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MEMORANDUM FOR ACS Research and Evaluation Workgroup

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Subject: Cognitive Testing of the American Community Survey  
Respondent Burden: Survey Recipients During a Decennial Year

Attached is the final American Community Survey Research and Evaluation report, "American Community Survey Respondent Burden Testing: Cognitive Testing of American Community Survey Recipients During a Decennial Year."

This report summarizes the cognitive testing results of 47 cognitive interviews with recipients of the ACS during the 2020 Census. Households in the 2020 ACS sample are legally required to complete both the ACS and the decennial census. However, receiving two sets of mailings in one calendar year may be confusing to respondents. Also, being asked to complete both the decennial census and the ACS may be burdensome and may decrease the rate of self-response.

To mitigate these issues, the Census Bureau developed a set of modified mail materials with language that directly addresses the difference between the ACS and the 2020 Census. The ACS mail materials modifications are based on an evaluation conducted by the Census Bureau in 2010. Interviews were conducted to assess recipients' (1) reactions to receiving both the ACS and the 2020 Census, and (2) impressions of ACS mail materials with added messaging communicating that households need to complete both the ACS and the 2020 Census. This report summarizes the data collection methods and presents the cognitive interview findings.

If you have any questions about this report, please contact G. Brian Wilson at 301-763-2819 or Elizabeth Poehler at 301-763-9305.

Attachment

# **OY4 American Community Survey Respondent Burden Testing: Cognitive Testing of American Community Survey Recipients During a Decennial Year FINAL Briefing Report**

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# 1. Overview

During the 2010 Census, the American Community Survey (ACS) response rates were higher than usual in the first few months of the year but were lower than usual in the spring and summer months.<sup>1</sup> The increase early in the year may have occurred because the decennial census communications campaign brought attention to the U.S. Census Bureau. The decrease later in the year may be because recipients thought the ACS was the decennial census, to which they had already responded, and disregarded the ACS questionnaire.

Households in the 2020 ACS sample are legally required to complete both the ACS and the decennial census. However, receiving two sets of mailings in one calendar year may be confusing to respondents. Also, being asked to complete both the decennial census and the ACS may be burdensome and may decrease the rate of self-response.

To mitigate these issues in 2020, the Census Bureau developed a set of modified mail materials with language that directly addresses the difference between the ACS and the 2020 Census. These materials were used during the main response period for the 2020 Census, March through September.<sup>2,3</sup> The ACS mail materials modifications are based on an evaluation conducted by the Census Bureau in 2010.<sup>4</sup> Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that address recipients' questions on the difference between the ACS and the 2020 Census have been added to mail materials as well.

Between April 13 and October 23, 2020, Westat's Instrument Design, Evaluation, and Analysis (IDEA) Services conducted 47 cognitive interviews with recipients of the ACS during the 2020 Census. Interviews were conducted to assess recipients' (1) reactions to receiving both the ACS

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<sup>1</sup> Baumgardner, Stephanie. 2013. "Tracking American Community Survey Mail Response During the 2010 Census." Available at: [https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2013/acs/2013\\_Baumgardner\\_01.html](https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2013/acs/2013_Baumgardner_01.html); Chesnut, John and Mary Davis. 2011. "Evaluation of the ACS Mail Materials and Mailing Strategy during the 2010 Census." Available at: [https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2011/acs/2011\\_Chесnut\\_01.html](https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2011/acs/2011_Chесnut_01.html).

<sup>2</sup> All cases selected to participate in interviews for this study were from households that received ACS materials with the modified 2020 Census language. As part of a separate experiment to test the effectiveness of the modified language, roughly 8% of sampled households received unmodified, baseline ACS materials in March that did not mention the 2020 Census. These households were excluded from this study.

<sup>3</sup> The original mailing schedule was adapted shortly after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic such that some contacts were not mailed to households at all and some contacts were sent in a different order or on a shortened schedule.

<sup>4</sup> Chesnut and Davis, 2011

and the 2020 Census, and (2) impressions of ACS mail materials with added messaging communicating that households need to complete both the ACS and the 2020 Census. This report summarizes the data collection methods and presents the cognitive interview findings.

## 2. Methods

Westat's IDEA Services contributed to the research design and developed the data collection materials (informed consent, recruitment screener, interview protocols), conducted intensive recruiting to meet the requirements for respondent characteristics, and conducted and analyzed 47 cognitive interviews.

### 2.1 Protocol Development

Protocol development consisted of crafting language for the introduction and informed consent, detailed interviewer instructions, research questions, and scripted probes for each research question. Research questions were designed around six themes to better understand how ACS mail was received and interpreted:

1. Mail handling;
2. Recall and recognition of Census mail items;
3. Differentiation between the ACS and the 2020 Census;
4. Response decision to the ACS and the 2020 Census;
5. Exposure to the ACS mailings; and
6. General civic or community engagement.

For each theme, participants were first asked a broad open-ended question intended to elicit their experience in their own words, followed by detailed probes to collect any additional needed information. The protocol was designed to first collect participants' unprompted recall of any mail they received from the Census Bureau. Participants were then shown the materials to collect their recollections of how the revised materials influenced their response and to obtain feedback on the changes.

The original (pre-pandemic) design called for interviews to be conducted in person. Because we were relying on participants' memories, an additional goal was to interview participants as soon as possible after they were exposed to the mailings of interest, ideally within two weeks of completing the ACS (for self-respondents). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, rather than

interview participants in-person with hard copies of the mailing materials, the methodology was changed to a telephone administration and the ACS materials were emailed to the participants shortly in advance of the interview. So that we could capture unvarnished real-time memories, participants were instructed not to open the attachments until asked to do so by the interviewer. Most interviews were conducted 3-4 weeks after ACS completion, and some as long as 8 weeks or more later, introducing a much longer recall period than originally intended.

Following the order of research themes listed above, the protocol first asked participants to describe how the mail generally is handled in their households. They were then asked if they recalled receiving any mail from the Census Bureau over the past few months. Those who did recall receiving mail from the Census Bureau were asked to discuss that mail in detail, and afterwards were asked to open the attachment in their email to briefly review the materials. If participants said they did not recall receiving any mail from the Census Bureau they would then be asked to open the attachment in their email with the appropriate mailings as a reminder and then asked what they recalled about them.

Participants were then asked if they received mail for one or two Census Bureau surveys. Participants who answered they had received mail for two surveys were asked about how they differentiated between the two surveys based on the mail they received. Participants who answered they received mail for only one survey skipped this section.

All participants were then asked how they decided to respond to the ACS or the 2020 Census. Following that, participants' attention was directed to language on the mailing materials differentiating the ACS from the 2020 Census. Interviewers elicited feedback on these specific messages. Finally, participants were asked a series of questions about their civic engagement, including voting, survey participation, and trust in various sources of statistics.

Cognitive interview participants were drawn from a sample of those who had completed the ACS as part of the March, July, or August panels. The Census Bureau made several adjustments to the planned mailing schedule to accommodate COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. As a result, not all participants received the same set of mailings. No participants in the April, May, and June panels were selected for cognitive interviews because of pauses in the mailings and adaptation of the mailing schedule. March panel participants received up to three mailings with the modified



language, and July and August panel participants up to two.<sup>5,6</sup> Table 2-1 displays the revised 2020 mailout strategy and potential mailings received for each ACS panel month included in this study.

**Table 2-1. 2020 revised ACS mailout strategy for panel months included in the study**

<b>Panel Month</b>	<b>Mailing 1</b>	<b>Mailing 2</b>	<b>Mailing 3</b>
March	Initial package	Reminder pressure seal	Questionnaire package
July	Initial package	Questionnaire package to some/Pressure seal to others	NA
August	Pressure seal letter	Questionnaire package to some/Pressure seal to others	NA

Westat administered three versions of the protocol, each reflecting the different mailing strategies for the March, July, and August panels. (All three protocol versions, with email attachments, are included in Appendix A.)

## 2.2 Recruitment

The Census Bureau provided Westat with lists of respondents to the March, July, and August ACS panels. To be included in the sample, households must have received the specialized mail materials containing 2020-specific language, and must have responded to the ACS by either mail, internet, or Telephone Questionnaire Assistance (TQA).<sup>7</sup> Sampled respondents were also over the age of 18 and had a phone number on file. Potential interview participants were screened first to ensure they personally handled the mail in their household, and in order to avoid professional respondents, had not participated in a research focus group or interview in the past six months. All eligible participants were then asked a series of screening questions to capture overall demographics (Appendix B). The desired demographic composition for this testing was a mix of urban and rural geographic locations (with a minimum of 6 from rural areas, as defined

<sup>5</sup> Due to changes made to the mailing schedule during the pandemic, not all March panel respondents were sent Mailing 3.

<sup>6</sup> For the interviews, quotas were set to interview 10 March panel participants who were sent Mailing 2 and 5 who were sent Mailing 3; 10 July panel participants who were sent Mailing 1 and 6 who were sent Mailing 2; and 6 August panel participants who were sent Mailing 1 and 10 who were sent Mailing 2.

<sup>7</sup> The original design included a small number of ACS non-respondents in the target recruitment criteria. This goal was dropped during data collection after assessing the high level of effort required to obtain self-respondents, and the impact of the revised mailing strategy on the ability to include non-respondents in the sample files.

by the Census Bureau using zip code), education levels (with a minimum of 10 with less than a bachelor's degree), sex, age, and race and ethnicity. Participants were also recruited to reflect a mix of number of ACS mailings received and internet or paper response. The number of completed interviews was evenly distributed across the three panel months. Table 2-2 shows the number of participants who were interviewed with the targeted characteristics, based on their responses to the recruitment screener and information provided by the Census Bureau. The table in Appendix C presents distributions of key demographic characteristics across the 47 completed interviews.

**Table 2-2. Number of respondents with targeted characteristics\***

Targeted Characteristic	March panel (n=15)	July Panel (n=16)	August Panel (n=16)	Total (n=47)
Mailings Sent				
1 Mailing	N/A**	10	6	16
2 Mailings	10	6	10	26
3 Mailings	5	N/A****	N/A****	5
Internet response	15	13	11	39
Paper response	N/A***	3	5	8
Less than college education	5	8	7	20
Rural	1	4	3	8

\*The table does not reflect recruitment goals because they changed several times throughout the field period in response revised mailing strategies and other pandemic-related issues.

\*\* Everyone in the March panel received mailings 1 and 2. Mailings 1 and 2 were sent too close together to differentiate between them in the sample file for response tracking purposes.

\*\*\*This criteria was not introduced until the July panel.

\*\*\*\*Did not receive three mailings.

Westat selected cases from the Census Bureau's sample files based on the desired demographic criteria. Two members of Westat's recruiting staff were trained to call potential participants, administer the screening questions, and if the participant was eligible, schedule him or her immediately. Westat monitored recruiting results and scheduled interviews on a daily basis, reviewing all screened and scheduled individuals to determine whether they met the criteria for the targeted characteristics. Westat and the Census Bureau communicated regularly throughout the screening process to evaluate selections and make decisions under the changing circumstances of the pandemic. Table 2-3 shows the number of cases contacted, participants scheduled, and interviews completed.

**Table 2-3. Cases contacted, participants scheduled, and completed interviews**

<b>Panel Month</b>	<b>Contacted</b>	<b>Scheduled</b>	<b>Completed</b>
March	652	24	15
July	479	24	16
August	613	21	15

## 2.3 Cognitive Interview Administration

Four interviewers conducted the cognitive interviews. Two of the interviewers were part of the Westat project development team and were well versed in the requirements of the project. Westat held a one-hour interviewer training with two additional interviewers and a separate one-hour training with two note-takers. All interviewers were formally trained in cognitive testing and had participated in at least one prior cognitive testing project for the Census Bureau. The training provided background information about the overall project; and presented the interview themes and associated probes along with all other interview materials and procedures. The note-taker training provided background information about the overall project, presented the interview themes and probes, and provided detailed instructions for using the interview summary template to draft the findings for each interview.

Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and respondents were given \$40 to offset any costs of participation, such as childcare expenses. All 47 interviews were conducted by telephone due to the conditions of the pandemic. Participants were emailed the consent form and relevant mailing examples just prior to the interview and were instructed not to open them until asked to do so by the interviewer. All interview materials and procedures were reviewed and approved by OMB and Westat's Institutional Review Board.

## 2.4 Analytic Approach

Analysis of the interviews was based on summaries that included respondents' answers to the open-ended questions and detailed probes.

These summaries were imported into NVivo, a text-based relational database for managing and analyzing qualitative data. Two Westat team members organized the data using a coding scheme that incorporated the project's research questions and any themes that emerged from the data.

Once all summaries were coded, the analysts ran targeted queries to iteratively review, categorize, and report on the data.

### 3. Executive Summary

This section presents a high-level summary of findings from 47 cognitive interviews conducted April through October, 2020 to assess participant reactions to receiving both the ACS and the 2020 Census and their impressions of ACS mailing materials with added messaging communicating that households need to complete both the ACS and the 2020 Census. More detailed descriptions of the Methodology and Key Findings can be found in this report's Sections 2 and 4, respectively.

- About half of participants were able to recall differentiating between the ACS and the 2020 Census based on the mailings they received. Most of these participants recalled seeing specific statements in the letters which told them this information. Many described the key difference between the two surveys as the 2020 Census being conducted at the national level and the ACS as conducted at a community or regional level. At the same time, half of the participants did not differentiate between the two surveys. Most of these participants reported that they did not pay close attention to the letters and assumed all the mail they received from the Census Bureau was for the 2020 Census.
- The various statements throughout the materials that response is required by U.S. law had the most influence on participants' decision to respond. Of all the information provided in the letters and throughout the mailings, this statement was cited most often as standing out and compelling participants to respond. Of those who understood that the ACS was a separate survey, most but not all also understood that its completion was required by law as well.
- About half of participants said they completed one or both surveys out of a sense of civic obligation which did not necessarily come from anything they read in the letters. No differences were found in attentiveness to the mailings, mail handling behavior, or general comprehension of the messaging between those who completed the survey out of civic obligation and those who did so because it was required.

- Most participants did not notice the FAQs in the revised letters, but those that did notice and read it said they found useful information. The FAQs were located on the back of the initial letter and the majority of participants said they did not recall seeing it. A few however said they did remember finding helpful information about when the ACS was due and why it was important to complete.
- When participants were asked to read and react to the revised language during the interview, most said they found it clear, informative, and helped to distinguish the two surveys. Several commented that if they had noticed and read the information when they received the mail, they would have understood there were two different surveys.
- The revised letters did not appear to communicate a clear message to these participants about how the ACS and the 2020 Census are different. Although about half of participants understood they were being asked to complete a survey separate from the Census, many were left unclear as to why the Census Bureau was conducting both surveys and what the ACS would be used for. For some this was because they did not pay close attention to the statements in the materials, and for others it was because the revised statements were not followed up by a sufficiently detailed explanation of the differences between the two.
- The interview protocol included questions about mail handling habits and civic engagement to provide possible explanations for respondents' reactions to and impressions of the revised messaging. Our analysis did not reveal a clear relationship between either of these behaviors and any of the feedback about the revised language on the mailing materials.
- For 2030, the Census Bureau may want to consider revised messaging, particularly on outer envelopes, that more clearly differentiates the two surveys and their purposes. Participants themselves offered suggestions that included larger print and survey-specific letterhead, among other ideas, to draw attention to and differentiate the two surveys.

## 4. Detailed Findings

This chapter presents key findings that address the research objectives for each theme in the interview protocol. Those portions of the excerpts that occur within quotation marks represent respondents' verbatim statements. Since all participants were asked the initial open-ended questions for each section relevant to their experience, but follow-up questions were asked as needed, counts are presented only for questions that all participants received; additional responses are summarized using non-numeric terms. Some research questions were repeated in more than one section of the protocol but are only discussed once in the findings. The findings are presented in the order in which the research questions were explored in the interview protocol, with the exception of mail handling behaviors, which are addressed at the end of the chapter (with findings about general engagement).

### 4.1 Recall and Recognition of ACS Mailing Materials

The interview focused primarily on participant reactions to the mailing materials, starting with what they remembered from the mailings they received from the Census Bureau. Participants were asked to describe what they remembered about any mail they received from the Census Bureau, then after sharing their unprompted recollections looked at electronic images of the mailings sent to them via email, with all components included, and asked what pieces they remember paying attention to at the time that they received them in the mail. At this point in the interview participants were not asked to differentiate between the ACS and the 2020 Census.<sup>8</sup>

The specific research questions were as follows:

- What do participants remember about the ACS and the 2020 Census mailings and questionnaires?
- What were participants' general reactions to the mailings?
- How did participants feel when they received the ACS and the 2020 Census mailings?
- What thought processes did participants go through when they received the ACS and 2020 Census mailings?

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<sup>8</sup> Participants who said they did not recall receiving mail from the Census Bureau at the beginning of this portion of the interview would have first reviewed electronic images of the mailings to trigger their memory and then asked the same set of questions. All participants recalled receiving at least one piece of mail from the Census Bureau.

- What were participants' perceptions of the 2020 ACS FAQs? (Did they notice them? Did the FAQs answer any questions participants had? Did the FAQs help differentiate the ACS and 2020 Census?)
- What action, if any, did participants take to get additional information about the ACS or 2020 Census?

All 47 participants recalled receiving mail from the Census Bureau at some point during 2020. While a few participants recalled receiving at least 10 pieces of mail from the Census Bureau, most said they recalled receiving between 3 and 5. Several said they only recalled receiving one or two mailings. Many participants noted some feature of the envelopes as what stood out the most to them, and some remembered receiving letters on Census Bureau letterhead or a paper questionnaire. Only a few participants recalled seeing an FAQ on the letter. While some participants were pleased to receive the mail because they were looking forward to doing the 2020 Census, most said they set it aside and did not feel any particular way about it. Receiving mail for two different surveys, the 2020 Census which was expected, and the ACS which was not, caused confusion for some participants. Any differences between the March, July, and August panels are noted below, otherwise no differences were found.

### **Envelopes stood out as “official-looking,” Census-branded, and required by law**

Of the 47 participants, 32 commented on some feature of the envelopes standing out in their memory. Many of these participants commented on the size of the envelopes, many of which were larger than standard mailings. Many also recalled receiving one or more postcards. Several others recalled receiving a “folded postcard” with perforated sides to tear off.

