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**2013 Census Test Cognitive Interview Report**

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## **2013 Census Test Cognitive Interview Report**

To meet the strategic goals and objectives for the 2020 Census, the U. S. Census Bureau must make fundamental changes in its design, implementation, and management. These changes must build upon the previous censuses, addressing challenges, while also maintaining cost containment, quality, flexibility, innovation, and disciplined and transparent acquisition of data. A number of changes to the way the Census Bureau conducts enumeration with households have been proposed; all of which are aimed at reducing the cost of the census.

This study focused upon the following cost reduction strategy proposals: (1) New modes of contact (e.g., text or email), (2) New modes of survey response (e.g., online), and (3) reordering some of the coverage probes to reduce reliance on coverage followup. If an alternative arrangement of probing questions is successful in resolving coverage and issues within the NRFU interview, need for additional followup will be reduced. Other items tested were revised versions of (4) the race and ethnicity questions, as well as (5) the relationship question to offer appropriate and clear response options to the respondent on both the paper form and the NRFU interview. In previous years, populations have been misclassified by race or by household composition due to limited response options. This cognitive test sought to understand whether new wording and new response categories might increase the accuracy of responses.

A total of 40 interviews were conducted in the Washington, DC metro area in September and October of 2012 in order to explore these issues. The results of this research are presented in this report.

## 1. Introduction

To meet the strategic goals and objectives for the 2020 Census, the U. S. Census Bureau must make fundamental changes in its design, implementation, and management. These changes must build upon the previous censuses, addressing challenges, while also maintaining cost containment, quality, flexibility, innovation, and disciplined and transparent acquisition of data.

A number of changes to the way the Census Bureau conducts enumeration with households have been proposed; all of which are aimed at reducing the cost of the census. Changes proposed to minimize cost should not adversely affect the quality or completeness of the collected data. Some of these proposals include:

- New modes of contact (e.g., text or email),
- New modes of survey response (e.g., online),
- reordering some of the coverage probes to reduce reliance on coverage followup,
- increasing the reliance on telephone contacts,
- altering the number of contact attempts required,
- altering the length of time the nonresponse operation is in the field, and
- tailoring contact strategies based on demographic or geographic characteristics.

This study focused upon the first three of these cost reduction strategy proposals as well as revisions of the relationship, race and ethnicity questions which are aimed improving *quality*.

The goals of this research are (1) to test wording and content of new contact strategies via text and email, and (2) to test a tailored ordering of the undercount and overcount probes that could improve coverage while producing cost savings. If an alternative arrangement of probing questions is successful in resolving coverage and issues within the NRFU interview, need for additional followup will be reduced. The undercount and overcount questions on the census household questionnaire are designed to serve as coverage flags—to indicate whether there may be inaccurate information in the coverage count at a household.

Followup operations are also used when demographic information is unclear on the initial paper form. It has been proposed that the race and ethnicity questions as well as the relationship question be revised to offer appropriate and clear response options to the respondent on both the paper form and the NRFU interview. The suggested revisions involve:

- revising the race and ethnicity questions to more accurately map onto respondent self-perception, and
- revising the relationship question to distinguish between same-sex and opposite-sex couples so that relationships might be measured with greater accuracy.

In previous years, populations have been misclassified by race or by household composition due to limited response options. This cognitive test sought to understand whether new wording and new response categories might increase the accuracy of responses.

## 2. Background

### 2.1. *Alternative Contact Strategies and Response Modes*

The method of contacting households in the census has changed dramatically over the years. From door-to-door enumeration to mail to telephone, we have witnessed how technology both facilitates and complicates the contact of dispersed people. Today, the impact of new technologies on contact strategies and response modes is more salient and influential than ever before. The Centers for Disease Control estimate that 3 out of 10 households in the United States only have cell phones (as opposed to a landline, CITE). These social trends have impacted and will continue to impact the feasibility of conducting a high-quality, cost-effective census. In this study, we tested respondents' reactions to contact strategies via email or text as a way of reaching those populations who may not have or do not use a landline telephone.

The proportion of the American public who are internet-users is also increasing rapidly. According to a PEW survey in August of 2012, of the 2,253 U.S. adults surveyed, 85 percent were internet users. Even more specifically,

- 83 percent of adults said that they “use the internet, at least occasionally,”
- 76 percent said “that they “send or receive email, at least occasionally,” and
- 58 percent said that they “access the internet on a cell phone, tablet, or other mobile handheld device, at least occasionally (Zickuhr and Madden 2012).

Such a high proportion of the U.S. population as “internet users” warrants research into online contact strategies and response options—especially for those respondents who may not regularly check their “snail-mail” or who are transient due to work, school, or some other reason. This series of cognitive interviews tested potential contact emails and text messages and obtained views about filling out a survey online.

### 2.2. *Coverage Probe Reordering*

The census questionnaire includes a series of questions that attempt to discover people tenuously attached to a housing unit roster. Probes are administered in order to find people who were left off the household roster who should have been included, as well as to determine whether any roster members live or stay at additional addresses. The goal of the census is to count every person once and in the right place. These probes attempt to accomplish that goal.

The probes looking for people missing from the roster are called “undercount probes” and the probes identifying an additional address for a person are called “overcount probes.” The undercount probes ask the respondent about frequently forgotten household members such as babies, foster children, relatives, roommates, and people staying at the address temporarily. The overcount probes ask a respondent whether any household members sometimes live or stay at another address for one of the following reasons: in college housing, in the military, for child custody, at a seasonal or second residence, in jail or prison, or in a nursing home.

In the 2010 Census, the majority of respondents responded “yes” to only one of these probes. The order in which the probes are asked could be introducing an order effect. To reduce

potential errors caused by an order effect, future research teams may use existing data (administrative records and census data) to identify which probe a housing unit is more likely to apply to a household. The identified probe will then be asked first in the probing series questions followed by the remaining probes. For example, in a census tract with a high university-age population, the college probe could be asked first.

Research to date has indicated some problems with the coverage questions (see citations below). This research sought to understand whether the reordering and rewording of the undercount and overcount probes more effectively identifies missed or erroneously enumerated people on the roster. Some of the issues related to coverage questions that we sought to resolve in the testing are:

- Confusion over the purpose of the undercount question. This question directly follows the residence rules and a question eliciting a count of persons in the household according to these rules. Perhaps because of this placement, the undercount question seemed redundant and possibly even insulting, to some respondents. A few respondents concluded that it was a “trick question” to check up on prior answers. (Hunter and de la Puente 2005; Cantor et al 2003; Dillman et al. 2005).
- Respondents do not understand the purpose of the undercount question; as a result some respondents change their answers to the previous household count question. This is not the intent of the question, and can, in some cases, create coverage errors rather than fixing them (Hunter and de la Puente 2005).
- In general, respondents’ answers to the coverage questions is weakly correlated with specific coverage problems, such as missing babies, or staying somewhere else for college. This also indicates that the categories may not be clear to the respondents (Cantor et al. 2003).

The intent of the coverage probes is that respondents will select the coverage category that best represents their living situation. However, when a respondent is presented with a list of categories to pick from, s/he may take a shortcut and respond “no” to all of the categories if the first category does not make sense or apply to her/him. The number of “yes” responses to the coverage probes may be influenced by an order effect that could promote satisficing (Krosnick, Narayan & Smith 1996). We have several hypotheses that offer explanations to account for respondents’ selections of early response options. The first hypothesis is that respondents assume that popular items appear earlier in a list; if the respondent responds negatively to the first probe s/he may respond negatively to the rest of the probes and avoid thinking about them. The second hypothesis is that respondents may think more about an earlier option than a later option, in that the novelty of the question requires them to pause and think before responding. Once they have realized that the first option does not apply to them, they may assume that they will have the same negative response to the following options and answer incorrectly in haste.

In response to these issues with coverage probes, cognitive testing sought to understand whether different question ordering will resolve such issues as those mentioned above or whether it will create new problems.

### *2.3. Race Question*

The Census Bureau is committed to improving the accuracy and reliability of census results by expanding our understanding of how people self-identify their race and Hispanic origin. This commitment is reflected in the many studies on race and Hispanic origin reporting conducted by the Census Bureau (Staff of the Special Population Statistics Population Division 1996; Sheppard et al. 2004; Alberti 2006; Fernández et al. 2009; Childs et al. 2009; Compton et al. 2010). In Census 2000, the Alternative Questionnaire Experiment (AQE) studied the census questionnaire effects on reporting of race and Hispanic origin separately, but did not include the testing of a combined Hispanic origin and race question. The focus of that research experiment was to replicate a 1990-style short form during Census 2000 and compare the results to data from Census 2000 short-form questionnaires in order to evaluate how the questionnaire changes affected reporting of race and Hispanic origin. The questionnaire changes introduced in Census 2000 included allowing the reporting of more than one race and reversing the sequence of the race and Hispanic origin items, as well as other changes in format, categories, and wording (Compton et al. 2010).

The 2010 Census Alternative Questionnaire Experiment (AQE) furthers this line of research that seeks to better understand and improve the reporting of race and Hispanic origin. Specifically, the 2010 AQE research demonstrated that a combined question on race and Hispanic origin has the impact of gaining overall success for both Hispanics and non-Hispanics in finding a way to identify and report their race and/or origin that maps onto a perceived sense of self. The validity of these responses was confirmed through the AQE reinterview results, which showed that when asked a series of follow-up questions about respondent identification with any of the possible response categories, overall matches between combined question responses and reinterview self-identification were much greater than separate question responses and reinterview self-identification. The greater illustration of this pattern was that “Hispanics” who reported they were “White” in the separate race question did not identify as “White” (only as “Hispanic”) in the reinterview; while “Hispanics” who did identify as “White” and “Hispanic” in the combined question also confirmed this identity in the reinterview (Compton et al. 2010).

