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Cognitive Testing of the Treatment Version of the Demographic Characteristics of Farm Producers Pilot Study

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METHODS

Cognitive interviews were conducted to evaluate the cover letter and the treatment version of the questionnaire for the Demographic Characteristics of Farm Producers Pilot Study. The focus of the cognitive testing was to evaluate new measures of gender identity, sexual identity, and disability status. Respondents who meet the Census of Agriculture definition of a farm and are members of the LGBTQ community or have a disability were targeted for this study. Respondents were recruited using web searches, personal contacts, and snowball sampling. Eleven interviews were scheduled. Two were no shows or cancelled and nine interviews were completed. Five respondents were identified prior to the interviews as being a member of the LGBTQ community and four respondents were identified as having a disability.

The interviews were conducted remotely using Zoom. All interviews lasted one hour. During the interviews, the interviewers first asked the respondent to read the cover letter (Appendix A). Respondents were then asked probe questions to evaluate the content of the letter. Next, respondents completed the questionnaire (Appendix B). Retrospective probing was done to assess respondents' question response process and their reactions to the survey questions. A copy of the interview guide can be found in Appendix C. All interviews were recorded and transcribed via Zoom. Interviewers also took extensive notes during the interviews. The recordings, transcriptions, and interview notes were used during analysis. The data were analyzed using the constant comparative method of analysis.

RESULTS

Cover Letter

Five respondents indicated they read the letter in full and four indicated they skimmed it. After reading the letter, respondents were probed on their understanding of the purpose of the survey, the information they felt stood out or was important, information they felt was missing, and information they felt was unnecessary. Some respondents' responses to the questions appeared to be biased by the information they were provided during the recruitment phase. For example, some respondents understood the purpose of the survey was to test new demographic questions. Others who were recruited through AgrAbility perceived this survey to be about disabilities. This should be considered when reviewing the results regarding respondents' interpretations of the purpose of this survey and comments on what they felt was missing from the cover letter.

Most respondents indicated the intent of this survey was to collect new information on producer demographics. One respondent interpreted this survey as gathering information on what producers are going to grow. It is not clear why he interpreted the intent of the survey this way.

Respondents indicated that different information stood out or was important to them when reading the letter. Half the respondents indicated that the information in "how will the data be used" stood out them. For example, when asked what stood out respondents provided comments like:

“You're asking me questions, it's not gonna be published, and it's a, it's a test and confidential...”

“How this data will be used. It's not for an official publication. You will be publishing a report.”

Respondents also said the information in the “What else do I need to know” section stood out. In particular, the confidentiality statement: “Supposedly it's confidential and can't be held against me, and I guess that's the biggest.” One respondent also noted that the letter conveys the importance of responding even if you are not farming.

A few respondents also indicated the information in “Why am I getting this” stood out: “So I think the thing that stood out to me is that USDA are- you guys are trying to learn more about the people that are producers in the U.S. and not just assuming that we're all the same, I guess, does that make sense?”

A few respondents also noticed the “What should I do next section.” One respondent thought this information stood out and was great for people who will not take the time to read the entire letter.

The thing that stands out most is what should I do next, and that I think is the most important part, the text box. Really informs like for people like me who were probably not going to read this thoroughly... and I think that is the most important part - if you make people look for what the call to action is.

The other respondent liked that it was easy to find how to get started and that it instructed how she could respond online:

Personally I like that you go ‘what should I do next,’ respond online. Because, if I can do something if, you know, if it's not going to take me very long, I get it in the mail, I can turn around and pop on the Internet and get it done, then I don't have to worry about it anymore. I can put a checkmark on it and put it in the file that that's done.

Respondents also noted the due date and the time it would take to complete the survey. Respondents felt the time it would take to complete the survey was reasonable. One respondent stated, “10 to 15 minutes. Oh yeah I can do that, whereas some surveys you think if this is an hour I don't even want to start it. So, that's good.”

One respondent also felt the sentence that said, “You are part of a select group of producers to receive this questionnaire” was very motivating.

I think it's interesting there, you know, why am I getting this letter? You're a part of a select group of producers to receive this questionnaire. [I] guess that would spur me on more to respond to it. If I knew that it wasn't you know every Tom Dick and Harry that there was a need for me to respond, because if all my neighbors around me are going to get the same letter then it's like well it's you know no need for me to respond to it.

However, this statement raised questions for some respondents. They wondered who exactly this survey was being sent to and why they were selected.

Respondents described the cover letter as “straightforward,” “succinct,” and “direct, to the point.” In general, they did not feel the letter contained unnecessary information. Some indicated they stopped reading when they reached the confidentiality statement and that this information was less important to them. One respondent stated, “I know you probably have to have it in here legally, but in the last section, the second paragraph with the federal law code and all of that fun stuff seems a little extra and fluffy but I’m sure you probably have to have that in there, for legal reasons.” Another wondered if it was necessary to include the confidentiality statement but felt it was good that it was presented at the end of the letter. “For the information you provide is confidential, protected by federal law and all that, do you have to put that in? I mean I mean it's not hurting anything, but I would put that very last.”

Respondents did feel the letter was missing necessary information. A few respondents described the letter as a generic letter that did not adequately convey the purpose of the survey. One respondent who felt the letter was too generic said he needed to know the purpose of the survey and how he would benefit from responding.

I think it needs to get a little more to the point on why am I getting this letter, what's the purpose of it. Am I getting it because I grow corn? Am I getting it because I was, you know... I think if you could be a little more forward with that- why you need the demographics or what's what the purpose is... I would probably be a little bit tighter you know under ‘Why am I getting this letter?’ Yeah I’d come out and say hey we're, you know, trying to survey, people with disabilities or limitations that are currently in agriculture, just, I mean, straightforward like that. Because I think most folks are going to look at why am I getting this letter and that's where they're going to look to the meat and bones of it.

He said people need to know how responding to this survey will benefit them. He said right now all this letter is telling him is that he needs to respond. “I read through it and you say you want me to answer a questionnaire... it's just telling me you want me to do a survey that will take 10 to 15 minutes.

Another respondent also felt the letter was too generic and needed more information on the purpose of the survey.

It seems very blanket-like, which might be the goal that you're trying to do, that you're trying to achieve, just to receive information in general... If there was something that I would change I would maybe try and get something that's a little more direct in what kind of information we're trying to receive. Just because I’m a very direct and to the point person... it seems very generic like oh the Federal Government wants more information. Great. Cool. If there was something that were specifically worded or saying that you were trying to target or place emphasis on minority producers, LGBT producers, producers with disability, something that was a little more direct.

However, he cautioned that it may limit the amount of information people would be willing to share. He said people may have one of two reactions. They may read the cover letter and think this survey is applicable to them or not applicable to them:

Oh wow, this is actually, they're wanting to hear from me because I identify as a part of that target or if you're sending this to, pardon me for lack of better words, but a

stereotypical white producing farm, this is probably going to get thrown away. Because they don't feel like they can identify or that they need to share their information.
...when I receive things in the mail or emails, I want to know that it's being specifically sent to me for a reason not just because I grow things.

Others echoed these respondents' statements that they did not feel the purpose of the survey was adequately conveyed and that more could be done to express how exactly the data collected will help ensure that future agricultural data are as comprehensive and accurate as possible, and how responding to the survey benefits the respondent.

Similarly, another respondent indicated he needed more information on the purpose of the survey and why he should respond. He said, "Honestly if I got that in the mail, I'd probably skim it and put it in the recycling. There's not like clear intention about why I should help you." Because of his distrust of the government and feeling like his identity has not been acknowledged in the past by the federal government, it is not enough to say 'NASS is testing new demographic survey questions.' He would like the letter to be more explicit in stating that NASS has not measured gender and sexual identities in the past and how they will use that information. As the respondent above mentioned, as a member of the LGBTQ community, he would find it motivating to know this information up front.

I feel like as a queer person, I don't trust government institutions to reflect back my identity, so if that is the intention behind expanding the questions that are being asked, I would say, you know, in that line 'the information from this test will be helped to ensure the future agricultural data as comprehensive an accurate as possible,' maybe saying intention behind that. Previously, questions such as... gender and sexuality or whatever you're expanding to ask... being explicit about that. These questions have not been asked. We want to integrate them to better understand X, Y and Z. Then I would maybe give it more time.

One respondent thought a statement could be added to reassure respondents that their information would not be shared across federal agencies or used against them.

Just a simple statement to help with the farmer or whoever is answering to be more comfortable about providing the information... Because I think in a lot of people's mind, and I think some of the farmers are apprehensive... The government... Uncle Sam is a big one that they always fear. ...I think some of the guys, especially the smaller guys are concerned about the government knowing what they actually do and how much they're actually producing to be able to quantify, you know, if they're actually making what they say they make, are they making more than what they make.

When asked if they would respond to this survey based on the information in the cover letter some respondents said no. One indicated that she recently stopped farming, so she was no longer responding to agricultural surveys. The other said she typically does not respond to agricultural surveys. "I'm notoriously absent from surveys. I don't take the time to respond..." She said, "I will ask if this is required and if they say no, I don't respond."

