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**Report on Cognitive Pretesting of the 2010 Census  
Program for Evaluations and Experiments Panels  
Mailing Package: Deadline Messages**

Elizabeth Nichols  
Nathan Jurgenson  
Dawn Norris

Statistical Research Division  
U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, D.C. 20233

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# Report on Cognitive Pretesting of the 2010 Census Program for Evaluations and Experiments Panels Mailing Package: Deadline Messages

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This summary briefly describes the methods used and provides the results from pretesting the deadline messages proposed for the 2010 Census Program for Evaluations and Experiments (CPEX) panels mailing materials. Five deadline-message conditions will be tested in 2010.

The methods and results of two rounds of cognitive interviews are presented. In the first round, we pretested each of the deadline messages on each mailing piece (an advance letter, outgoing envelope, cover letter, and reminder postcard). We asked respondents to read each mailing piece separately for an assigned condition, and then we probed for their understanding and reactions to the various deadline statements. In the second round, we pretested the deadline message on the initial cover letter only, since the messages on the other mailing pieces had already been tested thoroughly.

Each version of the deadline message was worded differently in the cover letters distributed for each of the five conditions. The conditions' names were not disclosed to the respondents but were labeled "Control," "Mild," "Progressive Urgency," "NRFU (Nonresponse Followup) Motivation" and "Cost." In the first round, we tested the Control, Mild, Progressive Urgency, and NRFU Motivation messages. We did not test the Cost message in the first round, because at the time, that message had not yet been added as an official CPEX panel. In the second round, we tested a revised NRFU Motivation message and a Cost message.

The different versions of the deadline messages in the cover letters were worded as follows:

- Control: "Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form today."
- Mild: "Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5."
- Progressive Urgency: "The deadline to complete and mail back the enclosed census form is April 5."
- Round 1 NRFU Motivation: "Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5 so that you are not inconvenienced with a personal visit from an interviewer."
- Round 2 NRFU Motivation: "Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5 so that you can avoid a personal visit from an interviewer."
- Cost: "Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5. Mailing your census form on time saves money that would otherwise be used to follow up with you."

The messages in the advance letter, postcard, and on the return envelope varied by condition as well, but used language consistent with the tone in the cover letter.

We conducted interviews with 20 respondents in the first round and ten respondents in the second round. Highlights from the testing follow.

### 1.1. Comprehension

In Round 1 of testing, based on their verbal reports, almost all 20 respondents understood each of the deadline messages across all of the materials they evaluated in the Control, Mild, Progressive Urgency and NRFU Motivation conditions. In Round 1, we designed and tested three additional NRFU messages, but none of the three proved superior to the original message.

We did identify aspects of the NRFU message that respondents reported liking and not liking, and we crafted a new NRFU message for further testing: “An interviewer will visit each address that does not return a census form to gather the required information. If you prefer to avoid this visit, please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5<sup>th</sup>.” This message was not chosen for the second round of testing. Instead, in the second round we tested, “Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5 so that you can avoid a personal visit from an interviewer.” Based on their verbal feedback, one respondent out of ten did not understand this message as intended.

In the second round of testing, based on their verbal feedback, three of the ten respondents did not understand the Cost message as intended. Specifically these three did not understand the latter part of the sentence, which indicated that additional taxpayer money would be needed to follow up with households that did not return the form by a particular date. The three respondents who had difficulty comprehending the latter part of the message had either a high school diploma or some college education. Because this level of education is indicative of the larger U.S. population, we do not recommend going forward with this message.

## **1.2. Respondent’s Deadline Awareness**

At the beginning of this project, we decided to gather data on whether respondents notice the deadline messages within the mailing materials, in addition to gathering information on what the messages meant to the respondents. If during our testing, few respondents spontaneously noticed the deadline messages, then the design and placement of the messages would need to be revised. In the first round of testing, there was some variability in how often respondents noticed the deadline messages in the different mailing pieces. Overall, the respondents were presented with 75 deadline messages across all the mailing materials. They commented on 36 of them without prompting, and tended to notice the deadline messages on the cover letter more often than they noticed the deadline messages on the other materials.

We did not track whether respondents spontaneously mentioned the deadline messages in the second round of testing since we had already collected message-related results during the first round.

## **1.3. Respondent Reactions**

During the first round of testing, when respondents saw the Control, Mild, Progressive Urgency, and NRFU Motivation message, we asked them which cover-letter message they liked the best, which one they liked the least, and why. Respondents indicated they liked the deadline message in the Control version the least because it did not use a date. The instruction was to complete the form “today.” Respondents reported that this prompt was too demanding. One respondent said this “makes it impossible” to comply with, particularly when a household may not receive the letter until the evening of the day it arrived in the mail or several days later, if they were on vacation. Respondents were equally divided as to which of the other three versions they liked the most.

During the first round of testing, we observed respondents having strong reactions (mostly positive) to the word “deadline.” Respondents reported that this word made them think of legal ramifications, implied a penalty for non-completion, and stood as a “mandate.” Three respondents reacted negatively to the word “deadline.” They reported that it was too pushy and bordered on rude. There did not seem to be any problems with the letter having a due date. Although no one mentioned that they would

throw away the form if they had not already filled it out after the due date passed, we cannot be certain that this would not happen during the actual census.

During the first round of testing, respondents had the strongest reactions to the NRFU Motivation version of the deadline message. The respondents who liked this version said they did so because the message clarified what would happen if the recipient did not respond on time. The message made them take the census more seriously. However, most respondents reported that they did not want a personal visit because it was inconvenient and felt like an invasion of privacy. At least one respondent said that bringing up the word “inconvenience” in the message actually might prime respondents to feel that completing the enclosed form would be an inconvenience. Interestingly, when respondents self-reported to which version they were more likely to respond, more selected the NRFU Motivation version than any of the other versions. In the second round, although two people did not seem to mind completing the form with an interviewer’s help, most other respondents cited time constraints that would make it easier and more convenient to simply complete the form without a personal visit.

In the second round of testing, we noticed that respondents did not pay a great deal of attention to the emphasis on cost savings (beyond being confused by it). In other words, they did not mention it as important, noteworthy, or motivating. None of the ten respondents explicitly said that avoiding the cost to taxpayers was an incentive to complete and return the Census form, although one respondent described this sentence as “positive.” This respondent also said the sentence, which stated, “Mailing your census form on time saves money that would otherwise be used to follow up with you.” makes it sound like sending in the form on time “is a good thing to do.” Instead of mentioning this savings as an incentive to complete the form on time, several respondents mentioned that they wanted to avoid a follow up (letter or phone call).

#### **1.4. Pretest of a Return Envelope**

This report also presents the results from a pretest of a return envelope. DeMaio, Beck, and Schwede (2008) had tested a return envelope similar to the one used in the 2008 Dress Rehearsal. These researchers found that many respondents did not see the instructions informing them how to place the questionnaire in the envelope correctly so that barcodes would show through the windows. DeMaio et al. made suggested changes to the envelope including changing the font style, moving the instructions on the back of the envelope down slightly, and enclosing the instructions in a black rectangle to make them more noticeable.

During the first round of testing, we unfortunately did not test a revised return envelope. Instead, we inadvertently tested a return envelope that we later recognized as identical to the envelope DeMaio et al. had tested. In the second round of testing, we tested a mocked-up return envelope with the black rectangle around the lowered instructions on the back of the envelope, as DeMaio et al. had recommended.

In both rounds of testing, we found that not all respondents saw the instructions on the return envelope. The first round of testing, which used the same envelope as DeMaio et al. (2008), found that six of 20 respondents did not see either the instructions on the front *or* the back of the return envelope. These findings confirmed DeMaio et al.’s results. Unfortunately, making the change to the back of the envelope (lowering the instructions and enclosing them in a black rectangle) did not seem to increase the likelihood of respondents seeing the instructions. During the second round of testing, five of the ten respondents did not see either the instruction on the front or the one on the back of the return envelope.

Our two rounds of testing produced somewhat conflicting results regarding whether the instructions help the respondent correctly place the form into the envelope so that the form can be scanned. In the first round, 13 of the 14 respondents who saw an instruction correctly placed the form in the envelope, while only three of the six respondents who did not see an instruction were successful. From the first round, we concluded that the instructions helped respondents accurately return scannable materials. However, in the second round, all five respondents, none of whom saw either instruction, placed the form into the envelope correctly. Only one respondent out of ten placed the form incorrectly into the envelope, and that respondent reported seeing the instruction on the front of the envelope.

### **1.5. Summary**

We found some comprehension problems with the Cost deadline message we tested in the second round. We did not find any consistent comprehension problems with any of the other versions of the deadline messages.

In both rounds, respondents had strong reaction to the NRFU message, with most respondents stating a preference for not having an interviewer come to their door and conduct an interview. Respondents saw the word “deadline” as a strong message. In general, respondents had a more favorable reaction to this message than they did to the Control version, which indicated that the respondent should complete and mail back the form today.

Like DeMaio et al. (2008), we continued to find that some respondents placed the form into the envelope incorrectly, making it unscannable. We did not see evidence that the changes made to the back of the envelope (lowering the instruction and enclosing them in a black rectangle) helped respondents notice the instruction. Based on our test, we conclude that either design, with or without the changes, is reasonable for use on the Census return envelope instructions.

# Report on Cognitive Pretesting of the 2010 Census Program for Evaluations and Experiments Panels Mailing Package: Deadline Messages

## 2. INTRODUCTION

As part of the 2010 Census Program for Evaluations and Experiments (CPEX), ten panels will test the effects of deadline messaging and a compressed mailing schedule on mail response rates. The first panel is the control panel. This panel will be mailed according to the 2010 Census schedule and will not display a calendar due date on any of the mailing pieces. The second, third, fourth, and fifth panels will examine the effects of four other deadline messages. Materials will be mailed to these panels according to the normal 2010 schedule, but a due date will be displayed on each of the mailing pieces: the advance letter, the cover letter and the outgoing envelope of the initial questionnaire package as well as the reminder postcard.

- 1<sup>st</sup> panel (labeled internally at the Census Bureau as the “Control” panel): Politely requests that the completed form be returned today.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> panel (“Mild”): Uses polite, non-threatening language that simply indicates the date by which the form should be mailed back.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> panel (“Progressive Urgency”): Emphasizes the “deadline” date and provides a reminder that a response to the census is required by law.
- 4<sup>th</sup> panel (“NRFU Motivation”): Uses similar messages as the Mild panel and additionally notes that an interviewer will come to the house if the form is not returned.
- 5<sup>th</sup> panel (“Cost”): Provides a deadline and adds a sentence appealing to the respondent’s presumed desire to save taxpayer money by completing and mailing the form on time.
- 6<sup>th</sup> panel: Evaluates the main effect for the compressed schedule condition, without any explicit deadlines.
- 7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> panels: Combine a due date (i.e., deadline messaging) with a compressed mailing schedule.

In this qualitative study, we used cognitive interviews to pretest the deadline messages. We present the results of these two rounds of cognitive interviews in this paper. In the first round, we pretested each of the deadline messages on each mailing piece (an advance letter, outgoing envelope, cover letter, and reminder postcard) developed for the Control, Mild, Progressive Urgency and NRFU Motivation CPEX panels. We asked respondents to read each mailing piece separately for an assigned condition, and then we probed for their understanding and reactions to the various deadline statements. In the second round, we pretested a revised NRFU Motivation deadline message on the cover letter and a deadline message on the cover letter for the Cost CPEX panel. We did not test the Cost deadline message in the first round of testing, as that message had not yet been added as an official CPEX panel. We were not tasked with testing the effect of the compressed schedule dates on the deadline messages. All the dates on the materials were from the normal 2010 mailing schedule. Within this document, we refer to the two rounds of testing as Round 1 and Round 2.

This study also presents the results from a pretest of the return envelope. In Round 1 of testing, we inadvertently tested the same envelope that was used during the pretesting documented in DeMaio, Beck, and Schwede (2008). In Round 2, we tested a mocked-up return envelope with the black rectangle around the lowered instructions on the back of the envelope, which was the design DeMaio et al. recommended.

We first describe the materials, methods, and limitations. Then we present the results in our study for Round 1 and Round 2 separately.

### **3. Round 1: Pretesting the Control, Mild, Progressive Urgency, and NRFU Motivation Deadline Message Conditions**

We had several objectives in this round. We needed to test respondents' comprehension of the different versions of the deadline messages on each mailing piece. Secondly, we attempted to find out whether respondents noticed the deadline messages without any prompting. We added this component to the testing because if respondents understood the messages, but did not notice them, then the purpose of the messages would be lost. Thirdly, we wanted to know if respondents had any preferences among the deadline messages and the reasons for their preferences. This information might help researchers craft future deadline messages. Lastly, we tested the whether respondents used the instructions on the return envelope to correctly insert their form into that envelope.

#### **3.1. Materials**

We review each piece of material the respondent interacted with during the first round of cognitive testing and describe how the materials differed across conditions (e.g., different deadline messages). We also describe the similarities across the conditions.

##### **3.1.1. Advance Letter Envelope**

There were no deadline messages on the advance letter envelope. The envelope was identical for all conditions (Appendix A). Because we were not testing the advance letter envelope, we did not print a fictional mailing address on the advance letter to show through the window of the envelope. Inside the envelope was the unaddressed, folded advance letter. We did not seal this envelope.

##### **3.1.2. Advance Letter**

We tested two different versions of the advance letter. The second sentence in each version of the advance letter contained the deadline message. The wording of this message was the only difference between the versions. The sentence was not in bold. Version A did not specify a date by which the form should be returned. Version B included a due date.

The different versions of advance letter deadline messages were worded as follows:

Version A (Control version, Appendix B): "When you receive your form, please fill it out and mail it in promptly."

Version B (Mild/Progressive Urgency/NRFU Motivation version, Appendix C): "When you receive your form, please fill it out and mail it in by April 5."

##### **3.1.3. Outgoing Envelope for the Initial Questionnaire**

We tested three different versions of the outgoing envelope. All versions of the outgoing envelopes contained the sentence, "YOUR RESPONSE IS REQUIRED BY LAW," which was placed underneath the statement, "U.S. Census Form Enclosed." Both statements were enclosed by a box. All versions except the Control version also contained a deadline message within the box. This message was placed underneath "YOUR RESPONSE IS REQUIRED BY LAW." The messages were not in bold and used the same font and lettering as "U.S. Census Form Enclosed."

The different versions of the outgoing envelope deadline messages were worded as follows:

Version A (Control version, Appendix D): (No message)

Version B (Mild/NRFU Motivation version, Appendix E): "Mail by April 5"

Version C (Progressive Urgency version, Appendix F): "Deadline is April 5"

Inside the outgoing envelope, the cover letter, the Census questionnaire, and the return envelope were placed in the order planned for the actual Census. We did not seal this envelope before giving it to the respondent.

#### **3.1.4. Cover Letter**

We tested four different versions of the cover letter. The last sentence in the first paragraph of the letter contained the deadline message in bold. That sentence was the only difference between the different versions of the letters.

The different versions of the cover letter deadline messages were worded as follows:

Version A (Control version, Appendix G) = “**Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form today.**”

Version B (Mild version, Appendix H) = “**Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5.**”

Version C (Progressive Urgency version, Appendix I) = “**The deadline to complete and mail back the enclosed census form is April 5.**”

Version D (NRFU Motivation version, Appendix J) = “**Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5 so that you are not inconvenienced with a personal visit from an interviewer.**”

The back of the cover letter was the same across the different versions (Appendix K).

#### **3.1.5. Census Questionnaire**

The Census questionnaire was identical for all four conditions.

We tested whether the respondent would place the completed Census questionnaire into the return envelope correctly. For this purpose, we needed to mimic the barcodes and mailing address that will be on the actual 2010 Census forms. We did this by printing two barcodes and a preprinted fictional mailing address onto large stickers. We placed these stickers on the forms so the large barcode and mailing address showed through the outgoing envelope window. The fact that the address was printed on the sticker was barely noticeable. The mailing address was printed as:

TO RESIDENT AT  
123 MAIN STREET  
ANYTOWN, USA 12345-1234

#### **3.1.6. Return Envelope**

In Round 1, the return envelope was the same envelope DeMaio et al. (2008) had tested. Appendix L provides the return envelope for Round 1.

#### **3.1.7. Reminder Postcard**

We tested four different versions of the reminder postcard. The deadline messages were not bolded, and the sentence with the message was the only difference between the different versions of the postcards. The version-specific message appeared as the last sentence in the second paragraph on the postcard. No mailing address was preprinted on the postcards. The side with the mailing address (Appendix M) was the same across all versions.

The different versions of the reminder postcard deadline messages were worded as follows:

Version A (Control version, Appendix N) = “If you have not responded, please provide your information as soon as possible.”

Version B (Mild version, Appendix O) = “If you have not responded, please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5.”

Version C (Progressive Urgency version, Appendix P) = “If you have not responded, the deadline to complete and mail back the enclosed census form is April 5.”<sup>1</sup>

Version D (NRFU Motivation version, Appendix Q) = “If you have not responded, please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5 so that you are not inconvenienced with a personal visit from an interviewer.”

### 3.1.8. Summary of Mailing Material Versions across Deadline Message Conditions

Table 1 provides a summary of the different versions of the mailing pieces that made up the four conditions. The Mild, Progressive Urgency, and NRFU Motivation conditions share the same advance letter. The Mild and NRFU Motivation conditions share the same outgoing envelope.

Table 1: Summary of the Mailing Materials Tested in Round 1 by Deadline Message Condition

Condition	Materials			
	Advance Letter	Outgoing Envelope	Cover Letter	Reminder Postcard
Control	Version A: Uses “promptly”	Version A: No Date	Version A: Uses “today”	Version A: No Date
Mild	Version B: Uses “April 5”	Version B: “Mail by April 5”	Version B: Uses April 5	Version B: Uses April 5
Progressive Urgency	Version B: Uses “April 5”	Version C: “Deadline is April 5”	Version C: Uses “deadline” and “April 5”	Version C: Uses “deadline” and “April 5”
NRFU Motivation	Version B: Uses “April 5”	Version B: “Mail by April 5”	Version D: April 5 & inconvenience & personal visit	Version D: April 5 & inconvenience & personal visit

## 3.2. RESEARCH METHODS

In this section, we provide information on the recruiting and demographics of the 20 respondents who participated in the research. Additionally, we discuss the design of the research for Round 1.

