

## **Census Bureau Overall Response to NAC Recommendations on Race and Ethnicity:**

Our Census Bureau race and ethnic research team deeply appreciates the time and effort that the Census Bureau's National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic, and Other Populations (NAC) took to review, discuss, and finalize the NAC Race and Ethnic Report Working Group Report and Recommendations on the Census Bureau's race and ethnic research and outreach plans. The NAC report and recommendations are very timely, as we are working to design the question approaches for our mid-decade testing, which follows on the successful strategies of the 2010 Census Race and Hispanic Origin Alternative Questionnaire Experiment (AQE).

With respect to race and ethnicity, the Census Bureau has been developing refinements to designs for mid-decade research and testing that focus on several key dimensions for improving the questions on race and Hispanic Origin. These dimensions include:

- 1) Question format (continuing research on the separate questions approach and the combined question approach),
- 2) Response categories (exploring how to collect and tabulate data for respondents of Middle Eastern, North African, and Arab heritage),
- 3) Wording of instructions and question terminology (examining ways to optimize detailed reporting and to improve respondent understanding of options to report multiple race and ethnic groups), and
- 4) Web-based technology (e.g., internet, smart-phone, tablet, telephone) to enhance question designs and optimize reporting of detailed racial and ethnic groups.

### **NAC Recommendation 1: Support Further Testing of the Combined Race and Hispanic Origin Question**

**Census Bureau Response:** Recommendation 1 (to further test the combined race and Hispanic origin question) is in line with the Census Bureau's mid-decade research and outreach efforts.

When the 2010 Census Alternative Questionnaire (AQE) research was conducted, the Census Bureau emphasized that research "strategies" were being tested and that we did not intend to "pick" the 2020 Census question ten years ahead of time. We also advised that we expected to conduct more research during the decade to build upon the successful strategies of the 2010 AQE in order to make recommendations and final determination for the 2020 Census.

As part of our mid-decade research, we will be fielding a 2015 National Census Test to further evaluate the separate questions approach and the combined question approach to determine how the questions perform in new web-based data collection methods using the internet, smart-phone, telephone, and in-person response. In addition, with the advantage of this new technology to collect data via web-based designs, we will also be testing a combined question with detailed checkboxes for soliciting detailed racial and ethnic origins. This approach will provide a series

of detailed checkboxes and write-in spaces for each of the OMB categories to help collect data for detailed groups (e.g., Samoan, Iranian, Filipino, Jamaican, Puerto Rican, Irish, etc.).

The results and findings from the 2015 NCT research will inform recommendations to OMB on question design format (separate vs. combined) for the 2020 Census.

### **NAC Recommendation 2: Create a Separate Category for Persons of “Middle Eastern or North Africa” Origin**

**Census Bureau Response:** Recommendation 2 (to create a separate category for respondents of Middle Eastern and North African origin) is within consideration of the Census Bureau’s mid-decade research and outreach efforts.

Over the past year, the Census Bureau has had many productive discussions with Census Advisory Committee members, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) Federal Interagency Committee on Racial and Ethnic Research, as well as key stakeholders, researchers, and leaders within the Middle Eastern and Arab American communities regarding the collection of data for people of Middle Eastern, North African, and Arab American origin.

Based on the results of these positive discussions, we are giving strong consideration to testing a new distinct category for respondents of Middle Eastern, North African, and Arab American heritage as part of our mid-decade research.

### **NAC Recommendation 3: Increase Response Rate for Multiracial Populations**

**Census Bureau Response:** Recommendation 3 (to improve the instructions for race and ethnic questions to enhance understanding and reporting of multiple racial and ethnic groups) is in line with the Census Bureau’s mid-decade research and outreach efforts.

The 2015 National Census Test will evaluate the use of alternative instruction wording and question terminology for improving respondent understanding of the question and reporting options. These approaches aim to improve the clarity of the question and make it more apparent that more than one group may be selected, and to evaluate the use of different terminology to describe the question and concepts of “race,” “ethnicity,” and “origin.”

The results and findings from the 2015 NCT research on alternative instruction wording and terminology will inform the Census Bureau’s race and ethnicity question design decisions for the 2020 Census.

### **NAC Recommendation 4: Improve Testing of, and Reporting by, Respondents with Limited English Proficiency, Low Reading and Computer Literacy**

**Census Bureau Response:** The Census Bureau is committed to serving and reaching out to populations that are of limited English proficiency (LEP), to ensure that an accurate and complete decennial census is taken.

#### 2015 Testing Activities

Site Test - Plans are underway to test the use of English/Spanish bilingual (back-to-back flip-over design) questionnaire booklets for the 2015 Census Test. In addition, both the Internet-based self-response and nonresponse follow-up questionnaires will be available in Spanish. Plans for the site test also include Telephone Questionnaire Assistance in Spanish and other non-English languages.

National Content and Self-Response Test – The Census Bureau is researching the possibility of creating non-English fillable forms to be made available online for the upcoming 2015 National Content and Self-Response Test. This is in addition to the English/Spanish bilingual, Internet-based self-response, and non-response questionnaires. Telephone Questionnaire Assistance in Spanish and other non-English languages will also be included.

#### 2016 Testing Activities and Beyond

The Census Bureau is exploring the possibility of a larger-scale language testing in 2016 and/or beyond, in which multiple non-English options will be available for LEP respondents. Possible questionnaire options include: Spanish and other non-English Internet-based self-response and nonresponse follow-up questionnaires; Spanish and other non-English fillable questionnaires (submitted via Internet or mail); Telephone Questionnaire Assistance in Spanish and other non-English languages; and bilingual questionnaire booklets. We will also provide Spanish and other non-English informational and promotional materials.

#### Language Working Group

Last but certainly not least, the Census Bureau is currently in the process of forming a Language Working Group, comprised of NAC members, to help advise planning for non-English operations for testing in 2015 and beyond.

## **NAC Recommendation 5: Continue Outreach with Racial and Ethnic Communities**

**Census Bureau Response:** Recommendation 5 (to continue outreach with racial and ethnic communities) is in line with the Census Bureau's mid-decade research and outreach efforts.

As part of our ongoing research efforts for race and ethnicity, the Census Bureau plans to continue our outreach discussions and dialogue with myriad racial and ethnic community stakeholders, leaders, expert scholars, and advisors. These important interactions have been, and will continue to be, paramount in our efforts to prepare for the 2020 Census. Our collaboration with the Census Bureau's National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic, and Other Populations, in particular, has been an integral part of our work and will benefit the Census Bureau in our next steps of planning for the 2020 Census.