

**2030 Census – Administrative Data  
Focus Group Moderator’s Guide - CORE**

<b>Date:</b>		<b>Start Time:</b>	_____ AM / PM
<b>Moderator:</b>		<b>Notetaker:</b>	
<b>FG#</b>		<b>Location:</b>	
<b>P Characteristics</b>			

**BEFORE PARTICIPANTS ARRIVE: PROVIDE TWO COPIES OF THE CONSENT FORM AND A BLANK NAME TENT FOR EACH SEAT AROUND THE TABLE. PLACE MARKERS AND PENS AROUND TABLE. AS PARTICIPANTS ARRIVE, ASK THEM TO WRITE THEIR FIRST NAME ON THE NAME TENT AND TO REVIEW THE CONSENT FORM.**

***MODERATOR: THIS IS A GUIDE TO HELP YOU LEAD THE DISCUSSION. YOU CAN MODIFY AND ADAPT THESE QUESTIONS TO MEET SITUATIONAL NEEDS DURING EACH SESSION.***

**SECTION I: INTRODUCTION (10 minutes)**

Welcome! Thank you for talking with us today. My name is [MODERATOR NAME] and I’m here with my colleague, [NOTETAKER NAME]. I will be guiding our discussion today. We will discuss several topics related to the collection of information in the 2030 decennial census.

[NOTETAKER NAME] will take notes so we don’t miss anything important.

The notetaker and I work for RTI International. We are working with the Census Bureau’s Center for Behavioral Science Methods to collect this information.

[IF OBSERVERS: We have a couple of other people from Census Bureau that have joined by phone and will be observing our conversation today.]

We will be audio recording our session so we can make sure to get all your feedback.

Did everyone have a chance to review the consent form? Does anyone have any questions?  
[ANSWER Q’s]

Please sign one of the consent forms and pass it back to me. The other version is for you to keep.

---

Before we begin, we have a few ground rules for our discussion:

## RULES

- **First, I will be asking a lot of questions.** There are no right or wrong answers to my questions; we just want your honest opinions. We don't need to have everyone agree. In fact, if you have a view different from others it is especially important for us to hear it because you may be the only person who is representing a different point of view here today.
- **Be respectful of other people's comments.** It is fine to disagree with each other's comments, but let's do so politely. We are interested in listening to everybody's opinion in a respectful manner.
- **Please keep information confidential.** This means that we want everyone to respect opinions shared here and not share them with others.
- **Only one person speaks at a time, and we'd like everyone to get a turn.** Please do not speak while somebody else is talking because it's hard to understand when too many people talk at once. Please speak up and let us know what you are thinking. If you are the type of person who always participates, please also give others a chance to talk.
- 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, we will leave a few minutes at the end of the discussion.
- We are **audio recording** this focus group session, so we don't miss anything that is said. We will only use first names during this discussion, and we won't ask questions that would identify you in any way. Only researchers who are working on the study will have access to the recording.
- **Please mention your first name** each time you respond to questions so we will have this for the recording. I know this can be difficult to remember, but I will remind you.

Does anyone have any questions before we get started? [ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS AT THIS POINT]

## ICEBREAKER

The first thing I want to do is get to know each of you a little better. Let's go around (the room) and have each one of you tell us briefly:

- Your first name and one thing you really like about where you live.

I'll go first. My name is... [BE BRIEF AND BUILD RAPPORT BY SHARING EXPERIENCE SIMILAR TO THEIRS]

[START THE RECORDING]

## SECTION II: DECENNIAL DATA COLLECTION CONSIDERATIONS

Thank you. Let's start by discussing a few topics related to the decennial census.

### A1. Overview of decennial census (~5 minutes)

1. What is your understanding of why the Census Bureau conducts a census of the U.S. population every 10 years?
2. What types of information are collected during the census? [DEVELOP LIST BASED ON P RESPONSES]
3. What was your past experience with completing the decennial census in 2020 or 2010?  
[IF NEEDED: Did you receive the notification post card?]  
[IF NEEDED: Do you recall if a Census worker come to your home or neighborhood?]
4. Can you think of any potential problems that can occur when people do not complete their census form or leave a lot of information blank?

### Intro to existing data:

**HANDOUT 1:** I want to now distribute a form that we will use during this discussion. For now, I just want to have you focus on the first page – the information presented in Handout 1.

During the census every ten years, the Census Bureau collects data for every resident of the United States. The data includes name, date of birth, gender, age, relationship to other household members, race, Hispanic origin, and whether a home is rented or owned. Citizenship status is not collected.