### 3.2.1. Respondents

In October and November 2008, staff from SRD conducted 20 cognitive interviews in Round 1 of testing. As was done in the cognitive pretesting of the Control mailing materials (DeMaio et al., 2008), we targeted general population respondents that reflect the diversity of households that will constitute the 2010 Census experimental panels. We recruited respondents through advertisements on *Craigslist* and the free DC newspaper, the *Express*, and by calling people in our recruiting database. Because very few highly educated participants responded to the ads, we also recruited five participants through contacts at a local university and three participants through a neighborhood listserv and personal connections. None of the participants had ever participated in any Census Bureau pretesting.

<sup>1</sup> The deadline message should have read, “If you have not responded, the deadline to complete and mail your census form is April 5. Your response is required by law.” Due to an oversight, the last sentence, “Your response is required by law,” was omitted from the testing materials. A mandatory statement, “Your response to the U.S. Census Bureau is required by law,” was on the mailing address side of all postcards.

Table 2 contains the demographic characteristics of the respondents in Round 1.

Table 2. Round 1: Demographic Characteristics of Pretesting Respondents. N=20

Sex		Race		Age		Education	
Male	8	White	7	≤30	3	< HS	1
Female	12	Black	11	31-45	6	HS, GED	6
		Hispanic	1	46-60	9	Some college, AA	6
		Asian	2	61+	2	Bachelor's	1
		Other	1			Some grad	6
Total	20		22*		20		20

\*Because two respondents reported more than one race, the total for race is greater than 20.

As described in the next sections, we initially presented the respondents with the materials for one condition. We did not consider the respondents' demographic characteristics when assigning them to their initial condition, so any apparent variation in or distribution of demographic characteristics occurred by chance, not by design. Appendix R contains the distribution of demographic characteristics by initial condition received.

### 3.2.2. Procedure

In Round 1, we conducted the interviews at the Census Bureau's cognitive laboratory and at places more convenient for some respondents in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. Each interview took approximately one hour to complete. A copy of Round 1's research protocol is included in Appendix S. We audiotaped the interviews to facilitate in the compilation of our findings. Each respondent was given an honorarium of \$40 to reduce expenses associated with participating in the research.

There were four parts to the pretest: 1) testing all materials in a particular condition; 2) comparing all versions of the deadline message in the cover letter; 3) comparing alternative NRFU deadline statements; and 4) completing the form and preparing it for mailing.

#### 3.2.2.1. Part 1: Testing all Materials in a Particular Condition

In Part 1, we assigned each respondent to one of the four conditions. Each condition had five respondents. In this first part, we did not disclose our interest in the deadline messages to the respondents, nor did we divulge the existence of different conditions or the condition names. Our objectives were to see whether the respondents noticed the deadline messages and to assess what the messages meant to them.

The researcher instructed the participant to pretend he or she was at home and that it was March of 2010. We presented each mailing piece for the assigned condition to the respondent, one at a time. First, we gave the respondent an envelope containing the advance letter, which we asked him or her to open, then the mailing package (outgoing envelope containing the cover letter, form and return envelope), and finally, the reminder postcard.

Upon presenting each piece to the respondent, the researcher instructed the respondent to read it as if at home (not necessarily out loud) and to verbalize any thoughts or reactions to it. The researcher did not ask any questions about the envelope containing the advance letter, although the respondent could comment upon it. After the respondent read the advance letter, the researcher asked what the letter was asking the respondent to do. The researcher listened for the respondent to mention words used in the

deadline message on the advance letter or words paraphrasing the intent of the deadline message. If the respondent did not mention anything related to the deadline message, the researcher asked the respondent what he or she first saw on the letter. The researcher then put the advance letter and envelope aside, gave the initial mailing package to the respondent, and asked the respondent to look over the outgoing envelope and comment on it, specifically about what he or she saw on the envelope (or what caught his or her eye).

The researcher then instructed the respondent to take out the contents of the envelope. If needed, the researcher steered the respondent toward the cover letter. The researcher instructed the respondent to read the cover letter. Then the researcher asked what the letter was asking the respondent to do. As with the advance letter, if the respondent did not mention anything related to the deadline message, the researcher asked the respondent what he or she first saw. The researcher then put these materials aside (the respondent did not fill out the form at this point). Finally, the researcher presented the postcard and asked the same questions.

After the respondent had seen each mailing piece, the researcher went back to each piece in order and asked whether the respondent had seen the deadline message (if they had not mentioned it earlier) and what each message meant.

As just stated, respondents saw all of the materials in their condition before the researcher went back and probed on the deadline messages in each mailing piece. We used this design to collect information on whether the respondent noticed and possibly processed the deadline message without prompting from the researcher. If no one noticed the messages without prompting, this information might help interpret the response rates from the experimental panels in 2010.

However, using this method, it is possible that seeing the message in a later mailing piece, such as the cover letter, changed the way respondents processed the message on an earlier piece of mail, such as the advance letter, when we went back and probed meaning on each piece. We found no evidence that seeing an initial deadline message changed respondents' understandings of subsequent deadline messages.

#### 3.2.2.2. Part 2: Comparison of the Deadline Messages in the Cover Letters

In Part 2, we compared the various deadline messages on the cover letters. Our objective was to determine what each deadline message meant to the respondent, which one they reported liking the best, and a self-assessment of which message they thought would prompt them to complete and mail back the form the quickest. We showed all of the cover letters to all 20 respondents because we wanted more than five respondents' findings on the meaning of the deadline message.

As a basis for making the comparisons, we placed all four cover letters in a row on the table in front of the respondent. The cover letter the respondent initially saw was the first letter on the left. We placed the remaining letters in the order we determined to be the simplest to the most complex message.

Below is the order of presentation (from left to right) in each condition.

- Control: Control, Mild, Progressive Urgency, NRFU Motivation
- Mild: Mild, Control, Progressive Urgency, NRFU Motivation
- Progressive Urgency: Progressive Urgency, Control, Mild, NRFU Motivation
- NRFU Motivation: NRFU Motivation, Control, Mild, Progressive Urgency

It should be noted, however, that a researcher mistakenly presented the letters out of the prescribed order for three participants.

After the researcher placed the cover letters on the table, the researcher instructed the respondents to read each bolded deadline message out loud, say what it meant in his or her own words, and indicate whether they liked it more or less than the deadline message they originally saw. Additionally, the respondents reported which message they liked the most, which message they liked the least, and why they felt that way. Then they indicated which message they thought would motivate them the most to fill in the form and return it via mail and why. In the Limitations Section, we address the caveats for interpreting these findings.

In Part 2, respondents became aware of our interest in the deadline statements, and they also became aware of the different versions of the cover letter. However, we did not share the condition names with the respondents.

#### 3.2.2.3. Part 3: Comparison of Alternative NRFU Deadline Messages

Before any testing began, we thought that the NRFU Motivation message might prove the most difficult for respondents to comprehend because the letter contained two “negative” words next to each other (“not inconvenienced”) and census jargon (“personal visit”). We developed the following three alternative NRFU messages to test, which retained the spirit of the original NRFU message:

- (1) An interviewer must visit each address that doesn't return a census form in order to gather the required information; to avoid this inconvenience to you, we ask that you complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5th.
- (2) To avoid the inconvenience of a visit to this address from an interviewer, please complete and mail back the enclosed form by April 5.
- (3) Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5 to avoid a visit by an interviewer.

Our objective was to see whether a reworded statement with the same intent might be easier for the respondent to understand. We realized that the first two revised messages continue to have two negative words (avoid and inconvenience). However, we thought that these revised messages were not as confusing as the original message because the negative words were separated by another word.

After finishing Part 2, the researcher removed the Control, Mild, and Progressive Urgency cover letters, leaving the NRFU Motivation letter in front of the respondent. The researcher then presented the three alternative statements to the respondent on an 8.5 x 11 piece of paper. Just as in Part 2, the researcher instructed the respondent to read each of the three alternative statements and say what each meant to them. Then, considering the four statements (the three alternative statements and the original), the researcher asked the respondents to report which statement they liked the best, which statement they liked the least, and why. The researcher then removed all materials except for the items in the original outgoing mail envelope packet that the respondent initially saw. Those items were the outgoing mail envelope itself, the cover letter, the form, and the return envelope.

#### 3.2.2.4. Part 4: Form Completion and Preparation for Mailing

In Part 4, we asked the respondent to complete the form and prepare it for mailing. Our main objective was to see whether the respondent saw the instructions in the front window and on the back of the

return envelope. These instructions explained how to place the form in the envelope. We also wanted to find out whether those instructions were helpful. Respondents were not aware that the purpose of the exercise was to see if they noticed the instructions on the return envelope and whether they placed the form into the envelope correctly.

### **3.3. LIMITATIONS**

In this section, we discuss the limitations associated with the return envelope, the Progressive Urgency Reminder Postcard, possible order effects associated with our design, and biases inherent in findings based on self-reports.

#### **3.3.1. Return Envelope**

We were not able to print the respondent's address on the form. Instead of using the respondent's actual address, we used a fictional bar code and address, as detailed in the Materials section. The lack of a real address could have affected how respondents placed the form into the return envelope. DeMaio et al. (2008) found that some respondents expected to see their address show through the envelope's window, instead of a bar code. If the respondents were looking for their own address to appear through the envelope's window they might have had a hard time getting the form in the envelope, since the address did not line up with the envelope's window.

In this round, we planned to test a revised return envelope (Appendix T), but mistakenly, we retested the return envelope that DeMaio et al. had tested. We tested a revised return envelope in Round 2.

Additionally, we did not seal the outgoing envelope before giving it to the respondent in Part 1. Therefore, when the respondent was looking through the materials to find the envelope that the completed form went into, they would have seen two unsealed envelopes: the outgoing envelope and the return envelope. Seeing two unsealed envelopes could have been confusing to respondents. After testing began and we saw at least one respondent consider the outgoing envelope to be a return envelope, we realized we should have sealed the outgoing envelope. We corrected this oversight in Round 2.

#### **3.3.2. Progressive Urgency Reminder Postcard**

The message that a response to the census is required by law was supposed to appear in the text of the reminder postcard for the Progressive Urgency condition. Due to an oversight, however, this message was not on the printed version we tested. We found no evidence suggesting that the lack of this statement changed the way respondents reacted to the Progressive Urgency deadline message. "Your response to the U.S. Census Bureau is required by law" appears in a box on the address side of all postcards. We initially presented each postcard to the respondent with the address side facing up. Most respondents saw this message.

#### **3.3.3. Order Effects**

The presentation order of the deadline messages in the cover letters might have affected the self-reported data. Because our main goal was to assess respondent comprehension of the different deadline messages, each participant received the entire mailing package for their randomly-assigned condition first, without knowing that we were interested in testing different versions of the deadline messages. Then they compared this cover letter to the other cover letters from the other conditions. This design had three main limitations:

- The initial or "anchor" message may have changed the way respondents interpreted the subsequent deadline messages (Tversky & Kahneman, 1986).

- While respondents were supposed to compare the letters in all four conditions two at a time, some respondents attempted to compare all four at once because all of the letters were on the table at the same time.
- We did not randomize the order in which we presented the subsequent messages. Respondents might have had a different understanding of the message or had a different message preference if they saw the materials in a different order.

### **3.3.4. Self-reported data**

We present respondents' self-reported responses in this report and base our conclusions on accepting self-reports as accurate.

We asked respondents to self-report what messages they saw on the letters, postcards, and envelopes. If it was not apparent from observing the respondent, we asked them whether they saw the messages on the envelope explaining how to place the form into the envelope correctly. There are limitations in asking a person to say what he or she saw. The eyes work quickly and at a pre-conscious level, and therefore it is next to impossible for someone to say what they saw first. People can only report what they think they saw first or what they think the interviewer wants them to have seen first. As a result, such information is subject to the same kind of error as any other kind of self-report.

We asked respondents to report which deadline message they liked the most, which message they liked the least, and which message they thought would motivate them to complete and mail in the form. We present tallies of these results, but we have no way of validating whether any respondent "liked" any of the messages or "liked" any of them better than another. Self-reported data are subject to Social Desirability biases, whereby a participant might report in a certain way in order to please the researcher. For example, all 20 of our respondents said they would complete and mail in the form. However, data from past censuses reveals that we never get a 100% response rate.

In this report, we present what respondents reported and what we observed and inferred from their actions and words. The reader should be reminded that inherent biases could have affected these results.

## **3.4. RESULTS**

We first provide results on whether respondents commented on the deadline message in their initially assigned condition in Round 1. Then, we discuss what respondents said the deadline messages meant to them. We review the respondents' stated preferences for the deadline messages on the cover letter and their predicted response behavior. Finally, we report whether respondents placed the form into the return envelope correctly and whether there was any relationship between correct form placement and respondents' reports of seeing the form-insertion instructions.

### **3.4.1. Respondents' Awareness of the Deadline Message for their Assigned Condition**

To assess whether the respondent was aware of the deadline message in each of the mailing pieces, we used the respondent's verbal reaction to each version of the mailing pieces that he or she saw initially. If the respondent stated the due date, the word "promptly," or any other word that signified that they noticed a deadline message, we concluded that the respondent saw the deadline message. Thus, we used the respondent's initial spontaneous reaction when he or she first saw the mailing piece. At this point in the testing, the respondents did not know we were interested in the deadline messages. We felt using spontaneous reactions was a more pure assessment of whether respondents saw the messages than using any comments they provided later in the interview, after we had focused on the deadline

messages. We used this information to gauge how well the deadline messages stood out in the different mailing materials. We note, however, that it was very possible that the respondent saw the message and did not make any mention of it.

Table 3 shows how many respondents in each of the conditions commented, on the deadline messages across mailing materials, without prompting. In total, all 20 respondents viewed 75 deadline messages, 36 of which they identified without prompting. Respondents seemed to notice the deadline message on the cover letter more than the deadline messages in the other materials. Fourteen of the 20 respondents spontaneously commented on those messages. Respondents seemed not to notice the deadline message on the outgoing envelope, as only five of 15 respondents spontaneously mentioned the date.

Our conclusion from Table 3 is that most respondents will probably see the deadline message within the cover letter. The deadline messages in the cover letters were the only deadline messages bolded. Perhaps the bolding of the messages helped respondents notice those messages.

Table 3. Number of Respondents Who Commented Spontaneously on Each Mailing Piece’s Deadline Message by Condition

	Control	Mild	Urgent	NRFU	Total
Advance Letter:	2/5	1/5	1/5	5/5	9/20
Outgoing Envelope:	N/A <sup>2</sup>	1/5	1/5	3/5	5/15
Cover Letter:	3/5	3/5	4/5	4/5	14/20
Postcard:	1/5	4/5	0/5	3/5	8/20
Total					36/75

### 3.4.2. Respondents’ Comprehension of the Deadline Messages

In this section, we analyze respondents’ interpretations of deadline message for the advance letter, the outgoing envelope, the cover letter, and the reminder postcard.

For the advance letter, outgoing envelope, and reminder postcard, we use respondents’ verbal reactions to the initial version they saw. We collapsed meaning across conditions, when the message was the same (for example, the Mild, Progressive Urgency, and NRFU Motivation conditions used the same version of the advance letter and we analyzed the responses of those respondents together).

For the cover letter, each respondent received the version corresponding to their condition first, and then later saw the three remaining letters. We used these results when we examined the deadline message meaning on the cover letter so that we would have results from 20 respondents for each deadline message instead of just five from the original condition they received.

Overall, we did not find significant problems with respondents’ understanding of the deadline messages across all four conditions, for any of the mailing pieces. We also did not observe any evidence that the order of presentation had an effect on the respondent’s interpretation of meaning. Finally, we did not observe any evidence that the demographic characteristics interacted with the design to produce different interpretations of the deadline messages. Understanding of the messages in each piece of mailing material seemed almost unanimously clear.

We begin a detailed analysis with the advance letter.

<sup>2</sup> There was no deadline message or date on the Control outgoing envelope.

#### 3.4.2.1. Advance Letter

The second sentence in both versions of the advance letter contained the deadline message. Nearly all respondents understood the deadline message on the advance letters as intended.

*Control version.* Five respondents in the Control condition saw the version of the advance letter, which had the deadline message, “When you receive your form, please fill it out and mail it in promptly.” All five respondents understood that the message was asking them to fill out the form and send it back. Three of the five respondents used the term “right away” when explaining what the sentence meant in their own words. Two respondents thought they could send it in within the week. Only one respondent, who understood that the message was telling her to do it right away, mentioned that she might put the form aside once she received it because it had no due date.

*Mild/Progressive Urgency/NRFU Motivation version.* Fifteen respondents across the Mild, Progressive Urgency, and NRFU Motivation conditions saw an advance letter that had the following deadline message: “When you receive your form, please fill it out and mail it in by April 5.” We collapsed these responses across conditions because we found no evidence of order effects.

Generally, respondents had no problem comprehending this statement, nor did they have any problem with the tone of the message. Nearly all respondents correctly interpreted the message to mean you should fill in your form and send it back.<sup>3</sup> Six of the 15 respondents thought the form had to be in the mail by the 5<sup>th</sup> while three respondents thought the Census Bureau must receive the form by April 5, so they had to mail it in a few days before that date. Five respondents did not mention the due date when talking about the message, but instead focused on filling out the form. Two of these five respondents expressed that there seemed to be some urgency to filling it out.

Even though not all 15 respondents noticed the March 10, 2010 date of the advance letter, no one mentioned any concern with receiving the advance letter on March 10<sup>th</sup> and having the form due almost a month later. Similarly, respondents did not express any concern about having enough time to fill out the census form, even though they had not seen it yet.

