



United States Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service



Results from Qualitative Testing of New Race and Ethnicity Question(s) from the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service

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USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service

Acknowledgements: Participants, RFO staff, field enumerators, advisory committees

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service

- Publish official agricultural statistics for the United States
- Conduct hundreds of surveys every year to collect data about agricultural topics including commodity production, farm practices, economics, labor, chemical use, etc.
- Collect data predominantly from farms and ranches
 - Considered establishments, but for some questions/concepts, more like households

Race/Ethnicity Questions

- Demographic questions, including race and ethnicity, are asked on a limited number of surveys, including the Census of Agriculture, to measure and serve the farm and ranch population
- OMB Interagency Technical Working Group (ITWG) on Race and Ethnicity tasked with content and testing of proposed question(s)

Initial Proposed Examples

What is your race or ethnicity?
Select all that apply.

White

Hispanic or Latino

Black or African American

Asian

American Indian or Alaska Native

Middle Eastern or North African

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

**Combined Question with
 Minimum Categories**

What is your race or ethnicity?
Select all that apply AND enter additional details in the spaces below.
Note, you may report more than one group.

WHITE – Provide details below.

German Irish English

Italian Polish French

Enter, for example, Scottish, Norwegian, Dutch, etc.

HISPANIC OR LATINO – Provide details below.

Mexican or Mexican American Puerto Rican Cuban

Salvadoran Dominican Colombian

Enter, for example, Guatemalan, Spaniard, Ecuadorian, etc.

BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN – Provide details below.

African American Jamaican Haitian

Nigerian Ethiopian Somali

Enter, for example, Ghanaian, South African, Barbadian, etc.

ASIAN – Provide details below.

Chinese Filipino Asian Indian

Vietnamese Korean Japanese

Enter, for example, Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong, etc.

AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE – Enter, for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Tribal Government, Tlingit, etc.

MIDDLE EASTERN OR NORTH AFRICAN – Provide details below.

Lebanese Iranian Egyptian

Syrian Moroccan Israeli

Enter, for example, Algerian, Iraqi, Kurdish, etc.

NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER – Provide details below.

Native Hawaiian Samoan Chamorro

Tongan Fijian Marshallese

Enter, for example, Palauan, Tahitian, Chuukese, etc.

**Combined Question with
 Minimum and Detailed Categories**

NASS Research Questions

- Which question stem better allows respondents to understand the question?
 - “What is your race or ethnicity?”
 - “What is your race and/or ethnicity?”
- Does simplifying the instructions impact how respondents understand and answer the question?
 - “Select all that apply”
 - “Select all that apply AND enter additional details in the space below. Note, you may report more than one group”
- How does the combined question affect understanding and self-identification?

NASS Cognitive Testing

- Conducted 33 cognitive interviews in March – May 2023
 - 10 mimicked self-administered paper data collection, using Zoom with screen sharing
 - 23 mimicked telephone data collection, conducted over the phone
- Race and ethnicity questions embedded with other demographic questions including number of people involved in the operation, name, age, sex, and some farmer characteristics

Cognitive Interview Participants

- Recruited farmers, ranchers, stake-holders, and survey enumerators in several states
- Recruited people of all races and ethnicities that we have data for
- Attempted to recruit people we suspected may identify as Middle Eastern or North African

Self-reported Race/Ethnicity of Cognitive Interview Participants

Minimum Race/Ethnicity Category	Count ^{1/}
White	17
Hispanic or Latino	8
Black or African American	8
Asian	4
American Indian or Alaska Native	4
Middle Eastern or North African	2
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2
Total	45

1/ Respondents could report more than one race/ethnicity



What is this person's race or ethnicity?

Select all that apply **AND** enter additional details in the spaces below. Note, you may report more than one group.

WHITE - Provide details below.

- German
 - Italian
 - Irish
 - Polish
 - English
 - French
 - Enter, for example, Scottish, Norwegian, Dutch, etc.
-

HISPANIC OR LATINO - Provide details below.

- Mexican or Mexican American
 - Salvadoran
 - Puerto Rican
 - Dominican
 - Cuban
 - Colombian
 - Enter, for example, Guatemalan, Spaniard, Ecuadorian, etc.
-

BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN - Provide details below.

- African American
- Nigerian
- Jamaican
- Ethiopian
- Haitian
- Somali
- Enter, for example, Ghanaian, South African, Barbadian, etc.

NASS Race/Ethnicity Question(s) - Paper

What is this person's race or ethnicity?

Select all that apply **AND** enter additional details in the spaces below. Note, you may report more than one group.

WHITE - Provide details below.

- German
 - Italian
 - Irish
 - Polish
 - English
 - French
 - Enter, for example, Scottish, Norwegian, Dutch, etc.
-

HISPANIC OR LATINO - Provide details below.

- Mexican or Mexican American
 - Salvadoran
 - Puerto Rican
 - Dominican
 - Cuban
 - Colombian
 - Enter, for example, Guatemalan, Spaniard, Ecuadorian, etc.
-

BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN - Provide details below.

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NASS Race/Ethnicity Question(s) - Paper

“or” vs. “and/or”

NASS Race/Ethnicity Question(s) - Paper

“or” vs. “and/or”

Long instructions vs. “Select all that apply”

What is this person's race or ethnicity?

Select all that apply **AND** enter additional details in the spaces below. Note, you may report more than one group.

WHITE - Provide details below.