One respondent said there was not enough information provided in the letter for him to determine if he would want to participate. He said, "Probably not as it's currently written. It depends on how helpful I felt that day and it depends on if I got it in the middle of the growing season or not." He said if he

received it in October or November, he probably would but he said he needed more information on how responding would benefit him. "If it was more explicit about why, and I guess. As a farmer, I want to know how it will benefit me if I help you with this information. We have very limited time and capacity so in being more explicit about it, then I would invest that time."

Other respondents said they would participate in this survey but some with caveats.

A few respondents said they would participate if they received it, but they were concerned others who were not as open minded as themselves would not. One respondent was excited to see questions that allowed her to express her true identity and said she would definitely respond to this survey, but she did not think others would. When asked why she said,

Just your standard, you know, white male, middle America, I hate to say it, but maybe Trumper that a lot of farmers that make up the United States, especially middle America that are doing large scale farming that's the demographic. So I think they would see this as like why do they need to participate, or if they do write back it's probably not going to be the nicest just like, you know, basically everything we've been going through for-how everything has been intensified the last couple of years with stuff. I just- I don't know. I feel like you're going to get to get a 50/50 response back to this. Good and bad. Just with the shape the world is in right now, especially our country. But I feel that anybody, that is, you know person of color or queer or anything like that or nonbinary they're going to see that and be like, yes! We are seen! You want to know about us and where we're at and that we're farming.

Another respondent said he would participate because he understands how the data NASS collects are used but he was concerned that others would not see the value in it.

I mean me personally, I probably would because I mean I work with a lot of veterans and I am and disabled so...I try and respond to as much stuff I can, because I know that, you know, that is what drives the train. But, you know, looking at it from the crusty old farmer or rancher out in West Texas that gets this, I say it goes back to 'hey is this going to help me out?' And I think that's the key thing, but I mean I would respond.

Other respondents were concerned that others would not see the disability questions as relevant. A respondent who said he would respond to the survey also felt not enough information was conveyed in the letter. He initially said he would respond to the survey based on the information in the letter. After completing the survey, he said once he has decided to complete a survey, he will answer all the questions unless he comes across a question that really makes him stop and think or wonder why it is being asked. In regard to the disability questions he said,

In hindsight I guess I'm trying to figure out what you guys are after. What are you trying to discern with that set... Just figure out how healthy the farmers are? ...how much longer they may be able to farm or what? Maybe why you have those set of questions. But it's again a little or maybe a level of concern that I'm not sure is needed on an agriculture survey.

He did not feel that the cover letter adequately conveyed what the survey was about. He said,

...in an agricultural survey it should be focused on the farm issues, and you know, unless you're trying to gather more information about the farmers themselves, the standard of the health of the farming community, then you should state that and then just ask those questions.

Similarly, another respondent said she would respond based on the cover letter, but she would also want to see the survey questions first. After completing the survey, she was concerned that others would think the survey questions did not apply to them and more text is needed in the cover letter to encourage response.

I think it's a good survey. But like I said on the cover letter, I would stress that, you know, there's probably some questions that will not pertain to you. But, you know, please, please complete them to your ability.... so you'll know if someone's has actually, you know, absolutely no disabilities whatsoever, then they can just wiz through there and mark, whatever that was... no difficulties. They need to know there's a purpose, I guess, that those questions are being asked.

Questionnaire

On average respondents spent 8 minutes completing the questionnaire. However, in some of those interviews the respondents asked questions or provided comments while completing the questionnaire or needed the interviewer's assistance navigating the questionnaire and entering answers over Zoom. In four interviews where the respondent completed the questionnaires without discussion or assistance from the interviews, the average time spent on the questionnaire was 6 minutes. The completion time could not be calculated for one respondent because concurrent probes were used.

Respondent Identification

The image shows a section of a questionnaire titled "Personal Characteristics". It contains two main questions, 5 and 6, with sub-questions. Question 5 asks about the number of people involved in decisions in 2021, with a response box labeled "Number" and a red "XXXX" placeholder. Question 6 asks for respondent identification, with sub-question 'a' asking for the respondent's age on December 31, 2021, with a response box and a red "XXXX" placeholder.

Personal Characteristics

5. In 2021, how many people were involved in decisions for this operation?
(Include family members and hired managers. Exclude hired workers unless they were a hired manager or family member.) XXXX Number

6. The following questions should be answered by a person involved in decisions for this operation.

a. What was your age on December 31, 2021? XXXX

Figure 1. Questions 5 and 6 Respondent Identification

Respondents interpreted Question 6 (figure 1) in different ways. Some respondents interpreted this question as asking about a) number of people involved in decisions, b) number of people who make decisions, c) number of people making day-to-day decisions, d) people who do the day-to-day work on the farm, e) the number of people who have influence over the trajectory of the farm, f) if they are the sole decision makers or partnership or LLC, g) if they need assistance on the farm.

Despite their varied interpretations, when respondents discussed who they included in their answers and those individuals' roles on the farm, it appeared the majority reported the correct individuals. One

respondent commented that the text in parentheses following Questions 5 helped him understand that he should report his farm manager, who he was initially going to exclude.

The respondent who interpreted this question as asking about the people who have influence over his farm included a wide variety of individuals, including his landlord. Although his landlord has no direct involvement in the decisions for his farm, he felt his landlord was involved in the sense that he controlled the amount of land he had access to: "I am losing two of my leases this year, and so that influences the decisions, I have to make on my farm." He said the word involved was vague. He also commented that "the word family is pretty triggering for me" and he was not sure if he should include his queer family. "When the USDA says family, I'm assuming they mean a spouse or children in a nuclear family model and that's not what my queer community and farming communities is really reflective of that."

Half of the respondents indicated they did not read the instruction at the start of Question 6 (The following questions should be answered by a person involved in decisions for this operation). However, this only led to response error for one respondent. This respondent listed all the ages of the three people involved in decisions. However, when he answered Question 6b, he began reporting for himself only.

One respondent who did not read the instruction, reported for himself in Question 6a-l but he wondered how someone would report if those involved in decisions were different races.

Gender Identity

d. What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?

1 Male

2 Female

- 4 -

e. How do you currently describe yourself?

1 Male

2 Female

3 Transgender

4 None of these, specify:

Figure 2. Gender Identity

Respondents understood the intent of Question 6d as asking what sex they were assigned at birth and Question 6e as what gender they currently identify as (Figure 2). Respondents who identified as the same sex they were assigned at birth (cisgender) had no difficulty answering these questions. One respondent who identified as male and transgender had difficulty with these questions. Several respondents felt Question D was intrusive and insensitive.

Question D

When asked about their reactions to these questions, some respondents who were cisgender and were not members of the LGBT community indicated that they understood that there was a need to collect the information asked about in Questions D and E.

“You're asking it because that's the thing to ask right now... I mean it's today's climate.”

“It's the day and age I understand you all have to ask it... It's sad that it's no longer male, female. But I think, especially in the ag community, that would be a common reaction. But I think the age of the person will influence how they perceive it.”

One cisgender respondent was neutral to this set of questions: “I don't have a problem if you have the same sex you're born with and I don't have a problem if they change. That's their own priority.”

One respondent who was a cisgender lesbian thought it was necessary to ask these questions and supported the inclusion of these question in an agricultural survey. She described these questions as “very normal” and stated, “I'm not offended by it. I'm not turned off by it. They're factual, non-emotional, where do you plug in questions... applicable.”

Another cisgender respondent who was not part of the LGBTQ community questioned why this information was important to collect and felt it was invasive to ask a person if they identify as a gender other than what was assigned at birth: “I don't know. It's just, uh, I guess in this time and age it's like why is that so important? ...because you already know I was born a male, why do you need to know if I changed or not? Does it really matter? It may be considered more invasive. It's like, why do you need to know?”

Four other respondents who were members of the LGBTQ community felt these questions, and Question D, in particular, were invasive. One of these respondents who self-identified as a gay man, was happy to see these types of questions being asked on federal surveys; however, he felt they could be perceived as intrusive.

It was a little I don't want to say invasive but personal um when these questions were asked because I've never seen these questions on a government questionnaire before. So that was fun and interesting because as a person of the community, this is, I think something that should be addressed. This I don't want to say, well, but it has the possibility of being taken as a little intrusive depending on the recipient, but I do think that it is pertinent information.

Another respondent who was cisgender and identified as lesbian said initially she was happy to see this question but then thought it could be offensive to people who are transgendered. When she first answered this question she said,

I like that question... instead of saying what's your sex- at the same time that might offend people because, like, if you've ever heard anybody that's like trans say their dead name. Right? They don't talk about the name they were born with or like the sex that they were born with. To them, that life is dead. They don't want to be reminded of that. Because they were assigned the wrong sex. They fell coming through this world, now they're finally who they are... I liked it. I mean I don't identify as trans but I have a lot of trans friends... I rethought that through and I was like okay cool! You didn't ask like hey what's your sex... this is more thoughtful. At the same time I could see somebody who's trans might be like well I am who I am right now. Why are you asking me what my sex was at birth?

A respondent, who was cisgender and self-identified as a female and bisexual indicated that her partner was female and transgendered. Her initial reaction to Question D was that this question was intrusive and wondered why it was being asked:

My question is why have this question? I'm thinking it's not important really... it's a little bit intrusive I suppose for people that are- that don't identify with their original birth certificate. It's almost like asking my partner what her real name was.... I don't like D. It seems intrusive. It's like poking at a wound when someone is transgendered. It's like always bringing that thing back up again...were you born with any birth defects? Why is that important? That's how I see people that are born identifying different than their birth certificate.... You're bringing up something that is misunderstood and seen as bad.

