



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. Census Bureau
Office of the Director
Washington, DC 20233-0001

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Barbara A. Anderson
Chair
Census Scientific Advisory Committee

From: John H. Thompson 
Director
U.S. Census Bureau

Subject: Census Responses to the Census Scientific Advisory Committee
(CSAC) Recommendations on the 2015 National Content Test
Preliminary Results

The U.S. Census Bureau thanks the Census Scientific Advisory Committee (CSAC) for the recommendations submitted as a result of the October 6, 2016, virtual meeting to discuss the 2015 National Content Test Preliminary Results.

Your expertise is necessary to ensure that the U.S. Census Bureau continues to provide relevant and timely statistics used by federal, state, and local governments as well as business and industry, in an increasingly technologically oriented society.

Attachment

Census Scientific Advisory Committee Recommendations on the 2015 National Content Test Preliminary Results (Presented by Nicholas A. Jones, Director of Race and Ethnic Research and Outreach and Michael (Mike) Bentley, Chief of Census Experiments Branch on October 6, 2016)

1. CSAC appreciates the careful research and the report that we received today.

Census Response: The U.S. Census Bureau's 2015 National Content Test (NCT) Analysis Team, Census Bureau Director, and Executive Staff appreciate the support and encouragement of the Census Scientific Advisory Committee (CSAC) with this important research.

2. Census should continue to investigate the effect of ordering, including alphabetical and randomized ordering, of response categories.

Census Response: The Census Bureau's 2015 NCT research on race/ethnicity has shown that listing response categories and examples in population size order has yielded reasonable and expected racial/ethnic distributions, comparable to previous census results, including the reporting of smaller population groups. Previous census research demonstrated that alphabetical ordering, which places "American Indian or Alaska Native" as the first category, resulted in erroneous reporting as non-American Indian respondents focused on the "American" wording in the category name. However, we do continually assess each of our census questions, and we may consider the possibility of studying the effect of category ordering in the future.

3. CSAC supports the Census Bureau recommendation that the combined race/ethnicity question with checkboxes be used.

Census Response: We acknowledge the CSAC's support with this important research to explore alternative options for race/ethnicity question format.

4. CSAC supports the inclusion of a dedicated MENA response category.

The Census Bureau appreciates the CSAC's input on this important research to improve data for communities of Middle Eastern and North African heritage in the United States.

5. CSAC supports continued research on the effects of different wording in the introduction and terminology.

Census Response: The Census Bureau's 2015 NCT Analysis Team continues to review and analyze the NCT results from testing different race/ethnicity instructions and terminology. The findings will be discussed with the Census Bureau Director and Executive Staff, in preparation for presentation to the CSAC and the Census National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic, and Other Populations. The NCT Analysis Team, Census Bureau Director, and Executive Staff appreciate the support and encouragement of the CSAC with this important research to improve the clarity of the race/ethnicity question(s) and respondent understanding of their options to self-identity myriad racial/ethnic identities.

6. CSAC recognizes improvements in the AIAN category to encourage those of Central or South American Indian origin to respond in the AIAN category. CSAC supports continued research on the wording for the AIAN category, especially to make clear to those of Central or South American Indian origin that they are included in this category.

Census Response: CSAC provides helpful insight on this important research to improve the conceptual presentation of the category for American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Central/South American indigenous populations. The 2015 NCT results have yielded promising findings, and we will continue to analyze the results from the NCT research regarding American Indian, Alaska Native, and Central/South American indigenous reporting, and consider whether future research should be done to explore this topic.

7. CSAC recommends continued usability testing of electronic responses, especially as more interactive aspects might be added.

Census Response: The Census Bureau values CSAC’s support with this important research to explore and understand innovative ways to collect census data with electronic, web-based modes. As we continue our preparations for the 2020 Census, we will continue to conduct extensive pre-testing of our online instruments. This testing includes several important steps before each census test. The first step is to ensure that the online instrument passes acceptance testing to identify any bugs or other issues that do not conform with the specifications. Additionally, we complete cognitive and usability testing with real-world participants of varying demographics and internet skill levels. This enables us to understand if respondents are interacting with the web-based instrument as we intended, and also to make enhancements to the usability and ease-of-use of the instrument as necessary.