEP focus groups (2.0 hours X 48 focus group participants), and 36 hours (0.1 hours X 360 people) for screening.**

Table of Estimated Burden

Research Activity	Number of Participants	Participation Time	Burden
Screening for Focus Groups	360	0.1 hours	36 hours
NPP Interviews	10	1 hour	10 hours
CPEP Focus Groups	48	2 hours	96 hours
Total			142 hours

The materials to be used in this study are enclosed with this letter and include:

Recruitment advertisements (Enclosure 1)

Recruitment screener (Enclosure 2)

NPP partner interview protocol (Enclosure 3)

CPEP partner staff/trusted messenger focus group moderator guide (Enclosure 4)

Consent form for focus groups (Enclosure 5)

Consent form for interviews (Enclosure 6)

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

Rodney Terry
Center for Behavioral Science Methods
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, D.C. 20233
301-763-5475
Rodney.Terry@census.gov