

**Generic Information Collection Request:  
Cognitive testing for the 2024 Rental Housing Finance Survey**

**Request:** 1The Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725). We will be conducting cognitive interviews to understand how respondents respond to proposed new questions to be added to the 2024 Rental Housing Finance Survey (RHFS).

The RHFS is a survey that is collected by the U.S. Census Bureau and is sponsored by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The purpose of this survey is to provide a current and continuous measure of financial, mortgage and property characteristics of rental housing properties in the United States. The survey focuses on the financing of rental housing properties, with emphasis on new mortgages, refinanced mortgages, or similar devices such as deeds of trust or land contracts, and the characteristics of debt originations. This survey helps inform the development of rental housing policies, especially those pertaining to financing rental housing for targeted groups such as low-income families and individuals, and the elderly. For more information regarding the RHFS: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/rhfs.html>.

**Purpose:** The RHFS asks a range of questions assessing the financial health of rental properties. The 2024 RHFS cognitive testing will include fifteen new potential questions. These question topics cover the following:

- Property owned by the military
- What is included in manufactured home rent
- Property contact information
- The extent of properties owned by the entity that owns the sample address property
- The utilization of units for daily and/or weekly rentals
- The amount charged for rental application administrative fees
- The amount charged for security deposits
- Additional utility included in rent
- The types of government grants that benefit the property
- GREEN mortgages

Cognitive interviews will be conducted to gain a better understanding of how respondents react to the new content. We will explore whether respondents feel that the new questions make sense as they are written, and gauge how easy or difficult they will be to answer. During these interviews, we will seek the following information:

- Understanding how respondents comprehend specific questions
- Identifying respondents' use of records and/or estimation strategies for answering specific questions
- Assessing the respondent's ability to answer specific questions
- Identifying difficulties in completing the questionnaire
- Recommended changes to questions and response options to be implemented in the 2024 RHFS

The results from the cognitive testing will be consolidated into a report that outlines the findings and recommendations for improvement to questions. Staff from ESMD's Data Collection Methodology & Research Branch will be conducting the interviews for this testing.

**Population of Interest:** Sample members from the 2021 RHFS. Businesses contacted should be representative of all sized properties and ownership types (namely property management companies and owners) and cover a variety of geographic regions.

**Timeline:** Testing will be conducted over two rounds from June through July 2023.

**Language:** Testing will be conducted in English only.

**Method:** The method of research will be cognitive interviews, which are interviews aimed at understanding how a respondent interprets the data requests within a survey, and assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the data collection instruments. For the purposes of this research, the cognitive questions will be focused on the participant's thoughts about the proposed questions, and how they anticipate responding to and/or collecting the requested data.

We will conduct two rounds of cognitive interviews, 12-15 respondents for round 1, and 8-10 respondents round 2, for a total of up to 25 respondents. Changes to the content and protocol may be made after round 1 concludes. All interviews will be conducted over the telephone or via Microsoft Teams. The new content will be programmed into Qualtrics. During the interviews, respondents will access the new questions via a secure link to Qualtrics. The interviews will follow a semi-structured interview protocol (Attachment A). The RHFS questions are listed in Attachment B.

Staff from the Census Bureau's Economic Indicators Division (EID) and special sworn status members of the HUD may observe if available.

**Sample:** We plan to conduct a maximum of 25 interviews over two rounds of interviews. We plan to conduct interviews with a variety of sizes and types (i.e., industries) of ownership entities. This number of interviews was selected because it is a manageable number of interviews for the time period allotted, it should adequately cover target companies, and should be large enough to provide reactions to the questions in order to identify meaningful findings.

**Recruitment:** Participants will be recruited by DCMRB staff from a pool of survey respondents to the 2021 RHFS. Once interviews are scheduled, researchers will send participants a confirmation email. Before beginning the interviews, we will inform participants that their response is voluntary and that the information they provide is confidential under Title 13. Researchers will confirm that the respondents have read, understand, and agree to the contents of the consent form (see Attachment C).

**Protocol:** A copy of a draft interview protocol is attached (Attachment A).

**Use of incentive:** Monetary incentives for participation will not be offered.

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

**Attachment A:** Draft Protocol  
**Attachment B:** 2024 RHFS Draft Content  
**Attachment C:** Consent Form  
**Attachment D:** 2021 RHFS Survey

**Length of interview:** For cognitive interviews, we expect that each interview will last no more than 60 minutes (25 cases x 60 minutes per case = 25 hours). Additionally, to recruit respondents we expect to reach out via email and, if necessary, to make up to 5 phone contacts per completed case. The recruiting calls are expected to last on average 3 minutes per call (5 attempts per phone call per completed case x 25 cases x 3 minutes per case = 6.25 hours). Thus, the estimated burden is 31.25 hours (25 hours for interviews + 6.25 hours for recruiting).

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

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