About a third of participants commented on information they recalled seeing on the exterior of the envelopes. Among this third, almost all remembered seeing the Census Bureau branding and realizing the mail was coming from the Census Bureau. Several participants also recalled seeing a statement on the envelope exteriors that their response was required by law. An August panel participant commented, “It was for the Census and it was at the time the Census was happening. It was clear it was not junk mail.”

Several participants commented on the “official” looking character of the envelopes, which reassured them that this was a request coming from the government. One participant described this as looking “like important government mail.” Another commented that the “very distinctive,

very formal” character of the mail was what made it stand out. A few others recalled that the envelopes were white.

## **Package contents were less memorable than envelopes**

Some participants also recalled details of the contents of the envelopes. Of the 31 participants who received at least two mailings, 11 recalled receiving a paper survey. A couple commented on the “mint” or green color of the questionnaire, and were likely thinking of the ACS, another recalled a light blue shade, and was likely thinking of the census.

Most participants recalled that they had received a letter as a part of the mailings, and some remembered a few details about it. Without being first shown the materials, five participants said that they recalled seeing a statement that they were being asked to complete the ACS or a “community survey” that was different from the 2020 Census. Several said that what stood out to them were the instructions to fill out the survey online along with the PIN. A few others again commented on the official look of the letter. A couple participants commented that they recalled seeing instructions on how to fill out and complete the survey.

A few participants recalled the Business Reply Envelope enclosed in the mailing with the paper survey, and a couple others recalled receiving the multilingual brochure.

## **Participant reactions to the mailings were mostly neutral or positive**

Most participants reported neutral reactions to the ACS and 2020 Census mailings they had received, merely saying that this mail was asking them to “do the census.”

Most participants at this point in the interview spoke generally about “the census.” Interviewers had deliberately not mentioned “the decennial,” “the census,” or the “American Community Survey” yet. Of the 47 participants, 14 recalled receiving mail about the ACS specifically. One participant recalled that the letter was telling her that not everyone is selected for the “second survey” and that she was required to complete it. Another said “my curiosity was piqued” about the ACS because he had never heard of it before.

“The community survey was not familiar to me and I was not expecting it but I believe there was something on it that made it clear it was not the normal census.”  
(August panel)



Most others thought the letters were telling them that “the census” is important and mandatory. Several said the letters were telling them about the benefits to their community of participating in the census, and a couple said the letters were telling them they could do the census online.

“I remember it was the census. I thought that was kind of important... we have to know how many people live here and stuff like that.” (August panel)

“[It was] information about it being completed. Information to remind you to complete the census and the importance of the census.” (July panel)

A few participants described being excited or pleased to receive the mail because they were enthusiastic about responding to “the census.” About a quarter of participants reported feeling some kind of pleasure or interest in receiving mail generally from the Census Bureau because they were interested in helping out, or wanted the “chance to be counted.” A few commented that they were pleased to see that they could do “the census” online.

Several participants said they were confused when they received mail for the ACS because they were not expecting to receive mail for two surveys. Some from the July and August panels commented that they did not understand why they were receiving more mail from the Census Bureau to complete another survey when they had already completed the 2020 Census. A couple participants felt cautious when they received mail for the ACS since they were only expecting to get mail about one survey from the Census Bureau. They said they questioned the authenticity of it or thought it was fraud and were compelled to do more research to be sure it was real. A few who had received many mailings commented that it was too much mail and it got annoying.

“With so much fraud out there right now I did look and make sure that they were actually sending this kind of stuff out, that it wasn’t some kind of other organization that was trying to gather material.” (July panel)

## **Participants saved or tossed mailings, depending on how promptly they responded**

Of the 47 participants, 31 said that when they first received mailings from the Census Bureau they would read them and then set them aside with the understanding that they needed to complete the survey. Of the 47, 10 participants said they completed the survey immediately or

within a day or two of receiving the mailings, either out of willingness to participate or to avoid receiving future mailings. Since some of the mailings say that they will receive a paper survey if they do not respond online, a few commented that they specifically waited to receive the paper survey because they did not want to fill out the surveys online.

Four participants, two from July and two from August, said once they completed their first survey, which they thought was the 2020 Census, they then threw out or ignored any other mail they received from the Census Bureau. They explained that they believed they had already done what they were being asked to do and so disregarded subsequent mail. Many other respondents also thought the first mailing they had received was the 2020 Census, so that several participants missed some mailings, but it is not possible to say which mailings. One August panel participant explained that he went online “early in the process” before he noticed any mail from the Census Bureau and saw that he could complete the census online, and so he went ahead and did so and then ignored any subsequent mail he received. After he was told there were two surveys he commented, “If I was supposed to act on the second one in addition to the first one, I probably slipped up.” Another possibility, while not something that could be explored with the methodology of this study, is that another person in his household had completed the ACS.

A few March panel participants made comments suggesting that they completed the ACS thinking it was the 2020 Census and then disregarded subsequent mail. One of these March participants said that while she remembered receiving mail for two surveys she only answered the first that she received mail for explaining she “did the Census and that should be sufficient.” Another of these March participants commented that the survey she completed took “way more than a few minutes” to complete because she “had to look up figures,” suggesting the survey she actually completed was the ACS.

### **Those who had not previously heard of the ACS were most likely to seek additional information**

Participants who had not heard of the ACS prior to this year were more likely to take action to get more information about it after receiving the letter. Of the 47 participants, 13 said that they asked someone or looked online somewhere to get more information. About a third went to the Census Bureau website, another third talked to someone like a friend or relative, a few called the phone number provided in the mailings, and a couple used other sources like Google or Facebook. Most of these participants who were looking for more information explained they were concerned about “fraud” or were trying to determine the legitimacy of the survey. Of those

who called the phone number provided, one wanted to find out if the survey was legitimate, one asked to make sure his online survey had been received, and one called to request a paper survey.

### **FAQs were ignored by most, but useful to the few who consulted them**

Participants were specifically asked if they recalled seeing FAQs in any of the mailings they received. In response to this question, six of the 47 participants said they recalled noticing the FAQs. Among these six, two said they used the FAQs to get more information, specifically when the ACS was due and why they should complete it. One participant recalled seeing a statement in the FAQs that the ACS should be filled out as soon as possible. The remainder of those who said they noticed the FAQs explained that they did not read it because they felt they did not have any questions. For example, one participant explained he is aware of the census and why it is conducted so he did not read the FAQs.

### **When shown mailings participants remembered the instruction card, logon information, and paper questionnaire**

At the conclusion of this portion of the interview participants reviewed electronic versions of the ACS mailings they were sent via email and asked which ones they recalled receiving. Images were purposely designed to provide a visual reminder of the overall mailing, but were somewhat small so as to not provoke participants to read the materials. Among the 12 March participants who said they recalled any of the mailings after seeing these images, six recalled mailing one, six recalled mailing two, and five recalled mailing three. While there was some overlap between those who remembered the individual mailings, there was no consistent pattern. Among the 12, four said they had paid attention to the instruction card, three had noted that it said “Your response is required by law,” three had paid attention to the instructions to complete the survey online, and two to the paper questionnaire.

Among the 15 July participants who said they recalled any of the mailings, 10 recalled the first mailing, and 4 recalled the second. As with the March panel, while there was some overlap among those who recalled both the first and second mailings, not all participants who recalled mailing two also recalled mailing one. Among these 15, eight said they had paid attention to the instruction card, six to the warning that response is required by law, and four to the log-on information.

Among the 15 August panel participants who recalled any of the mailings, 11 recalled the first mailing and 10 recalled the second. Most said they recalled receiving both mailing one and two. Among these 11, eight said they had paid attention to the warning that their response was required by law, four paid attention to the logon information, four paid attention to the paper survey, and two to the return envelope.

## 4.2 Differentiation

In the next portion of the interview participants were asked how many surveys they understood they had received mail for, and if more than one, how they differentiated between the ACS and the 2020 Census. Going into this portion of the interview, 14 participants had already offered unprompted that they remembered receiving mail for two surveys.

The research questions were as follows:

- Did participants notice that they were asked to complete two different questionnaires?
- How did participants know that they were being asked to complete two different questionnaires?
- What did participants think were the differences between the ACS and the 2020 Census questionnaires?
- What aspects of the mailings, if any, helped participants understand that the ACS is different from the 2020 Census?
- Did the FAQs help differentiate the ACS and 2020 Census questionnaires?

### **Just over half of participants realized they were being asked to complete two surveys**

When directly asked if they had received mail for one or two surveys from the Census Bureau 27 of the 47 participants said they understood that they had received mail for two different surveys. As noted above, this includes 14 who had already mentioned receiving two surveys, before being asked about it directly. Seventeen participants thought that they had only received mail for one survey, and three did not know or could not recall. Those who thought they had received mail for only one survey all assumed it had been for the 2020 Census. Among the three panels, six of the 15 participants in the March panel realized there were two different surveys, 13 of the 16 participants in the July panel, and 8 of the 16 participants in August did so (Table 2-4). Any

other differences between the March, July, and August panels are noted below, otherwise no differences were found.

**Table 2-4. Participant differentiation of surveys by panel month**

	One survey	Two surveys	Don't know	Total
March	7	6	2	15
July	3	13	--	16
August	7	8	1	16

Of the 27 who recalled being asked to complete two surveys, more than half specifically mentioned some aspect of the mailings that helped them understand the surveys were different. Most said they saw this information specifically stated in the letter itself. A few differentiated between them because they noticed that the PIN numbers or website URL provided on the letters were different. A few commented on the differences that stood out to them:

“It specifically said on the mailings that ‘this is different from the census, but it’s still required by law.’” (March panel)

“The instructions on the American Community Survey indicated that it was a separate survey from the Census.” (July panel)

“The paragraph that said it was not the 2020 Census was pretty clear.” (August panel)

About a third of participants said they understood that they were being asked to fill out different surveys not because of anything specific in the letters, but because they noticed that the surveys themselves were different, noting that one of the surveys was longer and more detailed, while the other was shorter. Among the remaining participants who recognized that the surveys were different, a couple had prior knowledge of the ACS and already understood it is a separate survey, and a couple noted that the ACS had “American” or “Community” in the title and therefore was different from the 2020 Census.

## Participants' understanding of differences between the ACS and the 2020 Census varied but was mostly accurate

Among the 27 participants who recognized that the 2020 Census and the ACS are different, seven described the former as a count of the United States population while the latter collects information at the community level. One participant explained that she thought of the 2020 Census as asking, “Who are these people and where do they live?” While the ACS asked, “How do you live there? What are your habits? How do you fit into your community?”

Another six of these participants who thought they were different focused on the level of detail in the questioning, explaining that the 2020 Census had asked more general or “high level” questions, while the ACS was much more detailed and asked more comprehensive questions about their life. A couple others explained that the 2020 Census is a count of everyone in the U.S. while the ACS was a count or “census” collected at the community or “region” level. A couple also commented that information from the ACS was used to determine community funding priorities.

“The first census [2020] they do every 10 years, the second census [ACS] was I think to refine the answers for the census. I think they explained it in there that they were trying to get more precise, more demographics.” (July panel)

“The Census survey counts everyone in the country. My impression of the American Community Survey is that it is a statistical sample by region or community to get a feel for that region or community.” (August panel)

One March participant who set aside all the mail he received from the Census Bureau over a few weeks and then opened it all at the same time explained he realized they were different when he read the letters. “They were different. One was the census, but the other one was a survey attached to the census that had more in-depth questions.”

Participants offered mixed responses for why the Census Bureau would be doing both surveys. Six of the participants who realized there were two different surveys said they thought the ACS is done to collect regional- or community-level information that is not collected by the 2020 Census. A March panel participant explained, “One is for nationwide and one is for my state.” Many of these participants connected this to allocating funding for communities. Another six of such participants said they did not know why the Census Bureau is doing both surveys. Three

suggested that there are too many questions in the ACS to be asked in the 2020 Census, so they send it to a smaller sample.

Several July and August panel participants thought the ACS is a part of the 2020 Census data collection and is a follow-up to the primary survey that only a sample of the population received. They described it as a “step one and a step two” or a “long form.” These participants explained that the Census Bureau would do this either because asking too many questions in the 2020 Census would lower response rates or because they could not be required to ask everyone in the country all of the questions included in the ACS.

“I think the second one said something along the lines that it was a follow-up survey. I don’t remember exactly what it said, but that was the gist of it.” (July panel)

“It’s hard enough to get people to fill in the normal census and if they asked them the level of detail that the community survey had then the response rate would be much, much lower.” (July panel)

A couple of participants confused the 2020 Census and ACS, assuming that the 2020 Census was the longer survey and the ACS was shorter. A July participant commented on how much shorter the ACS was than the 2020 Census. A March participant first logged on to do the ACS online in March thinking it was the 2020 Census, then stopped because it took too long. He then tried to log on to complete it after being contacted to participate in the Westat interview and completed what, from his description, sounded like the 2020 Census instead. He did not realize they were two separate surveys until the interview.

“I didn’t realize there were two separate surveys. I just thought it was just the census enhanced...I did not realize I was filling out two censuses. I thought, ‘They’ve really made a lot of changes to the census. They’re asking a lot more questions.’” (March panel)

## **For a few participants, the multiple mailings caused confusion**

For several participants, receiving mailing requests for more than one survey from the Census Bureau caused confusion. Most of these participants recognized they were being asked to complete a separate survey but were unsure why. One said that when she saw the title “American Community Survey” she wondered if it was a separate survey from the 2020 Census or if the

census itself had been renamed. Another explained that she was confused when she received a second letter from the Census Bureau about completing a survey since she had already completed the 2020 Census. She explained that since she did not know what it was, she did not fill out the survey herself but gave it to her son to do online. Another thought that while the 2020 Census was conducted by the Census Bureau, the ACS was conducted by a “third party” that wanted to collect additional information.

## **FAQs not a factor in differentiating the ACS from the 2020 Census**

For almost all participants, the FAQs in the mailings did not help them to differentiate between the ACS and the 2020 Census because they either did not notice them or did not take the time to read them. One participant who did notice them commented that she liked the FAQs because the questions explained what the ACS is and how the Census Bureau would use the information from the survey.

### **4.3 Response Decision**

In the next portion of the interview, participants were asked to explain their thought process for responding to either or both the ACS and the 2020 Census. Before answering these questions all participants were informed that they had received mail from the Census Bureau about two separate surveys and that they were required to complete both.

The research questions unique to this section were as follows:

- How did participants decide to answer either or both questionnaires?
- Were participants aware that their response was mandatory (to either or both)?
- What aspects of the mailings influenced participants’ decision to participate (in either or both)?

All of the 47 participants completed the ACS, but as discussed in the previous section, only 27 of the 47 realized they were completing a separate survey from the 2020 Census. Two primary factors shaped participants' decision to respond to either or both surveys: a sense of civic obligation or the fact that the surveys are required by law. Of the 47 participants, 24 said they completed one or both of the two surveys because they felt a civic obligation to participate, and



21 said they did so because it was required. An additional two participants said it was something to do while they were home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the 27 participants who understood they were being asked to complete two separate surveys, a little over half said they completed the ACS out of civic obligation, and a little under half said they did so because it was required by law. In each panel participants were split roughly in half between those who completed the surveys from civic obligation and those who did so because it was required. Further, those who understood there were two surveys were roughly split in half by motivation in each panel month.

### **For a little more than half of participants, a sense of civic obligation drove their response decision**

Many of the participants who completed one or both of the surveys out of a sense of civic obligation explained that completing either of the surveys was “important” and a “responsibility” as an American citizen. One participant explained she felt it is her “civil responsibility to participate in the census, so my community is recorded accurately.”

About half of the 27 participants who understood they were being asked to do the ACS in addition to the 2020 Census said that they completed them both out of this sense of civic obligation. One such participant explained that he completed the ACS “so there is an accurate reflection of the health of the community.” He went on to explain that once he did his own research and understood the purpose of the ACS he felt even more compelled to complete it. “I felt more inclined to fill that out than the census, to be honest.” Another commented that she is “an American citizen, and the data is to help Americans.” For a few, the political circumstances of the 2020 election year was a motivator. One participant explained that 2020 was a “special year given the election that is going and I think I should participate more” and that she felt “more motivated to participate in the community” by completing both surveys. Several others explained that they understood completing either of the surveys was linked to funding decisions for their communities.

“In both cases it seemed like it was my responsibility to do them, so you do what you’re supposed to do.” (July panel)

“I believe it’s very vital and important to everyone in this country to do the census.” (August panel)

“I just think it’s a civil duty to complete these things. I think that’s my main motivation.” (August panel)

A few participants also mentioned being excited or particularly enthusiastic to complete the surveys. These participants were statisticians, students, or people otherwise engaged in social research.

### **Slightly less than half of participants responded because the law requires them to**

All participants understood they were required to respond to the 2020 Census and 20 participants said they understood that the ACS is required by law. Four participants specifically said that while they understood the census was required they were not sure about the ACS. All participants said that this statement was very clear on the mailings. One participant commented in response to why he had completed the ACS that the materials were “unambiguous that it was required by law.”

“It said ‘required by law’ and I said, ‘ok, I guess I better respond to this and not lose it.’” (July panel)

A little less than half of the 27 participants who understood they were being asked to complete two surveys said they did both because both were required. The rest thought they were only asked to do one survey and that one survey was required. This statement that “Your response is required by law” was direct and compelling for these participants. Some explained that they knew their response was required and that they would continue to receive contacts about it so they decided to get their response in. One participant explained that she hurried to complete it in order to “avoid the knock at the door.” A couple participants commented that they found the statement saying, “Your response is required by law” to be “threatening,” although they did not elaborate on what they thought would happen if they did not do it.

A few participants thought that the 2020 Census is mandatory and the ACS is not. One commented that while she knew she was required to do the 2020 Census she did not feel the same level of importance about the ACS. One participant who thought the ACS was voluntary but completed it anyway explained, “Honestly, under lock-down we’ve got nothing to do.”

