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**Final Report of the Web and In-Person Cognitive Testing  
of Privacy and Confidentiality Respondent Messaging**

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## Abstract

The Census Bureau is required by law to inform respondents about access to and protections of the data it collects from them. For example, required messages include topics such as who has access to respondent data, what their data are used for, and, how data are kept confidential. These and other requirements are not only spelled out in various federal laws, but are also consistent with the Census Bureau's principles of openness and transparency. For example, the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) requires that we tell respondents the authority under which data is collected, the purpose for the survey, an estimate of burden, whether responses are voluntary or mandatory, the extent of confidentiality protection, an approval number from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and a statement that an agency may not conduct a collection without the approval number. A general review of the messages the Census Bureau presents respondents to explain data access and confidentiality found them to be not consistent across decennial census and ongoing surveys and recommended research on options for this messaging.

In response, staff from the Center for Survey Measurement (CSM) conducted cognitive testing of the range of the Census Bureau's respondent messaging concerning privacy and confidentiality. This research was designed to explore various ways of communicating the required description of access to data collected by Title 13, as well as various other language required by the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA). Testing was designed to identify the messages that were clear to respondents and communicated the intended messages, with the goal of standardizing the messages across Census Bureau collections.

This research project was two-staged, starting with a large online study exploring many possible options for this language, followed by a smaller-scale cognitive test of those options that seemed most viable and reliable based on findings from the larger study. Online data collection for this study was conducted from late November to mid-December 2015. The follow-up cognitive testing was conducted from early February to late March 2016 with thirty participants who were interviewed in-person. This report documents findings from both stages of this study. Final recommendations include language that is clear and easy to understand for respondents and avoids vague and complex language.

**Keywords:** privacy, confidentiality, messaging, Paperwork Reduction Act, cognitive testing, web probing

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## 1 Introduction

The Census Bureau is required by law to inform respondents about access to and protections of the data it collects from them. For example, who has access to respondent data, what their data are used for, and how they are kept confidential are required messages. These and other requirements are spelled out in the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA). In addition to required messages, Census Bureau documents and communications often include messages that are not specifically required by law but are designed to communicate privacy and confidentiality protections and assurances to respondents.

A general review of the messages the Census Bureau presents respondents to explain data access and confidentiality found them to be not consistent across decennial census and ongoing surveys and recommended research on options for this messaging. As part of the team tasked with evaluating the messaging, staff from the Center for Survey Measurement (CSM) conducted cognitive testing of the range of the Census Bureau's respondent messaging on privacy and confidentiality. The research was designed to explore various ways of communicating the required description of access to data collected by Title 13, as well as various other language required by the PRA, and other messaging around privacy and confidentiality that is not specifically required by law.

The messages tested in this project came from various census Bureau documents and communications that were currently in use. We tested 36 messages. The messages fall into two main categories: 1) Paperwork Reduction Act required messages, and 2) general privacy and confidentiality messages (not specifically required by law). Under each of these main categories, the messages are grouped into sub-themes. The sub-themes for the required messages are based on elements of the PRA. The sub-themes for the general privacy and confidentiality messages are based on the idea that the message is trying to communicate. Below we explain the sub-themes for required messages and subsequently we explain the sub-themes for the general privacy and confidentiality messages.

### *Required Messages*

Required messages that we tested are those that are spelled out in the Paperwork Reduction Act. The PRA requires the Census Bureau to include seven elements of required messaging. These include:

- 1) The legal authority(ies) that authorize the collection of information;
- 2) Reason/purpose for the information collection, including the way the information will be used;
- 3) Whether responses are mandatory or voluntary (citing the authority);
- 4) The nature and extent of confidentiality to be provided (if any) citing authority;
- 5) An estimate of the average respondent burden together with a request that the public direct to the agency any comments concerning the accuracy of this burden estimate and any suggestions for reducing this burden;
- 6) Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number;
- 7) A statement that an agency may not conduct, and a person is not required to respond to, an information collection request unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Since elements 1 and 2 vary across the different surveys that the Census Bureau conducts, this testing focused on elements 3-7. The messages that were tested included variations of these elements that were being used by the decennial census and other Census surveys. To identify specific messages to test, we reviewed a broad cross-section of respondent facing materials that are seen by respondents and in use by decennial and other Census surveys. Table 1 below displays all of the required messages that we tested and the PRA element that they correspond to.

Table 1. Required Messages Tested by PRA Element and Sub-theme Title		
Sub-theme title	PRA Element	Message Tested
Mandatory	Whether responses are mandatory or voluntary and cite the authority	You are required by law to respond to the census.
		The census is required by law (Title 13 U.S. Code Sections 141 and 193).
		Collection of the information is Mandatory and is collected under Title 13 U.S. Code Sections 141 and 193.
Burden	An estimate of the average respondent burden together with a request that the public direct to the agency any comments concerning the accuracy of this burden estimate and any suggestions for reducing this burden	Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 12 minutes, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.
		We estimate that completing the census will take 12 minutes on average.
Confidential	The nature and extent of confidentiality to be provided (if any) citing authority	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.
		The Census Bureau is required by U.S. law to keep your answers confidential. Your answers will only be used for statistical purposes, and no other purpose.
		The Census Bureau is required by U.S. law (Title 13, Section 193) to keep your answers confidential.
OMB Control Number Statement	A statement that an agency may not conduct, and a person is not required to respond to, an information collection request unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number	This data collection is approved under OMB No. 0607-0978 and the approval expires 04/30/17. If a valid OMB Control Number does not appear on the following collection, this form is not authorized for collection.
		A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, nor shall a person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act unless that collection of information displays a current valid OMB Control Number.
		You are not required to respond to this collection of information if it does not display a valid approval number from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The OMB Control Number for this information collection is 0607-XXXX and is located in the upper right-hand corner of this form
		This collection has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The eight-digit OMB approval number that appears at the upper right of the form or login screen confirms this approval. If this number were not displayed we could not conduct this survey

Table 2. General Privacy and Confidentiality Messages Tested by Sub-theme		
Sub-theme Title	Description of sub-theme	Messages tested
Only these people	This set of messages communicates the idea that only certain people can access survey responses or see information that people enter into surveys. Some of the messages provided descriptions of the types of people that have access.	We make sure that the only people who can see your responses are those who need them to perform official Census Bureau duties.
		Only people working on official Census Bureau business can access your survey response.
		Only a very limited number of specially authorized people can ever see your information, and only for official Census Bureau business.
		By law, the only people who can see your responses are authorized researchers for approved statistical uses.
		The Census Bureau will never share your responses with anyone who is not legally obligated to protect it.
Confidential by law	This set of messages tries to communicate that responses are confidential and that the requirement for confidentiality is written into the laws of the United States.	By law, your information is confidential and can not be seen by anyone other than the Census Bureau employees who collect and process it.
		By law, your information is confidential and can not be seen by anyone other than the statisticians who tabulate it.
		By law, your information is confidential and can not be seen by anyone other than specially authorized statistical researchers.
		Your data are confidential, by law, and the people who see your responses are bound by law to protect them.
		We are required by law to protect your information.
Data for Statistics only	This set of messages communicates that responses are only used to create statistics and that data are only for statistical purposes.	By law, we only allow access to data to conduct research that would help carry out the Census Bureau's mission and benefit the public good.
		The information we collect can only be used for statistical research.
		Your answers can only be used for statistical research. They cannot be used for any other purpose.
		Your information is protected by law. It can only be used to produce statistics. It can never be used against you.
		The Census Bureau will never use your responses for anything other than statistical research.



Table 2 (continued). General Privacy and Confidentiality Messages Tested by Sub-theme		
Sub-theme Title	Description of sub-theme	Messages tested
No individual identification	This set of messages communicates that statistical information released by the Census Bureau is designed to maintain individual confidentiality and privacy. The data that are released cannot be used to identify individuals and personal information is often removed from data files.	Experts review all statistical results before they are released to make sure there is no information that could identify an individual.
		Very few authorized individuals actually see your name or other personal information that could identify you. Most of the time, personal information that could identify you is removed from the file that contains your survey or census answers.
		Very few authorized people actually see names, addresses or other identifying information. Most of the time, personal information that could identify a person is removed from the file that contains the survey or census answers.
		The Census Bureau will never release your responses in any way that could identify you as an individual.
Benefits and Law enforcement	This set of messages communicates that responses will only be used for statistical purposes and that they will not be used against respondents in terms of their eligibility for social programs or government benefits. It also adds that responses will not be shared with law enforcement.	The Census Bureau will only use your responses for statistical research. Responses can never be used to determine whether a person is eligible for a social program or a government benefit.
		We will never share your information with law enforcement or allow it to be used to determine your eligibility for government benefits.
		By law, the Census Bureau cannot share your data with law enforcement or allow it to be used for anything other than statistical purposes.
Sharing with Feds	This set of messages communicates that responses are shared with other federal agencies. It also assures respondents that responses are still kept confidential and that their privacy is protected.	Under tightly controlled circumstances, we sometimes share responses with other federal agencies to further the Census Bureau's work. Those agencies must follow the same laws as the Census Bureau to protect your personal information
		Sometimes, we give a limited number of employees at other federal agencies access to your data under tightly controlled circumstances. Even in these cases the data can only be used to produce statistics.

## *General Privacy and Confidentiality Messages*

The general privacy and confidentiality messages that we tested fall into six sub-themes. To identify general privacy and confidentiality messages to test, we reviewed a broad cross-section of respondent facing materials that are seen by respondents and in use by decennial and other Census surveys. These statements come from documents that are currently in use, for example, advance notification letters, postcards, survey invitations, FAQs and other public-facing documents. These messages were chosen to best represent the variety of messages that are used most often in respondent-facing materials. Table 2 (above) displays all of the general privacy and confidentiality messages tested by sub-theme and provides a description of the themes.