A respondent who identified as male, transgender and queer also discussed the intrusiveness and insensitivity of Question D for people who are transgendered.

I don't like that question. Like, why are you asking me that invasive information and if I'm going to tell you that I'm trans in the next question, it seems unnecessary and triggering to ask someone what their sex assigned at birth was.... As a person that identifies as trans or gender different than what was assigned at birth and that was part of their identity, they would note that in E in a more empowering way... That question (Question D) is often asked of trans people in a really, yeah, like invasive de-empowering way of like 'Oh, but what is your real gender? What were you? What was your name? What is your- What was your sex assigned at birth?' It's like if that's not information that I want to share with someone, that is a really, is a really weird question. ...That question has been used in a way to the debunk trans people existing... it's been used in a way that's like 'oh trans people aren't real or your experience isn't like a real thing.'

When asked if he thought Question D was necessary, this respondent said,

I mean it's tricky it's like someone could identify as male and not trans but their birth certificate has a different sex assigned at birth and their gender identity currently I don't know if that makes sense, so they're trans people that are stealth and don't want you to know that they're trans and maybe they don't identify as trans I guess I'm just like, seems a pretty invasive question. I don't know why you're asking the sex assigned at

birth if what's more important is the way someone defines their gender, then. I don't know why you would ask them that question.

But he felt the question wording should reflect the construct NASS is trying to measure.

I think a question for the USDA would be what's the intention behind asking this question. Do you want people to say trans masculine, trans feminine, trans queer, gender queer, nonbinary, gender expansive like what is the- what is the goal? Do you want to list the whole laundry list or is the goal to you know capture, I don't know.

One respondent asked her farm manager who self-identifies as nonbinary and has a partner who is transgender to join the interview. The farm manager echoed other respondents' concerns with this question. This farm manager uses the pronouns they/their. When they initially read this question, they said,

Yeah that checks out. I think that's fine in terms of- I think it might, depending on the person, it could be like a little triggering to them. But it's, I guess, yeah, it's- the language is correct- what sex were you assigned at birth or on your original birth certificate. So that's fine, but maybe the question itself could feel invasive or triggering.

When asked how they would answer this question they said they would not answer it. They said the question does not account for people who are intersexed and as a person who is nonbinary being asked that question first is off-putting.

When people are asked that question and, especially, that being the first question, following these other questions. At least for me personally, and I think there'd be some other people that would feel this way... it feels kind of like you're being labeled and boxed in, kind of from the get-go and then everything else kind of feels a little... a little more hollow with that question being the first one. I think, to a lot of people who are nonbinary, transgender, the question feels really probing and there's also a lot of focus on like trans people and their genitalia. And, you know, I think a lot of trans people want to be seen fully and not just about like their genitalia or their assigned sex at birth. So maybe having that followed up kind of at the end, could be a good idea to so that's not right out the gate, could be a little bit more inclusive, or like kind of sensitive to those demographics.

When asked if they felt the question would be less intrusive if it was asked after Question E, they said moving Questions D to after E would...

Make it feel like this survey is being really thoughtful and inclusive of transgender and gender non-conforming people and I feel, like, included and seen in this. I think for a lot of people in those communities just having like that kind of question on almost every like medical survey, or just like taxes and everything that's like sex and there's only two answers, two things to choose from. That I think, for most people always feels extremely limiting and kind of like there's an erasure that people feel when that question comes up and depending on the person, it can just be- it can feel harmful. So just having that lower and then maybe like including intersex and maybe, including... maybe having also

like a check that's just blank to see if there was something else that was put on the original birth certificate... just that alone could show that there's some thought, and they can kind of take the sting out of the pointedness of that feeling of that question. And by the way, I'm super stoked to be having this conversation and... to be part of this right now so.

Others also felt this should not be the first question asked in this series. A respondent who had a partner who is transgendered also discussed not asking Question D first. She suggested making Question D a subset of Question E and asking if the person still identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth instead of asking what sex they were assigned at birth. "I think D should be a subset of E though and if you want gender you need to say how do you currently describe your gender instead of describe yourself... I don't like D. It seems intrusive...." When asked if she felt Question D was less intrusive if it followed Question E she said, "Well, I want to say yes, but probably not." She said the reason she does not like these questions and the ordering of them is asking someone how they identify after asking what sex they were assigned at birth makes it seem like the identity question was an afterthought and dismissive.

Like the respondent above, a respondent who self-identified as male, transgender, and queer also felt the order of these questions matters. However, he felt Question D was still an invasive question no matter its placement.

The order in which questions are asked too is really important. This section of gender and sexuality questions was prefaced by asking me what my sex assigned at birth was. I am on edge and don't want to divulge information. If you're going to ask me that question then I'd be like oh I am a gay man would probably be how I would ask the next two questions if I was closed off because you were asking me some of these questions about my sex assigned at birth. So, I think if someone was going to share that their sex assigned at birth was different than they would identify, you know, as trans or gender queer or, you know, write in their gender. [if the questions were reversed], I would still be like why are they asking me this question but if the order was switched I would feel differently about it, yes. I don't think you should ask that question though.

In the last interview, the farm producer and her manager were asked about alternative wording to Question D. These respondents were asked what their reaction would be to the question if it was worded: how was your sex recorded at birth? Both had a positive reaction that to that wording. The farm manager who identified as nonbinary said, "My gut feels like I mean I haven't heard that before, but what I like about that is recorded versus assigned. Recorded feels like it was someone's view or opinion versus assigned feels a little bit more permanent. So that feels like some good language." The farm producer was cisgender agreed: "...recorded is such a better word. I agree with [name] on that.... For the same reason...it just sounds more like it was just recorded. It's not that you are identifying with that sex. It's like that was what was recorded by somebody who was there. It doesn't mean you agree with it."

Question E

Respondents did not have the same strong reactions to Question E. However, some felt the question could be reworded to make it clearer and that response options could be modified.

One respondent who was cisgender but had a partner who was transgender suggested rewording the question to: How do you currently describe your gender. When asked why she said “Well you’re looking for gender right? Another respondent, who identified as male, transgender and queer, thought the question was ambiguous. “Well, just looking at the question I could tell you I describe myself as a fabulous cook or I describe myself as a fabulous dog dad so it's very ambiguous, looking at the answers to the question I think that what you need to ask is how do you currently describe your gender.”

Similarly, another respondent who self-identified as nonbinary suggested changing this question to: How would you describe your gender identity. This respondent also suggested adding an additional question that measured gender expression. When asked how gender expression differed from gender identity this person said,

Gender identity is more of an internal feeling. It's like a sense of who you are in the inside versus your expression has more to do with how you outwardly express the vast binary that's gender or the vast spectrum rather than gender. So you could have someone who, like my partner, who identifies as- uses they, them, and she her pronouns, identifies nonbinary and trans-fem and then also mostly presents in a feminine way and so, like all those are different things to be considered when it comes to like creating inclusive spaces. So, for me, or like for me, for example, I can use myself, my expression is typically pretty masculine or like butch. But that has more to do with kind of where I'm at in terms of my comfort level. In terms of my personal identity, I wouldn't identify as a man or male. And then, you know, and then I'd have a different answer to question D. So it's going to be different for every person, and I think like creating the most space as possible is really going to just allow everyone to fully you know answer to their most authentic self, with all that space being given.

As mentioned above, some respondents felt the response categories were inadequate and one respondent wanted to be able to select more than one. The respondent who was cisgender but had a partner who was transgendered thought transgender should be removed from the response options and nonbinary should be added.

I think you could do male, female, nonbinary and then, none of these. I mean you kind of skip everybody that's nonbinary because they're- they don't- they wouldn't identify with any of those. I guess, they could put none of these... Transgender is just one category of many other categories on a continuum of how people describe themselves... Transgender isn't really a gender. It just means that you don't identify with what your birth certificate says. It doesn't talk about cross dressing, nongender, fluid... I don't consider transgender a category for gender. It's more like the process, trans, like, going to a different gender than you what you originally, your birth certificate said. Like a process, I guess.

She felt the term transgender was unnecessary and insensitive. She discussed how persons who are transgender and binary want to be able to report the gender they identify with and not have to disclose that they transitioned genders.

I mean it seems kind of like apples to oranges, where you've got male and female and then you got transgender. The process is going on but that person has identified as male or female for quite a long time... even if they are still presenting as their birth identity

or- I mean I think people that are transgendered and identify as something that's binary, a label that's binary, they just want to be- they don't want to be called out on whether they're transgendered on every application they do. They just want to, like, fit in.

The respondent who identified as male, transgender and queer marked all three responses when answering Question E. When asked about it, he said,

I can't just select one and I don't think that many queer people would be able to just select one.... What I checked here is representative. It's really uncomfortable to fill out forms where it's just male or female. I'm just like, maybe I'll Just skip this question. It sucks. It's just like should I even be filling out the survey, maybe they don't want my information. So, it's cool that this is getting integrated. I think it's important to allow people to check as many as they apply.