## **Some participants were confused about which survey they had decided to respond to**

As discussed earlier, 20 of the 47 participants did not realize that they had been asked to complete two surveys from the Census Bureau. At this point in the interview, some of these participants expressed confusion about which survey they had actually completed. Most of these participants believed that the survey they had completed was the 2020 Census. All participants in the sample for this study had completed the ACS, so these participants were incorrectly identifying the survey they had completed as the 2020 Census. Another possibility, that could not be verified in this study, is that someone else in their household completed the ACS. Some of these participants asked the interviewer to clarify which survey they had actually completed and a few said they would follow-up with the Census Bureau after the interview for clarification. A few participants in the July and August panels reported having forgotten completing a survey for the Census Bureau earlier in the year until the interview discussion prompted a memory of it. Another participant was informed by his wife during the interview that they had received information for the ACS and she had completed the survey.

### **4.4 Exposure**

In the next portion of the interview, participants were shown the select ACS mailings that contained modified language about completing both the ACS and the 2020 Census. The purpose of this exercise was to elicit real-time feedback based on stimuli as opposed to participant recall of materials they had interacted with only briefly and sometimes weeks prior to the interview.

The specific research questions unique to this section were:

- What do participants remember about the ACS's and the 2020 Census' mailings and questionnaire (after examining the materials more closely)?
- What were participants' general reactions to the mailings?

Participants were first given a moment to review the letter as they would have when they received it in the mail. Their attention was then directed to the revised portion of the letter. This language was highlighted in the materials to focus participants' attention. Participants were asked if they recalled seeing this information when they got the letter, and if they did, what they

remembered about it, and how it influenced their decision to respond. They were then asked how helpful the information was to distinguish the ACS from the 2020 Census.

Due to changes to the mailing schedule during the COVID-19 pandemic, the initial overall mailing schedule was reduced from five contacts to three for the March panel and reduced again to two contacts for the July and August panels. All mailings sent in the revised mailing strategy contained the modified language. While March panel participants may have seen all three mailings with the modified language, July and August panel participants saw only two, as shown in Table 4-1. Participants were deliberately recruited to reflect a mix of number of contacts received within each panel such that not all interview participants received all contacts in the mail. Table 4-1, on the following page, demonstrates the order of letters for each panel.

**Table 4-1. Modified ACS materials sent by panel month and shown to participants**

<b>Panel Month</b>	<b>Mailing 1</b>	<b>Mailing 2</b>	<b>Mailing 3</b>
March	Initial package letter, with FAQ	Reminder pressure seal letter	Questionnaire package letter
July	Initial package letter, with FAQ	Questionnaire package letter	NA
August	Initial pressure seal letter	Questionnaire package letter	NA

After being shown the revised mailings during the interview, across panel months and mailing letter version, most participants said they still did not recall seeing the highlighted information when they received the letters in the mail, either because they threw them out before reading or did not closely read the entire letter. Participants who did recall seeing the information were asked how it influenced their decision to respond to the ACS. Most of those that did recall seeing the statements said that the information did not influence their decision to respond to the survey because they already wanted to do so. Most of the participants who took the time to initially read the letters when they received them were those who already felt compelled to do the 2020 Census from a sense of civic duty.

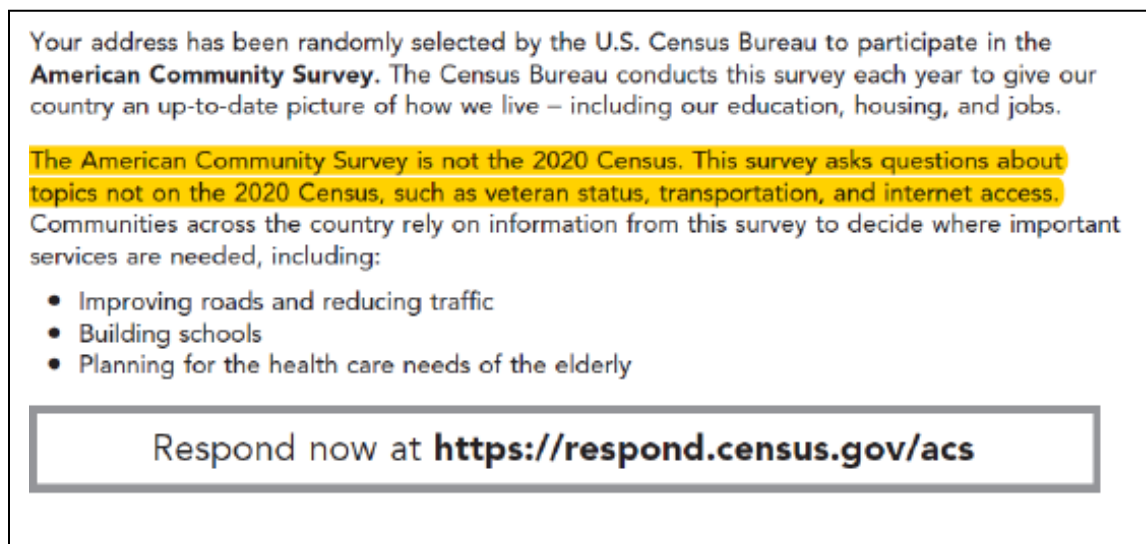
Across all three panels, when directed to focus on the statements, most participants said that they clearly stated that there are two surveys, and those who did not notice them initially said that if they had read them when they received them in the mail they would have understood that they were being asked to complete two surveys. However, after viewing the statements, several

participants were still unsure what the difference was between the ACS and the 2020 Census and why they were being asked to complete two surveys. Any differences by panel month and mailing are discussed below.

#### 4.4.1 March and July Panels: Initial Mailing Letter

Participants in the March and July panels received the ACS Initial Mailing letter in their first mailing. Since this was the first mailing all 31 participants in the two panel months were mailed this item. This letter included a statement on the first page that the ACS is not the 2020 Census and a brief summary of the ACS question topics. The FAQs were provided on the back page with questions and answers differentiating the ACS and the 2020 Census. Figure 4-1 demonstrates the portion of the front side of the letter with the tested information highlighted, as participants saw it during testing.

**Figure 4-1. ACS initial package letter, first page statement**



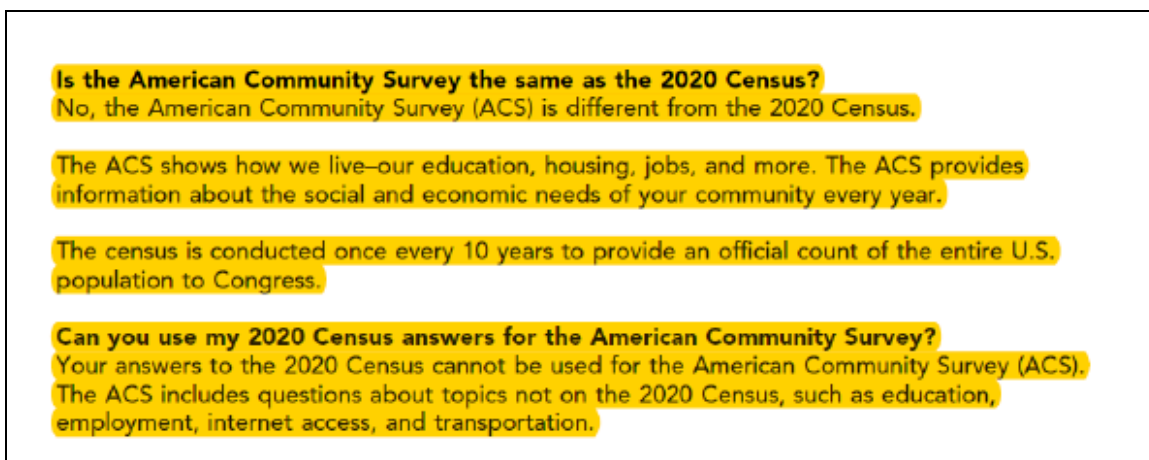
Of the 15 March panel participants, nine did not recall seeing this information on the first page and five did recall it. Conversely, among the 16 July panel participants, 11 did recall seeing this information and five did not recall.

All participants who said they remembered the highlighted information said it had not influenced their decision to respond. One participant who did recall seeing the information said that it made

him think that the request was not coming from the Census Bureau, but from a “third party” who was conducting the survey. He elaborated that this did not affect his response decision because he saw the Census Bureau logo at the top of the page and knew he should respond. A few participants commented that while they did notice the statements what really influenced their decision was a statement further in the letter that their response was required by law. Another participant recalled seeing the bullet about “improving roads and reducing traffic.” He added that this did not impact his decision because he “would’ve responded either way.”

Participants were then asked to focus their attention on the FAQs on the following page of the attachment. Interviewers asked if participants recalled the information and if it influenced their decision to respond. Figure 4-2 displays the tested portion of the FAQs with the relevant information highlighted for participants.

**Figure 4-2. ACS initial package letter, FAQs**



Among the 15 March panel participants, 12 could not recall seeing this information when they received the letter, and three said they did recall it. Among the 16 July panel respondents, 10 did recall seeing the information, and six did not. A couple of the participants who recalled seeing the FAQs said that the information about it benefitting their community stood out and did influence their decision to respond.

Although at the beginning of the interview most participants said they did not recall seeing the FAQs, six had said they did, and they shared their thoughts here after re-reading it. One participant recalled that the FAQ was telling her that the ACS would ask questions more specific to her neighborhood. She said that this did impact her decision to complete the survey because

she believed it would benefit her community. Another commented that reading this letter was the first time he had heard of the ACS and that it did impact his decision because he learned that the ACS was “part and parcel” of the Census Bureau and he wanted to “positively contribute to the research.” Another said he remembered this section saying the ACS would be about “detailed life” rather than “demographic” questions. Participants were then asked how helpful either or both of the highlighted sections were in helping to distinguish the ACS from the 2020 Census. Most of these participants said the sections were helpful, while some thought they were not helpful. Those who thought they were helpful said the statements clearly explain that the ACS and the 2020 Census are different surveys. One participant commented they are helpful, “if people pay attention.” Another said this would have been helpful if he had opened the letter and read it.

One participant who said the information on the front of the letter was not helpful said he missed the word “not” in the sentence “The American Community Survey is not the 2020 Census.” Others who thought it was not helpful said the statement was clear, but the information did not stand out and so they overlooked it. One participant said he just saw the word “Census” and did not read the rest of the letter, thinking he knew what it was about.

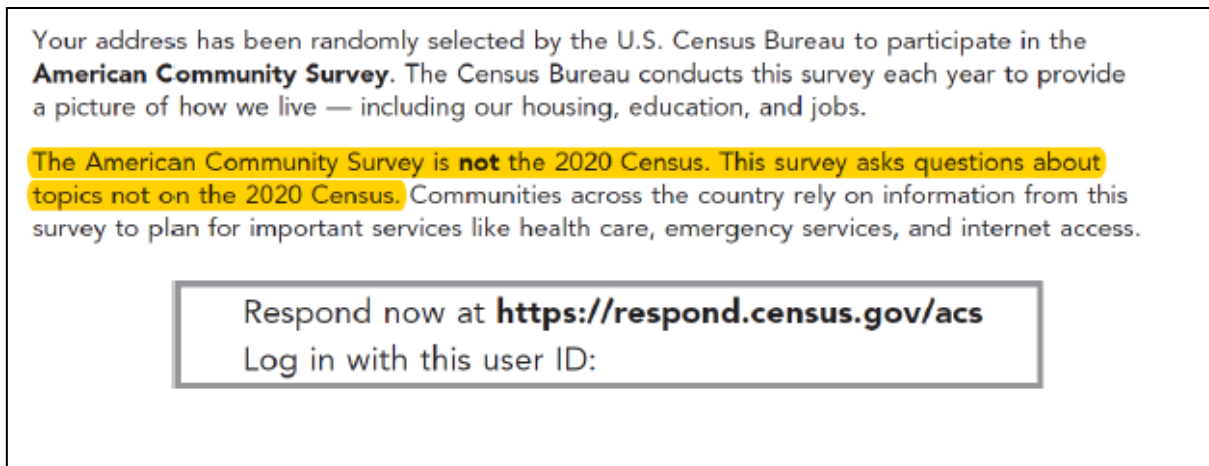
A few others said that while the highlighted information was helpful in understanding that they were two different surveys they did not think the letter did a sufficient job in explaining why both surveys were being conducted or what was the difference between them.

#### **4.4.2 August Panel: Mailing 1 Pressure Seal Letter**

Participants in the August panel saw a different version of the letter from their first mailing than those in the March and July panels. This version included the same first sentence as the initial mailing letter, with the word “not” bolded, and offered an abbreviated message about the topics covered in the ACS. In addition, the August participants received this letter alone as a pressure seal mailing and not as a part of the initial ACS package. Since this was the first mailing, all 16 participants from the August panel were mailed this item. Figure 4-3 demonstrates the portion of the letter with the tested information highlighted for participants.



**Figure 4-3. Initial pressure seal letter**



Of the 16 August participants, seeing the stimuli prompted 11 to recall the highlighted information. A couple such participants said that they did recall seeing this sentence and it encouraged them to respond to the ACS at the time that they received the letter. One said that he otherwise would not have realized the ACS was a separate survey. Another commented that she saw the information when she received the letter in the mail and was confused by it and so she called the ACS phone number for clarification on what the survey was.

The remaining five of the 16 August participants still did not recall the statement after seeing the stimuli. Of those who did not recall, about half said they did not recall that particular statement and the other half said they did not recall receiving the letter at all. A couple of these participants who did not recall seeing this statement said they only skimmed the letter or threw it out without reading it. A couple other participants who did not recall seeing this statement commented that they noticed other information in the letter, but not this statement. One such participant commented, “I probably looked at this letter for a couple of seconds and my eye focused on the box and the bolded sentence [the URL] and that’s about it.” Another commented that she noticed the language that stated how the ACS would help “communities across the country,” but not the highlighted sentence.

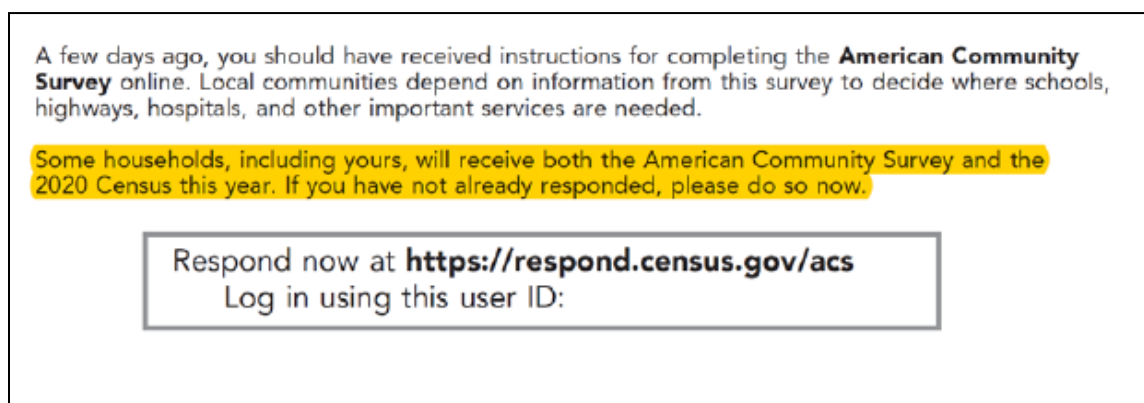
#### **4.4.3 March Panel: Mailing 2 Reminder Pressure Seal Letter**

Participants were then directed to view a second mailing and give their feedback on it in the same process as the first mailing. The 15 participants in the March panel were the only ones to



view three versions of the letters in total, and to have been sent the Mailing 2 version of the pressure seal letter. This version of the letter informed participants that only some households would receive both the ACS and the 2020 Census, and asked them to respond “now.” Figure 4-4 demonstrates the portion of the letter with the tested information highlighted for participants.

**Figure 4-4. Reminder pressure seal letter**



Of the 15 March panel participants who should have received this mailing, 10 said they did not recall either receiving this letter or reading this information and five said they did recall the information. Those who did recall seeing the statement when they got the letter in the mail did not say that it impacted their decision to respond to the ACS.

After being directed to focus their attention on this statement, almost all participants said the statement is helpful in distinguishing the ACS from the 2020 Census. A few commented again that they did not read the letter very closely when they received it in the mail, but if they had read this information at the time it would have helped to clarify the difference between the two surveys. One participant who said he did not read the full letter described this information as “the fine print.” Another commented that the line “if you have not already responded, please do so now” was probably what compelled her to complete it.

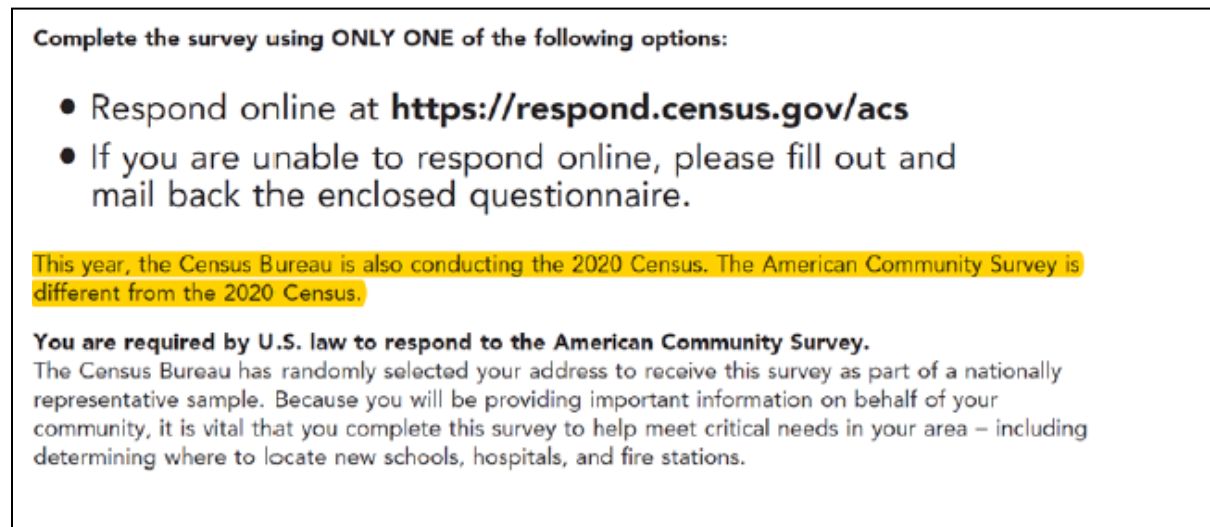
One participant liked the shorter length of this letter, describing it as “perfect.”

