2020 Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators Study (CBAMS) Survey and Focus Groups Report Findings Presentation

March 14, 2019
Outline

1. CBAMS Overview
2. Study Design
3. Key Findings
   A. Intent to Respond
   B. Knowledge Gaps
   C. Potential Concerns & Attitudinal Barriers
4. 2020 CBAMS Motivators, Conclusions, and Recommendations
1 CBAMS Overview
CBAMS Overview

Purpose

- Understand attitudes, barriers, & motivators toward the census
- Inform & inspire creative strategy
- Increase self-response to the 2020 Census

Research Questions

1. Who intends to respond to the census?
2. Where do gaps in knowledge about the census exist?
3. What barriers would prevent people from completing the census?
4. What would motivate people to complete the census?

Methodology

- Quantitative Survey
- Qualitative Focus Groups
2 Study Design
The 2020 CBAMS Survey was administered from February to April 2018 to 50,000 addresses in all 50 states and Washington, D.C.

- Questionnaire consisted of 61 questions
- Adults 18+ were eligible to participate via mail or web
- Households in the sample received a prepaid incentive and up to five mailings inviting them to participate
- Oversampled Asians, Blacks, Hispanics, and other small-sample races.
- Roughly 17,500 people responded to the survey
2020 CBAMS Focus Groups held in March and April 2018.

- **42 focus groups** conducted with **11 audiences** across **14 locations**

- **16 focus groups** were non-English

- **Focus group transcripts** went through a rigorous process to ensure intercoder reliability

- Transcripts were analyzed **to identify themes** among response barriers and motivators
### Study Design: CBAMS Focus Groups

2020 CBAMS Focus Groups conducted among the 11 audiences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese – Cantonese and Mandarin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Internet Proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern and North African</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish (Puerto Rico)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish (U.S. Mainland)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young and Mobile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two out of three said they were likely to respond

CBAMS Survey and Decennial Census
Measured vs Observed Response Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008 CBAMS Survey</th>
<th>2010 Census</th>
<th>2020 Census</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>2008 CBAMS Survey</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 Census</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>24%</td>
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</tr>
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<td>33%</td>
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The mail return rate to the 2010 Census was **10 pts lower** than measured in the 2008 CBAMS Survey.

CBAMS measures those who are “extremely” or “very” likely to fill out the census form if the census were held today.

*Note: Due to methodological differences, direct statistical comparisons between 2008 and 2018 survey are not appropriate.*
Knowledge Gaps
Many know the census basics but not much more

How familiar are you with the U.S. census?

- 8% Not at all familiar
- 13% Not too familiar
- 46% Somewhat familiar
- 24% Very familiar
- 9% Extremely familiar

In their own words

“What comes to mind when I hear ‘census’? I don’t know. Isn’t that like the people that want to know like everything? They send you letters to your house.”

— American Indian and Alaska Native
# Overview of knowledge gaps

### As you understand it, will the 2020 Census be used in any of the following ways or not?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Correct (%)</th>
<th>Don't know (%)</th>
<th>Incorrect (%)</th>
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<td>To determine changes in the size, location, and characteristics of the U.S. (True)</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<td>To help the police and FBI keep track of people who break the law (False)</td>
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Knowledge about funding from census data varies little by race and ethnicity

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% Correct by Race/Ethnicity:
- Black/AA, NH: 40%
- Small sample race, NH: 41%
- Asian, NH: 43%
- Hispanic, any-race: 43%
- White, NH: 47%
Hispanics & Asians more likely to know census counts citizens and non-citizens than others

As you understand it, will the 2020 Census be used in any of the following ways or not?

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% Correct by Race/Ethnicity:
- Hispanic, any-race: 68%
- Asian, NH: 64%
- Small sample race, NH: 57%
- White, NH: 54%
- Black/AA, NH: 48%
Potential Concerns & Attitudinal Barriers
Potential barriers to participation in the 2020 Census

- Apathy & Efficacy
- Concerns about data confidentiality & privacy
- Fear of Repercussions
- Distrust in Government
- Few Perceived Personal Benefits
Does it matter if I’m personally counted?