These findings coupled with other elements tested in the 2010 AQE produced the following set of recommendations that were incorporated in this round of cognitive testing:

- **The further testing of combined race and Hispanic origin questions**, with special interest in improving detailed Asian and Hispanic reporting. This supports all four objectives by increasing reporting within standard OMB categories, decreasing item nonresponse, improving accuracy and reliability, and increasing detailed reporting for a number of groups.
- **Continue researching the optimal use of examples for each race and origin response categories.** There are mixed results that inclusion of examples aid in accuracy and detailed reporting for some groups. Specifically, some benefited from the inclusion of examples in that they reported their race and origin with greater detail and specificity, while others there reported less or inaccurate information, due to confusion.
- **Remove the term “Negro” from the “Black, African Am., or Negro” response category.** Though this study did not show that the term “Negro” negatively impacted any of the study objectives, there was also no benefit to retaining the term on the

questionnaire. Due to the tremendous concern over this archaic term remaining on the questionnaire, there is no reason to continue to use it.  
(Compton et al. 2010)

Although there were other recommendations, these three issues were identified as particularly important and in need of testing; therefore they were integrated in this round of cognitive testing. These recommended changes were explored through the design of a new combined Race and Ethnicity question that includes seven check box options, in addition to a write-in line where respondents may specify their origin, ethnicity, tribe, or nationality. The follow-up question, which included a number of specific examples, differed depending upon which box(es) was/were selected.

#### *2.4. Relationship Question*

The relationship question captures the relationship of each household member to the householder and is often used as a means of building and defining household units. Measures of well-being, such as household income and poverty, depend upon the definition of these units. As a result, in order to accurately portray a population's demographic and social profile, the measures used to produce such profiles must keep up with changes in society and laws. The measurement of family relationships, living arrangements, and marital status has a long history at the Census Bureau. Over time, the census categories have changed to reflect changes in U.S. society including laws that define the institution of marriage and other legal and non-legal relationship statuses (DeMaio and Bates 2012).

A recent challenge of the census has been in accurately measuring relationships and marital status in a legal landscape that has inconsistent recognition of same-sex couples. Unlike other countries that have uniform policies, U.S. laws recognizing same-sex couples vary on a state-by-state basis; some states provide no legal recognition of same-sex marriage whereas other states offer full marriage equality. At the federal level, there is no legal same-sex partner recognition of any type despite the fact that in January of 2013, same-sex marriages are allowed in twelve states and the District of Columbia, and are recognized (but not performed) in two others. A handful of other states have much more limited relationship recognition laws such as designated and reciprocal beneficiaries (DeMaio and Bates 2012; DeMaio, Bates & O'Connell 2013). According to a Williams Institute review conducted in April 2011, approximately 3.5% of American adults identify themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual, while 0.3% are transgender—which would correspond to approximately 11.7 million Americans as of the 2010 Census (Gates 2011). Despite the many challenges associated with the different legal definitions of relationship status, the federal statistical system must find a way to allow people to self-identify relationship status in a meaningful way, otherwise we run the risk of misclassification or abstention.

Although legal recognition remains the exception, recent estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) suggest that the number of same-sex couples reporting "husband or wife" is much larger than the actual number of same-sex couples legally married in the U.S. (DeMaio and Bates 2012). One obvious explanation is that some same-sex couples equate their living situation to a marriage regardless whether the state recognizes them as officially married. Alternatively, questionnaire design may play a part – the spouse category is



first in the relationship category list on both the Census and ACS forms while unmarried partner is next to last in a long list of fourteen.

In order to resolve these misclassification or misreporting issues, the Census Bureau has conducted a series of qualitative research projects exploring revised relationship questions and their comprehension by same-sex and opposite-sex, married and unmarried couples. Based upon this research, a revised version of the relationship question includes:

- The addition of “spouse” to the “husband/wife” category,
- Moving up the “unmarried partner” category to second in the list and
- The addition of “same-sex” and “opposite-sex” qualifiers before the “husband/wife/spouse” and “unmarried partner” categories (DeMaio and Bates 2012).

These revisions were based upon preference by respondents, in addition to the hope that disaggregating “same-sex” and “opposite-sex” concepts might reduce classification errors by providing a check against misreports in the sex question. Reordering the categories to place the two same-sex categories together might reduce potential misreporting. Each of these recommendations were implemented in this round of testing to assess their effectiveness.

### **3. Cognitive Testing**

Cognitive interviewing is a qualitative method that offers the ability to understand the interpretive process behind answers to survey questions. Interviewers begin by administering the survey question, obtain an answer, and then “probe” the respondent for information with respect to the responses given. Interviewers can ask follow-up questions when contradictory information is given by the respondent to understand whether the respondent had a problem with the interpretation of the question itself. Probes are also used to explore areas of concern within the instrument that have been pre-identified by the researchers. At the same time, interviewers have the option to explore unanticipated issues that may come up during the interview. The data from narratives allow the analyst to determine if the respondent had any difficulty with comprehension, retrieval, judgment, or response at any part of the survey. The appropriateness of response categories can be evaluated with this procedure, as can the ability of participants to draw upon their own experiences and knowledge to answer the questions effectively. The goal of this method is to best understand what the respondents were thinking when answering and how they interpreted the meaning of the question. This information is used to help the researcher identify which questions and/or response categories are problematic. It also shows why and how questions are problematic, leading to informed strategies for improving question design in terms of maximizing construct validity.

The cognitive testing protocols for the study focused on coverage questions, tailoring the ordering of these questions to the type of housing unit under scrutiny. The interviewers administered the entire questionnaire, but focused probing on those questions of key interest to this study.

#### 4. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the cognitive testing of the 2013 Census Test. Although there were other research questions devised for the large-scale administration of the test itself, these were the questions primarily addressed through cognitive testing:

1. Can we use administrative records data or existing census data to improve the order of coverage probing questions in the census questionnaire?
  - a. Does the ordering of undercount probes identify missing people?
  - b. Does the ordering of overcount probes identify duplicated people?
    - i. Was the order of the overcount probes successful in identifying people that will be residence-coded at the other address?
2. Will there be any confusion or offense as a result of the re-ordering of the probes?
3. Do the addition of new relationship categories facilitate reporting for same-sex couples?
  - a. Is there any resistance against the inclusion of “same-sex” or “opposite” sex qualifiers?
  - b. Is there confusion about “opposite-sex unmarried partners?”
4. Does the new combined Hispanic Origin and Race question facilitate reporting?
  - a. Do fewer respondents choose “White” and “Hispanic” in the combined Hispanic Origin and Race question?
5. Are the follow-up questions about origin logical? Do they encourage more detailed and accurate reporting?
  - a. Are the examples provided helpful or confusing?
  - b. Does the removal of the word “Negro” form “Black or African American” confuse participants?

#### 5. Methods

A total of 40<sup>1</sup> interviews were conducted in the Washington, DC metro area in September and October of 2012. A purposive “sample” of respondents was recruited with emphasis on coverage of the survey topics. In order to better understand complex and transient households, respondents who might respond in the affirmative to one of the undercount or overcount probes were sought out for participation in this study. This was accomplished through Craigslist.org posts that targeted particular living situations as well as personal contacts in which the interviewer had insider knowledge about particular living situations or about racial and relationship identities. Respondents who may have trouble with the revised race or relationship questions were specifically recruited. Diversity in demographic characteristics such as education, age, and gender was also sought. We aimed for a sample that included those with high and low levels of educational attainment (college graduates and those with a high school diploma or less). Table 1 documents the characteristics of the interview respondents.

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<sup>1</sup> One respondent was inadvertently interviewed twice, so her data was only included as one participant.

**Table 1: Summary of the Demographic Characteristics of Cognitive Interview Respondents (N = 39)**

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Total</u>
Female	27
Male	12
<u>Age</u>	
Under 30 years	9
30 – 59 years	23
60 years and Over	7
<u>Education</u>	
High School or Less	10
Some College; No Degree	7
2- or 4-Year College Degree	10
Graduate/Professional Degree	12

The protocol for this study involved respondent narrative and intensive follow-up verbal probing after each question and at the end of the survey. Probes were semi-scripted and intended to cover certain pre-identified topics, but also allowed the interviewer the flexibility to follow unanticipated problems that surfaced. The goal was to best understand what the respondent was thinking when answering and how she or he interpreted the meaning of the question. This information was used to help identify which questions could benefit from revision and how they might be revised.

This study consisted of several parts. The first part involved respondents reading sample email and text messages on paper in order to understand how they might react to receiving such messages from the Census Bureau across a variety of modes. At the beginning of each interview, each respondent was asked to read three different emails that they might receive from the Census Bureau asking them to fill out their census form online. Respondents read these email scripts on paper, and asked hypothetical questions about how they would feel if they received one of these emails. Each of the emails varied in terms of language and they were intended to serve as: (1) an initial contact; (2) a reminder email; and (3) a final reminder. Respondents were asked about both the content and the mode of each of the messages, how likely they would be to respond to any of these contact strategies, and their general preferences.

The second part of the study involved respondents participating in an interviewer-administered NRFU interview in which a number of revised questions were tested. This questionnaire is included in Appendix A. Overcount and undercount probes were reordered based upon interviewer knowledge of particular living situations (e.g. a recent move, newborn in the

household, friend sleeping on the couch), so that the probes most relevant to the respondent's particular living situation were asked first. During the NRFU interview, revised relationship and race/ethnicity questions were also asked of the respondents. These revisions are not reflected in the attached protocol (Appendix A), but are presented and discussed in the body of the report. The saliency and meaning of the list of relationship categories and race and ethnicity examples provided in the interview were explored through post-question probing in which respondents were asked to explain the intent of the questions and examples in their own words. The findings of this research are reported in the next section.