Our goal in testing was to ensure that the messages were clear and easy to understand for respondents and to work on consistency across the messaging used by all of the surveys conducted by the Census Bureau as much as possible. Testing was designed to identify the messages that were clear to respondents and communicated the intended messages.

This research project was two-staged, starting with a large online study where we asked respondents to paraphrase the messages. This was followed by a smaller-scale cognitive test with in-person participants. Based on our analysis of the online data, we chose alternatives or created new messages that were presented to respondents in the cognitive phase of the project. Our findings recommend language for the required elements and other messaging that was found to be clear and easy for respondents to understand.

## **2 Methodology**

Online data collection for this study was conducted from late November to mid-December 2015. The follow-up cognitive testing was conducted from early February to late March 2016 with thirty participants who were interviewed in-person. This report documents findings from both stages of this study.

### **2.1 Phase 1: Web Testing**

This project began with a large online data collection using a Survey Monkey instrument. We decided to only show respondents a subset of the messages since asking for responses for all of the 36 messages would be too burdensome. Each respondent was shown 5 randomly chosen general privacy and confidentiality messages from Table 2. After each statement, respondents were asked “In your own words, what is this message telling you?” Then respondents were shown 4 additional required messages from Table 1. Each respondent saw 1 randomly chosen message from each of the four sub-themes. Again, they were asked to paraphrase the message in their own words. Respondents were each shown 9 messages in total. After responding to each of these, respondents were asked open-ended questions on whether they had any further comments about things they liked or didn’t like about the messages they saw. They were also asked some very general demographic questions, (see Appendix A).

The sample for the web study came from the Census Bureau’s opt-in research panel. The opt-in panel is a non-probability panel that allows the public to sign up to participate in research studies.

Since March 2013, the sign-up has been available through the Census Bureau website and over 15,000 respondents have signed up to participate. For this study, four thousand email addresses were selected and sent up to three emails with a link to the Survey Monkey instrument:

1. An initial email on a Monday,
2. A reminder email on the following Thursday (if they had not yet clicked on the link to the survey), and
3. A final reminder email on the following Monday with the survey closing the following Friday.

Copies of these emails are included in Appendix B.

After cleaning the data to remove duplicate responses and respondents under the age of 18, 303 completed responses remained for analysis. This represents a response rate of 8%.

## 2.2 Coding of Web Testing Responses

All responses were coded on the basis of whether respondents understood the messages or not. Additional codes were assigned to indicate whether respondents reacted negatively to the message, asked for clarification or offered a suggestion for different wording. Each response could receive up to two codes. The coding scheme we used for analysis of the web testing data is below in Table 3.

Table 4. Web Testing Codes

Code	Concept	Definition
UD	Understood	Respondent understood the message
CN	Clarification needed	Respondent mentions need for further clarity in the message
MI	Misunderstanding (implicit)	Respondent misinterprets the meaning of the message by paraphrasing incorrectly
ME	Misunderstanding (explicit)	Respondent explicitly states that they do not understand the message
NS	Nonsense	The response is either off-topic or unintelligible
NG	Negative affect	Respondent had a negative reaction to the message
SG	Suggestion	Respondent suggested new or different wording for the

We analyzed and summarized the coded data and qualitative data from the open-ended responses to determine which messages should go into the cognitive testing phase. Messages were identified as “high-performing” or “low-performing” by considering the relative percentages of UD, MI/ME, and NG codes within each sub-theme along with the magnitude of misunderstanding. Both high- and low-performing messages were chosen to go into cognitive testing. In some cases, other low-performing messages were included in cognitive testing for research purposes and to verify consistency between online and in-person testing results.

### 2.3 Phase 2: Cognitive Testing

After analyzing results from Phase 1, CSM staff selected a subset of required and general messages based on data from the web study for the next phase of research, cognitive testing. As noted above, in some cases, messages that were not well understood were included for research purposes. CSM staff recruited 30 respondents for cognitive interviews. Using a think-aloud protocol, respondents were probed on how messages fit together and their overall understanding of the messaging. Respondents were also asked which messages from each sub-theme they liked the most and the least. A copy of the in-person testing protocol is provided in Appendix C.

During in-person testing respondents were presented pages containing messages from each sub-theme. They were asked to read the messages and describe their thought processes (“think aloud”) while doing so. Then they were asked a series of probes about the messages and asked to choose the one they preferred. For the PRA messages, respondents were also shown an invitation letter from the American Community Survey. Respondents were not required to read the letter but were shown where the PRA messages would be located in the letter. This was designed to give respondents context about where they might find these types of messages.

### 2.4 Participants

Participants for the web testing were sampled from our Census research opt-in panel. As noted above, four thousand cases were sampled and we received completed responses from 303 individual respondents. For the in-person testing, participants were recruited through advertisements on social media, and from CSM’s participant database. The participant database consists of volunteers who either responded to a general recruitment advertisement or have previously participated in studies at the Census Bureau.

The respondents for the web testing were mostly white, female and highly educated. To diversify the participants, for in-person testing we deliberately recruited male participants of color with less educational attainment. The demographics of respondents for both phases of testing are below in Table 4.

Table 5. Participant Demographics

<b>Age</b>	<b>Web (n = 228)</b>	<b>In-Person (n = 30)</b>
Under 35	12.8%	20%
35-55	32.5%	40%
56-70	49.1%	37%
70+	5.6%	3%
<b>Race</b>	<b>Web (n = 221)</b>	<b>In-Person (n = 30)</b>
AA/Black	11.3%	73.5%
White	72.9%	23.5%
AIAN	2.7%	3%
Asian	6.8%	
NHOPI	1.4%	
More than one	5.0%	
<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Web (n = 223)</b>	<b>In-Person (n = 30)</b>

Yes	8.1%	3%
No	91.9%	97%
<b>Sex</b>	<b>Web (n = 228)</b>	<b>In-Person (n = 30)</b>
Female	32%	67%
Male	68%	33%
<b>Education</b>	<b>Web (n = 226)</b>	<b>In-Person (n = 30)</b>
High School or	5.7%	43%
Some College/	22.1%	37%
College Degree	27.9%	7%
Graduate	44.3%	13%

### 3 Results

This section reports the results of the web and in-person cognitive testing by sub-theme. For each sub-theme, we first present analysis of the individual messages from the web testing as well as the coding results. The percentages in these tables represent the frequency of a particular code given to each message as a percentage of all codes given to that message. We then present recommendations for which messages went forward into the in-person cognitive testing phase. This is followed by an analysis of each individual message based on the results of the in-person testing. Results from messages that were included for research purposes are also presented here. Analyses are followed by recommendations for each set of messages.

#### 3.1 Only These People

This set of messages communicates the idea that only certain people can access survey responses or see information that people enter into surveys. Some of the messages provided descriptions of the types of people that have access.

#### Web Testing

Message	Percent of Responses Receiving Code						
	UD	CN	MI	ME	NS	NG	SG
1) We make sure that the only people who can see your responses are those who need them to perform official Census Bureau duties.	71%	2%	3%	0%	7%	4%	0%
2) Only people working on official Census Bureau business can access your survey response.	71%	4%	3%	0%	8%	2%	4%
3) Only a very limited number of specially authorized people can ever see your information, and only for official Census Bureau business.	77%	10%	6%	0%	17%	13%	4%
4) By law, the only people who can see your responses are authorized researchers for approved statistical uses.	76%	3%	8%	0%	2%	10%	2%

5) The Census Bureau will never share your responses with anyone who is not legally obligated to protect it.	78%	2%	15%	0%	11%	2%	0%
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Message 1: *We make sure that the only people who can see your responses are those who need them to perform official Census Bureau duties.*

While respondents seemed to understand this message, some expressed negativity about the meaning of the term “people.” The term was described as vague. Some respondents also wanted to know more about what “official Census Bureau duties” include.

Message 2: *Only people working on official Census Bureau business can access your survey response.*

Respondents tended to understand this message. Similar to Message 1 above, negative comments and requests for clarification focused on the term “people” and “official Census Bureau business.”

Message 3: *Only a very limited number of specially authorized people can ever see your information, and only for official Census Bureau business.*

Respondents tended to understand this message, although there was a high percentage of negative comments. Respondents questioned the meaning of the term “limited” and also wanted clarification of the phrase “official Census Bureau business.”

Message 4: *By law, the only people who can see your responses are authorized researchers for approved statistical uses.*

This message had high levels of understanding, but also a higher percentage of negative comments. One respondent indicated that “hackers” could also access data. One respondent said that the Census Bureau could authorize any groups to access data and another mentioned authorization of contractors who might not have the same goals as the Census Bureau.

Message 5: *The Census Bureau will never share your responses with anyone who is not legally obligated to protect it.*

This message had the highest percentage of understanding and the lowest percentage of negative reaction.

Web Testing Recommendation: Of the messages in this category, there was no clear highest-performing message. We recommended that Messages 1, 2, 4, and 5 go forward into the cognitive testing phase. Message 3 was the obvious message to drop since it elicited the highest percentages of negative and nonsense responses.

## **In-Person Testing**

Overall, respondents had no trouble understanding what these four messages were conveying. Most liked that the messages assured them that their data would be protected, saying things like, “It makes me feel that my information is secure,” and “The Census Bureau is turning up the thinking level as far as security is concerned.” Others liked the idea of their data being protected in theory, but did not trust that the data would actually be protected in the ways the messages promise. When expressing his skepticism, one respondent said, “Theoretically, you are making best case scenarios to protect the person. However, I have seen that sometime this fails.”

*Message 1: We make sure that the only people who can see your responses are those who need them to perform official Census Bureau duties.*

For each set of messages, respondents were asked which of the messages they liked the least, and which they liked the most. On sheet one, Message 1 was chosen as the least liked message most frequently. This message was also chosen as the most liked message least frequently. When asked why this message was liked the least of the four, respondents gave a variety of reasons.

