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

United States Census Bureau

U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
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United States Census 2020

Outline

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2. Study Design
3. Key Findings
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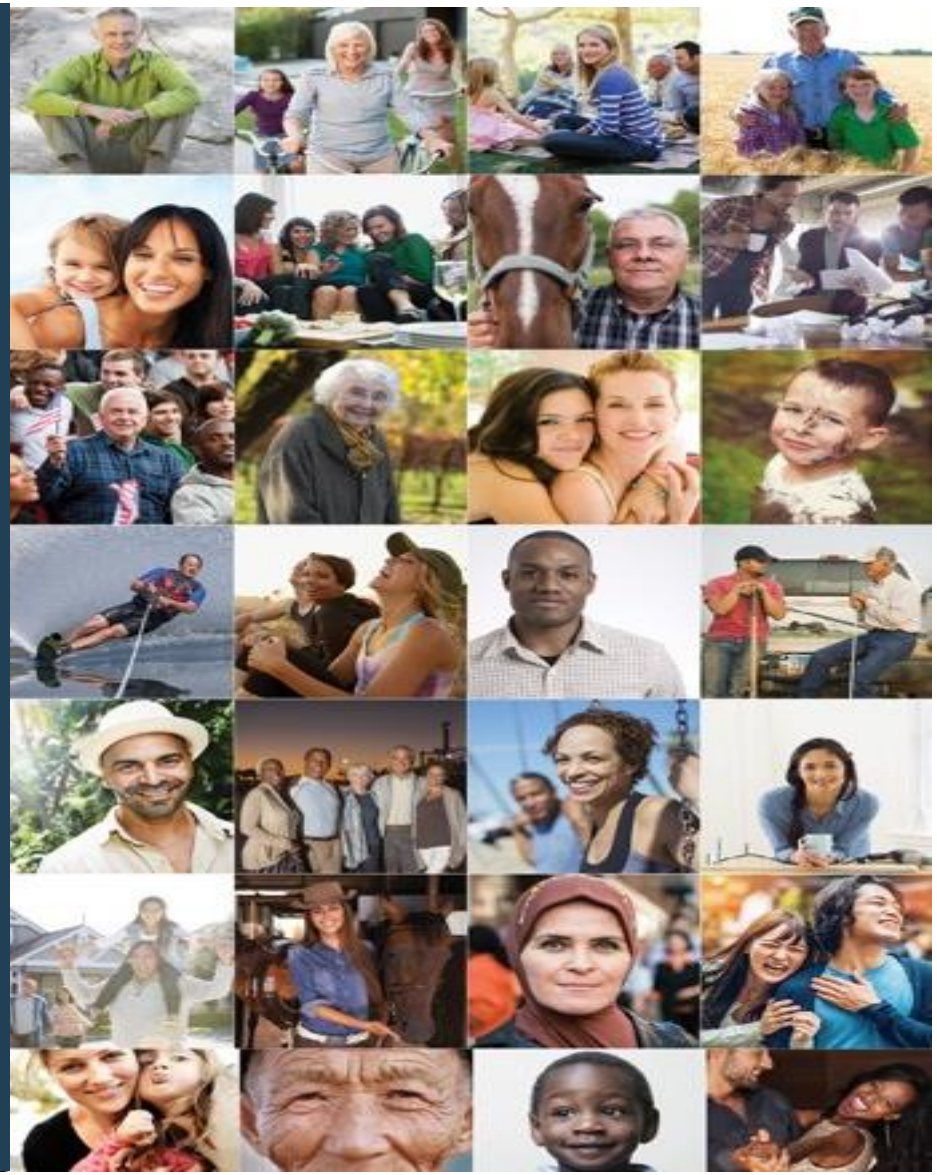
   - C. Potential Concerns & Attitudinal Barriers
   - D. Potential Motivators & Facilitators
4. 2020 CBAMS Conclusions & Recommendations
5. 2020 CBAMS Mindsets

1 CBAMS Overview



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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

Study Design: CBAMS Survey

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

Study Design: CBAMS Focus Groups

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.

American Indian and Alaska Native
Black or African American
Chinese – Cantonese and Mandarin
Low Internet Proficiency
Middle Eastern and North African
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI)
Rural
Spanish (Puerto Rico)
Spanish (U.S. Mainland)
Vietnamese
Young and Mobile

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3 Key Findings

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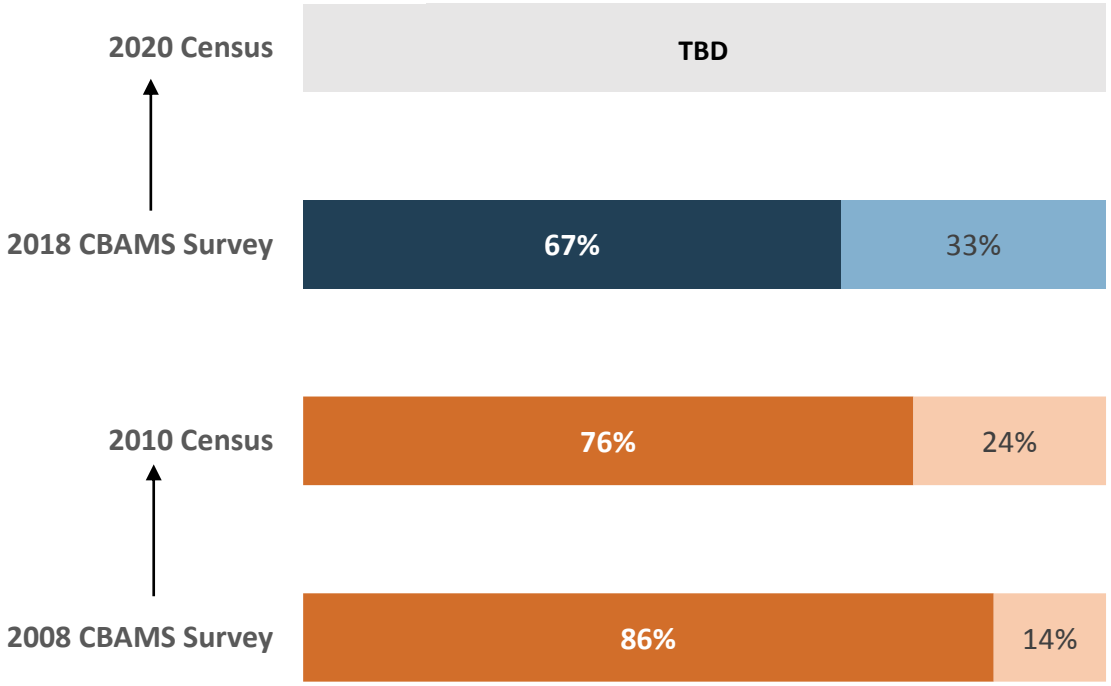
Key Findings Areas

