



Federal Committee on
Statistical Methodology



Effects of and Reactions to Response Formats for Race and Ethnicity Measurement in the U.S.

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Ipsos Public Affairs

2022 FCSM Research & Policy Conference
October 25th – October 27th, 2022
Washington D.C.

Study Background



Many surveys use questions for race and Latino ethnicity that align with the US Census in order to allow for benchmarking and weighting adjustment.

This typically means asking Latino ethnicity separately from asking about one's racial identity.

All respondents, including those who identify as Latino, are asked the follow-up question to identify their race or races.

Study Background



American Community Survey

→ **NOTE: Please answer BOTH Question 5 about Hispanic origin and Question 6 about race. For this survey, Hispanic origins are not races.**

Is Person 1 of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

- No**, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano
- Yes, Puerto Rican
- Yes, Cuban
- Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin – *Print, for example, Salvadoran, Dominican, Colombian, Guatemalan, Spaniard, Ecuadorian, etc.*

What is Person 1's race?

Mark (X) one or more boxes **AND** print origins.

- White – *Print, for example, German, Irish, English, Italian, Lebanese, Egyptian, etc.*
- Black or African Am. – *Print, for example, African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, etc.*
- American Indian or Alaska Native – *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe(s), for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc.*
- Chinese
- Vietnamese
- Native Hawaiian
- Filipino
- Korean
- Samoan
- Asian Indian
- Japanese
- Chamorro
- Other Asian – *Print, for example, Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong, etc.*
- Other Pacific Islander – *Print, for example, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese, etc.*
- Some other race – *Print race or origin.*

Current Population Survey

HSPNON

(Are / Is) (name/you) of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

- 1 Yes → **Follow-up for Latino origin in a second question**
- 2 No

RACE

I am going to read you a list of five race categories. You may choose one or more races. For this survey, Hispanic origin is not a race. (Are/Is) (NAME/you) White; Black or African American; American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; OR Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander?

♦ Do not probe unless response is Hispanic or a Hispanic origin
Enter all that apply, separate with commas

- 1 White
- 2 Black or African American
- 3 American Indian or Alaska Native
- 4 Asian
- 5 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- 6 Other - DO NOT READ

Study Purpose

The Census acknowledges that there are problems with their method of asking about race and ethnicity.

In 2015, the Census put out a report summarizing a content test that they conducted to inform updates to measurement of race and ethnicity.

Two recommendations stood out:

- merging the race and Latino ethnicity into a single question increased accuracy and demonstrated that Latino people can better find themselves in the response options
- the use of a distinct Middle Eastern or North African (MENA) category produced more accurate data for respondents who identify as MENA



Study Purpose



Taking these recommendations into consideration, we designed some alternative measures to test with a couple of goals in mind:

- 1. Would a new measure still allow for reasonable benchmarking to the U.S. Census?**
- 2. Would respondents react more favorably to the revised measures compared to the more traditional measures?**

Study Design – Fielding



Sample: We conducted a study using KnowledgePanel, a probability-based online panel in the US

We began with a general population sample of adults 18 and older and selected additional samples of Black/African American, Latino, and those who identify with a different race or multi-race.

Respondents: 4,042 responded

Field Period: April 8 to April 18, 2022

Mode of Administration: Web-based questionnaire

Average length of interview (LOI): 6.6 minutes

Study Design



Respondents were randomly assigned to 1 of 6 conditions –

- **Traditional Census two questions like CPS**
- **Traditional Census two questions like CPS with MENA**
- **One question with Hispanic/Latino**
- **One question with Four Hispanic/Latino origins**
- **One question with Hispanic/Latino and MENA**
- **One question with Four Hispanic/Latino origins and MENA**

Study Design – Conditions 1 and 2



Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

1. Yes, of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
2. No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin

Which of the following do you consider yourself to be? Please select ALL that apply.

1. White
2. Black or African American
3. Asian
4. American Indian or Alaska Native
5. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
6. A different race or ethnicity, please describe: _____

Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

1. Yes, of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
2. No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin

Which of the following do you consider yourself to be? Please select ALL that apply.

1. White
2. Black or African American
3. Asian
4. Middle Eastern or North African
5. American Indian or Alaska Native
6. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
7. A different race or ethnicity, please describe: _____

Study Design – Conditions 3 and 4



Which of the following do you consider yourself to be? Please select ALL that apply.