A common reason was that Message 1 was vague in multiple ways. Respondents were not sure who the “people” were that the message was referring to – Census employees, or third party workers. One respondent said the wording “offends me the most,” and pointed out that the term “need” is unclear because it is at someone’s discretion to decide what is needed.

The phrasing in Message 1 was also seen as less comforting as an assurance of protection because it does not say how they are going to make sure only authorized people see the data. As one respondent said, “I guess when I want something reinforced... I mean to show that someone is able to actually reinforce something that is important to me, when they just say that ‘we make sure that this...’ I want it to show that they have a very concrete way of enforcing that.”

*Message 2: Only people working on official Census Bureau business can access your survey responses.*

Message 2 did not elicit strong opinions in either direction. This message was chosen as the most liked message four times, and as the least liked message four times. Respondents who liked message two mentioned that the message was clear and straightforward. Those who disliked it gave reasons similar to those who disliked Message 1 – the message is vague and the term “people” is too broad to be informative.

*Message 4: By law, the only people who can see your responses are authorized researchers for approved statistical uses.*

Message 4 was chosen as the most liked message second most frequently, and the least liked message second most frequently. Many respondents liked the fact that the message included the phrase “by law.” The phrases made respondents feel more protected, and provided some comfort and peace of mind. One respondent pointed out that he liked that there is a law providing legal recourse if his information is made public. “It says there's a law somewhere, maybe Congress made it, or you know some government official made it, that that only people, approved people, can access statistical information.”

Less favorable views of Message 4 were due to the phrasing. Some respondents had trouble with the phrases “authorized researchers” and “approved statistical uses.” They thought these phrases were more difficult to understand and interpret. One respondent said, “So...I just feel like authorized researchers and approved statistical uses is maybe just a little bit unwieldy. Who’s authorized, and what’s approved? I feel like the other ones are a little more straightforward.” Other respondents mentioned that the message was unnecessarily technical and difficult to break down.

Message 5: *The Census Bureau will never share your responses with anyone who is not legally obligated to protect it.*

Message 5 was chosen as the most liked message the most frequently, and was only chosen as the least liked message four times. Respondents thought this message was straightforward and easy to understand. The phrase “legally obligated” provided more reassurance that their responses would be protected.

A few respondents compared this message to other messages in this set that raised skepticism for them. They pointed out that rather than including vague terms about who *would* see the data, this message just made it clear that anyone who does see it is legally obligated to protect it. One respondent said of the message, “I like the fact that they not only say that they won’t give out the information, but of course they have to give out the information sometimes, so they point out that if they do give it out, the person they give it to is bound to the same rules that we are in terms of confidentiality.”

While a few respondents felt that the use of the word “never” was reassuring in the context of the message, more respondents had negative reactions to the word. They said that it was a strong word that could lead to dishonesty, and was unbelievable. Multiple respondents were vocal about their skepticism. As one put it, “You’re not going to share, never? Yeah, right, ok. I think they should reword that.”

In-Person Testing Recommendation: Message 5 was the most liked message and tied for the least disliked of the four messages. Overall, respondents thought it was straightforward, easy to understand, and clearly explained how their data would be used and protected in a way that most found reassuring. However, the use of the word “never” bothered some respondents. Multiple respondents pointed out that the message uses multiple negative phrases: “will never share,” “who is not legally obligated.” For these reasons, the final recommendation is a version of Message 5 that has been modified to replace the negative wording with positive wording: *The Census Bureau will only share your responses with people who are legally obligated to protect them.*

### **3.2 Confidential by Law**

This set of messages tries to communicate that responses are confidential and that the requirement for confidentiality is written into the laws of the United States.



## Web Testing

Message	Percent of Responses Receiving Code						
	UD	CN	MI	ME	NS	NG	SG
6) By law, your information is confidential and cannot be seen by anyone other than the Census Bureau employees who collect and process it.	65%	0%	7%	0%	22%	13%	0%
7) By law, your information is confidential and cannot be seen by anyone other than the statisticians who tabulate it.	84%	0%	2%	0%	6%	8%	0%
8) By law, your information is confidential and cannot be seen by anyone other than specially authorized statistical researchers.	85%	5%	5%	2%	10%	5%	0%
9) Your data are confidential, by law, and the people who see your responses are bound by law to protect them	70%	0%	6%	0%	9%	15%	0%
10) We are required by law to protect your information.	81%	2%	8%	0%	10%	2%	0%

Message 6: *By law, your information is confidential and cannot be seen by anyone other than the Census Bureau employees who collect and process it.*

This message elicited the lowest percentage of statements indicating that it was understood. One respondent said that the statement made it seem like a larger number of employees would have access to data.

Message 7: *By law, your information is confidential and cannot be seen by anyone other than the statisticians who tabulate it.*

Eighty-four percent of respondents understood this message. One respondent who reacted negatively mentioned a breach in healthcare data and another mentioned that the statisticians should be monitored.

Message 8: *By law, your information is confidential and cannot be seen by anyone other than specially authorized statistical researchers.*

Respondents generally seemed to understand this message, but there were negative comments. One respondent commented that enumerators have access to data: “The workers that go out and get this information from others has ALL the information they need. Confidential? You have got to be kidding me.”

Message 9: *Your data are confidential, by law, and the people who see your responses are bound by law to protect them.*

Fifteen percent of the reaction to this message were negative, the highest in this category. Respondents seemed to fixate on the “people who see your responses” phrase in this message and that their confidentiality and privacy are dependent on people who are unreliable. One respondent mentioned Edward Snowden.

Message 10: *We are required by law to protect your information.*

This message was understood well by respondents. Eighty-one percent of responses accurately paraphrased the message.

Web Testing Recommendation: We recommended Messages 8, 9, and 10 go forward into cognitive testing. While Message 9 had a lower percentage of understanding, the message was slightly different from the others and further testing was recommended. Message 7 was included to cognitive testing for research purposes, while Message 6 was the obvious message to drop since it elicited the highest percentage of nonsense responses and was understood by the fewest respondents.

### **In-Person Testing**

Respondents were shown four different messages that could be used in data collection materials to let them know that their information is confidential by law. Across all of the messages, the common theme was that respondents felt all messages should have the wording "by law" to emphasize the legal duties of those interacting with the information respondents provide in surveys.

Message 7: *By law, your information is confidential and cannot be seen by anyone other than the statisticians who tabulate it.*

Respondents interpreted this message as saying that the data they provide are confidential and will be protected, and will only be seen by the statisticians handling the data. This message was the most liked option by only one respondent. Others found this message confusing because while Message 7 states only statisticians will see their data, the other messages suggest that more than just the statisticians will see their data. While respondents were happy that the message conveyed their data will be protected, several respondents struggled with saying the word "statistician" and were unsure of what "tabulate" means in this sentence.

Message 8: *By law, your information is confidential and cannot be seen by anyone other than specially authorized statistical researchers.*

Message 8 also told respondents that their data are being protected. Upon first glance some respondents thought that Message 8 is exactly the same as Message 7 above, with the difference being the use of the words "authorized statistical researchers" as opposed to "statisticians." This message appeared to be clearer because it did not use language that would be difficult for some people to understand. This message was well liked by respondents and appeared to be the least problematic.

Message 9: *Your data are confidential, by law, and the people who see your responses are bound by law to protect them.*

While Message 9 was most liked by 9 respondents, there were not many strong positive reactions to it. Most respondents were suspicious of the phrase "the people who see your responses." Only

one person admitted to liking the broadness of the use of "people." The others felt it is very ambiguous and does not make it clear with whom their information is being shared. This only made respondents question who else would be seeing their data despite the fact that it is required to be kept confidential.

Message 10: *We are required by law to protect your information.*

Some respondent felts there were similarities between Message 9 and Message 10. Overall Message 10 was the most liked and preferred messaging among 12 of the respondents. Although this message, too, is somewhat vague, respondents thought it was straight to the point and better than the other options provided.

In-Person Testing Recommendation: The recommendation for the messages on confidentiality is to use Message 10, but to state who the "we" is that the sentence is referring to and specify who is required by law to protect their information. The final recommendation would read: *The Census Bureau is required by law to protect your information.*

### 3.3 Data for Statistics Only

This set of messages communicates that responses are only used to create statistics and that data are only for statistical purposes.

#### Web Testing

Message	Percent of Responses Receiving Code						
	UD	CN	MI	ME	NS	NG	SG
11) By law, we only allow access to data to conduct research that would help carry out the Census Bureau's mission and benefit the public good.	68%	5%	7%	0%	3%	17%	0%
12) The information we collect can only be used for statistical research.	73%	2%	6%	0%	8%	4%	0%
13) Your answers can only be used for statistical research. They cannot be used for any other purpose.	76%	2%	9%	0%	7%	7%	0%
14) Your information is protected by law. It can only be used to produce statistics. It can never be used against you.	60%	0%	4%	6%	15%	9%	2%
15) The Census Bureau will never use your responses for anything other than statistical research.	83%	6%	10%	0%	14%	2%	0%

Message 11: *By law, we only allow access to data to conduct research that would help carry out the Census Bureau's mission and benefit the public good.*

This message had a lower percentage of understanding and the highest percentage of negative comments. Respondents reacted negatively to the phrase “public good.” One person commented, “Benefit the public good could mean almost anything depending on how someone might interpret public good.” Another respondent said that “public good” is subjective. Respondents were also unsure about the mission of the Census Bureau and indicated that this uncertainty made the statement hard to interpret.

Message 12: *The information we collect can only be used for statistical research.*

There was a wide variety of understanding with this message even though most understood the message in some way. Respondents interpreted the message by saying what they believed would not be done with their information. For example, respondents said that the message was telling them that their information would not be sold or shared. Some respondents understood that the message was telling them that their information would only be used for statistical research.