- Intent to Respond
- Knowledge Gaps
- Potential Concerns & Attitudinal Barriers
- Potential Motivators & Facilitators

Intent to Respond

Two out of three said they were likely to respond

CBAMS Survey and Decennial Census
Measured vs Observed Response Rate



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

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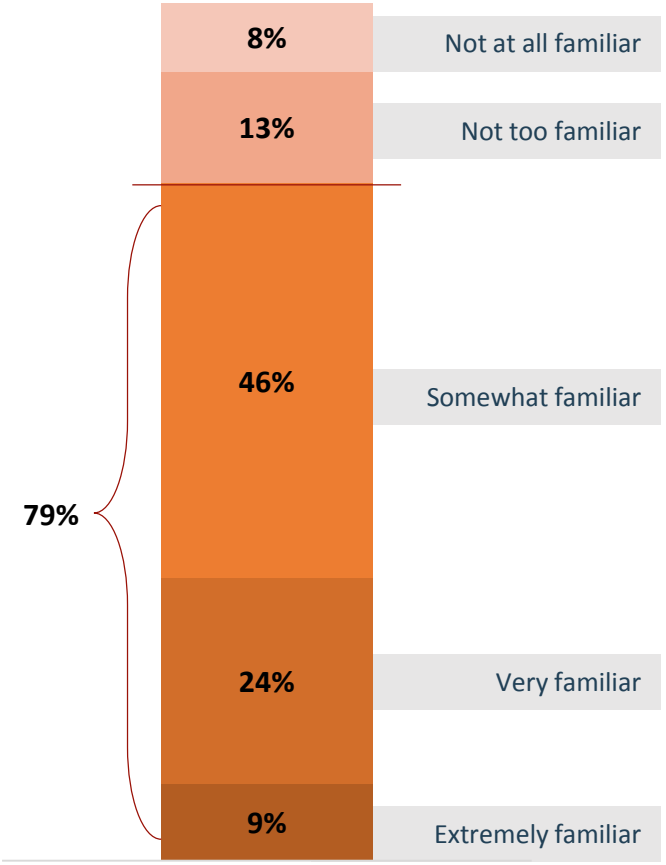
Many know the census basics but not much more