A respondent who was transgender, also felt the response options were inadequate. He suggested adding options such as third gender and two-spirit, a term that is used by indigenous tribes.

I've seen like male, female, transgender, third gender, none of these, and then write in. So I'd just add third gender, or two- and or two spirit as well, like indigenous trans people that's an identity that is held there too. I think HRC, Human Rights Commission, has examples of what you could change that to that are federally used.

As shown above, several respondents questioned why this information is needed. Respondents felt this information needed to be conveyed to all respondents regardless of their gender. A respondent in the LGBTQ community indicated that others in the LGBTQ community maybe fearful to disclose this information. She said NASS should inform respondents the reasons why they are measuring this information to alleviate fears: "You need to let them know this is how we're moving. And it's not just because we want to make sure we know where you are..." Respondents who were not in the LGBTQ community echoed this point and said NASS should be explicit about why they are asking these questions and how these data will be used. During the recruitment phase of this project, transgendered farmers were also reluctant to participate in this research due to fear of disclosing this information to the USDA.

Sexual Identity

f. Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself? Select one.

~~XXXX~~ 1 Gay or lesbian

2 Straight, that is, not gay or lesbian

3 Bisexual

4 None of these, specify: ~~XXXX~~

5 I am not sure yet

6 I don't know what this question means

Figure 2. Sexual Identity

Respondents interpreted Question 6f (figure 2) as asking about attraction, sexual preferences, sexual behaviors, and identity. The respondent who self-identified as gay and queer, thought this question was ambiguous though he understood the intent. When asked how he interpreted this question he said, "Same as the first one. Are you asking me 'do I think of myself as a good listener, or a fabulous person'? ...it's not clear, and instead I would say, I would suggest, which of the following best represents how you think of your sexuality." Similarly, another respondent who self-identified as lesbian suggested changing the wording of this question to: Which of the following best represents you. When asked why she said, "I don't think of myself. I am who I am... I would rather just see what best represents you. I don't know about the think of yourself part. I don't know why that doesn't sit well with me." Another respondent, who self-identified as queer and pansexual said, "if I just read this off the bat I might be like 'I don't really know what this question means' would also be an answer that I might give just because it's not the word sexual identity or sexuality isn't in the question." This person suggested changing the question to: how you personally describe your sexuality?

In terms of the response options, most respondents were able to find the appropriate response options for themselves. However, a few respondents had issues. Despite the instruction to "select one," one respondent selected two response options. He selected gay or lesbian and none of these and wrote in "queer." He said, "I can't just select one and I don't think that many queer people would be able to just select one." When asked about the instruction to select one, he said he disregarded that instruction because otherwise he would not be able to report his identity. He also felt that queer should be added as a response option.

I just disregarded it. I'm just – I'm used to forms trying to whittle us down to simple checkboxes. In reality, it's much more expansive than that. So yeah, I just disregarded it. Maybe if queer was an option, it would have been better. If it was 'which of the following best represents how you think about your sexuality' and queer was an option, but that said, still not really. I would say 'which of the following represents your sexuality check all that apply' and then I would have answered the same way. I would also encourage you to include queer as one of those options.

This respondent elaborated and said he uses the labels gay man, trans, and queer to describe himself but it can vary based on the environment he is in.

I usually describe myself as a gay man and a trans and queer farmer... I think it really depends on the space, depends if I'm in a safe space or not. If I'm with older people, they, sometimes people still think queer is a slur. So, if I'm not interested in having that conversation, I usually just describe myself as a gay man in that space. But that's not reflective of like my full sexuality.

Similarly, another respondent initially selected lesbian but then changed her answer to bisexual. When asked about this she said she identifies as bisexual but that can be hard for others to understand. Often she will just tell people that she is a lesbian. "Well normally I just say I'm a lesbian and I have a partner but truly I'm bisexual. People get so confused about how you can be attracted to both genders. It's not worth explaining it." She said if she tells people she is bisexual they will ask 'what you do mean your partner is a woman?' She then needs to explain that their question was not asking who she is sleeping with but what her sexual preference is.

One respondent said, “None of these would work for me... I’d have to write my own in, and I would identify as queer and also pansexual.”

Although other respondents were able to find the response options that were applicable to them, they had comments on the other response options in this question and the order of response options.

One respondent who self-identified as lesbian felt the response option “straight, that is not gay or lesbian” should be changed. When asked why she said because straight could mean more than just not being gay or lesbian. She also felt the term straight carries the connotation that “straight is right. Straight is what you should be.” She suggested changing it to “not gay or queer or not gay or lesbian.” She then added that there are people that are straight, but they identify as queer. She said, “I know it sounds very confusing and all... I’m still confused by a lot of it as well.”

This same respondent felt the terms lesbian and gay should be offered as separate response options. She said, “I feel like mostly gay males identify like ‘I’m gay.’ They don’t want to be grouped with lesbians.” She said lesbians also do not want to be grouped with gay men.

I don’t know why. It’s just a thing, and especially with the older population is what I’ve noticed. Not necessarily my like generation... but I’d say more like in the 50s and 60s. So that’s all they were through their, you know, lives. It’s always been separate and I think that they may be offended by that.

The farm manager who works for this producer had the same reaction. “I would separate gay and lesbian. I wouldn’t lump those together. People can identify as both or as just one or the other.”

They both discussed how labels are changing and an effort should be made to be made to include the terminology people use. However, they both pointed out that there are generational differences in terminology used. In the beginning of the interview, the producer discussed how her employees who are ten years younger than her use different terminology than she does.

I can’t even keep up with all this stuff. Like I have 3 29-year olds that work for me and they’re all queer. This would be a really good question for them, because there’s a long list of things that are- like apparently lesbian got canceled. Like nobody likes to be called a lesbian anymore... I’m like what? Who cancelled that? ... there’s so many letters now... LGBTQ, then 1,000 things after it now. It’s like I can’t keep up anymore.

When her farm manager joined her for the interview, they (the farm manager) discussed adding other categories such as queer, questioning, pansexual, and two spirit. They also discussed how terminology is changing and different generations use different words to describe themselves.

So [producer name] and I were just talking about this actually so apparently to the younger generation in the LGBTQIA+ everything community, lesbian, this is just within our circles, but lesbian isn’t being used as much, but I think there are still going to be a vast majority of people from my perspective that identify with that term... If you go through, there should be like a pretty long alphabet standard right now for like LGBTQIA two S and + and it just keeps... it gets longer because more people are finding nuances within their sexual orientation and- or sexual identity, I think, is slightly better than

orientation too. Or you could just say your sexuality, how would you personally describe your sexuality.

One respondent did not like the inclusion of the response option “I don’t know what this question means.” She felt this option was unnecessary given that anyone responding to this survey would be old enough to understand what this question means and other questions on the survey, which she had difficulty comprehending, did not provide this option.

Number 6, ‘I don’t know what this question means,’ I wouldn’t let people choose that. I would not be passionate about having that on there... I would like to think everybody would know what this means.... I guess none of the other questions give me that option.... The value of sales question doesn’t give me the ability to say I don’t know what this means.

This same respondent also thought there were too many response options in this question. In particular, she felt there are too many options for people who are not sure what their sexual identity is. “There’s so many- four or five and six give you so much ability to not put yourself in a box that putting yourself in the box might be hard if you are not 100% sure.”

Another respondent liked the inclusion of the “I don’t know what this question means.” She said there would be people who are overwhelmed by this question and may need this response option. “There’s gonna be a lot of people that may be like overwhelmed by it, who knows.... and they’re like ‘why the hell are you asking me this question?’ ...you’re going to get a lot of different answers.”

One respondent praised the inclusion of the response option “I’m not sure yet.”

I did notice is that the line number five I’m not sure, yet I think is another very important thing to make sure is included. So, kudos to whoever added that line because there are surprise, surprise, a lot, a lot of closeted gay producers in the rural agriculture industry. So even though that in real life they’re going about their doings as a straight man, giving them the opportunity to see that information from them matters, regardless of whether they’re straight or gay or whatever the case may be. So, I think that line is very important to add that in.

Three respondents provided comments on the order of the response options. Two respondents – one who self-identified as straight and one who self-identified as gay, did not like that the gay or lesbian response option was listed first. The respondent who self-identified as straight said she initially missed the straight category. “I thought at first it was alphabetical. I would suggest making straight the first option. Again, I think for the most part in the agricultural community... when I first glanced, I almost checked none of these.” She eventually found straight but said, “I completely blew over that. I don’t know why I was so sidetracked by gay/lesbian being first. I can’t explain why.” She said she had to go back and read the question again and felt strongly that straight should be listed first. “To me, the default is straight... how I was raised, and I think the majority of people you send that out to that will be the default. However you put the rest of them, the default should be straight.”

The respondent who self-identified as gay also felt straight should go first but for a different reason. He felt by listing gay or lesbian first, it made it seem that the question was targeting gays and lesbians. When he first read the question he said,

One thing that catches my eye is I would make sure that everything is in alphabetical order so that it doesn't seem like you are targeting information from LGBTQ or straight people. So, like E and F should be alphabetical for like the gay or lesbian, straight bisexual, needs to be, I would say, alphabetical and then the remaining three can stay the same. Just to make it seem not so targeted.