Message 13: *Your answers can only be used for statistical research. They cannot be used for any other purpose.*

Respondents seemed to understand this message and it had a low percentage of negative reactions. A few respondents seemed to think this statement meant that their responses could only be used for one specific survey or study in particular.

Message 14: *Your information is protected by law. It can only be used to produce statistics. It can never be used against you.*

This message seemed to produce strong negative reactions and had the lowest level of understanding in this set of messages. Respondents reacted to the phrase “It can never be used against you.” One respondent called this a “red flag.” This message could signal a possibility that data could be used against an individual rather than assuring respondents that it will not be done.

Message 15: *The Census Bureau will never use your responses for anything other than statistical research.*

Respondents understood this message and did not have many negative comments. Several respondents interpreted the message to mean that the government would not “sell” or “share” their information with other parties. Respondents also tended to contrast statistical research or information with the concept of individual data and individual identification.

Web Testing Recommendation: We recommended that Messages 12, 13, and 15 go forward to the cognitive testing phase of this research because they were well understood by respondents and elicited few negative comments. Message 11 also went into the cognitive testing for research purposes. Due to the intensity of negative responses, Message 14 was not recommended for the cognitive testing phase.

## **In-Person Testing**

Respondents were shown four different messages that could be used in data collection materials to let them know that their information will be used only for statistical purposes. The first message described the data use in terms of the Census Bureau's mission and the public good, while the remaining three messages focused more narrowly on "statistical research." Across all four messages, respondents were uncertain about what exactly their data could be used for. While benefiting the public good in the first message was perceived as vague, the term "statistical research" used in the other messages was difficult for some respondents to pronounce and to understand.

*Message 11: By law, we only allow access to data to conduct research that would help carry out the Census Bureau's mission and benefit the public good.*

This message elicited mixed reactions. Of the four related messages, it was chosen as the least liked most frequently. However, it was also chosen as most liked the second most frequently. The inclusion of "by law" in this statement was viewed as positive (although some wondered what law specifically was being referenced). "I think it's good that it starts with 'by law.' If it was more specific referencing a specific law [it would be better], but I think that it is helpful." Opinions were mixed, however, about the phrase "benefit the public good." Some respondents found it reassuring and positive, saying things like "...that's what it's all about. All of this is for the public good." Others found it to be too vague and subjective, with one respondent commenting that "the message has a lot of room for interpretation. Public good could be more than statistical research." Some respondents also disliked the use of "we" as the subject for this message, mentioning that they were unsure to whom the word "we" referred. They preferred the clear subject of the "Census Bureau" in Message 15.

*Message 12: The information we collect can only be used for statistical research.*

This message did not elicit strong opinions. As with Message 11, respondents mentioned being unsure about who the word "we" referred to and stated a preference for the clear subject of "the Census Bureau" in Message 15. One respondent asked, "Again, the thing about the information we collect, which information are they talking about? My part of it, or something else? And who's collecting it?"

*Message 13: Your answers can only be used for statistical research. They cannot be used for any other purpose.*

This message was liked and understood by respondents, but was infrequently chosen as the most liked. Respondents liked that the message "just seemed to be straightforward" and was "very specific and clear." However, while a few respondents appreciated the extra emphasis of the second sentence, others felt it was redundant and trying too hard. The repetition about the limited uses of the data made some respondents feel suspicious or concerned about for what other purposes the data might be used. As one respondent said, "What, are you trying to make me think of other possibilities that might make me uncomfortable?"

Message 15: *The Census Bureau will never use your responses for anything other than statistical research.*

This message was preferred by respondents most often and seemed to be well understood by respondents. As one respondent described it, "I felt like number 12 was a little bit too short and number 13 was... they're all saying the same thing, but 13 was a little bit too much, so it was like [message 15 was] the goldilocks answer." Respondents liked that the subject of the message was straightforward (the Census Bureau), as opposed to the less specific "we" used in some of the other messages. Although most respondents demonstrated a clear understanding of message 15, the negative framing of the statement seemed to make it more difficult for some respondents to read and process compared to other messages.

Respondents tended to have strong feelings about use of the word "never" in this statement, but these reactions ranged from positive to negative. Some felt that it sounded dishonest and were adamant that the word should not be used: "Never, that is not going to do. That does not even sound true. Anytime we are dealing with government or government being involved, something else could always change. So when it says never, I do not like." Others, however, felt the word was compelling and strong: "It is telling me, come rain or come shine the Bureau will never use my information other than [for] statistical research... The reader will be more confident because the message says '...will never...'"

In-Person Testing Recommendation: Message 15 was the most liked message for informing respondents that their information will only be used for statistical purposes. Overall, respondents thought the message was clear and reassuring. However, the use of the word "never" bothered some respondents. Respondents also pointed out that the negative phrasing of the message ("never use...for anything other than") made it more difficult to read compared to other messages. The message was also missing the reassurance of legal protection, which seemed to be the main element that gave Message 11 a unique appeal. For these reasons, the final recommendation is a version of Message 15 that has been modified to replace the negative wording with positive wording and to add in the words "by law": *By law, the Census Bureau can only use your responses for statistical research.* This final recommended version combines the general structure and clarity of message 15 with desirable features of the other tested messages.

### **3.4 No Individual Identification**

This set of messages communicates that statistical information released by the Census Bureau is designed to maintain individual confidentiality and privacy. The data that are released cannot be used to identify individuals and personal information is often removed from data files.

## Web Testing

Message	Percent of Responses Receiving Code						
	UD	CN	MI	ME	NS	NG	SG
16) Experts review all statistical results before they are released to make sure there is no information that could identify an individual.	81%	0%	14%	0%	0%	7%	0%
17) Very few authorized individuals actually see your name or other personal information that could identify you. Most of the time, personal information that could identify you is removed from the file that contains your survey or census answers.	54%	2%	12%	0%	16%	16%	0%
18) Very few authorized people actually see names, addresses or other identifying information. Most of the time, personal information that could identify a person is removed from the file that contains the survey or census answers.	77%	0%	5%	0%	17%	10%	0%
19) The Census Bureau will never release your responses in any way that could identify you as an individual.	84%	2%	4%	0%	5%	4%	2%

Message 16: *Experts review all statistical results before they are released to make sure there is no information that could identify an individual.*

Message 16 had a high percentage of understanding and a lower percentage of negative comments. However, it was also misunderstood with greater frequency than other messages, suggesting that the message may be prone to misinterpretation.

Message 17: *Very few authorized individuals actually see your name or other personal information that could identify you. Most of the time, personal information that could identify you is removed from the file that contains your survey or census answers.*

This message has a high percentage of negative reactions. One respondent asked for more clarity on the term “most” in this message. The respondent said that the term is vague and “possibly misleading.” Another respondent said that the message conveyed that there was “room for leakage” and another said that they felt “uncomfortable” after reading the message.

Message 18: *Very few authorized people actually see names, addresses or other identifying information. Most of the time, personal information that could identify a person is removed from the file that contains the survey or census answers.*

This message also had a high percentage of negative comments. Respondents expressed skepticism about their individual responses remaining anonymous and the ability of the Bureau to safeguard information.

Message 19: *The Census Bureau will never release your responses in any way that could identify you as an individual.*

Message 19 had a high percentage of understanding and a lower percentage of negative comments. Respondents understood that this message was trying to communicate that they would never be identified as individuals.

Web Testing Recommendation: We recommended that Messages 16 and 19 go forward into the cognitive testing phase of this research because they were generally understood and received few negative comments. Message 17 also went into cognitive testing for research purposes. Because of the high incidence of negative comments, Message 18 was not included in the cognitive testing phase.

### **In-Person Testing**

Message 16: *Experts review all statistical results before they are released to make sure there is no information that could identify an individual.*

Respondents' opinions and point of view regarding this message greatly varied. Some individuals believed this message was clear and reassuring. In other instances, individuals thought this message was vague and not reassuring. For example, a respondent stated, "The one I like best is 16 because it's more reassuring. It tells you that before they even release this information they're going to make sure there's nothing that could identify you." For another participant this message was not viewed positively: "No, that one [referring to message 16] is going to be the least likely one that I'm going to like... It's worded in a way that you have to like really read it in order to understand what it's saying." Similar reactions toward this message were found throughout the majority of cognitive interviews.

Message 17: *Very few authorized individuals actually see your name or other personal information that could identify you. Most of the time, personal information that could identify you is removed from the file that contains your survey or census answers.*

Of the three messages included in the "No individual identification", Message 17 was least liked by the majority of respondents. One common theme throughout the cognitive interviews was that the message was too long. Another common theme that emerged through the interviews was that message 17 was confusing or difficult to understand.

Lastly, most respondents did not like this message because they felt that certain statements or phrases such as 'very few' and 'most of the time' raised red flags, which led respondents to be skeptical of the message. For example, when reading message 17, a respondent wondered under what situations would his name and other personal information not be removed. Another respondent found the phrases "very few" and "most of the time" to be amusing and not very comforting. These phrases made some respondents feel uncomfortable: "It talks about actually seeing your name and personal information that could identify you. Reading 'Most of the time, personal information that could identify you...' is uncomfortable."



Message 19: *The Census Bureau will never release your responses in any way that could identify you as an individual.*

Message 19 was by far the most liked and understood out of the three messages. Respondents discussed how this message was reassuring, as it explained how their data would never identify them individually. A major theme that was apparent throughout the cognitive responses was that the message was clear, to the point, and straightforward.

It is important to note that the word ‘never’ elicited mixed feelings. However, in comparison to other messages, ‘never’ in this message was well received by most respondents. One respondent for example, mentioned that he did not like “never” “... because there could always be a possibility that response can be released one way or another.” In contrast, another respondent liked the word never because it made him feel protected, “19 was the best one because it says ‘will never release your responses’. You would never want to be tied to your answers and be identified or judged at a later time based on what you put down.” Similarly, another respondent felt that “never” in this message made it easier to understand.