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



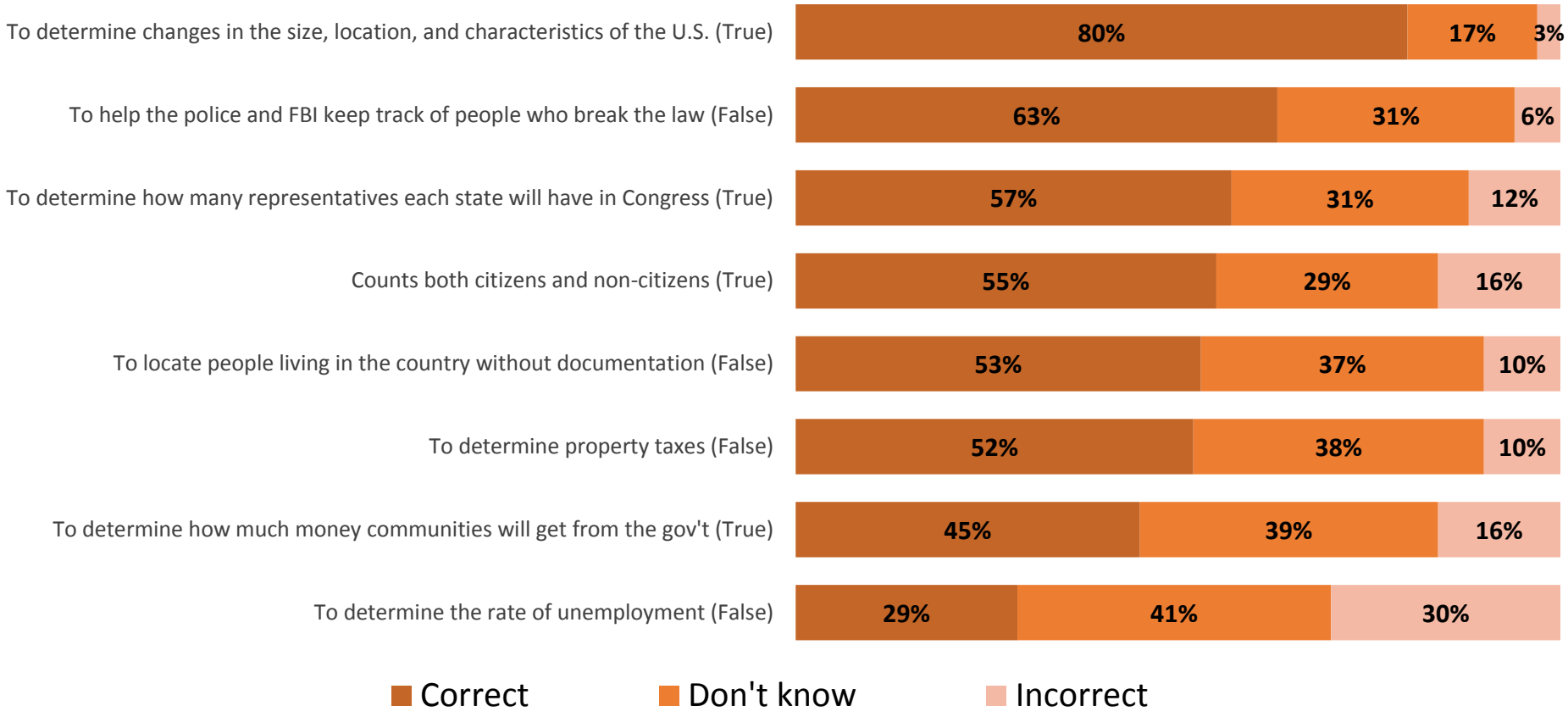
In their own words

[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

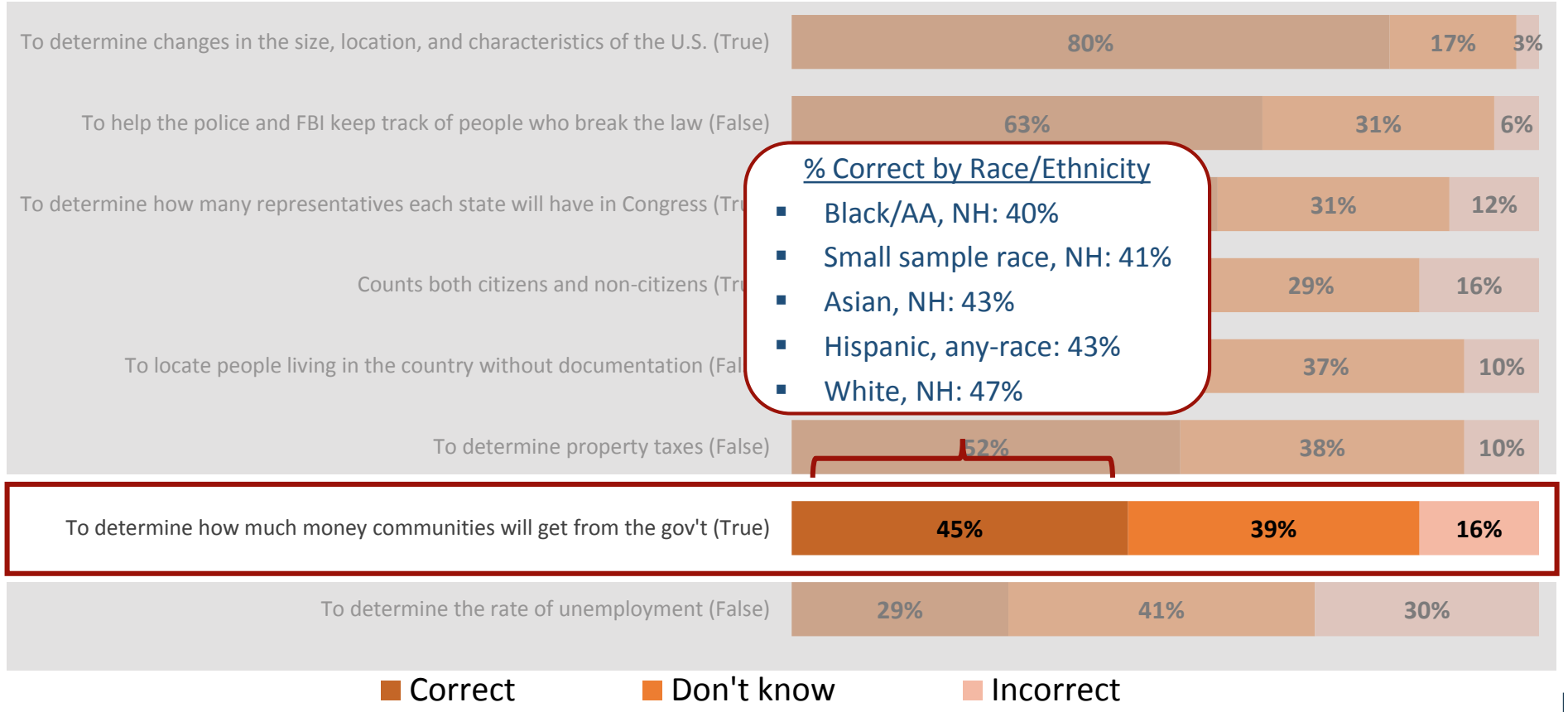
Overview of knowledge gaps

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



Knowledge about funding from census data varies little by race and ethnicity

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



% Correct by Race/Ethnicity

- Black/AA, NH: 40%
- Small sample race, NH: 41%
- Asian, NH: 43%
- Hispanic, any-race: 43%
- White, NH: 47%