## 6. Findings

### a. Email and Text Contacts

Each cognitive interview began with respondents looking over a series of email and text messages that were sent by the Census Bureau. These were presented to respondents on paper so that they could read over them before being asked a series of targeted questions. The sample email and text messages that were tested are presented below:

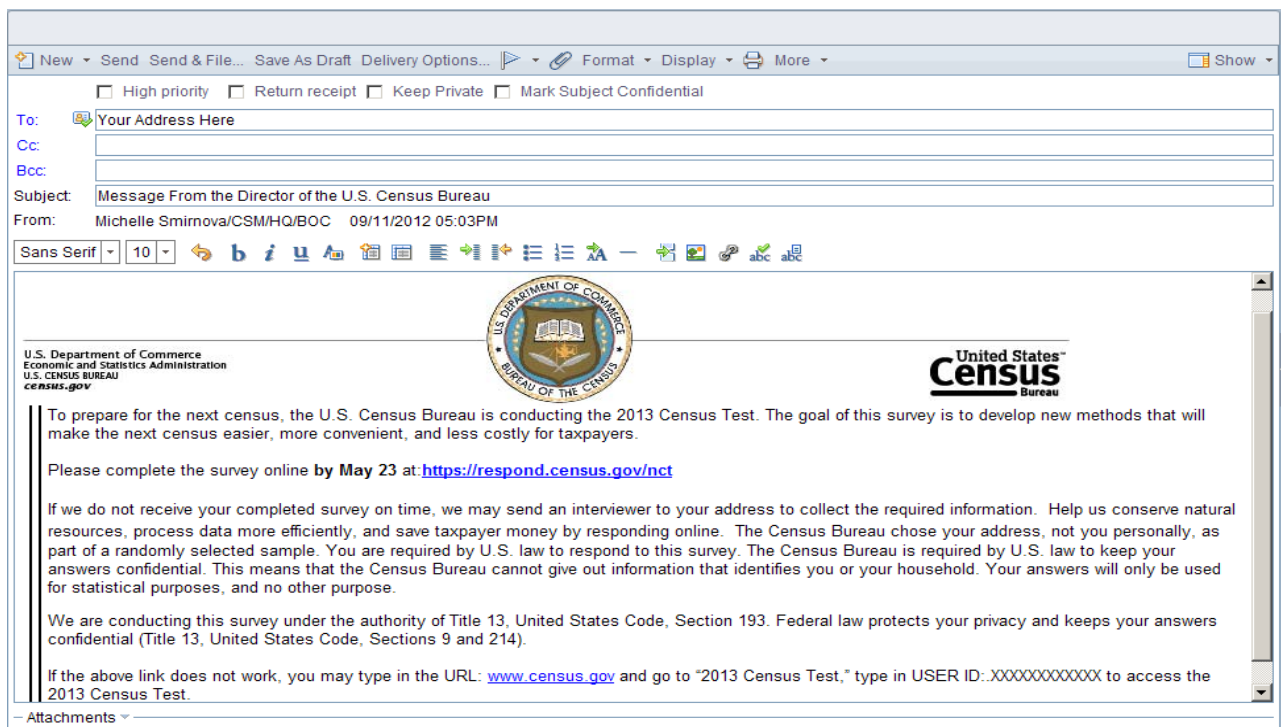
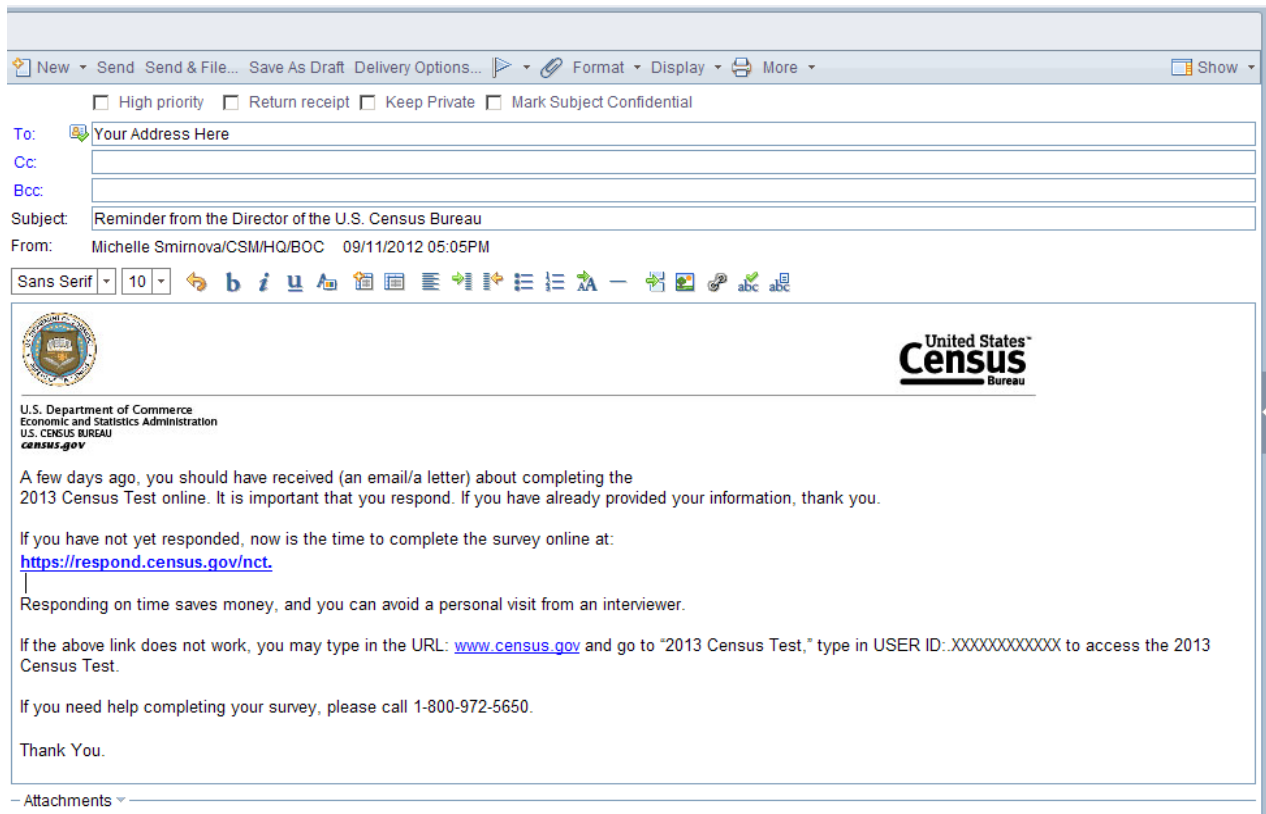
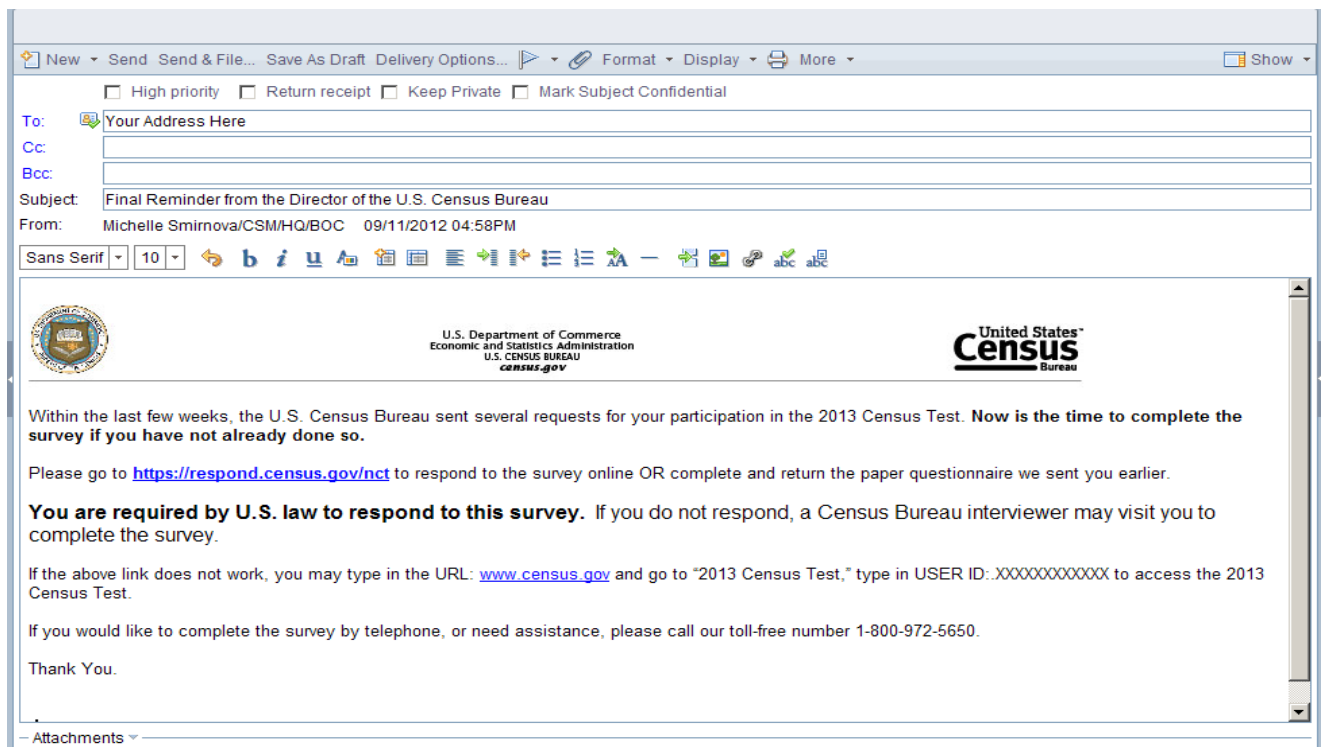