In-Person Testing Recommendation: Based on the qualitative evidence, we recommend use of Message 19: *The Census Bureau will never release your responses in any way that could identify you as an individual.*

### 3.5 Benefits and Law Enforcement

This set of messages communicates that responses will only be used for statistical purposes and that they will not be used against respondents in terms of their eligibility for social programs or government benefits. It also adds that responses will not be shared with law enforcement.

### Web Testing

Message	Percent of Responses Receiving Code						
	UD	CN	MI	ME	NS	NG	SG
20) The Census Bureau will only use your responses for statistical research. Responses can never be used to determine whether a person is eligible for a social program or a government benefit.	76%	2%	13%	0%	9%	9%	0%
21) We will never share your information with law enforcement or allow it to be used to determine your eligibility for government benefits.	75%	0%	9%	0%	2%	9%	4%

Message 20: *The Census Bureau will only use your responses for statistical research. Responses can never be used to determine whether a person is eligible for a social program or a government benefit.*

This message had a high percentage of responses where the message was paraphrased incorrectly (13%). Two of the incorrect responses interpreted the message as saying that their data would not be identifiable on an individual level. However, one person interpreted the message as meaning that “poor people should not respond since they are not getting anything in return.”

Message 21: *We will never share your information with law enforcement or allow it to be used to determine your eligibility for government benefits.*

This message seemed to be well understood although there were negative comments. A few respondents expressed concern about the believability of this message. One explicitly said that this message scared them. Another respondent suggested that this message might scare people rather than reassure them. Another respondent mentioned “current issues with NSA and IRS” and suggested that information will get to other agencies.

Web Testing Recommendation: We recommended that both of these messages move forward into the cognitive testing phase of this project. While both elicited negative comments and had lower levels of understanding, the communication of this idea required further research.

## **In-Person Testing**

Overall, with these messages respondents expressed confusion about what the Census Bureau has to do with social programs, benefits, or law enforcement, and how each of these elements are related to one another. One respondent said, “Message 20 made me laugh. It would never even cross my mind that responses would be used to determine whether you’re eligible for social programs. I don’t even know if you need to say that because whatever you’re saying they can’t identify who you are. Message 21 is like two different things, what does law enforcement have to do with government benefits? What does law enforcement have to do with determining eligibility for benefits? They’re two different things.”

Message 20: *The Census Bureau will only use your responses for statistical research. Responses can never be used to determine whether a person is eligible for a social program or a government benefit.*

Respondents who preferred this message appreciated that the message said what responses would be used for as opposed to only saying how responses would not be used. As noted above, respondents were surprised to see mention of government benefits and the Census Bureau together in this message. However, most respondents understood that the message was saying that the Census Bureau would not use responses in particular ways. Fourteen respondents said that they preferred this message.

Message 21: *We will never share your information with law enforcement or allow it to be used to determine your eligibility for government benefits.*

Respondents had both negative and positive reactions to mentions of law enforcement when reading this message. Some shared skepticism that the Census Bureau would never share with law enforcement. Referring to both messages one respondent said, “These are both lies because if there

was terrorism they can get the information because they are government. They don't have a different database, the FBI and the CIA have access to all this data under the guise of the Patriot Act." Thirteen respondents reported preferring this message to Message 20.

In-Person Testing Recommendation: We recommend not using this messaging on a regular basis. However, if the content of the survey is one where a connection with law enforcement or government programs and benefits is directly involved this type of messaging might be useful. We also recommend further testing of these messages with a context where it might be seen as more appropriate, such as the Survey of Income and Program Participation or the National Crime Victimization Survey.

### 3.6 Sharing with Feds

This set of messages communicates that responses are shared with other federal agencies. It also assures respondents that responses are still kept confidential and that their privacy is protected.

### Web Testing

Message	Percent of Responses Receiving Code						
	UD	CN	MI	ME	NS	NG	SG
<i>23 Under tightly controlled circumstances, we sometimes share responses with other federal agencies to further the Census Bureau's work. Those agencies must follow the same laws as the Census Bureau to protect your personal information.</i>	76%	4%	4%	0%	1%	20%	1%
<i>24 Sometimes, we give a limited number of employees at other federal agencies access to your data under tightly controlled circumstances. Even in these cases the data can only be used to produce statistics.</i>	69%	3%	12%	0%	1%	18%	0%

Message 23: *Under tightly controlled circumstances, we sometimes share responses with other federal agencies to further the Census Bureau's work. Those agencies must follow the same laws as the Census Bureau to protect your personal information.*

Respondents had a high percentage of negative reactions to this message. One respondent commented, "It tells me that my answer's are not actually confidential ... There must be thousands of federal agencies. What about quasi-governmental agencies, or State agencies?" Respondents also reacted negatively to this message in the context of the messages that came before it in the testing. Many respondents had already been asked to paraphrase messages that stated that their

responses would be confidential and this message as well as Message 24 below seemed to them to contradict previous statements.

Message 24: *Sometimes, we give a limited number of employees at other federal agencies access to your data under tightly controlled circumstances. Even in these cases the data can only be used to produce statistics.*

Many respondents reacted negatively to this message as well. One respondent commented, “this statement about producing statistics does not make me feel like my data are protected. There are federal agencies that I don't trust -- IRS, Homeland Security. This makes me very uncomfortable.”

Web Testing Recommendation: While respondents tended to react negatively to this set of messages, the idea being communicated is important and required further testing. We recommended that both of these messages go forward into the cognitive testing phase of this research.

### **In-Person Testing**

Multiple respondents immediately pointed out that these messages contradict other messages they were previously exposed to in the interview that say that the Census Bureau will never share their data. Though they were instructed to view each message in isolation during this interview, the contradictions caused negative reaction. Multiple respondents also said that they do not like either of the messages

Message 22: *Sometimes, we give a limited number of employees at other federal agencies access to your data under tightly controlled circumstances. Even in these cases the data can only be used to produce statistics.*

Message 22 was chosen as the most liked message seven times. Of the respondents who liked Message 22, they liked that it actually states what the other agencies are going to use the data for, which is to produce statistics. Some respondents said that Message 22 was more straightforward and clear than Message 23.

Many respondents had negative reactions to the word “sometimes,” saying things like they think it is sneaky, and it makes them distrust the whole message. “Sometimes, you never know with sometimes. Sometimes is very open with this, it's like, once a year, twice a year, one hundred times a year. You don't know what that sometimes is.”

Some of those respondents noticed the fact that Message 22 and 23 both contain the word “sometimes,” but said that the fact that Message 22 starts with “sometimes” made it stand out more and made the respondents distrust the message from the start. A respondent said, “To me it seems like they don't really want to say that we share your information with other federal agencies. So they say well sometimes, just in case, it may happen. Even though 23 says sometimes in the text, it stands out because 22 says that in the beginning. It seems a little sneaky.”

Message 23: *Under tightly controlled circumstances, we sometimes share responses with other federal agencies to further the Census Bureau's work. Those agencies must follow the same laws as the Census Bureau to protect your personal information.*

Message 23 was chosen as the most liked message 16 times. Respondents who chose this message as the one they liked most said that it gave more information about why their data might be shared. They also liked that it pointed out that the other agencies are bound by the same protections as the Census Bureau.

The phrase "under tightly controlled circumstances" produced opposing reactions. Some respondents thought the phrase was confusing and unclear. "Under tightly controlled circumstances is a little bit vague or unclear, I guess. What would constitute tightly controlled circumstances?" Others thought that it was a good phrase that made them feel more reassured and that protecting information was important even when they are sharing the information with other agencies.

As discussed with Message 22, some respondents disliked that this message contained the word "sometimes," but the inclusion of the word was pointed out less frequently with Message 23. They said that starting the message with the phrase made it stand out more in Message 23.

In-Person Testing Recommendation: Respondents indicated a strong preference for Message 23 over Message 22. The final recommendation is Message 23.

### **3.7 Paperwork Reduction Act Required Messages**

The messages in this section are required by The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 states that each information collection must inform the person receiving the collection of information of the following seven elements.

- 1) The legal authority(ies) that authorize the collection of information;
- 2) Reason/purpose for the information collection, including the way the information will be used;
- 3) Whether responses are mandatory or voluntary (citing the authority);
- 4) The nature and extent of confidentiality to be provided (if any) citing authority;
- 5) An estimate of the average respondent burden together with a request that the public direct to the agency any comments concerning the accuracy of this burden estimate and any suggestions for reducing this burden;
- 6) Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number;
- 7) A statement that an agency may not conduct, and a person is not required to respond to, an information collection request unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

### 3.7.1 Mandatory

#### Web Testing

Message	Percent of Responses Receiving Code						
	UD	CN	MI	ME	NS	NG	SG
25) You are required by law to respond to the census.	77%	2%	6%	1%	5%	5%	2%
26) The census is required by law (Title 13 U.S. Code Sections 141 and 193).	63%	0%	29%	2%	2%	4%	0%
27) Collection of the information is Mandatory and is collected under Title 13 U.S. Code Sections 141 and 193.	65%	3%	19%	1%	3%	8%	1%

Message 25: *You are required by law to respond to the census.*

This message had a higher percentage of understanding and did not elicit many negative comments. Respondents understood that they were required to respond to the census and paraphrased the message correctly.

Message 26: *The census is required by law (Title 13 U.S. Code Sections 141 and 193).*

This message had high levels of implicit misunderstanding. In response to this message as well as Message 27, respondents made statements indicating either implicitly or explicitly that they did not understand for whom the census is required or mandatory. Respondents sometimes said that the message was communicating that the federal government or the Census Bureau is required to conduct the census.