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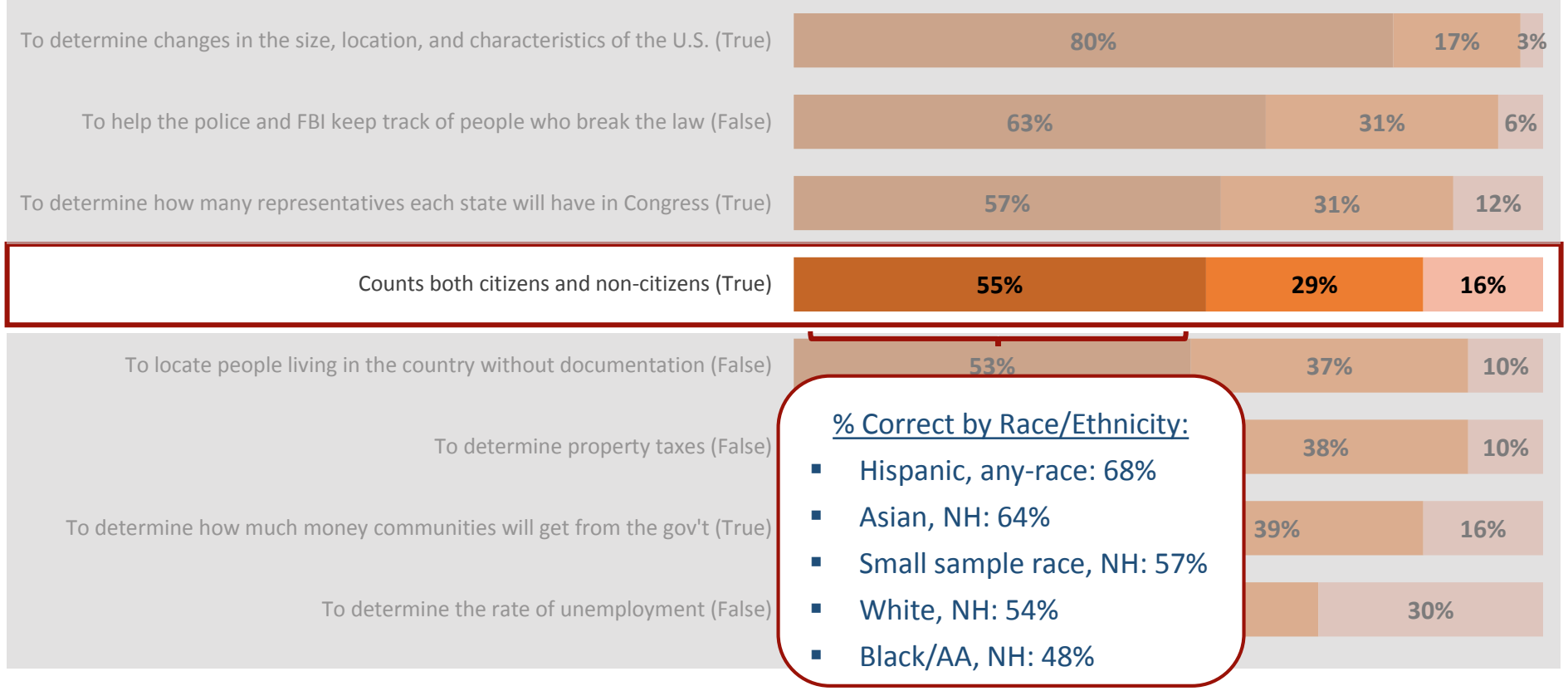
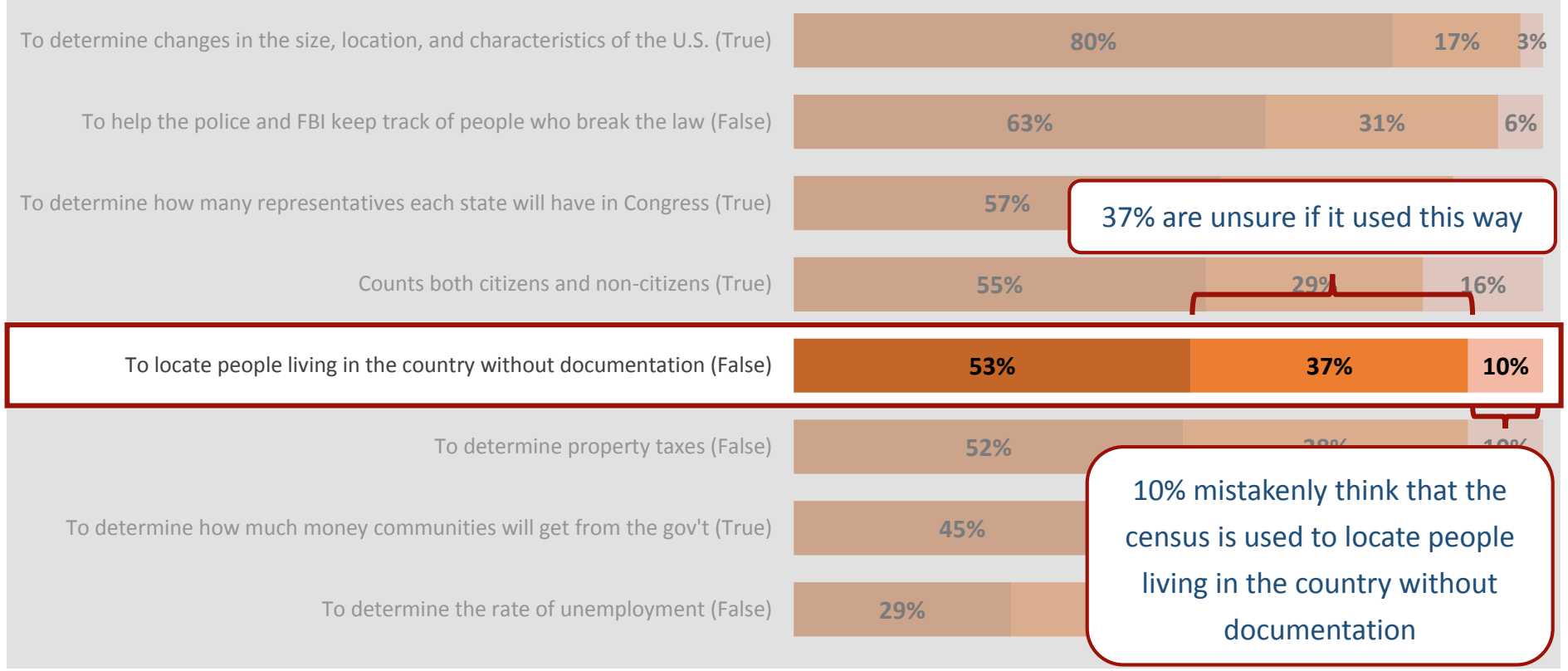
Hispanics & Asians more likely to know census counts citizens and non-citizens than others