#### 3.4.2.2. Outgoing Envelope

All of the outgoing envelopes had the message, “YOUR RESPONSE IS REQUIRED BY LAW” placed within a box. All respondents stated that they saw this message when the researcher first asked them to report what they saw or noticed on the envelope. Many respondents thought there was a penalty associated with not completing their form, but they were not sure what the penalty would be. Only one respondent said the message was intimidating and imposing.

In the Mild and NRFU Motivation versions, beneath the “Required By Law” message, was the deadline message, “Mail by April 5.” In the Progressive Urgency version, the message read, “Deadline is April 5” instead. There was no deadline message on the Control version of the envelope. Because all 20 respondents saw the “Required By Law” message, everyone was looking in the place where the deadline message would be located.

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<sup>3</sup> One respondent did not appear to be able to focus on this sentence and instead focused on the bolded statement about the form arriving within a week.

Control version. There was no due date on the Control version of the envelope. Only respondents in the Control condition received this envelope. None of the five respondents who saw this version mentioned the desire to see a due date.

Mild/NRFU Motivation version. The ten respondents across the Mild and NRFU Motivation conditions received the version of the message which read, “Mail by April 5.” There did not seem to be a difference in interpretation of this message compared to the “Deadline is April 5” message. Two people noted that there is a law that requires answering the form by the date given. A few respondents were interested in the penalty for breaking that law.

Progressive Urgency version. The five respondents in the Progressive Urgency condition received the version of the message which read, “Deadline is April 5.” No one appeared bothered by the date on the envelope or by the use of the word deadline. Only one respondent reported that the form would no longer be accepted after April 5th. Others reported thinking it was just a reminder to fill out the form and get it in the mail. One respondent said it had to be in the mail by the 5<sup>th</sup>, and another respondent said it had to be at the Census Bureau by the 5<sup>th</sup>.

In conclusion, it is very difficult to say for certain whether there was a difference in understanding between the two messages, “Mail by April 5” and “Deadline is April 5.” Of the 15 respondents who received either the “Mail by April 5” or “Deadline is April 5” message, no one took offense at the message or the design of the box. Only one of the five respondents who received the “Deadline is April 5” message reported that the form would no longer be accepted after that date. No one who received “Mail by April 5” voiced a similar concern. Two respondents recommended bolding the message, implying that a bolded message would catch their attention.

#### 3.4.2.3. Cover Letter

Overall, based on their verbal responses, nearly all respondents in each condition understood the deadline messages on the different versions of the cover letter. Only one respondent in the NRFU Motivation condition did not comprehend the meaning of the NRFU version of the deadline message. We did not observe any evidence of comprehension differences based on the order in which respondents saw the cover letters. Thus, the order of presentation did not appear to affect respondents’ understanding of the deadline messages. However, some preference-related comments about the content of the deadline messages could possibly be attributed to seeing the other deadline messages. For example, one respondent in the NRFU Motivation condition said she needed a due date when she read the Control version of the cover letter. The cover letter she saw first had a due date and the Control version did not. Seeing the due date in the NRFU Motivation letter before seeing the Control letter might have affected the way the respondent reacted to the Control message.

In the summary of results below, we report the results from all 20 respondents for the Control version of the cover letter, and from 19 of the 20 respondents across the Mild, Progressive Urgency, and NRFU Motivation versions of the cover letters. By mistake, one respondent in the Control condition did not see the other three cover letters. We first provide a summary of the understanding of each deadline message across all respondents and then provide more information on the interpretation of the deadline message by the condition to which the respondent was originally assigned.

Control version. Based on their verbal feedback, all respondents understood the intent of the deadline message on the Control version of the cover letter, “Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form today,” regardless of whether they saw it initially or later.

Of the five respondents in the Control condition, who received this cover letter first, three commented that the form should be completed “today” or “right now.” One of the three respondents commented that getting the form out today was unrealistic because the mail had already “come and gone for the day.” Another of the three said that if she could not get to the form today, then she would have about a week to complete it. This reaction was similar to that of the other two respondents. One of these respondents reported that he would have a week to get the form in. The other respondent said the message meant to get the form in as soon as possible.

Respondents in the Mild, Progressive Urgency, and NRFU Motivation conditions also understood this version of the message. Some respondents interpreted the deadline of “today” literally, and some paraphrased it as meaning as soon as possible. Some respondents appeared to be irritated with the message since it was a very authoritative message and virtually impossible to comply with. One respondent reported that it was a polite message, but that the urgency of “today” might have “ticked him off.” Some respondents, however, suggested it lacked urgency. We did not notice this irritation with respondents in the Control condition.

We provide more detail on comprehension of the Control version of the deadline message by condition in the following three paragraphs.

Of the five respondents in the Mild condition, three of them mentioned that the message means you must do it “right now” because it says “today,” but one of the three respondents noted that people can’t do things today; and another one said she would not do it today. Another respondent was concerned and asked, “If I open this at night, what should I do?” He worried that he would be in trouble, asking, “What will happen next?” The fifth respondent who received the Mild condition initially did not like the message and wondered aloud about how much time she would have to finish it and questioned the authority that said she must do it today.

Of the five respondents in the Progressive Urgency condition, one respondent reported that the use of the word “today” lacks a sense of urgency, “It’s not a hurry to get it back.” This interpretation was not followed up on by the researcher. Two respondents reported disliking the sense of urgency that the word “today” implies. One of these two respondents also reported that the message was direct and polite because it uses “please.” However, this respondent wanted to see a date. One respondent remarked that the message was asking her to do it today, but added that it would be impossible for the Census Bureau to know that she got it today since she could have been away. She said that she would do it whenever she got to it. There were no notes for the fifth and final respondent on comprehension of the message. We only collected preference data from this respondent.

Of the five respondents in the NRFU Motivation condition, three of them reported that the message did not have a sense of urgency or enough information about the consequences of not responding to take the message seriously. Another respondent noted that the message does not have a date, stating he or she needed the date, and the fifth respondent said that “today” means immediate, rushed, and that there is no way to mail it back since it is 6:30 p.m. and she just saw her mail.

*Mild version.* The deadline message in the Mild version of the cover letter read, “Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5.” Based on their verbal remarks, all respondents across all four conditions correctly understood this message to mean they should complete the form and mail it back.

For the five respondents in the Mild condition, there were differing opinions regarding exactly when the form should be mailed back, with three saying that the form has to be in the mail by April 5<sup>th</sup>, one saying that it should be in the mail by the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> in order for the Census Bureau to receive it by the 5<sup>th</sup>, and one respondent saying that the form needed to be in “as soon as possible.”

The other 14 respondents across the Control, Progressive Urgency, and NRFU Motivation conditions also understood the Mild deadline message. None of the 14 respondents spontaneously mentioned that they thought the form had to be at the Census Bureau by the 5<sup>th</sup>, but rather it had to be in the mail or postmarked by the 5<sup>th</sup>. None of these respondents responded negatively toward having a due date in the message.

We provide more detail on comprehension of the Mild version of the deadline message by condition in the following three paragraphs.

For the four respondents in the Control condition, all of them mentioned the due date when talking about the Mild deadline message, with one respondent calling the Mild deadline message straightforward, adding, “[they] want you to complete and mail it back by April 5<sup>th</sup>.” One respondent noted that this message gave her more time than did the Control message. Another respondent reported that the message gave respondents two weeks to complete the form and had a due date. Two respondents noted that you could complete and mail the form at any time, but that it should be in the mail by the date given. The fifth respondent in the Control condition did not see any of the other versions of the cover letter deadline message.

Of the five respondents in the Progressive Urgency condition, two respondents noted the Mild deadline message was polite and not demanding. However, one of these respondents reported that it did not have a sense of urgency and that she might not respond to it by April 5<sup>th</sup>. Another respondent reported that it meant you needed to do it by April 5<sup>th</sup>. The fourth respondent compared the Mild to the Progressive Urgency deadline message and said the Mild deadline message had “more meat” but lacked the word “deadline,” which would convey more of a “mandate.” We did not follow up on what this respondent meant by “more meat.” There were no notes for the fifth and final respondent on comprehension of the message. We collected only preference data from this respondent.

Of the five respondents in the NRFU Motivation condition, four respondents noted the Mild deadline message had a due date. One of the four respondents said that this message did not provide as much information as the NRFU Motivation deadline message. Another respondent said that the Mild deadline message stressed the importance of the task without using the word “deadline” or the urgent word “today.” One respondent only provided an opinion of the message, saying “eh,” and not the message meaning. It was clear from her nonverbal reaction that she understood this simple message. She implied with “eh,” that the message neither appealed to her nor turned her off.

When respondents became aware of the other versions of the deadline messages, many of them immediately started comparing messages, calling the Mild message “polite” and commenting that they liked the date. Overall, respondents said that they liked the specificity of the April 5<sup>th</sup> date versus “today.” For example, when comparing the Control version to the Mild version a respondent who received the Mild condition initially stated that, “today is nebulous, today is, like, what if I got it yesterday? What if I got it 2 days later? I like a date.” These comments illustrate the effect that seeing the other deadline messages had on eliciting different preference-related feedback. This respondent did not mention that she liked the date until having read the Control version, which did not have a due date.

Progressive Urgency version. The deadline message in the Progressive Urgency version of the cover letter read, “The deadline to complete and mail back the enclosed census form is April 5.” Again, based on their verbal comments, all respondents across all four conditions interpreted this message as intended.

Of the five respondents in the Progressive Urgency condition, one respondent said that the message is asking you to get the form back before April 5<sup>th</sup>. One respondent said the letter was asking him “to comply, fill it out and send it back by April 5<sup>th</sup>.” Another respondent said that the last possible date to put the form in the mail was April 5<sup>th</sup>. The other two respondents spontaneously mentioned the deadline message when initially reading the cover letter, but one of the respondents did not specifically mention the April 5<sup>th</sup> date when asked what the message was telling him to do. Rather, he said that he should mail it within one week to 10 days of receipt.

The other 14 respondents in the Control, Mild, and NRFU Motivation conditions also understood the Progressive Urgency deadline message. We provide more detail on comprehension of the Progressive Urgency version of the deadline message by condition in the following three paragraphs.

Of the four respondents in the Control condition, one respondent wondered aloud about the legal ramifications since the deadline message used the word “deadline.” One respondent reported the word “deadline” was more specific, but she also reported the “deadline” language was “frustrating.” In reference to the creators of the form, she added, “You’re pushing it.” One respondent paraphrased the message stating, “You have a deadline to complete and fill out the form and send it back by April 5<sup>th</sup>.” The final respondent reported that the message was straight and to the point but reported that the Census Bureau needs to receive it by April 5<sup>th</sup>.

Of the five respondents in the Mild condition, one respondent said that the message meant you must complete the form and mail it back “as soon as possible.” Later, this respondent also reported that the word “deadline” let people know it is important to send in by April 5<sup>th</sup>. Another respondent read the deadline as April 15<sup>th</sup> and described this message as polite. Two other respondents pointed out the Progressive Urgency message was written as a statement of fact, as in “The deadline to complete ... is April 5<sup>th</sup>,” while the Mild message was written as an action to take, “Please complete ... by April 5<sup>th</sup>.” Neither one of these respondents mentioned any negative or positive reaction to the word deadline, but both reported preferring the message written as an action. The fifth respondent reported that this message was similar to the Mild deadline message, but he liked the word “please” because it showed more respect.

Of the five respondents in the NRFU Motivation condition, one respondent reported liking having a deadline, but not the word “deadline” because that word was less polite [than other words the Census Bureau could have used]. Another respondent also described this message as forceful since there was no “please” in the message. On a positive note, one respondent said, “Deadline is a great word, puts a time ticker in my head, okay, deadline April 5<sup>th</sup>.” This respondent said that the word “deadline” was more direct than the word “please.” Another respondent paraphrased the message stating, “Deadline is April 5<sup>th</sup>.” This respondent said that the message did not seem serious. Another respondent reported that the message did not have enough information, since it did not tell the respondent about the consequences of not responding, as the NRFU Motivation version did.

When the respondents in the Control, Mild, and NRFU Motivation conditions saw the Progressive Urgency message, they again compared messages. The results are similar to those described above for

the Mild condition regarding the April 5<sup>th</sup> date. The difference between the versions is the addition of the word “deadline” and the lack of the word “please.” Neither difference had a noticeable effect on whether the respondent interpreted the sentence as intended.

*NRFU Motivation version.* The deadline message in the NRFU Motivation version of the cover letter read, “Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5 so that you are not inconvenienced with a personal visit from an interviewer.” Based on their verbal feedback, four of the five respondents in this condition understood the message as telling them to complete and return the form or else a person would knock on their door to conduct the interview. The fifth respondent reported believing that an interviewer only would visit a random sample of homes that had not returned their forms to ascertain whether anyone was living there. She did not seem to understand that the interviewer would try to collect answers to the census questions. This respondent also had reported that the advance letter communicated that she would need to call the Census Bureau to receive a form. She seemed unclear about the entire census operation.

The other 14 respondents in the Control, Progressive Urgency, and Progressive Urgency conditions understood the NRFU Motivation deadline message as intended, realizing that a person would come to their door and conduct an interview if they did not complete and return the form by the due date. As detailed in the following results, many respondents reported that the mention of a personal interviewer gave them incentive to complete and return their form. A few respondents noted that elderly or homebound people might desire a personal visit because they are lonely or simply need assistance with the form and, therefore, would not be “inconvenienced” at all. Respondents often used the term “inconvenience” when they described why they preferred not to have an interviewer to come to their door. As one respondent suggested, the word “inconvenience” might prime respondents to think of the entire task as inconvenient.

Of the four respondents in the Control condition, one respondent started to laugh when he read the deadline message. He said some people (like the elderly) might want an interviewer to come to do it, but that he would not want an interviewer to come. Additionally, he said the younger generation would not want anyone to come to their place. He said the message would motivate people to respond faster. Another respondent said she did not like people “invading my space.” She thought the homebound would appreciate someone to help them get their form completed. Another respondent also reported that the message meant that someone might come to your house because you did not do what they wanted you to do (to fill out the form and mail it in.) This respondent reported that the message was threatening. Another respondent reported that the message talked to her as though she were a child. She also did not understand why the visit was necessarily “inconvenient” because she might want the help or company.

Of the five respondents in the Mild condition, two respondents interpreted the message correctly but did not like the personal visit possibility. One of the two respondents said, “I don’t want to see anybody to do this [sic], so if I can do this now, I should send it in.” The other respondent reported that the message put her on the defensive: It was not a hostile message but leaned toward threatening, as in, “We’re going to come see you if you don’t do this.” Another respondent reported similarly, “Initial thought was that it sounded threatening, but it is not. It is just telling me I got to deal with someone coming, which is inconvenient. It would be better if I just filled it out.” Another respondent reported that the message would be perfect for procrastinators, since the deadline message lets you know you might get an interviewer if you do not fill out the form. And one respondent was surprised that the Census Bureau would do personal visits. She thought scheduling them would be difficult.

Of the five respondents in the Progressive Urgency condition, one respondent laughed and said he would be more compelled to complete the survey to avoid the interviewer visit. This message told him what would happen if he were non-compliant. Another respondent reported being motivated to respond that day, if he got this letter stating that someone was going to come to his house to make sure that he completed the form. One respondent reported that a visit from an interviewer would not be so inconvenient. It would take her out of her routine. This respondent also reported that the message told her the penalty for not responding, which would not be jail time or a fine. One respondent furrowed his brow at this message, and said that the use of the word “inconvenience” made him think “how DARE you” inconvenience me. He suggested that some could wait to talk to the interviewer as a form of protest. As the message is written, it suggested that completing the survey is inconvenient either way, so a visit would not be any more inconvenient than completing the form on your own.

#### 3.4.2.4. Reminder Postcard

At this point in the testing the respondents had given their interpretations of the deadline message in the advance letter, the mailing envelope, and the cover letter for the condition to which they were assigned. We gathered little new information during the cognitive probing on the deadline message in the reminder postcards because the messages were very similar to what respondents had read in the other mailings. We observed no glaring problems with any of the messages we tested.

*Control version.* Five respondents in the Control condition received the reminder postcard with the deadline message, “If you have not responded, please provide your information as soon as possible.” Four of the five respondents understood this message as intended. Two of the four respondents reworded the sentence by saying, “If you haven’t filled it out, then do it,” “You need to respond now,” or “You need to respond ASAP.” Another respondent said the meaning was to send something back in or call if you lost it or needed help. The fourth respondent said the meaning was to send the form in as soon as possible. One other respondent was focused on the ‘required by law’ statement, which took her attention away from other messages.

*Mild version.* Five respondents in the Mild condition received the reminder postcard with the deadline message, “If you have not responded, please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5.” Based on verbal feedback, all five respondents understood this message as intended. All but one of the respondents saw the message without prompting. The tone of the message did not appear to offend any of the respondents. The one respondent who had not initially seen the due date implied that the tone was pleasant, when he said, “It’s not making a demand or anything, it’s asking ... why not just do the right thing?” He said that if someone was too demanding or ordering, then people would not do it, but as long as we asked nicely, people would want to do the right thing. One respondent said she would be annoyed with the postcard if she had already completed the form, but this had nothing to do with the deadline statement itself. She also said she would put it on her “to-do” list if she had not completed the form yet. Another respondent said she kept a pile of items to do, and she said the statement meant, “Please look in your pile of papers and get it done.”

*Progressive Urgency version.* Five respondents in the Progressive Urgency condition received the reminder postcard with the deadline message, “If you have not responded, the deadline to complete and mail back the enclosed census form is April 5.” Again, we observed no problems in any of the five respondents’ understandings of the message and no problems with the tone of the message or the use of the word “deadline.” When asked what the sentence meant, one respondent said it meant, “do it; exactly what it says.” Another respondent said, “By April 5<sup>th</sup> I need to have that thing done. Put in an envelope and put a stamp on it.” One respondent used humor to sum it up by saying, “Can’t sit on this like an egg.”

*NRFU Motivation version.* Five respondents in the NRFU Motivation condition received the reminder postcard with the deadline message, “If you have not responded, please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5 so that you are not inconvenienced with a personal visit from an interviewer.” Two of the five respondents correctly understood the message before the researcher pointed out the message, and they interpreted it to mean if you do not respond by the due date, someone will come to your door. The other three respondents did not acknowledge the possibility of a personal visit in their verbal feedback, but interpreted the postcard as a reminder to fill in the form before April 5, and they noted its urgency.