A couple participants found it confusing that letters were printed on Census Bureau letterhead since the survey being referenced was not the 2020 Census, but something else. One commented that since the letters for both surveys were printed on the same Census Bureau letterhead it made it difficult for him to differentiate between them. Another said, “It seems odd that it’s not part of the U.S. Census.”

#### 4.4.4 March, July, August Panels: Questionnaire Package Letter

Nonresponding households in the March panel were sent a package with a letter and the paper version of the ACS Questionnaire as their third mailing. July and August nonresponding households were sent this as their second mailing. The letter included instructions to fill out the ACS either online or by mail and included a brief statement reiterating that the ACS is different from the 2020 Census. Since this was the second or third mailing, depending on panel month, and participants were recruited to reflect a mix of contacts received before completing the ACS, not all participants would have been sent this questionnaire package in the mail. From the March panel, five participants were sent this letter, six from the July panel, and 10 from the August panel. Figure 4-5 demonstrates the portion of the letter with the tested information highlighted for participants. All participants were shown the letter during the interview regardless of the number of mailings they were sent.

**Figure 4-5. ACS questionnaire package letter**



Across the three panels, nine of the 21 participants who were sent this mailing said they remembered seeing the highlighted text when they received this letter in the mail. Most of these nine said it did not influence their decision because they had already decided by that point that they would complete the survey.

Across all three panels, most participants said the information clearly stated that the two surveys are different. One participant commented, “It makes it clear that this is something beyond, an extension of the previous forms.”

A few additional participants said they understood that the letter was telling them that the two surveys are different, but they still did not understand what made them different or why they were being asked to complete both. One participant commented, “I don’t think it explains it clearly. After reading this I don’t think I can tell the difference.” Another commented, “It’s quite vague on what the American Community Survey is used for.” A few July and August participants thought the phrasing in the first mailings they saw was better (Figures 4-1 and 4-3, respectively) because those letters more clearly addressed the difference between the two surveys. They commented that this version was not as helpful because it does not offer any explanation of the difference.

A few participants found the phrasing of the first sentence with the word “also” to be confusing. A couple said it made the letter sound like it is a reminder for the 2020 Census and not the ACS, another said it made it sound to him like the two surveys were asking for the same information.

A couple of participants said that what stood out to them about the letter was the language that they were “randomly selected” to participate in the ACS and that this language was confusing to them. One participant did not understand the concept of random selection for a survey. He commented, “If it is random, then it is not important.” Another commented that she lived in a primarily Hispanic community, and since her family is not Hispanic them being randomly selected would not be representative of her community.

## **4.5 Mail Handling and General Engagement**

To help contextualize participants’ reactions and responses to the mail they received from the Census Bureau, at the beginning of the interview they were asked to discuss how mail is handled in their household. At the end of the interview they were also asked a series of questions about how involved they are in their communities, their voting behavior, willingness to do surveys, trust in statistics, and trust in the government to keep their information confidential. The sections below summarize participants’ responses to questions about these activities and opinions. Analysis of the data did not reveal any meaningful differences in reactions to or impressions of the mailing messages based on either mail handling behaviors or general engagement.

## 4.5.1 Mail Handling

To better understand how participants receive and organize mail in their households, interviewers asked how their household handles the mail, including how often they retrieve it, what they keep and throw out, and what they pay attention to in order to determine if something should be opened. These questions were asked first to establish the general behavior without influence from discussion about mailings from the Census Bureau.

The specific research question was:

- How and how often is mail handled in participants' households?

Forty-seven participants reported that they or someone else in their household retrieve the mail from their mailbox.

- Thirty-one reported that they retrieve their mail daily.
- One participant reported that he retrieves his mail "most days."
- Five reported that they retrieve their mail three to five times a week.
- Five participants reported that they retrieve their mail one to three times a week.
- Four reported that they retrieve their mail once a week.
- One reported that if it is important, she will retrieve the mail daily, but if not, she retrieves mail on the weekend. She appears to decide importance from an "informed delivery" feature of the United States Postal Service she reported using on her phone, which shows images of envelopes in her mailbox.

Participants were asked to describe how they sort their mail, and decide what to open. About three-quarters reported that they look at specific information on the envelope, most often the sender's name or address, but sometimes also the sender's "logo" or how the addressee name appears, and to whom the mail is addressed, when they sort their mail. Of those participants who sort, many reported that they open mail that consist of bills and mortgage information. A few reported that they open all their mail. Most reported that they either shred, recycle or throw away junk mail. Some reported that they throw their junk mail in the garbage before they get inside their house. Participants reported junk mail as fliers, advertisements, magazines, promotions, credit card and auto insurance offers, and mail from charitable organizations.

Only one participant reported differences in her mail handling behaviors due to the pandemic, explaining she now leaves all her mail at the door to “sit for extra days” before she sorts through it.

Of particular note, 27 participants were specifically asked to describe how they handle mail that is addressed to “resident” or “household.” Of those participants, 14 reported that they consider them as “junk mail” or “spam” and do not look at them. Two reported that they consider them as advertisements, and eleven respondents reported that they open them along with the other mail that they open. It should be noted that this question focused on mail in general, not specifically mail from the Census Bureau. Later in their interviews, many participants seemed to indicate they treat Census Bureau mail addressed “TO THE RESIDENT OF....” differently.

The same patterns were observed in each of the panel months. In addition, no differences were found in these mail handling behaviors and how participants received or remembered the mail they got from the Census Bureau.

#### **4.5.2 General Engagement**

At the conclusion of the interview, in order to get a better sense of their engagement in the community and willingness to participate in surveys, participants were asked about their involvement with civic or community activities, voting, trust in surveys, and trust in the federal government to keep their information private.

The specific research question was:

- What are participants’ general engagement with civic activities or community involvement (e.g. voting, Parent Teacher Association, Homeowner Association, volunteer work, other political activities)?

Of the 47 participants, 26 reported that they are involved in a community organization or civic activity. Of the 26, 8 reported that they are involved in their church. Other civic and community activities reported were university organizations, progressive voter’s alliance, tree foundation, Black Lives Matter protests, community pet rescue, fine arts organization, volunteer work and retirement communities. The remaining 21 participants reported that they are not involved in any civic activity or community organization.

Participants were asked to describe how active they are politically and 21 reported that they are active politically. Another 22 participants reported that they are not at all active politically. One participant reported that he is a “five” on a scale of one to ten. One participant did not answer the question. Of the participants who reported that they are active, one stated, “I have bumper stickers on my car, I wear hats that make it very clear where I stand politically, and I enjoy the comments that I get.” Another reported that she “sporadically donate[s] to campaigns for candidates” that she supports.

There did not appear to be a relationship between those who stated during the interview that they completed the surveys out of a stated sense of civic obligation and those who said that they were involved in community organizations and activities or those who said they were active politically. Those participants who said they were active in their communities were roughly split in half between those who answered the surveys out of civic obligation and those who did so because it was required by law.

Participants were asked to describe their feelings about responding to survey requests in general, and specifically, survey requests from a federal government agency, and 38 reported that they are open to doing surveys in general, and participate often. Of the 38 participants who are open to doing surveys, four participants reported that they are more inclined to participate in a survey if there is compensation. Nine participants reported that they do not like doing surveys in general, and do not participate in them. Interestingly, most of the participants who do not like doing surveys in general, will participate in survey requests from a federal government agency. A few respondents reported that their participation in a survey from a federal government agency is required by law. One participant reported that she “hates it,” because the federal government gets information for free. Conversely, approximately one-half of the participants reported that survey requests from a federal government agency are important and beneficial to the community, and participate in them. Many participants reported that they view federal government surveys the same as general surveys, and are open to doing them. It should be noted that those who agree to participate in cognitive interviews may be more open to doing surveys in general and therefore may not reflect attitudes of the general population toward survey research.

Other than participants generally being more willing to participate in federal government surveys than other surveys, again, no meaningful patterns were found between those who said they like or dislike doing surveys in general and those who said they completed the ACS and the Census out of civic obligation or because it was required.

Participants were asked about the amount of trust they have in statistics put out by the federal government, and by universities and the media. About three-quarters of the participants reported that they trust statistics put out by the federal government, and that it is accurate. A few participants reported that they do not trust federal government statistics, and some participants reported that the “current administration” was the reason for their mistrust. About a third of the participants do not trust statistics put out by universities and the media. Some participants reported that who is putting out the statistics and what their agenda is will determine their trust of university and media statistics. A few participants reported that they trust statistics put out by universities and the media. Participants were also asked about the amount of trust they have in statistics posted on social media, like Facebook or Twitter. About three-quarters of the participants reported that they do not trust statistics posted on social media. A few participants reported that they are not at all active on social media.

While there were no meaningful differences among participants’ opinions on federal surveys, slightly more participants who did the ACS out of a sense of civic obligation said that they trust federal government statistics (14), than those who said they did it because it was required (10).

Forty-five participants were asked about the amount of trust they have for federal statistical agencies like the Census Bureau to keep personal information confidential. While 39 reported that they trust the Census Bureau to keep their information confidential, six said that they do not. Of the six participants who reported mistrust, one commented, “humans do what humans do, they like to talk.” Participants who did trust the Census Bureau to keep their information private were again roughly split between those who did the ACS out of civic obligation and those who did it because it was required. No other meaningful differences were found between their sense of trust and their response behavior.

## 4.6 Recommendations

Although the purpose of this testing was to gain a better understanding of the performance of the revised materials and not to develop recommendations for revisions, some preliminary suggestions for future adjustments to the materials arose from the results.

- More needs to be done to differentiate the ACS and the decennial census to help participants understand they are being asked to complete two surveys. This could be accomplished by making revisions to the outer envelope itself as well as the interior letter



to encourage all respondents, even those who have already completed a Census Bureau survey, to open and read the contents of the mailing. Given participants' reported mail handling behaviors, it seems worth making best use of and paying particular attention to messaging on outer envelopes.

- Include clearer, consistent, and more prominent language about why the ACS is different from the decennial census. In addition to clarifying the differences for those who did understand there are two separate surveys, such language might also help draw the attention of those who did not realize they were being asked to complete two surveys.
- One participant missed the word not in “The American Community Survey is not the 2020 Census.” While this suggests the version used in the August Pressure Seal letter may have been more effective, another approach would be to use positive phrasing instead and avoid using the word “not,” such as, “The American Community Survey is one survey. The Census 2020 is another, different survey.”

In the Exposure portion of the interview, participants also offered suggestions for how the tested information could be emphasized in the mailings to better draw their attention. Namely, several suggested additional highlighting or bolding of the information to make it stand out. One participant commented, “I think if it were highlighted or bolded then I probably would have looked at it more. But if I were just going through mails I doubt I would pay attention to details like that.” The following suggestions were also offered:

- Make the print larger.
- Move the information to the first paragraph of the letter.
- Add a statement to the main portion of the letter on the front page specifying, “Your answers for the 2020 Census cannot be used for the American Community Survey,” instead of including this information in the FAQs on the back.
- Do not print both the 2020 Census and the ACS letters on the same Census Bureau letterhead.
- Add a message to the envelope exterior that says “This is required in addition to the U.S. Census.”



## Appendix A

Interview Protocols:  
March,  
July, and  
August

# OY4 ACS Respondent Burden Testing

## Cognitive Interview Protocol

### March Panel

## Introduction

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I work for Westat, a survey research company based in Rockville, Maryland. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research study.

Westat is working with the Census Bureau on a study to find out what people think about the mail that they receive.

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions I'll ask today. Our purpose is not to compile information about you. Instead, your interview along with those of others will allow us to give feedback to the Census Bureau about how people handle the mail in different types of households.

The information collected in this interview is covered under OMB # 0607-0725.



# Informed Consent

Before we get started, there are a few things I should mention. This is a research project, and your participation is voluntary. If you prefer not to answer any questions just say so, and we can go on to the next one. It's also okay if you change your mind after starting and would rather not participate.

All your answers, everything you say, will be kept confidential. We will not use your name in any reports. We may use quotes in our report that you provide during the interview, but never in a way that would identify you. The interview will take about 45 minutes and you will receive \$40. We also would like to audio record our conversation. This helps me so I can listen to what you are saying and won't have to take a lot of detailed notes while you are talking; it will also help when we write up a summary of this interview. Only project staff will have access to the recording and other project materials, and those materials will be stored according to federal requirements for protecting the identity of individual respondents.

We had emailed you a copy of the consent form. Do you have any questions about it? (Interviewer: ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS). Are you willing to take part in this study?

**Interviewer: TURN ON RECORDER.** The date and time is \_\_\_\_\_. Now that the recorder is running, let me ask again, do you consent to participate and be recorded for this interview?

Before we begin, can you please take a moment and open the email we sent you with the subject name "Attachments for Westat Interview"? You don't need to look at the email right now, but I'll let you know later when it's time to refer to it.

# Protocol

## I. MAIL HANDLING

### VII. Research Questions:

How and how often is mail handled in participants' households?

1. First I'd like to ask some questions about mail in your household. Can you paint a picture for me of how your household deals with mail? I'm interested in as much detail as you can give me.

**Interviewer: IF NEEDED, FOLLOW UP PROBES:**

1a. Who in your household retrieves the mail?

1b. How often is mail retrieved? (e.g. daily, every few days, once a week, etc.)

1c. What do you/does this person do with the mail?

1c1. (IF SORTS MAIL) How do you/does this person sort the mail? (e.g. bills, personal correspondence, junk mail, other)? What happens once the mail is sorted?

1d. How do you/does this person decide what to open?

1e. What do you/does this person do with mail you don't open?

1f. What kinds of things do you/does this person pay attention to on the envelopes? What makes you/this person pay attention to these things?

**Interviewer: MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A CLEAR IDEA OF ANY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HOW MAIL IS HANDLED IF ADDRESSED TO INDIVIDUALS VS. THE HOUSEHOLD**

**ALL CONTINUE TO SECTION II (RECALL)**

## II. RECALL

### VIII. Research Questions:

What do participants remember about the ACS and the 2020 Census mailings and questionnaires?

What were participants' general reactions to the mailings?

How did participants feel when they received the ACS and the 2020 Census mailings?

What thought processes did participants go through when they received the ACS and 2020 Census mailings?

What were participants' perceptions of the 2020 ACS FAQs? (Did they notice them? Did the FAQs answer any questions participants had? Did the FAQs help differentiate the ACS and 2020 Census?)

What action, if any, did participants take to get additional information about the ACS or 2020 Census?

2. Now I'd like to ask, do you recall receiving any mail from the Census Bureau in the past few months?

\_\_\_ YES (Interviewer: CONTINUE)

\_\_\_ NO (Interviewer: GO TO SECTION III – RECOGNITION)

2a. **Interviewer: IF YES (RECALL),** Please tell me in as much detail as possible what you recall about the mail you received from the Census Bureau.

**Interviewer: IF PARTICIPANT MENTIONS THAT THEY HAVE MAILING MATERIALS ON HAND, ASK THAT THEY BE SET ASIDE FOR LATER DISCUSSION.**

### **FOLLOW UP PROBES, IF NEEDED:**

2b. Do you remember how many mailings you received? **Interviewer: IF YES,** How many?

2c. Do you remember roughly when you got these mailings?

2d. What did it/the mailings look like?

2e. (**Interviewer: IF RECALLS MORE THAN ONE**) How were the mailings different from each other, if at all?

2f. What did you think was the purpose of the mailing/these mailings?

2g. What, if anything, stood out to you about the mailing(s)?

2h. What did you think it was/they were trying to tell you?

2i. Who did you think it was/they were for?

2j. What other reactions or feelings, if any, did you have when you received the mailing/these mailings?

2k. What do you recall doing with these mailings when you received them?

2l. Did you notice any frequently asked questions in the mailing(s)? **Interviewer: IF YES**, What do you remember about them? **Interviewer: IF NEEDED**, Did you use them to answer any questions you had? **Interviewer: IF YES**, What were your questions? Did the information in the frequently asked questions section answer your specific questions?

2m. What actions, if any, did you take to find out more about what you saw in the mailing/mailings? **Interviewer: IF NEEDED**, Where did you go for information? Did you get the help you needed?

**Interviewer: ASK ALL:**

Now I'd like you to open Attachment #1 from the email that I had asked you to have handy at the beginning of this interview. Please let me know when you have opened up the attachment. It should say Attachment #1 on the first page.

Each page of this attachment shows images from different mailings that you may or may not have received recently. Without spending a lot of time reading these, go ahead and scroll through this document and let me know when you're done.

2n. Now that you're looking at these materials, which of them do you remember receiving?

2o. Is there anything in these materials that you specifically remember paying attention to? If, so what?

**Interviewer: ALL SKIP TO SECTION IV (DIFFERENTIATION)**

### III. RECOGNITION

#### IX. Research Questions:

What do participants remember about the ACS's and the 2020 Census' mailings and questionnaire?

What were participants' general reactions to the mailings?

How did participants feel when they received the ACS and the 2020 Census mailings?

What thought processes did participants go through when they received the ACS and 2020 Census mailings?

What were participants' perceptions of the 2020 ACS FAQs? (Did they notice them? Did the FAQs answer any questions participants had? Did the FAQs help differentiate the ACS and 2020 Census?)

What action, if any, did participants take to get additional information about the ACS or 2020 Census?

3. Now I'd like you to open Attachment #1 from the email that I had asked you to have handy at the beginning of this interview. Please let me know when you have opened up the attachment. It should say Attachment #1 on the first page.

Each page of this attachment shows images from different mailings that you may or may not have received recently. Without spending a lot of time reading these, do any of them look familiar to you?

\_\_\_ YES (Interviewer: CONTINUE)

\_\_\_ NO (Interviewer: GO TO SECTION VI – EXPOSURE)

**Interviewer: FOLLOW UP PROBES:**

3a. Without looking too closely at the documents in Attachment #1, can you tell me which ones you remember receiving?