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

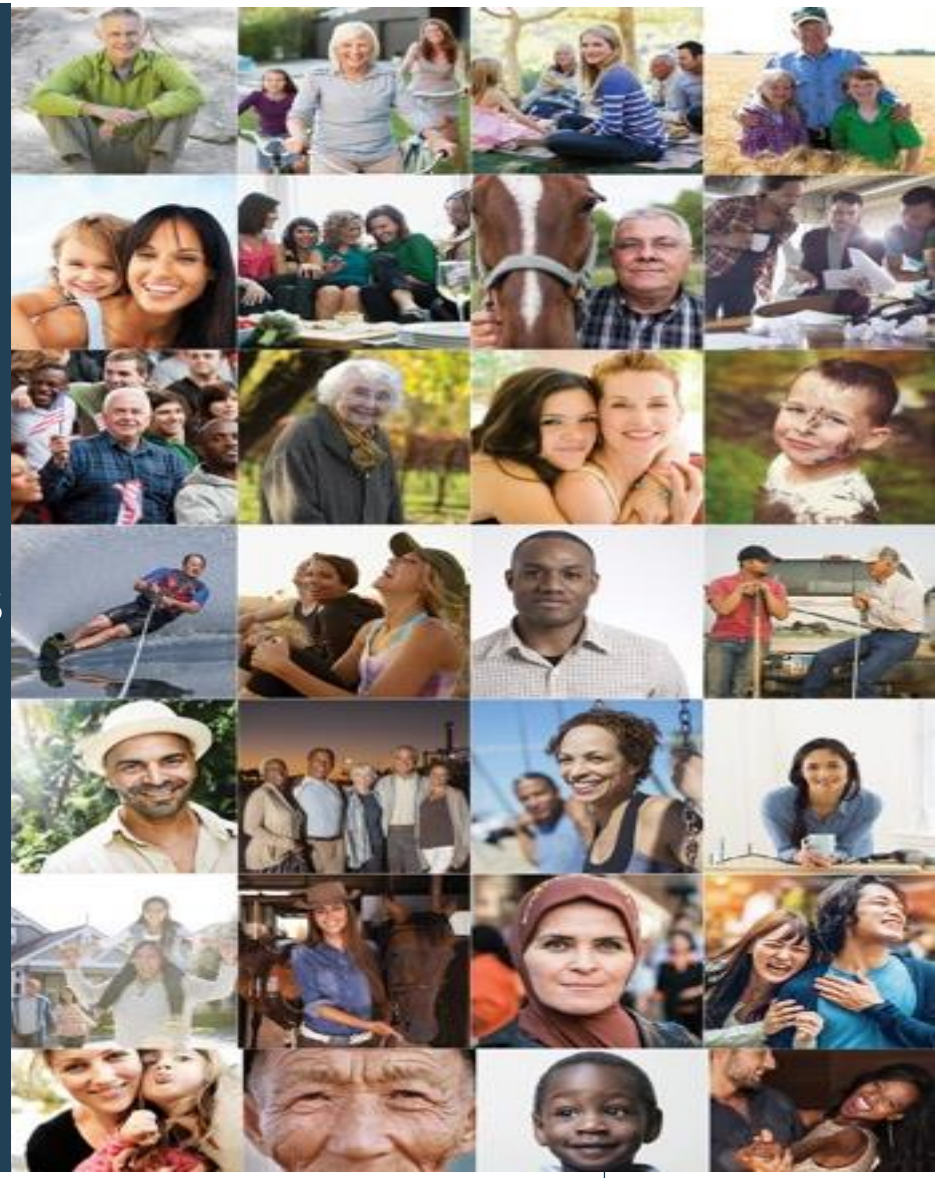


Some misperceive the census' purpose

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



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

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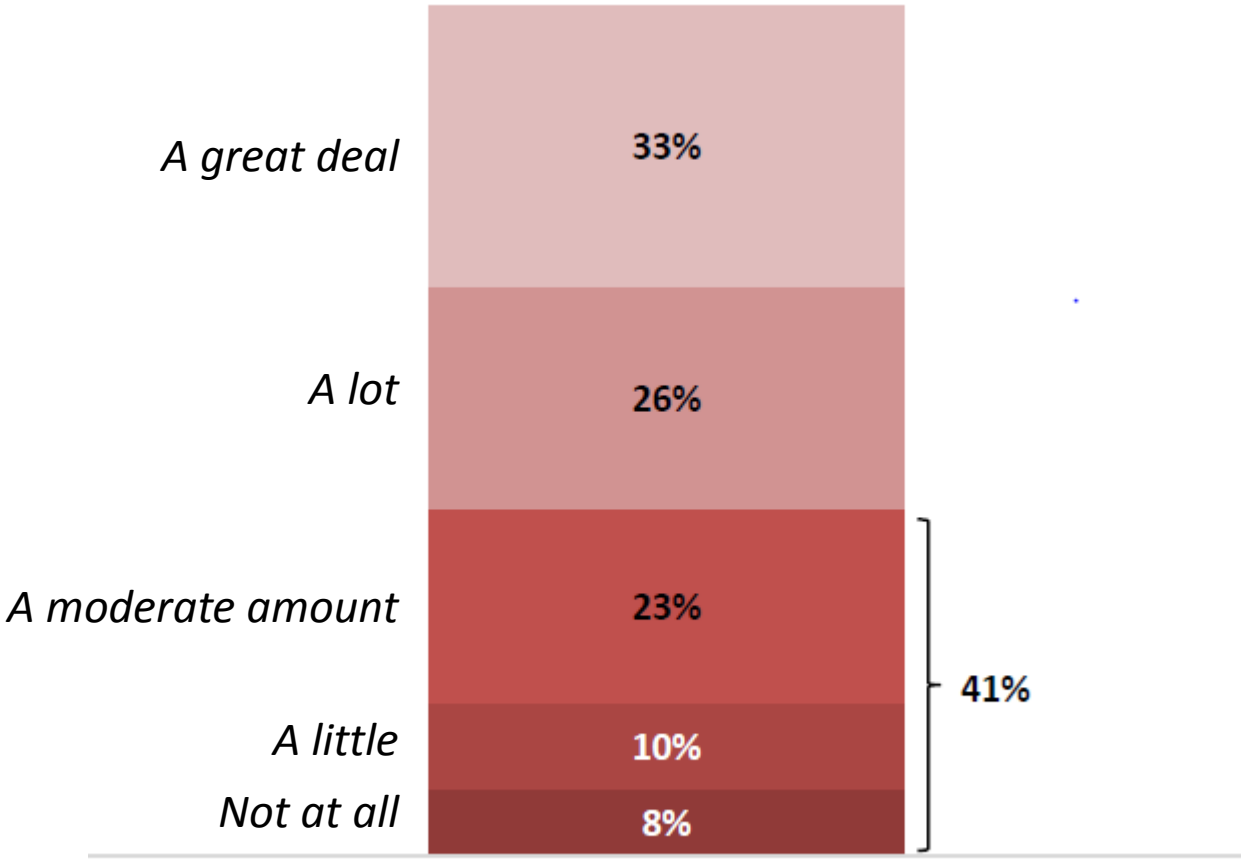
Does it matter if I'm personally counted?