Message 27: *Collection of the information is Mandatory and is collected under Title 13 U.S. Code Sections 141 and 193.*

Similar to the above message, the subject of the statement is unclear to respondents. One respondent commented, “The government is required to go out and collect census data. It is not clear whether an individual has to actually answer the questions.”

Web Testing Recommendation: Since the goal of this messaging is to emphasize the mandatory response for individuals, we recommended Message 25 for cognitive testing. Additionally, given that there were very few negative comments about the citation of U.S. Code in messages 26 and 27, we recommend modifying message 25 to include the citation for testing: “You are required by law to respond to the census (Title 13 U.S. Code Sections 141 and 193).” This modification of Message 25 went forward into cognitive testing as well as Message 27 for research purposes.

## **In-Person Testing**

Under the mandatory messages, respondents were shown two similar messages that informed respondents that their response to the census is required by law. From these two messages, respondents selected their least and most favorite message. It is important to note that several respondents did not like to be forced to respond to the census. However, respondents selected one statement or the other based on their opinions of the statements' clarity. For example, a respondent mentioned the following about their preference toward one message: "I think 25 is pretty clear. I don't like that by law you have to respond to the survey. That doesn't sound right to me."

*Message 25: You are required by law to respond to the census (Title 13 U.S. Code Sections 141 and 193).*

Respondents showed a strong preference for this message. The majority of respondents preferred this message because it was clear, to the point, and straightforward.

Respondents also believed this message would gain more attention, which would lead to increased participation. "I think 25 is more effective in a letter format, because when it's written in a letter, it's viewed as written to an individual." "No one wants to go against the law, especially if there are consequences." "You really want to do this because it is required by law." Additionally, respondents believed that it is necessary for the Census Bureau to point out the law, as they did not want to break any laws.

*Message 27: Collection of the information is Mandatory and is collected under Title 13 U.S. Code Sections 141 and 193.*

A major theme that arose from the cognitive interviews was that this message was confusing and unclear. One respondent said, "It's not clear what kind of information is mandatory to collect." Respondents also believed this message had a more negative tone than Message 25. Another respondent commented, "Mandatory I feel like sometimes has a negative connotation. No one likes to see mandatory from the US government. Mandatory with a capital M is sort of threatening." Several participants mentioned that this message seemed intended to target a different audience such as census employees or administrative staff. For example, one respondent said, "[Message 27] is for the census employee."

It is important to note that in both messages several respondents thought the reference to Title 13 was somewhat confusing. "When it says title 13 section... it's not clear. I guess you'd assume that it is a law, but it's not as up front about it." "When you start throwing numbers (codes) [in it] is superfluous information. Not going to look up this information." To clarify, although respondents had difficulty understanding the reference to Title 13, respondents preferred the reference to the Title in message 25 because it was in parentheses and not part of the sentence.

**In-Person Testing Recommendation:** Based on the results of the cognitive interviews, we recommend Message 25. The qualitative evidence clearly identifies message 25 as the most preferred and easy to interpret message by the majority of respondents.

### 3.7.2 Burden

#### Web Testing

Message	Percent of Responses Receiving Code						
	UD	CN	MI	ME	NS	NG	SG
28) Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 12 minutes, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.	58%	3%	20%	1%	7%	9%	1%
29) We estimate that completing the census will take 12 minutes on average.	80%	1%	5%	1%	7%	6%	0%

Message 28: *Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 12 minutes, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.*

Similar to the mandatory messaging statements, respondents who saw message 28 were often confused about to whom the 12-minute burden applied. Some respondents thought that this statement meant it would take a Census Bureau interviewer 12 minutes to collect data from an individual. Others thought that the Census Bureau would take 12 minutes to both collect and analyze data from everyone. One respondent paraphrased, “Preparing this data for public reporting is estimated to take 12 minutes to process, including all aspects of the processing procedure.” Another was unsure about to whom the burden applied and wrote, “How much it will take someone--not sure who--to collect and manage the survey.” This confusion seemed to stem from both the phrase “public reporting burden” and the lengthy list of tasks. Several respondents also commented that this message was wordy and that they had trouble following it.

Message 29: *We estimate that completing the census will take 12 minutes on average.*

Message 29 had a much higher percentage of understanding and a lower percentage of misunderstanding. The subject of the burden was clear in this message as opposed to Message 28.

Web Testing Recommendation: We recommended that Message 29 move forward into cognitive testing. However, Message 28 also went to cognitive testing for research purposes.

#### In-Person Testing

During this section of the interview respondents were shown a letter that they could receive from the Census Bureau, and examples of text that they may include. They were then handed a sheet containing two messages on burden that could be included in the letter.



Message 28: *Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 12 minutes, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.*

Many respondents were unhappy with this message and stated that it provided too much information. They felt it was too lengthy and too wordy. Several respondents reported that it is unclear what "public reporting burden" means in this context and had to re-read it multiple times to gain a better understanding. Respondents were also confused about how the acts of "searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed" pertains to them. They wanted to know if this line was actually applicable to them, or personnel working on the census. Comparing both messages on this sheet against one another, the consensus was that Message 28 is difficult to understand.

Message 29: *We estimate that completing the census will take 12 minutes on average.*

Respondents interpreted Message 29 to mean that it will take them 12 minutes to complete the census. Three respondents had negative reactions to this sentence. One of them mocked the length of time the census takes: "Whatever! [laughs] Because it takes a lonnggg time. So that's a big lie right there. I mean because you have to answer all of the questions for every person. Unless you're super fast, that's not a good sentence." They believe the census takes more than 12 minutes, and that the amount of time it can vary for different people based on their reading pace. They thought we were being untruthful.

In-Person Testing Recommendation: We recommend that Message 29 be used as a burden statement in official Census Bureau messaging. The majority of respondents preferred this message since it was simple and straight to the point.

### 3.7.3 Confidential

#### Web Testing

Message	Percent of Responses Receiving Code						
	UD	CN	MI	ME	NS	NG	SG
30) 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.	71%	1%	16%	0%	11%	0%	0%
31) The Census Bureau is required by U.S. law to keep your answers confidential. Your answers will only be used for statistical purposes, and no other purpose.	65%	2%	24%	0%	8%	0%	2%
32) The Census Bureau is required by U.S. law (Title 13, Section 193) to keep your answers confidential.	76%	3%	9%	1%	6%	6%	0%

Message 30: *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.*

This message was understood by most respondents. When paraphrasing the message respondents said that their information would not be shared and that they would not be identified as an individual.

Message 31: *The Census Bureau is required by U.S. law to keep your answers confidential. Your answers will only be used for statistical purposes, and no other purpose.*

This message had lower rates of understanding than others in this set, though it also elicited no negative comments.

Message 32: *The Census Bureau is required by U.S. law (Title 13, Section 193) to keep your answers confidential.*

While this message had the most negative comments, it also had the highest level of understanding. Many of the negative responses focused on disbelief in the message. One respondent commented, “This is meaningless. Although they are required to by law, that does not mean that it will be done.”

Web Testing Recommendation: We recommended that Message 30 go forward into cognitive testing. We also included Message 31 for research purposes.

### **In-Person Testing**

Respondents were shown two different messages that could be used in data collection materials to let them know that their information will be kept confidential. Both messages began with identical sentences describing the Census Bureau's legal obligation to protect respondent confidentiality. The first message then went on to describe the statistical use of the data, while the second message elaborated on the confidentiality message by explaining that personally identifiable information cannot be released by the Census Bureau. Since the content of the two messages was distinct, some respondents suggested combining the ideas from both into a single message.

Message 30: *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.*

This message was chosen as most liked by the majority of respondents. Respondents preferred this message over Message 31 because of the second sentence, which states that they will not be personally identified. As one respondent reasoned, “30 goes more into depth about how they can’t give out info that identifies you, but 31 says its going to be used for statistics and no other purpose. At first I was gonna say I like 31 better but I think I’m going to say 30 because they’re being more specific about how your identity is being protected.” When reading the two messages together,

some thought this statement was missing how the data would be used. "I wish they could combine the two, but saying in it... I think they're each missing part of it in some ways. Particularly if it's someone who hasn't responded before, that the first part... 30 doesn't mention anything about what it's actually used for, but it does give it more of an emotional tie by saying 'identify you or your household.' So I think there's good parts in both of them if you combine them."

Message 31: *The Census Bureau is required by U.S. law to keep your answers confidential. Your answers will only be used for statistical purposes, and no other purpose.*

While many respondents liked this message, few selected it as the one they liked the most: "[Message] 31 I like the 'no other purpose.' It cuts it off, only for statistical data. [But Message] 30 is the best. It personalizes it. This isn't going to single me out. It uses the word confidential." Respondents liked that the message told them their answers will be protected and kept confidential, but a few mentioned that the message content was redundant with the inclusion of "and no other purpose" at the end.

In-Person Testing Recommendation: Message 30 was the most liked message for informing respondents that the Census Bureau will keep their information confidential. Overall, respondents liked the reassurance that their personally-identifiable information would not be shared and felt that the message was clear and straightforward. For these reasons, the final recommendation is to use Message 30.

However, some respondents suggested combining the data use component of message 31 with the Message 30 content. Therefore, if not being presented in combination with other messages that contain this information, we recommend adding a "use" statement to the end of Message 30: *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.*

### 3.7.4 OMB Control Number Statement

#### Web Testing

This set of messages tests language required by the PRA. It communicates the laws that require an approval number from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for the collection of data.