1. White
2. Black or African American
3. Hispanic or Latino
4. Asian
5. American Indian or Alaska Native
6. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
7. A different race or ethnicity, please describe: _____

Which of the following do you consider yourself to be? Please select ALL that apply.

1. White
2. Black or African American
3. Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicano
4. Puerto Rican
5. Cuban or Cuban American
6. Other Hispanic, Latino, or Latin American
7. Asian
8. American Indian or Alaska Native
9. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
10. A different race or ethnicity, please describe: _____

Study Design – Conditions 5 and 6



Which of the following do you consider yourself to be? Please select ALL that apply.

1. White
2. Black or African American
3. Hispanic or Latino
4. Asian
5. Middle Eastern or North African
6. American Indian or Alaska Native
7. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
8. A different race or ethnicity, please describe: _____

Which of the following do you consider yourself to be? Please select ALL that apply.

1. White
2. Black or African American
3. Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicano
4. Puerto Rican
5. Cuban or Cuban American
6. Other Hispanic, Latino, or Latin American
7. Asian
8. Middle Eastern or North African
9. American Indian or Alaska Native
10. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
11. A different race or ethnicity, please describe: _____

Study Design – Random Assignments



The table below reflects the distributions of the stored profile values we had on respondents for race/ethnicity (based on traditional Census questions). Differences were not statistically significant but enough to make comparisons difficult.

Profiled Race/Ethnicity	Traditional two questions	Two questions with MENA	One question	One question with Latino origins	One question with MENA	One question with Latino origins and MENA
White, Non-Latino	50.3%	50.5%	52.9%	53.0%	53.3%	49.4%
Black, Non-Latino	13.5%	16.4%	13.5%	14.8%	14.9%	14.8%
Latino	18.8%	16.0%	14.9%	13.2%	13.8%	16.9%
Other, Non-Latino	8.9%	10.9%	11.6%	10.9%	9.8%	11.3%
2+ races, Non-Latino	8.6%	6.3%	7.2%	8.2%	8.2%	7.6%

Study Design



To make the groups more comparable, we weighted within condition to Census benchmarks for age by gender, education, income, and region. Benchmarks for race/ethnicity were the total across all conditions just to equate the groups. The table below reflects the weighted proportions.

Profiled Race/Ethnicity	Traditional two questions	Two questions with MENA	One question	One question with Latino origins	One question with MENA	One question with Latino origins and MENA
White, Non-Latino	50.4%	50.5%	50.5%	50.4%	50.4%	50.4%
Black, Non-Latino	14.6%	14.6%	14.6%	14.6%	14.6%	14.6%
Latino	17.3%	17.3%	17.4%	17.4%	17.4%	17.3%
Other, Non-Latino	8.5%	10.7%	10.5%	9.9%	9.4%	10.6%
2+ races, Non-Latino	9.2%	6.9%	7.1%	7.7%	8.3%	7.1%

We also asked respondents:

- **How difficult it was to answer the race/ethnicity question(s) to which they were assigned immediately following the race/ethnicity question(s)**
- **If they are generally offended by being asked questions about their race and ethnicity**
- **If they've found any of the following to be true when they answer race/ethnicity questions generally:**
 - **My race is usually not included in the list**
 - **My ethnic group is usually not included in the list**
 - **I don't know what to select**
 - **It is unclear what the difference is between race and ethnicity**
 - **I am concerned about data privacy**
 - **I don't like answering those types of questions**

Results

Results

Looking at respondents' reactions to being asked about their race and ethnicity generally, we can see people of color are more likely to have issues with how to answer these questions whereas we have made it easy for white people, indicating we have work to do.

Race-ethnicity of Respondent

	White	Black	Latino	Different Race	2+ Races	Missing Race
My race is usually not included in the list	1.7%	2.7%	10.6%	9.5%	5.7%	14.8%
My ethnic group is usually not included in the list	2.5%	2.7%	10.1%	11.3%	7.4%	18.5%
I don't know what to select	2.4%	3.4%	16.4%	5.6%	11.7%	14.3%
It is unclear what the difference is between race and ethnicity	9.5%	11.7%	26.8%	19.9%	20.1%	14.8%
I am concerned about data privacy	8.9%	14.9%	10.4%	16.9%	13.8%	17.9%
I don't like answering those types of questions	7.4%	10.8%	6.9%	10.4%	10.7%	39.3%
None of the above are true for me	75.3%	66.1%	47.0%	54.4%	55.7%	29.6%
	2052	559	658	444	298	31

Results - Offended



Overall, we see a high level of people indicating that they find answering questions about race and ethnicity offensive in a survey.