How much, if at all, do you think it matters if you personally are counted in the 2020 Census?

Does it matter if I'm personally counted?

Lack of Efficacy

They won't ever come into the hood, give us stuff that we need, or give us anything. *You go out where she at [a suburb] and you see parks and they get cleaned up, you see areas and centers and everything. Well, we have none of that. That's why I see a thousand kids on the block every day…So many high schools been closed. [It's connected to the census] because they not helping.* ***They not giving us no money. Then they up there counting, taking counts for everybody for what?"***

— Black or African American

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Does it matter if I'm personally counted?

Apathy

[I would not fill it out] just for not wanting to do it. ***Just not feeling like it… it kind of seems like taking a survey or something. Almost kind of pointless****, like it doesn't mean anything. It's not going to help anyways or do anything. It's more bothersome or more of a nuisance than anything, I guess."*
— Low Internet Proficiency

[I would not fill out the census because] ***I just don't care."*** *— Chinese*

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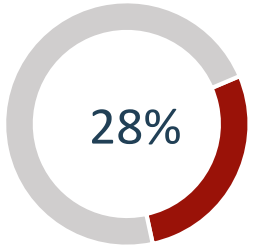
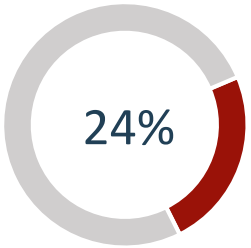
About one-quarter of respondents worry about confidentiality



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



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

Privacy Concerns

*Privacy [is a reason why people would not fill out the census]. I think there's a lot of people that are out there – I work in health and we have to keep things private – they probably think, '**Why do I have to give you this**?'"*

— American Indian and Alaska Native

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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

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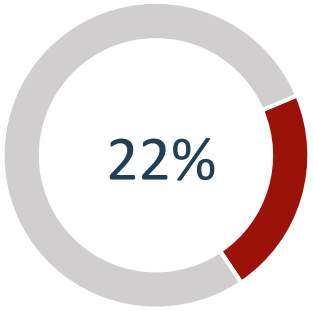
Nearly 1 in 4 respondents fear that their answers to the 2020 Census will be used against them



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

Harm to the 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

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…or them personally

Harm to them Personally

[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

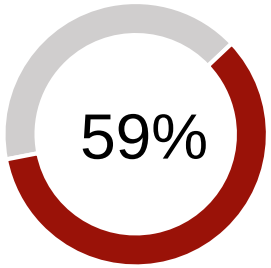
> *[The purpose is] to make people panic… Some **people will panic because they are afraid that they might be deported**."*
> *— Vietnamese*

> *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*

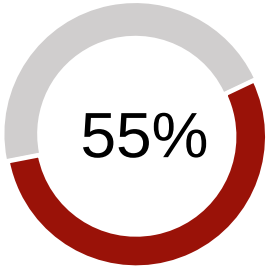
> *For this census, a lot of people are afraid. **It doesn't matter if they ask you whether or not you're a citizen.** The first question they ask you, are you Hispanic or Latino? And that's enough. That's all they need. And people are scared."*
> *— Spanish (U.S. Mainland)*

> *[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)*

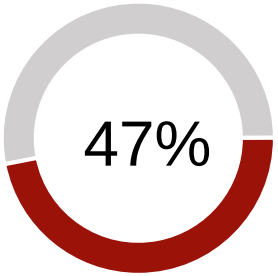
Distrust is highest for the federal government