Figure 1. Initial Contact Email Tested in Cognitive Interview



**Figure 2. Reminder Email Tested in Cognitive Interview**



**Figure 3. Final Reminder Tested in Cognitive Interview**

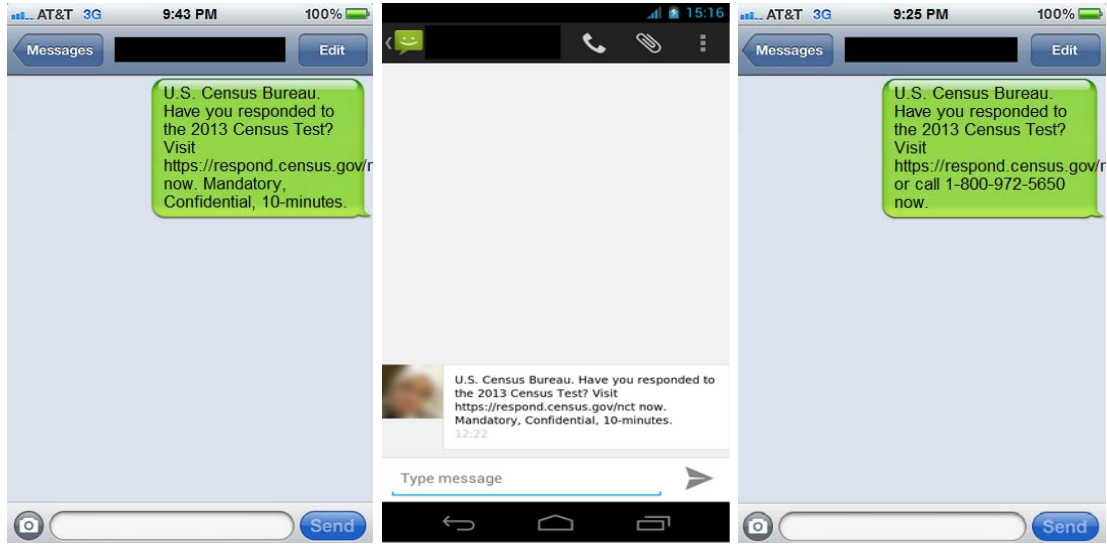
Reactions to the three emails varied among respondents. Generally, respondents appeared to understand the message of each of the three examples and most believed that they were “legitimate” emails from the Census Bureau due to the .gov domain of the sender address. Respondents had different preferences for the logos, but a number of them questioned the use of the Department of Commerce logo, either because they were not aware that the Census Bureau is part of the Department of Commerce or because the federal seal reminded them of the FBI and therefore produced discomfort. Most respondents preferred the Census Bureau text-based logo, and at least three respondents asked whether the Census Bureau had a slogan. They believed that the slogan would help serve to verify the email as legitimately from the Census Bureau.

Respondents were generally unconcerned about receiving an email from a government agency. They attributed this comfort to the fact that many service-based governmental agencies (such as the local DMV) already send out email reminders, therefore receiving an email from the Census Bureau would not be considered odd. On the other hand, some respondents called into question the IT security of the Census Bureau collecting personal information over email. One respondent, who served in the Army, noted that while she generally believed that the email came from a government source (because of the .gov address), she did not feel this was as secure as a .mil address and therefore would not provide any information across email or through an unsecured link. On a related issue, after reading through the emails, a number of respondents did not understand that these emails were simply reminders. They believed that they were being asked to send this information over email rather than over the internet or via paper forms.

Respondents had mixed feelings about the statement that, “You are required by U.S. law to respond to this survey,” especially in the final reminder email in which this sentence is bolded. Many inquired whether this was actually the case; a significant portion of respondents did not believe that this was true. Some believed it was inappropriate and angered them that there was a “threat” in the email, while others believed that the inclusion of this legal statement made it more likely that they would respond. Those who perceived this language as threatening said that they wanted the Census Bureau to “motivate [them] to respond, don’t threaten [them].” It was unclear whether this sentence would be a deterrent to response, though enough respondents said that it made them “angry,” “mad,” or “cautious” that we recommend not to bold this text if it is left in the final version—as it appears in the Final Reminder (Figure 3). Some respondents also found the line that stated, “If you do not respond, a Census Interviewer may visit you to complete the survey” to be troubling. Because this sentence follows the line about U.S. law, it also was perceived as a threat and respondents found it to be weird or funny that the Census Bureau is threatening to send someone to your door when that is perceived to be the primary job of Census Bureau employees.

Finally, a few respondents noticed the line, “we chose your address and not you personally,” and found this to be troublesome. These respondents inquired how the Census Bureau knows which physical address is linked to the email address receiving this letter. These respondents appeared to be more confused than upset by this line, though one did call it “creepy.”

Text messages that might serve as followup reminders for mailed postcards or emails were also tested in this study. The language of the text messages are below:



**Figure 4. Potential Text Messages Testing in the Cognitive Interviews**

Most respondents said they would be less likely to follow a link from a text message received on their cellphone than they would from an email received on their computer. Two respondents explained that they only text message with close friends or family, and they immediately delete all other texts without opening them. This was also the case for those respondents who pay per text—they often delete them without opening them since they believe that way they do not have to pay for them. Another respondent explained that text messages are a one-way communication, when he receives a text message from someone he does not know, it feels like an impersonal blast and the sender does not care if he opens it or not. Two respondents said they would be more likely to click on the link on their iPhone, because they perceive their iPhone to have greater immunity to viruses than their PC computers; most others seemed to prefer the computer.

Most respondents preferred the text message that included the telephone number because they believed that they could call to verify that this message was indeed legitimate. The “Mandatory. Confidential. 10 minutes.” was also appealing because it gave respondents a sense of the main points from the email: it made responding to the survey feel safe, easy, and urgent. That said, about half the respondents said they would not click on the link from their phone. For these reasons, we recommend using the email reminder rather than the text reminder.

Overall, respondents found the possibility of the government sending them text messages “creepy,” and others emphasized that this would not be an effective way of communicating with them. One respondent, a 23-year old DC resident who uses a smartphone, noted that, “It looks like all those messages Wal-Mart and AT&T send over and over. I never even look at them, except to trash them.” Other respondents, particularly those who do not use text messaging,

expressed worry that they would “not be counted,” because of this technology gap (see also, Smirnova and Scanlon 2012).

### **b. Missed People Questions**

Coverage probes are included in each of the various modes of data collection for the 2020 Research and Planning field tests. These coverage probes have slight wording and sequence changes from the 2010 questionnaires. Also, universes for particular probes have also been altered. For instance, if there is no household member between the ages of 18-25, the question about living away in college housing will not be asked. These wording, sequence, and universe changes are a result of the planned use of an automated questionnaire for 2020 in place of the paper questionnaire used in 2010. In 2010 NRFU, the undercount probes were asked after the roster and demographic information were collected. In the 2010 Mailout/Mailback (MO/MB) operation, the undercount probes were asked after a population count of the housing unit was collected, but before the roster was constructed. The overcount probes were asked after each person’s demographic and household<sup>2</sup> information was collected. In the current 2020 design, the undercount probes are asked after the roster is initially constructed and prior to the collection of demographic information. The standard order of undercount probes in the 2020 questionnaire is the following:

**There are certain types of people that are sometimes left out of the census. So far, you have told me about the following people:**

*(The enumerator reads a list of the people collected on the roster)*

[Note: Babies, Foster Children, Any other relatives or Roommates or people not related to you will be reordered based on the targeted demographic information we have about this household. – this is not read]

**Were there any additional people living or staying at [STREET] on [DATE] who you did not include yet? for example:**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Babies?</b> <i>(pause)</i>                                 | <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| <b>Foster children?</b> <i>(pause)</i>                        | <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| <b>Any other relatives?</b> <i>(pause)</i>                    | <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| <b>Roommates or people not related to you?</b> <i>(pause)</i> | <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |

If the respondent reports “yes” to any of the four undercount questions above, the enumerator will roster as many people as the respondent names. After these initial probes there are three general undercount follow-up probes that ask if anyone might stay at the address who had no permanent place to live, lives or stays at the address but was away at Census Day, or was living or staying at the address on Census Day but is no longer there.

Most respondents had no issues with this question. They understood the general meaning and reordering the categories and appeared to have no impact upon comprehension. The categories did elicit a number of missed persons, so they seem to be fulfilling their purpose. The only

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<sup>2</sup> This includes the collection of tenure, relationship, sex, age and race.



confusion produced for respondents was from the phrase: “living or staying.” Quite a few respondents asked the interviewer to clarify what this phrase meant, particularly requesting guidance as to whether they should include a particular person. For example, one respondent said, “Well, see, I’m already confused. ‘Cause it says ‘living or staying,’ like, what if I had a house visitor for one day, am I supposed to put them in, or – but then my stepson really does live there, but [on that date] he wasn’t there, am I supposed to put him in? So now I’m actually totally confused.” This respondent did not understand whether the Census Bureau “wanted” her to include her stepson. Upon reflection, the respondent said that she would probably include her stepson, even though he was not there on the date in question. “I don’t know what ‘living’ means, because he lives in two places.” She rationalized aloud that if a person has his/her own room in the home, that they should be included, but she remained a bit confused whether they should be included if they were away on business or in the hospital on the date in question. Other respondents wondered how to answer if they were traveling or on vacation at the time. A recommendation to deal with this issue would be to offer a help script for interviewers in case the respondent asks for assistance as to some examples of people who should or should not be included.

### **Own/Rent Home question**

1. **Do you or does someone in this household own this <house, apartment, mobile home> with a mortgage or loan (including home equity loans), own it free and clear, rent it, or occupy it without having to pay rent?**
  - Yes I/someone else own it free and clear (go to 16)
  - Yes I/someone else own it with a mortgage or loan (go to 16)
  - Yes I/someone else rent it (go to 17)
  - Yes I/someone else occupy it without having to pay rent
  - No (go to 18)

This question produced quite a bit of confusion among our respondents, many of whom responded with “No,” even after reading it multiple times. Although the question makes sense to respondents when they are encountering it visually in self-administration, it does not seem to work when asked orally by an interviewer. As a result, the wording or organization warrants revision to facilitate comprehension.

