Session A

Testing a “Middle Eastern or North African” Category on the 2015 National Content Test

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1997 Race and Ethnicity Standards

U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) defines White as:

A person having origins in any of the original peoples of

- Europe
- Middle East
- North Africa

Source: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg_1997standards
How Did We Get Here?

• 1997 OMB standards recommended further research on how to improve data on Arabs/Middle Easterners.

• Major findings from the Census Bureau’s 2010 Alternative Questionnaire Experiment showed that many respondents saw the use of “Egyptian” and “Lebanese” examples for the White category as inaccurate and recommended a separate Middle Eastern or North African category.

• Arab American Institute and 25 organizations and researchers sent a formal request for the new category.

• Census Bureau engaged and consulted with external stakeholders.

Activities in the Past Year

• Census Bureau National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic, and Other Populations recommended testing a separate category (Summer 2014).

• Federal Register Notice on 2015 National Content Test (NCT) plans solicited public comment on new category (Winter 2014).

• Researched how various federal agencies, universities, and research organizations classify the region to develop a working definition for the category (Fall 2014 - Spring 2015).

• Planned Middle Eastern and North African expert forum (Spring 2015).
Public Comments on the 2015 NCT Federal Register Notice (FRN)

- Notice for public comment published in the *Federal Register* on December 2, 2014
- Census Bureau alerted members of National Advisory Committee and hundreds of other stakeholders, advisors, and community leaders to the release of the FRN
- Shared message during public briefings
- Helped elicit public comments on 2015 NCT research plans

Federal Register Notice on 2015 NCT

- Presented overall objectives for the 2015 NCT
- Described major research dimensions for 2020 Census content (race and ethnicity, relationship, and within-household coverage)
- Requested public feedback on research plans
- All comments were reviewed and addressed in submission of 2015 NCT testing plans for U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
- Responses to comments will be made public
Comments on Testing a Middle Eastern or North African Category

Received 4,509 submissions related to testing a “Middle Eastern or North African” category

Submissions included 12,293 comments, covering 11 topics

- 4,473 comments expressed strong support for testing the category; 15 comments did not support testing the category
- 3,727 comments expressed strong disagreement with the classification of Middle Eastern or North African as “White”
- 3,301 comments advised that this population is racially diverse
- 737 comments on which countries or ethnic groups to include or exclude in this category
Summary

- Responses to public comments are under review
- U.S. Office of Management and Budget will review as part of clearance process for 2015 NCT
- Responses will be made public later this year
- Continuing to meet with stakeholders and advisors
- Building strong foundation for the 2020 Census

Overview of the 2015 NCT

- Test will take place in late Summer of 2015
- Use a large nationally representative sample, including Puerto Rico
- Evaluate and compare different census content, including race and Hispanic origin, relationship, and within-household coverage
- Refine estimates of national self response and Internet response rates and continue testing different contact strategies for optimizing self response
- Conduct content reinterview that includes a subsample of respondents, to measure accuracy of race/origin and coverage
Goals for Mid-Decade Race and Hispanic Origin Research

Four Key Dimensions to Explore

• Separate questions vs. combined question
• “Middle Eastern or North African” category
• Instruction wording and terminology
• Web-based designs to improve question understanding and optimize reporting of detailed racial and ethnic groups

Dimension 1: Separate Race and Hispanic Origin vs. Combined Race and Hispanic Origin
Dimension 2: New Category

Instruction Wording:

- Mark [X] one or more boxes.
- Mark all boxes that apply…
  Note, you may report more than one group.

Alternatives for Terminology:

- “Race,” “Ethnicity,” “Origin”
- Which categories describe you?
Dimension 4: Web-Based Designs

Initial Screen for Race and Ethnicity

Screen for Middle Eastern or North African

Subsequent Screens for Detailed Responses
Design Rationale for Detailed Groups

- Include six examples to reflect diversity of category’s OMB definition
- The Census Bureau identified the largest groups in the United States which represent the different geographic regions referenced in each of the OMB race and ethnic group definitions
- Balance and equity -- present groups in population size order (largest to smallest)
Detailed Ethnic Examples

- **Middle Eastern or North African**
  - Print, for example, Lebanese, Iranian, Egyptian, Syrian, Moroccan, Algerian, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle Eastern Examples</th>
<th>North African Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Lebanese (489,702)</td>
<td>1) Egyptian (237,606)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Iranian (458,789)</td>
<td>2) Moroccan (90,574)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Syrian (154,450)</td>
<td>3) Algerian (22,751)</td>
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</tbody>
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**EXPERT FEEDBACK AND DISCUSSION**

- Do you have a preference for the combined or separate question(s) on race and Hispanic origin?

- Do you think that Middle Eastern and North African responses should be classified as White?

- What do you think about the examples shown in the Middle Eastern or North African category on the questionnaire and the rationale of the selection of the examples?