Upon reading the postcard, none of the five respondents were visibly upset at the prospect of an interviewer coming to the door, but one respondent said, “it’s a serious matter.” This respondent realized that there was “no fixed time” that the interviewer would arrive and that people who were doing something “they shouldn’t be doing” would be sensitive to this message since the interviewer might drop by “anytime.” He rephrased the statement to convey a strong message: “be aware, ‘cause [the Census Bureau] *will* come and knock on your door.” The other respondent who acknowledged the personal visit aspect giggled at the prospect of an interviewer coming to her door. The possibility of an interviewer coming to her home to conduct the interview seemed to amuse her.

*Other Findings.* All four versions of the postcard had a “required-by-law” statement on the mailing address side of the postcard (Appendix M). In our design, we presented the postcard to the respondent with this side up. Nearly all respondents mentioned the “required-by-law” statement when we asked them to say what they saw or noticed about the postcard. Several wondered aloud about the penalty for noncompliance. One respondent who received the Progressive Urgency version and one respondent who received the Control version of the postcard were so focused on the required-by-law statement that the researcher could not redirect their attention to the deadline message.

### **3.4.3. Respondents’ Preferences for Deadline Messages and Self-Reported Response Behavior**

During Part 2 of the Round 1 procedures, we asked 19 of the 20 respondents which deadline message in the cover letters they liked the best and one they liked least. We also asked respondents which message they would be most likely to respond to, and which message they would be least likely to respond to. As previously mentioned, one respondent only saw the message in the cover letter from the Control condition, and thus, we report the results from only 19 respondents. Table 4 displays the results of these questions. Respondents who selected multiple versions in response to questions about their likes, dislikes, and likeliness to respond were counted multiple times. Thus, the column totals in Table 4 do not equal 19.

Table 4 shows that the least liked deadline message was the Control version. That message said to mail back the completed form “today.” Ten out of 19 respondents reported that they liked the Control version of the cover letter the least. Respondents were split between the Mild, Progressive Urgency, and NRFU Motivation versions, as to which version they reported liking the best. Respondents reported both liking and disliking the NRFU Motivation version of the letter.

Additionally, Table 4 shows that the Control version was the least likely to motivate respondents to complete and return the form. Twelve out of 18<sup>4</sup> respondents stated that they would be least likely to respond to the Control version relative to the others. Respondents reported that they would be most

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<sup>4</sup> Another respondent would not select a cover letter to be the least likely to respond to claiming he/she would always respond to the Census.

likely to respond to the NRFU Motivation version, with the Progressive Urgency version being selected second.

Table 4. Respondents' Preferences for Deadline Messages Contained in Cover Letters

	Reported Liking		Reported Likelihood to respond	
	Most	Least	Most	Least
Control	1	10	2	12
Mild	7	1	4	2
Progressive Urgency	6	3	6	3
Round 1 - NRFU	6	7	9	5

Appendix U contains the preferences broken down by treatment condition and provides more details when a respondent selected multiple versions to a question. There were no obvious patterns in preference based on treatment condition.

#### Possible Reasons for Preferences

In this section we outline the reasons for respondent preferences based upon their verbal reports.

Control version. Ten respondents reported liking the Control version of the cover letter the least and said that they would be least likely to respond to it. Respondents reported liking the conciseness of this version, but interpreted the meaning dichotomously, as either extremely urgent or as too ambiguous to be important. Some respondents said it was pushy because of the word “today,” which was often interpreted literally: “[This version is] a little demanding, almost unfair to expect, whatever you have in your life, to stop it right now and get this done today.”

Several respondents noted that the message was too demanding, saying it “makes it impossible” to comply with, particularly when they may not receive the letter until the evening or several days later. Respondents reported that the Control version was confusing and vague because it did not contain enough information, particularly a due date.

One respondent said that the Control version was both the most and least likely to elicit a response, depending on whether he retrieved his mail on the day the form arrived. The combination of perceived urgency and ambiguity may have led several respondents to state that they either had to complete the form that day or would not do it at all because it would be too late. Several respondents reported a preference for letters that contained the April 5<sup>th</sup> date.

Mild version. Seven respondents reported liking the Mild version of the cover letter best because it was not wordy and contained a due date. A few respondents described it as being polite and fair (because of the word “please”). However, they did not report that they were particularly likely to respond to this version, and answers to meaning probes revealed that this version did not make much of an impression on them. Like the Control version, respondents described this version as vague and lacking urgency.

Progressive Urgency version. Six respondents reported liking the Progressive Urgency version of the cover letter, and six respondents said that they were likely to respond to it. Four of the six respondents who reported liking the message also said that they were most likely to respond to it. Many

respondents described this version as much more serious and urgent than either the Control or Mild versions. At least one respondent mentioned that it gave more time to comply than did the Control version.

Most respondents had either a neutral or mostly positive verbal reaction to the word “deadline,” which they said made them think of legal ramifications, implied a penalty for non-completion, and sounded like a “mandate.” One respondent who had a positive reaction to the word said, “Deadline is a great word, puts a time ticker in my head: Okay, deadline – April 5<sup>th</sup>.” A few respondents reported that this would push them to complete the form more than the Mild version would. They also said it would remove reasons for not completing the form.

In their comments, a few respondents reacted negatively to the word “deadline.” They reported that it was too pushy and bordered on rude. One African-American respondent noted that this could present problems in the African-American community because the community may not prioritize the form to begin with (although she did not clarify why this would be the case). Another respondent said that “deadline” made her feel as if she was being treated like a child. The word “please” was not in this version, and this omission may have exacerbated these feelings. As previously mentioned, respondents had noted that they liked the use of the word “please” in the Control and Mild versions. Interestingly, one respondent stated that this version did not contain a deadline, and another respondent misread the deadline as April 15th.

*NRFU Motivation version.* The NRFU version of the deadline message elicited strong positive and negative reactions from respondents. Six respondents reported liking it the most and seven respondents reported liking it the least. Nine respondents reported that this version was the one to which they were most likely to respond (including some respondents who reported liking that message the least). However, five respondents said it was the version to which they were least likely to respond.

The respondents who reported liking the NRFU Motivation message said they liked that it clarified what would happen if they did not respond on time and made them take the census more seriously. They also mentioned liking the word “please” because of its polite tone. However, most respondents said they did not want a personal visit because it was inconvenient and felt like an invasion of privacy. One respondent said, “[It’s] almost like a Jehovah’s Witness, someone to be bothered with by the door... I certainly don’t want to see an interviewer on the weekend...I just wouldn’t want to be bothered by the person-to-person contact.” Another respondent said, “[It’s] like a social worker coming to check your babies...like the child protective service...they gonna come knock on your door.”

Several respondents reported that the sentence felt threatening and put them on the defensive. One respondent said the letter implied the recipient was “doing something wrong.”

Additionally, three respondents said they did not like the word “inconvenience” because, they said, it primed them to think of the entire census process as inconvenient and it made assumptions about their preferences. One of the three respondents suggested that the word “inconvenient” could make recipients see the form as a hassle and discourage them from completing it. Another respondent said, “[H]ow DARE you...So that you’re not inconvenienced with a personal visit...that just gives me some time to get a growl on with you. You’re tellin’ me that you’re gonna harass me now to get this. You don’t even wanna put that in the thought pattern.”

### Summary: Respondents' Preferences for Deadline Messages and Self-Reported Response Behavior

Although both the NRFU Motivation and Progressive Urgency versions elicited some negative feedback, they also elicited the intent to respond, primarily because these messages contain language (e.g., “personal visit by an interviewer,” “deadline”) that motivated respondents to complete and return the questionnaire. We believe the NRFU Motivation version may be a slightly stronger motivator than the Progressive Urgency version. However, the Progressive Urgency version may be seen as more polite and may elicit less negative feedback overall than would the NRFU Motivation version. We infer that the instruction to complete the form “today,” as in the Control version, did not elicit the same urgent response as the other messages because it does not give a practical or definitive deadline. Additionally, in some instances, (e.g., the mail arriving late in the day) it is literally not possible to follow through on the instruction to complete the form and mail it back today.

#### **3.4.4 Three Alternative NRFU Deadline Statements: Respondents' Comprehension and Preference**

During Part 3 of the Round 1 procedures, we showed respondents three alternative NRFU statements (along with the original one) and asked for their reactions to them. We asked them to indicate which message they liked the best, which message they liked the least, and reason they made each choice. We did not randomize the presentation of these three new messages to the respondent. The results we present are respondents' self-reported preferences. We use data from only 19 respondents, since one respondent did not see these alternative messages.

The three alternative messages were worded as follows:

Alternative Number 1: An interviewer must visit each address that doesn't return a census form in order to gather the required information; to avoid this inconvenience to you, we ask that you complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5th.

Alternative Number 2: To avoid the inconvenience of a visit to this address from an interviewer, please complete and mail back the enclosed form by April 5.

Alternative Number 3: Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5 to avoid a visit by an interviewer.

Respondents' feedback indicated that they understood the meaning of all three alternative versions of the NRFU Motivation message as intended. While preferences varied, respondents were generally consistent in the *elements* of the messages which they reported liking and disliking. Overall, participants said they liked two elements: 1) having an explanation of what will happen (e.g., interviewer visit) and under what conditions it would occur (e.g., non-response); and 2) use of the word “please,” which gave the letter a polite tone. Overall, respondents said they disliked three elements: 1) language that seemed authoritarian, such as the word “must” in alternative number one; 2) use of the word “inconvenience”; and 3) ambiguity as to why they would receive a visit. Detail about these findings follows.

##### 3.4.4.1. NRFU Motivation Version (Version D)

The original version of the NRFU cover letter deadline message read, “Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5 so that you are not inconvenienced with a personal visit from an interviewer.” Of the 19 respondents, four reported that they liked this version the most, and two respondents reported that they liked it the least of all four NRFU versions.

#### 3.4.4.2. Alternative Number 1

The Alternative Number 1 message read, “An interviewer must visit each address that doesn't return a census form in order to gather the required information; to avoid this inconvenience to you, we ask that you complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5th.”

Of the 19 respondents, eight reported liking this version the most and six reported liking it the least. Respondents reported liking it because it clarified the reasons why an interviewer would visit. Six respondents mentioned that they liked the use of the word “must” because it made the letter sound more polite (because “it’s not like they’re enjoying [coming to your house]”), and because it further clarified why the visit would occur. One respondent said, “You know why they’re coming – cause you didn’t do the form...I love the way this comes across.”

However, four respondents had a negative reaction toward the use of the word “must” in the message. One respondent said, “They act like they’re comin’ at you with a warrant...We didn’t get a response, so we’re gonna bust your door down.” This respondent said that it was not absolutely necessary for an interviewer to visit. He said that someone could have been away from home for an extended period of time. This person would need more time to complete and mail the form. The use of the word “must” implies that a visit would be absolutely necessary if the form is not in on time.

In addition, respondents said they disliked the word “inconvenience.” One respondent even said the word made her feel like the Census Bureau was “making fun of me.” We did not gather any more information on why message made her feel that way.

#### 3.4.4.3. Alternative Number 2

The Alternative Number 2 message read, “To avoid the inconvenience of a visit to this address from an interviewer, please complete and mail back the enclosed form by April 5.”

Of the 19 respondents, only two reported liking this version the most, and three said they liked it the least. Three respondents reported that this version of the sentence was clear and informative. Four respondents reported that it was hard to understand or did not contain enough information for them to know under what conditions the visit would occur.

Three respondents noted that this version, particularly the use of the phrase “To avoid the inconvenience,” was negative, and made them feel as if they were being punished. For example, one respondent mentioned that it would “make [him] feel bad” to think that the Census Bureau assumed he was just complying to avoid a visit, rather than complying for more positive reasons. Respondents also reported disliking the word “inconvenience,” for many of the same reasons they gave in the original version (i.e., framing the census as inconvenient, making assumptions about respondent preferences).

#### 3.4.4.4. Alternative Number 3

The Alternative Number 3 message read, “Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5 to avoid a visit by an interviewer.”

Of the 19 respondents, five said they liked this version the most, and seven said they liked it the least. Respondents mentioned liking that this version was polite (it started with “please”), clear, simple, and short. However, it may have been too short. One respondent said, “[It’s] a complete washout...no meat on the bones.”

Additionally, respondents reported that this version was ambiguous to the point of not clarifying why the visit would happen, which would not motivate people to respond. One respondent implied that the interviewer would likely receive excuses about why the form was not returned. He said, “[People would] have a field day on that one...They’ll tell you the cat ate the dog...yadda yadda.”

Similar to Alternative Number 1, several respondents reported that this version was threatening and felt like a punishment. Several respondents reported disliking the term “to avoid,” but reported liking that the word “inconvenience” was not used in this version.

### **3.4.5. Round 1 Deadline Message Summary and Recommendations**

In sum, we infer from the verbal data in Round 1 that respondents understood the Control, Mild, and Progressive Urgency messages in all materials as intended.

For the most part, we conclude that respondents understood the NRFU Motivation deadline message in the cover letter. None of the alternative NRFU messages we tested appeared superior to the original message in either comprehension or tone.

For the NRFU message we recommend incorporating the elements that respondents reported liking (explaining the conditions under which an interviewer visit will occur; use of the word “please”) and removing the elements that respondents reported disliking (use of the word “must” and “inconvenience”) to create a new NRFU message, as follows:

“An interviewer will visit each address that does not return a census form to gather the required information. If you prefer to avoid this visit, please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5<sup>th</sup>.”

We believe that this message would be worthwhile to cognitively test. It attempts to be polite and frames the personal visit as a choice the respondent makes, rather than a threat.

### **3.4.6. Other Points Regarding the Deadline Messages**

Here, we discuss some final important points found in our testing. These points included the mailing schedule, the April 5<sup>th</sup> due date, and wording previously used in the 1990 Census letter.

#### 3.4.6.1. Relationship between the Normal Mailing Schedule and the Deadline Messages

In the CPEX information sheet for this project, concern was raised about implementing a due date without compressing the schedule (Martin 2007). Martin speculates that setting a deadline too far in the future would not make sense because respondents might put aside (and perhaps forget) a questionnaire with a far-off due date. The mailing materials we tested used dates that corresponded to the normal mailout schedule. The normal mailout schedule would have the form arriving at residences shortly after March 15<sup>th</sup>, making the due date three weeks later. Although we did not directly probe on the issue of whether the normal mailout schedule was too early, we did try to set the stage by telling respondents to pretend it was March 2010. Although not all respondents looked at the dates of the mailing materials, some did. None of the respondents in either round of testing voiced concern that they would be getting the materials too far in advance. These results suggest that it would be perfectly acceptable to use the deadline messages with an April 5<sup>th</sup> due date even when form arrives shortly after March 15.

### 3.4.6.2. Respondents' Understanding of the April 5<sup>th</sup> Due Date

After cognitively testing the deadline message in each of the mailing pieces for their initial conditions, we asked respondents who received either the Mild, Progressive Urgency, or NRFU conditions what they would do if it were April 6<sup>th</sup> and they had not yet filled out the form. More respondents in the NRFU and the Progressive Urgency conditions than in the Mild condition said that they would call the Census Bureau before sending in the form if it was April 6. No one said they would throw the form away, thinking the deadline had passed. However, we cannot conclude that this would not happen in some cases. Most of the respondents reported that they thought the Census Bureau would still be interested in the data. We summarize the results below.

We did not pose the scenario to respondents in the Control condition since they had yet to see a due date on the materials. We asked one respondent what would be the last date on which he or she could mail the form in, if they got it on March 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup>. This respondent said that the last date she could get it in would be the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup>.

All four respondents in the Mild condition said they would complete and mail in the form, even if it were April 6<sup>th</sup>.<sup>5</sup> One of these four initially said it might be too late, but then stated that she would “probably send it anyway” because if the Census Bureau needs the information, they will probably take it anyway. Another mentioned that people sometimes send things in late. For her PTA fundraisers, they always build in an extra week before they really need the information, and she likened the census return policy to that experience.

Three of the five respondents in the Progressive Urgency condition said they would call before sending in the form if it were April 6<sup>th</sup> and they had not yet completed the census form. Only one respondent said he would complete and mail in the form. He mentioned that the forms are coming in from across the country and they may take time to arrive. This respondent stated there was some implied leeway because the government needs the information. The fifth respondent would not provide an answer to the scenario. This respondent said he would have gotten the form in before then.

The respondents in the NRFU condition varied in their responses. Two respondents said they would call first. One respondent said she would complete it and mail it in. Another respondent said that he would complete the form. He would also call the Census Bureau. He would notify them of the form in the mail and verify that it was okay to send the form in late. This respondent also said that he would ask whether he should come to the Census Bureau to complete form, if the form could not be received through the mail. The fifth person stated that they would call to let the Census Bureau know the form will be filled out and mailed. No one said they would wait for the interviewer to come conduct a personal visit.

Conclusion. We did not hear any comments implying that respondents would discard the form if they had not completed it by April 5<sup>th</sup>. However, respondents did comment that if the due date had passed, the respondent might call. If not already planned, monitoring the call centers and comparing the volume of calls after April 6<sup>th</sup> for these experimental panels might be useful because these conditions could have hidden cost implications.

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<sup>5</sup> Five respondents received the Mild condition. The first respondent to receive the Mild condition was not asked this question because it was developed ‘on the fly’ during a subsequent interview and retained through the rest of the testing.

### 3.4.6.3. The 1990 Census

Lastly, during the writing of this report, we were made aware that the 1990 Census letter had a message very similar to the NRFU Motivation messages we tested. The 1990 message was worded as follows: **Please answer and return your form promptly.**

Complete your form and return it by April 1, 1990 in the postage-paid envelope provided. Avoid the inconvenience of having a census taker visit your home.

Again, thank you for answering the 1990 Census.