Halfway through the cognitive testing, we decided to alter the question in a way that might be clearer to respondents. The revised wording we used was:

**Do you or does someone in this household own, rent, or occupy this <house, apartment, mobile home> without having to pay rent?**

- Yes I/someone else own it (go to next question)
- Yes I/someone else rent it (skip next question)
- Yes I/someone else occupy it without having to pay rent (skip next two questions)
- No (skip next two questions)

**Of the people who lived at <address>, who owned the <house, apartment, or mobile home> on <CENSUSDAY>?**

---

- a. Does <insert name here> own it free and clear or with a mortgage or loan (including home equity loans)**
- i. Free and clear
  - ii. With loan

Unfortunately, the revised question did not alleviate confusion. Respondents still responded with “No” to the first question in many of the cases. We believe this is because respondents focused upon the tail end of the question: “without having to pay rent” and therefore responded “no” without considering the earlier part of the question. Although clear visually, when conducted by an enumerator, this question might benefit from being broken down into sub-questions for the NRFU instrument. A proposed alteration would be:

- 1. Do you or does someone in this household own this <house, apartment, mobile home>?**
- o Yes I/someone else own it (go to 12)
    - i. Of the people who lived at <address>, who owned the <house, apartment, or mobile home> on <CENSUSDAY>?**

- 
- ii. Does <insert name here> own it free and clear or with a mortgage or loan (including home equity loans)**
- a. Free and clear
  - b. With loan

- o No, no one who lives here owns it

- 2. Do you or does someone in this household rent this <house, apartment, mobile home>?**
- o Yes I/someone else rent it (go to 12)
    - iii. Of the people who lived at <address>, who rented the <house, apartment, or mobile home> on <CENSUSDAY>?**

- 
- o No , no one who lives here rents it (go to 13)

If a respondent responds “no” to both questions, then we could assume they occupy the place without paying rent. Considering there were some situations among our respondents where one

person owned the unit and another rented it, it seems worthwhile to ask both questions separately to collect the most complete information on the household.

**c. Relationship Question**

As noted previously, a new version of the relationship question was tested in this series of cognitive interviews. The most notable change was the inclusion of response options that help distinguish between “opposite-sex” and “same-sex” partner or husband/wife/spouse. The tested question was worded as below:

**Next, we need to record each person’s relationship to <reference person>.**

**Looking at the screen, <roster person> is <reference person>’s \_\_\_\_\_.**

*Interviewer Note – Show list to respondent*

Opposite-sex husband/wife/spouse	Same-sex husband/wife/spouse
Opposite-sex unmarried partner	Same-sex unmarried partner
Biological son or daughter	Adopted son or daughter
Brother or sister	Stepson or stepdaughter
Father or mother	Parent-in-law
Grandchild	Son-in-law or daughter-in-law
Other relative	Roomer or boarder
Foster child	Housemate or roommate
	Other nonrelative

A number of respondents noticed the new relationship categories and commented upon them. Most of the responses were positive, indicating that, “it is about time!” or “I’m happy they have these new options,” though some indicated that “gender” ought to be used instead of “sex.” Two respondents remarked that although the list looked good, they could imagine how others with conservative views might be unhappy about the inclusion of same-sex relationships. Although we had respondents who talked of disapproving “others,” all of our respondents seemed receptive to the additions.

It must be noted that all interviews were conducted in the Washington DC metropolitan area, a region that may be more liberal than other parts of the United States. Further, same-sex marriage was recently legalized in Maryland and recognized in DC. As a result, we cannot generalize these findings to the general US population. Further testing of these revised categories in more conservative political climates is necessary before any conclusions are drawn.

In the initial testing of this question, the options were organized in a single vertical list. Although respondents were all able to find the appropriate category, a number of them commented on how long the list was, and how they desired a visual organization of options. In particular, one respondent recommended dividing the list into biological relatives and non-biological relatives, though the number of biological options is much smaller. The list above reflects an attempt to organize the categories. It was used for the second half of the interviews

and respondents seemed to have less difficulty with this organization, though there are no particular rules for its arrangement.

#### **d. Race & Ethnicity Question**

We tested a combined race and ethnicity question in this series of cognitive interviews based upon the recommendations of the 2010 AQE Report (Compton et al. 2010).

**I'm going to read you a list of race and origin categories. If you are multiracial or multiethnic, you may choose more than one.**

<Is ROSTER NAME/Are you> **White; Black or African American; Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish; American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; or Some other race or origin?**

Check boxes for each category, and specify ancestry, tribe, or country of origin.

- White**
- Black or African American**
- Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish**
- American Indian or Alaska Native**
- Asian**
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander**
- Some other race or origin**

#### **Initial follow-up:**

After a box is chosen: You said <you are/NAME is> \_\_\_\_\_. What is that specific origin?

The first 30 respondents were asked “You said you are \_\_\_\_\_. What is the specific origin?” The question of origin produced quite a bit of confusion for respondents, most notably for those who had selected “African-American/Black.” A number of the respondents who chose their race to be “White” also seemed very confused by this question. Many indicated that unless they were immigrants or were part of a family that recently immigrated to the U.S., this question is difficult and not meaningful. Many respondents asked for clarification of the term, “origin.” Those who did not have recent immigrants in their family simply said where they were born or where most of their family resides. For our cognitive testing, the most common responses were “Washington, D.C.” and “America” or “American.”

As a result, the follow-up question, which asks respondents to specify their ancestry, tribe, or country of origin, was expanded three-fourths of the way through the cognitive testing in response to persistent respondent confusion. The initial question asked, “You said you are \_\_\_\_\_. What is the specific origin?” The question was open-ended and the interviewer was instructed to write the verbatim response. The revised wording of the question, response categories and associated questions of specificity are as follows:

#### **Revised follow-up:**

If WHITE is chosen: You said <you are/NAME is> \_\_\_\_\_. What is <your/NAME's> specific ancestry or ethnicity, for example, German, Irish, Lebanese, Egyptian, etc.?

If BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN chosen: You said <you are/NAME is> \_\_\_\_\_. What is <your/NAME's> specific ancestry or ethnicity, for example African American, Haitian, Nigerian, etc.?

If HISPANIC, LATINO, OR SPANISH is chosen: You said <you are/NAME is> \_\_\_\_\_. What is <your/NAME's> specific ancestry or ethnicity, for example, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Columbian, Spaniard, etc.?

If AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE is chosen: You said <you are/NAME is> \_\_\_\_\_. What is <your/NAME's> specific tribe, for example, Navajo, Mayan, Tlingit, etc.?

If ASIAN is chosen: You said <you are/NAME is> \_\_\_\_\_. What is <your/NAME's> specific ancestry or ethnicity, for example, Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, etc.?

If NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER is chosen: You said <you are/NAME is> \_\_\_\_\_. What is <your/NAME's> specific ancestry or ethnicity, for example, Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, etc.?

If SOME OTHER RACE / ORIGIN is chosen: You said <you are/NAME is> \_\_\_\_\_. What is <your/NAME's> specific race or origin?

When we began testing this question, we were concerned that people who identified as “multiracial or multi-ethnic” may not choose multiple category boxes. Although this was the case for several respondents, it did not hold true for all. For example, one Argentinian respondent said that he considers himself 100 percent Argentinian, but he reported that he was both “White” and “Hispanic.” A Chilean woman also chose “White” and “Hispanic,” but when asked her origin, she said she would probably not answer that part of the question. If pushed by an enumerator she would answer “South American,” but she said that she identifies as a “White-Hispanic” as both her ethnicity and race. She says that this identification may have stemmed from the two-part ethnicity and race question that was previously on census forms. Now it is difficult for her to conceptualize herself according to different categories. She offered the addition of a “Brown” category for some of these other items. Another Hispanic respondent also asked, “Where is ‘brown.’?”

In contrast, another respondent whose mother is “White,” and whose family has lived in the U.S. for many generations, identified as “Hispanic” because her father was Mexican. She explained that, “there was a time that I considered myself multi-racial, but right now I do not consider myself multi-racial, I am just Hispanic.” This respondent said that culturally she identifies as being Hispanic and therefore it is her dominant identification status. A similar sentiment from another Hispanic respondent indicated that the terms “multi-ethnic” and “multi-racial” may be problematic. This respondent, who was Peruvian and Chilean by heritage, but is a native of the United States, justified choosing only one box by saying “The instruction said that I could pick multiple boxes if I was multiethnic or multiracial. I’m not. My ethnicity is Hispanic, and my

race is white.” When probed, he indicated that he chose the Hispanic option over the white one because he identifies more as a Hispanic and “wants the Census to know we’re here.”

A respondent whose husband and daughter are Kurdish also found the racial categories to be difficult. She explained that they are not “White” since they are explicitly defined as a minority in contrast to the “White” people in Turkey; therefore, they cannot be “White,” even in the U.S. She chose “Some other Race,” but she said that he could be considered to be half-Asian half-European. She said she would probably write in “Turkish” for ancestry or country of origin, because that question does not ask specifically for a category where she could offer “Kurdish,” although that is the primary identity of her husband. Another respondent, whose family is second and third-generation Jordanian-American, also commented on the problems with the White category. “So, I mean my family is from Jordan. Both grandparents. If you look at me, I’m white-looking and I really don’t have much of a tie to Jordan or think of myself as Arab or anything. But I’m not European. I like that the second part of that question let me say Jordanian, just to put it out there.”

We also asked respondents how they interpreted the terms “multiracial” and “multiethnic.” The interpretations of “multiracial” were consistent. Respondents said, “This means you have parents of two different colors” or “You have mixed background, for example white and black, white and Indian or something like that.” Some respondents believed that “multiracial” and “multiethnic” meant the same thing, whereas others believed they were two different things. Those who thought the two terms meant different things believed that ethnicity referred either to a nationality or to a religion. Interestingly, those who believed that “ethnicity” referred to religion tended to be Black or African American. One respondent offered the following examples of ethnicities: “Jewish, Baptist, Christian, etc.” Another respondent said that “Muslim and Baptist” were ethnicities; this respondent said that there are “many families with different beliefs, different ethnicities,” which appeared to imply that an ethnicity is a belief system to this respondent. White or Hispanic respondents identified ethnicity as a country or origin or ancestry. Some of them indicated this was because they were aware of the Census Bureau’s definition of ethnicity, while others indicated that “ethnicity” is a concept or term they use in regular conversation.