He said listing gay or lesbian first raised a flag for him and made him think that is what this question is really measuring – are you gay or lesbian.

However, another respondent who self-identified as gay and queer liked that gay or lesbian was the first category as it goes against assumptions.

I like that gay was above straight. I don't know what farming people, actually no one ever assumes that I'm straight but I just feel like sometimes there's an assumption of cis-straight family farmers. So, it's kind of cool that that one is before straight if you're asking everyone to fill this out.

Respondents' reactions to this question were mixed. Some respondents were happy to see this question included in the survey as it made them feel recognized. One respondent discussed how often on forms there is not a space to report her partner who is a woman. For example, on her child's birth certificate there was only a place for a mother and a father and no space for a second mother. She said, "I appreciate being included. I probably wouldn't fill it out if it didn't give me the option." Another respondent stated, "People like me... feel like we're oftentimes looked over in the agricultural community. This is going to be like a big win for me." Another respondent, who self-identified as straight indicated that he was neutral to seeing this question in the survey. "I don't have a problem with what people are. They got their choice. It isn't right but they have their choice. There's nothing we can do about it, so."

Other respondents, who self-identified as straight, questioned why this information was needed on an agricultural survey. Although he answered the question with no problems, one respondent asked, "Is that really a valid issue for an agriculture person?" Another respondent stopped when answering this question and asked "Are you going to put the some of these responses are optional? Some of these old guys might go 'to hell with this' and in the trash it goes. I'm just putting that out there 'cause I know a lot of people like that." He said these questions are optional on other forms he has filled out for the Department of the Army and Veteran's Affairs. He questioned why it was necessary to measure this information on an agricultural survey.

Is it purposeful to have a sexual orientation question on an agricultural survey? ...I understand there are programs set aside for certain things and certain demographics. But some people will take F as a personal question versus an identity question if you understand what I mean. Look at your demographic across the US for farmers and ranchers and when I say demographic, I'm talking age demographic. I mean you got a lot of older folks. Some of these folks and probably majority of these folks that are, you know, up in their 70s, will look at this question and go 'why the hell, they want to know what I'm doing on in the bedroom....' That's why you may need to change the verbiage on it again, you know give people a little feedback hey, this is why we're asking this question.

A third respondent said she understood the need to ask this question, but she thought it was not an appropriate topic of conversation. “It just knowing in this day and age that’s a question you have to ask. In my personal opinion, it’s sad that it’s come to that. ...From my raising, that there wasn’t talked about. Now it’s thrown in your face.”

Disability

g. Do you have difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses?	xxxx 1 <input type="checkbox"/> No difficulty	2 <input type="checkbox"/> Some difficulty	3 <input type="checkbox"/> A lot of difficulty	4 <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot do at all
h. Do you have difficulty hearing, even if using a hearing aid?	xxxx 1 <input type="checkbox"/> No difficulty	2 <input type="checkbox"/> Some difficulty	3 <input type="checkbox"/> A lot of difficulty	4 <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot do at all
i. Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps?	xxxx 1 <input type="checkbox"/> No difficulty	2 <input type="checkbox"/> Some difficulty	3 <input type="checkbox"/> A lot of difficulty	4 <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot do at all
j. Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?	xxxx 1 <input type="checkbox"/> No difficulty	2 <input type="checkbox"/> Some difficulty	3 <input type="checkbox"/> A lot of difficulty	4 <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot do at all
k. Do you have difficulty with self-care, for example, washing all over or dressing?	xxxx 1 <input type="checkbox"/> No difficulty	2 <input type="checkbox"/> Some difficulty	3 <input type="checkbox"/> A lot of difficulty	4 <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot do at all
l. Using your usual (customary) language, do you have difficulty communicating, for example, understanding or being understood?	xxxx 1 <input type="checkbox"/> No difficulty	2 <input type="checkbox"/> Some difficulty	3 <input type="checkbox"/> A lot of difficulty	4 <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot do at all

Figure 3. Disability Questions

Question G – Vision

Six respondents answered no difficulty to this question and indicated that they have no issues with their vision. Some of these individuals wear glasses and indicated that their glasses corrected their vision. Three respondents answered some difficulty. One respondent who answered some difficulty discussed having situational difficulty seeing. For example, he sometimes has difficulty when he does not clean his glasses and sometimes it is hard to see when there is smoke from forest fires. He also mentioned that he needed to update his prescription. The second respondent said she has difficulty seeing at night even when wearing her glasses. When asked why she answered some difficulty and not a lot, she said “I think it’s really just me having to go get an updated prescription because it’s been years. It’s not horrible. I’m not like legally blind or anything like that.” The third respondent who answered some difficulty indicated that she does have some problems seeing things at a distance even when wearing glasses and she has issues with depth perception due to her multiple sclerosis. She said she did not select a lot of difficulty because she can still see well enough to drive and her vision problems do not affect her work on the farm.

Question H – Hearing

Six respondents answered no difficulty to this question and indicated they do not have any difficulty hearing. One respondent who answered no difficulty indicated that he wears hearing aids and his hearing is improved significantly when wearing them. Three respondents answered some difficulty. These respondents all reported hearing loss. One respondent who answered some difficulty indicated that he often asks others to repeat themselves. He thinks he has hearing loss from being around tractors but does not wear a hearing aid. Two other respondents reported having hearing loss from being around airplanes and helicopters in the military. One of these respondents indicated that he has high frequency hearing loss. He does not wear hearing aids and has difficulty hearing in certain situations.

I have a high frequency hearing loss... Sometimes it comes to play when I'm either trying to hear a program. I have to turn it up or from, you know, in a class or, you know, like if I go to the Pecan Growers Association and they have speakers, so I need to be able to be in a range where I can hear everything.

When asked why he answered “some difficulty” and not “a lot of difficulty,” he said it was because he only has difficulty hearing in certain situations.

Sometimes it is a factor. Okay, and you know, like in conversations. And like I said in sessions, where you know if... whoever's speaking if they're not speaking consistently in a certain level of tone, then it, you know some things drop out for me.

The other respondent who answered some difficulty has hearing loss and wears hearing aids, which improve his hearing. However, he continues to have difficulty when he is around machinery, even when wearing his hearing aids. This respondent described an incident on his farm when he had a PTO shaft break loose from his tractor and he did not hear it, but his wife heard it from inside the house. After that, AgrAbility installed back up cameras on his tractor so he could see what was happening behind him. The reason he did not answer a lot of difficulty is because his hearing aids do improve his hearing and he mostly has problems when he is around loud machinery.

Question I – Mobility

Five respondents answered no difficulty to this question. One respondent indicated that even if she did have difficulty with walking or climbing stairs, she would not admit it. Three respondents answered some difficulty. One respondent who answered some difficulty indicated that he had his right knee and hip replaced and has issues with his left shoulder. When asked why he answered some difficulty and not a lot he said, “I'm good some days some days I'm not.” He is very vulnerable to falls and is supposed to use a cane, but he does not always use it because it is difficult to do work on the farm with a cane. For example, he cannot carry feed bags and dump them while walking with a cane. AgrAbility gave him a motorized wheelbarrow, which helps with his work on the farm. They also installed cameras on his farm so he can monitor his horses from inside the house.

Another respondent who answered some difficulty said he has issues with his vertebrae and neuropathy in his arms and legs and has difficulty with both walking and climbing steps. He said, “walking upstairs will kill me... if I walk enough it'll break me down.” He has received assistive devices from AgrAbility that help him with work on the farm. They provided him with a wheelchair with oversized tires that he can use to get around more easily on the farm and harvest his strawberries. He also used to have

difficulty getting on and off his tractor. They provided a modification for the step so he can get up and down more easily. He pointed out that this question may not capture the full range of mobility issues farmers experience day to day on the farm.

It might not just be walking and climbing steps. It might be climbing up onto equipment too. You start talking to these guys loading cows into 18-wheelers, and they're going up and down all the time too... climbing steps, they're thinking I don't live in a two-story house. I don't have a problem. But these guys can't get up and down off their tractor without hurting themselves and it also gets back to the point of the survey, we're looking at ag stuff here.

When asked why he answered some difficulty and not a lot he said because he will continue to do what he needs to do even if he is in pain.

It's just me. I'll force myself to do stuff when I'm hurting. That's probably why I got hurt so much in the army. Farmers ranchers are no different. They're going to go out because they got to get it done. That's their livelihood. If they don't do it, nobody else is going to it and they're going to lose money. And that's why I say some difficulties, more of an ego question for me. Yeah, I can do it, but it hurts.

The third respondent who answered some difficulty initially said his answer was somewhere between some difficulty and a lot. He said he tries not to climb. "I don't do much climbing because I have bad knees." He said he can do it "I just have to do it cautiously. I guess if it was a lot I wouldn't be doing any." He said he has some difficulty walking, but it is more difficult to climb steps. His equilibrium is off, and he tends to wobble when walking. He ended up selecting some difficulty. During probing he said he has bone on bone in three places in his left knee and overstressed ligaments in the right from compensating for the left. When asked why he answered some difficulty and not a lot and he said compared to other people who have a lot more difficulty and are in worse shape, he is not as bad off.