**Remember: Return the completed form by April 1, 1990.**

Further information on how this language was developed and why it was removed are unavailable as of the writing of this report, but is of potential interest to this project.

### 3.4.7. Putting the Questionnaire into the Return Envelope

In this section, we shift focus from the deadline messages to respondent behavior in placing the materials into the return envelope. DeMaio et al. found many respondents did not see the instructions on the return envelope regarding how to fold and place the questionnaire in the envelope correctly (i.e., so that barcodes show through the front return envelope's front window). We found additional support for these findings.<sup>6</sup>

#### 3.4.7.1. Results

In Round 1, after seeing all the materials containing the deadline message, we asked each of the respondents to fill out the decennial census form and to place it in the return envelope just as they would do at home. After the respondent had placed the form into the envelope, we asked the respondents whether they saw the instructions behind a clear window visible from the front of the envelope and whether they saw the instructions on the back, which pictorially and verbally demonstrated a correctly stuffed envelope. Table 5 highlights that noticing the instructions seemed to help respondents successfully place the form correctly in the envelope.

**Table 5. Round 1: Correct vs. Incorrect Placement of Census Form in Return Envelope by Instructions Respondents Reporting Seeing.**

<u>Placed form</u>	<u>Both Front and Back Instructions</u>	<u>Front Instructions Only</u>	<u>Back Instructions Only</u>	<u>Neither Instruction</u>	<u>Total</u>
Correctly (Scannable)	4	4	5	3	16
Incorrectly (Unscannable)	0	0	1	3	4
Total	4	4	6	6	20

<sup>6</sup> We had planned to piggyback testing of a revised return envelope with the deadline message testing. The revised return envelope incorporated changes informed by a previous pretest by DeMaio et al. (2008) in an attempt to help respondents notice the instructions on the return envelope. By mistake, the revised envelope was not tested, but the original envelope was retested.

As Table 5 demonstrates, 16 of the 20 respondents placed the form into the envelope correctly, so that barcode showed through the front window of the envelope, allowing the form to be scanned. Four respondents incorrectly inserted the questionnaire into the return envelope, which would result in such questionnaires being unscannable upon arrival at the Census Bureau.

Table 5 demonstrates the relationship between seeing the instruction and correct placement of the form into the envelope. When respondents reported seeing at least one of the two messages, most of them were able to correctly place the questionnaire in the envelope. Only one out of these 14 respondents completed the task incorrectly. For the six respondents who did not see either the instruction on the front *or* the back of the envelope, half placed the form into the envelope incorrectly. Thus, the instructions that explain correct placement of the questionnaire in the return envelope were very important in respondents' properly positioning the questionnaire in the envelope. These problems were consistent across the education levels of our respondents, indicating that people with all levels of education are able to understand and follow the instructions.

The 14 respondents who said they saw at least one of these instructions were about evenly split as to whether the instructions they reported seeing were on the back versus the front (10 on the back, 8 on the front).<sup>7</sup> Four respondents reported that it was the instructions on the back of the envelope that helped them correctly position the questionnaire in the envelope. These four respondents also reported that the pictorial example on the back of the envelope was clearer than the purely textual instructions on the front. Several respondents reported that the words "bar code" and "window" were meaningless to them until they saw the illustration on the back of the envelope. Nevertheless, only one respondent said the instructions on the front were not particularly helpful.

We explicitly pursued comprehension of the instructions in 11 of the 20 cases. By mistake, we did not probe on the instructions in the other nine cases. Fortunately, DeMaio et al. (2008) previously tested these instructions. Based on our available data, ten of the 11 respondents correctly understood the instructions to mean that the bar code must be positioned so that it shows through the front window of the envelope. As one respondent said, the instruction explains "specifically how it should look when I put it in there...It should look just like that illustration [on the back of the envelope]. If it looks any other kinda way, it's not right." Based on their verbal feedback, respondents correctly interpreted the instructions on the front and back of the envelope to mean the same thing.

Although most of the questionnaires were placed in the envelope correctly, six of these 16 "successful" respondents made other errors or required more time and effort than seemed reasonable. These respondents either made multiple attempts at stuffing the envelope, included the cover letter in the envelope, or initially put the questionnaire into the wrong envelope (the mail-out envelope in which the questionnaire arrived).<sup>8</sup> One respondent reported that she would not use an envelope to mail back the questionnaire. She reported that she would fold the form and tape up the sides or would "stick it in another envelope, one of those manila envelopes, with this [Jeffersonville] address on it..." Eventually she noticed the return envelope and said, "I guess I could put it in here." As like many other respondents, she reported that she thought the blue-outlined Jeffersonville Census address needed to be visible for the questionnaire to reach its destination.

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<sup>7</sup> These counts include four respondents who saw both messages.

<sup>8</sup> This may be because the outgoing envelope was not sealed and therefore the respondent did not have to tear it to open it. It was not always immediately clear which envelope was the original mailing envelope and which was the return envelope.

Several other “successful” respondents reported that they were confused about the mail-back format, which required them to position the bar code, located near their own mailing address, in the front window of the return envelope. Respondents said they expected a Census Bureau address, not a bar code, to show through the window. They searched for that address so they could place it in the envelope to show through the window. In this search, six respondents mistakenly selected their own address (the “To Resident” address block) and tried to get that to show through the window. These six respondents eventually succeeded in correctly positioning the questionnaire, because the bar codes were on the same side as their address. Two respondents noticed the blue boxes containing the Jeffersonville Census address (on the side opposite the bar codes when the questionnaire is folded correctly) and initially considered that address to be the return address. After reading the instructions, these two respondents eventually succeeded in correctly stuffing the envelope.

Of the four respondents who inserted their questionnaire into the envelope incorrectly, one folded the questionnaire so that the bar codes were on the inside. The other three folded the questionnaire correctly so that the bar code was on the outside. Two of these respondents placed the questionnaire into the envelope, trying to position the blue boxes containing the Jeffersonville Census address in the window. The other respondent placed the form incorrectly into the envelope because the instruction referred to the bar code above “YOUR ADDRESS.” Since the fictional address for the housing unit on the form was not his address, the instruction confused him.

#### 3.4.7.2. Summary and Recommendations

The mail-back instructions appeared to be clear to most respondents and facilitated correct insertion of the questionnaire into the return envelope; therefore, it is critical that respondents notice these instructions so that the Census Bureau receives questionnaires in a scannable form.

Round 1 of testing echoed the results of the DeMaio et al. (2008) testing. Respondents encountered problems with correctly inserting the questionnaire into the return envelope, resulting in four of the 20 questionnaires being packaged in such a way as to be unscannable upon arrival at the Census Bureau. We found that six of the 20 respondents reported not seeing either the instructions on the front or the back of the return envelope. Four respondents reported seeing both instructions, and ten respondents reported seeing at least one instruction. Six respondents reported seeing the instruction on the back and four reported seeing it on the front. We found that respondents who reported seeing the instructions were able to stuff the envelope correctly. Thirteen of the 14 respondents who reported seeing an instruction correctly placed the form in the envelope. However, only half of the respondents who reported not seeing an instruction correctly placed the form in the envelope. Respondents reported that the most effective instruction was the one on the back of the envelope, which contained an accompanying illustration.

We observed that many respondents attempted to find a Census Bureau return mailing address to position it in the window, potentially because that is how most return mail envelopes appear. For this reason, we also recommend adding a message to this side of the questionnaire that says, “This side should show through the envelope window.” This addition might help respondents put the correct side of the questionnaire toward the window if respondents looked at their own address when searching for the Census return address. The side of the questionnaire that has the bar codes is also the side with their own address.

We recommend testing the envelope DeMaio et al. (2008) designed. Their design is located in Appendix T.

## **4. Round 2: Pretesting the Cost Deadline Message and a Revised NRFU Motivation Deadline Message**

Our objective in this round was simpler than our objective in Round 1. In this second round, we wanted to find out what the deadline message on the cover letter of the Cost and revised NRFU Motivation versions meant to the respondents. We did not test whether respondents noticed the message or which message respondents preferred.

### **4.1. Materials**

The materials were identical to the materials tested in the first round, except for the differences noted below. As in Round 1, only the deadline message on the cover letter was bolded.

#### **4.1.1 Advance Letter Envelope**

The advance letter envelope was identical to the envelope tested in the first round.

#### **4.1.2. Advance Letter**

The advance letter was the same for both the Cost and revised NRFU Motivation conditions. The letter was identical to letter used for the NRFU Motivation condition during the first round of testing.

The deadline message was worded as follows:

Version B (Appendix C): “When you receive your form, please fill it out and mail it in by April 5.”

#### **4.1.3. Outgoing Envelope for the Initial Questionnaire**

The outgoing envelope was the same for both the Cost and revised NRFU Motivation conditions. The envelope was identical to the envelope used in the NRFU Motivation condition during the first round of testing.

The deadline message was worded as follows:

Version B (Appendix E): “Mail by April 5”

The cover letter, the Census questionnaire, and the return envelope were placed in the outgoing envelope in the order planned for Census 2010. Unlike the first round of testing, in this round, we sealed the envelope before giving it to the respondent. During the first round of testing, we suspected some respondents initially mistook the outgoing envelope for the return envelope. Neither envelope had been sealed in the first round. We observed a few respondents sorting through the materials to find the return envelope. These respondents briefly considered the outgoing envelope. We suspect they considered that envelope because it was not torn from being opened. During the actual census, respondents will have torn or sliced open the envelope. To better reflect what really happens, we changed our procedure in this round and sealed the outgoing envelope before giving it to the respondent to open.

#### **4.1.4. Cover Letter**

We tested two different versions of the cover letter. The cover letter was identical to the letters we tested in Round 1, except for the deadline message within each letter. The NRFU Motivation version we tested was not what we had recommended after Round 1. The message we tested in this round does not have the words “so that you are not inconvenienced with.” The message replaced those words with the words “to avoid.” The Field Division of the U.S. Census Bureau requested that the word

“inconvenience” be eliminated from the message. This change was not due to the results of our cognitive testing.

The deadline messages tested were worded as follows:

- Version E (NRFU Motivation version, Appendix V) = **“Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5 to avoid a personal visit from an interviewer.”**
- Version F (Cost version, Appendix W) = **“Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5. Mailing your census form on time saves money that would otherwise be used to follow up with you.”**

#### 4.1.5. Census Questionnaire

The Census questionnaire for both conditions was identical to the questionnaire used in Round 1.

#### 4.1.6. Return Envelope

In Round 2, we tested a mocked-up return envelope with the black rectangle around the lowered instructions on the back of the envelope. DeMaio et al. (2008) recommended this design. We could not obtain an envelope with the modified design printed directly onto the envelope. Instead, we had to print the instructions onto a large sticker and then affix the sticker to the back of the envelope. The front of the envelope in this round looked identical to the front of the envelope used in Round 1. Appendix X contains a copy of the return envelope tested in this round.

#### 4.1.7. Reminder Postcard

In Round 2, we did not test the reminder postcard because we felt we gained very little new information in Round 1.

#### 4.1.8. Summary of Mailing Material Versions across Deadline Message Conditions

Table 6 provides a summary of the different versions of the mailing pieces we tested in Round 2. The Cost condition used the same advance letter and outgoing envelope as was used in the NRFU Motivation condition. We combine data from common mailing materials when presenting results.

Table 6: Summary of the Mailing Materials Tested in Round 2 by Deadline Message Condition

Condition	Materials			
	Advance Letter	Outgoing Envelope	Cover Letter	Reminder Postcard
NRFU	Version B: Uses “April 5”	Version B: “Mail by April 5”	Version E: April 5 & avoid & personal visit	Not tested
Cost	Version B: Uses “April 5”	Version B: “Mail by April 5”	Version F: April 5 & saves money & follow up	Not tested

## 4.2. RESEARCH METHODS

In this section, we discuss our method for conducting the cognitive interviews in this round. The research goal in this round focused only on the comprehension of the deadline message on the cover letter.

### 4.2.1. Respondents

In March 2009, staff from SRD conducted ten cognitive interviews for Round 2 of pre-testing. We used the same recruitment sources as we did in Round 1, except that we did not recruit through the local university. None of the ten respondents had participated in the earlier testing of the materials, but three respondents had participated previously in some Census Bureau-sponsored usability tests.

Table 7 contains the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 7. Round 2: Demographic Characteristics of Pretesting Respondents. N=10

Sex		Race		Age		Education	
Male	4	White	4	≤30	0	< HS	0
Female	6	Black	6	31-45	2	HS, GED	2
		Hispanic	0	46-60	4	Some college, AA	3
		Asian	0	61+	4	Bachelor's	2
		Other	0			Some grad	3
Total	10		10		10		10

Appendix Y contains the distribution of demographic characteristics by condition. As in the first round, we did not observe any evidence that the demographic characteristics interacted with the methods design to produce different conclusions about the deadline messages.

### 4.2.2. Procedure

In Round 2, we conducted the interviews at the Census Bureau's cognitive laboratory and at places more convenient for some respondents in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Each interview took approximately one hour to complete. A copy of the research protocol is included in Appendix Z. We audiotaped the interviews to facilitate data analysis. Each respondent was given an honorarium of \$40.

We randomly assigned participants to one of the two treatment conditions (NRFU Motivation or Cost). Thus, there are two groups of five respondents each. We did not immediately disclose our interest in the deadline messages to the respondents, nor did we divulge the existence of different conditions or the condition names.

For each respondent, the pretest included three activities: 1) testing the cover letter for each condition; 2) completing the form and preparing it for mailing; and 3) testing the cover letter in the other condition.

We first gave the respondents the advance letter, which included a deadline message. We asked them to indicate what they thought the letter was telling them to do. We then gave respondents a sealed outgoing envelope, which contained one of the initial cover letters, the form, and a return envelope. We asked the respondents what they noticed on the envelope. We then asked these respondents to read

the cover letter and report what the letter was telling them to do. After that, we asked them specific questions about the deadline message in the cover letter to assess their understanding and reactions to that deadline message.

After respondents had commented on the cover letter, we asked them to complete the form and prepare it for mailing. Once they had put the completed form into the envelope and said they were ready to mail it, we asked them if they saw the form-insertion instructions on the back and front of the envelope. Finally, we showed respondents the other version of the cover letter and asked questions to elicit their comprehension of that deadline message.

Although we asked respondents to tell us what the advance letter was telling them, and what they noticed on the outgoing envelope, we did not show those findings in this report for two reasons. First, the advance letter and outgoing envelope tested in Round 2 contained the same messages tested in Round 1. Because we had already tested and reported on those messages in Round 1, we saw no reason to report on them again. Additionally, we did not show respondents the postcard in this round, and therefore did not have results on that mailing piece.

We asked respondents to “think-out-loud” about the advance letter and outgoing envelope to mirror our procedures in Round 1. In that round, respondents talked a lot about the deadline messages on the other mailing pieces before telling us what the deadline message on the cover letter meant to them. We wanted respondents in this round to have a similar experience, so we asked them what the advance letter was telling them and what they noticed on the outgoing envelope, even though we were not going to include those results in this report.

We did not collect respondents’ preferences in this round because we only tested two versions of the deadline message. We did not believe the sponsor would be interested in preference data for only two of the five versions, so we did not collect that information.

### **4.3. LIMITATIONS**

In this section, we remind the reader of the possible order effects associated with our design and biases inherent in self-reported data. We describe our modification to the return envelope for testing in this round.

#### **4.3.1. Return Envelope**

As in Round 1, we were not able to print the respondent’s address on the form and instead used a fictional address.

In Round 2, the back of the envelope had a large sticker affixed to it. Because we were unable to receive a completely revised envelope in time for our second round of testing, we had to mockup the envelope to the best of our ability. This meant we printed the instructions within the black rectangle onto a large sticker and then affixed the sticker to the back of the envelope. We thought that the sticker was fairly obvious on the envelope and made the envelope look less authentic than the other materials presented to the respondent. We worried that the sticker might change how respondents interacted with the envelope. We thought respondents would either be drawn to the text and picture on the sticker or ignore the information on the sticker. We do not have any evidence that either reaction happened. None of the respondents commented on the use of a sticker.

### **4.3.2. Order Effects**

Order effects could also exist in this round of testing. That is, the respondent's understanding of the second deadline message he or she saw might have changed depending upon the first version he or she saw. In this round we observed some evidence of order effects, which we discuss in the results section.

### **4.3.3. Self-reported Data**

The same self-reported data limitations apply in this round of testing.

## **4.4. RESULTS**

In Round 2, we focused on two outcomes: 1) respondent comprehension of the revised NRFU Motivation and Cost condition messages on the cover letter; and 2) how respondents placed the form into the return envelope.

### **4.4.1. Respondents' Comprehension of the Deadline Messages**

In Round 2, three respondents had comprehension difficulties with the Cost version of the deadline message in the cover letter. One respondent did not understand the revised NRFU Motivation deadline message as intended. In addition, we found some instances of respondents partially understanding the messages. Furthermore, there appeared to be an order effect, such that respondents' understanding of the Cost message differed if they had previously seen the NRFU Motivation message.

Each respondent commented on their assigned condition's cover letter first and then later saw the other letter. When we examine the deadline message meaning on the cover letter, we first present a summary of the results across all ten respondents. Then we present the results broken down by treatment condition. We start with the revised NRFU Motivation deadline message.

*NRFU Motivation version.* The NRFU Motivation deadline message tested in Round 2 read, "Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5 to avoid a personal visit from an interviewer." From their verbal feedback, it appeared that seven of the ten respondents correctly understood the NRFU Motivation message to mean that if the form was not completed and returned by a particular date, someone (from the Census Bureau) would come to their door. Based on their rephrasing of the message, two respondents appeared to partially understand the message, and one respondent did not appear to understand the message. Several respondents (some of whom saw the message first and some who saw it second) spontaneously used the word "inconvenience" when describing a possible personal visit.

