

**Generic Information Collection Request:
Exploratory Interviews on the Current Population Survey (CPS) Annual Social and Economic
Supplement (ASEC)**

Request: 1The Census Bureau, through a contract with RTI, plans to conduct exploratory interviews under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725) for the Current Population Survey (CPS) Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC). A separate package for subsequent cognitive and usability testing will be submitted at a later time.

Purpose: Efforts are underway to add an internet self-response option for the CPS and supplements, which are currently conducted only in-person and by telephone. A self-administered version of the CPS and ASEC presents many challenges, particularly with regards to respondent burden and data quality. ASEC is a long supplement, particularly for larger households, with questions on complicated and potentially sensitive topics. Item nonresponse is already high in interviewer-administered interviews; without the motivation of an interviewer, respondents may be even more likely to leave items blank and/or break off entirely. The high visibility of the data and the complexity of these challenges mean that thorough testing of a self-administered ASEC must be completed prior to implementing this mode into production. To optimize a self-administered ASEC supplement, the Census Bureau intends to conduct preliminary exploratory research in addition to formal cognitive and usability testing. Exploratory one-on-one interviews will be conducted on the two major topical sections of the ASEC questionnaire (health insurance and income/public assistance). Interviews will provide feedback on respondents' knowledge on these topics and on preliminary self-administered versions of ASEC questions.

Population of Interest: CPS/ASEC samples a nationally representative sample of households in the United States. We plan to recruit from this general population as described further below.

Timeline: Testing will be conducted from November 2023 through January 2024.

Language: Testing will be conducted in English.

Sample: We plan to conduct 50 exploratory cognitive interviews. Half of these interviews will focus on health insurance and half will focus on income/public assistance.

Recruitment: Respondents will be recruited through a variety of methods. RTI will use methods such as posting fliers at local community organizations, putting advertisements in community newspapers, and collaborating with staff at community-based organizations to identify potential respondents. RTI will also post advertisements on Craigslist.com and social media sites such as Facebook and Reddit. RTI may also conduct outreach to past Census Bureau participants who completed screening surveys, but were not selected to participate in past call order studies. Finally, broadcast messages will be distributed to Census Bureau and RTI staff to leverage personal connections.

Recruitment will primarily focus on identifying respondents who meet certain criteria for each of the topical interviews. Specifically, respondents for the health insurance interviews must all be under the age of 65. They must also meet one of the following criteria:

- Respondents who are not the policyholder for their insurance
- Respondents who have had a life event in the past year (marriage, divorce, children, new job)
- Respondents who have experienced a spell of unemployment
- Respondents who have performed nonstandard or seasonal work
- Respondents enrolled in Medicaid or other plans for people with low incomes

For the income interviews, half of respondents must be 65 or older. They must also have at least one, but ideally more, of the following sources of income or assistance:

- Retirement/pension
- Unemployment/workers compensation
- Self-employment
- Interest and dividends
- SNAP, WIC, Free and Reduced Price Lunch, or other public assistance programs

Most (80%) of the respondents will live in a household with at least one other person since proxy response is a design feature of the CPS/ASEC. We will also aim for demographic diversity in sex, education, race/ethnicity, geographic region of the country, and household composition. Since this research is focused on a self-administered web version of the ASEC, the majority of interviews will be conducted with people who are likely to respond online (i.e., those who use the internet frequently). However, a small number of respondents who are unlikely to respond online will also be interviewed for comparison purposes. The screening questions and advertising materials are attached (see Attachments 1 and 2).

Method: Staff from RTI will conduct exploratory interviews remotely using Microsoft Teams.

Protocol: In the health insurance interviews, respondents will first be asked a series of open-ended probes to learn more about how they seek medical care, their current and past current health insurance coverage, and their knowledge about their coverage (see Attachment 3). Respondents without current coverage will be asked about prior coverage. Specific probes are designed to elicit information on less common situations such as respondents who choose not to take advantage of employer-provided coverage and shared coverage with people outside of the household. Next, respondents will be asked about their attitudes towards providing information from their health insurance card in lieu of answering survey questions. This will provide some preliminary feedback on alternative methods of data collection that may be considered in the future. Finally, respondents will be asked to answer a short series of questions about their coverage re-written to be suitable for self-administration. Interviewers will observe respondents' interactions with the questions and ask follow-up probes. Probes include asking how they came up with their answers and what certain terms and phrases mean

to them. The interviews will conclude by asking respondents general debriefing probes about their experience.

The income/public assistance interviews will follow a slightly different format (see Attachments 4 and 5). Respondents will be asked to report all sources of income they receive. Probes will then focus on types of income known to be underreported in the current ASEC and survey questions identified as problematic in the current instrument. Like the health insurance protocol, the income protocol will ask open-ended probes and include questions re-written to be suitable for self-administration. These tasks are more intertwined in the income/public assistance protocol than in the health insurance protocol. Interviewers will observe respondents' interactions with self-administered questions and ask follow-up probes. Probes include asking how they came up with their answers and what certain terms and phrases mean to them. The interviews will conclude by asking respondents general debriefing probes about their experience.

Information from both types of interviews will help inform a draft full self-administered ASEC supplement.

Consent: We will inform respondents 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 respondent agrees that the interview can be audio and/or videotaped to facilitate analysis of the results (see Attachment 6). Verbal consent will be captured on recordings. Respondents who do not consent to be video and/or audio-taped will still be allowed to participate.

Incentive: Respondents will receive \$40.

Length of Interview: We estimate that each of the 50 interviews will take approximately one hour. This results in a burden of 50 hours.

The screening questionnaire specific to this research will take approximately 15 minutes per person. We estimate that we will screen 6 people for each successful recruit for each of the 50 interviews. Therefore, we estimate a total of 300 people screened for a total of 75 hours (300 people at 15 minutes each).

Thus, **the total estimated burden for the first round of this research is 125 hours.**

Table 1. Total Estimated Burden

Category of Respondent	No. of Respondents	Participation Time	Burden
Screening	300	15 minutes	75 hours
Exploratory Interviews	50	60 minutes	50 hours
Totals			125 hours

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

Attachment 1. Screening questionnaire
Attachment 2. Recruitment ads
Attachment 3. Health Insurance Protocol
Attachment 4. Income/Public Assistance Protocol
Attachment 5. State Program Names for Income/Public Assistance Protocol
Attachment 6. Consent form

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

Jessica Holzberg
Center for Behavioral Science Methods
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, D.C. 20233
301-763-2298
Jessica.Holzberg@census.gov