One person answered a lot of difficulty. This respondent has multiple sclerosis. She said has difficulty walking and climbing steps and needs to use assistive devices to get around. She uses a wheelchair 80% of the time in her house. AgrAbility has also provided some devices she can use on her farm.

I can walk short distances with canes and I've got, thankfully, with the help of Agribility, a track chair. So that helps me get along a lot on the farm. But as far as climbing steps it's really hard... I ordered running boards for every stinking vehicle we had because I could not get into them at all, and so. ...with the running boards, you know, I can get on them pretty easy or get in the vehicles pretty easy, but just you know walking any distance at all is a problem.

She cannot use the tractors on her farm because it is too difficult to climb in and out of the cabs.

Question J – Memory

Five respondents reported no difficulty and said they did not have any issues with remembering or concentrating. One respondent says she has days when she cannot concentrate but she interpreted this as a question asking about cognitive issues experienced by older adults such as dementia and Alzheimer's, so she answered no difficulty.

Four respondents answered some difficulty. One of these respondents said he has difficulty remembering to do stuff when he is busy or stretched too thin. Another respondent indicated that she has difficulty concentrating and remembering due to her multiple sclerosis. She needs to write things down or she will forget to them. She said she answered some difficulty and not a lot of difficulty because some days her cognition is better than others. The two other respondents indicated they have difficulty concentrating and remembering due to PTSD and one of these individuals also suffered a traumatic brain injury. When asked why they answered some difficulty and not a lot, both discussed ways they have learned to manage their PTSD and accommodate for their issues with concentrating and remembering. For example, when asked why he answered some difficulty one respondent discussed ways he has learned to manage his memory issues. He uses calendar reminders and AgrAbility provided him with a tablet that has software to help him with his crop planning. "It's kind of like having the stubby pencil and a notepad... something I can refer back to, but I can keep a whole lot more information at my fingertips and find it easier." When asked why he answered some difficulty and not a lot he said,

I have little habits and tricks that I use to help myself remember. you know little mnemonics and electronics, and my wife kids, that you know they kind of helped me. And with a lot of things once I get into a habit of doing it or routine, it's easier. But if it's something fresh and new or it's a once in a while thing then, you know, that's where sometimes they don't stick with everything else going on.

He also discussed services he has utilized through AgrAbility and the VA that have helped him with his memory.

The other respondent indicated that she has learned how to manage her PTSD and that has helped with her concentration and short-term memory. When asked why she answered some difficulty and not a lot she said, some means she needs to make some adjustments. A lot would mean she has made adjustments and is still not functioning. She said she has learned when to take breaks. If she is tired or stressed, she has difficulty concentrating and now she knows how to recognize her limits and take breaks from things.

Question K – Self Care

All nine respondents answered no difficulty to this question. Respondents discussed not having issues with dressing or bathing. One respondent indicated that he had to change the way he gets dressed due to his mobility issues. But because he can continue to dress and bathe himself, he answered no difficulty. One respondent indicated that self-care is a broad term and thought it was good that the question had the examples washing all over and dressing. She said sometimes she works so much she forgets to eat during the day or drink water, or she may not get enough sleep. If the question did not provide those examples, she would have indicated that she has difficulty with self-care. Another respondent also discussed how self-care encompasses more than just bathing and dressing. He said people could have problems with medication management, meal preparation, household chores, etc. and this question may not pick that up.

One respondent thought this question was odd on an agricultural survey.

I guess I don't understand what an agricultural survey would have to do with self-care...washing all over, dressing and I'm sure again I'm sure it's about mobility and movement and whatever else, but I just it seems- I can reason, with all of the questions, but that one just doesn't seem to apply.

Question L – Communication

All nine respondents answered no difficulty to this question. Respondents interpreted this question in different ways. One respondent interpreted this question as asking if he had issues hearing. Another thought about situational issues, such as interacting with someone who speaks a different language. Similarly, another respondent thought this question was asking if someone for whom English was a second language has difficulty being understood by native English speakers. She said, "My mom she's from Greece. It's so hard to understand her. So, she would have answered that totally different than the way that I answered that."

One respondent interpreted this as asking about learning disabilities and cognitive issues. Two other respondents asked what this question was measuring. One respondent was confused by "usual customary language. "I'm confused by usual customary. I'm curious about like dialect and ways of speaking... But I don't have any difficulty being understood when I try and communicate, so I selected no difficulty." Another respondent asked, "I'm just going to ask what y'all are trying to answer with this question? Are you trying to answer... because of some environmental or other type of disability, like Alzheimer's or accident or injury? Are you having trouble speaking, which is hindering your agricultural operation or getting points across rather?"

Reactions to Disability Questions

When asked about their reactions to this set of questions, respondents generally had a positive reaction. They described these questions as "easy," "straightforward," and "good." Some respondents thought it was good that these questions were being asked since there are a lot of older farmers and because asking these questions recognized farmers with disabilities.

A couple respondents questioned why these questions were being asked. One respondent said, "I don't identify with having a disability, so I don't feel like I should help inform I guess those questions.... so, I guess that's the question of like what's the intention behind asking the questions?" This same respondent discussed how he is immunocompromised, and it affects his ability to work on the farm, but he does not identify as having a disability and these questions do not measure his experiences.

One respondent suggested asking additional questions related to disability. For example, he suggested asking if people are aware that services are available such as AgrAbility. He said many people may not even know these services exist and it would be a good statistic to have. He also suggested adding to this survey or conducting other follow-on surveys on mental health. "Mental health on the farm is starting to get big. The suicide rate for farmers and ranchers is right up there with military and veterans." He said there was a lot of discussion around this topic at the last Commodity Classic and there is a lot of interest in this topic.

Other Questions

Respondents also had difficulty with the acreage, VOS, and farm type questions.

Acreage

When answering Questions 1-2, one respondent answered 18 acres owned and said that was an approximate. He then said, "When you say acreage operated that's as the farm because yeah when you when you think about it, we have about 14 acres... that's planted in pecan trees." He then said, "I'm not sure what A and B and C is." He then realized B and C were asking about rented acreage and indicated he did not rent from or to others. He then said, "Number two would be 14." He said he was only considering the land that he grows pecan trees on.

Another respondent did not read the text above the question or the text following acres operated in Question 2. When answering this question, she said she owns 25 acres but operates 2. She said most of the 25 acres is woodland and they put up fencing for the pigs, but it wasn't a big area. They only farmed about 2 acres of the 25. She entered 2 acres operated and realized later that she did not read the full question. "I figured I knew what the answer was." She interpreted total acres operated as total use for farm. She then asked why we needed question 2.

One respondent reported the acres he rents from others in the acres rent to box. It was not clear why he did this.

VOS

When answering this question, one respondent asked, "Total gross value of sales, that is revenue, right?" When asked what she thought, she said "I would have put revenue but I don't know if that's right. I would have- in reading this question I would have thought what were your sales for 2021. So, your gross revenue. Is that right?"

Another respondent had a lot of difficulty with this question. She said "I'm not familiar with federal farm payments. Is that supplemental crops?" When asked what she thought this question asking, she said, "how much you get from farm program payments." She then started reading it again and then said "oh this says which code..." She then read the question again. "I guess it's that federal farm payments sticks out... this question leads me to ask, okay, we don't get supplements... but as a result of Covid we did get some help. Should that be included in this question? I would say no because I'm thinking back." She then said did not receive any in 2021. At the end of the interview, we talked about this question more and she said the question should say include gross revenues. She said "value is so subjective. Because now, I see it now that we were talking about it, I do see describe the total gross value of sales, but again, the value to me is different than revenue." When asked what value means to her she said, "You know we've got a field of cows and calves that you know they've got a heck of a lot more value to us, and then, when we take them to the market.... Value and revenue is two different things to me."

Farm Type

One respondent had difficulty finding the appropriate farm type response. He was looking for flowers. He then realized they go under floriculture. He said, "I also grow seeds, but that's not really represented on here, but I don't know where I would find that, but it's not a big part of my income."

Recommendations

1. Be more explicit in the cover letter regarding what this survey and how that benefits farm producers.
2. Remove header Sales and Federal Farm Program Payments on page 2.
3. Use updated VOS question using the wording below. However, keep the response options that are currently on the producer demographic survey.

1. Please classify this operation in terms of the gross value of sales and government agricultural payments in 2019.
 - INCLUDE:
 - sales of all crops, livestock, poultry, and livestock products (milk, eggs, etc.) sold in 2019.
 - the value of hay, silage, and other crops harvested in 2019, but not sold.
 - the value of all crops, livestock, and poultry produced under contract in 2019.
 - landlord's share of government payments and crops sold in 2019.

EXCLUDE dollars received on land rented to others.