Message	Percent of Responses Receiving Code						
	UD	CN	MI	ME	NS	NG	SG
33) This data collection is approved under OMB No. 0607-0978 and the approval expires 04/30/17. If a valid OMB Control Number does not appear on the following collection, this form is not authorized for collection.	53%	2%	22%	8%	2%	13%	2%
34) A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, nor shall a person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with a collection of information subject	31%	7%	19%	11%	14%	17%	3%

to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act unless that collection of information displays a current valid OMB Control Number.							
35) You are not required to respond to this collection of information if it does not display a valid approval number from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The OMB Control Number for this information collection is 0607-XXXX and is located in the upper right hand corner of this form.	57%	0%	22%	12%	10%	7%	0%
36) This collection has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The eight-digit OMB approval number that appears at the upper right of the form or login screen confirms this approval. If this number were not displayed we could not conduct this survey.	63%	1%	15%	10%	7%	5%	0%

Message 33: *This data collection is approved under OMB No. 0607-0978 and the approval expires 04/30/17. If a valid OMB Control Number does not appear on the following collection, this form is not authorized for collection.*

Only about half of respondents paraphrased this message correctly. One respondent referred to OMB as an “obscure” authority and another explicitly asked what OMB stood for. A few respondents thought that the OMB control number was for all census surveys and that they should look for 0607 on all future data collection forms.

Message 34: *A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, nor shall a person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act unless that collection of information displays a current valid OMB Control Number.*

Only one-third of respondents paraphrased this message correctly. Respondents were confused about what OMB is and what an OMB control number is. One respondent said that the message “sounds like government jargon” and added that acronyms should be defined. Another commented, “[The message is] Not telling me anything. Just gobbletygook that sounds important.” Mention of the Paperwork Reduction Act in this message seemed to be associated with higher negative comments and less understanding in this message.

Message 35: *You are not required to respond to this collection of information if it does not display a valid approval number from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The OMB Control Number for this information collection is 0607-XXXX and is located in the upper right hand corner of this form.*

Less than two-thirds of respondents paraphrased this message correctly. One respondent asked for a plain language version of the message and another respondent correctly pointed out that we refer to a “valid approval number” and an “OMB Control Number” in the same message and that we should keep the language consistent. Similar to the last message respondents seemed to think that

the 0607 number was for all future forms. One respondent mentioned that this was “too much information for a regular John public.”

*Message 36: This collection has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The eight-digit OMB approval number that appears at the upper right of the form or login screen confirms this approval. If this number were not displayed we could not conduct this survey.*

This message had the highest percentage of responses that paraphrased correctly. One respondent questioned whether the number was specific to them as an individual or for the data collection.

Web Testing Recommendation: We recommended that Message 36 go forward into cognitive testing because it had the highest percentage of understanding. We also included Message 34 in the cognitive testing for research purposes.

### **In-Person Testing**

*Message 34: A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, nor shall a person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act unless that collection of information displays a current valid Office of Management and Budget Control Number.*

Respondents had difficulty understanding this message. In particular, respondents interpreted the phrase “nor shall a person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply” as meaning that they did not have to participate and that there would be no penalty.

*Message 36: This collection has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The eight-digit OMB approval number that appears at the upper right of the form or login screen confirms this approval. If this number were not displayed we could not conduct this survey.*

Similar to Message 34, most respondents were unsure about the meaning of Message 36. Participants described the message as government jargon and mentioned that they do not care about OMB numbers. Most had never heard of the Office of Management and Budget. Some respondents were able to understand that the message meant that they were to look for a number at the top of a survey. Most respondent preferred Message 36 to Message 34.

In-Person Testing Recommendation: While neither message was well understood by respondents, we recommend using Message 36. The misinterpretation of Message 34 could lead to reduced response if people think they do not have to complete the survey.

### **3.8 Summary of Recommendations**

In most cases, messages that avoid absolute terms (e.g. never) and vague terms (e.g. sometimes) tended to raise less red flags with respondents. When applicable, using the phrase “by law” was reassuring to respondents. We also found that short, positive sentence construction is often easier

to understand than longer, negative sentence construction. Table 15 below summarizes the final recommendations from this project by sub-theme.

Table 16 . Recommended Messages by Sub-theme		
	Sub-theme Title	Recommendations
General Privacy and Confidentiality Messages	Only these people	The Census Bureau will only share your responses with people who are legally obligated to protect them.
	Confidential by law	The Census Bureau is required by law to protect your information.
	Data for statistics only	By law, the Census Bureau can only use your responses for statistical research.
	No individual identification	The Census Bureau will never release your responses in any way that could identify you as an individual.
	Benefits and law enforcement	We recommend not using messaging around this theme on a regular basis. We also recommend further testing of these types of messages.
	Sharing with Feds	Under tightly controlled circumstances, we sometimes share responses with other federal agencies to further the Census Bureau's work. Those agencies must follow the same laws as the Census Bureau to protect your personal information.
PRA Required Messages	Mandatory	You are required by law to respond to the census (Title 13 U.S. Code Sections 141 and 193).
	Burden	We estimate that completing the census will take 12 minutes on average.
	Confidential	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.
	OMB Control Number Statement	This collection has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The eight-digit OMB approval number that appears at the upper right of the form or login screen confirms this approval. If this number were not displayed we could not conduct this survey.

## Appendix A

### Respondent Messages

Section 1: **Official Census Bureau Business.** Each respondent will be shown 5 at random and asked “In your own words, what is this message telling you?”

#### *Only these people*

1. We make sure that the only people who can see your responses are those who need them to perform official Census Bureau duties.
2. Only people working on official Census Bureau business can access your survey response.
3. *Only a very limited number of specially authorized people can ever see your information, and only for official Census Bureau business.*
4. By law, the only people who can see your responses are authorized researchers for approved statistical uses.
5. The Census Bureau will never share your responses with anyone who is not legally obligated to protect it.

#### *Confidential by law*

6. By law, your information is confidential and can not be seen by anyone other than the Census Bureau employees who collect and process it.
7. By law, your information is confidential and can not be seen by anyone other than the statisticians who tabulate it.
8. By law, your information is confidential and can not be seen by anyone other than specially authorized statistical researchers.
9. Your data are confidential, by law, and the people who see your responses are bound by law to protect them.
10. We are required by law to protect your information.

#### *Data for Statistics only*

11. By law, we only allow access to data to conduct research that would help carry out the Census Bureau’s mission and benefit the public good.
12. The information we collect can only be used for statistical research.
13. Your answers can only be used for statistical research. They cannot be used for any other purpose.
14. Your information is protected by law. It can only be used to produce statistics. It can never be used against you.
15. The Census Bureau will never use your responses for anything other than statistical research.

#### *No individual identification*

16. Experts review all statistical results before they are released to make sure there is no information that could identify an individual.
17. Very few authorized individuals actually see your name or other personal information that could identify you. Most of the time, personal information that could identify you is removed from the file that contains your survey or census answers.
18. Very few authorized people actually see names, addresses or other identifying information. Most of the time, personal information that could identify a person is removed from the file that contains the survey or census answers.



19. The Census Bureau will never release your responses in any way that could identify you as an individual.

#### *Benefits and Law enforcement*

20. The Census Bureau will only use your responses for statistical research. Responses can never be used to determine whether a person is eligible for a social program or a government benefit.
21. We will never share your information with law enforcement or allow it to be used to determine your eligibility for government benefits.
22. By law, the Census Bureau cannot share your data with law enforcement or allow it to be used for anything other than statistical purposes.

#### *Sharing with Feds*

23. Under tightly controlled circumstances, we sometimes share responses with other federal agencies to further the Census Bureau's work. Those agencies must follow the same laws as the Census Bureau to protect your personal information.
24. Sometimes, we give a limited number of employees at other federal agencies access to your data under tightly controlled circumstances. Even in these cases the data can only be used to produce statistics.

Section 2: **PRA Required Language** Each respondent sees one message from each section and asked "In your own words, what is this message telling you?"

#### **Mandatory**

25. You are required by law to respond to the census.
26. The census is required by law (Title 13 U.S. Code Sections 141 and 193).
27. Collection of the information is Mandatory and is collected under Title 13 U.S. Code Sections 141 and 193.

#### **Burden**

28. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 12 minutes, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.
29. We estimate that completing the census will take 12 minutes on average.

#### **Confidential**

30. 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.
31. The Census Bureau is required by U.S. law to keep your answers confidential. Your answers will only be used for statistical purposes, and no other purpose.
32. The Census Bureau is required by U.S. law (Title 13, Section 193) to keep your answers confidential.

#### **PRA language**

33. This data collection is approved under OMB No. 0607-0978 and the approval expires 04/30/17. If a valid OMB Control Number does not appear on the following collection, this form is not authorized for collection.
34. A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, nor shall a person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with a collection of information subject to the requirements of the

Paperwork Reduction Act unless that collection of information displays a current valid OMB Control Number.

35. You are not required to respond to this collection of information if it does not display a valid approval number from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The OMB Control Number for this information collection is 0607-XXXX and is located in the upper right hand corner of this form.
36. This collection has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The eight-digit OMB approval number that appears at the upper right of the form or login screen confirms this approval. If this number were not displayed we could not conduct this survey.

**Demographics**

	<b>Are you male or female?</b>
<input type="radio"/>	Male
<input type="radio"/>	Female

	<b>What is your age?</b>
<input type="radio"/>	Less the 18 years old
<input type="radio"/>	18-24
<input type="radio"/>	25-34
<input type="radio"/>	35-44
<input type="radio"/>	45-54
<input type="radio"/>	55-64
<input type="radio"/>	65 -74
<input type="radio"/>	75 or older

	<b>Are you of Hispanic or Latino origin?</b>
<input type="radio"/>	Yes
<input type="radio"/>	No

	<b>What is your race? <i>You may select one or more.</i></b>
<input type="radio"/>	White
<input type="radio"/>	Black or African American
<input type="radio"/>	American Indian or Alaska Native
<input type="radio"/>	Asian
<input type="radio"/>	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

	<b>What is your highest level of education?</b>
<input type="radio"/>	Less than high school diploma or GED
<input type="radio"/>	High school diploma or GED
<input type="radio"/>	Some college
<input type="radio"/>	College graduate or professional degree

## Appendix B

From: U.S. Census Bureau <[census@subscriptions.census.gov](mailto:census@subscriptions.census.gov)>

To: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject: 10-minute U.S. Census Study

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The U.S. Census Bureau is conducting research to improve how we describe our policies and procedures to respondents. This research study will help us understand how to communicate more clearly with you – members of the public.