Of the five respondents in the NRFU Motivation condition (who saw the NRFU version before seeing the Cost version), three respondents completely understood the message as intended. None of these three respondents had a negative reaction to the message. However, all three said that scheduling a face-to-face interview with them would be difficult because they were so busy. Another two of the five respondents partially understood the message. One of these two reported thinking the visit would be about why he did not fill out the form (i.e., not just about collecting the data). This respondent said that "avoid a personal visit" sounded "ominous." He wondered who would show up at his door and mentioned a "CIA guy." The other respondent who seemed to partially understand the message reported thinking the person coming to the door would be an IRS agent. It could very well be that in Round 1, respondents did not understand who would come to the door to conduct the interview, but we did not hear anyone make a comment like that. Our cognitive probing in Round 1 was not as specific as it was in Round 2.

Of the five respondents in the Cost condition, who saw the NRFU Motivation deadline message second, four respondents understood the NRFU Motivation deadline message as intended, and one respondent did not. This respondent reported thinking the follow-up would come in the form of a letter advising him to report to the Census Bureau office for the interview. This respondent said the visit would be about why he did not fill out the form.

Cost version. The Cost deadline message read, “Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5. Mailing your census form on time saves money that would otherwise be used to follow up with you.” Respondents correctly interpreted the message if they indicated that additional taxpayer money would be needed to follow up with households that didn’t return the form by a particular date.

Based on their verbal feedback, half of the ten respondents clearly understood the Cost message as intended. Three respondents clearly did not understand the message, and two other respondents partially understood it. We suspect these results are due to an order effect in our testing. All three of the respondents who did not understand this message were in the Cost condition, and saw this message first. Respondents in the NRFU condition, who saw the Cost message *after* seeing the NRFU message, tended to better understand the Cost message. We suspect this is due to the fact that the NRFU message clarifies what type of follow-up would occur.

Of the five respondents in the Cost condition, two respondents completely understood the message and three respondents did not. The three respondents who did not seem to understand the cost message reported having “some college” or a “high school” education. Two of the three respondents got hung up at the latter part of the second sentence, beginning with the word “otherwise.” One respondent reported not knowing the meaning of the phrase “follow up with you.” And another respondent did not connect the “follow up” with not returning the form on time, but rather said that the Census Bureau could follow up if they needed to clarify information. This respondent also said the message referred to money his community would not get if people were not counted. The third respondent reported thinking the “money” referred to a “stimulus” payment that the government would send her once she completed the form.

Of the five respondents in the NRFU Motivation condition, who saw this version after the NRFU Motivation version, three respondents understood the message as intended and two respondents had a partial understanding. One of these respondents appeared to be very upset about the message. Although he understood that taxpayer money was being saved, he did not indicate that it was a benefit. Instead, he pointed to the “otherwise be used” element of the sentence and the use of the word “you” (explicitly likening it to “you people”), as in “your people (sic), you are costin’ the government money.” This respondent noted that he would consider throwing the form away because he did not want to be blamed for government mismanagement of money. He also said the government should pay him money for filling out the form, although he did not report that he thought the sentence was telling him to expect payment from the government.

The other respondent who appeared to partially understand the Cost message needed to read the sentence three times before ultimately understanding what it was trying to convey. Initially, she too reported thinking that the message was threatening to use her money. Ultimately, she said that the threat was not “in a bad way.” She said, “They are letting me know it is money that could go to more useful situations.” She also said, “The money is going to have to pay the person who is coming to your house.” She was the only respondent to report thinking that the follow-up would be in the form

of a personal visit, but she had already seen the NRFU Motivation version, which explicitly mentions a personal visit.

Most respondents reported thinking the Cost version referred to a follow-up that would be in the form of a letter or phone call. After seeing both messages, a few respondents commented that the “follow up” in the Cost message did not convey the idea of a personal visit.

#### **4.4.2. Round 2: Deadline Message Summary and Recommendations**

For the most part, respondents understood the revised NRFU Motivation version of the deadline message as intended. With the addition of the word “avoid,” some respondents reported that the message was negative. Even so, respondents seemed to indicate that it would motivate them to return the form. Two respondents (of 10) reported not knowing exactly who would be coming to their door. They reported that the person could be someone from another government agency. Additionally, two respondents said that the interviewer would ask why he or she did not complete the form. Because the “personal visit from an interviewer” wording did not change between the rounds of testing, it is possible that respondents in Round 1 had that same misinterpretation, but did not voice it.

For the 2010 CPEX experiments, we recommend going forward with the NRFU Motivation deadline message tested in Round 2. For future census tests, we recommend cognitively testing the NRFU message we crafted after Round 1 testing:

“An interviewer will visit each address that does not return a census form to gather the required information. If you prefer to avoid this visit, please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5<sup>th</sup>.”

In addition to being polite and framing the personal visit as a choice the respondent makes, this message would also inform the respondent that the interviewer will collect only required information, and will not ask the respondent why he or she did not complete the form earlier.

We do not recommend going forward with the current Cost version of the deadline message because three of our respondents did not understand the message as intended. We suspect more people might not have understood the message if it was the only version they saw. Additionally, they did not pay a great deal of attention to the emphasis on cost savings. In other words, they did not view this message as important, noteworthy, or motivating. None of the 10 respondents explicitly said that avoiding the cost to taxpayers was an incentive to complete and return the Census form, although one respondent described this sentence as “positive.” This respondent also said the second sentence, “Mailing your census form on time saves money that would otherwise be used to follow up with you,” made her feel like sending in the form on time “is a good thing to do.” Alternatively, several respondents mentioned that they wanted to avoid a follow-up (letter or phone call).

We have identified three possible solutions for the Cost message. If there were time to test additional messages, we recommend testing a simple message such as, “Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5. Mailing your census form on time saves taxpayer money.” This eliminates the confusing “otherwise” clause, avoids suggesting that the federal government is blaming the individual for the increased expense, and keeps the message distinct from the NRFU Motivation message. We suspect that respondents might wonder “how” it saves money. Testing could reveal if respondents are confused when there is no explanation of how money is saved. A second solution is to craft and test a message combining the NRFU Motivation and Cost messages. A third solution would be to eliminate the Cost CPEX panel from the test.

### 4.4.3. Putting the Questionnaire into the Return Envelope

In this section, we shift focus from deadline message comprehension to respondent behavior while placing the materials into the revised return envelope.

In Round 2, after they had read the cover letter in their assigned condition, respondents filled out the form and inserted it into the return envelope. We hoped to find that the changes made to the instructions on the back of the envelope (enclosing them in a black rectangle and locating them lower on the envelope) would increase the number of respondents who saw those instructions.

#### 4.4.3.1. Results

Table 8 shows that the revised instruction design did not seem to increase respondents' awareness of the instruction. In fact, half (5 of 10) of the respondents did not report seeing either instruction, yet these same respondents all correctly inserted the form into the envelope. Thus in this round, unlike in Round 1, we did not find a relationship between seeing the instruction and correct placement of the form in the envelope. In this round, most respondents inserted the form into the envelope correctly. The one respondent who did not do so claimed he or she saw the instruction on the front.

Sealing the outgoing envelope was a successful procedural change. None of the respondents considered the outgoing envelope to be the return envelope. Additionally, even though we were concerned about the instructions on the sticker on the back of the envelope affecting results, none of the respondents commented it. Therefore, we have no evidence that use of the sticker affected our results.

Table 8. Round 2: Correct vs. Incorrect Insertion of Census Form in Return Envelope by Instructions Presented to Respondents.

Placed form	Both Front and Back Instructions	Front Instructions Only	Back Instructions Only	Neither Instruction	Total
Correctly (Scannable)	2	0	2	5	9
Incorrectly (Unscannable)	0	1	0	0	1
Total	2	1	2	5	10

#### 4.4.3.2. Summary and Recommendations

In the second round, not seeing the instructions did not prevent respondents from correctly inserting the form into the envelope. Everyone who *did not* see the instruction (and that was five of the 10 respondents) correctly placed the form in the envelope. The only respondent who incorrectly placed the form into the envelope reported seeing the insertion instructions on the front of the envelope. We did not see overwhelming evidence that the changes made to the back of the envelope (lowering the instruction and enclosing them in a black rectangle) made it more difficult for respondents to see the instruction, but we also did not see evidence that the changes helped respondents notice the instruction. We conclude that either design is reasonable for use on the Census return envelope instructions.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The major finding of this research is that comprehension was generally good for this group of respondents across the different messages and materials, with the exception of the Cost message. With its mention of filling the form out “today,” the Control message garnered the most negative reactions in Round 1 of testing. Additionally, it was the message respondents tended to say would be least likely to motivate their response. Most respondents understood both NRFU Motivation message tested in Round 1 and the revised NRFU Motivation message tested in Round 2. Several respondents verbally acknowledged that the prospect of an interviewer coming to their home to conduct an interview would motivate them to complete and return the form on time. Based on what we learned during the two rounds of testing, we crafted and recommend another NRFU message to test at a future date and had suggestions for revising the Cost message.

In our test of the return envelope, we continued to find that some respondents inserted the form into the envelope incorrectly, so that it would not be scannable upon receipt. We do not have overwhelming evidence that the changes made to the back of the envelope (lowering the instructions and enclosing them in a black rectangle) make the instructions more noticeable. Based on our small tests, we conclude that either design is reasonable for use on the Census return envelope instructions.

## 6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

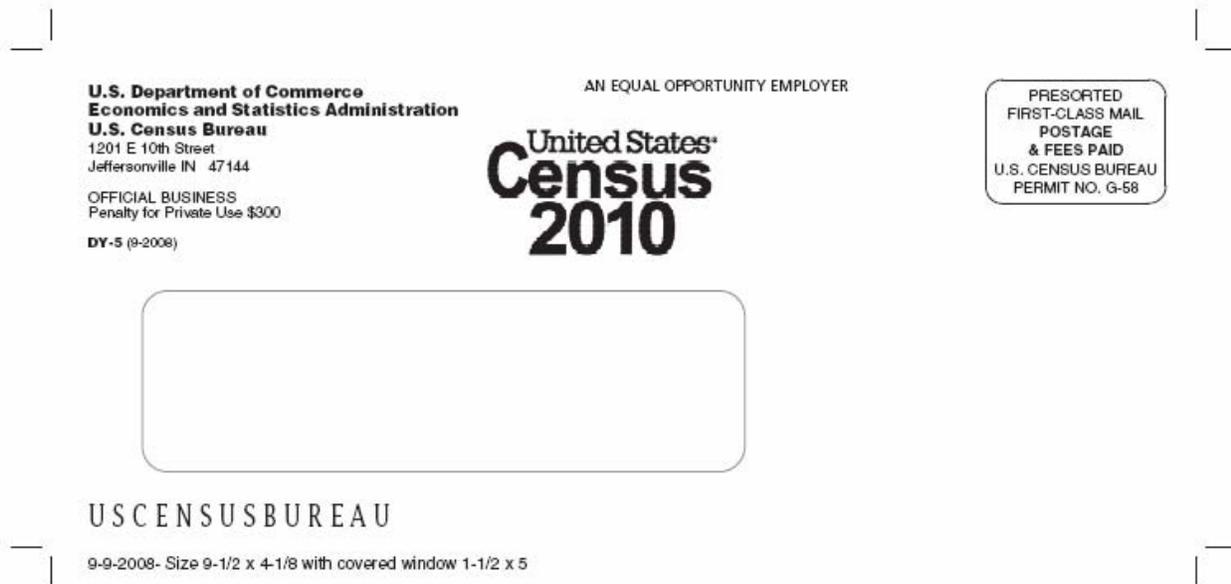
We thank our reviewers, Terry DeMaio, Betty Murphy, and Jen Beck (SRD), for their editorial assistance, valuable suggestions, and helpful insights into possible biases in the design of the research. We also thank Stephanie Sheffield for her editing and formatting help. Finally, we thank Michael Bentley and the Decennial Statistical Studies Division for the opportunity to test these messages.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A – Advance Letter Envelope – Round 1 and 2



## Appendix B - Advance Letter: Control

Draft 1 8/2/2008



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**Economics and Statistics Administration**  
**U.S. Census Bureau**  
Washington, DC 20233-0001  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

March 8, 2010

Dear Resident:

**About one week from now, you will receive a 2010 Census form in the mail.**  
When you receive your form, please fill it out and mail it in promptly.

Your response is important. Results from the 2010 Census will be used to help each community get its fair share of government funds for highways, schools, health facilities, and many other programs you and your neighbors need. Without a complete, accurate census, your community may not receive its fair share.

If you are interested in working on the 2010 Census, please call our toll-free jobs line at 1-866-861-2010, or visit our Web site at <[www.census.gov/2010census](http://www.census.gov/2010census)> and click on "Jobs".

Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Steve H. Murdock  
Director, U.S. Census Bureau

DY-5(L)(X1) (8-2008)

U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

United States  
**Census**  
**2010**

Appendix C - Advance Letter for Other Conditions: Mild, Progressive Urgency, NRFU (Round 1 and Round 2) and Cost

Draft 1 8/2/2008



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
**U.S. Census Bureau**  
Washington, DC 20233-0001  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

March 8, 2010

Dear Resident:

**About one week from now, you will receive a 2010 Census form in the mail.**  
When you receive your form, please fill it out and mail it in by April 5.

Your response is important. Results from the 2010 Census will be used to help each community get its fair share of government funds for highways, schools, health facilities, and many other programs you and your neighbors need. Without a complete, accurate census, your community may not receive its fair share.

If you are interested in working on the 2010 Census, please call our toll-free jobs line at 1-866-861-2010, or visit our Web site at <[www.census.gov/2010census](http://www.census.gov/2010census)> and click on "Jobs".

Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Steve H. Murdock  
Director, U.S. Census Bureau

DY-5(L)(X2) (8-2008)

U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

United States  
**Census  
2010**

Appendix D - Outgoing Envelope: Control

Draft 1 4/7/08  
Size 10-1/16 x 6-1/16" Open window 4 x 2-3/4"

**U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. Census Bureau**  
1201 E 10th Street  
Jeffersonville IN 47132

OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
Penalty for Private Use \$300

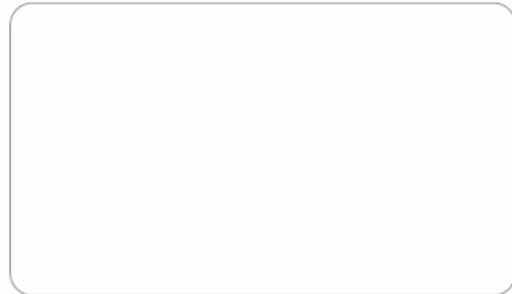
D-6A(IN) (4-2008)

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U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
PERMIT NO. G-58

U.S. Census Form Enclosed  
**YOUR RESPONSE  
IS REQUIRED BY LAW**



U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

4-7-2008

Appendix E - Outgoing Envelope: Mild, NRFU (Round 1 and 2), and Cost

Draft 1 8/2/2008  
Size 10-1/16 x 6-1/16" Open window 4 x 2-3/4"

**U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. Census Bureau  
1201 E 10th Street  
Jeffersonville IN 47144**

OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
Penalty for Private Use \$300

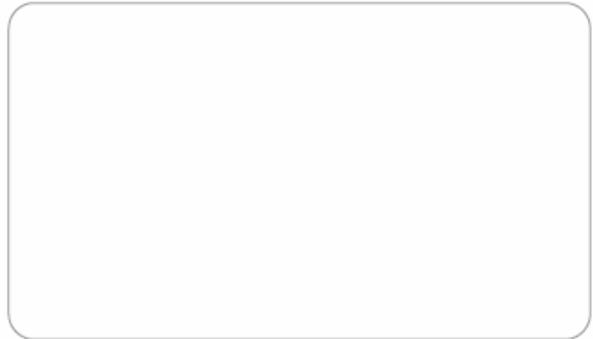
DY-6A(X2) (8-2008)

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

United States<sup>®</sup>  
**Census  
2010**

PRESORTED  
FIRST-CLASS MAIL  
POSTAGE  
& FEES PAID  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
PERMIT NO. G-58

U.S. Census Form Enclosed  
**YOUR RESPONSE  
IS REQUIRED BY LAW**  
Mail by April 5



U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

8-2-2008

# Appendix F - Outgoing Envelope: Progressive Urgency

Draft 1 8/2/2008  
Size 10-1/16 x 6-1/16" Open window 4 x 2-3/4"

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. Census Bureau  
1201 E 10th Street  
Jeffersonville IN 47144

OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
Penalty for Private Use \$300

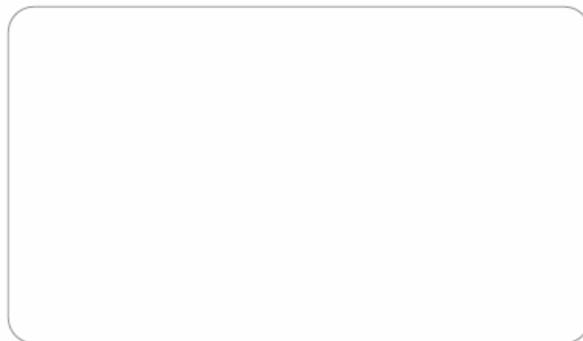
DY-6A(X3) (8-2008)

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& FEES PAID  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
PERMIT NO. G-58

U.S. Census Form Enclosed  
**YOUR RESPONSE  
IS REQUIRED BY LAW**  
Deadline is April 5



U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

8-2-2008

Appendix G - Cover Letter: Control

Draft 3 8/11/2008



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**Economics and Statistics Administration**  
**U.S. Census Bureau**  
Washington, DC 20233-0001  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

March 15, 2010

Dear Resident:

This is your official 2010 Census form. We need your help to count everyone in the United States by providing basic information about all the people living in this house or apartment. **Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form today.**

Your answers are important. Census results are used to decide the number of representatives each state has in the U.S. Congress. The amount of government money your neighborhood receives also depends on these answers. That money is used for services for children and the elderly, roads, and many other local needs.

Your answers are confidential. This means the Census Bureau cannot give out information that identifies you or your household. Your answers will only be used for statistical purposes, and for no other purpose. The back of this letter contains more information about protecting your data.