The data that is collected every ten years is used to determine how many seats each state gets in Congress; Congressional, state, and local legislative redistricting; as well as how to allocate federal funds. So now that we've talked a bit about the census, I want to tell you more about what we are going to talk about today.

While the Census Bureau conducts one big data collection every ten years, other federal, state, and local government agencies are continuously collecting data as they "administer" or conduct their work. These existing records are often called "administrative records." For example, the Social Security Administration, the IRS, and the Census Bureau collect data in other surveys. State agencies, such as the Department of Motor Vehicles, and private companies have existing records on U.S. residents too.

The Census Bureau is coming up with ways to use all these existing records to improve the next Census in 2030. So, today we would like to talk to you about the different ways that the Census Bureau **is considering for use of this** existing data.

## **A2. Use of administrative data to reduce contacts (~10 minutes)**

**HANDOUT 2:** Please turn to the information presented in Handout 2. Take a moment to read it and look up when you are finished so I know you are done.

### **Please consider the following scenario:**

The Census Bureau will make the first attempt to reach households by mail. In the past, the Census Bureau would send additional mailings and/or a person to the residence if the household did not respond. In 2030, the Census Bureau may decide to use existing data instead of continuing to send mail reminders or sending an interviewer. This would eliminate the need to make additional attempts to reach the resident.

For example, the Census Bureau could use existing data from the Social Security Administration. It could include information on household residents such as date of birth and gender. This information could be helpful to complete the decennial census when a household does not respond.

1. How do you feel about the Census Bureau using existing data like the example of getting data from the Social Security Administration to complete the information needed for a household's decennial census form?
2. Sometimes the Census Bureau must interview a neighbor or landlord if they cannot reach a resident. Do you think it would be better to use existing data to complete the information needed or use the information they receive from a neighbor or landlord?
3. All households will get a chance to respond themselves, however if existing data is adequate, the Bureau may decide that a household that does not respond by the established deadline will not get additional contact attempts. Instead, their existing data would be used to complete the census form. However, the existing data for other households might not be adequate. For those households, the Census Bureau will send additional mailings and may send a census worker to their home. Any reactions to using existing data in this way?
  - a. Do you feel it would be okay for some households to get different number of contact attempts based on their existing data?
4. What do you think could be some potential **benefits** of using another government data source to complete census information for a household and its residents?
5. What do you think could be some potential **drawbacks** of this approach?

### **A3. Using administrative data to revise/supplement self-report data (~20 minutes)**

The Census Bureau is considering using existing data to revise information about a household or fill-in missing information about a household or residents. Sometimes, people are left off census forms. For example, some people live in a household with other family members or other families. Grandparents can live with adult children and their grandkids or maybe some families decide to live together to save money on rent. Sometimes in these types of situations, all the people are not counted on a census form for the household.

1. What are your thoughts about using existing data to add individuals to the list of people reported?

2. One of the questions on the census form asks about how people are related in the household. Do you feel the same or differently about using existing data to fill-in missing data such as household members or relationship to other household members? Tell me more about why.
3. Young children, from newborn to age 5 are sometimes left off census forms. Does adding children in this age group, based on existing data, make you think any differently about this approach?
4. What do you think could be some potential **benefits** of this approach to fill-in missing information using existing data?
5. What do you think could be some potential **drawbacks** of this approach?
6. What remaining questions do have about this approach?

Similarly, the Census Bureau could consider using existing data to help identify situations where too many people were reported on the census form. For example, a college student may be included at their parents' household address and included at their college address. This may also occur with a member of the military included at multiple addresses if they are on military assignment.

7. How do you feel about the Census Bureau using existing data from other government agencies to remove people from a household list?

Another way that the Census Bureau could use existing data would be situations where someone does not provide certain information, such as date of birth, for all the household residents. The Census Bureau could use existing information to fill in the missing data.

8. What are your thoughts on the Census Bureau using data from other government agencies to fill-in resident characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, or sex of household residents?
  - a. Does it matter what type of data would be filled in?

#### A4. Use of administrative data to conduct customized contact strategies (~20 minutes)

Let's turn our attention to the communication materials that the Census Bureau sends to households.

**HANDOUT:** Please turn to the information presented in Handout 3. Take a moment to read it and look up when you are finished so I know you are done.

The Census Bureau is considering the use of existing data known about a household to tailor communications that a household would receive. Here are some scenarios:

- The Census Bureau uses existing data on a particular household to determine that the residents are Vietnamese. Communications sent to this household regarding the census could be provided in Vietnamese.
- The Census Bureau determines that a household has young children through review of existing data. Communications sent to this household could include language explaining that Census data are used to determine school funding.
- The Census Bureau uses existing data to determine that a household includes residents that are frequent internet users. As a result, materials sent from the Census could include a QR code to complete the census form online.

