Questions to ask when pilot-testing survey instruments

**Mail and other self-administered questionnaires:**

- Are instructions for completing the survey clearly written?
- Are questions easy to understand?
- Do respondents know how to indicate responses (e.g., circle of mark the response; use a special pencil; use the space bar)?
- Are the response choices mutually exclusive?
- Are the response choices exhaustive?
- If a mail questionnaire, do respondents understand what to do with completed questionnaires (e.g., return by post)?
- If a mail questionnaire, do respondents understand when to return the completed survey?
- If a computer-assisted/web survey, can respondents correctly use the commands?
- If a computer-assisted/web survey, do respondents know how to change (or “correct”) their answers?
- If an incentive is given for completing the survey, do respondents understand how to obtain it?
- Is privacy respected and protected?
- Do respondents have any suggestions regarding the addition or deletion of questions, the clarification of instructions, or improvements in format?

**Face-to-Face and Telephone interviews:**

- Do interviewers understand how to ask questions and present options for responses?
- Do interviewers know how to get in-depth information, when appropriate, by probing respondents’ brief answers?
- Do interviewers know how to record information?
- Do interviewers know how to keep the interview to the agreed-on time limit?
- Do interviewers know how to return completed interviews?
- In the case of telephone interviews, are interviewers able to select the sample using the agreed-on instructions?
- In the case of telephone interviews, can interviewers readily use the phone logs to record the number of times and when potential respondents were contacted?
- Do interviewees understand the questions?
- Do interviewees understand how to answer the questions (e.g., pick the top two; rate items according to the level of agreement)?
- Do interviewees agree that privacy has been protected and respected?