- A great deal: 33%
- A lot: 26%
- A moderate amount: 23%
- A little: 10%
- Not at all: 8%

How much, if at all, do you think it matters if you personally are counted in the 2020 Census?
About one-quarter of respondents worry about confidentiality

were “extremely concerned” or “very concerned” that the Census Bureau would not keep their answers confidential.
About one-quarter of respondents are concerned the census shares data.

24% were “extremely concerned” or “very concerned” that the Census Bureau would share their answers with other government agencies.
Privacy and confidentiality concerns in focus groups

Confidentiality Concerns

“Every single scrap of information that the government gets goes to every single intelligence agency, that’s how it works... individual level data. Like, the city government gets information and then the FBI and then the CIA and then ICE and military…”

— Middle Eastern and North African
Nearly 1 in 4 respondents fear that their answers to the 2020 Census will be used against them. 22% were “extremely concerned” or “very concerned” that their answers would be used against them.
Some focus group participants felt the government would use their data against their community.

They could say, ‘Look, this community has, like, X amount of race or something; let’s avoid them, or let’s define that area’… you can see it sometimes where they don’t fund certain schools because it’s in certain ‘bad areas.’”

— Middle Eastern and North African
[Someone might choose not to participate because] it can come back and haunt them...Like if you get food stamps, ...and they will be afraid that it's going to affect their food stamps if they report somebody else is there.” — Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander
The citizenship question may be a major barrier

1. **Its purpose is to find undocumented immigrants**
2. **The political discourse is targeting their ethnic group** – residents and citizens may also feel endangered

[The purpose is] to make people panic… Some people will panic because they are afraid that they might be deported.”
— Vietnamese

ICE is working with different groups on deportation sweeps, and it would make me feel like I’m aiding in that. They’re doing a lot of illegal stuff, and so I wouldn’t fill out any of the questions.”
— Middle Eastern and North African

For this census, a lot of people are afraid. It doesn’t matter if they ask you whether or not you’re a citizen. The first question they ask you, are you Hispanic or Latino? And that’s enough. That’s all they need. And people are scared.”
— Spanish (U.S. Mainland)

[Latinos will not participate] out of fear…[there] is practically a hunt [for us] …Latinos are going to be afraid to be counted because of the retaliation that could happen - it's like giving the government information, saying, ‘Oh, there are more here.’”
— Spanish (U.S. Mainland)
Distrust is highest for the federal government

- 59% said they did not trust the federal government.
- 55% said they did not trust their state government.
- 47% said they did not trust their local government.
More feel the 2020 Census benefits the community than them personally.

Do you believe answering your 2020 Census form could benefit or harm [your community/you] in any way?

- **Your Community**
  - Benefit: 54%
  - Neither benefit nor harm: 21%
  - Both benefit and harm: 24%
  - Harm: 1%

- **You**
  - Benefit: 37%
  - Neither benefit nor harm: 44%
  - Both benefit and harm: 18%
  - Harm: 1%
2020 CBAMS
Motivators, Conclusions, and Recommendations
Although people identified “helps determine funding for public services in my community” as the most important reason to fill out the census...

...only 45% of people know that the census is used to determine community funding.
Big Picture Conclusions

Knowledge Gaps

• There is a general lack of knowledge about the census’ scope, purpose, and constitutional foundation

Barriers

• Apathy and lack of efficacy
• Privacy concerns
• Fear of repercussions
• Distrust of government
• Few Perceived Personal Benefits

Motivators

• Funding for community needs is the most influential motivator across audiences
• Services such as hospitals, fire departments, and schools are important to many respondents

✓ Connecting census participation to support for local communities may address apathy and lack of efficacy
✓ Informing the public on the census’ scope, purpose, and process may address privacy and confidentiality concerns and fear of repercussions
✓ Engaging trusted voices may address trust-based concerns, especially among the most skeptical and disaffected
1. The CBAMS Survey found that concerns about data security and confidentiality may be a barrier to decennial response, especially for racial and ethnic minorities. What data security and confidentiality innovations should census implement and partners highlight when communicating with concerned residents?

2. During the 2020 Census, what strategies should we use to evaluate whether different communications strategies worked (for example, whether messages to different audiences were effective in promoting self-response)?

3. After 2020, what gaps in understanding the public’s mindsets, motivations, and barriers to the decennial census response could be addressed in mid-decade testing?