

**Special Census Qualitative Research on Undercount of Young Children**

**Focus Group Protocol for Participants in Households with Young Children**

Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ Start time: \_\_\_\_ AM / PM End time: \_\_\_\_ AM / PM

Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Moderator: \_\_\_\_\_ Notetaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Mode: In Person \_\_\_\_ Virtual \_\_\_\_ Recording: Video \_\_\_\_ Audio \_\_\_\_

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A. INTRODUCTION (10 MINUTES)

**NOTE FOR RESEARCHERS: All bold text is to be read aloud by the moderator. All bracketed text are notes or instructions for the moderator.**

Participants will receive a copy of the consent form by email after agreeing to participate in the focus group. This form provides privacy information and contact information for the study.

[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 afternoon, and thank you all for taking the time to be with us today to share your thoughts and opinions. My name is [MODERATOR NAME], and I am here with my Census Bureau colleague(s) [NAME(S)]. Before we get started, I want to first mention a few things about our discussion.**

- **Your thoughts and opinions are very important to us, there are no right or wrong answers, and what you say 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 today. Please know that anything you say will be kept among the research team, and you will not be personally identified in any reports we prepare from our conversation. We also ask that we all respect the privacy of everyone in the room, and that you don't tell what is discussed to others.**

- To help me and the team write a report, we will audio and video record this session. The audio files will be transcribed, but any information that could identify you will be left out of 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.
- I have some team members who are here helping me today who are observing and taking notes. 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.
- Due to limited time, I must move the discussion along and may sometimes have to interrupt in order to do so. Please do not be offended. If you have anything else that you'd like to share with us that you did not have time to say, please tell me your feedback after the session, through the e-mail that sent you the instructions for this focus group.
- We will not have any formal breaks, so if you need to step away for a restroom break, let us please go one at a time to not disturb the whole group.

I think that's just about everything for the introduction.

Before we get started, please turn off your cell phone or switch it to silent mode.

Does anyone have any questions before we begin?

Okay, let's get started by introducing ourselves to each other. Please tell us your first name and your favorite hobby.

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: GENERAL MEMORIES OF THE CENSUS(15 MINUTES)

Now, I'd like hear about your experiences with the U.S. census that happens every ten years. Let's talk about the last census that happened in 2020. As you may know, the U.S. census is the count of all the people who live in the United States. It happens every 10 years and is conducted by the Census Bureau. It asks questions such as how many people live in your household, their age, race, and ethnicity. The last census happened in 2020 and this area will have its own special census coming up soon. Today's conversation will help us greatly as we prepare for it.

1. What do you remember about the 2020 Census?

Okay, this is a helpful starting point. Let's talk a little more about your personal experience.

2. Do you remember hearing news about it?
3. Do you remember any 2020 Census advertisements?
  - a. [IF YES] Please share it with us.
    - i. Do you trust messages that say they are from the Census Bureau?
4. Did anyone in your community mention the Census to you?
  - a. [IF YES] What did they say?
  - b. [IF NOT MENTIONED] Did any friends or family mention the 2020 Census to you?

SECTION C: COMPLETING THE CENSUS(40 MINUTES)

5. Did you or someone in your household complete the 2020 Census?
  - a. [IF YES] What was your experience? Was it online, through the mail, or did someone come to your door?
    - i. [IF NOT DISCUSSED] How did you decide who in the home should complete the census?
    - ii. [IF NOT DISCUSSED] How did you decide what people to report on the census? Did you prefer to report people in a particular order? What other things did you think about when adding people to your census form?

1. [IF NOT DISCUSSED] **Have you encountered any challenges or difficulties when reporting people for the Census back in 2020? What about other surveys?**
2. [IF NOT DISCUSSED] **Have you ever left out certain people living in your home from your census form? [IF YES] for what reasons?**
3. [IF NOT DISCUSSED] **What are your memories about listing young children (that is, kids under 5 years old) living in your home in the census?**
  - a. **Did you have questions about which children to include? [PROBE FOR WHERE THEY MIGHT BE CONFUSED ABOUT WHO TO COUNT.]**
  - b. **Were there children that you deliberately did not include? [IF YES] For what reason?**
  - c. **Are there any concerns or fears you have about giving information about young children in the census? [IF YES] What are they?**
  - d. **Have you ever faced any language barriers or difficulties understanding census materials related to reporting young children?**
  - e. **What suggestions do you have for improving experiences with the census for households with young children?**
  - f. **What kind of support or assistance would encourage households like yours to include young children in the census?**
    - i. [IF NOT DISCUSSED] **Have you ever received information or assistance from community organizations about reporting young children in the census?**
  - g. **What strategies do you think would help encourage households like yours to include young children in the census?**
    - i. **Do you think there should be more awareness campaigns specifically addressing the importance of reporting young children in the census?**

SECTION D: NON-RESPONSE AND CONCERNS ABOUT THE CENSUS

(15 MINUTES)

6. [IF ANY INDICATION THAT ONE OR MORE PARTICIPANT DID NOT RESPOND] **For those of you that didn't responded, what made you decide not to respond?**
  - a. [IF NOT DISCUSSED] **What about others in your community, did you hear anything about others people's reasons for not responding?**
7. **Was there anything that made you feel concerned about the 2020 Census or the Census in general?**
  - a. [IF NOT DISCUSSED] **Do you have any concerns about the information that the Census collects from you?**
  - b. [IF NOT DISCUSSED] **Any concerns about how the Census Bureau uses the information they collect?**
  - c. **Tell me more about what or who could reduce any concerns you have with completing a Census Bureau form. How would these reduce your concerns?**
  - d. **What do you think would happen if you did NOT complete the census?**

PART C: CONCLUSION

(5 MINUTES)

8. **Based on what we've talked about today, what are the most important things for the Census Bureau to remember from this discussion?**
9. **Before we wrap up, is there anything else you'd like to tell us about the topics we discussed today that you haven't had a chance to mention yet?**

**Thank you very much for your time! The feedback that you shared today was very helpful.**