**Interviewer: MARK EACH MAILING THE PARTICIPANT RECOGNIZES:**

\_\_\_ FIRST MAILING

\_\_\_ SECOND MAILING

\_\_\_ THIRD MAILING

3b. Now that you're looking at them, what do you remember about them?

**Interviewer: FOLLOW UP PROBES, IF NEEDED:**

- 3c. What did you think was the purpose of the mailing/these mailings?
- 3d. What did you think it was/they were trying to tell you?
- 3e. Who did you think it was/they were for?
- 3f. What other reactions or feelings, if any, did you have when you received the mailing/these mailings?
- 3g. What do you recall doing with these mailings when you received them?
- 3h. Did you notice any frequently asked questions in the mailing(s)? **Interviewer: IF YES**, What do you remember about them? **Interviewer: IF NEEDED**, Did you use them to answer any questions you had? **Interviewer: IF YES**, What were your questions? Did the information in the frequently asked questions section answer your specific questions?
- 3i. What actions, if any, did you take to find out more about what you saw in the mailing/mailings? **Interviewer: IF NEEDED**, Where did you go for information? Did you get the help you needed?
- 3j. Do you remember recently receiving any other mailings from the Census Bureau in addition to these?

**Interviewer: ALL CONTINUE TO SECTION IV (DIFFERENTIATION)**



#### IV. DIFFERENTIATION

##### X. Research Questions:

Did participants notice that they were asked to complete two different questionnaires?

How did participants know that they were being asked to complete two different questionnaires?

What did participants think were the differences between the ACS and the 2020 Census questionnaires?

What aspects of the mailings, if any, helped participants understand that the ACS is different from the 2020 Census?

Did the FAQs help differentiate the ACS and 2020 Census questionnaires?

4. **Interviewer: IF NOT ALREADY MENTIONED BY PARTICIPANT, ask:** When you received mail from the Census Bureau, did you receive mail for one survey or for two different surveys?

\_\_\_ ONE SURVEY (Interviewer: GO TO SECTION V - RESPONSE DECISION)

\_\_\_ TWO DIFFERENT SURVEYS (Interviewer: CONTINUE)

##### **FOLLOW UP PROBES:**

4a. How did you know that you were being asked to complete two different surveys?

4b. In your own words, what are the two different surveys? **Interviewer: IF NEEDED, ask:** What makes them different from each other?

4c. Why do you think the Census Bureau is doing both surveys?

4d. Do you recall anything in the mailings that helped explain that these were two different surveys? **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:** What do you recall?

4e. **Interviewer: IF NOT ALREADY MENTIONED AND PARTICIPANT NOTICED FAQs IN 2L or 3H, ask:** Do you remember if anything in the frequently asked questions helped you understand that these were two different surveys? **Interviewer: IF YES, say:** Please say more.

**Interviewer: ALL CONTINUE TO SECTION V (RESPONSE DECISION)**

## V. RESPONSE DECISION

### XI. Research Questions:

How did participants decide to answer either or both questionnaires?

Were participants aware that their response was mandatory (to either or both)?

What aspects of the mailings influenced participants' decision to participate (to either or both)?

How did participants feel when they received the ACS and the 2020 Census questionnaires?

What thought processes did participants go through when they received the ACS and 2020 Census questionnaires?

What action, if any, did participants take to get additional information about the ACS or 2020 Census questionnaires?

5a. DID PARTICIPANT ALREADY INDICATE THAT THEY DID OR DID NOT RESPOND TO THE ACS?

\_\_\_ YES, ALREADY INDICATED (Interviewer: GO TO 5C)

\_\_\_ NO, DID NOT INDICATE (Interviewer: GO TO 5B)

5b. Do you recall whether you responded to any Census Bureau surveys in the past few months?

\_\_\_ RECALLS BEHAVIOR (Interviewer: CONTINUE TO 5C)

\_\_\_ DOES NOT RECALL BEHAVIOR (Interviewer: GO TO SECTION VI, EXPOSURE)

5c. We asked you to participate in today's interview because you were recently asked to complete two Census Bureau surveys – the 2020 Census and the American Community Survey. Help me understand your thought process of how you decided whether or not to respond to these survey requests. I'm interested in everything you can recall about your decision-making process.

**FOLLOW UP PROBES, IF NEEDED:**

5d. What did you ultimately decide to do about the survey requests?

5e. What factors went into your decision?

5f. Was anyone else in your household involved in making this decision? **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:** How so?

5g. Was there anything in the mailings you received from the Census Bureau that helped you decide whether or not to respond to one survey or the other? **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:** What aspects of the mailings helped you make the decision?

5h. Did you think you were required or not required to respond to either or both surveys? **Interviewer: IF REQUIRED, ask:** How did that impact your decision about whether to respond?

5i. Did you turn to any sources of information to help you make the decision of whether or not to participate in either of the two surveys? (**Interviewer: IF NEEDED, ask::** for example, a website, a family member or friend, social media, etc.) **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:** Where did you turn for information? How, if at all, did that information influence your decision about responding to the surveys?

5j. What other reactions or feelings, if any, did you have when deciding whether to participate in the surveys?

**Interviewer: ALL CONTINUE TO SECTION VI (EXPOSURE)**

## VI. EXPOSURE

### XII. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

What do participants remember about the ACS's and the 2020 Census' mailings and questionnaire?

What were participants' general reactions to the mailings?

How did participants feel when they received the ACS and the 2020 Census?

What thought processes did participants go through when they received the ACS and 2020 Census?

6a. Now I'd like you to open Attachment #2 from the email that I had asked you to have handy. (Interviewer: IF NEEDED, say: Let's make sure you have Attachment #2 open. It should say Attachment #2 on the first page.) Please go to page 2 of the document, which should say "MAILING #1" at the top. (Interviewer: CONFIRM THAT PARTICIPANT IS LOOKING AT THE CORRECT INFO) This is the first letter that you should have received to participate in the American Community Survey. Please read this as you would if you received this letter in the mail and decided to read it. When you are finished reviewing pages 2-3, let me know.

6a1. **MAILING #1:** Let's start by focusing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph on mailing #1, which starts with "The American Community Survey is not the 2020 Census." We have highlighted this paragraph for you so that you know which one I'm asking about.

(Interviewer: CONFIRM THAT PARTICIPANT IS LOOKING AT THE CORRECT INFO) Do you recall if you noticed this information when you got the letter? ?

**Interviewer: IF NOTICED:** Do you remember what, in particular, you noticed about it? Do you remember if this statement impacted your decision of whether or not to respond to the ACS? If so, how did it impact your decision?

6a2. Now let's turn to page 3 of the document and look at the first two questions and answers. Again these are highlighted in your document so that you know what part of the page I'm asking about. (Interviewer: CONFIRM THAT PARTICIPANT IS LOOKING AT THE CORRECT INFO) Do you recall if you noticed this information when you got the letter? **Interviewer: IF NOTICED:** Do you remember what, in particular, you noticed about it? Do you remember if this information impacted your decision of whether or not to respond to the ACS? If so, how did it impact your decision?

6a3. Now that you're seeing this language (again), how helpful is this information to distinguish the ACS from the Census? What makes it helpful/not helpful?

6a4. Do you have any other feedback for me on how well this letter explains that the ACS and the 2020 Census are two different surveys and that you are required to answer both of them?

6b. **PRESSURE SEAL MAILER:** Now please continue to page 4 of the document. It should say “Mailing #2” at the top. This is the second mailing you may have received about the American Community Survey. Again, please read this as you would if you received it in the mail and decided to read it. When you are finished reviewing Mailing #2, let me know.

6b1. Let’s start by focusing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph on Mailing #2, which says “Some households, including yours, will receive both the American Community Survey and the 2020 Census this year.” Again this is highlighted in your document so that you know what part of the page I’m asking about. **(Interviewer: CONFIRM THAT PARTICIPANT IS LOOKING AT THE CORRECT INFO)** Do you recall if you noticed this information when you got the letter? **Interviewer: IF NOTICED:** Do you remember what, in particular, you noticed about it? Do you remember if this statement impacted your decision of whether or not to respond to the ACS? If so, how did it impact your decision?

6b3. Now that you’re seeing this language (again), how helpful is this information to distinguish the ACS from the Census? What makes it helpful/not helpful?

6b4. Do you have any other feedback for me on how well this letter explains that the ACS and the 2020 Census are two different surveys and that you are required to answer both of them?

6c. **THIRD MAILING:** Now please continue to page 5 of the document. It should say “Mailing #3” at the top. This is the letter that some households received if they did not respond to the mailing you just looked at. Again, please read this as you would if you received this letter in the mail and decided to read it. When you are finished reviewing Mailing #3, let me know.

6c1. Let’s start by looking at the first sentence after the bullet points, which says “This year, the Census Bureau is also conducting the 2020 Census. The American Community Survey is different from the 2020 Census. Again this is highlighted in your document so that you know what part of the page I’m asking about. **(Interviewer: CONFIRM THAT PARTICIPANT IS LOOKING AT THE CORRECT INFO)**

6c2. **Interviewer: IF NUMBER OF ACS MAILINGS >=3 ON PARTICIPANT DATA SHEET:** Do you recall if you noticed this information when you got the letter? **Interviewer: IF NOTICED:** Do you remember what, in particular, you noticed about it? Do you remember if this statement impacted your decision of whether or not to respond to the ACS? If so, how did it impact your decision?

6c3. **ALL:** Now that you're seeing this language (again), how helpful is this information to distinguish the ACS from the Census? What makes it helpful/not helpful?

6c4. **ALL:** Do you have any other feedback for me on how well this letter explains that the ACS and the 2020 Census are two different surveys and that you are required to answer both of them?

### XIII. GENERAL ENGAGEMENT

#### XIV. Research Questions:

XV. What are participants' general engagement with civic activities or community involvement (e.g. voting, Parent Teacher Association, Homeowner Association, volunteer work, other political activities)?

7. Finally, we are interested in understanding how people are involved in the government and in their communities.

7a. Are you involved in any community organizations or civic activities in this area? **Interviewer:**  
**IF YES:** What types of organizations or activities?

7b. How often do you vote in elections? What types of elections do you usually vote in, if any?

7c. Aside from voting, how active would you say you are politically?

7d. In general, how do you feel about responding to different types of survey requests, like phone surveys, customer satisfaction surveys, or other types of survey requests you receive?

7e. How do you generally feel about survey requests that come from a federal government agency?

7f. How much trust do you have in federal statistics in the United States, like the population count, the unemployment rate, and the crime rate? **Interview: IF NEEDED:** Would you say that you tend to trust federal statistics or tend not to trust them?

7g. What about other kinds of statistics? How much trust do you have in statistics put out by other entities, like universities or the media?

7h. How about statistics you see posted on social media, like Facebook or Twitter?

7i. How much do you trust federal statistical agencies like the Census Bureau to keep information about you confidential?

## Closing and Incentive

**Interviewer: MARK HERE IF PARTICIPANT SEEMED TO HAVE PREPARED FOR THE INTERVIEW BY ALREADY HAVING THEIR ACS MAILINGS HANDY AND PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR YOUR IMPRESSION IN THE INTERVIEW SUMMARY.**

\_\_\_ **YES**

\_\_\_ **NO**

Those are all the questions I have for you. Is there anything we haven't discussed that you would like to mention?

**DISCUSS ANY PARTICIPANT COMMENTS.**

Thank you for your time.

STOP RECORDER.

The address I have on file for you is [READ ADDRESS FROM PARTICIPANT DATA SHEET]. Is this the address where you would like to have your \$40 check sent?

\_\_\_ **YES (Interviewer: THANK AND END)**

\_\_\_ **NO (Interviewer: CONTINUE)**

Please tell me the address for where you would like us to send your check.

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_



# WESTAT INTERVIEW

## ATTACHMENT #1

-1-

## MAILING #1

### Envelope:



### Letter:



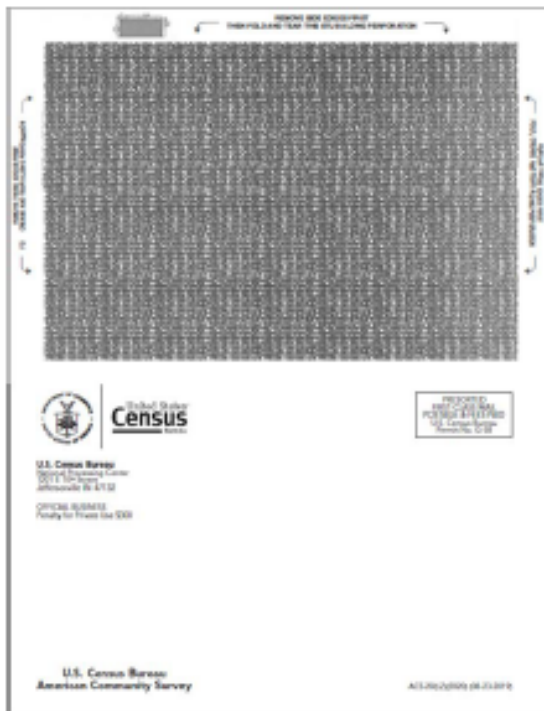
### Multilingual Brochure:



### Instruction Card:



## MAILING #2



## MAILING #3

### Envelope:

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic Development Administration  
2020 Census  
2020 Census

YOUR RESPONSE IS REQUIRED BY LAW

2020 Census

### Letter:

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic Development Administration  
2020 Census  
2020 Census

It comes from the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau.

The U.S. Census Bureau recently sent you a request to complete the American Community Survey online. If you have not already responded to this request, please do so now.

Complete the survey online ONLY ONE of the following options:

- Respond online at <https://respond.census.gov/enr>
- If you are unable to respond online, please fill out and mail back the enclosed questionnaire.

However, the Census Bureau is also conducting the 2020 Census. The American Community Survey is different from the 2020 Census.

You are invited by the U.S. Census Bureau to complete the American Community Survey.

The Census Bureau has randomly selected your address to receive the survey as part of a statistically representative sample. Because you will be providing response information on behalf of your community, it is vital that you complete the survey as fully and as accurately as possible - including answering others to ensure you, schools, hospitals, and the nation.

If you do not respond promptly, a Census Bureau enumerator may contact you to complete the survey.

The Census Bureau is required by law to keep your information confidential.

The Census Bureau is not a government agency. Information provided to us is not made publicly available.

If you need help completing the survey or have questions, please call our toll-free number at 1-800-368-7070.

Thank you for your personal response.

Sincerely,  
*Robert D. Moffatt*  
Robert D. Moffatt  
Director

10/20/2020

It is the American Community Survey the same as the 2020 Census?

No, the American Community Survey (ACS) is different from the 2020 Census.

The ACS shows how we live our lives, including who, what, and where. The ACS provides information about the social and economic needs of your community every year.

The census is conducted every 10 years to provide an official record of the nation's population and housing.

Can you see my 2020 Census response for the American Community Survey?

Your response to the 2020 Census cannot be used for the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS includes questions about your life on the 2020 Census, such as education, employment, income, and transportation.

Will my response be published?

No. The U.S. Census Bureau is required by law to protect confidentiality. The Census Bureau is prohibited from releasing any information that could identify you. We use a statistical technique to ensure that the results of the ACS are not released in a way that could identify you. We will publish the results of your survey and your community's results. We will not release your name, address, or any other information that could identify you. We will not release your name, address, or any other information that could identify you.

How often will the Census Bureau use the information I provide?

By law, the Census Bureau can only use your response to provide statistics. Your information will be used to provide information about the nation's population and housing. Your information will be used to provide information about the nation's population and housing. Your information will be used to provide information about the nation's population and housing.

Can you confirm your response with information that you have in other agencies or offices?

No. The Census Bureau is required by law to protect confidentiality. The Census Bureau is prohibited from releasing any information that could identify you. We use a statistical technique to ensure that the results of the ACS are not released in a way that could identify you. We will publish the results of your survey and your community's results. We will not release your name, address, or any other information that could identify you. We will not release your name, address, or any other information that could identify you.

### Questionnaire:

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic Development Administration  
2020 Census  
2020 Census

The American Community Survey

Start Here

For more information, please visit <https://respond.census.gov/enr>

Important information about the survey:

- The survey is conducted every 10 years to provide an official record of the nation's population and housing.
- The survey is conducted every 10 years to provide an official record of the nation's population and housing.
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For more information, please visit <https://respond.census.gov/enr>

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- The survey is conducted every 10 years to provide an official record of the nation's population and housing.
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For more information, please visit <https://respond.census.gov/enr>

Important information about the survey:

- The survey is conducted every 10 years to provide an official record of the nation's population and housing.
- The survey is conducted every 10 years to provide an official record of the nation's population and housing.
- The survey is conducted every 10 years to provide an official record of the nation's population and housing.

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic Development Administration  
2020 Census  
2020 Census

The American Community Survey

Business Reply Mail

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION  
2020 CENSUS

# WESTAT INTERVIEW

## ATTACHMENT #2

- 1 -

## MAILING #1



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

U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, DC 20233  
Office of the Director

A message from the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau:

Your address has been randomly selected by the U.S. Census Bureau to participate in the **American Community Survey**. The Census Bureau conducts this survey each year to give our country an up-to-date picture of how we live – including our education, housing, and jobs.

**The American Community Survey is not the 2020 Census. This survey asks questions about topics not on the 2020 Census, such as veteran status, transportation, and internet access.**

Communities across the country rely on information from this survey to decide where important services are needed, including:

- Improving roads and reducing traffic
- Building schools
- Planning for the health care needs of the elderly

Respond now at <https://respond.census.gov/acs>

**Your response is required by U.S. law.**

Because your household has been asked to participate on behalf of your community, it is vital that you complete this survey to help meet critical needs in your area.

**If you are unable to complete the survey online, we will send you a paper questionnaire in a few weeks.** The Census Bureau is using the internet to collect this information to conserve natural resources, save taxpayers' money, and process data more efficiently.

If you need help completing the survey or have questions, please call our toll-free number (1-800-354-7271).

Thank you in advance for your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Steven D. Dillingham

Enclosures

American Community Survey data help determine the annual distribution of more than **\$675 billion** in federal funds to communities nationwide.