4. Use updated farm type question as shown below.

2. Which of the categories represents the largest portion of the total gross value of sales in 2017 for this operation?

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- 1 Grains, Oilseeds, Dry Beans, and Dry Peas
(corn, flaxseed, grain silage and forage, grains and oilseeds, popcorn, rice, small grains, sorghum, soybeans, sunflowers, straw, etc.)
- 2 Tobacco
- 3 Cotton and Cottonseed
- 4 Vegetables, Melons, Potatoes, and Sweet Potatoes
(beets, cabbage, cantaloupes, pumpkins, sweet corn, tomatoes, watermelons, vegetable seeds, etc.)
- 5 Fruit, Tree Nuts, and Berries
(almonds, apples, blueberries, cherries, grapes, hazelnuts, kiwifruit, oranges, pears, pecans, strawberries, walnuts, etc.)
- 6 Nursery, Greenhouse, Floriculture, and Sod
(bedding plants, bulbs, cut flowers, flower seeds, foliage plants, mushrooms, nursery potted plants, shrubbery, sod, etc.)
- 7 Cut Christmas Trees and Short Rotation Woody Crops
- 8 Other Crops, Hay, CRP, and Pasture
(grass seed, hops, maple syrup, mint, peanuts, sugarcane, sugarbeets, etc.)
- 9 Hogs and Pigs
- 10 Milk and Other Dairy Products (from cows)
- 11 Cattle and Calves
- 12 Sheep, Goats, and their Products
(wool, mohair, milk, cheese, etc.)
- 13 Horses, Ponies, Mules, Burros, and Donkeys
- 14 Poultry and Eggs
(broilers, chickens, turkeys, ducks, eggs, emus, geese, hatchlings, ostriches, pigeons, pheasants, quail, poultry products, etc.)
- 15 Aquaculture
(catfish, trout, ornamental and other fish, mollusks, crustaceans, etc.)
- 16 Other Animals and Other Animal Products
(honey bees, honey, rabbits, fur-bearing animals, semen, manure, other animal specialties, etc.)

5. Add a space between Questions 5 and 6.
6. Change Question 6d to 'Was your sex recorded as male or female at birth?' And move this question to after 6e.
7. Remove "select one" from Question 6f.
8. Allow respondents to select more than one response in questions 6e and 6f but do not add instruction to select all that apply.

9. Add confirmation question to web version after the two gender identity questions. (Just to confirm, you were recorded as [response] at birth and currently describe yourself as [gender response]. Is that correct? 1) Yes, that is correct 2) no; if the respondent selects "none of these" in the gender question the wording should be: Just to confirm, you were recorded as [response] at birth and currently do not describe yourself as male, female or transgender. Is that correct? 1) Yes, that is correct 2) no

Appendix A. Cover Letter



Date

OMB No. 0535-0226 Exp. Date 9/30/2023

Why am I getting this letter?

The United States Department of Agriculture is conducting a pilot study on the demographics of farm producers. This study will be used to test new questions that may be used for future surveys and the Census of Agriculture. You are part of a select group of producers to receive this questionnaire. Your participation is vital to helping USDA improve its surveys and agricultural reports.

The survey should take no more than 10-15 minutes.

Please respond by Jan. 18. If we do not receive your completed questionnaire, we may follow-up with you.

How will the data be used?

The data from this pilot study will not be published in an official publication. Instead, NASS will publish a research report about the survey. The information from this test will help ensure that future agricultural data are as comprehensive and accurate as possible.

What else do I need to know?

If you are not currently farming, please respond so we can update our records accordingly. The online questionnaire will take you through a few quick questions then straight to the end. If you are responding by mail, please make a note on the front of the questionnaire and mail it back to us.

All information you provide is confidential, protected by federal law (CIPSEA 2018, Title III of Pub. L. No. 115-435, codified in 44 U.S.C. Ch. 35 and other applicable federal laws). If you need assistance completing the test, call toll-free 888-424-7828. For more information about agricultural statistics, visit www.nass.usda.gov.

Thank you for taking part in this effort to improve our agricultural statistics program and for your support of U.S. agriculture.

Sincerely,

Hubert Hamer
Administrator, National Agricultural Statistics Service
United States Department of Agriculture

Enclosures

What should I do next?



Respond online at
www.agcounts.usda.gov

It's fast and secure. Use your unique survey code on the enclosed form.



Or by mail using the enclosed prepaid envelope.

Responding online is convenient and secure.

Online Survey Response

To complete your survey online:

1. Go to www.agcounts.usda.gov.
2. Enter your unique survey code, which is shown above your address and barcode on the front of the questionnaire, then click “Continue.”

SURVEY CODE: 1111-11AA-AAAA



3. Click on the Demographics Pilot.
4. Verify and complete your contact information, then continue to the survey.
5. Complete the survey questions.
6. When you finish the survey, click “Submit.” *If you do not see the “Submit” button, reduce the zoom setting on your screen.*

Appendix B. Questionnaire

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF FARM PRODUCERS

Pilot Study

OMB No. 0535-0226
 Approval Expires: XX/XX/20XX
 Project Code: 537
 Survey ID: XXXX Version: 2



USDANASS
 National Operations Division
 9700 Page Avenue, Suite 400
 St. Louis, MO 63132-1547
 Phone: 1-888-424-7828
 Fax: 1-855-415-3687
 Email: nass@nass.usda.gov

Please make corrections to name, address, and ZIP Code, if necessary.

The information you provide will be used for statistical purposes only. Your responses will be kept confidential and any person who willfully discloses ANY identifiable information about you or your operation is subject to a jail term, a fine, or both. This survey is conducted in accordance with the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2018, Title III of Pub. L. No. 115-435, codified in 44 U.S.C. Ch. 35 and other applicable Federal laws. For more information on how we protect your information please visit: <https://www.nass.usda.gov/confidentiality>. Response is voluntary.

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB number is 0535-0226. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 10 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

Acres in 2021

Include the farmstead, all cropland, ponds, woodland, pastureland, wasteland, and land that is in government programs.

	Mark "X" if None		Acres
1. In 2021, how many acres are:			
a. Owned?.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	0043	
b. Rented or leased from others, or used rent free? (Exclude land used on an animal unit month (AUM) basis.).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	0044	
c. Rented or leased to others?	<input type="checkbox"/>	0045	
2. Total acres operated in 2021: [Items 1a + 1b – 1c]?		0046	

Sales and Federal Farm Program Payments

3. Please indicate below which code best describes the total gross value of sales for 2021, including landlord's share, Federal Farm Program Payments, and value of product for all crops, livestock, and poultry produced under contract. (Exclude cash rent received or share of crops received for land rented to others.)

(Include value from: field crops, hay, silage and forage crops, Christmas trees, short rotation woody crops, seed crops, nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, sod, mushrooms, seeds, bulbs, vegetables, melons, fruits, nuts, berries, other crops, maple syrup, hogs and pigs, cattle and calves, sheep and lambs, goats, poultry, horses, bees and honey, eggs, dairy products, other animals, livestock and animal products, fish, and other aquaculture.)

- 201
- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 'None' this year | 3 <input type="checkbox"/> \$1 - \$999 | 4 <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 - \$2,499 | 5 <input type="checkbox"/> \$2,500 - \$4,999 |
| 6 <input type="checkbox"/> \$5,000 - \$9,999 | 7 <input type="checkbox"/> \$10,000 - \$24,999 | 8 <input type="checkbox"/> \$25,000 - \$49,999 | 9 <input type="checkbox"/> \$50,000 - \$99,999 |
| 10 <input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000 - \$149,999 | 11 <input type="checkbox"/> \$150,000 - \$249,999 | 12 <input type="checkbox"/> \$250,000 - \$349,999 | 13 <input type="checkbox"/> \$350,000 - \$499,999 |
| 14 <input type="checkbox"/> \$500,000 - \$999,999 | 15 <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000,000 and over | | |

4. Of the farm or ranch income reported, which of these categories represents the largest portion of the gross income from the operation?
 [If no income reported in 2021, which category best describes the type of operation?]

- | | Code |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 – Grains, Oilseeds, Dry Beans, and Dry Peas
(corn, flaxseed, grain silage and forage, grains and oilseeds, popcorn, rice, small grains, sorghum, soybeans, sunflowers, straw, etc.) | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 – Tobacco | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 – Cotton and Cottonseed | 3 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 – Vegetables, Melons, Potatoes and Sweet Potatoes
(beets, cabbage, cantaloupes, pumpkins, sweet corn, tomatoes, watermelons, vegetable seeds, etc.) | 4 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 – Fruit, Tree Nuts and Berries
(almonds, apples, blueberries, cherries, grapes, hazelnuts, kiwifruit, oranges, pears, pecans, strawberries, walnuts, etc.) | 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 – Nursery, Greenhouse, Floriculture and Sod
(bedding plants, bulbs, cut flowers, flower seeds, foliage plants, mushrooms, nursery potted plants, shrubbery, sod, etc.) | 6 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 – Cut Christmas Trees and Short Rotation Woody Crops | 7 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8 – Other Crops and Hay, CRP and Pasture
(grass seed, hay and grass silage, hops, maple syrup, mint, peanuts, sugarcane, sugarbeets, CRP, etc.) | 8 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9 – Hogs and Pigs | 9 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10 – Milk and Other Dairy Products (from cows) | 10 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11 – Cattle and Calves
(beef and dairy cattle for breeding stock, fed cattle, beef and dairy cull animals, stockers and feeders, veal calves, etc.) | 11 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12 – Sheep, Goats, and their Products | 12 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13 – Horses, Ponies, and Mules | 13 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14 – Poultry and Eggs
(broilers, chickens, turkeys, ducks, eggs, emus, geese, hatchlings, ostriches, pigeons, pheasants, quail, poultry products, etc.) | 14 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15 – Aquaculture
(catfish, trout, ornamental and other fish, mollusks, crustaceans, etc.) | 15 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16 – Other Animals and Other Animal Products
(honey bees, honey, rabbits, fur-bearing animals, semen, manure, other animal specialties, etc.) | 16 <input type="checkbox"/> |

Code
862

Personal Characteristics

5. In 2021, how many people were involved in decisions for this operation?
(Include family members and hired managers. Exclude hired workers unless they were
a hired manager or family member.) Number
xxxx

6. The following questions should be answered by a person involved in decisions for this operation.

a. What was your age on December 31, 2021? xxxx

b. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

- xxxx 1 No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- 2 Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
- 3 Yes, Puerto Rican
- 4 Yes, Cuban
- 5 Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
(Salvadoran, Dominican, Columbian, Guatemalan, Spaniard, Ecuadorian, etc.)