said they did not trust the federal government



said they did not trust their state government



said they did not trust their local government

Focus group participants who distrust the government do so strongly

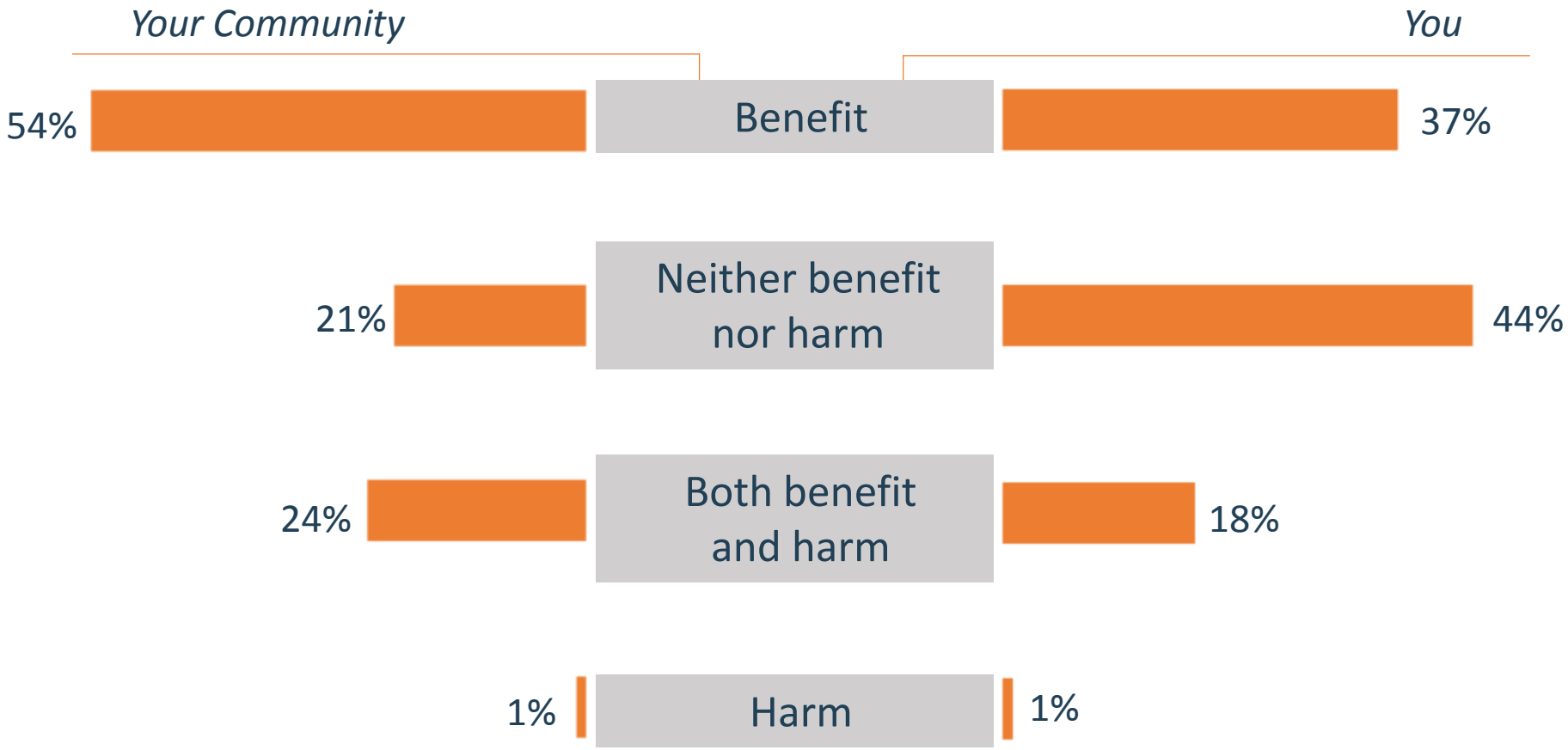
[The government will sell personal information] in a heartbeat."
— Rural

The U.S. Census Bureau is connected to the U.S. government. ***I don't trust the government not one bit****, so I wouldn't even if they told me this is what we're going to do I wouldn't."*
— Black or African American

The government has always been intrusive as it is*, and it's probably a level of intrusion. That's why people are like, 'Hold on, what you want to know what's in my bed, at my house, and who's using my toilet?* ***You should go mind your business****.'"*
— Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander

More feel the 2020 Census benefits the community than them personally

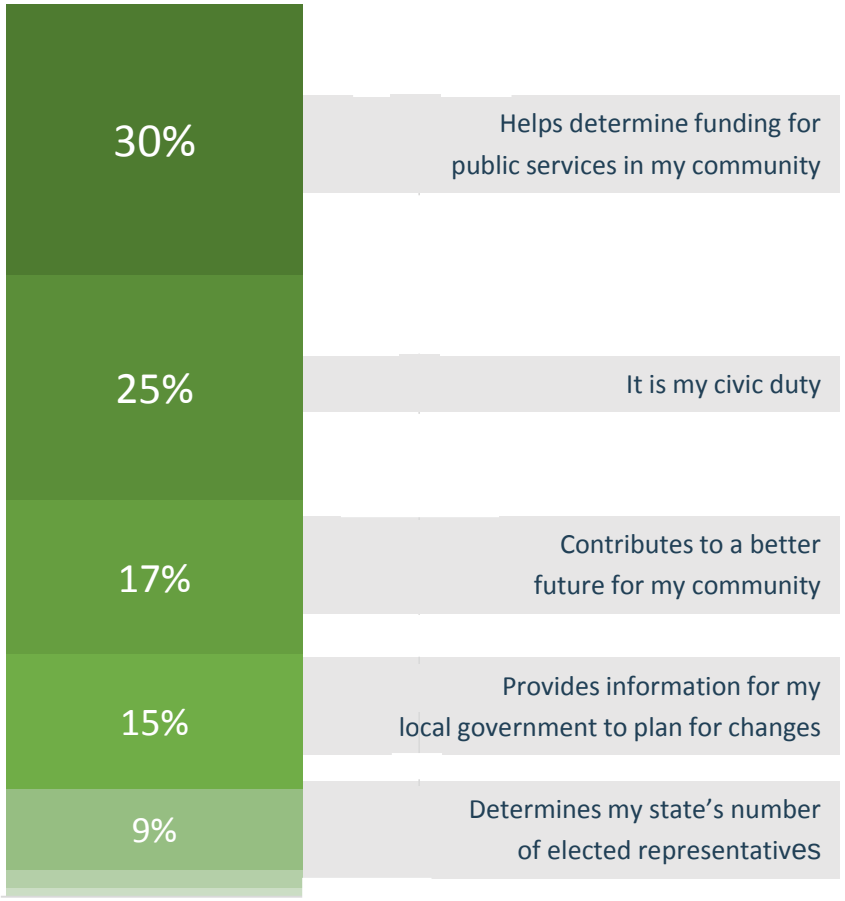
Do you believe answering your 2020 Census form could benefit or harm [your community/you] in any way?