Sincerely,

Steve H. Murdock  
Director, U.S. Census Bureau

U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

United States  
**Census**  
**2010**

DY-16(L)(X1) (8-11-2008)

Base copy prints black ink  
Overlay prints Pantone Cyan - 10% and 100%

Appendix H - Cover Letter: Mild

Draft 2 8/7/2008



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
**U.S. Census Bureau**  
Washington, DC 20233-0001  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

March 15, 2010

Dear Resident:

This is your official 2010 Census form. We need your help to count everyone in the United States by providing basic information about all the people living in this house or apartment. **Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5.**

Your answers are important. Census results are used to decide the number of representatives each state has in the U.S. Congress. The amount of government money your neighborhood receives also depends on these answers. That money is used for services for children and the elderly, roads, and many other local needs.

Your answers are confidential. This means the Census Bureau cannot give out information that identifies you or your household. Your answers will only be used for statistical purposes, and for no other purpose. The back of this letter contains more information about protecting your data.

Sincerely,

Steve H. Murdock  
Director, U.S. Census Bureau

Enclosures

U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

United States  
**Census**  
**2010**

DY-16(L)(X2) (8-7-2008)

Base copy prints black ink  
Overlay prints Pantone Cyan - 10% and 100%

## Appendix I - Cover Letter: Progressive Urgency

Draft 1 8/2/2008



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
**U.S. Census Bureau**  
Washington, DC 20233-0001  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

March 15, 2010

Dear Resident:

This is your official 2010 Census form. We need your help to count everyone in the United States by providing basic information about all the people living in this house or apartment. **The deadline to complete and mail back the enclosed census form is April 5.**

Your answers are important. Census results are used to decide the number of representatives each state has in the U.S. Congress. The amount of government money your neighborhood receives also depends on these answers. That money is used for services for children and the elderly, roads, and many other local needs.

Your answers are confidential. This means the Census Bureau cannot give out information that identifies you or your household. Your answers will only be used for statistical purposes, and for no other purpose. The back of this letter contains more information about protecting your data.

Sincerely,

Steve H. Murdock  
Director, U.S. Census Bureau

Enclosures

U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

United States  
**Census**  
**2010**

DY-16(L)(X3) (8-2-2008)

Base copy prints black ink  
Overlay prints Pantone Cyan - 10% and 100%

Appendix J - Cover Letter: NRFU Motivation -Round 1

Draft 1 8-2-2008



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**Economics and Statistics Administration**  
**U.S. Census Bureau**  
Washington, DC 20233-0001  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

March 15, 2010

Dear Resident:

This is your official 2010 Census form. We need your help to count everyone in the United States by providing basic information about all the people living in this house or apartment. **Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5 so that you are not inconvenienced with a personal visit from an interviewer.**

Your answers are important. Census results are used to decide the number of representatives each state has in the U.S. Congress. The amount of government money your neighborhood receives also depends on these answers. That money is used for services for children and the elderly, roads, and many other local needs.

Your answers are confidential. This means the Census Bureau cannot give out information that identifies you or your household. Your answers will only be used for statistical purposes, and for no other purpose. The back of this letter contains more information about protecting your data.

Sincerely,

Steve H. Murdock  
Director, U.S. Census Bureau

Enclosures

U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

United States  
**Census**  
**2010**

DY-16(L)(X4) (8-2-2008)

Base copy prints black ink  
Overlay prints Pantone Cyan - 10% and 100%

**Your Answers Are Confidential**

Federal law protects your privacy and keeps your answers confidential (Title 13, United States Code, Sections 9 and 214). The answers you give on the census form cannot be obtained by law enforcement or tax collection agencies. Your answers cannot be used in court. They cannot be obtained with a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request.

As allowed by law, census data become public after 72 years (Title 44, United States, Section 2108). This information can be used for family history and other types of historical research.

Please visit our Web site at <[www.census.gov/2010census](http://www.census.gov/2010census)> and click on "Protecting Your Answers" to learn more about our privacy policy and data protection.

Appendix L - Return Envelope –Round 1

9-7/16 x 5-11/16" window: 8-9/16w x 5/8"v (barcode window)  
and 1-1/8"v (larger window) Draft 2 11-10-2008

**U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. Census Bureau**  
1201 E 10th Street  
Jeffersonville IN 47199-1111

OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
Penalty for Private Use \$300

D-8A(IN) (11-2008)



NO POSTAGE  
NECESSARY  
IF MAILED  
IN THE  
UNITED STATES



**BUSINESS REPLY MAIL**

FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 16081 WASHINGTON DC

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

To return your census form, please make sure  
the **BAR CODE ABOVE YOUR ADDRESS** appears  
in this window.

2010 CENSUS NATIONAL PROCESSING CENTER  
PO BOX 5500  
JEFFERSONVILLE IN 47199-1111



11-10-2008

4719911116

Thank you for participating in the 2010 Census.

Your return envelope should look like this.  
Make sure the **BAR CODE ABOVE YOUR ADDRESS**  
appears in the larger part of the window. 



4-10-2008

D-8A(IN) (BACK)

Appendix M - Postcard: Mailing Address Side

Draft 2 8/7/2008

**U.S. Department of Commerce**  
**Economics and Statistics Administration**  
**U.S. Census Bureau**

1201 E 10th Street  
Jeffersonville IN 47144

OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
Penalty for Private Use \$300

**DY-9(X4)** (8-2008)

PRESORTED  
FIRST-CLASS MAIL  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
PERMIT NO. G-58

Your response to the U.S. Census Bureau  
is required by law.

Appendix N - Postcard: Control

Draft 1 8/2/2008

March 22, 2010



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, DC 20233-0001  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Dear Resident:

A few days ago, you should have received a request to participate in the 2010 Census. It was sent to your address as part of our effort to conduct the most accurate census possible.

It is important that you respond. If you have already provided your census information, please accept our sincere thanks. There is no need to provide your answers again. If you have not responded, please provide your information as soon as possible.

If you need help completing your questionnaire, please call 1-866-872-6868 or, for help in Spanish, call 1-800-928-2010. The TDD telephone number for assistance is 1-800-783-2010. Census Bureau staff are available to help you everyday, 7 days a week, from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Steve H. Murdock  
Director, U.S. Census Bureau

U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

DY-9(X1) (8-2008)

United States  
Census  
2010

Appendix O - Postcard: Mild

Draft 1 8/2/2008

March 22, 2010



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**Economics and Statistics Administration**  
**U.S. Census Bureau**  
Washington, DC 20233-0001  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Dear Resident:

A few days ago, you should have received a request to participate in the 2010 Census. It was sent to your address as part of our effort to conduct the most accurate census possible.

It is important that you respond. If you have already provided your census information, please accept our sincere thanks. There is no need to provide your answers again. If you have not responded, please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5.

If you need help completing your questionnaire, please call 1-866-872-6868 or, for help in Spanish, call 1-800-928-2010. The TDD telephone number for assistance is 1-800-783-2010. Census Bureau staff are available to help you everyday, 7 days a week, from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Steve H. Murdock  
Director, U.S. Census Bureau

U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

DY-9(X2) (8-2008)

United States  
**Census**  
**2010**

Appendix P - Postcard: Progressive Urgency

Draft 1 8/2/2008

March 22, 2010



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, DC 20233-0001  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Dear Resident:

A few days ago, you should have received a request to participate in the 2010 Census. It was sent to your address as part of our effort to conduct the most accurate census possible.

It is important that you respond. If you have already provided your census information, please accept our sincere thanks. There is no need to provide your answers again. If you have not responded, the deadline to complete and mail back the enclosed census form is April 5.

If you need help completing your questionnaire, please call 1-866-872-6868 or, for help in Spanish, call 1-800-928-2010. The TDD telephone number for assistance is 1-800-783-2010. Census Bureau staff are available to help you everyday, 7 days a week, from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Steve H. Murdock  
Director, U.S. Census Bureau

U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

DY-9(X3) (8-2008)

United States  
**Census**  
**2010**

Appendix Q – Postcard: NRFU – Round 1

Draft 2 8/7/2008

March 22, 2010



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, DC 20233-0001  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Dear Resident:

A few days ago, you should have received a request to participate in the 2010 Census. It was sent to your address as part of our effort to conduct the most accurate census possible.

It is important that you respond. If you have already provided your census information, please accept our sincere thanks. There is no need to provide your answers again. If you have not responded, please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5 so that you are not inconvenienced with a personal visit from an interviewer.

If you need help completing your questionnaire, please call 1-866-872-6868 or, for help in Spanish, call 1-800-928-2010. The TDD telephone number for assistance is 1-800-783-2010. Census Bureau staff are available to help you everyday, 7 days a week, from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Steve H. Murdock  
Director, U.S. Census Bureau

U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

DY-9(X4) (8-2008)

United States  
**Census**  
**2010**

Appendix R – Demographic Characteristics by Condition for Round 1

**Demographic Characteristics of 5 Respondents in the Control Condition**

Sex		Race		Age		Education	
Male	1	White	2	≤30	2	< HS	0
Female	4	Black	3	31-45	1	HS, GED	2
		Hispanic	0	46-60	2	Some college, AA	1
		Asian	0	61+	0	Bachelor's	0
		Other	1			Some grad	2
Total	5		6*		5		5

\*One respondent selected black and other as his/her race.

**Demographic Characteristics of 5 Respondents in the Mild Condition**

Sex		Race		Age		Education	
Male	2	White	3	≤30	0	< HS	0
Female	3	Black	1	31-45	2	HS, GED	1
		Hispanic	0	46-60	2	Some college, AA	2
		Asian	1	61+	1	Bachelor's	1
		Other	0			Some grad	1
Total	5		5		5		5

**Demographic Characteristics of 5 Respondents in the Progressive Urgency Condition**

Sex		Race		Age		Education	
Male	3	White	1	≤30	0	< HS	1
Female	2	Black	3	31-45	3	HS, GED	0
		Hispanic	1	46-60	2	Some college, AA	2
		Asian	1	61+	0	Bachelor's	0
		Other	0			Some grad	2
Total	5		6*		5		5

\*One respondent selected white and Hispanic as his/her race/ethnicity.

**Demographic Characteristics of 5 Respondents in the NRFU Condition**

Sex		Race		Age		Education	
Male	2	White	1	≤30	1	< HS	0
Female	3	Black	4	31-45	0	HS, GED	3
		Hispanic	0	46-60	3	Some college, AA	1
		Asian	0	61+	1	Bachelor's	0
		Other	0			Some grad	1
Total	5		5		5		5

## Appendix S – Round 1 Protocol

### Protocol for CPEX Testing of Decennial Deadline/Mailing Package

RESPONDENT #:

1<sup>st</sup> CONDITION=

#### Introduction:

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I work for the U.S. Census Bureau. Thanks for agreeing to help us today. Let me start by telling you a little about what we will be doing today. Every ten years the Census Bureau conducts a census, or count, of everyone who is living in the United States at that time. First, we send out mail questionnaires to all of the households in the United States, and ask them to complete and return the questionnaire. Today we are going to look at some of the letters and postcards that you get in the mail around the time of that census. I'll explain each one to you as we go along. I'm going to ask you to read the materials, and then ask you some questions about them: what they mean to you, and what your reactions to them are. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in how these materials work for you.

#### Permission to Tape Record:

Because it would be hard to keep track of everything you say today, I'm going to tape record this session. [Hand respondent consent form.] Please read this over and sign it. I want you to know that your responses will be kept strictly confidential and will only be seen by Census employees working on this project. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can decline to answer any particular question.

#### **TURN ON TAPE RECORDER**

We need your permission on the tape, so can you say something like, "You have permission to tape record me for this session." Thanks.

#### Think-out-loud Instructions:

As I said before, we are interested in your thoughts on these materials. So what I would like you to do is to read each one as I give it to you. But so I know how you are thinking and reacting as you read it, I'd like you to tell me everything that's going through your mind as you look at them. Instead of thinking to yourself, I'd like you to think out loud. I would like you to tell me everything you're thinking as you read the materials: questions that come to your mind, reactions you're having, what information you are getting from the materials. After you've completed reading each piece, I will ask you some additional questions. From time to time, I will ask you questions about what you've done so far. Again, there are no right or wrong answers. We're just interested in how these materials work for you.

You'll have to do a little pretending for this. Let's imagine that it is March in 2010.

#### 1) What do they notice? (1 condition only)

##### Advance letter:

A week or so before the census form comes in the mail, you would be sent the letter I am going to show you now. Please open this envelope as you would at home. It doesn't come with a form; the letter is the only thing in the envelope. As you'll see, the letter is addressed to "Dear Resident" (as all the mailings are.) Please look at this letter, read it as you would at home, and remember to think aloud as you go through it. (Give them the ADVANCE LETTER)

- What do you think this letter is asking you to do? Anything else?
- (If don't mention deadline) What was the first thing you saw on this letter?

CIRCLE ONE:      Deadline Message      ---      Something Else

NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_ (NOT the bold msg)

## Appendix S – Round 1 Protocol (continued)

Mailing envelope: (the large package of materials, incl form)

After about a week, you would receive the census form in the mail. It would come in an envelope like this (Give them the MAILING ENVELOPE). Please take a look at this envelope before taking out the contents, and remember to think aloud as you look at it.

- What was the first thing you noticed on the mailing envelope?
- What else did you notice about the envelope, if anything?

CIRCLE ONE:      Required by Law --      Deadline Message      ---      Something Else  
NOTES:

Now open the envelope and let's look at the materials.

Cover letter:

This letter would be on top of the questionnaire. Please look at the letter, read it as you would at home and remember to think aloud as you go through it. (Direct them to the COVER LETTER)

- What do you think this letter is asking you to do? Anything else?
- (If don't mention deadline)      What was the first thing you saw on this letter?

CIRCLE ONE:      Deadline Message      ---      Something Else  
NOTES:

Postcard: (place side containing the "response required by law" face-up)

A little while later, you would receive this postcard in the mail, whether or not you had already returned the form in the package. Please look at the card, read it as you would at home, and remember to think aloud as you go through it. (Give them the POSTCARD)

- What do you think this postcard is asking you to do? Anything else?
- (If don't mention deadline)      What was the first thing you saw on this postcard?

CIRCLE ONE:      Deadline Message      ---      Something Else  
NOTES:

Understanding of phrases & terms

Advance letter:

(SHOW ADVANCE LETTER and point to deadline statement)

- The letter says "When you receive your form, please fill it out and mail it in [promptly/by April 5]."
- (If they didn't say they noticed it earlier) Did you see this when you read it earlier? It's okay if you didn't.
- What does this sentence mean?
  - IF PROMPTLY: What does "promptly" mean to you? How soon do you think that means you need to mail it in? Could you wait a little while? How long could you wait?

CIRCLE ONE:      YES      ---      NO  
NOTES:

Mailing envelope: (the large package of materials, same as before – this time revisiting for meaning probes)  
(SHOW MAILING ENVELOPE)

-

## Appendix S – Round 1 Protocol (continued)

- (If they didn't say they noticed it earlier) Did you see this (POINT TO RESPONSE REQUIRED BY LAW BOX) when you looked over the envelope earlier? It's okay if you didn't.
- (POINT TO LOCATION ON ENVELOPE) What does "your response is required by law" mean to you?
- IF "DEADLINE": What does "deadline" mean to you?

CIRCLE ONE: (Did they see box?) YES --- NO

NOTES:

### Cover letter:

(SHOW COVER LETTER)

- The letter says [READ BOLDED SENTENCE IN 1<sup>ST</sup> PARAGRAPH].
- (If they didn't say they noticed it earlier) Did you see this when you read it earlier? It's okay if you didn't.
- What does this sentence mean to you?
  - IF "TODAY": How soon do you think that means you need to mail it in? Could you wait a little while? How long could you wait?
  - IF "APRIL 5": How soon do you think that means you need to mail it in? Could you wait a little while? How long could you wait?
  - IF "NRFU": What is a "personal visit from an interviewer?"
- (Optional – use if you think it will be useful) Is there anything you especially like or dislike about the letter?

CIRCLE ONE: (Did s/he see bolded sentence?) YES --- NO

NOTES:

### Postcard: (final time to show postcard – place side containing the most text face-up)

(SHOW POSTCARD)

- The postcard says [READ LAST SENTENCE IN 2<sup>ND</sup> PARAGRAPH; LAST 2 SENTENCES IN THE PROGRESSIVE VERSION].
- (If they didn't say they noticed it earlier) Did you see this when you read it earlier? It's okay if you didn't.
- What does this sentence mean to you?

CIRCLE ONE: YES --- NO

NOTES:

FOR MILD/URGENT/NRFU

- If it was April 6, and you hadn't filled out the form yet, what would you do? And why.

CIRCLE ONE: Complete & mail in --- Call --- Wait for interviewer -- Something Else

NOTES:

### 2) Comparison to other deadline wording in three other conditions

PLACE ALL 4 LETTERS SIDE BY SIDE ON THE TABLE – 1<sup>ST</sup> condition on R's right. From R's left to right:  
today/control > April5/mild > deadline/prog Urgency > NRFU

- I'm going to show you a few other letters that we are thinking of using. They are all very similar except for the sentence I'm going to point out to you. Please look at the sentence in bold [POINT TO SENTENCE ON \_\_\_\_\_]. This is the letter you looked at earlier.
  - In your own words, what does this sentence mean to you?

Appendix S– Round 1 Protocol (continued)

NOTES:

- Do you like this sentence more or less than the other sentence? [POINT TO VERSION THEY INITIALLY SAW] Why?  
**THIS --- INITIAL**

NOTES:

- Please look at the sentence in bold [POINT TO SENTENCE ON \_\_\_\_\_].
- In your own words, what does this sentence mean to you?

NOTES:

- Do you like this sentence more or less than the other sentence? [POINT TO VERSION THEY INITIALLY SAW] Why?  
**THIS --- INITIAL**

NOTES:

- Please look at the sentence in bold [POINT TO SENTENCE ON \_\_\_\_\_].
- In your own words, what does this sentence mean to you?

NOTES:

- Do you like this sentence more or less than the other sentence? [POINT TO VERSION THEY INITIALLY SAW] Why?  
**THIS --- INITIAL**

Let's look at all 4 letters now.

- Of all 4 letters, which do you like best? Least? Tell me a little about why.