Race-ethnicity of Respondent

White	Black	Latino	Different Race	2+ Races	Missing Race
10.7%	14.1%	11.3%	15.6%	14.5%	62.1%

Results - Comparability



Results were fairly comparable across the experimental conditions – differences were not statistically significant.

Survey Response	Traditional two questions	Two questions with MENA	One question	One question with Latino origins	One question with MENA	One question with Latino origins and MENA
White, Non-Latino	51.9%	52.4%	51.7%	50.8%	50.1%	50.2%
Black, Non-Latino	14.1%	14.0%	14.1%	13.6%	14.3%	13.7%
Latino	14.9%	15.9%	14.9%	17.0%	17.7%	18.0%
Other, Non-Latino	11.6%	10.9%	11.5%	10.3%	10.1%	12.2%
2+ races, Non-Latino	7.5%	6.8%	7.8%	8.3%	7.8%	6.0%

Results - Comparability



We did not find a consistent increase in identification as Latino when listing four responses with Latino origins vs one response “Hispanic or Latino”

Survey Response	Traditional two questions	Two questions with MENA	One question	One question with Latino origins	One question with MENA	One question with Latino origins and MENA
White, Non-Latino	51.9%	52.4%	51.7%	50.8%	50.1%	50.2%
Black, Non-Latino	14.1%	14.0%	14.1%	13.6%	14.3%	13.7%
Latino	14.9%	15.9%	14.9%	17.0%	17.7%	18.0%
Other, Non-Latino	11.6%	10.9%	11.5%	10.3%	10.1%	12.2%
2+ races, Non-Latino	7.5%	6.8%	7.8%	8.3%	7.8%	6.0%

Results - Comparability



We do not see systematic increase or decrease to white or Black when including Middle Eastern or North African as a separate category.

Survey Response	Traditional two questions	Two questions with MENA	One question	One question with Latino origins	One question with MENA	One question with Latino origins and MENA
White, Non-Latino	51.9%	52.4%	51.7%	50.8%	50.1%	50.2%
Black, Non-Latino	14.1%	14.0%	14.1%	13.6%	14.3%	13.7%
Latino	14.9%	15.9%	14.9%	17.0%	17.7%	18.0%
Other, Non-Latino	11.6%	10.9%	11.5%	10.3%	10.1%	12.2%
2+ races, Non-Latino	7.5%	6.8%	7.8%	8.3%	7.8%	6.0%
MENA		0.5%			0.7%	0.4%

Results - Difficulty



Across the conditions, Latino respondents are the most likely to find the race/ethnicity questions difficult to answer, with the two separate questions having the largest share indicating they were difficult to answer.

	Two questions	Two questions with MENA	One question	One question with Latino origins	One question with MENA	One question with Latino origins and MENA
White, Non-Latino	5.5%	6.8%	4.4%	5.6%	7.2%	4.9%
Black, Non-Latino	10.1%	9.1%	6.5%	7.4%	11.7%	11.5%
Latino	19.7%	23.9%	13.1%	14.8%	17.8%	15.5%
Other, Non-Latino	10.0%	12.8%	7.9%	9.5%	6.6%	7.5%
2+ races, Non-Latino	5.6%	10.3%	14.0%	12.8%	9.4%	13.0%
Overall	9.1%	11.1%	7.1%	8.2%	9.6%	8.5%

Conclusions and Discussion

Overall, we found that results were fairly comparable across the conditions that we tested.

The high levels of people reporting that they have difficulty answering the questions, that they are offended by the questions, and that they have difficulty locating themselves among response options shows us that we have work to do in improving these measures.

By trying to align with Census measures as they are currently written, we may be undermining our own sample representativeness.

We need to improve our measures so that respondents can more easily and comfortably answer the questions. This is critical in ensuring that our research is representative of all voices here in the US.

Thank you!

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