#### **e. Overcount/Undercount Probe Reordering**

There are seven overcount probes in the 2020 NRFU questionnaire. A person’s demographics must meet the eligibility rules for asking some of the overcount questions (e.g. college, military, nursing home). This is a departure from the 2010 NRFU questionnaire, in which all of the overcount questions were asked about all of the housing unit roster members. This change was made in the electronic questionnaire so housing units would not have to be asked questions that do not pertain to their demographic profile. The overcount questions in the 2020 NRFU questionnaire and their universes are below:

- Overcount Question 1: Seasonal Home

*Universe: All respondents*

**Does anyone sometimes live or stay at another home, like a seasonal or second residence?**

- Overcount Question 2: Custody

*Only asked if a roster member is 18 years old or younger*

**Does anyone sometimes live or stay somewhere else with a parent, grandparent or other person?**

- Overcount Question 3: College Reasons

*Only asked if a roster member is between the age of 18 and 25 years old*

**Was anyone staying away from <address> while living in college housing – on or off campus?**

- Overcount Question 4: Job/Military

*Only asked if a roster member is between 18 years old and 60 years old*

**Was anyone staying away from <address> to be closer to a job (including military assignments)?**

- Overcount Question 5: Nursing Home

*All respondents*

**Does anyone sometimes stay in a place like a nursing home or a group home?**

- Overcount Question 6: Jail

*All respondents*

**Was anyone recently in a jail or prison?**

- Overcount Question 7: Other reasons

*All respondents*

**Does anyone sometimes live away from <address> for any reasons other than those you just mentioned?**

If any of the overcount probes are responded to in the affirmative, the particular household member is identified, and then a series of questions are asked about them. These questions ask

for the address of the other place of residence, where the roster member lives or stays most of the time, and where s/he lived on census day. These follow-up questions are asked to see if the roster member should be counted elsewhere. The responses to the follow-up questions and the quality of the address data collected determine if a person should be removed from that census address.

Overall, these probing questions worked the way that they were intended. Depending upon ordering, some questions were perceived to be more inclusive, for instance, if the Overcount Question Number 5 about Nursing Homes/Group homes was asked before the Overcount Question Number 6 about jail, respondents may have included the person who was in jail here. Similarly, if Overcount Question Number 1 about a second home was asked before Number 2 about a parent or grandparent, respondents might include this transient person here. Despite these different responses, the general intent of the question appears to be accurately conveyed across the board.

We found that in complex households, respondents often indicated an overcount or undercount only after a number of other probes were asked. From this evidence, we concluded that respondents were processing the idea whether they should include or exclude someone from their residence based upon the other living situations contained in the other probes.

#### **f. Sensitive Questions**

The majority of our respondents did not indicate that there were particularly sensitive questions in the questionnaire. Those who did indicate that some question were sensitive tended to fall into one of three groups:

1. Some respondents felt uncomfortable disclosing personal information about other members of their household. In these situations, respondents indicated that if the other household members were home when an interviewer came to the door, the respondent would have the other member come to the door and answer the question her/himself so that s/he may choose to disclose as much information as s/he feels comfortable. This issue was particularly common for parents of foster children who did not necessarily feel comfortable giving out detailed information about those over whom they had temporary custody. In these cases, the respondents felt comfortable giving out the gender of, race of and relationship to the child, but often not the name or date of birth.
2. Respondents who never spent time in jail often stated that the jail question was a sensitive question. Those respondents who had been in jail or lived with someone else who had been in jail did not identify this question as particularly sensitive.
3. The opening question that asked who lived or stayed at the census address on the night of the census day was also found to be sensitive among some respondents. These respondents argued that this question made them feel as though the government was trying to get into their personal business. These respondents often had complex households or significant others who sometimes stayed the night at their place, and



therefore felt as though it was inappropriate for the government to ask about such intimate details about their life.

4. In response to the contact methods, respondents often identified a text message as intrusive. In such cases, they expressed that they divide text messages into two categories: (1) those solicited messages from friends and family to which they will often respond, and (2) SPAM mass text messages that they perceive to be unidirectional and often delete without opening.

## 7. Recommendations

**Contact Methods:** We recommend that email contact messages clearly display the Census Bureau logo or seal. Every effort must be taken to make the email look as “official” as possible, as the respondents indicated that signs such as an official seal and a .gov email address increase their confidence in the content and origin of the message. Following previous findings (Smirnova and Scanlon 2013), respondents indicated that they liked the messages that provided more detail about how their data were used and why it is important to participate.

We furthermore recommend that text messages not be used as either a contact or a reminder method. This research indicates that individuals think of text messaging as a more private and personal form of communication than emails, snail mail, and in some cases even telephone calls. Respondents who used text-messaging regularly indicated that they would consider unsolicited texts from the Census Bureau to be spam. At the very least they would delete the texts, while some individuals indicated that getting “spammed” by the Census Bureau would make them *less likely* to respond to a survey. If the Census Bureau does intend to continue with text message reminders, some sort of publicity campaign would probably be necessary to alert the public that they may receive texts from the Census Bureau.

**Undercount Questions:** The ordering of the undercount probes did not appear to make a difference in respondents’ answers. A number of respondents did note that they liked the breakdown into smaller categories, as it helped them focus their thinking during the survey. A number of respondents did have questions pertaining to the exact definitions of “living” and “staying,” so we recommend that the Census Bureau provide a standardized script to the interviewer that will allow them to clarify any definitional issues.

**Own/Rent/Occupy Questions:** Cognitive testing found this question to be particularly difficult for respondents to comprehend and answer. While the question appears to work in visual form (for paper or internet modes), when read aloud, the respondents tended to focus their attention on either the first or last answer choices. A minor adjustment made halfway through this round of cognitive interviews did not improve the question. Across the board, this appeared to be the most difficult questions for respondents to understand and misclassification rates were high, as indicated by follow up questioning. We suggest breaking this question into the following set of questions:

**1. Do you or does someone in this household own this <house, apartment, mobile home>?**

Yes I/someone else own it.

**1a. Of the people who lived at <address>, who owned the <house, apartment, or mobile home> on <CENSUSDAY>?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**1b. Does <insert name here> own it free and clear or with a mortgage or loan (including home equity loans)?**

- i. Free and clear
- ii. With loan
- iii. No, no one who lives here owns it

**2. Do you or does someone in this household rent this <house, apartment, mobile home>?**

**a.** Yes I/someone else rent it

**i. Of the people who lived at <address>, who rented the <house, apartment, or mobile home> on CENSUSDAY>?\_\_\_\_\_**

**b.** No , no one who lives here rents it

**Relationship Question:** The respondents in our study received the new same-sex relationship categories positively; though it must be noted that the respondents in this study were from the Washington DC metropolitan area—an environment that tends to be more socially liberal than other parts of the country. Further testing in regions that are more conservative is recommended. Further, respondents in more complex households seemed to have a problem finding the right relationship categories on the list. We suggest making the list 2 or 3 columns, and arranging the categories into some logical groups (i.e. biological relationships, marital relationships, etc.).

**Race and Ethnicity Questions:** This series of cognitive interviews tested a new form of the race and ethnicity question wherein Hispanic ethnicity is listed alongside the standard race categories in one question. The prompt for this question indicates that if a respondent or roster member is “multiethnic” or “multiracial” more than one category can be chosen. A follow up question asked that respondents give a specific origin. The interviews found a number of comprehension issues with the original format of this question set. Those respondents who chose “Black or African American” did not appear confused without the word “Negro,” in fact not a single respondents mentioned noticing its absence.

We recommend that the introductory statement not include the sentence that if the respondent is, “multiracial or multiethnic, you may choose more than one [race or ethnicity category].” While it seems like the intent of this statement was to give “permission” to pick more than one

category, we found some indication that respondents—particularly Hispanics—understood this statement to be a limitation instead. We suggest that the sentence be changed to match the ACS or 2010 Census prompt that places no restrictions on who can choose more than one category.

A large number of respondents also had comprehension issues with the specific origin part of this question set. The largest source of confusion seemed to stem from the vagueness of the prompt, “You said you are\_\_\_\_. What is your specific origin?” The term specific origin does not appear to be vernacular for ancestry, and so a number of responses were micro-geographic in nature (i.e. Washington, DC or Montgomery County, MD). We recommend adding examples to frame the respondents’ answers.

Keeping these findings in mind, our recommended format for the race and ethnicity question set is:

**I'm going to read you a list of race and origin categories. You may choose more than one.**

<Is ROSTER NAME/Are you> **White; Black or African American; Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish; American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; or Some other race or origin?**

Check boxes for each category, and specify your ancestry, tribe, or country of origin.

- White**
- Black or African American**
- Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish**
- American Indian or Alaska Native**
- Asian**
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander**
- Some other race or origin**

If WHITE is chosen: You said <you are/NAME is> \_\_\_\_\_. What is your specific ancestry or ethnicity, for example, German, Irish, Lebanese, Egyptian, etc.?

If BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN chosen: You said <you are/NAME is> \_\_\_\_\_. What is your specific ancestry or ethnicity, for example African American, Haitian, Nigerian, etc.?

If HISPANIC, LATINO, OR SPANISH is chosen: You said <you are/NAME is> \_\_\_\_\_. What is your specific ancestry or ethnicity, for example, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Columbian, Spaniard, etc.?

If AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE is chosen: You said <you are/NAME is> \_\_\_\_\_. What is your specific tribe, for example, Navajo, Mayan, Tlingit, etc.?

If ASIAN is chosen: You said <you are/NAME is> \_\_\_\_\_. What is your specific ancestry or ethnicity, for example, Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, etc.?

If NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER is chosen: You said <you are/NAME is> \_\_\_\_\_. What is your specific ancestry or ethnicity, for example, Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, etc.?

If SOME OTHER RACE / ORIGIN is chosen: You said <you are/NAME is> \_\_\_\_\_. What is your specific race or origin?

**Overcount Questions:** Overall, these probing questions operated the way that they were intended. In complex households, respondents often indicated an overcount or undercount only after a number of other probes were asked. From this evidence, we concluded that respondents were processing the idea whether they should include or exclude someone from their residence based upon the other living situations contained in the other probes. Each of our respondents appeared to have constructed the appropriate roster based on their living situation, therefore we recommend tailoring the order of overcount probes based on administrative records data.

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## Appendix A

### 2013 Census Test Questionnaire Protocol

#### Introduction:

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I work for the Census Bureau. Thanks for agreeing to help us today. Let me start by telling you a little about what we will be doing. Every ten years the United States conducts a census, or count, of everyone who is living in the United States.

In the past the Census Bureau has mailed most households in the United States a paper census form and visited people who did not respond which cost a lot of taxpayers' money. In an effort to reduce cost, we are considering alternative ways of contacting people.

This is a two part study. In the first part, I'm going to show you some of the ways we may contact people in an effort to save money and get your reactions. In the second part, I'm going to play the part of a census taker and ask you questions like the ones you might be asked in the census in 2020.

#### Permission to Tape-Record:

Because it would be hard to keep track of everything you say today, we're 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. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can decline to answer any particular question.

#### Think-out-loud Instructions:

As I said before, we are interested in how these questions work for you. So what I would like you to do is tell me everything you're thinking as you come up with your answers. 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 hear the question and decide how to answer it. And sometimes I may ask you additional questions about the questions or your answers. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in how these questions work for you.

Because sometimes people take a while to get used to the idea of thinking out loud, I'd like to start out with a practice question. Can you tell me how many windows are in your house or apartment? [PROBE as appropriate to responses to this question.]

#### *If not in the home:*

*Also, some of the questions will ask you about this address or this house, apartment, or mobile home. Pretend you are taking this survey in your home and answer about where you live.*

*Before we begin, may I have your home address?*

*Street Address* \_\_\_\_\_

*Do you live in a house, apartment or a mobile home?* \_\_\_\_\_

*Use these fills as needed throughout the interview.*

Okay, let's begin with the different ways we might contact someone.



## Part 1: Alternate Contact Language

New Send Send & File... Save As Draft Delivery Options... Format Display More Show

High priority  Return receipt  Keep Private  Mark Subject Confidential

To: Your Address Here



Cc:

Bcc:

Subject: Message From the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau

From: Michelle Smirnova/CSM/HQ/BOC 09/11/2012 05:03PM

Sans Serif 10

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
census.gov

United States™  
**Census**  
Bureau

To prepare for the next census, the U.S. Census Bureau is conducting the 2013 Census Test. The goal of this survey is to develop new methods that will make the next census easier, more convenient, and less costly for taxpayers.

Please complete the survey online by **May 23** at <https://respond.census.gov/nct>

If we do not receive your completed survey on time, we may send an interviewer to your address to collect the required information. Help us conserve natural resources, process data more efficiently, and save taxpayer money by responding online. The Census Bureau chose your address, not you personally, as part of a randomly selected sample. You are required by U.S. law to respond to this survey. The Census Bureau is required by U.S. law to keep your answers confidential. This means that the Census Bureau cannot give out information that identifies you or your household. Your answers will only be used for statistical purposes, and no other purpose.

We are conducting this survey under the authority of Title 13, United States Code, Section 193. Federal law protects your privacy and keeps your answers confidential (Title 13, United States Code, Sections 9 and 214).

If the above link does not work, you may type in the URL: [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) and go to "2013 Census Test," type in USER ID: .XXXXXXXXXX to access the 2013 Census Test.

Attachments

New Send Send & File... Save As Draft Delivery Options... Format Display More Show

High priority  Return receipt  Keep Private  Mark Subject Confidential

To: Your Address Here



Cc:

Bcc:

Subject: Reminder from the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau

From: Michelle Smirnova/CSM/HQ/BOC 09/11/2012 05:05PM

Sans Serif 10

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
census.gov

A few days ago, you should have received (an email/a letter) about completing the 2013 Census Test online. It is important that you respond. If you have already provided your information, thank you.

If you have not yet responded, now is the time to complete the survey online at:  
<https://respond.census.gov/nct>

Responding on time saves money, and you can avoid a personal visit from an interviewer.

If the above link does not work, you may type in the URL: [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) and go to "2013 Census Test," type in USER ID:.XXXXXXXXXXXX to access the 2013 Census Test.

If you need help completing your survey, please call 1-800-972-5650.

Thank You.

- Attachments -

New Send Send & File... Save As Draft Delivery Options... Format Display More Show

High priority  Return receipt  Keep Private  Mark Subject Confidential

To: Your Address Here



Cc:

Bcc:

Subject: Final Reminder from the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau

From: Michelle Smirnova/CSM/HQ/BOC 09/11/2012 04:58PM

Sans Serif 10

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
census.gov

Within the last few weeks, the U.S. Census Bureau sent several requests for your participation in the 2013 Census Test. **Now is the time to complete the survey if you have not already done so.**

Please go to <https://respond.census.gov/nct> to respond to the survey online OR complete and return the paper questionnaire we sent you earlier.

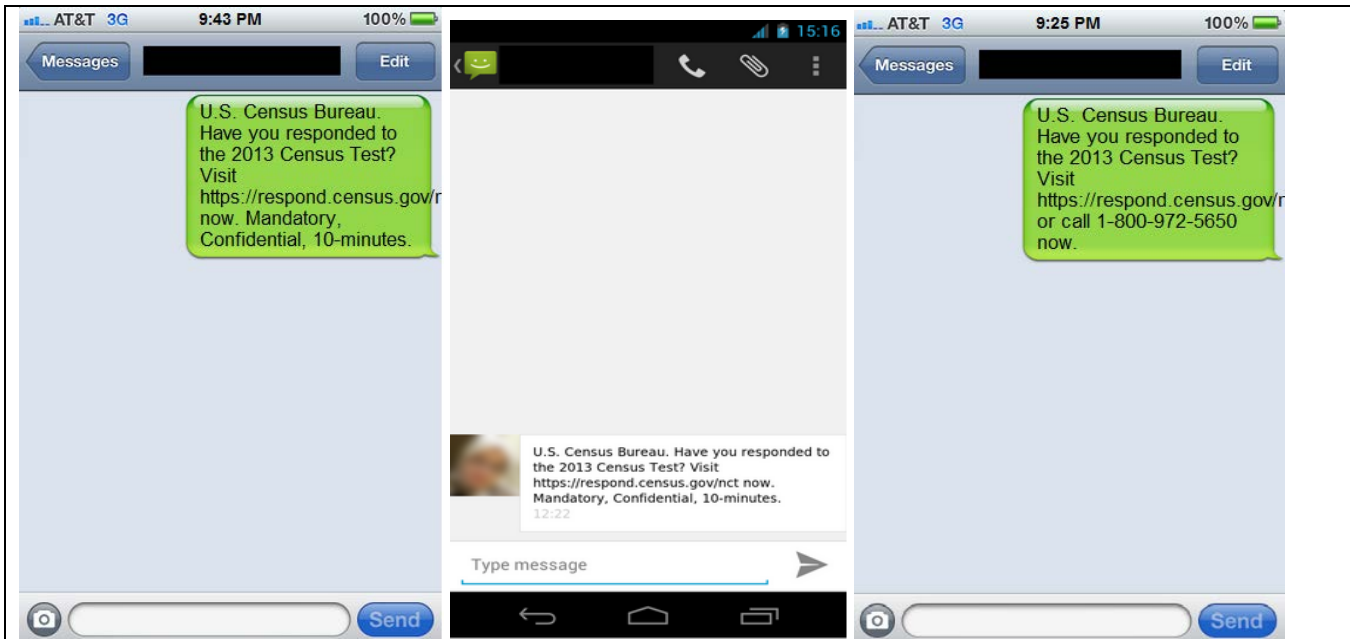
**You are required by U.S. law to respond to this survey.** If you do not respond, a Census Bureau interviewer may visit you to complete the survey.

If the above link does not work, you may type in the URL: [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) and go to "2013 Census Test," type in USER ID:.XXXXXXXXXXXX to access the 2013 Census Test.

If you would like to complete the survey by telephone, or need assistance, please call our toll-free number 1-800-972-5650.

Thank You.

- Attachments -



Probes: In your own words, what is this email/text message saying?  
 If you had received this email/text message, would you have believed that it was from the Census Bureau?  
 Why or Why not?  
 If you had received this email or text message would you have clicked on the link? Why or why not?  
 How do you feel about the Census Bureau emailing or texting you to fill out a survey? Do you prefer one over the other?  
 Probe: Did you notice the difference between the three letterhead designs on the emails? Which looks the most credible? If all of them look equally credible which of the four do you prefer the most?

Part 2: Census Questionnaire

3. **Hello, I'm** *<fill enumerator name>* **from the U.S. Census Bureau.** *(Show ID).*  
**Is this** *<fill address of case>*  
 Yes  
 No

4. **On** *<CENSUSDAY>*, **were you living or staying here at** *<ADDRESS>*?  
 Yes (go to 3)  
 No (go to 4)

5. **What is your full name?** *(go to 6)*

6. **Did anyone live at** *< address>* **on** *<CENSUSDAY>*?  
 Yes *<go to 6>*  
 No *<go to 5>*

7. **Where did you live on** *<CENSUSDAY>*?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

8. **Please list the name of each person who was living and sleeping at** *<ADDRESS>* **on** *<CENSUSDAY>*.

\_\_\_\_\_

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Note: Babies, Foster Children, Any other relatives or Roommates or people not related to you will be reordered based on the targeted demographic information we have about this household.