ACS-138.D(2020) 108-27-2816

census.gov

- 2 -

**Is the American Community Survey the same as the 2020 Census?**

No, the American Community Survey (ACS) is different from the 2020 Census.

The ACS shows how we live—our education, housing, jobs, and more. The ACS provides information about the social and economic needs of your community every year.

The census is conducted once every 10 years to provide an official count of the entire U.S. population to Congress.

**Can you use my 2020 Census answers for the American Community Survey?**

Your answers to the 2020 Census cannot be used for the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS includes questions about topics not on the 2020 Census, such as education, employment, internet access, and transportation.

**Will my response be confidential?**

Yes. The U.S. Census Bureau is required by law to protect this information. The Census Bureau is not permitted to publicly release your responses in a way that could identify you. We are conducting this survey under the authority of Title 13, United States Code, Sections 141 and 193. Federal law protects your privacy and keeps your answers confidential (Title 13, United States Code, Section 9). Per the Federal Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015, your data are protected from cybersecurity risks through screening of the systems that transmit your data.

**Am I required to fill out the survey?**

Yes. Your response to this survey is required by law (Title 13, U.S. Code, Sections 141, 193, and 221). Title 13, as changed by Title 18, imposes a penalty for not responding. As a randomly selected representative of your community, you are the voice of your neighbors and peers. To create an accurate picture of your community, it is critical that you respond.

**How will the Census Bureau use the information I provide?**

By law, the Census Bureau can only use your responses to produce statistics. Your information will be used in combination with information from other households to produce data for your community. Similar data will be produced for communities across Puerto Rico and the United States.

We may combine your answers with information that you gave to other agencies to enhance the statistical uses of these data. This information will be given the same protections as your survey information. Based on the information that you provide, you may be asked to participate in other Census Bureau surveys that are voluntary.

## MAILING #2



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

U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, DC 20233  
Office of the Director

A message from the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau:

A few days ago, you should have received instructions for completing the **American Community Survey** online. Local communities depend on information from this survey to decide where schools, highways, hospitals, and other important services are needed.

Some households, including yours, will receive both the American Community Survey and the 2020 Census this year. If you have not already responded, please do so now.

Respond now at <https://respond.census.gov/acs>  
Log in using this user ID:

If we do not receive your response online, we will mail a paper questionnaire to your address.

**Your response to the American Community Survey is required by law.**

Your response is critically important to your local community and your country. Responding promptly will prevent you from receiving additional reminder mailings, phone calls, or personal visits from Census Bureau interviewers.

If you need help completing the survey or have questions, please call our toll-free number (1-800-354-7271).

Thank you in advance for your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Steven D. Dillingham

census.gov



## MAILING #3



United States®  
**Census**  
Bureau

U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, DC 20233  
Office of the Director

A message from the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau:

The U.S. Census Bureau recently sent you a request to complete the **American Community Survey** online. If you have not already responded to this important survey, please do so now.

**Complete the survey using ONLY ONE of the following options:**

- Respond online at **<https://respond.census.gov/acsf>**
- If you are unable to respond online, please fill out and mail back the enclosed questionnaire.

**This year, the Census Bureau is also conducting the 2020 Census. The American Community Survey is different from the 2020 Census.**

**You are required by U.S. law to respond to the American Community Survey.**

The Census Bureau has randomly selected your address to receive this survey as part of a nationally representative sample. Because you will be providing important information on behalf of your community, it is vital that you complete this survey to help meet critical needs in your area – including determining where to locate new schools, hospitals, and fire stations.

If you do not respond promptly, a Census Bureau interviewer may contact you to complete the survey.

**The Census Bureau is required by law to keep your information confidential.**

The Census Bureau is not permitted to publicly release your responses in a way that could identify you or your household.

If you need help completing the survey or have questions, please call our toll-free number (1-800-354-7271).

Thank you for your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Steven D. Dillingham

Enclosures

ACS-143(2/2020) 08-27-2019

census.gov

- 5 -

# OY4 ACS Respondent Burden Testing

## Cognitive Interview Protocol

### July Panel

## Introduction

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I work for Westat, a survey research company based in Rockville, Maryland. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research study.

Westat is working with the Census Bureau on a study to find out what people think about the mail that they receive.

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions I'll ask today. Our purpose is not to compile information about you. Instead, your interview along with those of others will allow us to give feedback to the Census Bureau about how people handle the mail in different types of households.

The information collected in this interview is covered under OMB # 0607-0725.



# Informed Consent

Before we get started, there are a few things I should mention. This is a research project, and your participation is voluntary. If you prefer not to answer any questions just say so, and we can go on to the next one. It's also okay if you change your mind after starting and would rather not participate.

All your answers, everything you say, will be kept confidential. We will not use your name in any reports. We may use quotes in our report that you provide during the interview, but never in a way that would identify you. The interview will take about 45 minutes and you will receive \$40. We also would like to audio record our conversation. This helps me so I can listen to what you are saying and won't have to take a lot of detailed notes while you are talking; it will also help when we write up a summary of this interview. Only project staff will have access to the recording and other project materials, and those materials will be stored according to federal requirements for protecting the identity of individual respondents.

We had emailed you a copy of the consent form. Do you have any questions about it? (ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS). Are you willing to take part in this study?

**Interviewer: TURN ON RECORDER.** The date and time is \_\_\_\_\_. Now that the recorder is running, let me ask again, do you consent to participate and be recorded for this interview?

Before we begin, can you please take a moment and open the email we sent you with the subject name "Attachments for Westat Interview"? You don't need to look at the email right now, but I'll let you know later when it's time to refer to it.

# Protocol

## VI. MAIL HANDLING

### XVI. Research Questions:

How and how often is mail handled in participants' households?

1. First I'd like to ask some questions about mail in your household. Can you paint a picture for me of how your household deals with mail? I'm interested in as much detail as you can give me.

#### IF NEEDED, FOLLOW UP PROBES:

1a. Who in your household retrieves the mail?

1b. How often is mail retrieved? (e.g. daily, every few days, once a week, etc.)

1c. What do you/does this person do with the mail?

1c1. (IF SORTS MAIL) How do you/does this person sort the mail? (e.g. bills, personal correspondence, junk mail, other)? What happens once the mail is sorted?

1d. How do you/does this person decide what to open?

1e. What do you/does this person do with mail you don't open?

1f. What kinds of things do you/does this person pay attention to on the envelopes? What makes you/this person pay attention to these things?

**Interviewer: MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A CLEAR IDEA OF ANY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HOW MAIL IS HANDLED IF ADDRESSED TO INDIVIDUALS VS. THE HOUSEHOLD**

**ALL CONTINUE TO SECTION II (RECALL)**

## VII. RECALL

### XVII. Research Questions:

What do participants remember about the ACS and the 2020 Census mailings and questionnaires?

What were participants' general reactions to the mailings?

How did participants feel when they received the ACS and the 2020 Census mailings?

What thought processes did participants go through when they received the ACS and 2020 Census mailings?

What were participants' perceptions of the 2020 ACS FAQs? (Did they notice them? Did the FAQs answer any questions participants had? Did the FAQs help differentiate the ACS and 2020 Census?)

What action, if any, did participants take to get additional information about the ACS or 2020 Census?

2. Now I'd like to ask, do you recall receiving any mail from the Census Bureau in the past few months?

\_\_\_ YES (Interviewer: CONTINUE)

\_\_\_ NO (Interviewer: GO TO SECTION III – RECOGNITION)

2a. **Interviewer: IF YES (RECALL), say:** Please tell me in as much detail as possible what you recall about the mail you received from the Census Bureau.

**Interviewer: IF PARTICIPANT MENTIONS THAT THEY HAVE MAILING MATERIALS ON HAND, ASK THAT THEY BE SET ASIDE FOR LATER DISCUSSION.**

### **FOLLOW UP PROBES, IF NEEDED:**

2b. Do you remember how many mailings you received? **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:** How many?

2c. Do you remember roughly when you got these mailings?

2d. What did it/the mailings look like?

2e. (**Interviewer: IF RECALLS MORE THAN ONE, ask:**) How were the mailings different from each other, if at all?

2f. What did you think was the purpose of the mailing/these mailings?

2g. What, if anything, stood out to you about the mailing(s)?

2h. What did you think it was/they were trying to tell you?

2i. Who did you think it was/they were for?

2j. What other reactions or feelings, if any, did you have when you received the mailing/these mailings?

2k. What do you recall doing with these mailings when you received them?

2l. Did you notice any frequently asked questions in the mailing(s)? **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:** What do you remember about them? **Interviewer: IF NEEDED, ask:** Did you use them to answer any questions you had? **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:** What were your questions? Did the information in the frequently asked questions section answer your specific questions?

2m. What actions, if any, did you take to find out more about what you saw in the mailing/mailings? **Interviewer: IF NEEDED, ask:** Where did you go for information? Did you get the help you needed?

**Interviewer: FOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE JULY PANEL ASK THEM TO OPEN CORRESPONDING JULY PANEL ATTACHMENTS.**

**ASK ALL:**

Now I'd like you to open Attachment #1 from the email that I had asked you to have handy at the beginning of this interview. Please let me know when you have opened up the attachment. It should say Attachment #1 on the first page.

Each page of this attachment shows images from different mailings that you may or may not have received recently. Without spending a lot of time reading these, go ahead and scroll through this document and let me know when you're done.

2n. Now that you're looking at these materials, which of them do you remember receiving?

2o. Is there anything in these materials that you specifically remember paying attention to? If, so what?

**ALL SKIP TO SECTION IV (DIFFERENTIATION)**

## VIII. RECOGNITION

### XVIII. Research Questions:

What do participants remember about the ACS's and the 2020 Census' mailings and questionnaire?

What were participants' general reactions to the mailings?

How did participants feel when they received the ACS and the 2020 Census mailings?

What thought processes did participants go through when they received the ACS and 2020 Census mailings?

What were participants' perceptions of the 2020 ACS FAQs? (Did they notice them? Did the FAQs answer any questions participants had? Did the FAQs help differentiate the ACS and 2020 Census?)

What action, if any, did participants take to get additional information about the ACS or 2020 Census?

3. Now I'd like you to open Attachment #1 from the email that I had asked you to have handy at the beginning of this interview. Please let me know when you have opened up the attachment. It should say Attachment #1 on the first page.

Each page of this attachment shows images from the two mailings that you may or may not have received recently. Without spending a lot of time reading these, do any of them look familiar to you?

\_\_\_ YES (Interviewer: CONTINUE)

\_\_\_ NO (Interviewer: GO TO SECTION VI – EXPOSURE)

### FOLLOW UP PROBES:

3a. Without looking too closely at the documents in Attachment #1, can you tell me which ones you remember receiving?

Interviewer: MARK EACH MAILING THE PARTICIPANT RECOGNIZES – JULY PANEL:

\_\_\_ FIRST MAILING

\_\_\_ SECOND MAILING

3b. Now that you're looking at them, what do you remember about them?

### FOLLOW UP PROBES, IF NEEDED:

- 3c. What did you think was the purpose of the mailing/these mailings?
- 3d. What did you think it was/they were trying to tell you?
- 3e. Who did you think it was/they were for?
- 3f. What other reactions or feelings, if any, did you have when you received the mailing/these mailings?
- 3g. What do you recall doing with these mailings when you received them?
- 3h. Did you notice any frequently asked questions in the mailing(s)? **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:** What do you remember about them? **Interviewer: IF NEEDED, ask:** Did you use them to answer any questions you had? **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:** What were your questions? Did the information in the frequently asked questions section answer your specific questions?
- 3i. What actions, if any, did you take to find out more about what you saw in the mailing/mailings? **Interviewer: IF NEEDED, ask:** Where did you go for information? Did you get the help you needed?
- 3j. Do you remember recently receiving any other mailings from the Census Bureau in addition to these?

**ALL CONTINUE TO SECTION IV (DIFFERENTIATION)**



## IX. DIFFERENTIATION

### XIX. Research Questions:

Did participants notice that they were asked to complete two different questionnaires?

How did participants know that they were being asked to complete two different questionnaires?

What did participants think were the differences between the ACS and the 2020 Census questionnaires?

What aspects of the mailings, if any, helped participants understand that the ACS is different from the 2020 Census?

Did the FAQs help differentiate the ACS and 2020 Census questionnaires?

4. **Interviewer: IF NOT ALREADY MENTIONED BY PARTICIPANT, ask:** When you received mail from the Census Bureau, did you receive mail for one survey or for two different surveys?

\_\_\_ ONE SURVEY (Interviewer: GO TO SECTION V - RESPONSE DECISION)

\_\_\_ TWO DIFFERENT SURVEYS (Interviewer: CONTINUE)

### **FOLLOW UP PROBES:**

4a. How did you know that you were being asked to complete two different surveys?

4b. In your own words, what are the two different surveys? **Interviewer: IF NEEDED, ask:** What makes them different from each other?

4c. Why do you think the Census Bureau is doing both surveys?

4d. Do you recall anything in the mailings that helped explain that these were two different surveys? **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:** What do you recall?

4e. **Interviewer: IF NOT ALREADY MENTIONED AND PARTICIPANT NOTICED FAQs IN 2L or 3H, ask:** Do you remember if anything in the frequently asked questions helped you understand that these were two different surveys? **Interviewer: IF YES, say:** Please say more.

**ALL CONTINUE TO SECTION V (RESPONSE DECISION)**

## X. RESPONSE DECISION

### XX. Research Questions:

How did participants decide to answer either or both questionnaires?

Were participants aware that their response was mandatory (to either or both)?

What aspects of the mailings influenced participants' decision to participate (to either or both)?

How did participants feel when they received the ACS and the 2020 Census questionnaires?

What thought processes did participants go through when they received the ACS and 2020 Census questionnaires?

What action, if any, did participants take to get additional information about the ACS or 2020 Census questionnaires?

5a. DID PARTICIPANT ALREADY INDICATE THAT THEY DID OR DID NOT RESPOND TO THE ACS?

\_\_\_ YES, ALREADY INDICATED (Interviewer: GO TO 5C)

\_\_\_ NO, DID NOT INDICATE (Interviewer: GO TO 5B)

5b. Do you recall whether you responded to any Census Bureau surveys in the past few months?

\_\_\_ RECALLS BEHAVIOR (Interviewer: CONTINUE TO 5C)

\_\_\_ DOES NOT RECALL BEHAVIOR (Interviewer: GO TO SECTION VI, EXPOSURE)

5c. We asked you to participate in today's interview because a few months ago you were asked to complete two Census Bureau surveys – the 2020 Census and the American Community Survey. Help me understand your thought process of how you decided whether or not to respond to these survey requests. I'm interested in everything you can recall about your decision-making process.

**FOLLOW UP PROBES, IF NEEDED:**

5d. What did you ultimately decide to do about the survey requests?

5e. What factors went into your decision?

5f. Was anyone else in your household involved in making this decision? **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:** How so?

5g. Was there anything in the mailings you received from the Census Bureau that helped you decide whether or not to respond to one survey or the other? **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:** What aspects of the mailings helped you make the decision?

5h. Did you think you were required or not required to respond to either or both surveys? **Interviewer: IF REQUIRED, ask:** How did that impact your decision about whether to respond?

5i. Did you turn to any sources of information to help you make the decision of whether or not to participate in either of the two surveys? (**Interviewer: IF NEEDED, ask:** for example, a website, a family member or friend, social media, etc.) **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:** Where did you turn for information? How, if at all, did that information influence your decision about responding to the surveys?

5j. What other reactions or feelings, if any, did you have when deciding whether to participate in the surveys?

**ALL CONTINUE TO SECTION VI (EXPOSURE)**

## VI. EXPOSURE

### XXI. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

What do participants remember about the ACS's and the 2020 Census' mailings and questionnaire?

What were participants' general reactions to the mailings?

How did participants feel when they received the ACS and the 2020 Census?

What thought processes did participants go through when they received the ACS and 2020 Census?

6a. Now I'd like you to open Attachment #2 from the email that I had asked you to have handy. (Interviewer: IF NEEDED, say: Let's make sure you have Attachment #2 open. It should say Attachment #2 on the first page.) Please go to page 2 of the document, which should say "MAILING #1" at the top. (Interviewer: CONFIRM THAT PARTICIPANT IS LOOKING AT THE CORRECT INFO) This is the first letter that you should have received to participate in the American Community Survey. Please read this as you would if you received this letter in the mail and decided to read it. When you are finished reviewing pages 2-3, let me know.

6a1. **MAILING #1:** Let's start by focusing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph on mailing #1, which starts with "The American Community Survey is not the 2020 Census." We have highlighted this paragraph for you so that you know which one I'm asking about.

(Interviewer: CONFIRM THAT PARTICIPANT IS LOOKING AT THE CORRECT INFO) Do you recall if you noticed this information when you got the letter? ?

**Interviewer: IF NOTICED, ask:** Do you remember what, in particular, you noticed about it? Do you remember if this statement impacted your decision of whether or not to respond to the ACS? If so, how did it impact your decision?

6a2. Now let's turn to page 3 of the document and look at the first two questions and answers. Again these are highlighted in your document so that you know what part of the page I'm asking about. (Interviewer: CONFIRM THAT PARTICIPANT IS LOOKING AT THE CORRECT INFO) Do you recall if you noticed this information when you got the letter? **Interviewer: IF NOTICED, ask:** Do you remember what, in particular, you noticed about it? Do you remember if this information impacted your decision of whether or not to respond to the ACS? If so, how did it impact your decision?

6a3. Now that you're seeing this language (again), how helpful is this information to distinguish the ACS from the Census? What makes it helpful/not helpful?

6a4. Do you have any other feedback for me on how well this letter explains that the ACS and the 2020 Census are two different surveys and that you are required to answer both of them?

6b. **PRESSURE SEAL MAILER:** Now please continue to page 4 of the document. It should say “Mailing #2” at the top. This is the second mailing you may have received about the American Community Survey. Again, please read this as you would if you received it in the mail and decided to read it. When you are finished reviewing Mailing #2, let me know.