- German
 - Italian
 - Irish
 - Polish
 - English
 - French
 - Enter, for example, Scottish, Norwegian, Dutch, etc.
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HISPANIC OR LATINO - Provide details below.

- Mexican or Mexican American
 - Salvadoran
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- Nigerian
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- Ethiopian
- Haitian
- Somali
- Enter, for example, Ghanaian, South African, Barbadian, etc.

NASS Race/Ethnicity Question 1 - Telephone

First Race Question

What is <Name>'s race and/or ethnicity? I am going to read you seven groups. Please select all that apply and note that you may report more than one group. Are you/they:

[ENUM] Select all that apply.

- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- Black or African American
- Asian
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

The next question(s) collect(s) detailed information for each race and/or ethnicity you selected.

NASS Race/Ethnicity Question 1 - Telephone

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- Hispanic or Latino
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The next question(s) collect(s) detailed information for each race and/or ethnicity you selected.

“or” vs. “and/or”

NASS Race/Ethnicity Question 2 - Telephone

Asian

You said <Name> is Asian. I am going to read you several groups. Please select all that apply and note that you may report more than one group. Are you/they:

[ENUM] Select all that apply.

- Chinese
- Vietnamese
- Filipino
- Korean
- Asian Indian
- Japanese
- Another Asian group, please specify, for example Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong, etc.

Cognitive Interview Versions

Description	Count
Detailed Question, Long Instructions, Telephone	11
Detailed Question, Short Instructions, Telephone	12
Detailed Question, Long Instructions, Paper	6
Detailed Question, Short Instructions, Paper	4
Total	33

Research Question #1

- Which question stem better allows respondents to understand the question?
 - “What is your race or ethnicity?”
 - “What is your race and/or ethnicity?”
- Many respondents (all paper, some telephone) were asked about their preference for “or” vs “and/or”
- Main finding: For those respondents who were asked their preference, all but one indicated that they would prefer the use of “and/or”
 - Several respondents indicated that just using “or” can impact how they may understand and respond to the question

Selected Comments on “or” vs. “and/or”

- “When you look at me or my husband, you may think we are African American, when you say ‘and/or,’ you are asking for things beyond the obvious, what may not be known”
- “I prefer ‘and/or’, it would cue me in to think more about a detailed answer”
- “If it was ‘and/or’ it would have changed how I felt about the question, the ‘or’ made it seem like people don’t care about me”

Research Question #2

- Does simplifying the instructions impact how respondents understand and answer the question?
 - “Select all that apply”
 - “Select all that apply AND enter additional details in the space below. Note, you may report more than one group”
- Respondents on paper and telephone were exposed to either the longer or shorter instructions, then asked about their preference
- Main findings:
 - Survey enumerators generally preferred the shorter instructions
 - All other participants preferred the longer instructions

Selected Respondent Comments on Instructions

- In reference to preference for the longer instructions:
 - “That sounds like it wants me to be as inclusive as I can be”
 - “...is a little clearer, you can tell that you really can check more than one race and ethnicity”

Select All That Apply

- Participants were asked if they knew they could select all that apply
- All were exposed to at least “Select all that apply”
- Main finding: While many respondents did select more than one or said they knew they could, there were at least eight respondents who indicated they did not know
 - The more detailed instructions did not seem to reduce the number of respondents who did not realize they could report more than one

Research Question #3

- How does the combined question affect understanding and self-identification?
 - On what basis do respondents answer the question?
 - What factors influence the race/ethnicity respondents report?
 - What level of detail did respondents prefer to use to self-identify?

On What Basis Do They Answer?

- Ancestry or culture they identify with
 - “What are you made of, what is your make up, who are your ancestors, what makes you who you are...”
- Parental lineage, genetic make-up, results from DNA testing
 - “Because when my sister did the DNA testing, it showed more of African descent than Indian descent...”
- Process of elimination
 - “Well, because I am not any of the others”

What Factors Influence Self-identification?

- Who is asking?
 - “In the livestock business, you can go in to apply for assistance, if you are American Indian, female, or minority, you don’t have to pay – but if I am White, I have to pay. In my records with USDA, I am American Indian”
 - This multi-racial respondent indicated that they do not always report that they are American Indian
- Why are they asking?
 - “I really didn’t feel like I needed to put that in. If I knew the reason behind the survey or what the survey was being used for – I would select more than one”
 - Reported a minimum race and/or ethnicity but not detail. When asked why, they said didn’t see the importance of providing more detail such as “German” and “Irish”

Mode Specific Findings

- For telephone, respondents often interrupted the enumerator before they read all response options
- For paper, respondents often did not check boxes for both the minimum reporting category and the detailed categories

BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN - *Provide details below.*

- African American
- Nigerian
- Jamaican
- Ethiopian
- Haitian
- Somali
- Enter, for example, Ghanaian, South African, Barbadian, etc.*

Proxy Reporting Findings

- Nineteen participants had a second person involved in the farm or ranch and were asked to report as a proxy
- Most could easily report as a proxy because of a familial relationship they had with the second person (e.g., spouse, sibling, parent, child)

Summary of Cognitive Interview Findings

- Respondents strongly preferred using “What is your race **and/or** ethnicity”
- Farmers and ranchers (but not enumerators) generally preferred the longer instructions
- Most respondents could report detailed race and/or ethnicity for themselves
- Most could report as a proxy for a second person with familial ties



Thank You

- Full report available from the authors
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