1. This use of existing data might mean that your household gets a different type of message than your neighbor. How do you feel about this approach?
2. Do any of the scenarios presented make you feel differently, or do you feel the same about each of them?

**HANDOUT:** Please turn to the information presented in handout 4. Take a moment to read it and look up when you are finished so I know you are done.

The Census Bureau is considering customized messaging to be more appealing to residents of different communities. For example, on the postcard that you might receive, the Census Bureau could explain that data collected on the census form are used to allocate funds to improve roads, parks, and various services within your community.

Another example could be a town that has experienced a rise in crime. The Census Bureau could appeal to residents' concerns about this issue by explaining that census data are used in the allocation of resources within the community that might result in an increase in police, fire, and other first responders.

1. How would you feel about the Census Bureau using existing government data about your community or household, to create these customized messages encouraging you to complete the census form?
2. Would customized messaging, specific to the needs of your community, encourage you to go online to complete the Decennial Census form soon after receiving it from the Census Bureau?
3. What do you think could be some potential **benefits** of using existing data about your community in this way?
4. What do you think could be some potential **drawbacks** of this approach?

#### **A5. Using administrative data to determine occupancy (~15 minutes)**

Sometimes Census interviewers will visit an address several times when trying to reach someone or determine whether anyone is currently living there or if it is vacant. Another potential use of existing data is to determine if there is someone living at an address or if it is vacant.

1. How do you feel about the Census Bureau using existing data to determine whether an address is vacant?
  - a. Do you see any benefits to the Census Bureau using data from other sources to determine whether a residence is occupied?
  - b. Do you have any concerns about this approach?
  - c. What about using data from real estate websites, such as Zillow? How do you think that might change your opinion?



- d. What about using utility data? If the Census Bureau knew that there was no electric or gas service, they could use that data to figure out if an address is vacant or occupied. Do you feel any differently about the use of utility data?
- 2. Another idea would be to use cell phone location data to figure out if an address was vacant or occupied. If no or very few cell phones were used, they could figure out if people are likely living there or if the place is vacant. What do you think of this idea?
  - a. What do you think about the Census Bureau using cell phone location data for other types of uses? For example, they could use this location data to produce statistics about travel or migration. Do you have any reactions to that idea?
- 3. Consider Census Bureau interviewers that might be working in your neighborhood.

How would you feel about someone from the Census Bureau asking you whether an address close to your home was occupied or vacant? They may ask if you know the neighbors, whether there has been any recent activity at the residence, or whether you might think it is vacant.

- a. Would you provide this information if asked on the census form? Tell me more about being willing to provide the information.

### **SECTION III: Participant-specific questions (5 minutes)**

#### **Good ADRECS:**

The Census Bureau has done a lot of research on the use of existing data. They know that about 80% of households have adequate information in existing records. If these households do not respond quickly to the first invitation, the Census Bureau is considering not providing these households with further invitations to respond. This would mean that some people, even if they preferred to answer in-person with an interviewer, would not get an interviewer coming to their home, as they would in past censuses.

Does this change your opinion about what you've heard today? Tell me more about your reaction to this.

#### **Less good ADRECS:**

The Census Bureau has done a lot of research on the use of existing data. They know that about 20% of households do not have adequate information in existing records. If these household do not respond to the first invitation, they would continue to get mailings and interviewers would be sent to collect data. Because the census is mandatory, interviewers would be persistent in trying to get information from these households. This might be different than households with adequate information in existing records.

Does this change your opinion about what you've heard today? Tell me more about your reaction to this.

**Likely to respond with an interviewer:**

The Census Bureau has information about how households have responded to requests in the past. For example, the Bureau may have data about whether a household has responded online or on paper, or if the household has not responded to requests in the past. The Bureau might use this data to decide that mail probably won't work for some households and if the Bureau does not have adequate existing data, then the Bureau would send an interviewer right away.

Does this change your opinion about what you've heard today? Tell me more about your reaction to this.

**SECTION IV: CONCLUSION (5 minutes)**

1. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us that you haven't had a chance to mention yet?
  - a. Anyone else?

Before we end the group, I want to remind you that the Census Bureau is committed to keeping your personal information confidential. Census Bureau employees are sworn for life to protect your confidentiality. Any Census Bureau employee who violates Title 13 is subject to a fine up to \$250,000, a prison sentence up to five years, or both. Does anyone have any questions?

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

[TURN OFF RECORDING]

[PROVIDE INCENTIVE AND HAVE PARTICIPANT SIGN INCENTIVE RECEIPT]