6b1. Let’s start by focusing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph on Mailing #2, which says “This year, the Census Bureau is also conducting the 2020 Census. The American Community Survey is different from the 2020 Census.” Again this is highlighted in your document so that you know what part of the page I’m asking about. **(Interviewer: CONFIRM THAT PARTICIPANT IS LOOKING AT THE CORRECT INFO)** Do you recall if you noticed this information when you got the letter? **Interviewer: IF NOTICED, ask:** Do you remember what, in particular, you noticed about it? Do you remember if this statement impacted your decision of whether or not to respond to the ACS? If so, how did it impact your decision?

6b3. Now that you’re seeing this language (again), how helpful is this information to distinguish the ACS from the Census? What makes it helpful/not helpful?

6b4. Do you have any other feedback for me on how well this letter explains that the ACS and the 2020 Census are two different surveys and that you are required to answer both of them?

## XXII. GENERAL ENGAGEMENT

### XXIII. Research Questions:

XXIV. What are participants' general engagement with civic activities or community involvement (e.g. voting, Parent Teacher Association, Homeowner Association, volunteer work, other political activities)?

7. Finally, we are interested in understanding how people are involved in the government and in their communities.

7a. Are you involved in any community organizations or civic activities in this area? **IF YES:** What types of organizations or activities?

7b. How often do you vote in elections? What types of elections do you usually vote in, if any?

7c. Aside from voting, how active would you say you are politically?

7d. In general, how do you feel about responding to different types of survey requests, like phone surveys, customer satisfaction surveys, or other types of survey requests you receive?

7e. How do you generally feel about survey requests that come from a federal government agency?

7f. How much trust do you have in federal statistics in the United States, like the population count, the unemployment rate, and the crime rate? **Interviewer: IF NEEDED, ask:** Would you say that you tend to trust federal statistics or tend not to trust them?

7g. What about other kinds of statistics? How much trust do you have in statistics put out by other entities, like universities or the media?

7h. How about statistics you see posted on social media, like Facebook or Twitter?

7i. How much do you trust federal statistical agencies like the Census Bureau to keep information about you confidential?

## Closing and Incentive

**Interviewer: MARK HERE IF PARTICIPANT SEEMED TO HAVE PREPARED FOR THE INTERVIEW BY ALREADY HAVING THEIR ACS MAILINGS HANDY AND PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR YOUR IMPRESSION IN THE INTERVIEW SUMMARY.**

\_\_\_ **YES**

\_\_\_ **NO**

Those are all the questions I have for you. Is there anything we haven't discussed that you would like to mention?

**Interviewer: DISCUSS ANY PARTICIPANT COMMENTS.**

Thank you for your time.

Interviewer: STOP RECORDER.

The address I have on file for you is [READ ADDRESS FROM PARTICIPANT DATA SHEET]. Is this the address where you would like to have your \$40 check sent?

\_\_\_ **YES Interviewer: THANK AND END**

\_\_\_ **NO Interviewer: CONTINUE**

Please tell me the address for where you would like us to send your check.

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

# WESTAT INTERVIEW

## ATTACHMENT #1

- 1 -





## MAILING #2

### Envelope:

### Letter:

At request from the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau:

The U.S. Census Bureau cordially asks you to respond to the **American Community Survey** online. If you have not already responded to this important survey, please do so now.

**Complete the survey online ONLY ONE of the following options:**

- Respond online at <http://respond.census.gov/us>
- If you are unable to respond online, please fill out and mail back the enclosed questionnaire.

However, the Census Bureau is also conducting the 2010 Census. The American Community Survey is different from the 2010 Census.

**You are invited to help us understand the American Community Survey.**

The American Community Survey is conducted to provide the nation with a picture of the nation's communities. Your answers will help us understand the nation's communities and help us make decisions about the future. Your answers will also help us understand the nation's communities and help us make decisions about the future.

If you do not respond promptly, a Census Bureau messenger may contact you to complete the survey.

**The Census Bureau is required by law to keep your information confidential.**

The Census Bureau is prohibited by law from releasing your responses in a way that could identify you or your household.

If you need help completing the survey or have questions, please call our toll free number 1-800-556-1271.

Thank you for your prompt response.

Sincerely,  
  
 Susan B. Abraham  
 Director

**Is the American Community Survey the same as the 2010 Census?**

No, the American Community Survey (ACS) is different from the 2010 Census.

The ACS does not ask for your education, housing, jobs, and more. The ACS provides information about the social and economic needs of your community every year.

The census is conducted every 10 years to provide an official count of the entire U.S. population in December.

**Can you use my 2010 Census answers for the American Community Survey?**

Your answers to the 2010 Census survey can be used for the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS includes questions about race, sex, age, marital status, education, employment, income, and more.

**Will my response be confidential?**

Yes, the U.S. Census Bureau is required by law to protect all information. The Census Bureau is prohibited by law from releasing your responses in a way that could identify you or your household.

**Is it required to fill out the survey?**

Yes, the American Community Survey is required by law (Title 13, U.S. Code, Sections 141, 142, and 143). Title 13 is changed by the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. It is required by law to provide information about your community. If you do not provide information about your community, it is required by law to provide information about your community.

**How will the Census Bureau use the information I provide?**

By law, the Census Bureau can only use your responses to provide statistics. Your information will be used to provide information about your community. Your information will be used to provide information about your community. Your information will be used to provide information about your community.

**Will my response be confidential?**

Yes, the U.S. Census Bureau is required by law to protect all information. The Census Bureau is prohibited by law from releasing your responses in a way that could identify you or your household.

### Questionnaire:

**START HERE**

Please follow the instructions below to complete the survey.

Respond online today at <http://respond.census.gov/us>

OR

Complete the survey by mail and send it back to your enumerator.

**How to respond**

The American Community Survey is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. It is a survey of the nation's communities. Your answers will help us understand the nation's communities and help us make decisions about the future.

**How to respond**

The American Community Survey is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. It is a survey of the nation's communities. Your answers will help us understand the nation's communities and help us make decisions about the future.

**BUSINESS REPLY MAIL**

RETURN TO: U.S. Census Bureau

PO BOX 3284

WASHINGTON, DC 20540-0324



# WESTAT INTERVIEW

## ATTACHMENT #2

- 1 -

## MAILING #1



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

U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, DC 20233  
Office of the Director

A message from the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau:

Your address has been randomly selected by the U.S. Census Bureau to participate in the **American Community Survey**. The Census Bureau conducts this survey each year to give our country an up-to-date picture of how we live – including our education, housing, and jobs.

The American Community Survey is not the 2020 Census. This survey asks questions about topics not on the 2020 Census, such as veteran status, transportation, and internet access. Communities across the country rely on information from this survey to decide where important services are needed, including:

- Improving roads and reducing traffic
- Building schools
- Planning for the health care needs of the elderly

Respond now at <https://respond.census.gov/acs>

**Your response is required by U.S. law.**

Because your household has been asked to participate on behalf of your community, it is vital that you complete this survey to help meet critical needs in your area.

If you are unable to complete the survey online, we will send you a paper questionnaire in a few weeks. The Census Bureau is using the internet to collect this information to conserve natural resources, save taxpayers' money, and process data more efficiently.

If you need help completing the survey or have questions, please call our toll-free number (1-800-354-7271).

Thank you in advance for your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Steven D. Dillingham

Enclosures

American Community Survey data help determine the annual distribution of more than **\$675 billion** in federal funds to communities nationwide.

ACS-136D(2020) (08-27-2016)

census.gov

| 2 -

**Is the American Community Survey the same as the 2020 Census?**

No, the American Community Survey (ACS) is different from the 2020 Census.

The ACS shows how we live—our education, housing, jobs, and more. The ACS provides information about the social and economic needs of your community every year.

The census is conducted once every 10 years to provide an official count of the entire U.S. population to Congress.

**Can you use my 2020 Census answers for the American Community Survey?**

Your answers to the 2020 Census cannot be used for the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS includes questions about topics not on the 2020 Census, such as education, employment, internet access, and transportation.

**Will my response be confidential?**

Yes. The U.S. Census Bureau is required by law to protect this information. The Census Bureau is not permitted to publicly release your responses in a way that could identify you. We are conducting this survey under the authority of Title 13, United States Code, Sections 141 and 193. Federal law protects your privacy and keeps your answers confidential (Title 13, United States Code, Section 9). Per the Federal Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015, your data are protected from cybersecurity risks through screening of the systems that transmit your data.

**Am I required to fill out the survey?**

Yes. Your response to this survey is required by law (Title 13, U.S. Code, Sections 141, 193, and 221). Title 13, as changed by Title 18, imposes a penalty for not responding. As a randomly selected representative of your community, you are the voice of your neighbors and peers. To create an accurate picture of your community, it is critical that you respond.

**How will the Census Bureau use the information I provide?**

By law, the Census Bureau can only use your responses to produce statistics. Your information will be used in combination with information from other households to produce data for your community. Similar data will be produced for communities across Puerto Rico and the United States.

We may combine your answers with information that you gave to other agencies to enhance the statistical uses of these data. This information will be given the same protections as your survey information. Based on the information that you provide, you may be asked to participate in other Census Bureau surveys that are voluntary.

## MAILING #2



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

U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, DC 20233  
Office of the Director

A message from the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau:

The U.S. Census Bureau recently sent you a request to complete the **American Community Survey** online. If you have not already responded to this important survey, please do so now.

**Complete the survey using ONLY ONE of the following options:**

- Respond online at **<https://respond.census.gov/acs>**
- If you are unable to respond online, please fill out and mail back the enclosed questionnaire.

**This year, the Census Bureau is also conducting the 2020 Census. The American Community Survey is different from the 2020 Census.**

**You are required by U.S. law to respond to the American Community Survey.**

The Census Bureau has randomly selected your address to receive this survey as part of a nationally representative sample. Because you will be providing important information on behalf of your community, it is vital that you complete this survey to help meet critical needs in your area – including determining where to locate new schools, hospitals, and fire stations.

If you do not respond promptly, a Census Bureau interviewer may contact you to complete the survey.

**The Census Bureau is required by law to keep your information confidential.**

The Census Bureau is not permitted to publicly release your responses in a way that could identify you or your household.

If you need help completing the survey or have questions, please call our toll-free number (1-800-354-7271).

Thank you for your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Steven D. Dillingham

Enclosures

ACS-148.25(2020) 108-27-2019

census.gov

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# OY4 ACS Respondent Burden Testing

## Cognitive Interview Protocol

### August Panel

## Introduction

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I work for Westat, a survey research company based in Rockville, Maryland. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research study.

Westat is working with the Census Bureau on a study to find out what people think about the mail that they receive.

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions I'll ask today. Our purpose is not to compile information about you. Instead, your interview along with those of others will allow us to give feedback to the Census Bureau about how people handle the mail in different types of households.

The information collected in this interview is covered under OMB # 0607-0725.





# Informed Consent

Before we get started, there are a few things I should mention. This is a research project, and your participation is voluntary. If you prefer not to answer any questions just say so, and we can go on to the next one. It's also okay if you change your mind after starting and would rather not participate.

All your answers, everything you say, will be kept confidential. We will not use your name in any reports. We may use quotes in our report that you provide during the interview, but never in a way that would identify you. The interview will take about 45 minutes and you will receive \$40. We also would like to audio record our conversation. This helps me so I can listen to what you are saying and won't have to take a lot of detailed notes while you are talking; it will also help when we write up a summary of this interview. Only project staff will have access to the recording and other project materials, and those materials will be stored according to federal requirements for protecting the identity of individual respondents.

We had emailed you a copy of the consent form. Do you have any questions about it? (ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS). Are you willing to take part in this study?

**Interviewer: TURN ON RECORDER.** The date and time is \_\_\_\_\_. Now that the recorder is running, let me ask again, do you consent to participate and be recorded for this interview?

Before we begin, can you please take a moment and open the email we sent you with the subject name "Attachments for Westat Interview"? You don't need to look at the email right now, but I'll let you know later when it's time to refer to it.

# Protocol

## XI. MAIL HANDLING

### XXV. Research Questions:

How and how often is mail handled in participants' households?

1. First I'd like to ask some questions about mail in your household. Can you paint a picture for me of how your household deals with mail? I'm interested in as much detail as you can give me.

#### IF NEEDED, FOLLOW UP PROBES:

1a. Who in your household retrieves the mail?

1b. How often is mail retrieved? (e.g. daily, every few days, once a week, etc.)

1c. What do you/does this person do with the mail?

1c1. (IF SORTS MAIL) How do you/does this person sort the mail? (e.g. bills, personal correspondence, junk mail, other)? What happens once the mail is sorted?

1d. How do you/does this person decide what to open?

1e. What do you/does this person do with mail you don't open?

1f. What kinds of things do you/does this person pay attention to on the envelopes? What makes you/this person pay attention to these things?

**Interviewer: MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A CLEAR IDEA OF ANY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HOW MAIL IS HANDLED IF ADDRESSED TO INDIVIDUALS VS. THE HOUSEHOLD**

**ALL CONTINUE TO SECTION II (RECALL)**

## **XII. RECALL**

### **XXVI. Research Questions:**

What do participants remember about the ACS and the 2020 Census mailings and questionnaires?

What were participants' general reactions to the mailings?

How did participants feel when they received the ACS and the 2020 Census mailings?

What thought processes did participants go through when they received the ACS and 2020 Census mailings?

What were participants' perceptions of the 2020 ACS FAQs? (Did they notice them? Did the FAQs answer any questions participants had? Did the FAQs help differentiate the ACS and 2020 Census?)

What action, if any, did participants take to get additional information about the ACS or 2020 Census?

2. Now I'd like to ask, do you recall receiving any mail from the Census Bureau in the past few months?

\_\_\_ YES (Interviewer: CONTINUE)

\_\_\_ NO (Interviewer: GO TO SECTION III – RECOGNITION)

2a. **Interviewer: IF YES (RECALL), say:** Please tell me in as much detail as possible what you recall about the mail you received from the Census Bureau.

**Interviewer: IF PARTICIPANT MENTIONS THAT THEY HAVE MAILING MATERIALS ON HAND, ASK THAT THEY BE SET ASIDE FOR LATER DISCUSSION.**

### **FOLLOW UP PROBES, IF NEEDED:**

2b. Do you remember how many mailings you received? **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:** How many?

2c. Do you remember roughly when you got these mailings?

2d. What did it/the mailings look like?

2e. (**Interviewer: IF RECALLS MORE THAN ONE**) How were the mailings different from each other, if at all?

2f. What did you think was the purpose of the mailing/these mailings?

2g. What, if anything, stood out to you about the mailing(s)?

2h. What did you think it was/they were trying to tell you?

2i. Who did you think it was/they were for?

2j. What other reactions or feelings, if any, did you have when you received the mailing/these mailings?

2k. What do you recall doing with these mailings when you received them?

2l. Did you notice any frequently asked questions in the mailing(s)? **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:**

What do you remember about them? **Interviewer: IF NEEDED, ask:** Did you use them to answer any questions you had? **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:** What were your questions? Did the information in the frequently asked questions section answer your specific questions?

2m. What actions, if any, did you take to find out more about what you saw in the mailing/mailings? **Interviewer: IF NEEDED, ask:** Where did you go for information? Did you get the help you needed?

**Interviewer: FOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE AUGUST PANEL ASK THEM TO OPEN CORRESPONDING AUGUST PANEL ATTACHMENTS.**

**ASK ALL:**

Now I'd like you to open Attachment #1 from the email that I had asked you to have handy at the beginning of this interview. Please let me know when you have opened up the attachment. It should say Attachment #1 on the first page.

Each page of this attachment shows images from different mailings that you may or may not have received recently. Without spending a lot of time reading these, go ahead and scroll through this document and let me know when you're done.

2n. Now that you're looking at these materials, which of them do you remember receiving?

2o. Is there anything in these materials that you specifically remember paying attention to? If, so what?

**ALL SKIP TO SECTION IV (DIFFERENTIATION)**

### XIII. RECOGNITION

#### XXVII. Research Questions:

What do participants remember about the ACS's and the 2020 Census' mailings and questionnaire?

What were participants' general reactions to the mailings?

How did participants feel when they received the ACS and the 2020 Census mailings?

What thought processes did participants go through when they received the ACS and 2020 Census mailings?

What were participants' perceptions of the 2020 ACS FAQs? (Did they notice them? Did the FAQs answer any questions participants had? Did the FAQs help differentiate the ACS and 2020 Census?)

What action, if any, did participants take to get additional information about the ACS or 2020 Census?

3. Now I'd like you to open Attachment #1 from the email that I had asked you to have handy at the beginning of this interview. Please let me know when you have opened up the attachment. It should say Attachment #1 on the first page.

Each page of this attachment shows images from the two mailings that you may or may not have received recently. Without spending a lot of time reading these, do any of them look familiar to you?

\_\_\_ YES (Interviewer: CONTINUE)

\_\_\_ NO (Interviewer: GO TO SECTION VI – EXPOSURE)

#### FOLLOW UP PROBES:

3a. Without looking too closely at the documents in Attachment #1, can you tell me which ones you remember receiving?

Interviewer: MARK EACH MAILING THE PARTICIPANT RECOGNIZES – AUGUST PANEL:

\_\_\_ FIRST MAILING

\_\_\_ SECOND MAILING

3b. Now that you're looking at them, what do you remember about them?

**FOLLOW UP PROBES, IF NEEDED:**

3c. What did you think was the purpose of the mailing/these mailings?

3d. What did you think it was/they were trying to tell you?

3e. Who did you think it was/they were for?

3f. What other reactions or feelings, if any, did you have when you received the mailing/these mailings?

3g. What do you recall doing with these mailings when you received them?

3h. Did you notice any frequently asked questions in the mailing(s)? **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:** What do you remember about them? **Interviewer: IF NEEDED, ask:** Did you use them to answer any questions you had? **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:** What were your questions? Did the information in the frequently asked questions section answer your specific questions?

3i. What actions, if any, did you take to find out more about what you saw in the mailing/mailings? **Interviewer: IF NEEDED, ask:** Where did you go for information? Did you get the help you needed?

3j. Do you remember recently receiving any other mailings from the Census Bureau in addition to these?

**ALL CONTINUE TO SECTION IV (DIFFERENTIATION)**

#### XIV. DIFFERENTIATION

##### XXVIII. Research Questions:

Did participants notice that they were asked to complete two different questionnaires?

How did participants know that they were being asked to complete two different questionnaires?