Potential Motivators & Facilitators

Survey respondents chose **funding for public services** as the single most important reason to respond

What is the one most important reason to fill out the census?



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Public services are important to nearly all respondents

Most Important Motivators

Hospitals and healthcare	94%
Fire departments	94%
Police departments	92%
Roads and highways	92%
Enforcement of civil rights laws	86%
Schools and education system	85%
Civic duty	82%
Contributing to a better future for community	81%

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According to the focus groups, what would motivate people to participate?

Conditions that need to be met to be most compelling

1. Information about the census and its impact
2. Tangible evidence
3. Connection to a better future

Schools & Education System

*Our schools need help. **The schools here do need help.** It hasn't been that long since the school system was shook up pretty bad, so it does need help, and I don't know about the fire departments."*
— Low Internet Proficiency

Better Future for Community

*[I would fill it out] **because that data is going to impact my community**. And if it's not my community, because I die, then **my grandchildren and my children**."*
— Spanish (U.S. Mainland)

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Focus group results imply community can assuage skepticism

According to many focus group participants, trusted voices and organizations with deep community roots may facilitate participation among the most skeptical by:

- **Providing information** about the community funding and the general census process
- **Assuring people** that participation is safe

Trusted voices and organizations

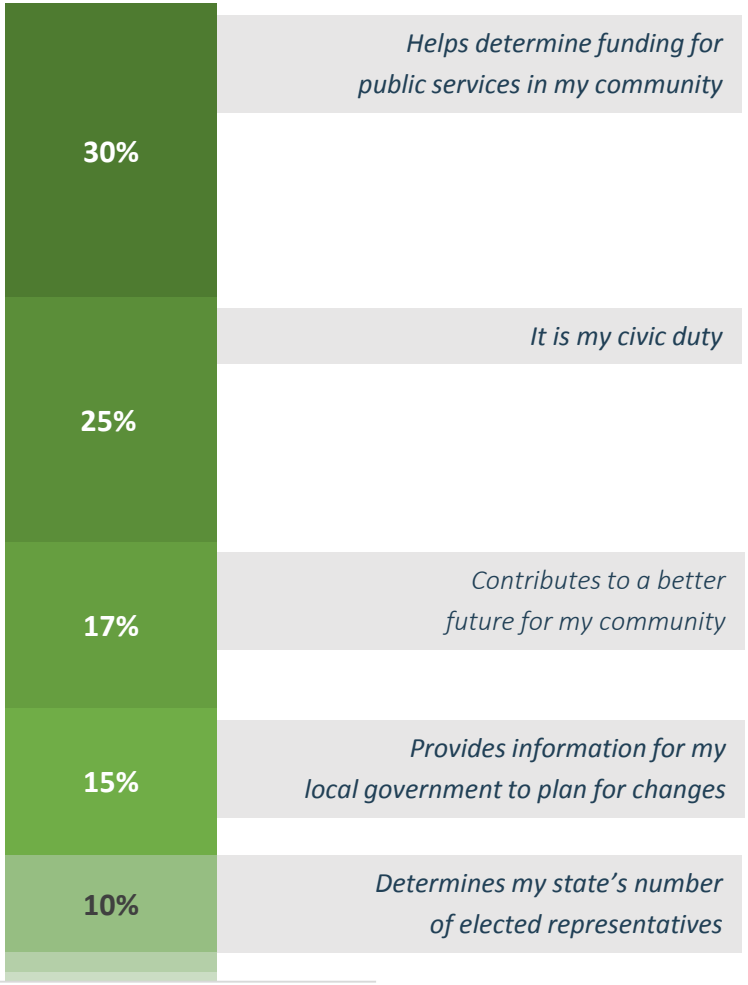
*Those who are representing and helping the Hispanic communities [would assure me my information is safe]…Those who are independent, **who support all the Hispanics**. Those who are now helping [with] DACA and all those young people."*
— Spanish (U.S. Mainland)

*Most definitely [**my church would assure me if I had concerns about filling out the census form**]." — Rural*

*Somebody raised in the city, **knows the hardships**, and something like that, not somebody that just got elected to be somebody."*
— Black or African American

4 2020 CBAMS Conclusions & Recommendations

Connecting Census & Community Funding



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

5 2020 CBAMS Mindsets

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Creating Candidate Mindsets

For the 2020 mindsets, we used a mathematical approach to balance two goals:

1. Cluster individuals into cohesive groups with similar attitudes/behaviors.
2. Have mindset groupings that are distinct from each other.

Creating the candidate mindsets involved five steps:

- Step 1: Use principal component analysis (PCA) to distill 50+ CBAMS questions into a smaller number of factors.
- Step 2: Cluster algorithms to group into candidate mindsets.
- Step 3: Select a final mindset solution.
- Step 4: Name the mindsets and develop easy-to-understand personas.
- Step 5: Use mindsets to inform the communications program.

Big Picture: Mindsets

Eager Engagers

19% of U.S. Population

82% Intent to Respond

Fence Sitters

32% of U.S. Population

71% Intent to Respond

Confidentiality Minded

15% of U.S. Population

63% Intent to Respond

Head Nodders

9% of U.S. Population

60% Intent to Respond

Wary Skeptics

14% of U.S. Population

59% Intent to Respond

Disconnected Doubters

10% of U.S. Population

51% Intent to Respond

Note: U.S. population percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding error.

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Questions?

monica.j.vines@census.gov
gina.k.walejko@census.gov

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