Please complete the research study online at [INSERT LINK HERE](#)

The survey will take 10 minutes or less to complete.

Your responses will not be shared with anyone in a way that could personally identify you. Your participation in this study is voluntary. The legal authority under which this information is being collected is Title 13 U.S.C. Chapter 5 Sections 141 and 193. This data collection is approved under OMB No. 0607-0978 and the approval expires 04/30/17. This data collection uses third-party web site to collect data. This survey does not collect personally identifiable information. The results from this survey will be used to conduct primary research to enhance planning efforts for current and future surveys and censuses.



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

From: U.S. Census Bureau <[census@subscriptions.census.gov](mailto:census@subscriptions.census.gov)>

To: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject: Reminder: Complete the U.S. Census Study

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A few days ago, you should have received an email about completing an important U.S. Census Bureau study. The survey will take 10 minutes or less to complete.

If you have not yet responded, now is the time to complete the survey online at [INSERT LINK HERE](#)

Your responses will not be shared with anyone in a way that could personally identify you. Your participation in this study is voluntary. The legal authority under which this information is being

collected is Title 13 U.S.C. Chapter 5 Sections 141 and 193. This data collection is approved under OMB No. 0607-0978 and the approval expires 04/30/17. This data collection uses third-party web site to collect data. This survey does not collect personally identifiable information. The results from this survey will be used to conduct primary research to enhance planning efforts for current and future surveys and censuses.



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

From: U.S. Census Bureau <[census@subscriptions.census.gov](mailto:census@subscriptions.census.gov)>

To: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject: Reminder: Complete the U.S. Census Study

-----

About a week ago, you should have received a couple of emails about completing an important U.S. Census Bureau study. If you have not yet responded, this is your last chance to complete the survey online at [INSERT LINK HERE](#)

The survey will take 10 minutes or less to complete.

Your responses will not be shared with anyone in a way that could personally identify you. Your participation in this study is voluntary. The legal authority under which this information is being collected is Title 13 U.S.C. Chapter 5 Sections 141 and 193. This data collection is approved under OMB No. 0607-0978 and the approval expires 04/30/17. This data collection uses third-party web site to collect data. This survey does not collect personally identifiable information. The results from this survey will be used to conduct primary research to enhance planning efforts for current and future surveys and censuses.



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



**Are the messages easy or difficult to understand?**

If needed: **Is there one message that is more difficult to understand than others?**

**Are there any particular words or phrases that are unclear or confusing?**

**Which of these messages do you like the least? Can you tell me more about your choice?**

**Please highlight the message that you like the most.**

**In your own words, can you tell me what this message is saying? \*\*READ VERBATIM PLEASE\*\***

If needed: **Can you tell me more about your choice?**

SHOW RESPONDENT SHEET 2: Confidential by law

**These are some examples that you might see or hear in a message from the Census Bureau. Take a minute to look at each of these messages and remember to think aloud as you read them.**

**Tell me (more) about your reaction to these messages.**

**Are the messages easy or difficult to understand?**

If needed: **Is there one message that is more difficult to understand than others?**

**Are there any particular words or phrases that are unclear or confusing?**

**Which of these messages do you like the least?**

**In your own words, can you tell me what this message is saying? \*\*READ VERBATIM PLEASE\*\***

If needed: **Can you tell me more about your choice?**

**Please highlight the message that you like the most.**

**Can you tell me more about your choice?**

SHOW RESPONDENT SHEET 3: Data for stats only

**These are some examples that you might see or hear in a message from the Census Bureau. Take a minute to look at each of these messages and remember to think aloud as you read them.**

**Tell me (more) about your reaction to these messages.**

**Are the messages easy or difficult to understand?**

If needed: **Is there one message that is more difficult to understand than others?**

**Are there any particular words or phrases that are unclear or confusing?**

**Which of these messages do you like the least? Can you tell me more about your choice?**

**Please highlight the message that you like the most.**

**In your own words, can you tell me what this message is saying? \*\*READ VERBATIM PLEASE\*\***

If needed: **Can you tell me more about your choice?**

SHOW RESPONDENT SHEET 4: No individual identification

**These are some examples that you might see or hear in a message from the Census Bureau. Take a minute to look at each of these messages and remember to think aloud as you read them.**

**Tell me (more) about your reaction to these messages.**

**Are the messages easy or difficult to understand?**

If needed: **Is there one message that is more difficult to understand than others?**

**Are there any particular words or phrases that are unclear or confusing?**

**Which of these messages do you like the least?**

**In your own words, can you tell me what this message is saying? \*\*READ VERBATIM PLEASE\*\***

If needed: **Can you tell me more about your choice?**

**Please highlight the message that you like the most.**

**Can you tell me more about your choice?**

SHOW RESPONDENT SHEET 5: Benefits and law enforcement

**These are some examples that you might see or hear in a message from the Census Bureau. Take a minute to look at each of these messages and remember to think aloud as you read them.**

**Tell me (more) about your reaction to these messages.**

**Are the messages easy or difficult to understand?**

If needed: **Is there one message that is more difficult to understand than others?**

**Are there any particular words or phrases that are unclear or confusing?**

**Which of these messages do you like the least? Can you tell me more about your choice?**

**Please highlight the message that you like the most.**

**In your own words, can you tell me what this message is saying? \*\*READ VERBATIM PLEASE\*\***

If needed: **Can you tell me more about your choice?**

SHOW RESPONDENT SHEET 6: Sharing with Feds

**These are some examples that you might see or hear in a message from the Census Bureau. Take a minute to look at each of these messages and remember to think aloud as you read them.**

**Tell me (more) about your reaction to these messages.**

**Are the messages easy or difficult to understand?**

If needed: **Is there one message that is more difficult to understand than others?**

**Are there any particular words or phrases that are unclear or confusing?**

**Which of these messages do you like the least?**

**In your own words, can you tell me what this message is saying? \*\*READ VERBATIM PLEASE\*\***

If needed: **Can you tell me more about your choice?**

**Please highlight the message that you like the most.**

**Can you tell me more about your choice?**

SHOW RESPONDENT LETTER 2: ACS LETTER

**Please take a look at this letter. This is one of the letters that we send to people when they are selected to participate in the American Community Survey. You do not have to read the entire letter, just take note of where the highlighted portions are. POINT TO HIGHLIGHTED [LOCATION 1]**

SHOW RESPONDENT SHEET 7: Mandatory

**These are examples of some text that you might see in this letter from the Census Bureau. It would be here. POINT TO HIGHLIGHTED [LOCATION 1]. Take a minute to look at these messages. Please remember to think aloud.**

**Tell me (more) about your reaction to these messages.**

**Are the messages easy or difficult to understand?**

If needed: **Is there one message that is more difficult to understand than others?**

**Are there any particular words or phrases that are unclear or confusing?**

**Which of these messages do you like the least? Can you tell me more about your choice?**

**Please highlight the message that you like the most.**

**In your own words, can you tell me what this message is saying? \*\*READ VERBATIM PLEASE\*\***

If needed: **Can you tell me more about your choice?**

SHOW RESPONDENT SHEET 8: Confidential

**These are another set of examples that you might see in this letter from the Census Bureau. It would be here. POINT TO HIGHLIGHTED [LOCATION 1]. Take a minute to look at these messages. Please remember to think aloud.**

**Tell me (more) about your reaction to these messages.**

**Are the messages easy or difficult to understand?**

If needed: **Is there one message that is more difficult to understand than others?**

**Are there any particular words or phrases that are unclear or confusing?**

**Which of these messages do you like the least?**

**In your own words, can you tell me what this message is saying? \*\*READ VERBATIM PLEASE\*\***

If needed: **Can you tell me more about your choice?**

**Please highlight the message that you like the most.**

**Can you tell me more about your choice?**

SHOW RESPONDENT SHEET 9: Burden

**These are a couple more examples of text that you might see in this letter from the Census Bureau. It would be here. POINT TO HIGHLIGHTED [LOCATION 1]. Take a minute to look at these messages. Please remember to think aloud.**

**Tell me (more) about your reaction to these messages.**

**Are the messages easy or difficult to understand?**

If needed: **Is there one message that is more difficult to understand than others?**

**Are there any particular words or phrases that are unclear or confusing?**

**Which of these messages do you like the least? Can you tell me more about your choice?**

**Please highlight the message that you like the most.**

**In your own words, can you tell me what this message is saying? \*\*READ VERBATIM PLEASE\*\***

If needed: **Can you tell me more about your choice?**

SHOW RESPONDENT SHEET 10: PRA Language

**This is the final set of example text that you might see in this letter from the Census Bureau. It would be here. POINT TO HIGHLIGHTED [LOCATION 1]. Take a minute to look at these messages. Please remember to think aloud.**

**Tell me (more) about your reaction to these messages.**

**Are the messages easy or difficult to understand?**

If needed: **Is there one message that is more difficult to understand than others?**

**Are there any particular words or phrases that are unclear or confusing?**



**Which of these messages do you like the least?**

**In your own words, can you tell me what this message is saying? \*\*READ VERBATIM PLEASE\*\***

If needed: **Can you tell me more about your choice?**

**Please highlight the message that you like the most.**

**Can you tell me more about your choice?**

Debriefing Questions:

**Overall, did you find the questions easy or difficult to answer?**

**Have you read or seen any messages like these before?**

If yes: **Where did you see them? What did you think about them when you read or saw them?**

**Is there anything you wanted to mention that you have not had a chance to talk about yet?**

Thank the participant for their help. Have them fill out the voucher and give them \$40