What did participants think were the differences between the ACS and the 2020 Census questionnaires?

What aspects of the mailings, if any, helped participants understand that the ACS is different from the 2020 Census?

Did the FAQs help differentiate the ACS and 2020 Census questionnaires?

4. **Interviewer: IF NOT ALREADY MENTIONED BY PARTICIPANT, ask:** When you received mail from the Census Bureau, did you receive mail for one survey or for two different surveys?

\_\_\_ ONE SURVEY (Interviewer: GO TO SECTION V - RESPONSE DECISION)

\_\_\_ TWO DIFFERENT SURVEYS (Interviewer: CONTINUE)

##### **FOLLOW UP PROBES:**

4a. How did you know that you were being asked to complete two different surveys?

4b. In your own words, what are the two different surveys? **Interviewer: IF NEEDED, ask:** What makes them different from each other?

4c. Why do you think the Census Bureau is doing both surveys?

4d. Do you recall anything in the mailings that helped explain that these were two different surveys? **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:** What do you recall?

4e. **Interviewer: IF NOT ALREADY MENTIONED AND PARTICIPANT NOTICED FAQs IN 2L or 3H, ask:** Do you remember if anything in the frequently asked questions helped you understand that these were two different surveys? **Interviewer: IF YES, say:** Please say more.

**ALL CONTINUE TO SECTION V (RESPONSE DECISION)**

## XV. RESPONSE DECISION

### XXIX. Research Questions:

How did participants decide to answer either or both questionnaires?

Were participants aware that their response was mandatory (to either or both)?

What aspects of the mailings influenced participants' decision to participate (to either or both)?

How did participants feel when they received the ACS and the 2020 Census questionnaires?

What thought processes did participants go through when they received the ACS and 2020 Census questionnaires?

What action, if any, did participants take to get additional information about the ACS or 2020 Census questionnaires?

5a. DID PARTICIPANT ALREADY INDICATE THAT THEY DID OR DID NOT RESPOND TO THE ACS?

\_\_\_ YES, ALREADY INDICATED (Interviewer: GO TO 5C)

\_\_\_ NO, DID NOT INDICATE (Interviewer: GO TO 5B)

5b. Do you recall whether you responded to any Census Bureau surveys in the past few months?

\_\_\_ RECALLS BEHAVIOR (Interviewer: CONTINUE TO 5C)

\_\_\_ DOES NOT RECALL BEHAVIOR (Interviewer: GO TO SECTION VI, EXPOSURE)

5c. We asked you to participate in today's interview because a few months ago you were asked to complete two Census Bureau surveys – the 2020 Census and the American Community Survey. Help me understand your thought process of how you decided whether or not to respond to these survey requests. I'm interested in everything you can recall about your decision-making process.



**FOLLOW UP PROBES, IF NEEDED:**

5d. What did you ultimately decide to do about the survey requests?

5e. What factors went into your decision?

5f. Was anyone else in your household involved in making this decision? **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:** How so?

5g. Was there anything in the mailings you received from the Census Bureau that helped you decide whether or not to respond to one survey or the other? **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:** What aspects of the mailings helped you make the decision?

5h. Did you think you were required or not required to respond to either or both surveys? **Interviewer: IF REQUIRED, ask:** How did that impact your decision about whether to respond?

5i. Did you turn to any sources of information to help you make the decision of whether or not to participate in either of the two surveys? (**Interviewer: IF NEEDED, say:** for example, a website, a family member or friend, social media, etc.) **Interviewer: IF YES, ask:** Where did you turn for information? How, if at all, did that information influence your decision about responding to the surveys?

5j. What other reactions or feelings, if any, did you have when deciding whether to participate in the surveys?

**ALL CONTINUE TO SECTION VI (EXPOSURE)**

## VI. EXPOSURE

### XXX. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

What do participants remember about the ACS's and the 2020 Census' mailings and questionnaire?

What were participants' general reactions to the mailings?

How did participants feel when they received the ACS and the 2020 Census?

What thought processes did participants go through when they received the ACS and 2020 Census?

6a. **PRESSURE SEAL MAILER:** Now I'd like you to open Attachment #2 from the email that I had asked you to have handy. (IF NEEDED: Let's make sure you have Attachment #2 open. It should say Westat Interview Attachment #2 on the first page.) Please go to page 2 of the document, which should say "MAILING #1" at the top. **(Interviewer: CONFIRM THAT PARTICIPANT IS LOOKING AT THE CORRECT INFO)** This is the first letter that you should have received to participate in the American Community Survey. Please read this as you would if you received this letter in the mail and decided to read it. When you are finished reviewing page 2, let me know.

6a1. **MAILING #1:** Let's start by focusing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph on mailing #1, which starts with "The American Community Survey is not the 2020 Census." We have highlighted this paragraph for you so that you know which one I'm asking about. **(Interviewer: CONFIRM THAT PARTICIPANT IS LOOKING AT THE CORRECT INFO)** Do you recall if you noticed this information when you got the letter? **Interviewer: IF NOTICED, ask:** Do you remember what, in particular, you noticed about it? Do you remember if this statement impacted your decision of whether or not to respond to the ACS? If so, how did it impact your decision?

6b. Now please continue to page 3 of the document. It should say "Mailing #2" at the top. This is the second mailing you may have received about the American Community Survey. Again, please read this as you would if you received it in the mail and decided to read it. When you are finished reviewing Mailing #2, let me know.

6b1. Let's start by focusing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph on Mailing #2, which says "This year, the Census Bureau is also conducting the 2020 Census. The American Community Survey is different from the 2020 Census." Again this is highlighted in your document so that you know what part of the page I'm asking about. **(Interviewer: CONFIRM THAT PARTICIPANT IS LOOKING AT THE CORRECT INFO)** Do you recall if you noticed this information when you got the letter? **Interviewer: IF NOTICED, ask:** Do you

remember what, in particular, you noticed about it? Do you remember if this statement impacted your decision of whether or not to respond to the ACS? If so, how did it impact your decision?

6b2. Now that you're seeing this language (again), how helpful is this information to distinguish the ACS from the Census? What makes it helpful/not helpful?

6b3. Do you have any other feedback for me on how well this letter explains that the ACS and the 2020 Census are two different surveys and that you are required to answer both of them?

## XXXI. GENERAL ENGAGEMENT

### XXXII. Research Questions:

XXXIII. What are participants' general engagement with civic activities or community involvement (e.g. voting, Parent Teacher Association, Homeowner Association, volunteer work, other political activities)?

7. Finally, we are interested in understanding how people are involved in the government and in their communities.

7a. Are you involved in any community organizations or civic activities in this area? **Interviewer:** **IF YES, ask:** What types of organizations or activities?

7b. How often do you vote in elections? What types of elections do you usually vote in, if any?

7c. Aside from voting, how active would you say you are politically?

7d. In general, how do you feel about responding to different types of survey requests, like phone surveys, customer satisfaction surveys, or other types of survey requests you receive?

7e. How do you generally feel about survey requests that come from a federal government agency?

7f. How much trust do you have in federal statistics in the United States, like the population count, the unemployment rate, and the crime rate? **Interviewer: IF NEEDED, ask:** Would you say that you tend to trust federal statistics or tend not to trust them?

7g. What about other kinds of statistics? How much trust do you have in statistics put out by other entities, like universities or the media?

7h. How about statistics you see posted on social media, like Facebook or Twitter?

7i. How much do you trust federal statistical agencies like the Census Bureau to keep information about you confidential?

## Closing and Incentive

**Interviewer: MARK HERE IF PARTICIPANT SEEMED TO HAVE PREPARED FOR THE INTERVIEW BY ALREADY HAVING THEIR ACS MAILINGS HANDY AND PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR YOUR IMPRESSION IN THE INTERVIEW SUMMARY.**

\_\_\_ **YES**

\_\_\_ **NO**

Those are all the questions I have for you. Is there anything we haven't discussed that you would like to mention?

**Interviewer: DISCUSS ANY PARTICIPANT COMMENTS.**

Thank you for your time.

STOP RECORDER.

The address I have on file for you is [READ ADDRESS FROM PARTICIPANT DATA SHEET]. Is this the address where you would like to have your \$40 check sent?

\_\_\_ **YES (Interviewer: THANK AND END)**

\_\_\_ **NO (Interviewer: CONTINUE)**

Please tell me the address for where you would like us to send your check.

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

# WESTAT INTERVIEW

## ATTACHMENT #1

- 1 -

## MAILING #1

**RECEIVE ONE ENVELOPE FIRST**  
TEAR HERE TO OPEN ENVELOPE

RECEIVED BY U.S. DEPT. OF COMMERCE

U.S. Census Bureau  
National Processing Center  
1211 E 10th Street  
Jeffersonville, IN 47132-0001

RECEIVED BY U.S. DEPT. OF COMMERCE

U.S. Census Bureau  
National Processing Center  
1211 E 10th Street  
Jeffersonville, IN 47132-0001

YOUR RESPONSE IS REQUIRED BY LAW

ACS Eligible household

U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, DC 20533-0001  
Office of the Director

A message from the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau:

Your address has been randomly selected by the U.S. Census Bureau to participate in the **American Community Survey**. The Census Bureau conducts this survey each year to provide a picture of how we live — including our housing, education, and jobs.


The American Community Survey is **not** the 2020 Census. This survey asks questions about topics not on the 2020 Census. Communities across the country rely on information from this survey to plan for important services like health care, emergency services, and internet access.

Respond now at <https://respond.census.gov/acs>  
Log in with this user ID:

**Your response to the American Community Survey is required by law.**  
Because your household has been asked to participate on behalf of your community, it is vital that you complete this survey to help meet critical needs in your area.

Your quick response prevents you from receiving additional mailings, sometimes national censuses, and saves taxpayers' money. If you need help completing the survey or have questions, please call our toll-free number (1-800-354-7371).

Thank you in advance for your prompt response.

Sincerely,  
  
Steven D. Dillingham

The Census Bureau is not permitted to disclose your response to any one that would identify you. The information collected is used to produce statistical data for the nation, states, and local areas. It is used to plan and improve government services. It is also used to provide information to the public. The information collected is used to produce statistical data for the nation, states, and local areas. It is used to plan and improve government services. It is also used to provide information to the public.

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## MAILING #2

### Envelope:

### Letter:

### Questionnaire:

### Return Envelope:



# WESTAT INTERVIEW

## ATTACHMENT #2

- 1 -

## MAILING #1



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

U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, DC 20233-0001  
Office of the Director

A message from the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau:

Your address has been randomly selected by the U.S. Census Bureau to participate in the **American Community Survey**. The Census Bureau conducts this survey each year to provide a picture of how we live — including our housing, education, and jobs.

The American Community Survey is **not** the 2020 Census. This survey asks questions about topics not on the 2020 Census. Communities across the country rely on information from this survey to plan for important services like health care, emergency services, and internet access.

Respond now at <https://respond.census.gov/acs>  
Log in with this user ID:

**Your response to the American Community Survey is required by law.**

Because your household has been asked to participate on behalf of your community, it is vital that you complete this survey to help meet critical needs in your area.

Your quick response prevents you from receiving additional mailings, conserves natural resources, and saves taxpayers' money. If you need help completing the survey or have questions, please call our toll-free number (1-800-354-7271).

Thank you in advance for your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Steven D. Dillingham

The Census Bureau is not permitted to publicly release your responses in a way that could identify you. We are conducting this survey under the authority of Title 13, U. S. Code, Sections 141 and 193. Title 13, Section 221, as changed by Title 18, imposes a penalty for not responding. Federal law protects your privacy and keeps your answers confidential (Title 13, U. S. Code, Section 9). Per the Federal Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015, your data are protected from cybersecurity risks through screening of the system that transmit your data. By law, the Census Bureau can only use your response to produce statistics. Your information will be used in combination with information from other households to produce data for your community. Similar data will be produced for communities across Puerto Rico and the United States. We may combine your answers with information that you gave to other agencies to enhance the statistical use of these data. This information will be given the same protections as your survey information. Based on the information that you provide, you may be asked to participate in other Census Bureau surveys that are voluntary.

census.gov

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## MAILING #2



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

U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, DC 20233  
Office of the Director

A message from the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau:

The U.S. Census Bureau recently sent you a request to complete the **American Community Survey** online. If you have not already responded to this important survey, please do so now.

**Complete the survey using ONLY ONE of the following options:**

- Respond online at <https://respond.census.gov/acs>
- If you are unable to respond online, please fill out and mail back the enclosed questionnaire.

**This year, the Census Bureau is also conducting the 2020 Census. The American Community Survey is different from the 2020 Census.**

**You are required by U.S. law to respond to the American Community Survey.**

The Census Bureau has randomly selected your address to receive this survey as part of a nationally representative sample. Because you will be providing important information on behalf of your community, it is vital that you complete this survey to help meet critical needs in your area – including determining where to locate new schools, hospitals, and fire stations.

If you do not respond promptly, a Census Bureau interviewer may contact you to complete the survey.

**The Census Bureau is required by law to keep your information confidential.**

The Census Bureau is not permitted to publicly release your responses in a way that could identify you or your household.

If you need help completing the survey or have questions, please call our toll-free number (1-800-354-7271).

Thank you for your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Steven D. Dillingham

Enclosures

ACS-143.2(2020) 08-27-2019

census.gov

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## Appendix B

### Screeners

# OY4 ACS Cognitive Testing Recruiting Screener

## SELF-RESPONDENTS

**Interviewer: IF VOICEMAIL REACHED, LEAVE MESSAGE ONCE, say:** Hello, this is [NAME] from Westat calling for [NAME] on behalf of the U.S. Census Bureau. We are conducting a study to find out what people think about the mail they receive and would like to invite you to participate in a 45-minute interview. You will receive \$40 after the interview is complete. If you are interested, please call me at [NUMBER] at your earliest convenience. Thank you.

**Interviewer: IF LIVE PERSON ANSWERS, say:** Hello, this is [NAME] from Westat. May I please speak with [NAME]?

**Interviewer: IF ASKED THE REASON FOR THE CALL, say:** We're working with the U.S. Census Bureau to find out what people think about the mail they receive. I'm calling about a study we're conducting for the U.S. Census Bureau to find out what people think about the mail they receive. If you are interested and eligible, we will invite you to a 45-minute phone interview. After the interview you will receive a \$40 check.

**Interviewer: IF ASKED FOR MORE INFORMATION, say:** The Census Bureau recently received your household's response to the American Community Survey and they have asked us to follow-up to gather your reactions to the survey and related mailings.

To make sure you are eligible for the study, I need to ask you a few questions. This will only take about 5 minutes.

First, I would like to confirm the street address I have on record for you. Is [ADDRESS FROM SELECTED CASES TRACKER] correct?

**Interviewer: IF ADDRESS DOES NOT MATCH, INELIGIBLE. THANK AND END.**

1. How old are you?

---

REF (Refused)

DK (Don't Know)

**Interviewer: IF UNDER 18, REF OR DK, INELIGIBLE. THANK AND END.**

**2. How many people live in your household including yourself?**

---

REF

DK

**3. (Interviewer: IF MORE THAN ONE PERSON IN HH, ask:) Who typically handles the mail in your household? Would you say it's...**

Only you,

You and other members of your household, or

Someone else in your household other than you?

REF

DK

**Interviewer: IF "SOMEONE ELSE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD OTHER THAN YOU", REF OR DK, INELIGIBLE. THANK AND END.**

**4. What is your sex?**

FEMALE

MALE

OTHER

DK

REF

**5. What is the highest grade or level of education you have completed?**

LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL

HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA/GED

SOME COLLEGE (INCLUDES ASSOCIATE'S)

COLLEGE GRADUATE (BA, BS)

GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL DEGREE (MA, MS, MD, JD, PhD, etc.)

REF

DK

**6. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?**

YES

NO

REF

DK

**7. What is your race? You may say more than one. (IF NECESSARY, READ CATEGORIES ALOUD)**

**Interviewer: MARK ALL THAT APPLY.**

White,

Black or African American,

American Indian/Alaskan Native,

Asian, or

Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander?

OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

REF

DK

## Interview Date and Time

Before we schedule a 45-minute interview, I'd like to make sure it's ok with you that we audio record the interview. This allows us to carefully review the discussion and draw the proper conclusions. Will that be alright with you?

Yes    **(Interviewer: CONTINUE)**

No    **(Interviewer: DO NOT SCHEDULE)**

We will also need to send you a confirmation email after we talk today, as well as one additional email before the interview that will include some attachments you will need to open during the phone interview. Do you have both a computer or tablet and an Internet connection to receive and view the documents we will email to you?

Yes    **(Interviewer: SCHEDULE DATE AND TIME OF INTERVIEW)**

No    **(Interviewer: DO NOT SCHEDULE)**

Great. You will be receiving these emails from the interviewer who will be conducting the interview. Those emails will contain their phone number so that you recognize their number when they call you.

**Interviewer: RECORD DATE AND TIME OF INTERVIEW IN THE SELECTED CASES TRACKER**

**ALL:** In case we are having difficulty reaching you on the day of your interview, is it ok if we send you a text message?

**Interviewer: COLLECT PARTICIPANT PHONE, EMAIL, AND REMINDER PREFERENCE ON THE SELECTED CASES TRACKER.**



**You will receive two emails from us. They will both say “Westat interview” in the subject line, and they will come from a Westat email address. Your interview will be conducted by a Westat interviewer on behalf of the Census Bureau and they will provide you with more information about the interview.**

## Appendix C

### Respondent Demographics

**Table C-1. Sample demographic information**

Demographics	Totals
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	17
Female	30
<b>Household size</b>	
1	16
2	13
3+	18
<b>Education</b>	
Less than High School	2
High school or GED	6
Some college	13
College	19
Graduate/Professional Degree	7
<b>Age</b>	
18-29	7
30-39	8
40-49	8
50-64	12
65+	12
<b>Response mode</b>	
Paper	8
Internet	39
TQA	-
<b>Location</b>	
Northeast	5
South	12
Midwest	7
West	23
<b>ACS Mailings received</b>	
1	15
2	27
3	5
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	
Hispanic White	4
Hispanic Black	2
Non-Hispanic White	26
Non-Hispanic Black	10
American Indian/Alaskan Native	-
Asian	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47</b>