**CIRCLE ONE BEST: CONTROL MILD PROGRESSIVE NRFU**

**CIRCLE ONE LEAST: CONTROL MILD PROGRESSIVE NRFU**

- Of all 4 letters, which do you think you would be most likely to respond to, or if it is the same, that is okay too? Least likely? Why?

**CIRCLE ONE MOST: CONTROL MILD PROGRESSIVE NRFU**

**CIRCLE ONE LEAST: CONTROL MILD PROGRESSIVE NRFU**

Now we are going to focus on this sentence which was in this letter [LEAVE NRFU VERSION; PUT CONTROL, MILD AND URGENT AWAY]. There are a few other ways we might say this. [SHOW NRFU SENTENCES FOUND ON THE ALTERNATIVE NRFU SHEET AND THE ORIGINAL].

In your own words, what does this sentence mean to you? (GO THROUGH EACH ONE)

Appendix S – Round 1 Protocol (continued)

NOTES:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

- Of these four sentences [SHOW NRFU SENTENCES FOUND ON THE ALTERNATIVE NRFU SHEET AND THE ORIGINAL], which do you like the most? Why?

CIRCLE ONE MOST: ONE TWO THREE ORIGINAL  
CIRCLE ONE LEAST: ONE TWO THREE ORIGINAL

NOTES:

[Note: Alternative wordings:

- (1) "An interviewer must visit each address that doesn't return a census form in order to gather the required information; to avoid this inconvenience to you, we ask that you complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5th."
- (2) "To avoid the inconvenience of a visit to this address from an interviewer, please complete and mail back the enclosed form by April 5."
- (3) "Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5 to avoid a visit by an interviewer."

4) Usability – filling out form & placing it in the envelope

"Let's now turn to the form and complete it as you would at home and prepare it for mailing."

**Observation**

[INSTRUCT RESPONDENT TO COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR AT LEAST ONE HOUSEHOLD MEMBER.]

Note: If respondent asks for guidance during questionnaire completion, say: "Just do whatever you would do if I wasn't here to help you."

Note: If R does not continue to envelope stuffing, say: "Ok, what would you do to mail the questionnaire back?"

**Observe:**

How does R fold the questionnaire?

CORRECT INCORRECT

Does R put the questionnaire into the envelope with the large bar code showing on the right of the envelope through the window?

YES --- NO

If NO, does R self correct?

YES --- NO

How many attempts does it take for R to correctly place the questionnaire in the envelope?

NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

Does R include anything other than the form in the mail return package?

YES --- NO

**Probes**

- Did you see this instruction and picture on the back of the envelope? (Point to instruction on the back of the return envelope that gives directions for how to place the form in the envelope.)
  - What is this instruction asking you to do?

Appendix S – Round 1 Protocol (continued)

CIRCLE ONE: YES --- NO

NOTES:

- Was this instruction helpful?  
 YES ---  NO
- Did you see this instruction? (Point to instruction in the return envelope window that gives directions for how to place the form in the envelope.)
  - What is this instruction asking you to do?

CIRCLE ONE: YES --- NO

NOTES:

- Was this instruction helpful?  
 YES ---  NO

**General debriefing**

- Was there anything that some people might find sensitive or uncomfortable in any of the materials?
- Is there anything you haven't already told me that you'd like to add?

NOTES:

<u>RESPONDENT#:</u>
<u>1<sup>ST</sup> CONDITION:</u>
<u>RACE:</u> White Black Hispanic Asian Other
<u>AGE RANGE:</u> ≤ 30 31-45 46-60 61+
<u>GENDER:</u> M F
<u>EDUCATION:</u> HS/GED Some Coll/AA Bachelor's Some grad
<u>DATE OF INTERVIEW:</u>
<u>INTERVIEWER:</u>

Appendix T - Terry DeMaio's Revised Return Envelope (Not Tested)

9-7/16 x 5-11/16" window: 8-9/16w x 5/8"v (barcode window)  
and 1-1/8"v (larger window) Draft 1 8/20/2008

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. Census Bureau  
1201 E 10th Street  
Jeffersonville, IN 47144  
OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
Penalty for Private Use \$300  
DY-8A(x1a) (8-2008)



NO POSTAGE  
NECESSARY  
IF MAILED  
IN THE  
UNITED STATES



**BUSINESS REPLY MAIL**

FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 16081 WASHINGTON DC

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

To return your census form, please make  
sure the **BAR CODE ABOVE YOUR ADDRESS**  
appears in this window.

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
PO BOX 5500  
JEFFERSONVILLE IN 47199-5500



8-26-2008

4719955000

Thank you for participating in the 2010 Census.

Your return envelope should look like this.  
Make sure the **BAR CODE ABOVE YOUR ADDRESS**  
appears in the larger part of the window.



8/26/2008 - Draft #2

DY-8A(xa1) (BACK)

Appendix U – Respondent’s Reported Preference of Deadline Message by Condition

Control Condition(N=4)	Reported as Liked the		Reported as Likely to Respond the	
	Most	Least	Most	Least
Control version	0	1	0	2
Mild version	2	0	2	1
Progressive Urgency version	2	1	1	1
NRFU version	0	2	1	3

Note: One respondent reported that all the messages were about the same as far as least likely to respond to them.

Mild Condition(N=5)	Reported as Liked the		Reported as Likely to Respond the	
	Most	Least	Most	Least
Control version	0	2	1	3
Mild version	3	1	2	1
Progressive Urgency version	2	1	2	0
NRFU version	1	2	2	0

Notes: One respondent chose Mild and Progressive Urgency as the messages he/she liked the most.  
 One respondent chose Control and Progressive Urgency as the messages he/she liked least.  
 One respondent chose Mild, Progressive Urgency, and NRFU as the messages he/she would be most likely to respond to.  
 One respondent did not report a message he/she would be least likely to respond to.

Progressive Urgency Condition (N=5)	Reported as Liked the		Reported as Likely to Respond the	
	Most	Least	Most	Least
Control version	0	4	0	5
Mild version	2	0	0	0
Progressive Urgency version	1	0	2	1
NRFU version	2	2	3	0

Note: One respondent chose Control and NRFU as the messages he/she liked least.

NRFU Motivation Condition (N=5)	Reported as Liked the		Reported as Likely to Respond the	
	Most	Least	Most	Least
Control version	1	3	1	2
Mild version	0	0	0	0
Progressive Urgency version	1	1	1	1
NRFU version	3	1	3	2

Appendix V - Cover Letter: NRFU Motivation – Round 2

Draft 2 02-11-09



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**Economics and Statistics Administration**  
**U.S. Census Bureau**  
Washington, DC 20233-0001  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

March 15, 2010

Dear Resident:

This is your official 2010 Census form. We need your help to count everyone in the United States by providing basic information about all the people living in this house or apartment. **Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5 so that you can avoid a personal visit from an interviewer.**

Your answers are important. Census results are used to decide the number of representatives each state has in the U.S. Congress. The amount of government money your neighborhood receives also depends on these answers. That money is used for services for children and the elderly, roads, and many other local needs.

Your answers are confidential. This means the Census Bureau cannot give out information that identifies you or your household. Your answers will only be used for statistical purposes, and for no other purpose. The back of this letter contains more information about protecting your data.

Sincerely,

Steve H. Murdock  
Director, U.S. Census Bureau

Enclosures

U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

United States  
**Census**  
**2010**

DY-16(L)(X4) (02-11-09)

Base copy prints black ink  
Overlay prints Pantone Cyan - 10% and 100%

Appendix W - Cover Letter: Cost

Draft 2 02-11-09



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
**U.S. Census Bureau**  
Washington, DC 20233-0001  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

March 15, 2010

Dear Resident:

This is your official 2010 Census form. We need your help to count everyone in the United States by providing basic information about all the people living in this house or apartment. **Please complete and mail back the enclosed census form by April 5. Mailing your census form on time saves money that would otherwise be used to follow up with you.**

Your answers are important. Census results are used to decide the number of representatives each state has in the U.S. Congress. The amount of government money your neighborhood receives also depends on these answers. That money is used for services for children and the elderly, roads, and many other local needs.

Your answers are confidential. This means the Census Bureau cannot give out information that identifies you or your household. Your answers will only be used for statistical purposes, and for no other purpose. The back of this letter contains more information about protecting your data.

Sincerely,

Steve H. Murdock  
Director, U.S. Census Bureau

Enclosures

U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

United States  
**Census**  
**2010**

DY-16(L)(X11) (02-11-09)

Base copy prints black ink  
Overlay prints Pantone Cyan - 10% and 100%

# Appendix X - Return Envelope –Round 2

9-7/16 x 5-11/16" window: 8-9/16w x 5/8"v (barcode window)  
and 1-1/8"v (larger window) Draft 2 11-10-2008

**U.S. Department of Commerce**  
**Economics and Statistics Administration**  
**U.S. Census Bureau**  
1201 E 10th Street  
Jeffersonville IN 47199-1111

OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
Penalty for Private Use \$300

D-8A(IN) (11-2008)



NO POSTAGE  
NECESSARY  
IF MAILED  
IN THE  
UNITED STATES



**BUSINESS REPLY MAIL**

FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 16081 WASHINGTON DC

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

To return your census form, please make sure  
the **BAR CODE ABOVE YOUR ADDRESS** appears  
in this window.

2010 CENSUS NATIONAL PROCESSING CENTER  
PO BOX 5500  
JEFFERSONVILLE IN 47199-1111



11-10-2008

4719911116

Thank you for participating in the 2010 Census.

Your return envelope should look like this.  
Make sure the **BAR CODE ABOVE YOUR ADDRESS**  
appears in the larger part of the window. ▶



8/26/2008 - Draft #2

DY-8A(xa1) (BACK)

Appendix Y – Demographic Characteristics by Condition for Round 2

**Demographic Characteristics of 5 Respondents in the NRFU Condition**

Sex		Race		Age		Education	
Male	2	White	2	≤30	0	< HS	0
Female	3	Black	3	31-45	1	HS, GED	1
		Hispanic	0	46-60	2	Some college, AA	1
		Asian	0	61+	2	Bachelor's	2
		Other	0			Some grad	1
Total	5		5		5		5

**Demographic Characteristics of 5 Respondents in the Cost Condition**

Sex		Race		Age		Education	
Male	2	White	2	≤30	0	< HS	0
Female	3	Black	3	31-45	1	HS, GED	1
		Hispanic	0	46-60	2	Some college, AA	2
		Asian	0	61+	2	Bachelor's	0
		Other	0			Some grad	2
Total	5		5		5		5

Appendix Z – Round 2 Protocol  
**Protocol for CPEX Testing of Decennial Deadline/Mailing Package**

RESPONDENT #:

1<sup>st</sup> CONDITION=

**Introduction:**

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I work for the U.S. Census Bureau. Thanks for agreeing to help us today. Let me start by telling you a little about what we will be doing today. Every ten years the Census Bureau conducts a census, or count, of everyone who is living in the United States at that time. First, we send out mail questionnaires to all of the households in the United States, and ask them to complete and return the questionnaire. Today we are going to look at some of the letters that you get in the mail around the time of that census. I'll explain each one to you as we go along. I'm going to ask you to read the materials, and then ask you some questions about them: what they mean to you, and what your reactions to them are. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in how these materials work for you.

**Permission to Tape Record:**

Because it would be hard to keep track of everything you say today, I'm going to tape record this session. [Hand respondent consent form.] Please read this over and sign it. I want you to know that your responses will be kept strictly confidential and will only be seen by Census employees working on this project. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can decline to answer any particular question.

**TURN ON TAPE RECORDER**

**Think-out-loud Instructions:**

As I said before, we are interested in your thoughts on these materials. So what I would like you to do is to read each one as I give it to you. But so I know how you are thinking, I'd like you to tell me everything that's going through your mind as you look at them. Instead of thinking to yourself, I'd like you to think out loud: tell me about any questions that come to your mind, reactions you're having, what information you are getting from the materials. After you've completed reading each piece, I will ask you some additional questions. From time to time, I will ask you questions about what you've done so far. There are no right or wrong answers. We're just interested in how these materials work for you.

You'll have to do a little pretending for this. Let's imagine that it is March in 2010 and you are home and you are getting your mail.

Appendix Z – Round 2 Protocol (continued)

Give Advance letter in unsealed envelope:

A week or so before the census form comes in the mail, you would be sent the letter I am going to show you now. Please open this envelope as you would at home. It doesn't come with a form; the letter is the only thing in the envelope. As you'll see, the letter is addressed to "Dear Resident" (as all the mailings are.) Please look at the envelope and then the letter. Read it as you would at home, and remember to think aloud as you go through it. (Give them the ADVANCE LETTER)

- What do you think this letter is telling you? Anything else?

NOTES:

Mentions deadline? Y N

Give sealed Mailing envelope: (the large package of materials, incl form)

After about a week, you would receive this in the mail. Before opening it, please take a look at it, and think aloud about what you see.

- What do you notice about the mailing envelope? Anything else

CIRCLE ONE:      Required by Law --      Deadline Message      ---      Something Else

NOTES:

Now open the envelope and let's look at the materials.

Cover letter:

This letter would be on top of the questionnaire. Please look at the letter, read it as you would at home and remember to think aloud as you go through it. (Direct them to the COVER LETTER)

- What do you think this letter is asking you to do? Anything else?

Initial Reading R Mentions      April 5 ---      Followup or PV --      Cost --      Something Else

NOTES:

- "Please read the section in bold out loud."
- What does that statement mean in your own words?

NOTES:

Appendix Z – Round 2 Protocol (continued)

- *If COST:* Look at this sentence (POINT TO COST) Whose money do you think it is referring to?

NOTES:

- *If COST:* What does this phrase “follow up with you” mean?

NOTES:

- *If NRFU:* Look at this sentence (POINT TO NRFU) In your own words, what is a personal visit?

NOTES:

- *If NRFU:* Look at this sentence (POINT TO NRFU) How would you feel about an interviewer conducting a personal visit at your home?

NOTES:

- Would that sentence encourage you to fill in your form and mail it. Why or why not?

CIRCLE ONE:      YES    ---    NO

NOTES:

“Alright, thanks for that information...”

## Appendix Z – Round 2 Protocol (continued)

### 4) Usability – filling out form & placing it in the envelope

“Let’s now turn to the form and complete it as you would at home. Once you are done with the questionnaire, prepare it for mailing.”

#### Observation

[INSTRUCT RESPONDENT TO COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR AT LEAST ONE HOUSEHOLD MEMBER.]

Note: If respondent asks for guidance during questionnaire completion, say: “Just do whatever you would do if I wasn’t here to help you.”

Note: If R does not continue to envelope stuffing, say: “Ok, what would you do to mail the questionnaire back?” If necessary, prompt respondent to use the return envelope by asking “Please use the return envelope.”

#### Observe:

How does R fold the questionnaire?

**CORRECT**                      **INCORRECT**

What does R do with envelope stuffing instructions:

On the front, in the window                      **Reads – Glances – Doesn’t seem to notice – Not sure**

On the back, in the window                      **Reads – Glances – Doesn’t seem to notice – Not sure**

Final Outcome: How does R put the questionnaire into the envelope?

**Bar codes in correct portion of window**



**Bar codes are in wrong portion of window**



**No bar codes in window; Describe how form is put in?**

Appendix Z – Round 2 Protocol (continued)

Does R include anything other than the form in the mail return package?

YES --- NO

If not correct on first attempt, describe what happened

NOTES:

Did R attempt to self correct?

YES --- NO

How many attempts did R make to get form into envelope?

NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

**Probes**

- How did you decide how to put the form in the return envelope?

CIRCLE: PICTURE ON BACK -- TEXT ON BACK -- TEXT ON FRONT

Notes:

- Did you see this picture on the back of the envelope? (Point to picture on the back of the return envelope)

CIRCLE ONE: YES --- NO

- What is this asking you to do?

NOTES:

- Did you read the words on back of the envelope? (Point to written instructions on the back of the return envelope)

CIRCLE ONE: YES --- NO

- What are they asking you to do?

NOTES:

Appendix Z – Round 2 Protocol (continued)

- Did you read this instruction? (Point to instruction in the return envelope window that gives directions for how to place the form in the envelope.)

CIRCLE ONE:      YES    ---    NO

- What do you think we mean by this term “barcode”?

NOTES:

“Okay, thank you very much. We are finished with these materials and I’m going to put them over here and show you one last letter.” PUT ALL MATERIALS AWAY

BACK TO COVER LETTERS

Understanding of phrases & terms

Cover letter:

(SHOW OTHER COVER LETTER AND REMOVE INITIAL LETTER)

- I’m going to show you another letter that we are thinking of using instead of the other letter you saw in the mail package. The only difference is this sentence that is in bold.
- “Please read the section in bold out loud.”
- What does that statement mean in your own words?

NOTES:

- *If COST:* Look at this sentence (POINT TO COST) Whose money do you think it is referring to?

NOTES:

- *If COST:* What does this phrase “follow up with you” mean?

NOTES:

Appendix Z – Round 2 Protocol (continued)

- *If NRFU*: Look at this sentence (POINT TO NRFU) In your own words, what is a personal visit?

NOTES:

- *If NRFU*: Look at this sentence (POINT TO NRFU) How would you feel about an interviewer conducting a personal visit at your home?

NOTES:

- Would that sentence encourage you to fill in your form and mail it? Why or why not?

CIRCLE ONE:      YES    ---    NO

NOTES:

“Okay, thanks, we are almost done.”

**General debriefing**

- Is there anything you haven’t already told me that you’d like to add?

NOTES:

Appendix Z – Round 2 Protocol (continued)

<u>RESPONDENT#:</u>
<u>1<sup>ST</sup> CONDITION:</u>
<u>RACE:</u> White Black Hispanic Asian Other
<u>AGE RANGE:</u> ≤ 30 31-45 46-60 61+
<u>GENDER:</u> M F
<u>EDUCATION:</u> HS/GED Some Coll/AA Bachelor's Some grad
<u>DATE OF INTERVIEW:</u>
<u>INTERVIEWER:</u>