Specify: xxxx

c. What is your race? Select all that apply.

- xxxx White
- xxxx Black or African American
- xxxx American Indian or Alaska Native, specify: xxxx
- xxxx Asian Indian
- xxxx Chinese
- xxxx Filipino
- xxxx Japanese
- xxxx Korean
- xxxx Vietnamese
- xxxx Other Asian, specify: xxxx
- xxxx Native Hawaiian
- xxxx Chamorro
- xxxx Samoan
- xxxx Other Pacific Islander, specify: xxxx

d. What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?

- xxxx 1 Male
- 2 Female

e. How do you currently describe yourself?

- xxxx 1 Male
- 2 Female
- 3 Transgender
- 4 None of these, specify: xxxx

f. Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself? Select one.

- xxxx 1 Gay or lesbian
- 2 Straight, that is, not gay or lesbian
- 3 Bisexual
- 4 None of these, specify: xxxx
- 5 I am not sure yet
- 6 I don't know what this question means

g. Do you have difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses?

- xxxx 1 No difficulty 2 Some difficulty 3 A lot of difficulty 4 Cannot do at all

h. Do you have difficulty hearing, even if using a hearing aid?

- xxxx 1 No difficulty 2 Some difficulty 3 A lot of difficulty 4 Cannot do at all

i. Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps?

- xxxx 1 No difficulty 2 Some difficulty 3 A lot of difficulty 4 Cannot do at all

j. Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?

- xxxx 1 No difficulty 2 Some difficulty 3 A lot of difficulty 4 Cannot do at all

k. Do you have difficulty with self-care, for example, washing all over or dressing?

- xxxx 1 No difficulty 2 Some difficulty 3 A lot of difficulty 4 Cannot do at all

l. Using your usual (customary) language, do you have difficulty communicating, for example, understanding or being understood?

- xxxx 1 No difficulty 2 Some difficulty 3 A lot of difficulty 4 Cannot do at all

Respondent Name:

Date:

9912	9910 MM DD YY -- -- --
------	--

Respondent Email:

Respondent Phone:

1095	9911 (____) _____ check if cell phone <input type="checkbox"/>
------	--

Operation Email (if different from above):

Operation Phone (if different from above):

9937	9936 (____) _____ check if cell phone <input type="checkbox"/>
------	--

Please return this form in the postage-paid envelope provided. Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix C. Interview Guide

Demographics Cognitive Interview Guide

Date:

POID:

Interviewer Name:

Interview Mode:

Length of interview:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. NASS is currently conducting research to learn more about the people involved in agriculture. We plan to survey farmers and ranchers and ask them questions about their farm and characteristics of the farmers and ranchers.

Today, I'm going to show you draft versions of our cover letter and survey. I'm going to have you read through the cover letter and survey. Then I will ask you follow up questions to get your feedback.

Recording:

Before we get started, I would like to record our meeting today. This recording will only be reviewed by NASS employees working on this research project. Your name will not be associated with this recording and all information you provide today will be kept completely confidential. Do I have your permission to record our meeting?

If yes: Begin Recording (save recording to the cloud) and once it begins, verbally confirm again that the respondent has agreed to record.

If no: That's fine. We can still proceed without a recording. Let's get started.

If yes or no: Complete recording consent form indicating respondent's consent. See instructions at the end.

COVER LETTER

First, I want to share with you the cover letter that will be sent with this questionnaire. I'm going to share my screen with you so you can see the cover letter.

[Click Share Screen. Confirm that respondent can see the cover letter. Enlarge if necessary.]

Normally this letter would be printed two sided. Go ahead and read this letter and then I'm going to ask you a few questions.

Cover Letter Probes:

How much of this letter did you read? Did you read this letter in full, skim, didn't read anything?

In your own words, what is the purpose of the survey?

What information stood out to you when reading this letter?

Would you participate in this survey if you were selected to do so? Why or why not?

Is there anything in this letter that you don't understand or are confused about?

What information on this letter do you feel is the most important to you?

Is there any information that you feel is unnecessary?

Is there any information that you feel is missing?

QUESTIONNAIRE

Now I'm going to share the survey with you. I would like you to go through the questions and answer them how you normally would if you received this survey in the mail. Let me know if you have any question or comments as you move through the survey. Once you have completed answering all the questions, we will go back over them. I'm interested in your reactions to the questions and I'd like to know more about how you went about answering the questions – what you thought about when answering, how you determined your answer. Feel free to be honest. We really value your feedback.

For this I'm going to give you control so that you can navigate through the survey at your own pace.

[Click Share Screen. Confirm that respondent can see the web instrument. Click Remote Control on top right, Give Mouse/Keyboard Control to respondent. Respondent should see a message that says click to start mouse/keyboard control on the shared screen. They should be able to move their mouse and use their keyboard to answer the survey questions. To end control, click on the screen and then click Remote Control, Stop Remote Control.]

Time it took to complete questionnaire:

Observations (record any comments respondent provided while filling out questionnaire):

Questionnaire Probes:

Let's begin at question 5. When this question says In 2021, how many people were involved in decisions for this operation, what do you think this question is asking? What types of decisions are these people involved in? Are there any other people who are involved in decisions that you didn't include in your answer? Why didn't you include them?

Question 6 says the following questions should be answered by a person involved in decisions for this operation. If necessary, did you read this when answering? How did you interpret this? Verify reporting for self.

Gender Identity

Question D asks what sex were assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate. What do you think this question is asking? Can you tell me why you answered the way you did?

Question E asks how do you currently describe yourself? What do you think this question is asking? Do you see this question as different from the previous question, how so? Can you tell me why you answered the way you did? What does it mean to you to describe your self as ____?

What is your reaction to these two questions?

Sexual Identity

The next question asked, Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself? You answered _____. What do you think this question is asking? Can you tell me why you answered the way you did? What does it mean to you to say you are _____? Did you have any difficulty answering this question? What is your reaction to this question?

Disability

Next I want us to look at questions G- L.

Question G asks Do you have difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses? You answered _____. Can you tell me why you answered the way you did? What did you consider when answering? (If necessary) why do you say some difficulty and not a lot of difficulty (or vice versa)? Do you currently wear glasses? What do you wear glasses for? How often do you wear them? When answering this question, did you consider your eyesight when wearing your glasses? If not, how would you answer this question? Are you limited in any way because of your vision? Does that impact your ability to do work on the farm? How so?

Question H asks, Do you have difficulty hearing, even if using a hearing aid? You answered _____. Can you tell me why you answered the way you did? What did you consider when answering? (If necessary) why do you say some difficulty and not a lot of difficulty (or vice versa)? Do you currently wear a hearing aid? Did you consider your hearing aid when answering? If not, how would you answer this question? Are you limited in any way because of your difficulty hearing? How so? Does that impact your ability to do work on the farm? How so?

Question I asks, Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps? You answered _____. Can you tell me why you answered the way you did? What did you consider when answering? (If necessary) why do you say some difficulty and not a lot of difficulty (or vice versa)? Do you have any other difficulty moving around? Can you tell me more about that? Are you limited in any way because of your difficulty walking or climbing steps? How so? Does that impact your ability to do work on the farm? How so?

Question J, Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating? You answered _____. Can you tell me why you answered the way you did? What did you consider when answering? (If necessary) why do you say some difficulty and not a lot of difficulty (or vice versa)? Are you limited in any way because of your difficulty with remembering or concentrating? How so? Does that impact your ability to do work on the farm? How so?

Question K asks, Do you have difficulty with self-care, for example, washing all over or dressing? You answered _____. Can you tell me why you answered the way you did? What did you consider when answering? (If necessary) why do you say some difficulty and not a lot of difficulty (or vice versa)?

Question L asks, Using your usual (customary language, do you have difficulty communicating, for example, understanding or being understood? You answered _____. Can you tell me why you answered the way you did? What did you consider when answering? (If necessary) why do you say some difficulty and not a lot of difficulty (or vice versa)? Are you limited in any way because of your difficulty with remembering or concentrating? How so? Does that impact your ability to do work on the farm? How so?

What is your reaction to this set of questions (G-L)?

That is all the questions I have. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Thank you so much for your time today.

Take back control if haven't already done so. Stop sharing screen. Stop Recording. End Meeting.

Complete the recording consent form. Indicate whether or not respondent consented. Then print: "permission given/denied over Zoom" on Participant's Signature line, the respondent's name, and the interview date. Sign and date it.