**9. Were there any additional people living or staying at [STREET] on [DATE] who you did not include yet? for example:**

**Babies?** *(pause)*                       Yes  No

**Foster children?** *(pause)*    Yes  No

**Any other relatives?** *(pause)*    Yes  No

**Roommates or people not related to you?** *(pause)*    Yes  No

**For any yes go to 10, otherwise go to 11**

**Probe:** In your own words, what is this question asking?

If yes for any of the additional people categories, please tell me more about NAME and their living situation.

**10. What are the names of the babies, foster children, other relatives or people not related to you?**

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**11. Was there anyone else staying at <street> on <CENSUSDAY> who had no permanent place to live?**

- Yes What was their name \_\_\_\_\_
- No

**Probe:** In your own words, what do you think this question was asking about? Can you give me an example of someone who has no permanent place to live?

If yes, please tell me more about NAME and their living situation.

**12. Was there anyone else living or staying at <street> on <CENSUSDAY> who is no longer living there?**

- Yes What was their name \_\_\_\_\_
- No

**Probe:** Can you give me an example of someone who may no longer be here?

If yes, please tell me more about NAME and their living situation.

**13. Do you or does someone in this household own, rent, or occupy this <house, apartment, mobile home> without having to pay rent?**

- Yes I/someone else own it (go to 12)
- Yes I/someone else rent it (go to 13)
- Yes I/someone else occupy it without having to pay rent (Go to 14)
- No (go to 14)

**14. Of the people who lived at <address>, who owned the <house, apartment, or mobile home> on <CENSUSDAY>?**

\_\_\_\_\_

c. Does <insert name here> own it free and clear or with a mortgage or loan (including home equity loans)

- iii. Free and clear
- iv. With loan

(go to 18)

**15. Of the people who lived at <ADDRESS>, who rented this house, apartment, or mobile home on <CENSUSDAY>?**

\_\_\_\_\_

(go to 18)

**16. Next, we need to record each person’s relationship to <reference person>.**

Looking at the screen, <roster person> is <reference person>’s \_\_\_\_\_.

*Interviewer Note – Show list to respondent*

Opposite-sex husband/wife/spouse	Same-sex husband/wife/spouse
Opposite-sex unmarried partner	Same-sex unmarried partner
Biological son or daughter	Adopted son or daughter
Brother or sister	Stepson or stepdaughter
Father or mother	Parent-in-law
Grandchild	Son-in-law or daughter-in-law
Other relative	Roomer or boarder
Foster child	Housemate or roommate
	Other nonrelative

**Probe:** How did you choose your answers?

- Did you have any difficulty finding a category that fit?
- Was looking at the options helpful?

**17. What is <roster name>’s sex?**

- Male
- Female

**18. What is <NAME>’s date of birth?**

*Omitted verify age and relationship, since we are not testing an automated instrument.*

**19. I'm going to read you a list of race and origin categories. If you are multiracial or multiethnic, you may choose more than one.**

<Is ROSTER NAME/Are you> **White; Black or African American; Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish; American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; or Some other race or origin?**

Check boxes for each category, and specify your ancestry, tribe, or country of origin.

- White
- Black or African American
- Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Some other race or origin

**If White, Black, Hispanic or Asian is chosen:** You said <you are/NAME is> \_\_\_\_\_. Do you have a specific ancestry, ethnicity or country of origin?

**If American Indian or Alaska Native is chosen:** You said <you are/NAME is> \_\_\_\_\_. What is that specific tribe?

**If Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander or Some other race or Origin is chosen:** You said <you are/NAME is> \_\_\_\_\_. Do you have a specific ancestry, ethnicity, tribe, or country of origin?

**Probe:** Was this question easy or difficult to answer?

**Overcount /Undercount**

**Note:** We will re-order Questions 18-27 depending on the demographic information that we have about the household. The more likely populations to be overcounted or undercounted will be targeted in the first question in the series.

**20. Some people live or stay in more than one place and we would like to make sure everyone is only counted once. The following questions will be about: READ ENTIRE ROSTER**

***Did you/anyone move during <March> or <April>?***

Yes

No

[Note: If “Yes” and more than one person in the HH, ask Who?]

**Who? List**

**Probe:** In your own words, what was this question asking about?

**21. If there are people 18 or under: < Do you/does anyone> sometimes live or stay at another home, like a seasonal or second residence?**

Yes

No

[Note: If “Yes” and more than one person in the HH, ask Who?]

**Who? List**

**Probe:** In your own words, what was this question asking about? Can you give me an example of situations where people might live or stay at another home?

**22. <Do you/does anyone> sometimes live or stay somewhere else with a parent, grandparent or other person?**

Yes

No

[Note: If “Yes” and more than one person in the HH, ask Who?]

**Who? List**

**Probe:** In your own words, what was this question asking about? Can you give me an example of situations where people might live or stay somewhere else with a relative?

**23. If there are people ages 18-25 <Were you/ was anyone> staying away from <address> while living in college housing - on or off campus?**

- Yes
- No

[Note: If “Yes” and more than one person in the HH, ask Who?]

**Who? List**

**Probe:** In your own words, what was this question asking about? What does “on or off campus” mean to you in this question?

**24. If there are people ages 18-60 <Were you/ was anyone> staying away from <address> to be closer to a job (including military assignments)?**

- Yes
- No

[Note: If “Yes” and more than one person in the HH, ask Who?]

**Who? List**

**Probe:** In your own words, what was this question asking about? Can you give me an example of situations where people might stay away to be closer to a job or military assignment?

**25. <Do you/ does anyone> sometimes stay in a place like a nursing home or a group home?**

- Yes
- No

[Note: If “Yes” and more than one person in the HH, ask Who?]

**Who? List**

**Probe:** In your own words, what was this question asking about? Can you give me an example of other places like a nursing home or group home?

**26. <Were you/Was anyone> recently in a jail or prison?**

- Yes
- No

[Note: If “Yes” and more than one person in the HH, ask Who?]

**Who? List**

**Probe:** In your own words, what was this question asking about? What do you think is meant by “recently” in



this question?

**27. < Do you/ does anyone > sometimes live away from <ADDRESS> for any reason other than those just mentioned?**

Yes

No

[Note: If "Yes" and more than one person in the HH, ask Who?]

**Who? List**

**Probe:** In your own words, what was this question asking about? What sorts of situations can you think of here? If yes, Why didn't you mention this person before?

**Please provide the full address <flag\_location1> where <person> sometimes lived or stayed around <CENSUSDAY> <flag\_location2>. Fill in as much information as the respondent can provide.**

Address (Number and street name)

\_\_\_\_\_

City

\_\_\_\_\_

State

\_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code

\_\_\_\_\_

**If there is no street address or if this is a facility, please type a description in the box below.**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Probe:** Was this easy or difficult for you?

**28. Where does/do <person/you> live and sleep most of the time?**

- Write Address \_\_\_\_\_
- Equal time at all places
- Some other place
- Don't know

**Probe:** How did you come up with your answer? Was this easy or difficult for you?

**29. Where was/were <person/you> staying on <CENSUSDAY>?**

- Write Address \_\_\_\_\_
- Equal time at all places
- Some other place
- Don't know

**Probe:** How did you come up with your answer? Was this easy or difficult for you?

**Thank you for your help. We would like to collect just a few last bits of information if we need to obtain more information about this household in the future.**

**30. Could you please provide an email address where we can contact you about this household?**

Enter address: \_\_\_\_\_

*Repeat back the email address to the respondent to confirm it was entered correctly.*

**Probe:** In your own words what was this question asking? Is this a person email address or a work address? Is it yours alone or shared with others in the household?

(Ask or confirm.)

**31. What is your name?**

**32. In case I need to contact you again to clarify any information, what is your phone number?**

**33. What is the address or place where I can best find you again?**

**34. Another Census employee may contact you to evaluate my work. What would be the best mode and time to contact you?**

Thanks. Now I have a few follow-up questions for you.

- Other than what we have already talked about, did you find any of the questions difficult? Are there questions that you think some people would find difficult?
- Did you find any of the questions sensitive? Are there questions that you think some people would find sensitive?

For analysis purposes, we need to get a little more information from you:

**1. Do you use a cellular phone or smartphone?**

- Yes → Go to 2
- No → Skip to 3
- DK/RF → Skip to 3

**2. When you use your cellular phone or smartphone, do you...**

*Read and select all that apply*

<input type="checkbox"/> Send/receive text messages? <input type="checkbox"/> Browse the Web? <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail? <input type="checkbox"/> DK/RF
<p><b>3. How often do you use or visit the Internet for paying bills, shopping or other financial transactions? (Is it very often, often, sometimes, rarely, or never?)</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Very often <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely <input type="checkbox"/> Never
<p><b>4. Do you receive notifications about upcoming bills by email?</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> DK/RF
<p><b>5. How often do you use or visit the Internet for... Filling out surveys? (Is it very often, often, sometimes, rarely, or never?)</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Very often <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely <input type="checkbox"/> Never
<p><b>6. Have you ever gone to a website of a company or organization for which you have received mail?</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> DK/RF <p><b>[Probe for Cognitive Testing: What factors influence your decision &lt;to go/not to go&gt; to these links?]</b></p>
<p><b>7. Do you open all of your mail?</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> DK/RF <p><b>[Probe for Cognitive Interview: How do you determine which mail to open?]</b></p>
<p><b>8. If someone came to your door to do a census, would you talk to them or would someone else in your household be more likely to talk to them?</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Respondent would talk to them <input type="checkbox"/> Someone else would talk to them <input type="checkbox"/> No one would talk to them <input type="checkbox"/> Respondent would talk to them <input type="checkbox"/> DK/RF
<p><b>9. What is the highest level of education you have completed?</b></p> <p>a. Less than high school?</p> <p>b. High school diploma or GED?</p> <p>c. Some college?</p>

- d. Bachelors' Degree?
- e. Graduate Degree?

**Those are all of the questions I have. Thank you for your time.**